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NEED 2023 2nd Quarter Newsletter

Success Stories



By: Tonya Ashworth, Residential Horticulture Agent, Duval County

Duval Master Gardeners Partner to Help Monarchs

As you have probably already read, the monarch butterfly has been placed on the endangered species list due in part to loss of habitat.

A core group of Duval County Master Gardener Volunteers, concerned for the plight of the monarch, decided to take action. Native milkweed plants were grown by volunteers and donations of native milkweed plugs were secured from the Monarch Watch Habitat Restoration Project, as a part of their community education grant program. These plants were installed in pollinator habitat beds at a local library and a museum. The volunteers also grew native milkweed from seed to sell at the spring Master Gardener plant sale because native milkweed can be very difficult to find at local garden centers. One of the volunteers wrote a newspaper article highlighting the monarch's situation and challenged local mayors to sign the Mayor's Monarch Pledge started by the National Wildlife Federation.

As a result of the newspaper article, Mayor Ellen Glasser of the city of Atlantic Beach, took the challenge and signed the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. The city built a pollinator habitat raised bed area on the grounds of city hall. Extension Master Gardener volunteers supplied the native milkweed for the bed and the labor to install and maintain. Educational signage with QR codes lets the public know what they can do to help. A Master Gardener Volunteer involved with the project also gave a series of presentations on monarch butterflies at the Atlantic Beach library to support the project.



Tonya Ashworth (left) along with 3 MGVs at the newly installed
“Atlantic Beach Mayor’s Monarch Pledge Garden”



Duval County Master Gardener Volunteers and the new Mayor’s Monarch Pledge Garden that they installed. Photo Credit: Mike Franqui



The Chronic Disease Program

TJ, an elderly woman residing in an underserved community, faced the challenge of high blood pressure with limited awareness about the disease. Due to not owning a blood pressure machine and the scarcity of doctors in the county, she struggled to receive regular check-ups to monitor her condition. Nevertheless, TJ discovered a ray of hope through her affiliation with a faith community that collaborated with UF/IFAS Extension to establish a chronic disease program. This initiative organized classes at her church, where TJ learned valuable lifestyle strategies for effectively managing her high blood pressure. The program emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in physical activity, managing weight, avoiding stress, and obtaining sufficient sleep. Furthermore, TJ benefited from complimentary health screenings and was even provided with a free blood pressure cuff, enabling her to monitor her condition at home.

The chronic disease program, which takes place multiple times a year, has proven instrumental in helping county residents by offering vital education and resources to prevent and manage chronic conditions. The program's success owes much to its partnerships with local faith communities, libraries, the Department of Health, and the dedication of numerous volunteers. Surveys conducted among participants revealed significant improvements in their understanding of chronic conditions and their ability to adopt preventive measures and self-management strategies.

Considering the widespread prevalence of high blood pressure and the shortage of physicians in the county, community education programs such as this one is crucial to good health. These programs play a significant role in promoting healthier individuals, families, and communities by equipping residents with vital knowledge, tools, and resources to effectively manage their health conditions.

Feature Stories



By: Samantha Murray, Senior Public Relations Specialist, UF/IFAS Communications

What’s PR Got to Do with It?

A message from your media relations specialist

Dear colleagues,

This will be my last column in this newsletter, as I will be leaving UF at the end of July 2023. While I’m looking forward to my next adventure, it’s bittersweet, as I’ve enjoyed working with you all over the last several years.

But never fear, I am leaving you in good hands!

The IFAS media relations coverage is shifting to better match media markets throughout Florida. The new media relations map is below.

UF/IFAS Regional Media Relations Specialists



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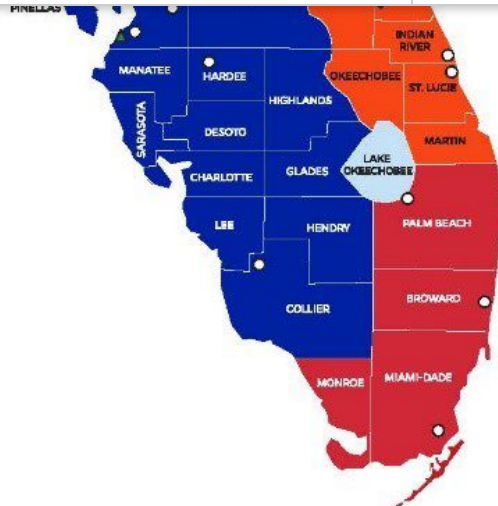
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The UF/IFAS media relations team provides science-based news and content from university-based faculty, research centers and Extension across the state. For general media inquiries, please contact newsIFAS@ifas.ufl.edu



May 2023

For most of you, Kirsten Romaguera (kromaguera@ufl.edu) will be your new media relations contact. Brad Buck (bradbuck@ufl.edu) will be covering Citrus County. Between now and July 20, I will be shifting to support the new central region (orange above), which will then be covered by my replacement. I will continue to support faculty on main campus.

After July 20, please be sure to direct all media relations project requests through our Workfront project management request portal, and if you need immediate media relations assistance (for example, if a reporter has called you), please email newsifas@ifas.ufl.edu.

I know this is a lot of change, so please, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out.



Edited from: Solomon, C. *The Way We Work*. https://www.ted.com/talks/cindy_solomon_5_tips_for_dealing_with_meeting_overload

The Way We Work

“Have you ever reached the end of what feels like a grueling workday, only to realize that you didn’t actually accomplish anything? That it was.... just meeting after meeting after meeting after meeting.....” So begins Cindy Solomon’s TED talk.

This introduction caught my attention. The adoption of virtual meetings from pandemic days has continued to complicate our work calendars. We all experience days with too many virtual (and occasionally in-person) meetings.

Take control of your workday by dealing with meeting overload! Cindy has 5 tips for controlling “calendar creep.” These tips are a reminder to help reclaim calendar space.

1) Ask yourself, “Do you REALLY need a meeting?”

- For many meetings, the information could be disseminated, or the questions asked (and answered) through a text, email, or quick phone call. Before scheduling a meeting, write the invitation first. It should begin with an action verb. “Decide, finalize, create next steps.....” Next, write the purpose statement. “In this meeting we will finalize.....” The purpose statement will provide a focus for the meeting and keep it short and on point.
- If you are scheduling a meeting to “review” a topic, don’t. Send out an email with written details for review and then schedule a brief 15-minute meeting to answer questions - related to the material. This will help ensure that folks read your email before the short meeting.

2) Invite the least number of people possible.

- Invite the people necessary to accomplish the meeting objective. Don’t waste other people’s time by extending invitations to large groups or to everyone that might be somehow connected to the topic. Cindy mentions that the optimal size of a decision-making meeting is 5 to 8 people. Too many people can result in failure to achieve the stated objective.

3) make your meetings shorter.

- Schedule 30- and 45-minute meetings instead of hour-long sessions. With a specified purpose and with action verbs in mind, move the meeting forward, stay on-topic, and STOP on-time. Give yourself and your co-workers time to digest, take notes, and process.

4) Say “NO.”

- Say “no” to meetings that do not move you closer to your goals or when your opinion is not vital to the purpose of the meeting. We are in the habit of responding “yes” to meetings when we really want to say “no.” Be honest with the meeting organizer. If you have other priorities that need your focus, ask if your attendance is necessary or delegate the meeting to a subject matter expert that may have better input.

5) Be ruthless with your time.

- Schedule blocks of uninterrupted time to focus on your own work. Block off time for future projects, writing deadlines, or for brainstorming. Refuse to change, add, or delete that blocked space. Consider when you are most productive and give that time back to yourself.
- Don't tackle the task of reclaiming your calendar in a vacuum. Let your office mates know that you are trying something new for calendar management. Try one tip at a time and share what works with a co-worker.
- My calendar is always overloaded! Recently, I employed tip #1 by resisting the temptation to schedule a virtual meeting with two agents to discuss an upcoming multi-county program. Instead, I sent a bulleted email with the “essentials” that I needed to share. It was quicker, more efficient, and saved calendar space! (And no one had to take notes....and then remember where they misplaced those notes....)

[Link for the video](#)



By: Victor Blanco, Marine Agent, Taylor County

Diving with Disabilities

Extension agents have been receiving a lot of information and training about inclusion, diversity, access, and equity (IDEA) in the last couple of years. Reaching out to underserved and underrepresented audiences in all different areas of extension services is challenging.

Thanks to Dean's award and mini grants I was able to get certified as a Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA) instructor. The certification has provided me the opportunity to offer access to a more experiential learning process to a group that we have not served before: people with disabilities. Literature shows how experiential learning improves knowledge gain and understanding of complex topics. Also, it shows how scuba diving has therapeutic effects at the physical and psychological level for people with disabilities. This is why I coordinated the first extension diving with disabilities experience.

I was able to work with youth and adults with different types of disabilities, from cerebral palsy to PTSD and spectrum of autism. The first experience was in a controlled environment, as it was the first-time trying scuba for some of the participants. I must say it was a rewarding experience for all involved, as we dealt with physical and emotional barriers. All these barriers were overcome and at the end they not only engaged in dive activity, but also felt motivated to take the opportunity to the next level and experience in a real natural environment, especially the shallow seagrass beds at the Big Bend Seagrass Aquatic Preserve in Taylor County. The activity is being planned for August 2023, and it is expected to expand participant's awareness and knowledge about some local coastal issues, like seagrass biodiversity and boat prop scarring.

I'll keep you updated on the results of the experience.





By: Stephen Jennewein, Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises Agent, Duval County

2023 NEED Meeting



The Northeast Extension District met at Hearthstone Botanical Gardens on May 2nd. Team building exercises in the picturesque gardens provided an entertaining opportunity for faculty and staff to work together on the novel challenges of an immersive scavenger hunt.

Following the team building scavenger hunt, the Northeast District attended a meeting at the Westside Community Center. The meeting included presentations on *Peer Review and Professional Letter Writing*, *District Life Updates*, success stories, *Accessing Microsoft Resources*, the Center for Online Learning and Technology,

Photography.



Faculty and staff of the NEED viewing posters (left) and presentations (right) during the May 2nd meeting. Photo Credit: Tyler Jones (above), Steve Jennewein (lower)

How UF Works



By: Eric Simonne, Professor and NE District Extension Director

Options for agents looking to get their Master of Science (MS) online at UF in CALS:

- Agronomy: Concentration on Agroecology and is a shared program between the UF/IFAS Agronomy and Soil and Water Sciences Departments

- [Agricultural Education and Communication](#)
- [Entomology and Nematology](#): Specializes in landscape Pest Management, Medical Entomology, Pest Control Technology, and Urban Pest Management
- [Family, Youth and Community Sciences](#)
- [Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences](#)
- [Forest Resources and Conservation](#): Concentration on Ecological Restoration, Geomatics, and Natural Resource Policy and Administration
- [Microbiology and Cell Science](#): Concentration on Medical Microbiology and Biochemistry
- [Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences](#): Environmental Science track
- [Wildlife Ecology and Conservation](#): Concentration in Wildlife Forensic Sciences and Conservation

More information at: <https://cals.ufl.edu/current-students/online/gr-online/>



By: Eric Simonne, Professor and NE District Extension Director

Insurance Coverage for Interns Driving County

Question: Are UF student interns working for the summer in a county office covered by UF insurance when they drive a county vehicle?

Short answer: No

Long Answer:

UF employees are covered for liability to drive owned and non-owned vehicles for work purposes; students are not covered unless they are an employee at the time of the accident. The challenge with this is, the insurance doesn't provide physical damage coverage for the vehicle. So, if the employee drives the county vehicle and is at fault, the county will ask UF to pay for their vehicle's damage and there is no insurance (i.e. the department the employee belongs to will have to pay for it).

If the driver is not a UF employee at the time (they are participating in the county's internship and doing work related to that), our auto liability insurance would not cover them at all.

Counties have the same statutory insurance that we have, so they cannot add anyone as an Additional Insured.

The student's personal auto insurance (or their parent's insurance, if they are covered there) may cover them to drive a county vehicle for an internship; they would need to contact their insurance agent to pose that question.

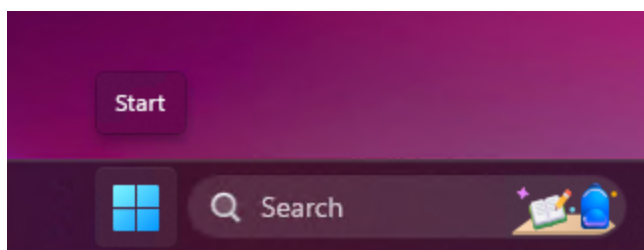


By: John Macias, IT Professional, IFAS Information Technology

Installing Approved Software without Administrator Rights

Did you know there is a way to install software without needing ADMINISTRATOR rights? IFAS IT has pre-loaded software on every IFAS-managed computer that you can install if you want. The location of this software is called SOFTWARE CENTER.

To access this feature, you need to be either on the UF network or connected to the UF network via the Cisco VPN. Once you have done this, you will click on START then select SOFTWARE CENTER.



From the SOFTWARE Center you can install the **Cisco VPN**. This software should already be installed on your laptop, but I would also install it on your desktop PC just in case you decide to take your PC off site to work from home. This way you will be able to connect back to the UF network. When you first launch the vpn, you will need to add the server's name which is `vpn.ufl.edu`, after you connect expect a DUO push to authenticate your credentials.

software license, you can select **GIMP**. GIMP stands for the GNU Image Manipulation Program. It is a free and open-source image editing program.

Audacity is an open-source application that is used as a digital audio editor and recording application.

VLC Media Player is a free open-source media player. So, if you click on a file and the computer is asking you to buy a plug-in, DON'T. Instead, install VLC player, right click on the media file you want to watch and select "Open with" option and choose VLC player.

OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) Studio is a free and open-source software for video recording and streaming.

Handbrake is a free and open-source video transcoder so that the video you created can be uploaded to YouTube.

If you do not want to pay for a Microsoft Office license, but would like WORD, POWERPOINT, EXCEL type programs that can be opened by Microsoft Office, then install **Libre Office**.

If you click on the Additional Information hyperlink near the bottom of the install page, you will be taken to the site where you can download the software. Then it can be installed on another non UF computer. I hope this inspires you to learn about open-source software that can do as much as licensed software, without the cost of financial investment.

From the District Director

"There is no sense in being negative. It would not work anyway."



By: Eric Simonne, UF/IFAS Professor and NE District Extension Director

Time to give up on the 80's employee management methods?

The 80's were the advent of the offices and the emergence of office culture. The boss was the boss, the employees were connected to their clients with snail mail and their desk telephones, and secretaries were keeping up with the myriads of folders, papers, and pens. Post-its were major upgrades to speed up communication and keep reminders. These were the golden years of the paper office.

The mantras of the 80's management style were simple: work 8-to-5 (in person, of course), if you are not at your desk, you are not working, provide paper reports, and everyone is treated the same. Endless office meetings that had no agenda or purpose were lurking everywhere. Procrastination was invented. There was time at work, and time off.

Then came the personal computer, the blackberry, the internet – and new generations in the workplace.

Consequently, things have changed: work is in-person or virtual or a combination of both, work is performed anytime and anywhere, texts and emails have replaced paper memos, and every employee has their own individual needs and expectations. The office (what "office"?) is paperless, documents are signed electronically, phones, tablets and computers are employees' connections to the world. The mantras have changed: communication skills are required; listening skills are expected; employees demand constructive feedback, they nurture work-life balance; the need professional development. And of course, transparency and accountability have arrived.

This new workplace dynamic causes a headache for many managers: how do I know my employees are actually working when I do not see them? Who actually signed this

Sounds familiar? Are you one of these managers? Or do you have one like that? In the end, productivity, work quality, and service friendliness are all that should matter, no?!



Artificial Intelligence

Take the quiz by **clicking the following link:**

[Test your AI knowledge here!](#)

How to interpret your score:

15-20. Congratulations! You have a good working knowledge of AI. You made the team that will organize the next IST on the topic.

11-15. Commendable. Your natural intelligence should takeover the artificial one!

6-10. Encouraging. Take the test again and this time use ChatGPT to find the correct answers.

0-5. Eligible for retake. Be on the look for the next IST on AI 101!

Let's Meet the Agents



Marguerite Beckford, Ed.D.
CED and Environmental Horticulture Agent
Citrus County

I am the Citrus County Extension Director and Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent (EA II). My undergraduate degree is in Agronomy and my graduate degrees are in Agri-business Management/Marketing (MS), and Instructional Design (EdD). Since 2017, my Extension program focus areas in southwest Florida have been Environmental Horticulture/Landscape Management (ELM) and Urban Forestry Extension education. Prior to that, my Extension program focused on the establishment of Miami-Dade county's first residential mobile irrigation lab, with a grant from the South Florida Water Management District, resulting in conserving millions of gallons of landscape irrigation water.

My ELM Extension programs have offered landscape best management practices seminars and workshops, providing technical assistance for more than 3000 green-industry professionals and property owners. To support tree canopy conservation efforts aimed at mitigating canopy loss in urbanizing areas, I launched Florida's first trademarked urban forestry Extension program (Treejuvenation™ Florida). Through the Treejuvenation™ program, I have coordinated urban forestry Extension seminars, workshops, and community engagement events, resulting in urban afforestation projects re-planting more than 500 trees, and providing technical assistance for the installation of three micro-forests. Serving on an inaugural tree

My professional accomplishments include publications in EDIS and ASHS journals, presentations at national and international conferences, earning national and state Extension awards, as well as a UF/IFAS Faculty and Staff Superior Accomplishment award. I'm looking forward to collaborating on projects with the dynamic Extension agents comprising the Northeast Extension District.



Shivendra Kumar, Ph.D.
Regional Specialized Agent- Row Crops
NFREC- Suwannee Valley

I have a Masters in Life Science and Ph.D. in Botany with a strong background in Plant Breeding, Genetics, Agronomy and Plant Pathology.

I have worked with David Wright and Ian Small at NFREC-Quincy as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate on different agronomic and pathological aspects of cotton, peanuts and carinata.

I have also worked as a Post-Doctoral Associate at Iowa State University to develop varieties resistance to SDS and stem and root rot in soybean.

The focus of my program at NFREC-SV is to engage in extension activities to assess the immediate and long-term needs of the farming community and to educate our

I am working on designing impactful educational efforts to bring behavioral changes. I am getting involved in on-farm and in-station demonstration trials for nutrient management, variety assessment, etc.

My goals are to develop:

- Triage facility at NFREC-SV for disease assessment and advising farmers to take necessary measures to reduce the impact of disease on the crop.
- Sap testing for corn, which will be helpful in determination of on-site recommendations for fertilization.
- Trials for nutrient management (Potassium) for peanuts to ensure its availability throughout the growing season and to assess its impact on plant health, yield and quality.
- Nutrient management on hay to reduce leaching using controlled release fertilizer.
- On-farm peanut variety trials- to evaluate the performance of different varieties in Suwannee valley region.
- Field days to demonstrate research activities related to different crops at the station.

I am a team player and believe that to bring any change, everyone has to work hand in hand. I am meeting farmers in the region, collaborating with county agents, RSAs, extension specialists and regulators for immediate and long-term needs assessment and will develop my program based on that in the coming years.

Stephen Jennewein (editor), Lori Wiggins, Jessica Altum, Alicia Lamborn, Abbey Tharpe, Stephanie Conner, Victor Blanco, Peyton Beattie, Heather Janney, Marnie Ward, Beth Kerr, Kim Griffin, Ivonne Black, Eric Simonne.

For past issues visit:

<https://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu/communications/nenews/>

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