

An Equal Opportunity Institution

SOLUTIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cindy Sanders, Farm Bureau's
Extension Professional of the Year 2

Lara Milligan Leads Visitors Through
'The Wildest Place in Pinellas' 3

IPM Scouting Workshops Improve Skills
of Greenhouse/Nursery Employees..... 4

Enhancing Best Management Practices
for Ag in Central District.....5

Ag Adventures a Virtual Success 5

Pumpkins for a Purpose 6

COMINGS & GOINGS 7

New Hires 7

Transfers 7

Departures 7

Retirement..... 7

UF/IFAS Extension Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION



What You Should Know About the New Leader of UF/IFAS Extension

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



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



Dr. Andra Johnson

There's a new leader for nearly 650 Extension agents and specialists who work in every Florida county to help growers stay profitable and to help all Floridians lead better lives. Dr. Andra Johnson starts as Dean of UF/IFAS Extension and Director of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service on November 1.

Here's why I chose Johnson from among six highly qualified finalists who interviewed in two rounds of searches:

He's an aggie. Johnson pledges to keep a focus on production agriculture. The vision he presented for modernizing Extension includes an expansion of service to production agriculture.

Johnson grew up in rural Louisiana in a family that raised cattle, cotton, corn, and wheat. His aunt served more than 30 years at USDA. He has previously worked at three land-grant universities and earned three academic degrees from land-grants.

Florida ag leaders supported his candidacy. Whatever you grow, your commodity association was likely represented on the search committee or at the stakeholder interviews of the candidates.

He wants your agent to stay your agent. We lose too many agents too early in their careers. Sometimes you hire them, and that's OK. But Johnson has a vision for removing the university-created drivers of attrition. He plans to beef up support so agents are not bogged down in administrative duties instead of the programming they'd rather be doing.

He'll advocate for higher salaries to retain high-performing agents. And he'll work to improve the promotion process that ultimately gives an agent freedom to determine in concert with stakeholders how best to serve the local community as well as job security to build years-long relationships.

He's a triple threat. In addition to Extension administration experience, he has taught extensively, and he has a record securing funding for research. He has also skillfully integrated the three major land-grant mission areas—using classes in agricultural Extension, for example, as a training ground for future agents.

Johnson will be his own man. One of my few directives to him will be to get out of the office and visit you. As of this writing, I've visited 47 of our 67 Extension offices. I want Johnson to get to them all before I do, and to visit with stakeholders like you while he's at it. Please invite him to your farms as well.

Johnson has been emerging as a national leader who represents the future of Extension. At UF/IFAS, we're in the business of getting you to the future first, ahead of your national and global competitors.

Cindy Sanders, Farm Bureau's Extension Professional of the Year

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



Dr. Cindy Sanders with Kevin Morgan (l) and John Hoblick (r)

Cindy Sanders didn't have to be lured to the UF/IFAS Extension Farm Bureau appreciation dinner in August. She organizes it with other Extension agents. She even personally prepared the night's most popular dish, blueberry cobbler.

So she was doing what she's usually doing—working to support the Farm Bureau—when President John Hoblick stood up and started an announcement. He wanted to recognize someone who grew up in the Farm Bureau family—as a teenager, she had been the organization's Miss Florida Agriculture. Her father had worked for the Farm Bureau as

a field rep. Her roots run deep as a 6th generation agriculturalist growing up on her grandfather's citrus and cattle ranch in Polk County.

Wait.... Sanders thought when she heard that at the back of the room.... *That's me.*

Then Hoblick announced that Dr. Cindy Sanders had been named the Farm Bureau Extension Professional of the Year.

She wiped her hands off and went to the lectern

to accept. Clearly surprised by the announcement, she jokingly thanked Hoblick for not revealing the year she was Miss Florida Ag.

Although the Miss Florida Ag program is no longer, Sanders has carried on the ambassadorial role. For decades she has connected people to their food and to Farm Bureau members who produce it. She has delivered county commissioners, congressional staffers and the public to your Alachua County farms to hear about the importance of ag in the county and the state. She's led busloads of people to dozens of local farms over the years, handing the

tour guide microphone along the way to the county Farm Bureau president.

She has partnered with Farm Bureau to shepherd hundreds of children a year through a series of where-does-your-food-come-from stations at the county fair. It has given youth a chance to milk cows, to taste local peanuts and to play "beef bingo."

In her capacity as leader of the Alachua County Farm Bureau Women's Committee, Sanders has even set up a table outside local supermarkets to talk agriculture with shoppers. With Farm Bureau-supplied gift certificates, she has enticed them to the table to listen to the story of local agriculture during Food Check Out Week.

Sanders has technical and academic expertise as a triple Gator with advanced degrees in animal science and Extension leadership. She is an expert in livestock, and in her pre-UF/IFAS days managed a local ranch. But there was never a pre-Farm Bureau era. Even then, while in the private sector, she served on the Alachua County Farm Bureau board.

Since she became the county Extension director 14 years ago, she's distinguished herself through leadership as much as through technical assistance. She serves on

Alachua County's Rural Concerns Committee, an advisory panel for county government. In 2018, in recognition of her dedication to serving the Farm Bureau, she was appointed an ad hoc member of the Alachua County Farm Bureau board, and she's there every month.

She called it an honor to be nominated by the Alachua County Farm Bureau and President Richard Feagle for an

award whose previous winners include [Bob Hochmuth](#), [Gene McAvoy](#), [Libbie Johnson](#) and [Danielle Sprague](#).

Sanders's leadership proved instrumental in a years-long effort to get a new Extension office in Alachua County that will allow for the expansion of programming and increased public accessibility by moving to a site with many more residential neighbors. Sanders expects to open the new office

this month and to hold a ribbon cutting this fall.

The ribbon cutting will be another opportunity for her to tell the ag story. It's yet another way she'll bring commissioners, citizens and farmers together. That's what Extension professionals do. I'm proud to have Farm Bureau recognize that few do it better than Dr. Cindy Sanders.

Lara Milligan Leads Visitors Through 'The Wildest Place in Pinellas'

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



Lara Milligan leads hike.

It's known as the wildest place in Pinellas County. It might also be the quietest. It's one of the few places out of earshot of traffic.

The [Brooker Creek Preserve](#) can change your relationship to the natural world—or create one if your life is all cars, buildings, parking lots and industry. Its lone public university scientist uses the 8,700 acres and teaching programs throughout the community to inspire people to create a bit of Brooker in their backyards.

That could mean landscaping with native species, shutting off sprinklers, using fewer pesticides or installing rain sensors. And if the Preserve and its educators really reach you, they even hope to see you at a beach cleanup, sample local waters for microplastics or clear a storm drain of debris to reduce water pollution.

With the support of a team of Pinellas County employees and the county-owned Preserve, the University of Florida's [Lara Milligan](#) has since her arrival nine years ago succeeded in doubling the number of people who go from "I've driven by that a million times" to "I'll be back." She also teaches throughout the community to bring the spirit of Brooker far outside the boundaries of the Preserve and across those of the three counties—Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco—that meet near the Preserve's northern border.

That spirit is that everyone can play a role in making the region a little wilder, with slightly cleaner water and air, with more vigilance for its critters and to see those animals as neighbors rather than nuisance. Come to Brooker and you're guaranteed to see a wild turkey, a coyote or a bobcat, albeit as taxidermy ambassadors in the visitor center. But if you're lucky you can see a live one on a hike, whether on your own or on one of Milligan's guided hikes. You're likely to see a gopher tortoise and a gator (as well as, of course, a Gator: Milligan has two conservation degrees from UF).

Milligan is a natural resources agent for UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County. It's her publicly funded job to deliver the science of the natural world to the public. Using the century-old Extension model that has traditionally helped people preserve or grow food, Milligan brings what we know about how we can protect the environment and translates it so every homeowner, gardener, beachgoer and Pinellas County resident can weave conservation into their habits and habitats.

Her message is that you don't need to be an expert to make an impact. In fact, she "discovered" Extension only when she applied for her current job. It set her on a course to develop programs like her water steward course, to launch the [Naturally Florida podcast](#) and to teach at Brooker and beyond about coyotes, your place in a watershed or why flatwoods, hammocks and forested wetlands matter.

Her leadership as an environmental educator earned her election by her peers as a past president of the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals and recognition as a national Project Learning Tree Educator of the Year.

She's a valuable resource, just as Brooker is. Please visit her at the Preserve, enroll in her courses, volunteer for her beach cleanups or support her call for the establishment of more living shorelines to put nature to work for us protecting our coast.

If you're too busy for that, at least consider reflecting on the spirit of the Preserve and perhaps bringing a bit of Brooker to your backyard.

IPM Scouting Workshops Improve Skills of Greenhouse/Nursery Employees

Dr. Liz Felter, Food Systems/Commercial Hort/IPM RSA IV, Central District

Ornamental production is challenging because of the diversity of crops grown, pest problems, consumers' lack of tolerance for less than aesthetic perfection, and potential economic losses due to failure. Increases in pest resistance, chemical costs, and public concern over environmental risks raises the need for alternatives to conventional pest control methods. There is a great need to elevate the awareness of using IPM tactics to reduce chemical use and increase the utilization of other practices that have less impact on the environment.

By training IPM scouts and applicators to recognize pests and anticipate potential insect and disease pressures, growers can plan to implement biological control or use low-risk pesticides to reduce pesticide resistance and avoid use of older classes of chemicals that have high potential for environmental consequences. While online trainings work well for some topics, there is extreme value in hands-on classes for IPM scouting and insect and disease identification, as these skills are best developed through practice. It is important to note that this marks the 25th consecutive year the UF/IFAS Scouting Class has been offered, and this year, the program received the NACAA's National Search for Excellence in Consumer or Commercial Horticulture Award.

Program Activities: This workshop is a three day mini-series that runs from 9 am – 4 pm each session. It is limited to the first 25 registrations because of the intense number of hands-on activities. Spanish translation is available upon request on the registration form. Participants were taught how to identify insect pests, beneficial insects, weeds, diseases, nematodes and abiotic symptoms, how to monitor soil pH and fertility and the importance of water quality. The program is a team

effort that consists of five commercial horticulture Extension agents (Hannah Wooten, Brooke Moffis, Matt Smith, Grantly Ricketts and Morgan Pinkerton) and four Extension research specialists from the UF/IFAS Mid-Florida Research and Education Center (Dr. Lance Osborne, Dr. Dave Norman, Dr. JJ Chen and Dr. Chris Marble).

Teaching methods: Participants attended a three-part nursery/greenhouse scouting workshop to improve their skills in developing action plans for insect, weed, disease, and abiotic pest problems. Each participant received a notebook with class materials as a reference for future scouting endeavors. The workshop has two sponsors, and they provided a 10x hand lens to each participant along with pocket sized identification card decks and reference books and meals. Each day begins with PowerPoint presentations followed by lab demonstrations. The whole class attends a field trip at the end of each session where they take their hand lens, a clipboard and record keeping sheets into a local greenhouse or nursery and practice what they have learned. The participants also have homework assignments such as to bring in a plant with a problem, a weed for identification, or insects or plants with diseases for the whole class to discuss. They also are given a yellow sticky card to trap insects at their job site and asked to bring it back to class the following week for discussion.

Results: A total of 67 people have received IPM Scout training between 2018 and 2020 offerings. According to post-test results, 75% increased their pest identification skills. Additionally, 83% stated their job performance would increase. Early detection of plant problems would allow the growers to use the least toxic means of control. One of the owners who sent at least two employees to this annual class

stated, "My employees come back energized and say they are proud of where they work and what they do."

Impacts: Although the US economy is struggling, the average consumer is spending more time at home and spending on indoor foliage and home landscape materials have increased. Producers have struggled to keep a steady work force. This class provides basic terminology and skills to workers that do not have any experience in the industry as well as educating workers that want to diversify their skills. The series develops skills for entry-level workers and elevates the skills of existing employees of the greenhouse/nursery workforce and provides a toolkit to assist employees on the job. By gaining knowledge about IPM scouting the workers have provided themselves with an avenue for increasing their income. According to the evaluation results a dollar an hour pay raise would equate to \$2,000 more per year.

Evaluation: Based on a post-test, 84% of attendees (n=66) increased their pest identification skills. Ninety-three percent of attendees indicated their job performance would improve as a result of the series. Almost 77 % indicated they had implemented one or more IPM practice at their job site. In a follow up survey with participants from the 2018 class (n=21), 100% agreed or strongly agreed that what they learned in the class was useful in their job. Based on survey data 29% reported the training helped them get a higher paying job or a pay raise at their current position. The amount of money received was a dollar more per hour. Thus, increasing the worker's income by \$2080 per year that can be returned to the local economy.

Enhancing Best Management Practices for Ag in Central District

Dr. Yilin Zhuang, Water Resources EA I, Central District/MFREC

Farmers have implemented Best Management Practices (BMPs) that maintain or improve water quality on their lands for many years on a voluntary basis. For farmers in an area with a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP), however, the requirements have changed. The 2016 Florida Water Bill states that BMP implementation in impaired watersheds, such as the Silver Springs Basin, is required or alternatively, the producers must show the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) that they are in compliance through water quality monitoring at the farmers' expense.

Agencies in the Central District, such as the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - Office of Agricultural Water Policy (FDACS-OAWP), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), St. Johns Water Management District (SJRWMD), Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), as well as the UF/IFAS Extension and research faculty, work in the region on various aspects of BMP research, education, promotion and implementation. It can be difficult for farmers, agencies and UF/IFAS representatives to fully understand who is doing what regarding BMPs in the region and to obtain the most current information. A need exists for stakeholders to consolidate as a group and meet on a regular basis to share information and updates, discuss research and education needs, and discuss ways to collaborate to increase knowledge regarding BMPs

and enhance efforts towards BMP implementation among producers.

Therefore, the Central District Agricultural BMP Working Group was established. This group meets quarterly to share information and updates regarding cost share opportunities, research, education and outreach needs, and ways to collaborate to promote and increase BMP adoption among farmers in the region. The Central District Water Resources Regional Specialized Agent (RSA) coordinates and facilitates the meetings and discussions. Multiple stakeholder groups in the region, including FDCAS-OAWP, NRCS, SWFWMD, SJRWMD and Soil and Water Conservation Districts attend the meetings. Attendance has ranged from 22 to 28 participants per meeting, and meetings have been expanded to include educational presentations and field trips. The annual evaluation revealed that the working group found the meetings very helpful. They improved their understanding of knowledge of collaborations between agencies in the region (77%); Ag BMP regulations and/or technologies (69%); and communications with researchers (54%). The group has also developed a [factsheet](#) that outlines the cost share opportunities and requirements from different agencies in the region. We foresee more collaborative efforts to enhance the implementation of agricultural BMPs result from the working group.

Ag Adventures a Virtual Success

Marie Arick, FCS CED I, Liberty County



Liberty County 4-H Ag Adventures youth show off their goody bags.

Ag Adventures is a 4-H fall program that invites schools to bring 4th grade students to the North Florida Research and Education Center in Quincy for a field day to educate youth about many facets of agriculture. The COVID-19 pandemic has thwarted our program for past two years. This year, because

activities as well-rounded and interactive as those of a traditional program. Not only did the youth participate through many virtual activities, but also had peanut, cotton, corn, and pumpkins available for a variety of in-classroom activities. Liberty County youth that participated

of yet another cancelation, we responded by creating a virtual Ag Adventures!

Due to the great efforts of many agents throughout the Florida panhandle and in coordination with Liberty County Office Manager Cathia Schmarje, a closed Google site was created to provide educational

this year also received a goody bag, an ornamental pumpkin and a popcorn party.

Many thanks to the Florida Peanut Producers and Mr. Ken Barton, Regional Specialized Crop Agent Ethan Carter, and UF/IFAS Extension Calhoun County CED Daniel Leonard for providing peanut and cotton plants; Ace Hardware in Bristol for donating seed packets; Aunt Louise's Farm in Monticello for pumpkins; Sweet Pea Farm in Bristol and Mark and Jo Plummer for corn; as well as Ag in the Classroom for providing activity books, Farm Bureau Federation for corn activity booklet, and Nutrien® for the Seed Survivor Activity.

While there was no true farm experience this, the farm instead made the trip to three county schools. Happy fall and happy Ag Adventures! If you would like more information, please contact me jmarick@ufl.edu

Pumpkins for a Purpose

Allie Anderson, 4-H Youth Development EA I, St. Johns County



A 4-H youth harvesting a pumpkin from the field.



A 4-H youth sorting the pumpkins.

The start of a new 4-H year brought new youth and new ideas to the St. Johns County 4-H Program. One of the most unique of these was the 4-H Pumpkin Project, which educates youth about harvesting, agribusiness, entrepreneurship, food safety and culinary arts. Throughout the fall season, 4-H members furthered their knowledge of the pumpkin industry at three hands-on learning opportunities led by Extension agents from St. Johns and Flagler counties.

At the first meeting, youth traveled to the UF/IFAS Hastings Agriculture Extension Center. St. Johns County Agriculture Extension Agent Prissy Fletcher oversaw a half-acre pumpkin demonstration supported by the county's BOCC. The plot boasted twelve specialty varieties. The 4-H'ers had hands-on opportunities to learn about farm safety, equipment, harvesting techniques, grading and pumpkin varieties. They worked to harvest many different varieties in preparation for their second meeting date. At the end of harvesting,

one youth stated that he never knew there were so many types of pumpkins!

The excitement about varieties brought enthusiasm to our second meeting, where 4-H'ers hosted a pumpkin stand for the public. This meeting had an emphasis on agribusiness, entrepreneurship and community service. Funds raised from the pumpkin stand were used in a community service effort. St. Johns County 4-H Extension Agent Allie Anderson worked with the 4-H'ers to enhance their professional toolkit by developing their skills in communication, leadership and citizenship. Youth also learned how skills such as relationship building and responsibility related to business management. Under Allie's guidance, youth spoke with local growers to conduct a needs assessment

regarding the agricultural community. With the results, they used their new skillsets to make a difference in the community by utilizing the funds to address an agriculture-related community need.

The final meeting is set to take place in November, where youth will bring their pumpkins to the table! With instruction from St. Johns and Flagler County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agents Wendy Lynch and Melanie Thomas, youth will learn how to prepare their pumpkins for eating and turn them into delicious treats. In addition to learning how to follow recipes, there will also be an emphasis placed on food safety, nutrition and culinary techniques.

The St. Johns County 4-H Pumpkin Project allows youth to explore the different aspects of the food system chain while celebrating the fun of the fall season. The St. Johns County 4-H program is looking forward to working with a diverse team of Extension agents to continue the Pumpkin Project for many years to come.

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

Cynthia Nazario-Leary, Environmental Horticulture EA II, Alachua County

Lourdes Perez Cordero, ANR EA I, Highlands County

Mary Lee Sale, 4-H Youth Development EA II, Alachua County

Rebecca Elliott, FCS/Food Systems EA I, Marion County

Dr. Hamutahl Cohen, Commercial Horticulture EA II, Collier County

Dr. Candi Dierenfield, 4-H SSA IV, Statewide

Allison Williams, Small Farms/Alternative Enterprises EA I, Hillsborough County

Dr. Stephen Jennewein, ANR EA II, Duval County

Sheri Trent, Ag/4-H Youth Development Program EA I, Seminole Tribe

Kaitlyn McCarty, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Indian River County

Christopher Lauen, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Holmes County

Transfers

Maxine Hunter, From Ag/Residential Horticulture to ANR EA II, Marion County

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

Departures

Jose Zayas-Bermudez, 4-H Youth Development EA II, Hardee County

Charles Barrett, Water Resources RSA II, NE District

Virgilia Zabala, FCS EA I, Orange County

Retirement

Suzanne Fundingsland, FNP Program EA II, Collier County

Ed Thralls, Urban Horticulture EA III, Orange County