

# Woman of the Year

*in Agriculture*

# 2016

*Judi Whitson*



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner



Since 1985, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Florida State Fair Authority have recognized the significant contributions of women in the Florida agriculture industry with the "Woman of the Year in Agriculture" award. This year the department names Judi Whitson as recipient of this distinguished award. I am proud to honor Judi for her outstanding work.

Judi was born in Brooksville to Ada Rae Barnett Driggers and William J Driggers Sr. Her father was in the U.S. Navy, so her family moved to different naval bases around the country. During the summer months, Judi would visit her uncle's cattle ranch and citrus groves in Inverness. It was there that Judi's passion for agriculture grew.

In 1991, as a working mother of two, the Hillsborough County Farm Bureau hired Judi as administrative assistant. She worked for the board of directors taking minutes, working on financial statements and managing general office tasks. As she grew professionally, Judi was presented with a new challenge: the post of executive director.

Judi made ag education one of her priorities and promoted the Ag in the Classroom program to cultivate an appreciation of the agriculture industry among school students. She began visiting local classrooms and forming relationships with local agriculturists, legislators and community leaders. In 1995, with the help of her peers, Judi formulated the AgVentures program, an interactive agricultural experience geared toward Hillsborough County School students. In 2002, with assistance from educators in Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Judi developed and co-wrote the curriculum for the Ag-Abilities program, designed to teach ESE students the many facets of agriculture and prepare them for possible careers in the industry.

Today, Judi continues to work tirelessly for Florida agriculture. Whether it's educating youth about where their food comes from or promoting the industry to decision makers, Judi has become one of Florida agriculture's top ambassadors. She never loses her enthusiasm to help agriculturists become better spokespeople for the industry she loves.

Judi serves on the boards of the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, AgVenture of Hillsborough County and Plant City Chamber of Commerce, and formerly served on the 4-H Overall Advisory Committee and the Ag-Institute of Florida. Despite a very busy schedule, Judi finds time to lend her voice to the Toast of Tampa Show Chorus, a local non-profit group ranked third in the world in Sweet Adeline barbershop chorus competition. With all her accomplishments, Judi's greatest joy is her family. Her son, Brian, is a park manager with the Florida Park Service and her daughter, Shelli, is a social worker with Pinellas County Schools.

Lisa joins 32 other women who have earned the respect and admiration of their peers by making outstanding contributions to Florida agriculture. Therefore, it is my distinct pleasure to congratulate Judi Whitson on being named the 2016 "Woman of the Year in Agriculture."

Sincerely,

Adam H. Putnam  
Commissioner of Agriculture

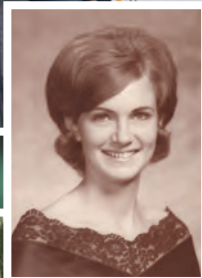




Whether it's educating youth about where their food comes or promoting the industry to decision makers, Judi Whitson works tirelessly for Florida agriculture. Having served as Hillsborough County Farm Bureau's executive director for over 25 years, Judy has become one of Florida agriculture's leading spokespersons.















In 1991, as a working mother of two, Judi began her career at the Hillsborough County Farm Bureau as administrative assistant. Over time her responsibilities grew, as did her desire to improve agricultural literacy in schools.





With a hands-on approach that would become her hallmark, Judi promoted Ag in the Classroom, a program designed to cultivate students' understanding and appreciation of agriculture.



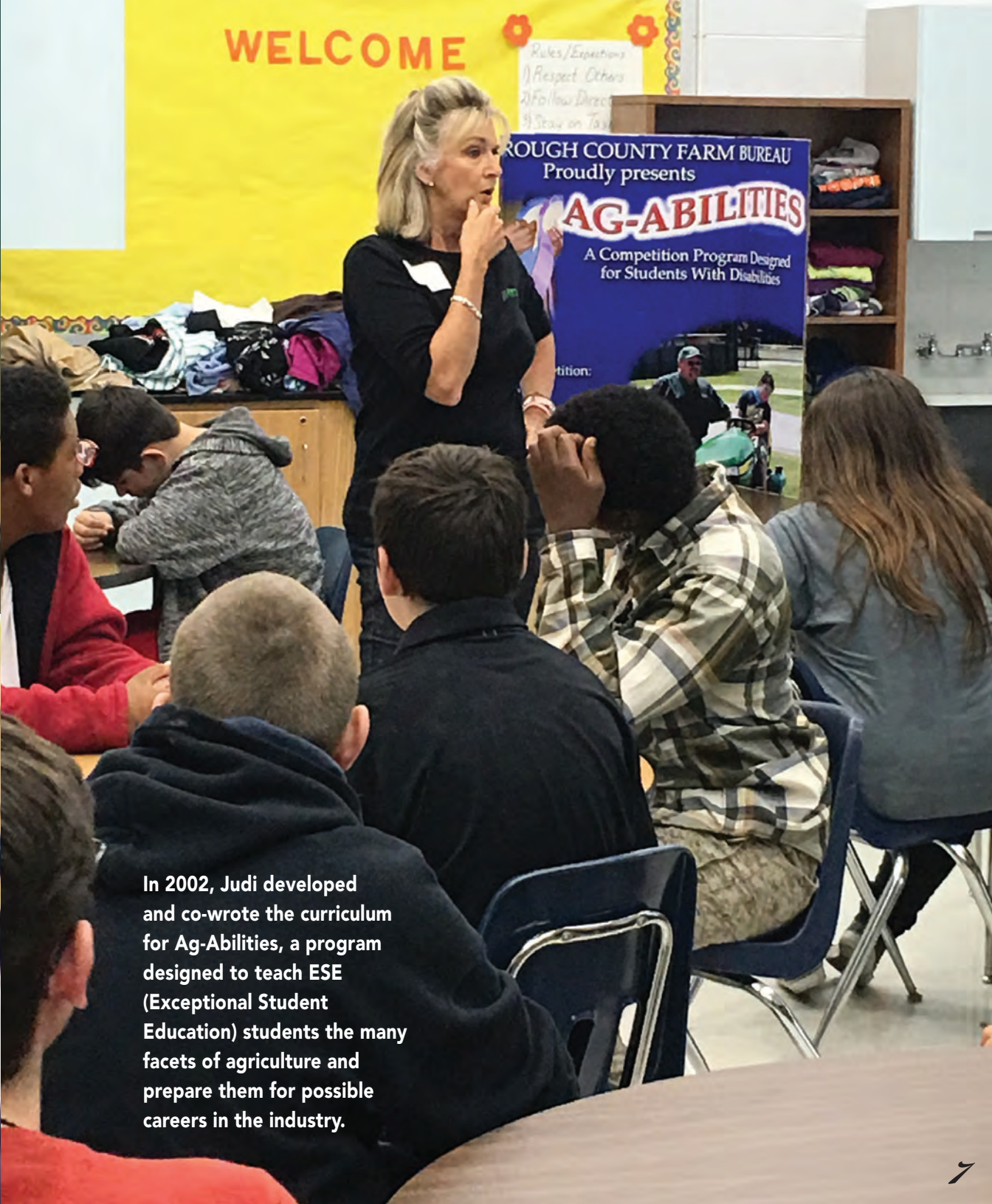




Building on the success of Ag in the Classroom, Judi helped to formulate the interactive agricultural experience AgVentures in conjunction with the Florida State Fair.







WELCOME

Rules/Expectations  
1) Respect Others  
2) Follow Directions  
3) Stay on Task

ROUGH COUNTY FARM BUREAU  
Proudly presents

## AG-ABILITIES

A Competition Program Designed  
for Students With Disabilities

Competition:

In 2002, Judi developed and co-wrote the curriculum for Ag-Abilities, a program designed to teach ESE (Exceptional Student Education) students the many facets of agriculture and prepare them for possible careers in the industry.





Judi has participated on countless boards, such as the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, AgVenture of Hillsborough County, 4-H Overall Advisory Committee, and the Ag-Institute of Florida.





As executive director of the Hillsborough County Farm Bureau, Judi works closely with its president, Kenneth Parker.







Despite a very busy schedule, Judi finds time to lend her voice to the Toast of Tampa Show Chorus, a local non-profit group ranked third in the world in Sweet Adeline barbershop chorus competition.





From left, Wesley Bishop Pinson, Wyatt Dean August, Brian Pinson, Nicole Gonzalez Pinson, Judi Whitson, Shelli Pinson August, Ashley Taylor August, Sara Pinson Poulton, Calvin Poulton.

Judi loves spending time with her four grandchildren.









# Previous Winners

## Woman of the Year in Agriculture

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**2015**

Lisa Hinton

**2014**

Belinda Chason

**2013**

Lynetta Usher Griner

**2012**

Imogene Yarborough

**2011**

Sarah K. Childs

**2010**

Ann Holt

**2009**

Marcia Lightsey

**2008**

Patsy Nathe

**2007**

Colleen H. Boggs

**2006**

Iris Pollock Wall

**2005**

Marlene Strickland

**2004**

Martina "Teena" Borek

**2003**

Jennie Lee Zipperer

**2002**

Annette Barnett

**2001**

Barbara Carlton

**2000**

Helen Houck

**1999**

Vina Jean Banks

**1998**

Nancy Gurnett Hardy

**1997**

Gertrude "Trudy" Carey

**1996**

Norma Stokes

**1995**

Louve "Vee" Frierson Platt and Patricia Robbins

**1994**

Anne Wardlaw Dickinson

**1993**

Sarah W. Bailey

**1992**

Carol C. Murphy

**1991**

Ruth M. Tucker

**1990**

Jeanette Barthle

**1989**

Belle Jeffords

**1988**

Carolyn Reed Kempfer

**1987**

Dorothy Conner Shipes

**1986**

Ruth Wedgworth

**1985**

Jo Ann Smith



