

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Christa Kirby & Cliff Coddington: Preserving Manatee's Cow Country Heritage .....	1
Michelle Atkinson & Lakewood Ranch: Leading the Way on Water Quality .....	2
Here and Now in Florida 4-H .....	3
FNP Partnership with MEANS Helps Increase Food Distribution.....	3
Extension Offers Training Programs at Martin Correctional Institution.....	4
Palm Beach County 4-H, Florida Afterschool Network Awarded Grant....	5
Farm to Fork Exhibition – A Day in Charlotte County History .....	6
Charlotte County Virtual Ag Tour .....	6
Utilizing the Outdoors to Create a Sense of Belonging .....	7
4-H Take-out: Reaching Youth During the Pandemic .....	8
Friend of 4-H Award Presented to Citrus County 4-H Foundation .....	9
Maintaining A Relationship with County Government .....	9
A New Resource! Plant This, Not That: A Guide to Avoiding Invasive Plant Species in Florida .....	10
<b>COMINGS &amp; GOINGS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
New Hires .....	11
Departures .....	11

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 Aldrari.

Please feel free to also forward any questions or comments about this periodical to Valkyrie Aldrari at [valkyriea@ufl.edu](mailto:valkyriea@ufl.edu).

# UF/IFAS Extension *Comings & Goings* FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION



## Christa Kirby & Cliff Coddington: Preserving Manatee's Cow Country Heritage

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



*Cliff Coddington and Christa Kirby*

About 15 years ago, Myakka City cattleman Cliff Coddington wanted the University of Florida to hire a livestock agent for Manatee County who could get technical knowledge to people who kept cows and debunk the misperceptions among the surge of newcomers who didn't. Christa Carlson wanted to come home.

Carlson had the right credentials—a UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences degree, a few years working for UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences 4-H Extension in another county, and experience with animals.

Coddington also thought Carlson could play an important part in preserving the heritage of Manatee's cow country because it was her heritage. Her parents were among those who volunteered at the Manatee County Fair every year.

While she was not the girl next door, she was the girl who went to 4-H next door. Coddington's sister led the Manatee 4-H livestock club back then, and she sometimes hosted meetings at her home next door to Coddington's.

Coddington wasn't the only Manatee cattleman who saw potential in Carlson. Jim Strickland of [Blackbeard's Ranch](#), too, had been a director of the county fair and knew Carlson from her 4-H cow show days.

Having a homegrown agent meant a lot to a sixth-generation Manatee cattleman like Coddington. And she came with an endorsement from her predecessor, who also had been Coddington's agriculture teacher at Southeast High School, Travis Seawright.

Today Coddington is president of the [Florida Cattlemen's Association](#) (Strickland is also a former FCA president) and Carlson is now livestock agent [Christa Kirby](#). They continue to work on keeping the sprawl of population growth from contributing to the vanishing of ranchlands in Manatee and to a vanishing awareness of agriculture among the general public.

Kirby established programming geared toward ranchettes, generally the properties of newcomers with little pre-existing cattle knowledge. While it didn't do much for Coddington's operation, it did a lot for his industry. Helping hobby ranchers could prevent mistakes and practices that could turn the public against even the professionals. Kirby and Coddington organized events to bring non-cattle people to ranches.

They also helped the pros. Kirby is part of an Extension [team of livestock agents](#) that serves South Florida cattlemen and cattlemen. She assisted in bringing the UF/IFAS Alvin C. Warnick Cattle Reproductive Management School just over the county line in Sarasota County, where Coddington hosted it for several years on the [Longino Ranch](#), where he's been the general manager for 16 years.

Kirby spent years gathering forage samples at Longino and sending them to the UF/IFAS Range Cattle Research and Education Center for testing. She presented the results in a comprehensible way that has guided Coddington's decisions on what and when supplementation to his cow herd should occur.

Kirby and Coddington now have 15 more years of shared history, creating agriculture-related memories for the next generation through 4-H, FFA, and fairs. They're fellow guardians of Manatee cow country heritage.

They prefer cattle to concrete. They accept that the latter comes with growth as long as it doesn't also come with a community amnesia that leaves agriculture out of the vision of what makes Manatee County special.

## Michelle Atkinson & Lakewood Ranch: Leading the Way on Water Quality

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



UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County environmental horticulture agent [Michelle Atkinson](#) sees potential for Lakewood Ranch to teach the state important lessons about how to reduce the incidence of green rivers and red

tides without homeowners having to do a thing.

[The Ranch](#), a planned community in Manatee and Sarasota counties, has hundreds of stormwater ponds. Atkinson and her research and Extension colleagues are doing experiments at five to see

whether they can clean water, not just hold it.

What they learn at ponds, as well as at public sites such as the Bradenton Area Convention Center, could have huge

implications for Florida. Until recently, we had no idea how huge.

UF/IFAS ecologist Basil Iannone wondered how many stormwater ponds we have in Florida. So he and UF/IFAS agricultural engineer Eban Bean counted them. With sophisticated mapping software, they [located 76,000](#).

The potential of ponds as powerful anti-algae tools had been hiding in plain sight. The only body of water a majority of Floridians see at least twice weekly is not the gulf, the ocean, a river, a spring or a lake. It's a stormwater pond.

Why start at the Ranch? Because it has long welcomed scientists inside the gates to share science that makes it a more sustainable community. As the Manatee County environmental horticulture agent, Atkinson has for years educated residents on irrigation, fertilization and other landscape best practices. It's her job as well to deliver



science directly to the neighborhood associations that control what gets planted where.

Her credibility and service-oriented approach has earned her the trust of Lakewood Ranch management, which has granted the UF/IFAS team access to a handful of ponds. It also earned the trust of Manatee County government, which has provided Atkinson with \$50,000 worth of pond plantings for her research at several county parks.

The scientists want to discover whether plants instead of grass on the banks of the Ranch ponds' perimeters could act as filters. The thinking is that the more grass cuttings and storm water debris the plants trap, the more fertilizer runoff from nearby lawns they can eat, and the less would make it into our ponds and groundwater where they contribute to harmful algal blooms.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sees the potential for Lakewood Ranch to teach Florida and the nation as well. It has granted Iannone \$197,000 to monitor water quality, to try different mixes of plants, and to gauge how effective each mix is in filtering.

This is a social question as well. The research aims to get a feel for what the ponds' neighbors find attractive. To have impact, innovations have to be embraced by people who aren't scientists.

That's why the UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency team, which includes Iannone and Atkinson, has social scientist Paul Monaghan. While the biological and physical scientists seek a mix of pondside plants that filter water and attract wildlife, Monaghan will gauge whether residents believe the plantings obstruct their "waterfront" views or look too much like a tangled, wild mess.

Stormwater ponds have the potential to be a resource beyond flood control. If the UF/IFAS team and its government, industry and residential partners can identify the right mix of plants, stormwater ponds could do invaluable work protecting our water quality. The pond plantings could host pollinators and other wildlife, or host "good" bugs that feed on and outcompete pests.

Replacing grass with plantings can also protect landscaping staff, who can get injured when their mowers tip over on grassy pond slopes.

She's not a scientist up here in Gainesville. She's a neighbor. That's how Extension works. UF/IFAS scientists work in every county on solutions to local problems. And sometimes a solution in one county can be a lesson for the other 66. Atkinson's work has the potential to raise Lakewood Ranch's profile as a leader in sustainability.

## Here and Now in Florida 4-H

Stacey Ellison, 4-H Associate State Program Leader

- The first week of October commemorated National 4-H Week. If you missed it, check out this outstanding [video](#) from University of Florida President, Dr. Kent Fuchs, and UF/IFAS Vice President, Dr. J. Scott Angle.
- Florida 4-H is excited to announce a new partnership with Florida Power and Light (FPL) to power the [Florida 4-H Public Speaking Program](#). This partnership will give Florida students the opportunity to develop their public speaking skills. Florida Power and Light VP for external affairs and economic development Pam Rauch shared: "For me, my spark is giving back to the community and working with organizations like 4-H to help develop our state's future leaders." FPL invests in local organizations, like 4-H, that result in more vibrant, healthier and engaged communities that help move Florida forward.
- Florida 4-H is excited to welcome Dr. Candi Dierenfield, State Specialized Agent for Volunteer Management. Dr. Dierenfield began work in late September and dove right into volunteer development work for all of IFAS Extension.

## FNP Partnership with MEANS Helps Increase Food Distribution

Stella Harbilas, Marketing and Communications Specialist, Family Nutrition Program

Through a partnership between the [UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program \(FNP\)](#) and [MEANS Database](#), food distribution in Florida has increased. Since May 2021, more than 52,000 pounds of food, mostly vegetables, was distributed to people in need in Collier, Lee, Manatee, and Pinellas counties.

MEANS is a free online platform that allows farmers, grocery stores, restaurants, and other food providers to donate rather than discard unsold food. Although MEANS operates nationwide, FNP is instrumental in connecting MEANS with Florida non-profits and food providers that receive and distribute locally.

In addition to providing ongoing referrals, FNP Regional Specialists Kelly Wilson, Emily Grant, and Kathleen Morales Perez, organized partner training webinars last spring. The webinars encouraged local non-profits, such as [St. Matthews House](#) in Collier County, to join the MEANS platform. St. Matthews House so far has donated most of the foods received by participating organizations in Collier County.

If you have questions, please contact the following:

- Emily Grant, [emily.grant@ufl.edu](mailto:emily.grant@ufl.edu)
- Kathleen Morales Perez, [kmoralesperez@ufl.edu](mailto:kmoralesperez@ufl.edu)
- Kelly Wilson, [kelly.wilson@ufl.edu](mailto:kelly.wilson@ufl.edu)

## Extension Offers Training Programs at Martin Correctional Institution

Yvette Goodiel, Commercial Hort/Ag EA III, Martin County; Christine Kelly-Begazo, Agriculture CED III, Indian River County; Cesar Peralta, Edu Training Spec II, UF/IFAS CLUE; Dr. Katherine Layton, Edu Supervisor, Florida Department of Corrections; Carol Roberts, CRD EA I, St. Lucie County; Jennifer Pelham, Urban Hort CED IV, Martin County



UF/IFAS GI-BMP instructors and MCI Education Coordinator, Dr. K. Layton (front row) with Farm Squad inmates who participated in the summer 2021 horticultural programs.

The state correctional facility in Martin County, Martin Correctional Institution (MCI), has vegetable gardens where inmates grow produce for use in the facility. In December 2019, the inmate farmers harvested 3,776 pounds of squash, mustard and collard greens from their gardens. They also taught one another horticultural principles in a classroom setting, and participating inmates sought more training and certifications. The facility has an education coordinator, who is building a broad suite of industry-recognized certification programs for inmates to choose from. She began with the Farm Squad, a group of 20 inmates who have demonstrated responsibility and cooperation in their work together. The Florida Department of Corrections sought to pilot a Farm Credentialing Program, centering on “the science of developing and managing a mini-farm.”

In June 2021, UF/IFAS Extension Martin County entered into a funded contract with the Florida Department of Corrections. We were contracted to teach a series of agriculture and horticulture programs to the inmates at MCI. The programs taught were Green Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP), Business Basics for Your Landscape Business, and Beginning Farmer. Each program offered

graduates a certificate they could carry with them upon release from prison. For participating inmates not eligible for release, the training provided enrichment and an opportunity for positive growth.

### GI-BMP

GI-BMP offers inmates the opportunity to receive a certificate they can later use in applying for a fertilizer applicator license anywhere in Florida. Additionally, GI-BMP certification is required in many Florida coastal counties and municipalities to obtain an occupational license as a Professional Landscaper.

A team of three instructors delivered the program over the course of three days. The participants did incredibly well on the certification exam, with a 100% pass rate (n=20). Pre-test scores averaged 73%, and post-tests averaged 89%. All of the participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that participating in the training was a good use of their time, with 85% expressing they “strongly agreed”. Almost all (95%) said they learned something they will apply in work or future decisions. In the class evaluation, participants shared that the program was “very valuable”, and they “Learned a great deal about

our water and what not to do and what to do. Thank you.” Class instructors were Christine Kelly-Begazo, UF/IFAS Extension Indian River County; César Peralta, UF/IFAS Extension South Region GI-BMP Program; and Yvette Goodiel, UF/IFAS Extension Martin County.

### Business Basics

Seeking employment with a company as an ex-offender can be difficult. Starting a landscaping or other business of their own after release offers former inmates an alternative. The Business Basics course was taught through a series of video modules, followed by an instructor-led review of the assignments submitted. Knowledge gains were strong, with an average pre-test score of 67% increasing to a post-test average of 85%. On a scale of 1 (“extremely dissatisfied”) to 5 (“extremely satisfied”), the average course satisfaction was 4.6. The majority (72%) of participants said they “Yes, definitely” or “Yes, probably” would do something new as a result of what they learned. Intended practice adoption included seeking green industry licensing (39%), creating a business plan (39%) or marketing plan (33%), or helping family with their business (17%). Class instructors were Carol Roberts, UF/IFAS Extension St. Lucie County; Jennifer Pelham, UF/IFAS Extension Martin County; and Yvette Goodiel, with Christine Kelly-Begazo moderating the in-person and virtual classes.

### Beginning Farmer

The Beginning Farmer program was taught as a five-session series. Topics covered included: building healthy soils, using cover crops, product research, selecting crops, planning crop rotations, crop fertility management, IPM planning and scouting for pests, and irrigation. Most sessions included assignments the inmates could complete to help plan for the next

season of production. For example, inmates learned about product research and then conducted research among staff and fellow inmates to learn about their preferences for fresh produce. They then used the research to select crops. Participants then researched the specific crops chosen to determine rotations, fertility and irrigation needs, and common pests. On class evaluations, 19 out of 20 respondents said they were “extremely satisfied”, with one respondent “somewhat satisfied.” A good 90% of participants said they would “Yes, definitely” or “Yes, probably” change at least one practice as a result of the

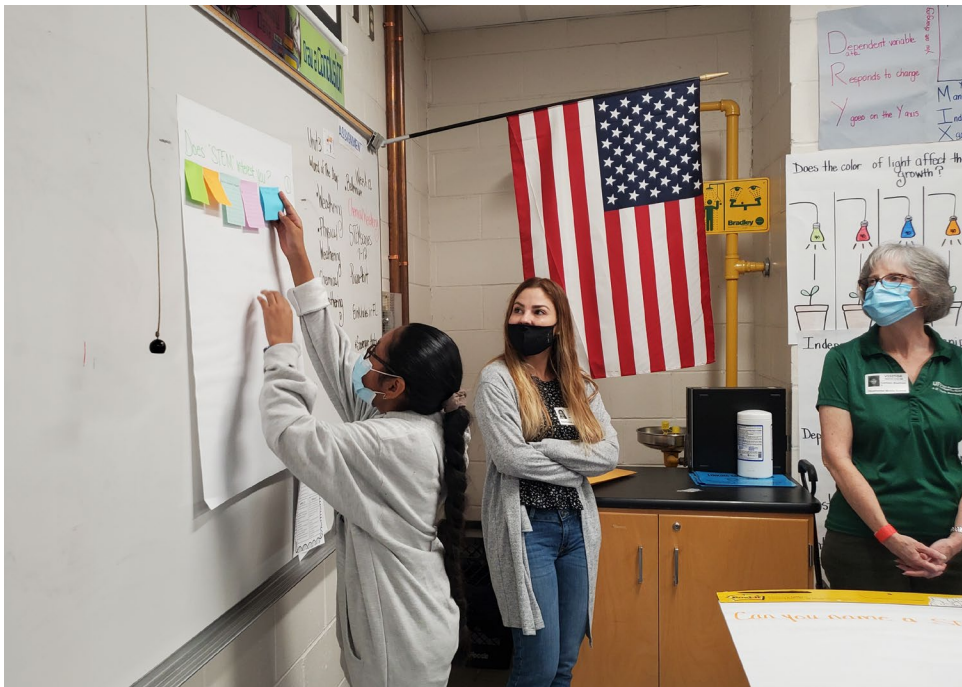
program. Some of the best practices participants said they would adopt include planting cover crops to improve soil conditions (55%), changing or improving irrigation (45%), rotating crops to reduce pests/disease pressure (40%), scouting for pests (35%), and growing a new crop (25%). Class instructors were Christine Kelly-Begazo and Yvette Goodiel.

Overall, the programs were very much appreciated by inmates and the education coordinator alike. The certificates issued will be there for inmates after release, to help them reintegrate into society and support themselves financially.

With community volunteers and newly graduated and enthused inmates returning to the garden now, everyone is excited for the growing season. Along with the current Farm Squad, a new cohort of inmates will be able to participate in Extension education programs this fall/winter/spring. We are currently developing a budget and scope for the season’s programs, which will likely expand to include the FNGLA Certified Horticulture Professional training, personal finance classes, a more extensive beginning farmer program, and pesticide license training.

## Palm Beach County 4-H, Florida Afterschool Network Awarded Grant

Noelle Guay, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Palm Beach County



Okeehelgee Middle School students identifying what they know and like about STEM.

With support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the STEM Next Opportunity Fund has accepted a proposal from Palm Beach County 4-H and the Florida Afterschool Network to identify, develop, and evaluate strategies for connecting STEM learning across settings for middle school girls. The effort is part of the Million Girls Moonshot, which seeks

to support growth of an engineering mindset and persistence in STEM programs for more middle school girls. The project, designed by Palm Beach County 4-H Agent Noelle Guay, will support this goal by developing and improving effective “hand-off” and coordination strategies that support STEM learning for middle school girls from groups underrepresented in

STEM fields. The STEM Next Fund is supporting this effort with \$50,000 in grants, and effective strategies will be shared across networks to facilitate their wide adoption.

Noelle is currently working with five local middle school STEM programs to help female students, underrepresented students, and their families find opportunities to transition from their current school STEM programs into new summer and high school STEM programs. 4-H, in coordination with the Palm Beach County Library System, will identify local high school and non-school STEM programs and lead targeted sessions at each middle school location culminating in a STEM opportunities research project. 4-H and the Palm Beach County Library system will also create a virtual repository of local STEM events, clubs, and programs on the main youth library homepage and teach youth and families how to utilize this site to find local STEM opportunities. 4-H and the libraries will work with local partners and other county agencies, including the Urban League of Palm Beach County, to develop and regularly populate and update this site to help remove barriers to youth participation in STEM.



# Farm to Fork Exhibition – A Day in Charlotte County History

Ralph E. Mitchell, Horticulture CED III, Charlotte County



A busy day at the Farm to Fork Exhibition.

Late in December 2019, Charlotte County's Centennial Quarterly Events Sub-Committee took on the Farm to Fork Exhibition, scheduled for July 2021. In 2019, the event seemed a long way off, but planning ahead and frequent meetings paid off. We took on this event to recognize and celebrate 100 years of agriculture in Charlotte County. Pulling together the resources of UF/IFAS Extension and Charlotte County, the Farm to Fork Exhibition showcased the food we produce and how we prepare it. The exhibition was a day full of education and fun, featuring local and regional food, educational exhibitors, vendors, food trucks, and workshops all related to agriculture and food.

Participating organizations included the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Ag in the Classroom, the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program, Peace River Seafood, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Fresh Access Bucks, Charlotte County Soil and Water Conservation District, Charlotte County History Department, and the Gulf Coast Beekeepers Association, to name just a few. Organizations provided seminar presentations on the cottage food industry, the Family Nutrition Program,

beekeeping, basic food preservation, community food systems, and multi-county agents' efforts in Charlotte County related to citrus and vegetable production. We also had a special whip-cracking demonstration provided by the Florida Cracker Trail Association, and all-day musical accompaniment by a local musician.

In all, the Farm to Fork Exhibition was a superior, meritorious success only witnessed once in a century, thanks to the combined input, knowledge, efforts, sweat, blood and tears of all involved – a real county partnership! In fact, it was a Centennial success! At the end of the day, the final tally of participants was at least 439!

The planning committee was comprised of Kristie Popa, UF/IFAS 4-H Agent; Cindy DiGiacomo, Community Services Coordinator; Holly Bates, Extension Program Manager; Paul Schumaker, Graphic Artist; Jessica Ryals, Agriculture & Sustainable Food Systems Agent, UF/IFAS Collier County; Kelly Wilson, FNP Food Systems Specialist; Andrea Moron, FNP Extension Program Manager; and Haydee Carbajal, FNP Extension Program Assistant — an ensemble of cross-county expertise, knowledge, and logistical talent.

A short survey of vendors found that 100% were satisfied with the Farm to Fork Exhibition regarding the number of participants. Another evaluation tool provided some feedback from participants. Overall, 73% were "Extremely Satisfied" with the event, while 27% indicated that they were "Moderately Satisfied." One participant commented "We had a great time. Vendors and shoppers were nice and engaging. The Extension team did a great job. Many thanks!"

Several people approached the committee wanting to have a table at the event next year. As a group, we thought, "OK, you mean in 2121 – the next Bicentennial in 100 years?" No, they meant *next year*! In reality, we may have created something that will continue celebrating agriculture year after year!

For more information on agriculture in Charlotte County, or more information on local Backyard Chicken Ordinances, please call Ralph Mitchell at (941) 764-4344 or e-mail – [shadowed@ufl.edu](mailto:shadowed@ufl.edu).

## Charlotte County Virtual Ag Tour

Ralph Mitchell, Horticulture CED III, Charlotte County

In the late 1800s, urban residents often visited rural areas in search of relief from heat and the business of the city. Just after World War II, people visited farming communities for a change of scenery and recreational opportunities. Sometimes agritourism and entertainment were combined into "agritainment" as the search for different types of recreation found in rural farming communities continued.

In 2021, COVID-19 changed Charlotte County's in-person ag tour to a virtual platform. The 2021 Virtual Ag Tour was a recreational and educational effort used to increase viewers' knowledge of where their food and textiles come from, as well as the processes and people involved in producing it. The United States produces the most abundant, diverse, safest, and most inexpensive food in the world, yet the

agriculture activities involved in its production are often out of sight to most consumers. This recorded virtual tour explored the history of agriculture and various agricultural operations in Charlotte County, including a visit to four local farms — Farabee Cattle, Melon 1, Iguanaland, and Peace River Organics — in order to gain a better understanding of a few of the different types of agriculture business, both



4-H/Youth Development Agent Kristie Popa (right) interviews farmer Rusty Daughtry at Farabee Cattle.

traditional and non-traditional, and what they bring to our community.

Since its release on March 18 as part of the [Charlotte County Centennial Celebration](#), the Virtual Ag Tour has been viewed by 569 people – over ten times the number of people we would have reached using the bus tour format! For more than 50 years, agritourism events such as this Ag Tour have offered Charlotte County residents a front-row seat demonstrating where their food and fiber comes from. Charlotte County has had a rich agriculture industry documented since the early 1930s, including their principal agricultural activities of truck farming, and cattle.

For more information, please contact Ralph E. Mitchell at [shadowed@ufl.edu](mailto:shadowed@ufl.edu), and see it for yourself at [2021 Charlotte County Agribusiness Tour - YouTube](#).

## Utilizing the Outdoors to Create a Sense of Belonging

Chelsea Woodard, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Seminole County



Crusaders 4-H Mud Walk

A sense of belonging is one of the essential elements of youth development and a critical component to the implementation of positive youth development (Kress, 2004). Belonging focuses on providing youth with a physically and emotionally safe space to learn and develop relationships. Because face-to-face interactions with peers and caring adults provide the ideal setting for building a sense of belonging, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the 4-H program. In 2020, 4-H was applauded for pivoting to virtual meetings, camps

and trainings; however, as we enter year two of COVID-19 precautions, many volunteers and youth are experiencing “COVID fatigue”. As necessary as safeguards may be, they have added stress to adolescents by changing their routines and decreasing face-to-face social connections. Volunteers and youth alike expressed the desire for face-to-face interactions while continuing COVID-19 precautions.

In late August 2021, as the new 4-H year began, Florida experienced another surge in COVID-19 cases. This caused many 4-H clubs to pause and rethink how they planned to meet during the fall. Several 4-H families in community clubs have immediate family members with medical conditions, increasing their risk of complications from COVID-19. To mitigate risk and provide a space for belonging, 4-H agents consulted with club leaders and provided guidance on outdoor 4-H projects to accommodate all 4-H families. Based on the need for belonging and face-to-face interactions, these clubs chose hiking as their 4-H project, utilizing Seminole County’s hiking trails and wilderness areas.

Through partnership with Seminole County Greenways and Natural Lands, the Crusaders 4-H Club participated in a Mud Walk at the Seminole County Environmental Studies Center. During this experience, 4-H’ers went on a guided hike through a section of the Spring Hammock Preserve. 4-H’ers learned about Seminole County’s unique environment and native species, while getting knee-deep in mud. The Crusaders also conducted a community service project at a



county beach in Ponce Inlet. 4-H'ers and their families spent two hours removing trash from the beach. This outdoor community service project fostered a sense of belonging and accomplished one of the club's performance standards.

The 4-H County Council has also adapted to outdoor activities. In early September, to accommodate all 4-H Council Officers the Seminole County 4-H Council Officer Training was conducted outside with masks and social distancing. Officers were trained on parliamentary procedure, parts of the 4-H meeting, team building, and leadership roles/responsibilities. In October, the 4-H County Council completed an outdoor community service project collecting trash by canoe along the Wekiva River. Officers were paired up in canoes, provided trash grabbers and plastic bags. This outdoor activity served not only as a community service project for the 4-H Council, but also as a team-building and communication exercise.

A recent study cited many physical and mental health benefits associated with exposure to nature: "Studies exploring connections between physical activity and exposure to nature

demonstrate that these two factors work synergistically to provide greater positive impacts on physical and mental health than physical activity alone" (Jackson, et al. 2021). Through outdoor activities 4-H agents, adult volunteers, youth and parents are increasing their face-to-face social interactions, decreasing their sedentary lifestyle and experiencing a sense of belonging. A 4-H Council Historian explained, "I felt much safer outside because my brother is immune compromised and we could do more active activities...if the activities were not outside, I would have to join them with Zoom or not at all."

## References

- Jackson, S. B., K. T. Stevenson, L. R. Larson, M. N. Peterson, and E. Seekamp. 2021. "Outdoor Activity Participation Improves Adolescents' Mental Health and Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 5: 2506. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052506>
- Kress, C. 2004. Essential elements of 4-H youth development. National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES USDA.

## 4-H Take-out: Reaching Youth During the Pandemic

Jessica Altum, 4-H Youth Development CED II, Gilchrist County



Building a stomp rocket with the take home kit provided by UF/IFAS Extension science and technology project.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, participation in youth programs declined dramatically. In-person events and activities were minimized and many school moved to an online format. With the suspension and reduction of many 4-H events and activities, a new approach was needed to reach youth.

4-H agents from Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor counties joined to create 4-H Take-out, a package of project-based, theme-focused activities to encourage experiential learning and youth-adult engagement. A takeaway grab bag was developed containing lessons, materials and a project book that the 4-H'er could pick up from the county office. The takeaway contents were completed either at home or as part of a virtual 4-H club experience. A wide variety of topics were included: Physics, Outdoor Exploration, Kitchen Science and Watch it Grow (Plants).

4-H Take-out supported youth learning in science, engineering, and communication. In post-program evaluations, 86% (n=232) of youth indicated they gained knowledge about the topics. A total of 47 youth —94% of whom were first timers—turned in record books for awards. This new collaborative effort strengthened agent relationships across five counties and kept youth engaged in 4-H programs during a time of limited in-person club meetings.

Agents participating included Shawn Jackson, Lafayette County; Beth Moore, Madison County; Abbey Tharpe, Taylor County; Kim Glasscock (program assistant), NFREC-Suwannee Valley; and Beth Kerr, Hamilton County.



## Friend of 4-H Award Presented to Citrus County 4-H Foundation

Jessica Altum, 4-H Youth Development CED II, Gilchrist County



Citrus County 4-H Foundation members and agent at their annual rodeo event.

Each year, Florida 4-H recognizes outstanding individuals who benefited 4-H youth programs through the Friend of 4-H Award. In 2021, the Citrus County 4-H Foundation directors received this award at the annual Extension Professional Associations of Florida (EPAF) conference in September.

Founded in 1986, the mission of the Foundation directors is to support Citrus County 4-H programs. They devote countless hours and much “sweat equity” to develop financial resources that provide educational opportunities for youth in our community. As advocates for UF/IFAS

Extension, they dedicate energy to the ideals and financial sustainability of the Citrus County 4-H program.

The current volunteer Foundation directors are Hal Porter, President; Wayne Sessa, Vice-President; Bob Iverson, Treasurer; Andy Hunnicutt, Secretary; Marlene Law, Rodeo Chairwomen; Lisa Gray, member;

Burt Stevens, member; Tony Wiesen, member; Cindy Connolly, member; Carrie Landry, member; and David Tomczak, member. While not named here, the investment of past foundation directors contributed directly to the success of the 4-H program today.

Early on, the directors raised money by organizing banquets and silent auctions. This changed in 1995, when the Foundation planned and produced the first Citrus Stampede Rodeo. Current Foundation president Hal Porter said: “We had a dream, then .... to raise \$100,000 for our county 4-H program.” The Foundation surpassed

their initial goal with this annual tradition, and this year marked the 25th Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo, held November 19-20 at the Citrus County Fairgrounds.

The Foundation’s ongoing commitment supports the 4-H program. Funds are used in 4-H Public Speaking, classroom STEM programs, and 4-H Club work in small group settings. The outcome? Growing the next generation of community leaders through experiential projects and youth-adult partnerships that develop citizenship, leadership, and responsibility. Raising money for the local 4-H program leverages the benefits to the larger community.

The Foundation seeks to build confident youth that see themselves as active participants in the future. They support youth in opportunities for self-determination by funding 4-H graduating seniors with scholarships. The scholarship recipients may attend two-year or four-year colleges or trade/technical schools. Since 2000, 64 4-H alumni realized their goals for a brighter future through education. Together, students received over \$100,000 in scholarships. These scholarships reflect the commitment of the Foundation to the futures of Citrus County youth.

## Maintaining A Relationship with County Government

Jessica Altum, 4-H Youth Development CED II, Gilchrist County



Hamilton County Coordinator Loui Goodin (left) receives an update from Hamilton County CED Greg Hicks.

Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders is imperative to assure the survival and success of local county Extension offices. A stakeholder is someone involved with an organization, who has an interest in

its success and the capacity to generate goodwill and obtain resources for support. One such stakeholder is the board of county commissioners.

Hamilton County is a small, rural north Florida county which has a “County Coordinator” in place to handle general information concerning administrative matters. The County Coordinator (CC) is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners. This position operates under and reports directly to the board. In Hamilton County, the County Extension Director (CED) is considered a department head; all department heads meet monthly, led by the CC. Following the chain of command, the CED reports to the CC on current programs, program results in the county, future programs and budgetary matters. With the

agent's approval, the CED also shares privately each agent's individual UF annual appraisal results. As a liaison to the board of commissioners, the CC reports any necessary information to the board.

Hamilton County is fortunate to have a CC who lives on a farm and who previously owned an agri-supply business for many years. His children (and now grandchildren) were/are members of Hamilton 4-H and participate in our annual livestock show. The Clerk of the Circuit Court for Hamilton County also had children heavily involved in 4-H, and he still serves on our youth livestock show board. Three commissioners have beef cattle operations and periodically attend our beef cattle production meetings. One Commissioner is a large-scale row crop producer and regularly attends our crop production meetings. To engage all the commissioners in an Extension activity and help keep Extension continually visible in the community, a plaque is given at a scheduled board meeting to the Hamilton County Farm Family of the Year. This recipient is selected annually by

the UF/IFAS Extension Agricultural Advisory Council. During this presentation, the CED promotes Extension and gives a brief background on the family being honored. Following the presentation, the commissioners, the CED, and the farm family are featured together in the local newspaper. Beth Kerr (4-H/FCS Agent), along with some of her 4-H members, also give a "State of Local 4-H" address to the commissioners during National 4-H week.

These simple but effective actions help maintain a positive relationship with an important Extension stakeholder, the board of county commissioners. This relationship has not only rewarded Hamilton County Extension by not receiving any budgetary cuts during the past two years of COVID, but our faculty and staff have received salary increases during both budget cycles. Furthermore, after the "State of Local 4-H" presentation to the commissioners, the board, unprompted, unanimously voted to give the 4-H program a onetime \$3,000 contribution (in addition to the annual 4-H budget) to help with program funding!

## A New Resource! Plant This, Not That: A Guide to Avoiding Invasive Plant Species in Florida

Tina McIntyre, Florida Friendly Landscaping EA I, Seminole County

Dr. Morgan Pinkerton, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems EA II, Seminole County



An invasive plant is defined by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) as a plant which sustains itself outside of cultivation and expands its range into and within Florida ecosystems. These invasive species can degrade our natural resources, cause management problems in agricultural fields, and can be very costly. (See [infographic](#))

There is a new book at the UF/IFAS Extension Bookstore that can help you and your clients select the right non-invasive plants! *Plant This Not That: A Guide to Avoiding Invasive Plant Species in Florida* is a field-friendly guide that features over 20 entries, each detailing a commercially available invasive plant. Each entry contains:

- the common and scientific names of the plant
- a description of its appearance, growth habit, distribution, and range in Florida
- the ecological implications of the plant
- alternative plants or approved cultivars to plant instead

Plant This Not That can be ordered from the [UF/IFAS Extension Bookstore](#).



# 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

Dr. Andra Johnson, Dean and Director, UF/IFAS Extension and Florida Cooperative Extension Service

Jessica Alfonso, Prg EA I, Miami Dade County

Kalan Royal, EA I, Highlands County

Sara Murphy, EA I, Seminole County

Dr. Rod Greder, EA III, Sarasota County

David Herbert, EA I, Nassau County

Elaine Giles, EA I, Clay County

Christine Russo, EA I, Manatee County

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

## Departures

Mimi Vreeland, Residential Hort EA I, Flagler County

Rachel Biderman, EFNEP Prg EA I, Miami Dade County

Alyssa Bowers, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Pinellas County