



News Release

For Immediate Release

Jennifer Morgan

Media Contact

813-752-9194

berrypr@flstrawberryfestival.com

Festival elects four new directors and associate directors

PLANT CITY, Fla. (October 10, 2019) – The Florida Strawberry Festival board of directors recently voted to elect its newest directors, Dr. Michael Salvato and Chris Sparkman, and associate directors, Calvin “Pee Wee” Callins, Sr. and Brian Shepherd.

As of recent, directors Ron Gainey, Ken Lucas and Mike Sparkman announced their resignation from the board but will maintain active membership status as directors’ emeriti.

The 11-day event’s board of directors is comprised of 16 directors and 14 associate directors. New associate directors are elected by the board from a group of nominated candidates, and directors are selected from the current group of associate directors.

“We are incredibly honored to have had so many outstanding nominees,” said Florida Strawberry Festival Chairman of the Board Dub McGinnes. “It was difficult to select just four.”

Salvato has served as an associate director for 16 years. He has been part of numerous festival committees including the Americans With Disabilities Act committee and emergency preparedness and safety committee. He also serves as the festival’s “on-call physician.” He and his wife, Linda, have five children.

Sparkman began volunteering at the festival in 1993 as an usher for the headline entertainment concerts and was elected to an associate director position in 2007. He has been a member of stadium operations committee, headline entertainment committee, Strawberry Ball committee and Media Party committee. He currently serves as chairman of the Plant City Pig Jam and is the president of Florida Roll-Off Solutions. He and his wife, Angela, have four children.

“I’m extremely proud to be part of such a great organization,” said Sparkman. “I hope to continue the tradition of providing family focused entertainment for many years to come.”

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Callins is a native of Plant City and is the senior pastor of Greater New Hope Anointed Ministries. He began volunteering at the festival as a member of the stadium operations crew, has parked cars with his church's lot and has headlined "Gospel Night" since 2014. He has also been an integral member of the Battle of the Bands committee. He currently serves as an assistant coach for Plant City High School's boys basketball team and is the voice of raider football games on Friday nights. He is a board member for the Plant City Improvement League and Plant City Family YMCA. He and his wife, Tandria, have three children.

"I hope to contribute to the family feeling the festival offers its guests," said Callins. "The festival is a place for everyone to come experience Plant City."

Shepherd is a fifth-generation native of Plant City. He currently works with Locus Ag Solutions as a business development representative and is the senior pastor at First Thonotosassa Missionary Baptist Church. He has been volunteering at the festival for over 25 years, serving on the youth plant show and sale committee, steer committee, swine committee and agriculture committee. He is a former president of the Tampa Chapter of the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association and former president and football trustee of Pinecrest Little League. He and his wife, Kari, have three children.

"The impact that the Florida Strawberry Festival and its leaders have made on me and my family is immeasurable," said Shepherd. "I am overwhelmed by the confidence of the board of directors and look forward to serving our community in this capacity."

About the Florida Strawberry Festival

The Florida Strawberry Festival is an 11-day community event celebrating the strawberry harvest of Eastern Hillsborough County. Each year, over 500,000 visitors enjoy the festival's headline entertainment, youth livestock shows, exhibits of commerce and, of course, its strawberry shortcake. The 2020 Florida Strawberry Festival will take place Feb. 27 through March 8 in Plant City, Fla. For more information, visit www.flstrawberryfestival.com, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (#berryfest20).

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