

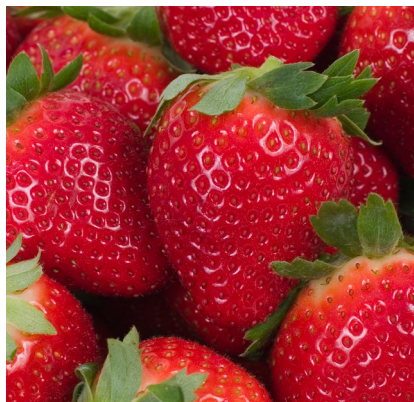
Comings & Goings

January/February 2022

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

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UF/IFAS Extension Comings and Goings is a monthly newsletter distributed by the Office of the Dean for Extension via e-mail and on the UF/IFAS Extension web site at <http://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu>.

If you have any suggestions or would like to submit your own recognition or short article of interest, please send them to Valkyrie Aldnari.

Please feel free to also forward any questions or comments about this periodical to Valkyrie Aldnari at valkyriea@ufl.edu.



Jay Capasso has his Hands in Columbia County Agriculture

J. Scott Angle, Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources



Jay Capasso (left), with Ronald Norris (center).

Even when Ronald Norris breaks even growing corn on his 70 acres north of Lake City, he says, it's not by much. Yet he owns a soil moisture sensor, a no-till drill and a side dressing rig to apply fertilizer by the row instead of broadcasting it.

Norris monitors his plants' health and whether nutrients escape his farm by sending soil and tissue samples to labs. He dedicates part of his acreage to experiments to identify how to be more efficient with fertilizer. He also owns

something money can't buy—Farm Bureau recognition as an environmental steward.

UF/IFAS Columbia County Extension agent [Jay Capasso](#) has a hand in just about all of it. His hands take samples, harvest corn and assists with calibrating equipment. They also strike the right keys on a computer that has allowed Norris to accumulate the equipment and know-how that have kept him in business.

Norris says that without Capasso, he likely would have quit farming. Capasso has been a pipeline to the funding that has covered almost all of the tens of thousands of dollars invested in the machines, lab testing and harvesting on experimental plots.

Capasso showed up three years ago on Norris's farm with modest grant funding and the desire to make an impact. Norris was intrigued by an opportunity to learn. The two put a \$5,000 Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) grant to use testing different ways to fertilize corn.

Capasso kept writing grant proposals. On the advice of UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center-Suwannee Valley BMP outreach coordinator Joel Love, Capasso secured more than \$30,000 for a no-till drill to plant cover crops without disturbing Norris's soil.

Capasso helped Norris learn how to use the soil moisture sensor that cost the farmer only pennies on the dollar through the Suwannee River Water Management District's (SRWMD) agricultural cost-share program. It has saved him hundreds of dollars in reduced water bills through a 40 percent reduction in irrigation without sacrificing yield.

Capasso is still active on the keyboard, securing further FDACS funding to continue research on the [Ronald Norris Farm](#) on how best to apply fertilizer to his corn.

Last year Capasso supported a nomination submitted to the Florida Farm Bureau that earned him an award from Suwannee [CARES](#), a cooperative effort of the Farm Bureau, UF/IFAS, SRWMD, FDACS and the Suwannee River Partnership to honor environmental stewards.

Norris loves producing food and treasures the heritage of growing corn on land his grandfather and great-grandfather worked. He loves it so much that he spent 34 years farming on the side after hours during a career at the Florida Department of Transportation before becoming a full-time farmer.

Now he has more time to spend on science, and with a scientist whose career is just getting started. As farmers face increasing scrutiny of their management of nutrients, you need that science more than ever.

That puts a land-grant university in a position to help you more than ever. We're hard at work updating statewide nutrient recommendations.

At the same time, right source, right rate, right time and right place are farm-to-farm things. Capasso and Norris are figuring out those four Rs in Deep Creek.

In so doing, they're figuring out how a small farmer can afford to do what he loves to do.

In Madison, Extension and County Support Each Other

J. Scott Angle, Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources



Dr. Scott Angle visits UF/IFAS Extension Madison County.

There are some things you learn only by visiting in person. When I recently visited the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) [Extension Madison County](#) office, I got a lesson in how to tell if folks are home in Madison.

Look at how the rocker is positioned on the porch, explained a retired farmer named [Richard Terry](#) who came out to meet me. If the rocker is turned around

and leaned against the wall, no one is home. If the chair is in place, though, go on up and knock and someone will answer.

I already knew that Madison County embraces and supports Extension. They volunteer to lead our [4-H](#) clubs. County government not only contributes (along with the university and the federal government) to Extension

employees' salaries, but the Board of County Commissioners also recently authorized funding for the purchase of a new 4-H van and 4-H summer camp employee position.

I like to think that's because we deliver. Hundreds of Madison County youth benefit from 4-H programs and homeowners get answers about how to control pests and weeds, how to grow flowers and vegetables, and anything

else they need to maintain their lawns, gardens and landscapes.

Sixth-generation farmer [Kevin Leslie](#) and fifth-generation farmer [Jeffery Hamrick](#) told me the science that County Extension Director Dan Fenneman delivers helps keep them in business. UF/IFAS does the research they don't have the time, money or capacity to do, and we share the results with them for free. We're constantly working on their profit margins by teaching how to do more with less—that is, how to maintain or increase their yields while using less water, fewer pesticides and less fertilizer.

Sometimes the payoff takes years to materialize. [Commissioner Donnie Waldrep](#) said he supports Extension in part because it supported him when he was a 4-Her. He spent summer weeks at 4-H [Camp Cherry Lake](#). He participated in public speaking contests. He worked on service projects. It all turned out to be great training for being a commissioner.

Extension is effective because it's community-based. 4-H agent [Beth Moore](#) is a daughter of Madison.

Her dad was the public schools superintendent and later a principal who launched a square-foot garden project that gave every elementary schooler a small raised bed in which to grow his or her own plants. She also taught agriculture at a local elementary school and incorporated agriculture in the classroom into a school she led as principal for 17 years before joining UF/IFAS Extension.

With only a few days' notice, Moore could assemble a group of community residents to come out to educate me during an early-morning visit because she has deep ties to the community.

The coffee was hot, Moore's cinnamon buns were second to none, and her breakfast casserole was a flourish of hospitality that made my visit to Madison stand out among the dozens I've made in counties across the state as leader of UF's agriculture and natural resources branch.

UF/IFAS has Extension offices in all 67 counties that serve residents of all ages through everything from youth programs, cooking and nutrition classes, farming advice and much more.

We bring the entire university to you. For example, retired teacher Lucile Day

told me she found our "[Take Charge of Your Diabetes](#)" classes made a real difference in her life. And through a partnership with UF Health, we're launching a telemedicine program that gives you access to Gainesville-based doctors without having to leave your community.

If there's any way we serve you further, please reach out to County Extension Director Dan Fenneman at 850-973-4138 or at dfenneman@ufl.edu, and feel free to cc me.

Extension is a partnership. I appreciate your support, and I want to support you back.

Dillard, Christmas Embody IFAS, Farm Bureau Partnership



Dr. Bruce Christmas (right) receives the Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Farm Bureau, 2021.

Longtime Washington County Farm Bureau board member Bruce Christmas doesn't recall it being a hard sell. He simply suggested to [Julie Pigott Dillard](#) that she apply to become the UF/IFAS county Extension director.

Dillard remembers it a little differently. When the words come from your Sunday school teacher, it comes with extra high authority. At the very least, Dillard's family was so intertwined with the Christmases that it was like getting advice from her grandfather.

Dillard, then Pigott, had grown up around Christmas. He was Mr. Agriculture, running the University of Florida's Poultry Evaluation Center in Chipley and opening it up to 4-H'ers and Chipley FFA. He brought Pigott and others to the center for practice as he built them into a state champion poultry judging team.

Pigott and Christmas family vacations included traveling to regional or national FFA conventions. Her dad was the FFA adviser to all four of Christmas's sons.

Christmas taught Dillard how to candle an egg. He helped organize the outing that gave Dillard her first look at a cotton gin. She was in the audience numerous times as he gave speeches about how important agriculture is to Florida.

In fact, he's made a parallel career of telling the story of agriculture. His Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame nomination reports that he drove 66,000 unreimbursed miles to get to whatever audience would have him—schools, civic clubs, county fairs, Farm-City events. The 16,000 volunteer hours don't seem possible, as they'd equate to seven and a half years of full-time work.

Whether the numbers are right, the story they tell is true. Christmas barnstormed for agriculture for decades.

He also has a long record of supporting UF/IFAS off the clock. For example, he got a visit from Dillard after she had gone away to college, and she confided to Christmas that she was considering a career in Extension. He told her she'd never find a more rewarding career. The endorsement was hugely influential in her career path.

When she returned to Washington County with a degree, a couple of years' experience in Georgia Extension, and a husband, Christmas pulled them both back into the Farm Bureau fold. He recruited them into Young Farmers & Ranchers. And he tapped Nick to serve on the Farm Bureau board in 2002. Though Nick no longer works in agriculture, he still serves on the board.

Dillard has been the Washington County Extension director for about eight years, which gives her opportunities to talk

about the importance of agriculture. She structures her delivery from her recollections of watching Christmas.

Dillard did a little storytelling of her own, sharing her history with Christmas to help Farm Bureau field representative Allen Scheffer nominate Christmas and his wife Addie Ann for the Florida Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award.

It was a highlight of the annual convention in Orlando to see a 32-year UF/IFAS Extension professional receive such an honor. And the cooperation on the nomination was fitting, because Christmas has always worn two hats when he puts on that trademark Stetson of his, representing both organizations.

His close friends still call him Bruce. On the plaques he's accumulated over the decades he's identified as Dr. Christmas: Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, 4-H Hall of Fame, Kiwanian of the Year, and National Agricultural Alumni and Development Association volunteer of the year.

In some circles he's even risen to the level of a monogram: RBC, short for his full name of Robert Bruce Christmas.

Christmas has been a part of UF/IFAS since there's been a UF/IFAS. He worked as a graduate assistant in UF/IFAS founder E.T. York's office and wrote the first brochure for [SHARE Council](#), the volunteer group that supports the UF/IFAS fundraising office. He worked 32 years for Extension in Orange and Washington counties. He was a founding board member of the UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Alumni Association. He served on the Florida Ag Council, an important advisory group to UF/IFAS administration.

Perhaps Christmas could move so seamlessly between UF/IFAS and Florida Farm Bureau because we are both service organizations. Christmas embodies that service, and I congratulate him on his recent recognition and the Farm Bureau on spotlighting service by an agriculture legend.

Comings & Goings with Dr. Johnson

Andra Johnson, Dean and Director, UF/IFAS Extension



With Lourdes Cordero, Dr. Saqib Mukhtar, Dr. Anita Neal, and Alexis Cooper at Highlands Extension, Jan. 13.



With Dr. Natalia Peres (l) and growers at the Strawberry Field Day in Dover, Jan. 12.



With Dr. Samira Daroub (front row), Jim Shine, Dr. Kay Kelsey, Dr. Scott Angle (middle row), and Keith Wedgeworth at the Everglades REC, Jan. 21.



With 4-H members at the state capitol in Tallahassee, Feb. 23.

UF/IFAS Extension's 2022 has gotten off to a great start, as COVID restrictions have begun to lift and we have been able to enjoy travel and in-person events in the Florida sunshine. In January, Dr. Mukhtar and I had an opportunity to visit some of our Extension offices in Highlands, Broward and Palm Beach counties. We also toured the Everglades and discussed sustainable agriculture with EREC's new director, Dr. Samira Daroub. I had some enlightening discussions with stakeholders and agents at the

Strawberry Field Day in Dover, the Cattlemen's Institute in Sebring and the Florida Grower Citrus Show in Ft. Pierce.

In February we had a great day at the Florida State Fair, meeting with Hillsborough County agents and 4-H members who were proud to show off their livestock and knowledge during the judging shows. I got to get my chomp on during Gator Giving Day and sat down to dinner with Florida's changemakers at the Florida Ag Hall of Fame Banquet. Then it was on to

Tallahassee to join more than 900 4-H members for 4-H Day at the Capitol. Seeing that sea of green on the steps of the state capitol was a truly an inspiring sight.

It has been a great pleasure going around the state, getting to know you and witness the extraordinary work you do for the people of Florida. I hear again and again from stakeholders how much our work is appreciated. I'm looking forward to moving forward and meeting you next!

Operation Strong & Ready

Brenda Marty Jimenez, FCS EA IV, Broward County

Studies indicate increasingly negative health and wellness outcomes for some military service members. In some cases, service members reportedly are unable to pass their branch's physical training test due to weight gain. This has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had halted military group fitness classes and temporarily closed gyms. There is a need to provide health and nutrition education for readiness and decrease the prevalence of disease in geographically dispersed military service members.

First Coast YMCA, in partnership with Building Healthy Military Communities (BHMC) and UF/IFAS, launched Operation Strong and Ready (OSR) in 2021 to respond to the need for research-based nutrition and health education. The objective was to prepare military members for peak performance. UF/IFAS Extension, BHMC, and the YMCA together created an eight-week online wellness course designed to keep military members healthy, get in shape, and learn new avenues of nutrition and fitness when going to a gym might not be possible. This free health and wellness program, taught by UF/IFAS Extension Registered and Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionists (RDN/LDN), was combined with weekly virtual exercise classes from a licensed YMCA instructor. Our mission was to strengthen and support local service members across Jacksonville's military community and beyond.

The UF/IFAS Extension action team consisted of eight Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agents and two state specialists with RDN/LDN credentials from throughout the state (K. Griffin, Suwannee County; V. Zabala (previous county agent), Orange County; L. Johnson, Lake County; S. Fundingsland (retired), Collier County; T. Leigh, Collier County; A. Nikolai, Polk County; A. Mullins, Leon County; K. Shelnett, Family, Youth & Community Sciences; W. Dahl, Food Science & Human Nutrition and B. Marty-Jimenez, Broward County). The team met virtually to discuss the needs presented by BHMC, topics to cover, project timeline, delivery methods and evaluation tools. Each agent developed a health and wellness presentation, recording, and evaluation, and had their work reviewed by a peer. An eight-topic video series included Healthy Eating 101, Performance Nutrition, Portion Control and Food Choices, Safe Supplement Use, Proper Hydration,

Choosing Beverages Wisely, The Importance of Sleep, and Nutrition for Weight Management and Disease Prevention. Healthy, fun, and educational cooking videos with recipes were also developed. The RDN/LDN action team shared the final project with the collaborators, who marketed, recruited participants, and rolled out the video educational content.

Success was measured via surveys the team created to go along with the eight-week virtual education series, which began February 2021. A second cohort began in May 2021. Outcome data is anecdotal at this point, but will come into focus as additional cohorts are completed.

This Extension online series has helped to break down geographic barriers for the First Coast YMCA and BHMC. The program has engaged participants from all over Northeast Florida and the country, even as far as Arizona. The course was run by trained professionals geared to be applicable for those at home. Members of the RDN/LDN action team presented this program and results to colleagues at the 2021 national NEAFCS annual meeting as a concurrent session. The plan is to move beyond this initial programming, with future rollouts (and data collection) during the upcoming year(s), expanding outreach broadly to even more military members. FCS agents from Missouri and North Carolina State Extension have also expressed interest in adapting and moving the program forward in 2022, in collaboration with the UF/IFAS Extension, RDN/LDN action team.

As demonstrated by this partnership, it is both beneficial and rewarding when Extension agents and specialists collaborate and combine resources within action teams for targeted projects with statewide reach. These action teams help share the responsibility of research, curriculum development, program delivery, evaluation tool development, assuring educational sustainability, scholarly impact, and continued professional success.

Given the military presence in Florida and beyond, as well as the demand for programming, this type of series-based education could springboard to educational activities tailored to reach this population with other targeted Extension programming.

Peanut Butter Challenge: A Smooth Year for the Panhandle

Libbie Johnson, Agriculture EA II, Escambia County | Claire Reach, 4-H Youth Development/FCS EA I, Calhoun County

Erik Lovestrand, Sea Grant EA II, Franklin County

The Peanut Butter Challenge continues to grow in the Panhandle and statewide. In 2021, the Northwest District collected 11,154 jars of peanut butter weighing 15,638 pounds, with more than 14,000 additional jars donated by the Florida Peanut Producers Association. Jefferson County brought in the most peanut butter for the district, but also worthy of celebration are two counties that achieved the most improved collections: Calhoun and Franklin.

Claire Reach, the new 4-H and family and consumer sciences agent in Calhoun County, and Erik Lovestrand, Florida Sea Grant agent and CED in Franklin County, made phenomenal contacts and garnered much-needed peanut butter for their counties. Please read more about their successes and think about how your county might be able to adopt some of those practices in your county for the 2022 competition. The Peanut Butter Challenge in 2022 will only be held in the month of October.

Being a small, rural county, Calhoun County sure has a big heart for helping their neighbors in need! All donations collected are a direct result of community support, and all the jars will be distributed amongst local food banks. A large portion of the donations came from a competition within the Calhoun County school system, with the promise of a popcorn party to “up the ante.” All of Carr School and a few classes from Altha Public School participated in the collection of peanut butter. In total, UF/IFAS Extension Calhoun County collected 498 jars, roughly 607 pounds of peanut butter, which will all go to feed our food insecure neighbors. The 607 pounds that were collected would allow one individual to roughly make 9,716 peanut butter sandwiches. With the Florida Peanut Producer Association donating a matching amount of peanut butter, that would add up to 18,700 peanut butter sandwiches!

“I cannot thank Calhoun County enough for their generosity and joining in the collection efforts for the 2021 Peanut Butter Challenge,” Reach said. “We surpassed all previous years’ collection numbers, and we hope to continue growing in the coming years. As a new agent, I was unsure how much of an impact this collection would make. Calhoun County has proven, through their generosity, that they want to help others in our community!”

In Franklin County, Maddison Whitten, a senior at the Franklin County K-12 school, chose the event as a way to give back to her community. Maddison, with the help of the FCHS National Honor Society chapter (Kathy Strunk, faculty advisor), spread the word of how to take a bite out of local hunger by collecting peanut butter. Collection boxes were placed in classrooms around the FCHS campus. Friendly competition was encouraged with the incentive of a pizza party for the class with the most peanut butter. The response from fellow students, parents, teachers, and school administrators was



Mrs. Britney Hansford's 2nd grade class at Altha.

astounding. During the collection period, the school amassed over 800 jars of peanut butter, totaling 1,004 pounds. This,

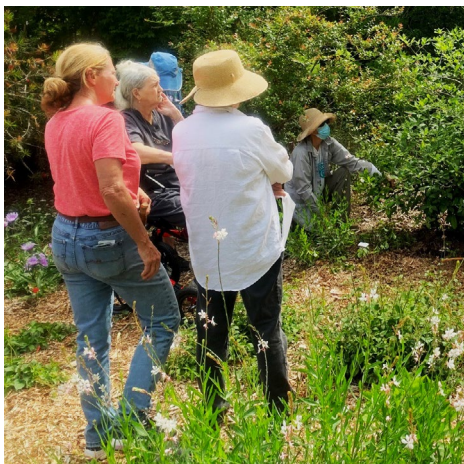
along with other collection sites (First Baptist Christian School, UF/IFAS Franklin Extension Office, Sportsman's Lodge, 4-H Making Strides Club, Gander's Hardware), gathered a total of 952 jars weighing 1,178 pounds. This was by far the most peanut butter ever collected in this small, rural county.



Franklin County High School Senior Maddison Whitten.

Escambia Master Gardeners Reach Endowment Fund Goal

Kirsten Romaguera, Public Relations Specialist, IFAS Communications



An Escambia County Master Gardener Volunteer conducts a class.



Master Gardener Volunteer Marjorie Johncheck

When Ann Luther's friend asked in 2008 if she wanted to take Master Gardener classes through the UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County office, she had no idea it would become one of her passions.

“I don't know why, but I'd never heard of it,” Luther said. She had, to be fair, spent years moving from place to place as a military spouse, eventually retiring in Pensacola from a career as an elementary educator and becoming a part-time CPR instructor. Naturally, the teaching aspects of the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program appealed to her. “I had always liked to garden,

but I was never in one place long enough to put much in the ground,” she added.

After completing the course and becoming a UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County Master Gardener Volunteer in 2009, Luther vowed to make people aware of the program. Her involvement grew into many areas of the county’s organization throughout the years, including as a board member.

Growing knowledge throughout Florida

The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program provides local communities statewide with University of Florida-trained volunteers, like Luther, who are passionate about sharing their gardening knowledge. But each program, coordinated through the local UF/IFAS Extension office, also relies upon fundraising to be able to offer those educational opportunities and outreach.

To reduce the fundraising burden for its future members, the Escambia County group set on a mission three years ago to establish an [endowment fund](#). As 2021 closed, ahead of its five-year goal and despite almost two full years of COVID pandemic-related challenges, the fund reached its \$30,000 target. This investment will generate over \$1,000 each year for the group’s operations.

“We had a very active Master Gardener board at the time this effort started, and they wanted to find a way for

future volunteers to spend less time fundraising and more time teaching,” said Beth Bolles, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County horticulture agent and coordinator of the county’s program.

Escambia County’s volunteers help community members learn more about growing landscape and food plants successfully, sharing information at churches and public libraries, and through homeowners’ associations and garden clubs.

In a recent effort, Bolles shared, a group of Master Gardener Volunteers helped a local Native American tribe begin growing native plants with a significance to Native American culture. Luther said other projects focus on the military community and veterans’ groups; the volunteers include former military members, too.

‘It’s just my happy place’

“When we got this opportunity to ensure that the Master Gardener program continues after those of us in it now are no longer involved, we all thought that this was such an important opportunity to do something for this wonderful program,” said M.J. Ziemba, who’s been a Master Gardener Volunteer since 2018. “It’s not only wonderful for the people who are in the group; it’s wonderful for the whole community because we then take the information that we learn and help share it.”

Unlike Luther, Ziemba had learned of the Master Gardener program long

before she became a volunteer. She thought of joining right then, sometime in the 1980s, but with four kids and a career in education, “I just didn’t have the time.”

“As soon as I retired in 2017, I signed up,” Ziemba said. “Working in the garden and being with my garden friends... it’s just my happy place.”

Securing continued services

Like other Florida Master Gardener Volunteer groups around the state, the Escambia County volunteers’ plant sales contribute some of their largest fundraising efforts each year.

In addition to the plant sales, though, Bolles said the group also got creative in trying to reach the endowment goal. They hosted a rummage sale, used planned speaking engagements to promote the fund and encourage donations, and created a set of educational postcards, with 100% of the proceeds going toward the endowment.

And although they’ve reached their initial goal, she added, “we know we’re still planning for the future, so we will continue to add to it.”

Read more about the Escambia County Master Gardeners Endowment at go.ufl.edu/mgvendowment. The fund will continue to accept donations as its volunteers maintain and grow their services to the community. Gator Nation Giving Day, on Feb. 17, marks a perfect occasion to support your favorite [UF/IFAS Extension program](#).

Blooming Youth and Blueberries

Julio Perez, Residential/Commercial Horticulture EA I, Putnam County
Crystal McCazzio, 4-H Youth Development EA III, Marion County

Blueberry production in Florida has increased to encompass around 5,100 acres with an estimated value of \$62 million (USDA, 2019 Blueberry Statistics). The blueberry is one of the most prevalent fruits grown commercially in Putnam County. The 4-H Berry Project provides participants with insight into the blueberry horticulture and experience with budgeting, marketing and selling a product. Youth participating in this project increase their awareness of an agriculture crop, leading to a greater appreciation of farming and a possible career in agriculture.

This annual 4-H project starts in October and ends with the Putnam County Fair in March. It focuses on multiple educational meetings, demonstration of abilities to grow the issued blueberry plants, and a project book to record ongoing daily activities. These tasks require youth to gain knowledge of horticultural practices, goal setting and recordkeeping. Additionally, youth learn about blueberries' nutritional value, which they incorporate into the marketing of the product they auction at the fair.

The 2019-2020 4-H Berry Project started with a group of 22 youth. The participants were educated on the care and repotting of their bushes; they were observed demonstrating proper pruning techniques and guidance was provided when asked. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only three participants completed the project, but they received blue ribbons and auctioned off their plants for an average of \$95. In 2020-2021, 15 participants experienced the project differently as all meetings were conducted via Zoom and demonstrations recorded to YouTube. Participants plan to conclude their project in March and are reporting positive outcomes.

By participating in this project, 4-H youth gained knowledge of the complexities of growing healthy blueberries and the challenges of being profitable. This project also provided elements for youth to develop critical life skills such as responsibility and problem-solving. Partnership with the Putnam County Fair provides youth with additional motivation to explore entrepreneur benefits by earning premiums for quality bushes and financial compensation for well-marketed projects.

Chick Chain Workshop

Kalyn Waters, Agriculture and Natural Resources CED II, Holmes County
Julie Pigott Dillard, 4-H Youth Development CED III, NW Associate DED, Washington County
Chris Lauen, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Holmes County



4-H youth demonstrates his showmanship and knowledge as part of the 4-H Chick Chain.

4-H members in Washington, Jackson and Holmes counties are learning what

it takes to raise chickens for backyard egg production. In September and October, 4-H'ers took ownership of four baby chicks and were tasked to raise them to laying age. During the past few months, 4-H'ers have read up on caring for poultry, attended club meetings, and participated in care, grooming, and showmanship workshops. They have learned about biosecurity and their bird's nutritional and housing needs. They have watched the transformation from fluffy baby chicks to nearly full-grown birds.

The program, called 4-H Chick Chain, spans the Florida panhandle from Escambia to Jefferson counties. Nearly 80 4-H'ers are currently raising backyard poultry through this program. They are getting ready for the culminating event – the 4-H Chick Chain District Show. In March, they'll compete in their 4-H age divisions in showmanship, bird exhibition, and

skill-a-thon. Youth who previously participated in 4-H Chick Chain can enter their birds as production projects and participate in an Avian Challenge by giving a demonstration or presentation.

In January, UF/IFAS Extension Washington County hosted a workshop to help 4-H'ers fine-tune their grooming, showmanship, and record keeping skills. Throughout the workshop, youth participated in hands-on learning experiences guided by Extension agents. The grooming portion of the workshop was shared live on Facebook. Check it out on either the UF/IFAS Extension Holmes County or Washington County pages!

Animal science projects, like 4-H Chick Chain, are especially effective in teaching youth life skills like responsibility, communication, planning, and empathy.

Tropical Fruit Tuesdays

Jeff Wasielewski, Commercial Tropical Fruit EA II, Miami-Dade County

UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County



Tropical Fruit Tuesdays

Tropical Fruit: Tropical Fruit Truths

This webinar will tell the ten basic truths of growing tropical fruit. Subjects covered will be pruning, planting, fertilizers, irrigation, plant selection, and more.

Tuesday
February 15, 2022
2:00-2:45 PM

Upcoming Classes:
The Sapotaceae, March 15
Pruning, April 19

For more information, contact:
Jeff Wasielewski, jfshort@ufl.edu

[Register Here](#)

MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY

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COVID-19 put many aspects of life into disarray. Professional sports were cancelled, schooling was put on hold, and restaurants and small businesses

were shuttered. These past few years have been difficult, but they will also be known as a time where solutions to problems were discovered and society still moved forward, as we must.

When the trials and tribulations of COVID were foisted upon the Miami-Dade County Extension office, we had to adapt. Clients needed help more than ever. New problems required new solutions. As a tropical fruit agent, I traditionally used a variety of techniques to serve my clients, with in-person workshops being one of the most effective. With in-person learning no longer an option, it was imperative to transition to online classes. Starting in June 2020, I offered a bi-weekly series of free webinars under the title "Tropical Fruit Tuesdays". The first offering on air-layering tropical fruit was an immediate success, with over 65 attending. Over 30 webinars have been offered over a period of

20 months reaching more than 1,500 stakeholders.

The Tropical Fruit Tuesday workshops were designed to teach sound horticultural practices for tropical fruit production, such as propagation, proper planting and pruning, as well as deep dives into how to grow specific tropical fruit crops. These webinars averaged 50 stakeholders per offering, with follow up surveys showing high learning gains and practice change.

The transition from in-person learning to online learning was a successful one. Online learning is now a tool in the belt of almost every Extension agent, one that will be successful and useful now that restrictions are lifted. The COVID years are like nothing we have ever seen, but that only meant that new solutions are required for these new problems. Tropical Fruit Tuesdays is one such solution.

Remembering Mrs. Duska Dorschel

Amarat (Amy) Simonne, Food Safety and Quality Professor, FYCS



Duska Leone Dorschel 2/7/45-3/4/22. Photo provided by Stephanie C. Toelle

It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of Mrs. Duska Dorschel. Duska was among the best Home Economics and Family & Consumer Sciences Agents in Florida. She began her Extension career at the Duval County Extension Office on August 6, 1973 and retired as an Emerita Agent IV on January 31, 2010. Throughout the years, she (and partner-in-crime twin-sister Tamer Britton) taught many food and nutrition programs in Duval County. She also embraced many collaborations across counties lines in her Extension district and the whole state. Duska was an amazing leader who created large functional teams that worked toward common goals. As a new Extension Specialist, I was so fortunate to get to work and interact with her. Duska was the first FCS Agent to invite me to her county and showed me how the agent-specialist partnership works. Among numerous collaborations, together, we co-taught the inaugural ServSafe® class in April 2001. Duska was a people-person who made lasting impacts on many around her – including me. Like many, I looked up to Duska as she always made us feel welcomed and appreciated. She passed away on March 4, 2022 and left a long-lasting legacy on Duval County and Florida Extension.

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/24219571/duska-leone-dorschel>

COMINGS & GOINGS

We would like to welcome the following newly hired and transferring faculty. These individuals were hired following a highly competitive search, screening and selection process. In some cases, candidates interviewed both on the UF campus in Gainesville and in a county Extension office. Selection was often difficult because we typically have two or three suitable candidates. These faculty are truly the best of the best!

New Hires

Caetano Rossi Sales, Agriculture and Natural Resources EA I, Citrus County

Sudeep Sidhu, Agriculture/Water Management RSA II, Northeast District

Katherine Rose, Sea Grant EA I, Charlotte County

Marissa Alexander, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Hardee County

Joshua Criss, Environmental Horticulture EA I, Santa Rosa County

Jeremy Rhoden, Agriculture/Urban Horticulture EA I, Marion County

M Jennison Kipp Searcy, Sustainable Communities SSA II, PREC

Kenan Bridges, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Miami-Dade County

Transfers

Crystal McCazzio, from Putnam County to 4-H Youth Development EA III, Marion County

John Roberts, from Orange County to Residential Horticulture/Master Gardener EA I, Palm Beach County

We would like to wish the following agents the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Retirement

John Atkins, Agriculture and Natural Resources EA IV, Santa Rosa County

Mary Salinas, Environmental Horticulture Program EA II, Santa Rosa County

Michael Goodchild, Forestry/Residential Horticulture CED III, Multi-County

Laurie Albrecht, Environmental Horticulture EA I, Palm Beach County

Departures

Laura Cash, 4-H Youth Development Program EA I, Volusia County

Patrick Williams, Agriculture and Natural Resources/Horticulture CED II, Wakulla County

Susan Webb, Community Gardens RSA I, SW District

Angela Hinkle, FCS EFNEP EA III, Escambia County

Nicole Pinson, Horticulture/FFL/Master Gardener EA II, Hillsborough County

Courtney Darling, Agriculture and Natural Resources EA I, Suwannee County

Sarah Ellis, FCS EA II, Citrus County