

Northeast News

A District Newsletter

From the District Director

Welcome to first edition of “The Northeast News” – the news letter of the University of Florida Institute of Foods and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Northeast Extension District. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep UF/IFAS county faculty and county officials in the NE district informed about what happens in their district. The approximately 70 faculty members of the NE Extension District offer the planned non-degree educational programs of UF/IFAS in North Florida in the programmatic areas of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H, and Sea Grant. These cutting-edge and dedicated faculty members are located in 16 counties in North Florida (Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Nassau, Suwannee, Taylor and Union). This group includes traditional rural counties, a large urban center, and transition areas on its fringes.

Service is “cooperative” in nature: its educational efforts are jointly supported at the Federal, State and County levels to fulfill the needs of local citizens and communities. Because each county has its own organization, culture and needs, the forms, size, delivery methods and facets of Extension programs are very different from one county to the next. Hence, the diversity found in the NE District is greater than that found in academic departments that share a common discipline or in Research and Education Centers that serve a specific region of Florida. Communication within the district is essential! This issue of the Northeast News covers topics such as “Teaching tips”, “How does the University of Florida work?”, “Featured county extension office”, “Success stories”, and “District life”. Enjoy!



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The Florida Cooperative Extension

Foundation for The Gator Nation
An Equal Opportunity Institution



ALACHUA, BAKER, BRADFORD, CLAY, COLUMBIA, DIXIE, DUVAL, GILCHRIST, HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE, LEVY, MADISON, NASSAU, SUWANNEE, TAYLOR, AND UNION COUNTIES

District life

District-wide faculty meeting committee

The North East Extension District has five committees whose members work to make things run smoothly in our district. A review of the committees and their members is listed below. District members are encouraged to contact committee heads to get information or make suggestions for their activities. Communication is crucial to all of us working more efficiently.

Katherine Allen, Suwannee County FCS Agent, CED and District-wide Faculty Meeting Committee member reports on our last faculty meeting:

Dr. Simonne's first NE District Faculty meeting was a huge success. Held at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park in Live Oak on May 5, 2009 with a pirate theme, the goal was to initiate group rapport while providing news and information from Administration. Even the Acting Associate Dean Dr. Tom Obreza got into the spirit with a pre-taped address that included a live "parrot" on his shoulder! A jeopardy-type game showing photos of the various Specialists allowed county faculty to "see" some of the Specialists throughout Florida. Albert Fuller led activities to show the importance of working together as a team, while Jevetta Stamford provided a program to allow ideas for improvement for the District to be shared.

Cheri Brodeur gave an overview of how to write SMART objectives and Keith Guion discussed the services available through Administrative Services in Extension Administration. Lunch was provided by a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). As a result of the meeting, the formation of various committees have occurred. From the P & T committee to the NE District newsletter committee! All in all, it was a great day, especially since no one was forced to walk the plank!

2010 North East Extension District Committee Appointments, Chairs and Committee Charges

1- Permanent status and promotion committee:

Mission: review district faculty packets, and assist candidates in content and format.

Members: Cindy Sanders (Ag, chair), Clay Olson (Ag), David Nistler (Ag), Lori Wiggins (4-H), Chris Decubellis (4-H), Jackie Schrader (FCS/4-H), Diann Douglas (FCS), Meg McAlpine (FCS), Anita McKinney (FCS)

2 - Mid-career (third year) review committee:



AAARRGH How do balance all these nails on one bugger?!

Mission: review 3rd-year district faculty packets, and assist candidates in content and format

Members: Albert Fuller (4-H, co-chair), Jana Hart (FCS, co-chair), Carolyn Saft (Ag), Cathy Rogers (FCS), Steve Gaul (Ag), Debbie Nistler (4-H), Brad Burbaugh (Ag)

3 - NE District newsletter committee:

Mission: develop, design, publish, and distribute quarterly a district-wide Newsletter. Target audience: district members, county government, local leaders

Members: Jim Devalerio (Ag, co-chair), Brian Estevez (4-H, co-chair), Elena Toro (Ag), Cathy Rogers (FCS), Andy Toelle (4-H), Holly Houghton (4-H/FCS), Larry Figart (Ag), Alicia Lamborn (Hort)

4 - Mentoring:

Mission: Ensure that every agent of ranks I, II or III has an official and effective mentor.

Members: Cindy Higgins (Chair, 4-H), Tim Wilson (Ag), Katherine Allen (FCS)

5 - 2010 District-wide Faculty Meeting Committee:

Mission: Organize the event

Members: Greg Hicks (Ag, Chair), Katherine Allen (FCS), Albert Fuller (4-H), Leslie Sturmer (Aquaculture), Aparna Gazula (Ag), Heather Futch (4-H).



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District success stories

North Florida farmers build food safety plans

A recent University of Florida pilot program brought vegetable farmers in North Florida one step closer to developing a complete food safety manual for their farm. With increasing pressure from buyers, more small and mid-sized farmers are becoming aware of the need to develop their farm food safety plans so many have been participating in University of Florida Extension training programs for food safety. After these trainings in 2009, participating farmers indicated they were ready to begin developing their own food safety plan, but needed help from Extension to move forward. This group represented farms ranging from one acre to 300 acres of fresh produce, but most with less than 50 acres. As these were smaller scale operations, they needed to develop the plans themselves as they could not afford the few thousand dollars required to hire someone to conduct training and develop the plan and manuals required.

The opportunity to help these farmers came through a newly developed educational program of the University of Florida, The Small Farms Academy <http://nfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/academy/index.shtml> who

partnered with Dr. Keith Schneider, UF Extension Food Safety Specialist. The funding support for this pilot training program came from USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant funding in Florida administered through the FDACS. Local leadership in planning the training strategy was developed by regional Extension agents, Linda Landrum and Bob Hochmuth who also put together a team of county extension agents which included Elena Toro, Katherine Allen and Anthony Barbaglia and other volunteers to assist in implementing the trainings. The team decided to develop the pilot trainings around an on-line “build your own” food safety manual provided free to farmers at the Primus Labs web site, www.primuslabs.com. Landrum and Hochmuth co-taught the two day trainings with every farmer or farm family members at a computer logged into the site. If a farmer requested to attend the training, but was not comfortable with the computer, a University of Florida or Florida A&M Extension agent, or staff members, from the NFREC-SV, Florida Farm Bureau, or Florida Department of Agriculture were provided as a “training buddy” for the two days. Because there was greater interest in developing manuals for the farm and ranch (fields) two sessions for the farm and ranch manual were conducted with a single session for the packing facility category.



Workshop attendees and teachers take a break from food safety planning for a quick photo.

The farmers were able to maneuver through the site and felt confident they could refine their plans once back at their farms. Farmers left with a completed food safety document (plan). The training also included go-

ing through a “self-audit” which helps provide the farmer insight on the strengths and weaknesses of their plan. Participants also received a food safety “Tool Kit” to use back on the farm. After the training sessions, 25 farms from 13 counties had developed their own Farm and Ranch plan and 13 had developed plans for the packing facility. Discussions are underway to develop educational programs to continue support for these farms including farmers hosting other farmers to share how they have implemented their plans. Future plans include training opportunities for more farmers, including greenhouse operations and development of a “train the trainer” program to extend this information to other Extension agents throughout Florida.

Robert Hochmuth and Linda Landrum

Multi County Extension Agents

North Florida Research and Education Center – Suwannee Valley



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How does the University of Florida work?

Have you heard of "Asset Management Services"?

Although I really don't want to share this, there is a wonderful little secret that UF holds and can be especially useful given these tough economic times. Have you heard of the Asset Management Service (or surplus warehouse)? The surplus warehouse is located at UF off of Radio Road. The web site is

<http://www.surplus.ufl.edu/>. At the surplus warehouse you can find office chairs, desks, file cabinets, computers, digital cameras and today I even found very nice stair stepper machines! (We are now thinking “office gym” some day in the future). This is only a partial list of the items you may be able to find on a daily basis at the warehouse.

The warehouse holds equipment that other departments at UF have declared surplus and are available to any other UF department on a first come first serve basis. The web site has pictures of most of the items for transfer. Items are transferred from the Asset Management Service to your county extension office (your department). If you see anything you may want on their web site, the CED needs to email them and reserve it. You will need to contact Nikki for our department number, and bring your Gator Card with you so that you can prove who you are when you pick it up. Today I picked up 16 cloth stackable chairs for our meeting room.

Do the electronics work? “The PC Shop” checks out all lap tops, desk tops, LCD projectors, printers, and digital cameras to make sure that they work and to get a “spec's list” from the items. If you are looking for a certain type of lap top or desk top, the PC Shop employees will be able to help you find something that will best fit your needs, if they have it. Same with LCD projectors, copy machines and digital cameras.

How much does it cost? Everything is free and is simply transferred to your department. The Asset Management Team keeps track of your inventory and you will have to make sure that you take inventory each year when it's time to do so.

I find this a win win situation for our office. It's been awhile since I have utilized the surplus warehouse but I intend to look at the web site on a monthly basis to see if they have anything that we may need or want for the office. Because things are free, I don't have to use county funds to purchase items if I can find them in good condition at the surplus warehouse. In the near future, we will need several more lockable filing cabinets that I am almost certain I can find in good condition at the warehouse. It may take a month of looking but I can afford 15 – 20 minutes a month. Our county will have a \$2.5 million dollar shortfall in the coming year and have

asked each department to conserve resources. This may certainly be a viable option for us, transferring versus purchasing.

So now the secret is out. Agents, get with your CED if you see anything that looks appealing, and CED's can contact via email the surplus warehouse. Remember that you have to pick up your own equipment and supplies but we are a very "close to UF" district so the surplus warehouse may serve as a good starting point when you need something for the office that really doesn't have to be new and in pristine condition. Happy hunting.



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Quiz question

Which Florida fruit was called the "Love Apple" during the 18th century in France?

- The Tangelo
- The Mango
- The Tomato
- The Papaya

Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Fresh-From-Florida campaign.

The answer will be printed in the next issue.



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Featured County Extension office

Greetings from Bradford County!

Welcome from the Bradford County Extension Office! Bradford County is approximately 300 square miles where more than 29,000 residents call home. We are situated 26 miles Northeast of Gainesville and 32 miles Southwest of Orange Park. From 2002 to 2007, the number of farms increased 27% from 378 to 479. Seventy-two percent (346) of these farms have between 1 to 49 acres. Since most of our farms are relatively small (< 50 acres) and many of our clientele are new to farming, we field a large variety of questions. Fortunately we are staffed with faculty who are equipped with the knowledge (both education as well as real-world experience) to quickly and accurately respond to our clientele.



Upper Left: Tim Wilson, Director, Livestock and Forages Agent, Upper Right: Jim DeValerio, Agriculture & CRD Agent, Lower Left: Debbie Nistler, 4H Agent, Lower Right: Melanie Thomas, Bradford and Baker Counties, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Success Stories

Pond Management

A pond owner contacted me regarding extensive weed growth around and throughout his pond. He attended my Pond Management workshop and received, hands-on training and information on topics such as measuring pond dimensions and acre feet of water as well as aquat-

ic weed identification and control practices using herbicides and/or biological control measures. Materials presented at this workshop helped this client take control of his pond management and provide a pleasant environment not only for the fish, but also for his family. After the workshop, he was able to identify and control his aquatic weeds without the use of herbicides by using biological control measures.



Pond condition before management



Pond appearance after Extension outreach

Agri-Tourism

Immediately after attending a Small Farms Agri-tourism educational event, a local entrepreneur decided to scale up efforts on his plan to put in Bradford County's first corn maze. Realizing it was a good idea to practice before making it a real business venture, the sizable three acre maze was installed with the help of Mace Bauer UF/IFAS BMP Implementation Team and me. With 500

hundred customers, the maze was a successful venture for one local entrepreneur. Although expenses (\$1,700) exceeded income (\$960), the owner felt he gained valuable business experience and has stated that he plans to try an improved business scheme next year. This agri-tourism attraction was Bradford County's first corn maze.

Tim Wilson

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Teaching tips

Bring on the bunnies! Seven ways to interest your learners

Each spring, I teach an undergraduate course on non-formal teaching methods. One of the topics we cover is teaching with animals. Without a doubt, this is one of the most popular topics of the semester. Students are told in advance that there will be live animals in the classroom, but I always keep the type of animal a secret until the big day. There's always a lot of anticipation – will the animal be scary or cuddly? What if it's a spider or a snake? When it's time for the animal to be revealed, the students lean forward in anticipation, the cover over the cage is removed and voila! There sits a cute little bunny rabbit.

The way that the students talk about "bunny day" for weeks afterwards tells me that the lesson was a hit. What do you do to create interest for your learners? When was the last time you used a bunny – figuratively - to get your learners on the edge of their seats? It's critical for us as extension educators to generate interest in our learners in order to get our audiences engaged and on their way to mastering the material being taught. One way we can focus on generating interest is to cater to natural impulses when we teach.

Natural impulses are instinctual inclinations to do or be interested in something (Lancelot, 1929). Lancelot outlined seven natural impulses which are identified with examples as follows:

Activity allows learners to take part in something hands-

on.

- Practice pruning a crepe myrtle
- Have learners develop a budget

Nature appeals to learners' interest in the outdoor world.

- Present slideshows or videos showing the manatees
- Take a field trip to the coast to teach about the importance of conservation

Curiosity means creating a sense of anticipation in your learners.

- Integrate surprises into your lessons, like the bunny
- Let learners' taste exotic foods in a nutrition course

Wonder can be used to inspire awe in your learners.

- Take a field trip to a state-of-the-art farm
- Begin a 4-H project meeting by showing members pictures of the previous year's state champion projects

Creativeness allows learners to express themselves using multiple mediums.

- Have learners in a parenting class play roles as parent and child in a skit
- Encourage learners to draw their dream communities to facilitate discussion on community planning

Gregariousness is the natural inclination people have to be social.

- Plan time for learners to complete an activity in partnership or teams
- Integrate group discussion into a class on composting

Competition can inspire people to compete to win.

- Have learners compete to see who can create the greatest number of healthy meals on a set budget
- Host a most beautiful native landscape contest in your county

You can use natural impulses to your advantage when you teach. Integrating natural impulses into your teach-

ing activities will generate interest and facilitate learning (Lancelot, 1929). Spruce up old lessons by incorporating new ways to appeal to natural impulses and plan on including at least one of these seven natural impulses in new lessons. Taking the time to do so might mean *your* lesson is the one that people are talking about for weeks. Bring on the bunnies!

More information on developing interest in learners is available in the EDIS publication: *Creating Interest in Learners*, Publication #AEC 393 (Benge & Harder, 2008).

Reference: Lancelot, W. H. (1929). *Handbook of teaching skills*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



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Information technologies

Is there an avatar in your future?

You may have already seen the movie *Avatar*, and maybe you have visited Second Life (<http://www.secondlife.com>). Perhaps you have played golf or gone fishing in a video game. The technology behind these 3-D movies and games is rapidly moving into education. Rather than sit in a lecture, or read a textbook (either on-line electronic textbooks or the old fashion paper text books), students can now have learning experiences inside virtual 3-D worlds. They can interact with other students through social networks, conduct laboratory experiments that might be costly, dangerous, or simply not available otherwise, and learn in ways that are not possible with traditional methods.

A project to develop a virtual world environment (VWE) for forestry students is just underway at the University of Florida. VWEs combine 3-D graphics, virtual reality, game technology, interactivity, and social networks. VWEs are accessible on-line through standard Web browser (you can try this yourself by going to [Second Life](http://www.secondlife.com)). A forest laboratory is being built (see Figure)

where students can go to conduct experiments and learn about various forest ecosystems. Each student appears in the forest as an avatar, and the student moves through the forest by moving his avatar. Students can work together in a team. Students can see each other's avatar and can communicate by voice or through text chats.

VWEs have many potential uses in education. Growers could attend a "virtual field day" by going into an on-line VWE to learn about the latest technologies, and even conduct simulations to see how crops perform under various management practices. A virtual greenhouse could be used to study heating and cooling and other environmental controls. Students could learn about soil types and explore soil horizons and composition by literally moving within the soil layers. Students can study machinery using a 3-D model of a machine, make adjustments in the machine to see what happens, or learn how to troubleshoot problems.



Virtual forest laboratory with student avatar in foreground.

The possibilities are endless, the technology to do this is becoming very affordable, and the University of Florida is taking a lead in adopting this technology and making it available to students. If you would like to learn more about the forestry project, or want to know more about VWE technology, feel free to contact the author. There is likely to be an avatar in your future.

Howard Beck is a Professor in the University of Florida Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department. He is a computer scientist and has been working on applications of information technology to agricultural ex-

tension, teaching and research for over 30 years, having special interest in data and knowledge management, computer graphics, collaborative work environments, and computer-based training.



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New hires, retirements and recognition

New Hires

Emma Willcox is joining us as a Regional Specialized Agent II, Wildlife/Natural Resources, she is based in Levy County.

Fred Vose, Agent II, Marine-Natural Resources in Taylor County.

Jenny Jump, Agent I, Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H in Columbia County

Becky Bennett, Agent I, 4-H/Youth Development in Madison County

Basil Bactawar is the new CED for Union County and will start in July 2010.

Congrats

Aparna Gazula, Alachua County Extension, gave birth on April 20, 2010, to a bouncing baby boy, Nikhil Ting-Long Chi.

Jim DeValerio received his Master's Degree in Agricultural Education and Communications

Please send information for this section to Jim DeValerio or Nikki Wilson.

Your newsletter editorial team

Jim DeValerio (co-chair), Brian Estevez (co-chair), Larry Figart, Alicia Lamborn, Holly Houghton, Andrew Toelle and Elena Toro