

SEPC Announces Allstar Speaker Cup Lineup at Southern Innovations

Millen, GA (May 9, 2023) – The Southeast Produce Council has waved the green flag to announce a powerful lineup of speaker frontrunners for upcoming Southern Innovations, September 14-16, 2023. Held at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, this year's conference will continue to build upon SEPC's "What's New?" platform, as SEPC members race to discover the latest innovations within the fresh produce industry. Southern Innovations continues to evolve as a growing interest from produce fans in each segment of our industry drives SEPC to deliver creative solutions and inventive perspectives to boost businesses to the finish line. The following guest speakers are sure to rev engines as they bring some dynamic horsepower to SEPC's continued endeavors:

Keynote Speaker – Darrell Waltrip, 3-time NASCAR Premier Series Champion, NASCAR Hall of Fame Member

Darrell Waltrip is a three-time NASCAR premier series champion. Waltrip won all three alongside legendary driver and owner Junior Johnson. He is tied with Bobby Allison for fourth all-time in series victories with 84.

Waltrip's 59 poles rank fifth all-time in NASCAR premier series history. He competed from 1972-2000, another highlight being his 1989 Daytona 500 victory in a Rick Hendrick-owned Chevrolet.

Waltrip's first series title came in 1981, when he finished with 12 wins and 21 top fives in 31 races. He won the title by 53 points over Bobby Allison. In his second championship season, 1982, he finished with 12 wins and 20 top 10's in 30 races, sweeping both races at four tracks (Nashville, Bristol, Talladega, and North Wilkesboro). In his third championship season, 1985, Waltrip finished with three wins and 21 top 10's in 28 races.

Waltrip and his wife, Stevie, reside in Franklin, TN. He was nicknamed "Jaws" during his career because of an outspoken demeanor. He's served as a long-time commentator on FOX's NASCAR broadcast until his retirement from the booth in 2019. Waltrip was named one of NASCAR's "50 Greatest Drivers" in 1998 and was inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame in 2012.

Southern Roots Reception Speaker and Keynote Moderator – Shannon Spake, Veteran Sports Broadcaster, FOX Sports

Veteran sports broadcaster Shannon Spake joined FOX Sports in July 2016 as a three-sport star, covering NASCAR, college football, college basketball and NFL. In 2019, she was named host of FOX NASCAR's race coverage, handling all anchor duties for NASCAR Cup Series and NASCAR Xfinity Series races and prerace shows live from FOX Sports' state-of-the-art virtual studio set in Charlotte, N.C.

Spake also co-hosts NASCAR RACE HUB, FS1's daily NASCAR news and highlights program, alongside Adam Alexander, in a role she has held since February 2017. For the 2022 NFL season, she serves as a FOX NFL reporter for her sixth season, teaming with play-by-play announcer Kenny Albert and analyst Jonathan Vilma after working with Adam Amin and Mark Schlereth in 2021. She has been a fulltime NFL reporter since the 2018 season.

Spake's move to FOX after several years with ESPN represented a "homecoming" for the reporter, who worked for FOX Sports' SPEED early in her TV career. Beginning in 2005, she reported for SPEED's "NASCAR Nation," co-hosted "Backseat Drivers" and reported from the NASCAR garage during the network's coverage of the 2006 Daytona SpeedWeeks.

In 2017, she had a cameo role in Disney Pixar's hit movie, "Cars 3," starring as Shannon Spokes.

Spake was raised in South Florida and graduated from Florida Atlantic University (FAU) with a bachelor's degree in communications. Despite being diagnosed with scoliosis as a child and undergoing back surgery at 13 that involved the insertion of rods, Spake swam competitively through high school and college. She earned a swimming scholarship to Broward College before transferring to FAU to complete her degree.

She currently resides in Charlotte and is the mother to identical twin boys. Spake is active in the endurance racing community. In addition to being a four-time marathon finisher, she has competed in seven 70.3 Ironman events and, in 2018, became part of the IRONMAN Foundation Ambassador program and has raised close to \$60,000 for the Foundation.

"I'm not sure there is a better choice of speakers to correspond with our theme for this year's conference – Race to Discover What's New? at Southern Innovations. What a perfect fit! Darrell and Shannon have both utilized thoughtful innovation within their careers to become two of the most highly respected individuals in the sport. Be sure to join us for the race to find new technologies and innovations to achieve a more sustainable world and prepare to be inspired to drive innovation both personally and professionally!"

~ Tim Graas, SEPC Chairman of the Board

Make a pit stop at SEPC's [Southern Innovations](#) webpage to discover the conference agenda, hotel information, exhibitors, and to register...we'll race you there!

About SEPC

The Southeast Produce Council (SEPC) sprouted in 1999 when a shared vision for cultivating a nonprofit Southeastern-based produce organization was planted.

From the first formal meeting of the SEPC where 100 agriculture, retail, and foodservice professionals gathered, we've flourished into a vibrant and innovative organization of over 4,000 industry professionals who reap the benefits of harvesting quality experiences guaranteed to increase the value of their membership.

As with farmland, a well-cultivated industry can last for generations, and today, we continue to grow at a steady pace thanks to a broad range of backgrounds and expertise from people like you, creating a more bountiful tomorrow.

Learn the benefits of SEPC membership at seproducecouncil.com