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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUTNAM TO SERVE AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF ACHIEVEMENT ACADEMY'S 'TOP CHEF' EVENT

Lakeland, Fla. – (Feb. 3, 2017) – Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam will serve as Honorary Chairman for the Achievement Academy's third annual "Top Chef of Polk County" event, which will be held on Monday, April 10, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Lakeland Center.

"Top Chef of Polk County" is a multi-course fine-dining experience that places the spotlight on the area's leading chefs while raising much-needed funds for the Achievement Academy.

"I am honored to be asked and happy to serve as Honorary Chair of an event that will support the Achievement Academy's continuing efforts to provide programs and services for children with special needs," Commissioner Putnam said. "I am very familiar with the Achievement Academy and so is my family. We know what a difference they have made in the lives of the children and families they have served throughout Polk County for more than 60 years."

The Achievement Academy serves Polk County children from birth through age five with various developmental delays and disabilities. The Achievement Academy offers two programs, each provided at no cost to the child or family. The first program is a **Charter School** that offers specialized instruction by certified teachers; small class sizes; individual speech, occupational and physical therapies; and assistive technologies that enable each student to reach his or her full potential at one of the Achievement Academy's three campus locations (Lakeland, Winter Haven and Bartow). The second is a "**Birth to Three Program**" that provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers who are "at-risk" for developmental delays and/or have been identified with a specific delay. Professional Early Interventionists serve these children and their families throughout Polk County.

Chefs who have already committed to participating in this year's event include Chef Tina Calhoun (Fresco's); Chef Jeff Conley (Aprons); Chef Wayne Haggard (Spectra Food Services); Chef Jose Vincente (Brasa Latina); Chef Terrie Lobb (Terrie Lobb Catering); Chef James Lazaros (La Flor de España); and Chef Ronald Mayer (Florida Presbyterian Homes), who was named "Top Chef of Polk County" last year. In addition to Mayer, nine other chefs participated in 2016 and organizers expect at least that many again this year. For information on the event – including sponsorship opportunities – visit Achievement Academy's website: www.achievementacademy.com.

- more -

TOP CHEF OF POLK COUNTY

ADD ONE

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Adam Putnam was elected to serve a second term as Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture on November 4, 2014, and was sworn into office on January 6, 2015. In this capacity, he oversees the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and serves as a member of Florida's Cabinet. Previously, Commissioner Putnam served five terms as Congressman for Florida's 12th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. During that time, he was elected Republican Policy Chairman during the 109th Congress and Chairman of the House Republican Conference for the 110th Congress, the highest elected leadership position any Floridian of either party has held in Washington. During his time in Congress, Commissioner Putnam was also a member of the House Committees on Government Reform, Agriculture, Rules and Financial Services. Before he was elected to Congress, Commissioner Putnam served in the Florida House of Representatives from 1996 to 2000. A graduate of the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in food and resource economics, Commissioner Putnam is a fifth-generation Floridian who grew up in the citrus and cattle industry. He and his wife, Melissa, have four children.