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## Adam Putnam campaigns in Jonesville



**Adam Putnam shakes hands with a supporter soon after entering The Copper Monkey West in Jonesville on Thursday (June 22).**

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**By Jeff M. Hardison © June 22, 2017 at 8:47 p.m.**

**ALACHUA COUNTY** – Adam H. Putnam, one of the Republican Party candidates for Florida governor in the 2018 race, spoke Thursday morning (June 22) at a small restaurant in Jonesville.

Introduced by Rep. Charles Wesley "Chuck" Clemons Sr. (R-Jonesville, Dist. 21), Putnam mentioned that Alachua County is well-served by both Rep. Clemons and Sen. Keith Perry (R-Gainesville, Dist. 8).

**<https://youtu.be/mpTYVBoOeR4>**

**In this video, Adam Putnam is seen speaking about attracting young talent to Florida via universities. He spoke about other aspects to improve education in Florida, too. He wants Florida to be the launch pad for the American Dream by putting Florida First.**

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**Rep. Chuck Clemons introduces Adam Putnam.**



**Sen. Keith Perry finds a place to sit down.**

**Adam Putnam speaks about reasons for people to elect him as the next governor of Florida.**



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**Nancy Ruch (second from left in photo) and John Ruch (at right) of Old Town pose with Adam Putnam after the candidate gave his presentation.**

Commissioner of Agriculture Putnam is seen by some Republicans as the heir apparent to the governorship, however there are other many other people who have made their intention to run known – including Gwen Graham, a Democrat who is an attorney, a former member of the United States House of Representatives and the daughter of former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham who is also a former Florida governor.

Putnam's presentation Thursday morning was strong. His words easily captured the hearts and minds of those listeners who share his philosophy.

There were several times during his speech when the audience applauded him. At one point when an audience member shouted a vulgar expletive, Putnam simply mentioned that he would not phrase his sentiment that way; and the candidate's next words helped listeners know his intent in that regard.

Clemons said he is grateful to the owners of The Copper Monkey West in Jonesville – Rob and Ashley Zeller, and Cotton Fletcher and Jake Fletcher – for sponsoring the get-together that was titled “Newberry-Jonesville ‘Up & Adam’ Breakfast with Adam Putnam.”

Clemons said Putnam has served the people of Florida since he was 21 years old.

Putnam, a 42-year-old Bartow resident, has been Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture since 2011. Previously, he served in the United States House of Representatives for 10 years, representing the Central Florida-based 12th congressional district from 2001 to 2011. He started his political career in the state legislature before winning his seat in Congress.

On Sept. 11, 2001, President George Bush was reading a book to children at a

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Hillsborough County school, Rep. Clemons said, at the invitation of then-Congressman Putnam.

After that attack, Clemons said, Putnam went on Air Force One with President Bush to return to Washington, D.C.

Putnam took the floor after that introduction.

Candidate Putnam said the Gainesville area has a special place in his heart, because this is where he met his wife Melissa, when they were both on the campus of the University of Florida.

They have four children, all in public schools in Bartow.

Melissa Putnam was able to attend the event in Jonesville on Thursday morning and Adam Putnam introduced her as “the next First Lady of the State of Florida.”

Putnam mentioned that he is a fifth-generation Floridian, and he conceded that some older Floridians in the room that morning may have him beat in that regard, by having an even longer lineage of Florida ancestors in their families.

As a fifth-generation Floridian, Putnam said that when he makes a decision for the state, it is based on what he believes is the right choice for the long term. His choices are “... not just to slap a Band-Aid on a problem to get through this election, or this fiscal year, or this budget cycle.”

He mentions his heritage to let listeners so that they know he has deep roots in Florida. His fifth-generation Floridian status is not a statement that he is “a better Floridian” than someone who does not have the same ancestry.

“In fact,” Putnam continued, “Melissa is ‘an Air Force brat.’ She grew up all over the world. She moved every two years of her life. She saw the world, and she picked Bartow.”

His wife reminds him, Putnam said, that people who have made Florida their home by choice are those who help the natives remember to not take this state’s wonders for granted, as is the case sometimes when a person grows up in Florida.

He fell “deeply, madly in love with our springs” while he was a student at the University of Florida.

Going down the Ichetucknee River on a tube as a UF student several times during “Summer A” and “Summer B” sessions, and visiting the many other springs, and communities in the area as a student, helped Putnam realize how special North Florida is, he said.

People from all parts of the state are part of the whole.

“When we talk about building a stronger, better Florida,” Putnam said, “all of us are in this together.”

The method for improvement is by working together – the people who were fortunate enough to have been born here, and those who became Floridians by choice, by moving here, he said.

When Putnam thinks about how to make Florida into the state that people want it to be, he looks at methods that are going to improve it for generations to come – not just for a brief period.

Putnam said some people from other places save their money all year to take a vacation in Florida. Other people save their entire lives to retire in Florida. This desire to visit Florida, he said, results from what people encounter here.

His vision for the state is more than to just have it as a destination.

“I want Florida to be more than a prize for a life (that was) well-lived someplace else,”

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Putnam said. “I want Florida to be the launch pad for the American Dream.”

For Florida to become that place, Putnam said, the people of Florida must invest in education, and invest in infrastructure.

## **EDUCATION**

Investing in higher education is a given, he said. There is a need, though, to go beyond what exists today. The University of Florida is a great university, but Putnam wants all universities in the system to be excellent.

He wants a stronger focus on community colleges, and technical schools too.

Putnam wants to start by introducing middle school students to programs to bring back vocational and career education. He wants them to have more options.

Last week, Putnam spoke at the FFA convention. He said there were 5,000 of the sharpest students in Florida there. They were well-dressed and well-mannered.

He said this is one example of what can be accomplished in Florida’s public schools when students are exposed to all that they can earn in all of the crafts and trades.

He believes students need an option to learn a trade before going into debt from student loans for something they don’t really want and can’t use.

“You’re going to rebuild the middle class in the state college system,” Putnam said. “You’re going to create the kind of economic opportunity, the employable skills at that level when you graduate from Newberry (High) or (Bartow) High, or Pahokee, or Little Havana – or downtown St. Pete. This is not just rural economic development. This applies to everybody.”

Putnam said he believes that a student ought not to have to leave his or her hometown to obtain employment if he or she has gained the skills to become employed.

He said nurses and truck drivers are among the most needed workers he has seen in watching the unemployment scene for seven years.

After the speech on Thursday, Putnam was asked by HardisonInk.com about the massive cuts that Gov. Rick Scott imposed on the Florida 4-H programs. This question sprang from Putnam’s reference to FFA.

Putnam said he knows Gov. Scott had to make tough choices, however he was “disappointed” in the governor’s choice to cut 4-H, especially because of all of the good that 4-H does for young people.

Putnam is a past president of the Florida 4-H Foundation.

During this most recent legislative session, Gov. Scott vetoed \$1 million that had been allocated for the 4-H youth development program by the Florida Legislature.

This funding is a base of the program, a recurring funding item, which in the past has paid salaries as well as covering state level initiatives that help the counties’ 4-H programs.

As for vocational education, Putnam highlighted nursing in his speech first. He said two-thirds of Floridians do not have a college degree and the state should not leave them behind.

“Number one for seven straight years (in job vacancies) is nursing,” Putnam said. “The vast majority of those nursing slots are not being filled by FSU, or UF, or USF, or UCF grads. They are being filled by students who are balancing two other jobs.

“(They are) raising kids,” he continued, “going to school at night. (They are) trying to convert from a CNA to an RN or to (earn) a bachelor’s (degree) so that they can make \$20 an hour instead of \$15 an hour.

“And then get the (economic) foundation to be able to move if their husband or

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spouse gets transferred,” Putnam said. “And they still have an employable skill to get a job at a hospital, or in a clinic.”

Truck driving is another profession with jobs available, he said.

It is not just about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). It is about everything, he said.

As a small business owner, Putnam said he finds it difficult to locate a person who is trustworthy enough to be hired to handle an expensive piece of equipment.

Finding employees who can pass a drug test and show up for more than two days in a row has become difficult in Florida, he said.

“We are going to rebuild this economy,” he said. “We can make it stronger. We have come so far because of conservative values.”

In seven years, Putnam said, unemployment in Florida has been cut from almost 12 percent to less than 5 percent.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Putnam said there is a need to improve the major highways.

A commuter going to work does not know whether he or she will spend an hour and a half on one trip or 40 minutes on the same trip. People cannot plan their lives, he said, because of this problem.

Another part of the infrastructure in Florida that he sees as vital is water.

“Water is our golden goose,” Putnam said. “Tourism needs it. Agriculture needs it. Construction needs it. Manufacturing needs it. If we don’t take care of that, none of these other things matter because it’s the key to what makes Florida – Florida.”

Putnam said the digital infrastructure in Florida needs work. There are school districts in Florida where there are so few computers available, that it is slowing down the ability of students to perform academically.

“We can do better than that in the state of Florida,” Putnam said. “And we are going to put common sense back into the education system.”

The candidate for governor spoke about his child in fifth grade. The boy came home from school. Putnam asked his son about his day. The father heard that his son took the Florida Writes test, and on the test his son read a story about whether to keep the penny in circulation, and then he was to write an opinion essay about that.

When Putnam was discussing this with a principal at a school, he was told that his son had violated the law, because children are not supposed to tell their parents about the content in the Florida Writes tests.

“Bullshit!” a man shouted from the audience.

“Well,” Putnam said, “I did not tell her that. But how ridiculous is it that there is a law that says a child can’t tell their parent what they are being asked to write an essay about?”

Putnam added “That’s crazy talk and we’re going to get rid of that when I am governor.”

## **WHY VOTE FOR HIM**

Putnam said Floridians want a leader who knows the state, knows the problems and how to solve them.

The people want a leader, he said, who knows how to bring people together to get something done.

“I am an unabashedly conservative leader for our state,” Putnam said. “I am proud of it, but I am not angry about it. My buddy Mike Pence, we were elected to Congress

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together, I said 'I am a conservative, but I'm not mad about it.

"That's exactly right," Putnam said. "We don't have to have a scowl. We've got a bright future in Florida. But we've got to unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and students, families, businesses on Main Street, family farmers. Get government out of the way, and let Florida find its potential."

He stressed again that he wants Florida to be more than just the prize for a life well-lived someplace else. The state should be a launch pad for the American Dream, he said.

He wrapped up his presentation by talking about the very setting where the people were listening to him.

Just as the Founding Fathers plotted a revolution in taverns and coffee shops in the 1700s, Putnam brings his message to a relatively small group of people at The Copper Monkey West in Jonesville.

He spoke about the first leaders in America.

"We want to get the yoke of big government off our backs," Putnam said. "We want to find our own potential here on this great new continent. And they changed the world forever."

Putnam said his asking the people for them to choose him as the leader of Florida begins in a coffee shop, in a hayfield, in a barn.

He intends to go to all of the places to represent the diversity of the state, "... asking you to support my vision for a brighter, better Florida," Putnam said. "This is what it's all about. This is what our politics can be. And this is what our politics will be, when I am your governor."

After his presentation, Putnam posed for photos and spoke with people individually.

One list of all of the current candidates in the 2018 race for Florida governor shows the following contenders listed alphabetically with Republicans first, and then Democrats, and then other political parties: David Adams (R) Businessman; Don Baldauf (R) Alarm Contractor; Tim Devine (R); Usha Jain (R) Physician; Bruce Nathan (R) Physical Therapist, Army Veteran; Adam Putnam (R) State Agriculture Commissioner, Agribusinessman, Ex-Congressman, Ex-State Representative; Angel Rivera (R) Businessman; Bob White (R) Businessman; Nathan Wilson (R) Consultant, Ex-Medical Technologist, Ex-Realtor, USAF Veteran; Daniel Zutler (R) Businessman, Army Veteran; Lucretia Fordyce (D); Andrew Gillum (D) Tallahassee Mayor, Ex-Tallahassee City Commissioner; Gwen Graham (D) Attorney, Ex-Congresswoman, Daughter of Ex-U.S. Sen. and Ex Fla. Gov. Bob Graham; Chris King (D) Real Estate Executive, Attorney; Brooke Locke Marx (D) Electronic Data Interchange Manager; Louis McClanahan III (D); Randy Wiseman (Libertarian) Ex-Lake County School Board Member, Gymnastics School Owner; Joe Allen (NPA) Retired Teacher; Kyle "K.C." Gibson (NPA) Pastor; and Tony Knox (NPA) Shoeshine Stand Owner.