

## CITRUS CENTER 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON

Weslaco

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Good afternoon and thanks for joining us to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Citrus Center. The Citrus Center and its researchers are a very important part of Texas A&M-Kingsville's overall research program and we are excited to have this opportunity to reflect on some of the achievements that have occurred here.

The Citrus Center is perhaps best known for producing two dark red grapefruit varieties – the Star Ruby and the Rio Red. Every year, my office gives out some of this fruit as special gifts to our loyal supporters and friends – and we know they look forward to getting it. Our faculty and staff also have become accustomed to gifts of grapefruit – *and Allen Rasmussen becomes one of the most popular guys on campus when he hand delivers boxes across campus!*

New varieties of fruit may be our most “public” claim to fame at the Citrus Center, but our researchers have really moved with the times. Their work involves:

- the development of new pesticides registered for use in Texas;

- establishing biological control of pests such as the citrus blackfly;
- helping citrus growers increase productivity per acre;
- using molecular techniques to identify pests and diseases;
- researching citrus greening disease to avoid crop losses;
- and looking at the genetic basis of cold tolerance in hopes of developing varieties that can withstand future freezes

The Citrus Center has enjoyed many successes over its sixty year history and has become an important part of the Valley's citrus industry. We're proud of our past achievements and happy to celebrate this anniversary – but we're also anxious to look ahead.

We had planned to have a ceremonial groundbreaking today as part of this celebration – and we're still going to do that sometime next spring. The Citrus Center is an important part of Texas A&M-Kingsville and I want to assure you that a new building is coming soon.

We've just postponed the groundbreaking in response to the changing economy. The original building design came in over budget, but the downturn in the economy means that construction material costs are dropping. We are

in the process of redesigning the new building – and we think we can get more for less in the process. So, we'll return sometime early next spring and have another celebration where we can share building renderings and floor plans with you.

Great things have happened here in the past, and more great things are in store for the Citrus Center in the future. Thanks again for joining us and we look forward to seeing you again next spring.