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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.

UF/IFAS Extension *Comings & Goings*

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION



A MESSAGE FROM DR. SCOTT ANGLE

By J. Scott Angle



Excerpted from remarks delivered to EPAF on September 3.

I work for you. My philosophy is one of servant leadership. I don't do research, I don't teach and I don't extend knowledge to 22 million Floridians. My job is to support you.

All universities teach. Many do research. Only land-grants have people in every community in their state, helping farmers, families, children and others improve their lives.

You are community leaders. I want you to assume national leadership roles. Good examples are Gene McAvoy, president of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents; and Lara Milligan, who is president of the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals.

To do Extension in a state as diverse as ours calls for a strong partnership between UF/IFAS and FAMU.

My thanks go to FAMU's Vonda Richardson for the leadership she has shown.

There are many Extension success stories, but I highlight five here:

- The COVID-19 crisis inspired Sumter County urban horticulture agent Norma Samuel to start a YouTube channel called, "[Let's Talk Gardening](#)." Norma has also advised a city employee on how to tend a community garden, sometimes through virtual field visits, and the garden has produced vegetables for 25 families in need.
- Noelle Guay, a 4-H agent in Palm Beach County, started a robotics club led by three university students on the autism spectrum. A 4-H'er named Arne, who is also on the spectrum, had previously been withdrawn in a previous club's meetings, but has now started leading activities. He became a counselor at a 4-H day camp, and in February he represented Florida at a national conference in Washington D.C., where he presented his work to students from across the country.
- Hillsborough County small farms agent Francisco Rivera helped Wendy Altman become a farmer. She had moved to an 11-acre farm in the Tampa area and found neglected pasture. She spent thousands of dollars with little to show for it. Rivera had her soil tested. He taught her about best management practices. He even tested several types of winter forages on her ranch. Altman has called Rivera's advice "priceless." But we can price it out when we consider that she's saving close to \$10,000 a year because of Rivera.

- Escambia County natural resources agent Carrie Stevenson teaches a Master Naturalist class that includes the history of the Blackwater River as a former lumber route. Three students in her class launched kayak tours as their capstone project. Their tours signaled that the river, long dormant as a route for floating timber, could once again spring to economic life as a site of ecotourism.
- Sea Grant agent Savanna Barry of the Nature Coast Biological Station has taken the “Florida-friendly” concept to the water. There had been no professional development for

fishing charter guides. Savanna took the lead on developing the [Florida-Friendly Fishing Guide program](#) to certify professionals in science-based practices for proper fish handling and release and sustainable boating.

I support all areas of Extension programming, from Café Latino to water to natural resources to community development. Let me know what I can do to help you. After all, I work for you.

UF/IFAS EXTENSION IN-SERVICE TRAININGS – WHAT ARE THEY AND WHO ARE THEY FOR?

Saqib Mukhtar, Mike Gutter, and Tom Obreza

In September of each year, the Extension Dean’s Office solicits In-Service Training (IST) ideas and proposals from county and state faculty to advance professional development across the organization. Associate Deans/Program Leaders (AD/PL) review IST proposals in their program areas. Successful proposals are submitted to the Professional Development and Evaluation Center’s website for final approval by the appropriate AD/PL.

All Extension faculty are encouraged to develop and conduct ISTs. These virtual and in-person trainings are a key part of the continuous academic and core competency improvement of our faculty and staff. ISTs should be designed to increase faculty competencies through enhanced knowledge, skills, as well as expertise in different subject matters for effectively conducting educational programs for their clients and stakeholders. It is important for all of us to understand

that ISTs are intended only for IFAS/Extension faculty and staff as the audience. Inviting and registering IST participants other than Extension faculty and staff is not appropriate. There are no restrictions on inviting trainers outside IFAS/Extension.

Please follow this guideline before submitting your IST idea, and before developing and conducting ISTs for the professional development of our faculty and staff. Thank you!

New & Notable Programs

Saqib Mukhtar (Associate Dean for Extension), Holly Ober, and Maia McGuire (Associate Program Leaders)

STATEWIDE AGENT/SPECIALIST TEAMS

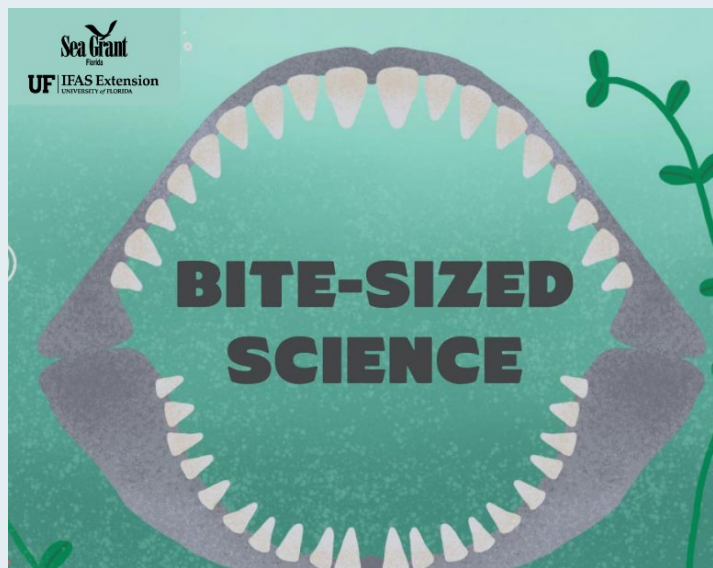
To build on our strong foundation and national reputation and enhance agent-specialist collaborations, Statewide Extension Education Core Teams are being established. These teams will be an information source for new and existing county and state faculty to stay up to date on statewide educational programs. The first two teams formed are the Industrial Hemp (IH) Extension Education Team, led by Dr. Zack Brym; and the Ag BMP Core Team, led by Dr. Lakesh Sharma. Team members meet regularly to get input and ideas on elevating current programming, developing educational materials and information, and provide and receive feedback on IH and BMPs projects. Information on the Ag BMP Team and related activities and educational materials can be found in a monthly newsletter <https://bmp.ifas.ufl.edu/news/> and website <https://bmp.ifas.ufl.edu/>. For questions related to the Ag BMP education and teams, please contact Dr. Lakesh Sharma lakesh.sharma@ufl.edu.

Information on the IH project and resources is available at <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/hemp/>. Click [Hemp Experts](#) for a list of statewide IH team members. To find out more on the IH project, please contact Dr. Zack Brym at brymz@ufl.edu

INTERESTED IN VIRTUAL TRAININGS ON INVASIVE SPECIES?

These days, we are all doing most of our teaching and learning remotely. Fortunately, there are many opportunities for each of us to learn from one another, so that we are better equipped to answer questions for our clientele. Below are three virtual trainings scheduled for October, intended to help you learn more about invasive species so that you are ready to address emerging issues. Each is part of an ongoing series, so if you’re unable to tune in for these specific events, consider tuning in for the next offering within each series.

BITE-SIZED SCIENCE/BOCADOS DE CIENCIA



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UF/IFAS Extension Sea Grant faculty teamed up to create the Bite-sized Science Webinar Series. Each webinar is a 30-minute presentation followed by a Q&A session. Initially, webinars were scheduled each weekday from April 20 to May 29; in June and July the frequency was reduced to twice a week. For the first six weeks, presentations were arranged in five categories, loosely corresponding to Florida Sea Grant's focus areas: Florida's habitats and species; fish and fisheries; threats to coastal habitats and species; sustainability and climate change; and aquaculture and seafood. For the spring and summer "semesters," 894 individuals watched at least one of the 45 Bite-sized Science webinars live, for a combined number of live views of over 2,600. Based on zip codes, people have joined from at least 31 states, 8 countries and 56 counties within Florida. All webinars were recorded; to date, there have been over 5,800 views of the recordings. A follow-up Qualtrics survey is used to measure the registrant's intent to change behavior. Of the 228 responses, 94% plan to share information they have learned with others, and 82% plan to use what they have learned. There were 143 responses listing specific actions that people planned to take as a result of the webinars. The webinar series has already resulted in the donation of funds to a coral restoration initiative, as well as the adoption of webinar content for 4-H virtual summer marine camps and virtual Florida Master Naturalist programs.

This fall, the Bite-sized Science webinar series will include webinars in Spanish (as "Bocados de Ciencia"). These are being offered at 4 pm on Tuesdays from 9/15 through 12/8/2020 (except 11/24). A separate suite of webinars is being offered in English at 4 pm on Thursdays from 9/17 through 12/10/2020.

To view upcoming Bite-sized Science topics and to register for webinars, visit: <http://bit.ly/bite-sizedscience>.

APPLE SNAILS

UF/IFAS Invasive Species Council Training Webinar Series

Speaker – Dr. Shirley Baker, Associate Professor in the UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation

This webinar series (offered on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 2-3pm) is designed for UF/IFAS Extension professionals. Each session provides attendees with information and resources (slide sets, EDIS documents, etc.) to share with their clientele on Florida's most pressing invasive species issues.

Visit <https://invasivespecies.ifas.ufl.edu/for-agents/> to join our Microsoft TEAMS group. Contact Emily Bell with any questions: ecbell@ufl.edu

GLYPHOSATE

Nature Knowledge Webinar Series

Speaker: Stephen Enloe, Associate Professor at the UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants

The Nature Knowledge Webinar is a speaker series developed to share current knowledge about nature in Florida. Dr. Shelly Johnson, State Specialized Agent in Natural Resources, hosts an expert each month (offered on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 3-4pm) to discuss a current environmental topic relevant to Florida's natural resources.

Register at <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/2020/09/09/nature-knowledge/>.

INTRODUCED PARASITE IMPACTING NATIVE SNAKES IN FL

Florida Invasive Species Partnership (28 October 2020)

Speaker – Dr. Melissa Miller, Invasive Species Research Coordinator at the Fort Lauderdale Research & Education Center

Dr. Miller is the lead author of a recent study published in the journal *Ecosphere* that describes how the invasive Burmese python has introduced to Florida a non-native lung parasite that has now spread to native snakes. The native snakes are so susceptible to infection that the parasite is spreading northward beyond the range of the pythons. You can read more details in this blog: <https://bit.ly/3dp87Bv>.

How To Participate: [Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android](#), Or [Skype for Business \(Lync\)](#)

Telephone: 1-646-558-8656; Meeting ID: 792 336 4433

PLEDGING HANDS TO LARGER SERVICE DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Charles Poliseno, 4-H YD EA I, Hillsborough County

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has impacted our communities locally, nationally and globally. One of the unforeseen impacts was a decline in food donations to a Tampa orphanage, Hope Children's Home. This organization has the responsibility of housing, feeding and educating approximately 80 children every day.

A representative from Hope Children's Home reached out to the Hillsborough County 4-H office, requesting any kind of assistance to provide nutritional food items for their resident youth. The representative described the situation at the facility:

"Currently, there are 80 orphans and their caregivers, which equates to 300 meals per day. They have been surviving mainly on canned and shelf-stable foods, but for the long-term nutritional needs of the children, we are looking for fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and eggs. [Days prior to reaching out to 4-H], we received a donation of bananas and the children were thrilled, as they rarely, if ever, receive fresh fruits. The Home is not state or federally funded, so it relies solely on donations, which have dropped off radically in light of recent events."

The goal of providing enough healthy and nutritious food for 80 children and their caregivers through donations is challenging, even in the best of times. Trying to find donors and getting them to the facility during a time of social distancing, with limited person-to-person contact, multiplies those difficulties.

Thankfully, Hillsborough County Extension and Hillsborough County 4-H are trained problem-solvers and quickly came together to find solutions for Hope Children's Home. 4-H Extension agents Charles Poliseno and Brandi Yancy communicated the situation and needs of the facility to their 4-H club members and volunteers via social media and email. The agents highlighted the need to maintain social distancing and personal safety on the part of all 4-H members and volunteers. Any undertaking needed to be done with caution and with the health of individuals and the public in mind.

The response was immediate and overwhelming. Multiple clubs spread the message to their families, many of whom had extra commodities immediately available. One family in Hillsborough County's Raise the Bar 4-H Club, who has many chickens as part of their 4-H poultry project, readily committed seven dozen fresh eggs. A Cloverbud 4-H member in the Trailblazers 4-H Club quickly offered a bundle of carrots that she was growing as a part of her 4-H gardening project. The Udderly Legendary 4-H club not only contributed donations of produce and eggs they had readily available, but reached out to a local produce grower, Strawberry Passion Farm, who generously donated enough produce to nearly fill a walk-in refrigerator. In total, Udderly Legendary 4-H club donated 19 dozen eggs, 30 pounds of chicken, two gallons of orange juice, and an immense amount of fresh produce.

In order to make this donation drive a success while maintaining safe social distancing guidelines, the leaders of our 4-H clubs had to get creative. Many organized porch pickups, where a leader would dedicate a day to drive to various members' houses, pick up the donations from porches or driveways, and then deliver them to Hope Children's Home. For many volunteers on the opposite side of the county from the facility, this was an all-day event, and a true example of "pledging their hands to larger service."

Hillsborough County 4-H is a youth organization that focuses not only on community service, but "service learning," in which the members that participate in the effort learn important life skills. In this service learning opportunity, youth self-reported the life skills they practiced. One Junior 4-H member said, "There are ways to help without being in a group but still being part of a group," noting the sense of community that we share, even while practicing social distancing. Another Junior 4-H member reported, "I look forward to having more ways to help and being able to work with my friends and club to help—because lots of things are more fun with a group and lots of people helping can do more and motivate each other."

VIRTUAL TAXPAYER EMPOWERMENT

Lisa Leslie, FCS EA IV, Hillsborough County

Since 2011, Hillsborough County Extension has provided free tax preparation assistance for county residents. This tax site is a bit unique because residents are taught how to use tax preparation software and complete their own taxes. This helps citizens learn more about their personal finances and the federal income tax system. The tax season started in January as a typical tax filing year. County residents came to the Extension Office and received one-on-one

assistance. Then COVID-19 hit and one-on-one assistance at the office was not possible. Instead, Hillsborough County Extension offered virtual tax preparation assistance via web conferencing. To date, 204 tax returns were transmitted electronically and over \$145,000 in tax credits were returned to the community (41 of the 204 received virtual assistance). Hillsborough County Extension will continue to help 2019 filers through November 16.

ADULT 4-H VOLUNTEERS GAIN WORKFORCE SKILLS

Brandi Yancy, 4-H YD EA I, UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County

In 2019, there was a stay-at-home mother named Barbra who lived in Hillsborough County, Florida. Barbra had been a 4-H volunteer for five years, the last two of which she was club leader. With her husband's health issues and limited ability to work, Barbra needed to return to the workforce to supplement her family's income.

As a stay-at-home mom, Barbra did not have recent employment history to strengthen her resume. Through her five years volunteering with 4-H, Barbra attended monthly volunteer meetings and participated in continuing education in topics such as experiential learning, life skill development and youth development theories. As club leader, Barbra was able to utilize her knowledge in these areas and implement in her work with 4-H youth. As an experienced 4-H volunteer, Barbra also provided support to less-experienced volunteers through mentoring and sharing her experiences. Through her service to Hillsborough 4-H and her engagement with 4-H youth, as reported during her annual interviews and club youth record books, the 4-H Agent was able to illustrate Barbra's continued workforce skill development in a letter of support. With support from the 4-H agent and her service to the 4-H program, Barbra was offered and accepted a position as a substitute teacher with the Hillsborough County Public Schools, allowing her to contribute to her family finances.

Barbra is just one of the adults who volunteered with traditional 4-H clubs in Hillsborough County. From 2012-2019, 744 adults volunteered through the Hillsborough 4-H Youth Development Program with traditional 4-H clubs. During this period, Hillsborough 4-H agents continued their ongoing development series to provide 4-H club volunteers with the necessary skills to become positive mentors to youth and further develop workforce skills. One hundred percent of Hillsborough County 4-H club volunteers participated in at least three hours of county-wide volunteer development annually to ensure volunteer growth and development.

According to a study conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service, volunteering is associated with 27% higher odds of employment. Throughout Hillsborough 4-H volunteer training, volunteers are taught how to utilize the essential elements when working with youth, how to use the experiential learning model with curricula, how to target life skills in 4-H activities and using smart goals to help youth plan their yearly objectives and further develop life skills. Through continued education and development opportunities, 4-H volunteers further develop necessary workforce skills to mentor youth, lead traditional 4-H clubs, and be productive in the workforce.

YOUTH 4-H VOLUNTEER GAINS WORKFORCE SKILLS

Brandi Yancy, 4-H YD EA I, UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County

In 2019, there was a young girl named Isabel who lived in Hillsborough County. Hillsborough County is a mixture of urban and rural communities. Isabel lived with her two younger sisters, three younger brothers and parents on a small farm. Isabel wanted to go to college and needed money to do so. She wasn't not old enough to drive or old enough to hold a "real" job, but she was determined to earn money for college. And there was something that Isabel had going for her—she was in 4-H.

Isabel attended monthly 4-H club meetings and weekend workshops where she learned how to raise and care for goats, keep animal health records, speak in front of an audience, track expenses and calculate profit. Isabel used what she learned to write essays and study for skill-a-thons. She placed fourth in the Florida State Fair Champion of Champions competition in 2019 and second in the Florida State Fair Champion of Champions competition. With these accomplishments, she has served as a youth ambassador for the program and has received two Florida State Fair Champion of Champions college scholarships. The 4-H Youth Development Program has provided Isabel a way to solve her problem and find her passion as a public speaker.

Isabel is just one of the 373 Hillsborough County youth who learned valuable life skills through their involvement in 20 4-H community clubs last year. Community clubs are led by adult volunteers who contribute their time so that youth have a safe environment in which to learn over 30 different projects, develop their public speaking skills, serve their communities, and engage in leadership roles.

Floridians value the development of youth who mature into productive, well-adjusted citizens prepared for the workforce. An estimated 4 million youth live in Florida (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Recent studies have found that youth who participate in 4-H are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors (such as smoking, drinking, etc.), contribute more to their family and community, and state they are more likely to attend college (Lerner et al., 2013). All these factors lead to productive, well-adjusted citizens prepared for the workforce.

Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2013). The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development Tufts University.

UF/IFAS EXTENSION HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

Lynn Barber, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, EA II; Jacqlyn Rivas, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, Program Coordinator; and Lisa Meredith, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, Program Coordinator, UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County

Connecting with Hillsborough County residents has become more important during COVID-19. Residents are increasingly in search of educational opportunities they can participate in from the safety of their homes. They are interested in learning more about their role in water and environmental conservation and now have additional time to participate in online classes. Hillsborough County's three-workshop educational series has been presented and upgraded several times over the past two decades and is delivered once a month, February through November.

April workshops were cancelled due to COVID-19, and planning commenced for virtual events. Compost Happens, Microirrigation and Rainwater Harvesting presentations are conducted via Zoom on different days (Thursday through Saturday) for one hour. Attendees participate in the workshops, which involve question and answer sessions. They may pick up our giveaway items during a two-hour period which starts after the last workshop on Saturday. Our drive-through system and parking lot environment provides three stations, one for each workshop, in which we provide compost bins, thermometers, kitchen buckets, microirrigation kits, hose end-nozzles, rain gauges, and drilled and spigoted food grade rain barrels. Attendees are checked off a list and drive away ready to create compost, install their microirrigation

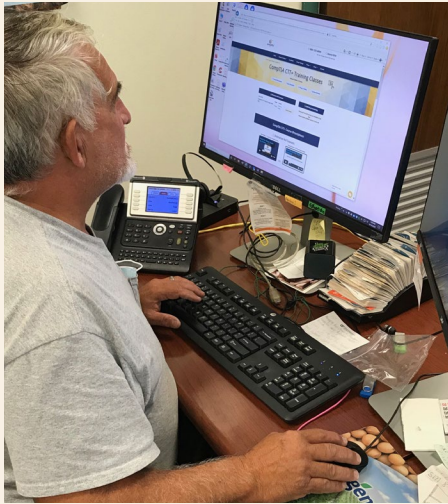
kits and set up their rain barrels. Hillsborough County and Tampa Water Department, a municipal water supplier, provide funding for the giveaway items.

May presentations involved a total of seven residents attending the three-workshop series. Monthly participation has increased significantly and August attendees totaled 165. Compost participants plan to use the humus they create as a soil amendment. Microirrigation participants indicated they would apply only 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water and follow right plant, right place recommendations. Nearly all Rainwater Harvesting workshop attendees committed to installing their rain barrel and overflow mechanism, thus reducing stormwater runoff from their landscapes. Comments included: "This was fantastic! I thought I knew a lot about watering, but I was wrong!" "Thank you for this great service. I wish I would have taken these classes years ago."

Extension works closely with all members of our community. This water conservation and recycling educational program may be replicated in other counties. Bringing community members together to conserve water and protect the environment can increase resource sharing. Providing a sense of belonging benefits the greater good for the Tampa Bay area.

VOLUSIA COUNTY HELPS WPS TRAINERS AND APPLICATORS

Karen Stauderman, Commercial Horticulture EA III, Volusia County



Applicators are able to train in their office to become compliant with state requirements

During an August 25 Volusia County overall advisory committee meeting, David, a commercial cut-foilage grower, indicated a need for Worker Protection Safety and Train-the-Trainer certification training during these COVID times to keep in compliance with the state pesticide safety regulations as regulated by the Florida Department of Ag and Consumer

interpretation of instructions on how to obtain FDACS certification online through the UF/IFAS Volusia County Extension blog. Karen wrote a blog to instruct growers on how to certify employees through online instruction and posted to Facebook. Additionally, she included the forms (as pdf's) needed to maintain proper record-keeping in the event of an EPA/OSHA inspection.

She then used the blog link to email clientele on how to certify online and offered further contact information. Within two minutes, she received an email from a different cut-foilage grower thanking her for the informational blog post. This grower was relieved that her company was able to stay compliant with FDACS. Within the next minute, David's receptionist called to say that she and David were 'just talking about this dilemma' and how she decided to become a certified licensed trainer by attending the online training that Karen blogged about. She expressed relief that she would be able to train their entire ag operation's Spanish and English-speaking personnel. Karen's blog allowed the receptionist to be more effective and the company compliant. She was eager to obtain the online certification and thanked Karen on helping to empower them to keep the training in-house.

Services (FDACS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). UF/IFAS Extension Volusia County agent Karen Stauderman used an internal email to translate a 'Spanglish'

GROWING TOGETHER FROM A DISTANCE

Brooke Moffis, Urban Commercial Horticulture/4-H YD EA III, Lake County; Lori Johnson, FCS EA I, Lake County; Jamie Daugherty, Residential Horticulture EA II, Lake County; Juanita Popenoe, Fruit Crops EA IV, Lake County; Dallas Meringolo, 4-H YD EA I, Lake County; Megan Brew, Livestock/Forages/Equine CED II, Lake County

Covid-19 took the world by surprise. In an effort to protect public health and slow the spread of the pandemic, UF/IFAS Extension Lake County temporarily ceased in-person classes on March 20. As resources became limited and travel outside the home was reduced, the need and desire for research-based home garden information increased. Local residents expressed concerns about food security and wanted to plant their own modern-day victory garden.

UF/IFAS Extension Lake County agents designed a program to provide aspiring gardeners with the knowledge they need to be successful in their new growing and healthy cooking endeavors. Using Zoom software, PowerPoint, and video, classes were held weekly on Friday afternoons starting April 3 and continuing through 2020. Archived classes are available on our [UF/IFAS Extension Lake County YouTube channel](#).

The UF/IFAS Lake County residential horticulture, commercial horticulture, FCS, multi-county fruit crops, and livestock agents partnered to conduct this program. Both Lori Johnson, the FCS agent, and Jamie Daugherty, the residential horticulture agent, were new hires who quickly brought their teaching and technology expertise to our team. This allowed for an expansion in topics available to the public, which included edible plants, FFL and backyard livestock subjects,

such as waterwise landscaping, raising backyard chickens, citrus, and cultivating and creating with herbs.

To date, a total of **764** individuals have attended **19** classes. One hundred thirty-four participants completed both pre- and post-test polls resulting in a **22%** increase in knowledge. Ninety participants of edible classes responded to a post webinar survey. As a result of attending webinars, **93%** stated that they plan to incorporate more edibles into their gardens and **83%** plan to incorporate more herbs and vegetables into their diet. We presented these results at the FACAA session of the 2020 EPAF annual conference.

Class advertisements were posted on social media. This allowed us to reach an audience of **2,276** with **1,226** engagements and 70 shares. Testimonials from our series include

"I am now an addict! Thanks for all the great sessions!" -RM.

"Thank you for all the wonderful and informative webinars" -SB.

Online classes, such as Growing Together from a Distance, allow Extension agents the opportunity to continue educational efforts during a time of global crisis and when teaching in a traditional classroom setting is not possible.

CURB-SIDE RAIN BARREL SALE – INCONVENIENCE MEETS CONVENIENCE

Ralph Mitchell, Horticulture CED III, Charlotte County



On July 24, 2020, UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County conducted its first hands-free curb-side rain barrel sale. With UF/IFAS requesting we continue to maintain virtual contact with our customers, selling rain barrels was going to be

a challenge. Requests from customers were continuing to roll in, but how best to get the rain barrel and the customer connected safely together was the conundrum.

We moved into our new facility at Centennial Park last October and with us the last supplies of rain barrels that we normally have available for customers. Without much storage, we were looking at ordering barrels for each workshop so that they would come in and go out in short order. This worked until COVID-19 shuttered that service and educational outreach. Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Education-Training Specialist

Sara Weber organized a sale in which customers prepaid for their rain barrels on Eventbrite and received them in our parking lot. In an orderly manner, the rain barrels were set up all ready to go with the customers' names on them. They simply drove in and picked up their barrel, which included instructions on setup and other Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ information. They were in and out in a minute or less without contact!

In 2019, 80 Rain Barrels were installed by Charlotte County residents, saving at least 208,000 gallons of potable water and thereby reducing stormwater runoff. On average, each rain barrel saved the consumer 2,600 gallons of fresh water per household annually. In Florida in 2019, Charlotte County FFL efforts resulted in a combined estimated water savings of 677,430 gallons of water annually, based on Extension clients' reported behavior change.

The success of this curb-side rain barrel sale will likely generate another such event in the future. As COVID-19 changes the way we do business and educational outreach, Extension will continue to adopt and adapt. For more information on all types of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ information, please contact Sara Weber at 941-764-4351, Sara.Weber@charlottecountyfl.gov.

RETURN OF THE NATIVE PUMPKIN TO HASTINGS

Evelyn “Prissy” Fletcher, Commercial Agriculture EA II, St. Johns County



'Jarrahdale,' an edible and ornamental pumpkin grown at HAEC in mid-September.



Drone view of the half-acre pumpkin patch demonstration at HAEC. Photo courtesy of Tim Wilson.

It's been many years since we have offered demonstrations on pumpkin varieties at Hastings Agriculture and Extension Center (HAEC). A few years ago, our local ag inspector and I were having a chat about the native Seminole pumpkin, which some refer to as a squash. We were discussing how this species is tough and has such an excellent shelf life. He shared a pumpkin with me, which I turned into pies and saved the seeds. Since planting them, they have returned every summer in my yard, trellising over fallen logs and palmetto fronds. I was amazed how easily this crop survived the summer heat, was tolerant of pest pressures, and tasted amazing! I later learned

that Native tribes in south Florida would allow the vines to crawl up Live Oak trees. Several of our local small and large farms felt like there was a market for calabazas, whether it be for fresh produce in grocery stores or even pumpkin beer for our local microbreweries!

When the call for grant proposals through HAEC came about, I thought it would be interesting to compare the heirloom Seminole seeds to our UF hybrid, the 'La Estrella' calabaza. Then our new director Christian Christensen came on board and gave me the inspiration to compare our “hardcore” native species to cultivated species. The goal is to assess the yield of each variety, while comparing tolerance to pest pressures, with the hypothesis being that La Estrella and Seminole will knock the others out of the park! Our HAEC team planted six 430-foot-long rows with the following six varieties:

- 'La Estrella',
- 'Seminole',
- 'Jarrahdale',
- 'Marina di Chioggia',
- 'Baby Pam',
- and 'Jill-Be-Little'.

With the exception of the heirloom Seminole, all seeds were pre-treated with fungicide and triple drilled on July 15. We used a 36-inch spacing between plants, and 38-inch tops. As you can see in the photo, we chose to use reflective mulch to assist with insect pressures. This mulch helps to confuse the bugs as they struggle to find the orientation of the sun, and thus is a supplemental form of IPM. The team has since thinned the seedlings, and fertigating twice per week. 'Marine di Chioggia' was the fastest growing vine, but 'La Estrella' was the first to flower after only 27 days. 'Jill-Be-Little' was hit the hardest with regards to pressures from Pythium and Sclerotinia. While it is beneficial to bring in bees for cucurbit production, we were fortunate to have an abundance of pollinators, and giving credit to the vast plantings of sunn hemp in and around HAEC. Most of these plants reach maturity ~100 days after planting to a harvest in time for Halloween! With so much excitement in the community about this demonstration, we intend to share the pumpkins with local growers to receive feedback for future research and interest in local markets. Follow our Instagram account ([@stjohns_ag](https://www.instagram.com/stjohns_ag)) for weekly updates on our trial!

A REAL TIME EXTENSION PROGRAM RESPONSE - BY AGENTS, FOR AGENTS

Ramona Madhosingh-Hector, CRD EA III, Pinellas County; Alicia Betancourt, CRD CED III, Monroe County; Carol Roberts, CRD EA I, St. Lucie County; Linda Seals, CRD RSA III, Southeast District

In March 2020, a lot changed! By April, most UF/IFAS Extension employees were working from home or alternating between work and home offices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A team of Community Resource Development (CRD) agents developed a lunchtime webinar series called “Chew on This” to provide content and connection time during the pandemic. These CRD agents (Alicia, Carol, Linda and Ramona) launched a weekly meeting series on April 15, transitioned to monthly in June, and concluded on August 12.

Agents met virtually via the Zoom software and participants learned about a wide range of topics, including *Working from Home*, *Money and You*, *Finding Your Tribe*, *Feeling the Burn*, *Getting Back on Track*, *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* and *Skills for Dynamic Situations*. Each one-hour block included a short educational component and connection time to share concerns and best practices. The sessions provided information on improving productivity in work-at-home situations, planning for economic setbacks, building effective teams

and partnerships, navigating burnout and using coping strategies, creating resiliency in program planning and assessments, and skills for constructive dialogue on difficult issues. All sessions were advertised via multiple listservs, including IFAS-Extension-ALL, district lists and word-of-mouth. Webinar topics reflected both stated and expressed needs based on current events and chat box responses from attendees.

Ten sessions were hosted, involving a total of 323 participants; the largest attendance was reflected at the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* session (n=90). Over time, agents’ attitudes became more positive and 93% agreed that webinars helped them feel more connected; 99% will use one or more strategies learned; 98% gained new knowledge; and 64% formed a new collaboration. The comments below reflect the evolution in agents’ attitudes as creativity and innovation replaced anxiety and stress as the “new normal” became standard across the organization:

- I put more pressure on myself now that I’m working from home. I feel like if I’m not producing X number

of items a day, I am not proving my worth. It’s crazy!

- This gives me the opportunity to change and do things differently.
- Our county wants stories about our economic impact.
- I appreciate you are willing to tackle the difficult topics and share how to approach them.
- I agree...be willing to be vulnerable. It’s hard, but it leads to greater understanding.
- Thank you all very much, this is a much-needed meeting. Really couldn’t have been a memo.

In addition to the weekly series, the CRD team produced 11 blogs, one guidance document, two newspaper articles, ten instructional Multi-Media presentations, ten administrative updates, and one summary report. For access to materials available on the MS Teams site, contact one of the CRD agents listed here.

Overall, the online Zoom sessions provided an opportunity for agents to share resources, learn new strategies for program development, connect with each other amidst the social isolation, and promote fellowship.

URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION: TURNING HOT POTATOES INTO MASHED POTATOES

Hannah Wooten, Commercial Horticulture, EA I, Orange County; Liz Felter, Food Systems/Commercial Horticulture RSA IV, Central District; Kevin Camm, Sustainable Agriculture/Community Development CED III, Orange County; Catherine Campbell, Community Food Systems Asst Professor, Mid-Florida REC Apopka

Hot potato, hot potato! Extension agents across Florida have a handful of “hot potato” topics that may be easier to quickly toss to the next person to deal with. UF/IFAS Extension Orange County is located in the heart of Florida and is a mostly urban metropolitan area, and urban agriculture is the hot potato. Despite a strong agricultural past, urban sprawl paired with environmental regulations have restricted activities on lands that are well suited for food production

in an area in close proximity to a lot of consumers. Immediate impacts of COVID-19 caused disruptions in the conventional food supply. While most of the world was testing TP alternatives, a local dad was considering how to grow food for his family.

This dad, known as Billy to everyone other than his kids, hit the school of YouTube and stumbled on miscellaneous UF/IFAS documents. Billy quickly learned that his dreams of growing his own food in Florida were

melted by sweltering summer heat. Seldom stifled, he found a crop that he could grow year-round in vacant space in his residential home: microgreens! He also found that growing at home provided a fun activity for his whole family, consisting of the three kids, ages 8, 5, 1, and mom, all now stuck at home. Billy and his family started growing and eating their own microgreens, and they enjoyed it so much they decided to take it to the next level: farmers markets!

Following business regulations, Billy filed for a business tax receipt with Orange County. The county raised a few flags, and the Planning and Zoning Division said having an agricultural business in a residential area was not allowed. He was confused because it appeared that other types of businesses were growing food or flowers at home to distribute elsewhere... Where was he missing something?

Billy reached out to UF/IFAS Extension Orange County to discuss details. Hannah Wooten, UF/IFAS Extension Agent of Commercial Horticulture, and Dr. Liz Felter, UF/IFAS Regional Specialized Agent for Food Systems, have an appetite for “hot potatoes”, especially those related to the food system. They reviewed Billy’s information, state and local law, and requested a virtual meeting. The only thing that was certain at this point was that Billy was a pioneer, and that pioneers have extra work to do to pave the trail for those who follow. He was tickled to be a trailblazer, and Extension was happy to help.

The big question at hand for the microgreens business: Could all of this confusion be over a few words? Or is this a multifaceted issue that needs UF/IFAS Extension working closely with Planning and Zoning Departments? The answer was both.

Billy remained persistent, and it was not too long before the Director of Orange County Zoning requested a meeting

with the UF/IFAS Extension Orange County Director, Kevin Camm. At this point, all parties demonstrated openness and active listening. Kevin was briefed by his local Extension agents and supported by state specialist, Dr. Catherine Campbell, Assistant Professor of Community Food Systems, on key questions. All parties agreed that the improved communication among departments is an excellent outcome if nothing else.

Communication was key! Camm explained that Billy was growing a lot of microgreens completely indoors, and only intended to have off-site sales to preserve the residential nature of the community. Planning and Zoning was surprised that someone could have a small scale commercial agricultural business in their home. The directors discussed some big picture ideas and potential “best practices” to consider in the future.

As a result of UF/IFAS Extension Orange County’s open communication with clientele and county partners, Billy’s business was approved. Furthermore, Orange County is open to learning more about urban food production and how it impacts zoning—and they know UF/IFAS is the go-to for science-based information on the subject. Finally, at least three more kids know where their food comes from. **The next question: How to get those kids in 4-H?**

SEMINOLE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS WORK WITH LEO’S LIMAS GROWERS CLUB

Kaydie McCormick, Residential Horticulture/Master Gardener EA I, Seminole County



Lighthouse Central Florida Transitions Students and Master Gardener Volunteers setting up for the MGV Annual Orientation. Photo taken prior to COVID-19 restrictions.

In collaboration with Lighthouse Central Florida, Seeds of Inclusion, and Advent Health Occupational Therapy Students, the Seminole County Master Gardener Volunteer program provided support to the Leo’s Limas Growers Club. This online program served as the summer work experience for a group of students from Lighthouse Central Florida’s Transitions Program. The nine students involved in the program this year are all living with different levels of blindness or visual impairment while also significantly challenged with additional

motor, learning, and cognitive disabilities due to conditions such as autism and Down syndrome.

The students in the program are often left out of vocational programming due to their additional disabilities. In the summer of 2019, the program met in person at the Seminole County Extension Center, and the students developed their lima bean grow kit. Teaching them the skills required to assemble the kits, inspect them for quality, and interact with clients gave the Transitions students a chance to stretch into new territory. Reports from their families showed an increase in their abilities at home as their abilities in the program progressed.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in 2020, an online version of the program was developed for the safety of the students and volunteers. Master Gardener Volunteers provided the ‘customers’ for the students to practice their skills on. The volunteers received the grow kits developed in 2019, and each week they participated during a scheduled Zoom classroom with the Transitions students. The students oversaw guiding them through the kit set up, and then worked each week with the Master Gardener Volunteers to help with problems, tech support, and to receive progress reports.

The seven Master Gardener Volunteers who participated in the program served two hours a week for four weeks during

the month of July. During that time the Transitions students taught their Lima Bean Boot Camp, walked the volunteers through using the materials and methods developed last year, provided customer service, and performed analysis for the contest between the two different lima bean varieties chosen to determine the winner of the Battle of the Beans.

Teaching the students and their families how to utilize the online platform had a very steep learning curve. Even with those difficulties the program was successful. The students enjoyed the interaction with the volunteers, and the volunteers found a worthwhile program to spend some of their quarantine hours on. Seminole County Extension is looking forward to a 2021 partnership!

PINELLAS YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUCCESS STORY

Alyssa Bowers, 4-H YD EA I, Pinellas County



Pinellas Youth Advisory Committee in 2019.



YAC meeting in 2020

In 2020, COVID-19 upended many plans, including those of the Pinellas Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). YAC, which consists of high school aged youth in Pinellas County, is housed under and appointed by the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners (with one Commissioner assigned to lead the youth committee), in partnership with 4-H and UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County. In the past, YAC offered youth perspectives to projects when asked, learned about a variety of county and local government departments, and completed service projects. This year, however, proved to be a very historic one for Pinellas YAC, including when 32 members were appointed for the largest committee since its inception. Almost immediately, YAC members began discussing the problem with the required mental health sessions that were being presented at their schools. Teachers did not have the credentials or time to deliver the material effectively, and youth that were struggling felt brushed off. Because of this, they took on the ambitious goal of hosting a youth mental health fair. Just as planning began to get off the ground and event committees were formed, COVID-19 locked everything down. Luckily the adult advisors for YAC, the Pinellas 4-H agent and a Pinellas Commissioner's Aide had a plan!

Once the Governor gave the go ahead for Sunshine Committees to meet virtually, plans were made to meet on Zoom weekly instead of monthly to ensure completion of their service project. In another historical move for YAC, the group voted to continue their appointments into the summer, when traditionally the appointments ended with the school year. After the meetings were set, the youth members got to work. They decided to move their mental health fair to an online format, featuring a weekly webinar on different mental health topics, including COVID-19 mental health, LGBTQ+ youth, suicide prevention and substance use disorder. The members managed the webinars' promotions, led all meetings, solicited

the speakers, and facilitated questions for their webinars. For the first time, YAC was a true youth-adult partnership. A proclamation by the Board of County Commissioners officially kicked off the Youth Mental Health Month and the Mental Health Monday webinars in August. These webinars were a resounding success and have been shared on various social media avenues, as well as being featured on Bay News 9.

In a survey about their YAC experience, these 32 youth indicated they built many life skills, including leadership, managing stress, caring for their community and resiliency. Not only did they increase their own skills, they also helped bring awareness and insight to the incredibly important topic of youth mental health. Partnerships between county government, municipalities, and other community nonprofits are critical to 4-H's success, particularly in an urban county. It expands 4-H's reach to new and more diverse audiences, while also building credibility in the community. Youth that participate in 4-H programs like YAC learn valuable life skills that will help them thrive as successful adults and citizens for the rest of their lives.

Mental health is an issue at the forefront of today's younger generations. In a 2020 survey by 4-H and The Harris Poll, 81% of teens say mental health is a significant issue for young people in the U.S., and 64% of teens believe that the experience of COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on their generation's mental health. Seven out of ten teens surveyed have struggled with mental health as well. This data shows how critically important this issue is to youth in the US. Positive Youth Development programs like YAC and 4-H have been shown to build resiliency and provide protective factors against negative outcomes (Lerner & Learner, 2012). By centering youth voices, adults can be sure that the topics and programs will be timely and beneficial to the youth involved and their greater community.

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

Joanna Ortiz, FCS EA I, Hillsborough Couty
Samara Purvis, 4-H YD CED II, Bradford County

NEW POSITIONS

Carolyn Saft, Environmental Horticulture CED III,
Suwannee County

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

DEPARTURES

Karla Hernandez, Agriculture EA II, Sarasota County
Whitney Cherry, 4-H YD EA II, Calhoun County

RETIREMENTS

Joseph Sowards, Residential Horticulture EA II,
Volusia County
Alicia Whidden, Veg Crops EA III, Hillsborough County
Christopher Vann, Agriculture EA II, Lafayette County
Joanne Cooper, FCS EA II, St. Johns County