

## FEATURE Story

### Serve Week a Success in Gilchrist

**Jessica Cooper,**  
UF/IFAS Extension Gilchrist County  
Interim County Extension Director Agent I  
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Late this summer, 16 teens participated in a county wide week of service. These youth, ages 14-18, did a needs assessment of their community and planned several service projects that could be completed during a week-long mission to help others. The planning process started, and each small group was to decide on 1-2 projects that the group could put together from a materials list, objective, and total of people served. The planning groups were made up of 3-4 teens from diverse backgrounds, and they were to contact a representative from each location they decided on and propose the project to the overall group. Once the proposals were submitted, each youth ranked the projects from 1-10 and we mapped out the week based on their priorities. Monday, the group partnered with Nature Coast Master gardeners to landscape the Sherriff's department and then returned to the 4-H clubhouse to do a tutorial and each sew a few pillowcases for pediatric oncology at UF Shands hospital to brighten up patient's hospital stays during treatment. Tuesday, youth spent the day at a local equine rescue center grooming horses, painting a barn, and leveling wash racks. Wednesday, youth took

school lists and did supply shopping for foster care families and local teachers. Wednesday afternoon, youth packaged backpacks with the supplies and made up teacher kits then delivered them to the Partnership for Strong Families and the school. Thursday, youth learned to make bread and baked over 200 rolls for our local food pantry's weekly distribution. Friday, youth cleaned up the springs and spent the afternoon visiting with the residents at Ayers nursing home. These youth practiced life skills like responsible citizenship, empathy, teamwork, decision making, wise use of resources, and communication. This was an excellent week of camp that allowed youth to gain valuable experiences, earn community service hours, and develop a larger interest in serving their community.



### November 2019 - January 2020

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## What's WORKING?

### Meeting Facilitation: Dealing with disruptive behaviors

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Besides the regular educational activities, in all areas of Extension, agents usually coordinate or facilitate meetings with stakeholders to deal with regular or sensitive topics. Personalities among the people attending these meetings varies significantly and as we prepare to facilitate an event, during the planning phase, is important to build a strategy to manage disruptive behaviors that can move the meeting out of the agenda or its goal. To keep the meeting on track agents must follow three steps once you identify a disruptive behavior: 1) reflect on what you see (describe to the group what you see is happening); 2) describe the impact



of the behavior on the process or other people; 3) redirect the behavior and keep control of the meeting. The facilitation skills require the Extension agent to: 1) stay neutral; 2) paraphrase; 3) listen actively; 4) ask questions; 5) summarize. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management developed a quick guide (<https://coast.noaa.gov/ddb>) to identify disruptive behaviors comparing them to marine creatures (Talkative Blowfish,

Arrogant Sea Lion, Complaining Crab, Eager Oater, Argumentative Jellyfish, Shy Clam, Diverting Dolphin, Indecisive Octopus, Apathetic Flounder, or Dominant Shark). The guide provides a good short description of each behavior and a recommendation of how to intervene in a gently or a firm way. Very useful tool applicable for all the UF/IFAS Extension family.

## PROFESSIONAL Development

### Seek First to Understand

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In my experience, most conflict is caused by communication issues. Either a lack of communication or miscommunication. Part of the communication process is listening. It isn't good enough just to remain quiet and nod your head when someone talks. According to a Harvard Business Review article<sup>1</sup>, in a study that looked at 3,492 participants, the best listeners were those who had a two-way dialogue that confirmed the listener was comprehending enough to want more data.

Active listening is for both informational, as well as relational reasons. Therefore, stopping interruptions like phones and activity on laptops helps to focus attention on the other person and allows for appropriate eye-contact.<sup>2</sup> Focus on the speaker provides less distraction and more time to explore thoughts. Don't forget to give time for the speaker to organize and express their thoughts.

Listening is an intellectual and emotional process requiring listening for the content, intent, and feeling of the speaker. Showing interest is important. When people feel listened to, it facilitates revelation of concealed thoughts and work-related problems. An active listener is perceived as pleasant, caring

and warm. These traits are associated with agreeable individuals. Agreeable individuals are cooperative. Good listeners may also be perceived as more approachable and their paraphrasing is associated with attentiveness and responsiveness.

Watch the nonverbal communication which can transmit a message of non-interest. Repeatedly interrupting before the speaker has finished; breaking eye contact; using antagonistic or patronizing tone of voice; exhibiting facial expressions such as frowning; and/or body language such as leaning or turning away from the speaker can erode their sense of comfort and value.

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## From the DISTRICT DIRECTOR



**Eric Simonne**

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### Don't dis my ability

#### We all need to do the best we can with what we have!

A few years back, the t-shirt of special-needs youths and staff at a camp was "Don't 'dis' my ability". I immediately liked the message. We should look at the good and positive attributes in people. Limitations, shortfalls, and absences do not define us. Our abilities, skills and strengths do. What a powerful lesson.

As I now contemplate my surroundings from the width of my couch and the height of my crouches, I have to deal with the reality that, with just one valid foot, I cannot do much - and what

I can do, gets done slowly. Or rather, I have to approach life differently. Some trivial things that I could do so easily - like drive, run, and answer e-mails-, now are out of my reach. Some daily tasks I never thought of - like eating, watching TV, or concentrating are exhausting and take a lot of time. Yes, my abilities, albeit hopefully temporarily, have changed. So, my challenge is not to complain about what I can no longer do, but instead find new ways to do trivial things - and do them well. I am improving daily. I have to be creative.

Dropping my cell phone while hopping around the house on my crouches was a disaster on the first day: will I fall if I try to pick it up? My new ability invented "cell-phone hockey". This game consists in pushing a cell phone on the floor with either crouch until I reach my goal in the house. The two goals are the bed and the couch. Presently the score is bed 2 and couch 3! Moving an empty bucket across the house is impossible when both my hands are busy holding the crouches: how can I

lift this stuff that weighs a whopping half pound? My new ability invented "bucket put-put golf". Standing still, I firmly push the bucket with my leg in the direction I want to take it. Each push counts as one shot. I figure that going around the kitchen is a par 15 difficulty. I scored a 16 this morning. I am getting good at this too! And of course, my favorite sport is "mono-leg soccer" played with a toy ball (only when Amy is out of the house). My goal is to not break anything (otherwise it needs fixed it before she notices). So far, so good!

This is all about my new abilities and adaptations to my new limitations. Every day, I wake up hopping I will score a couple of cell-phone hockey points, beat par at bucket put-put golf, and not break anything at mono-leg soccer. Whatever I can do today, I want to be better at it tomorrow! When in reduced circumstances, don't dis your abilities. Celebrate them! Focus on what you are good at and do it better. Some call this "making the best better!"

## CONGRATULATIONS!!!!

All Northeast District 3<sup>rd</sup> year Packets received  
Satisfactory ratings and thank you to their mentors!

Tatiana Sanchez  
Kevin Korus  
Amanda (Morgan) Pittman  
Paulette Tomlinson

Charles Barrett  
Savanna Barry  
Kelsey Haupt

Annie Sheldon  
Alicia Halbritter  
Wayne Hobbs



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Probably one of the most difficult parts of active listening is postponing evaluation. Many times, people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand. So, the mind wanders to the right and wrong rather than attending to the speaker. Refrain from judging. This is difficult as we have implicit biases, or a bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally. This leads to the importance of questioning. Question stimulate critical thinking, encourage

discussion, inspire creativity and helps to explore the subject matter. Asking a speaker to elaborate on his/her feelings and beliefs helps a speaker feel attended to and helps a listener understand perspectives of others. Asking questions can also be a way to reduce defensiveness or conflict.

Interpersonal relationships are widely recognized as a major source of job stress. Yet, listening is a leadership

responsibility that does not appear in the job description. Listening requires a depth of concentration and sensitivity from the listener. Active listening can improve interpersonal relationships and perception of confidence and respect, lessen tension, and provide a better environment for joint problem solving and sharing the information in organization.

## DISTRICT Life

### Why we need STEM education

#### Matthew Olson

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STEM is the new buzzword, well actually its acronym, but nevertheless I am sure you have heard this word in the news and thought to yourself, "what is this STEM thing, and what is the big deal?" STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

In the framework of education, STEM is an approach that intentionally incorporates science, technology, engineering and mathematics. As a 4-H youth development agent I have certainly thought about our 4-H programs and said, we have science, that means we're doing STEM!

However, what we commonly forget is the key to STEM education is integrating the subjects. Rather than teach the four areas as separate and discrete subjects, STEM integrates them into a connected learning experience based on real-world applications. Now you may be thinking "so why is it important?"

It is important because these subjects play an important role in addressing critical needs of our communities and generating innovation. Technology is continuously expanding into every aspect of our lives and is a direct result of the research and theories developed through science. Engineering as many of us know it is the basic designs of roads and bridges, but it can also be used to tackle other global challenges like drought and famine.

Mathematics has a role in every occupation and activity in our lives, whether we like it or not. It is important to note that each subject builds upon the other. For example, mathematics is the foundation for physics (science), physics is the foundation for engineering, and all three (science, engineering and mathematics) are the foundations of technology.

This educational approach is being used to meet a growing need. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, STEM-related occupations in the US are projected to grow to more than 9 million between 2012 and 2022. In Florida alone there are over 17,000 open computing jobs and only 2,986 computer science graduates in 2017 to fill these jobs.



4-H members using Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics to build a robot.

Not all STEM jobs require higher education or even a college degree; however, a four-year degree is beneficial because the average starting salary for entry-level STEM jobs with a bachelor's requirement is 26% higher than non-STEM jobs. Furthermore, for every job

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posting for a bachelor's degree recipient in a non-STEM field, there were 2.5 entry-level job postings for a bachelor's degree recipient in a STEM field.

The good news is that schools and youth development organizations are

taking note. The Clay County School District is working to implement "STEM schools" while youth development programs like 4-H are working to develop and implement after-school programs and clubs for interested young people.

These non-formal education programs provide opportunities to learn about STEM through hand-on activities and projects.

## 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Lafayette County Farm Judging Competition

**Chris Vann and Michael S. Jackson**  
UF/IFAS Extension Lafayette County  
Extension Agents

UF/IFAS Extension Lafayette County recently hosted its annual Farm Judging Competition. This year, a record 247 4-H and FFA members from Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor Counties participated. This is Lafayette County's 27<sup>th</sup> year hosting the event and nearly 6,000 youth have participated since the first contest in 1992.

Contestants judged 10 classes in the following categories; beef and dairy heifers, market hog and gilts, poultry, corn, corn silage, peanuts, tobacco and hay.

The farm manager portion of the competition consisted of 5 tests: Basic Farm Knowledge, Feeds, Poisonous/Noxious Plants, Tools, and Insects/Disease damage. The farm manager portion of the competition is optional, but many participate for the experience and educational benefits.



Awards will be presented to high scoring teams and individuals in the appropriate 4-H and FFA categories after all test have been graded and scores have been calculated.

Many advisors, leaders and youth feel this is one of the best educational events of the year. Beth Moore, Madison County 4-H Agent stated, "It is more

than farm judging, these kids are learning to have self-confidence and in our world today, this is extremely important!" Another adult present said, "This is what FFA and 4-H is about, teaching practical skills that will last a life- time and prepare our youth for future success."

## Weekend Backpack Program.... Feeding One Child at a Time

**Lori Wiggins**  
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Interim Extension Director/  
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When students leave school for the weekend, the last thing they should have to worry about is how they are going to get their next meal. Thanks to Taylor County's Weekend Backpack program, weekends are worry free for a lot of kids in our community.

The Weekend Backpack program provides almost 100 children annually, who don't have enough to eat, with nutritious, easy-to-prepare food at times when other resources are not available.

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## DISTRICT Life...continued

Weekend Backpack Program....Feeding One Child at a Time...continued from page 5

The concept is simple: children at risk of weekend hunger receive a bag of food that is child-friendly, nutritious, nonperishable and easy to eat. The local Extension Service partners with local schools to distribute Backpacks every Friday so that children have meals for the weekend. Backpacks are distributed to all the schools in the County.

Each Backpack provides enough food that a child can easily assemble into healthy meals for the weekend. This helps ensure that children will have food over the weekend and return to school on Monday ready to learn. Nutrition information and easy to prepare recipes are included weekly by the Extension Service for both the student and the parents.

This program was founded in Taylor County, in 2012, by a long-time educator, Mrs. Carolyn Winningham, who is also a Master Gardener. During her years of teaching, she saw the importance that children are provided with food every day so their focus can be on education and not hunger. She approached the Extension Service about partnering, and the rest is history. There have been many dedicated volunteers throughout the years, who volunteer to unload the truck of food each week, pack backpacks and deliver them to the schools. Volunteers are truly the backbone of this vital program.

UF/IFAS Extension is instrumental in writing grants to support the program and collecting monetary donations made by local businesses and individuals. Donations of recycled bags, backpacks, individual items for bags such as: fruit cups, granola bars, packets of grits, small containers of cereal, box milk, box juice, etc., and plastic jars of peanut butter and jelly are also collected.



**Surveys are administered at the end of each school year. In 2018-19 school year there was a 66% survey response rate of the 100 student-based surveys distributed.**

**A few responses from the student survey question, "My weekend bag makes me feel..." included:**

**"My weekend bag makes me feel full."**

**"My weekend bag makes me feel blessed."**

**Student responses from the survey question asking, "My weekend bag helps me..." included:**

**"My weekend bag helps me have more food, so my mom doesn't have to spend as much money as she does."**

**"My weekend bag helps me play a lot."**

**"My weekend bag helps me feel great."**

**"My weekend bag helps me feel full on the weekends."**

**91% of students reported sharing their weekend bags with at least one other member of their family.**



## Featured County **EXTENSION OFFICE**

### Featured County: Levy

#### Amanda Morgan Pittman

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#### What are some interesting facts about Levy County or Extension?

Levy County was named to honor David Levy Yulee, one of Florida's first U.S. Senators and the nation's first Senator with a Jewish heritage. Levy County ranks second in the state in the production of aquaculture and horses and third in peanut production. Levy County farmers are the first to harvest peanuts in the nation each season as one of the southernmost counties in Florida that grows peanuts. Florida's first railroad connected the Atlantic to the Gulf from Fernandina to Cedar Key in Levy County. Entertainer Bo Diddley is buried in Levy County.

#### When was your office built and what year did Extension start in your county?

Current office was built in 1980. Extension was started in Levy County in the late 1920's

#### What is one thing that makes our office different?

Vast resources including guns, archery equipment, shooting range, pontoon boat, canoes, 4 wheelers etc. and several acres for accompanying activities

#### What has been the most surprisingly successful idea implemented in the office?

Conversion of front lobby to include publicizing 4-H accomplishments along with seasonal topics on agricultural practices like peanut maturity testing, seasonal pasture management, seasonal gardening, wildlife viewing etc.

#### What is the 1st thing you want people to think when they walk in the door?

That they are entering a professional yet approachable office that values our past and embraces the future of helping residents learn to make their lives better

#### Describe your Extension office facility?

The UF/IFAS Extension Levy County Office is located on six acres on US highway 27 in the County Seat of Bronson. It is a three-minute drive from the Levy County Government Center. The campus includes USDA offices making it a one-stop location for many agricultural needs. In addition to offices for agents and staff, there is a conference room, outdoor pavilion, secured storage/garage, shooting range, and pole barn with office space for the Ag Technician. There is also garden space and an apiary.

#### What is your favorite physical feature about your office?

Outside, the natural areas both on and off the property. Inside, the new flooring and furniture.

#### If you could create your dream Extension office, what is one thing you would make sure to add?

Dedicated lab space

#### What has been a main shift in Extension that has put us in the direction of where we are today?

Revenue enhancement

#### What is the size and population of your county?

Geographically, Levy County encompasses over 1400 square miles, making it the ninth largest county in Florida. Population is about 40,000

#### How many people does the Extension office serve?

UF/IFAS Extension Levy County had direct educational contact with over 17,000 clients in 2018

#### What is one office tradition your office has?

Themed potluck lunches like potato bar, taco bar, fish fry etc.



## Let's Meet Some Agents: **NEW**

### **Heather Janney**

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### **Courtney L. Darlin**

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Suwannee County  
Agriculture Agent  
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From Central Florida, Courtney L. Darlin was born and raised in Tampa, FL. Her agriculture journey began in high

school when she joined her school's FFA chapter where she developed a passion for livestock through showing and judging dairy cattle. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Plant Science at the University of Florida. During her time at UF she interned at North Florida Holsteins and was involved in several organizations including Block n Bridle, Gator Collegiate Cattle Women, and the Agronomy-Soils club, where she met her husband.

Prior to starting graduate school in 2017, she served as an agronomy intern at Deseret Cattle and Citrus and started a small perennial peanut hay operation in McAlpin with her husband. She joined the Agronomy department at UF, where she was advised by Dr. Brent A. Sellers at the UF/IFAS Range Cattle Research and Education Center in Ona, FL. During her studies as a graduate research assistant, she studied weed management in pastures and rangeland. Her research has focused on the tolerance of bermudagrass to glyphosate and controlling perennial grass weed species with herbicide tank-mixes. She received her Master of Science degree from the University of Florida in August 2019.

Now she is serving as an agriculture extension agent with a focus in live-stock, forages, and natural resources in Suwannee County. She looks forward to shifting her involvement in the Florida Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers of Gilchrist/Levy County to the Suwannee group. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, horseback riding, and farming with her husband. Outside of agriculture, she has interests in architecture and photography.



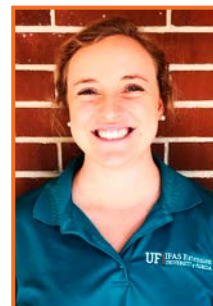
### **Cassidy Dossin**

UF/IFAS Extension Clay  
County  
Agriculture and Natural  
Resources Extension  
Agent  
cdossin@ufl.edu

Cassidy Dossin is the new Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent for Clay County.

She recently graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's degree in Animal Sciences, with emphasis in beef cattle management. In her time at UF, she competed on the Livestock and Meat Judging Teams. She also worked at the University Swine Unit on campus while attending classes, to further her knowledge and experience with farm and livestock management. She is Beef Quality Assurance certified and a member of the Florida Cattle Women and the Florida Cattlemen's associations.

She enjoys hiking, kayaking, and fishing in the forests and waterways of Florida, and she loves continuing to learn more about these natural environments and promoting their conservation. She is very excited to assist Clay County producers in any way needed.



### **Sylvia Willis**

UF/IFAS Extension  
Suwannee County  
Agricultural Extension  
Agent-Commercial  
Horticulture/Row Crops  
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Sylvia Willis was born in Lizton, Indiana and after growing up in a small town,

moved to the city to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Sciences with an Earth and Water Resources focus from Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis in May 2017. Growing up in an agriculture-focused town, Sylvia worked with a local agricultural company detasseling and pollinating corn starting out as a member of the crew and then becoming a crew leader herself. In college, she continued working for another local agriculture company, Bayer CropScience, where she interned 3 years conducting chemical research on corn and soybeans.

After graduation, she moved to Gainesville, FL in Fall 2017 to pursue a Master of Science degree in Horticultural Sciences. Her master's work evaluated the potential use of grafted seedless watermelon for early season planting in North Florida. With her passion for crops and love for outreach, Sylvia is now the Agricultural Extension Agent-Commercial Horticulture/Row Crops in Suwannee County.

Sylvia enjoys not only working outside on crops, but also exploring new areas, traveling, hiking around the Grand Canyon, or snorkeling through the many springs Florida has to offer, she finds adventuring to new places fun and exciting. Sylvia finds time

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to play pick-up games of soccer with friends, even making time to head to the beach to catch some waves. She even has a passion for volunteering, by helping at food distributions and

at the St. Augustine Catholic Church in Gainesville, where she is a leader in the community for youth and young adults. Sylvia is very excited to be in her new position where she will work

closely with the community and growers to educate and find solutions to concerns throughout the diverse area.

## UF/IFAS EXTENSION Northeast District Offices – Find your local office at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/map/>

### Alachua

2800 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32609  
Phone: 352.955.2402

### Baker

1025 W Macclenny Avenue  
Macclenny, FL 32063  
Phone: 904.259.3520

### Bradford

2266 N Temple Avenue  
Starke, FL 32091  
Phone: 904.966.6224

### Citrus

3650 W. Sovereign Path, Suite 1  
Lecanto, FL 34461  
Phone: 352.527.5700

### Clay

2463 SR 16 West  
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043  
Phone: 904.284.6355

### Columbia

971 West Duval Street, Suite 170  
Lake City, FL 32055  
Phone: 386.752.5384

### Dixie

99 NE 121<sup>st</sup> Street  
Cross City, FL 32628  
Phone: 352.498.1237

### Duval

1010 N McDuff Avenue  
Jacksonville, FL 32254  
Phone: 904.255.7450

### Gilchrist

125 E Wade Street  
Trenton, FL 32693  
Phone: 352.463.3174

### Hamilton

1143 NW US HWY 41  
Jasper, FL 32052  
Phone: 386.792.1276

### Lafayette

176 SW Community Circle, Suite D  
Mayo, FL 32066  
Phone: 386.294.1279

### Levy

625 N Hathaway Avenue, Alt. 27  
Bronson, FL 32621  
Phone: 352.486.5131

### Madison

184 College Loop  
Madison, FL 32340  
Phone: 850.973.4138

### Nassau

543350 US Hwy 1  
Callahan, FL 32011  
Phone: 904.879.1019

### Suwannee

1302 11<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Live Oak, FL 32064  
Phone: 386.362.2771

### Suwannee Valley Ag. Ext. Center

7580 County Road 136  
Live Oak, FL 32060  
Phone: 386.362.1725

### Taylor

203 Forest Park Drive  
Perry, FL 32348  
Phone: 850.838.3508

### Union

25 NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
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Phone: 386.496.2321

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