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# UF/IFAS Extension *Comings & Goings*

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION



## RELIVING THE DREAM

Nick Place, Dean and Director, UF/IFAS Extension



Back in November 2012, I presented [my first address](#) as dean in the Extension *Comings & Goings* newsletter. I got up the nerve to re-read it the other day. Often, going back to the writings and statements of your past can bring a twinge of regret. But in this case, re-reading an old throwback gave me a certain sense of pride.

I had been on the job about three months and was fresh from listening sessions with stakeholders and faculty around the state. I wrote about how impressed I was with the quality of our people and how, again and again, stakeholders told me how much they valued and appreciated UF/IFAS Extension. "It's the best-kept secret in Florida" is what I kept hearing.

I thought that Extension shouldn't be a secret anymore, and in my address I said that effective communication and increased visibility were essential to building our organization from within and taking it to a wider public. I promised quarterly video clips from my office, and these have evolved into our monthly Extension Connections webinars. I talked about working to make the best use of our *Comings & Goings* e-newsletter. Since then, it has expanded its coverage, not only reporting our success stories and transitions, but also communicating the impact of our efforts, addressing major emerging issues through interdisciplinary work, strategic staffing and professional development opportunities.

It's been a while since I contributed a "Dean's Notes & Quotes" to this newsletter, but in 2017 I joined the scores of Extension faculty who blog about our successes, challenges, and issues of critical importance. I can assure you that people in the Florida ag and natural resources industries and elsewhere read our blogs very closely and often share them online and reprint them in their trade journals.

In 2012, Extension was just on the verge of embracing the world of social media. Today, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube have greatly expanded our outreach and have been a lifeline to our clientele in times of emergency and throughout the current pandemic.

The progress we've made over the years in communicating our message can be found in the pages of *Comings & Goings*.

I want to thank VPs Jack Payne and Scott Angle for contributing regular columns to this newsletter. Your support has been vital to our success and demonstrates the importance of leaders as communicators. Thanks also to Val Aldrari and Tom Obreza, who have done such an incredible job serving as the editors of *Comings & Goings* these past eight years.

I take great pride in how much we've accomplished since 2012. Thanks to your efforts, UF/IFAS Extension is not a best-kept secret anymore. We have a significant presence in local and national news, in social media, video, podcasting and

other platforms. We're not just a part of the conversation, we're a trusted source of fact-based information at a time when Florida—and the world—needs it most.

I am both proud and humble to have been with you on this journey.

Sincerely,  
Nick Place



## A MESSAGE FROM SCOTT ANGLE

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



Nick Place is leaving "Nick's place" better than he found it. Not only that, but Extension will get even better for the next couple of years because of the momentum he generated. He's been the right leader in the right job at the right time.

Nick ushered in an era of heightened professionalism. It increased our expertise in the service of stakeholders as well as our stature at a time of great

university-wide ambition to bolster our standing among our peers.

In 2012, Nick inherited fewer than 10 regional specialized agents and no state specialized agents. He recognized the need for high-level expertise to serve clients and agents alike, and he bequeaths us 24 RSAs and 11 SSAs. Half of these specialized agents have Ph.Ds. For years to come, they'll help our Master Gardener program thrive, infuse our 4-H activities with current science, and dissect the economics of the cattle industry.

Extension under Nick has been good at anticipating needs, not just responding to them. He was prescient in leading the creation of a five-person water RSA team. They are now leaders poised to make great impact as the state's water quality and quantity challenges attract headlines and the focus of the Legislature.

He was ahead of the pandemic-related supply chain disruptions by investing in food systems expertise among specialized agents and county agents. So an agent in Collier County, for example, was ready to launch a website with a listing of Southwest Florida farmers and their products to help them find buyers when markets collapsed in the spring. When times were good, he knew we'd again face budget challenges

like today's, so he led efforts to diversify funding sources through revenue enhancement and the Road to 67 drive to establish endowments to support every county office.

Nick treated Extension professionals as scholars, and he has helped expand that perception across campus. We see evidence that UF Health and other campus partners are starting to "get" Extension and partner with us more.

Extension Connections webinars are among the modern communications tools Nick created to make himself perhaps the most widely recognizable UF/IFAS Extension dean ever. Nick's on-screen presence has been especially reassuring as the face and voice of hurricane and COVID-19 response.

None of this happened automatically. It took leadership, the embrace of ideas, and relationship building. Nick was relentless in insisting that Extension be at the table, whether that was at a county Farm Bureau meeting or in Tigert Hall.

He was also relentlessly cheerful in carrying the Extension flag. He took an ice bucket over the head to raise a few bucks for an Extension endowment. He held a scorpion to promote the Bug Week outreach campaign. He drew on the milking chops he developed as a dairy kid to dominate the field in the Sunbelt Expo milking contest. And he raised morale when he'd tell us he was "Livin' the Dream!"

Nick's the first to say that he didn't achieve all the advances of the past eight years, you did. His job is to bring out the best in others. Looks to me like he did that job remarkably well.

Some parting words of advice to Nick: Do not represent Georgia in the Sunbelt milking contest. Getting crushed by Chris Decubellis or Colleen Larson will not burnish UGA's or your reputation.

In seriousness, if I may say so, I have some insight into the job Nick is about to undertake. I predict that in five or 10 years, Georgians will be able to look back and say they got the right man in the right place at the right time, too.

# IN MEMORIAM

## SHEPARD “SHEP” EUBANKS

*County Extension Director and Extension Agent IV*



On November 6, 2020, Shepherd “Shep” Eubanks lost his battle with cancer at the age of 58. He spent 32 years working for UF/IFAS Extension in Columbia, Holmes and Gadsden counties. Shep was a county agent that made a real impact on the lives of farmers and extension faculty all across North Florida.

This article provides a

tribute to the legacy of a man that worked every day to help people be better stewards of their land and resources. More importantly, he was a friend you could rely on.

Shepard “Shep” Eubanks began working for the University of Florida in 1982 as a student, completing his bachelor’s degree in Animal Science in 1985 and his master’s degree in 1988. After graduation, he started his first position with the UF/IFAS Extension as a Livestock Extension Agent I for Columbia County. During this time, Shep cultivated his knowledge and experience of working with farmers and ranchers and introduced his knowledge and love for natural resources and the outdoors. In 1993 he was promoted to Extension Agent II and began a new position as the Extension Director and Agricultural and Natural Resources Agent in Holmes County. There he continued to develop his skills in consulting with farmers, ranchers, and homeowners, as well

as a new audience of local county officials. As CED, Shep was instrumental in moving his staff of agents and support staff from a small three-room office in the Holmes County courthouse to a recently renovated Agricultural Center and Extension Office in Bonifay. In 1997, Shep was promoted to Extension Agent III; in 2003 he was promoted to Extension’s highest rank of Extension Agent IV.

Having an opportunity in 2015, Shep moved “home” to Gadsden County with his wonderful wife Genea and their two grown sons, John and Justin, to become the county Extension director and Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agent. Shep worked with farmers, ranchers, and large landowners and homeowners, assisting them in all areas of agriculture and natural resources, providing educational programming leadership and individual consultations to all Gadsden County residents. As CED, he provided leadership for other Extension agents and support staff. Shep worked with the former County Extension Director Dr. Henry Grant, along with the Gadsden County Commissioners and leadership, to continue to secure funding and build a new Gadsden County Agricultural Center and convert the older building into the Inman Livestock Pavilion.

Shepard “Shep” Eubanks will always be remembered as a kind and thoughtful person, willing to help and assist everyone he met. Shep was a mentor to many younger Extension agents and a friend to all Extension agents across the Florida Panhandle and the State of Florida.

*Pete Vergot III, Ph.D., Professor and Northwest District Director*

## LEROY CRESWELL

*Regional Specialized Agent, Florida Sea Grant*



Many in the UF/IFAS Extension community knew LeRoy Creswell as the Florida Sea Grant extension agent in St. Lucie County from 2000-2011. From 2011 until his retirement in 2019, he worked for Florida Sea Grant as a regional Extension program manager. He passed away on October 27, 2020, after a long illness.

Some of his many accomplishments during his career with Florida Sea Grant included creating and managing a volunteer-based program to restore degraded oyster reefs and improve water quality

in the Indian River Lagoon, publishing numerous articles on candidate species for aquaculture, helping create a curriculum for teaching aquaculture in schools, and developing restoration modules for the Florida Master Naturalist Program.

An educator and researcher, his work on aquaculture, water quality and education reached well beyond Florida and even the nation. LeRoy was on the executive committee and was past president of the National Shellfish Association. He received the prestigious Meritorious Award in 2013 for his efforts and leadership in that organization. He was also past president of the World Aquaculture Society and was the executive secretary and proceedings editor for the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) for the past eighteen years.

A statement from GCFI captures LeRoy’s essence: “He was an institutional pillar, not only through his official responsibilities, but also through the generosity and warmth he gave to all,



especially to students and early-career professionals ready to become part of the GCFI family. In life, he was a charismatic presence, generous with his knowledge and wisdom, and a clarion voice for marine aquaculture and sustainable resource management in the U.S. and the Caribbean. His contributions to GCFI will remain with us forever.”

We send condolences to his family and all those that he has touched over the years. His family (wife Danita and daughters Leala and Alonah) ask that people post on LeRoy’s Tribute

Wall at <https://www.haisleyfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Roger-Creswell/>. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Ocean Research and Conservation Association in Fort Pierce, FL.

## NEW & NOTABLE PROGRAMS

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

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR INVASIVE SPECIES

UF/IFAS faculty are responsible for reporting diseases, insects, weeds, nematodes or any other invasive species to the Florida Department Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (FDACS, DPI).

Reporting this information is essential to protect Florida agriculture, communities and natural areas.

Questions regarding reporting to FDACS, DPI should be directed to:

Dr. Leroy Whilby, Bureau Chief-Entomology, Nematology and Plant Pathology  
352-395-4661  
[Leroy.whilby@fdacs.gov](mailto:Leroy.whilby@fdacs.gov)

Dr. Paul Skelley, Assistant Chief-Entomology, Nematology and Plant Pathology  
352-395-4678  
[Paul.skelley@fdacs.gov](mailto:Paul.skelley@fdacs.gov)

Samples of regulatory concern submitted to UF/IFAS diagnostic laboratories will be reported to FDACS, DPI.

FDACS, DPI is responsible for announcing detection or establishment of new invasive species.

Announcing the establishment of new invasive species can affect Florida’s agricultural producers and trade of agricultural products.

Reporting is a legal obligation under Florida Statute 581.091.

### FINDING EXTENSION INITIATIVE PAGES ON MICROSOFT TEAMS

The current Extension Initiatives and their Priority Work Groups (PWGs) can be accessed by clicking on ‘Roadmap and Teams’ found on the main webpage for PDEC (Program Development & Evaluation Center; <https://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/>). On the Roadmap and Teams page, click on ‘Microsoft Teams’; from there, you can click on ‘Initiatives and Priority Work Groups’ to visit the PWG team’s page (<https://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/hub/teams/>). To join a PWG of any Initiative, click on a

PWG’s name (for example, 1.1 Animal Systems). When there, click on ‘Join this Team’ (Gatorlink Login is required) to access the Microsoft Teams page for that PWG.

### STATEWIDE AGENT/SPECIALIST TEAMS

In addition to the Industrial Hemp Extension Education Team and the Ag BMP Core Team, the Honey Bee Extension Education Team (HBEET), the Pesticide Education Extension Team (PEET) and the Statewide Equine Extension Education Team (SWEET) have been established and are forging ahead with ideas on elevating programming and online educational content and information for clients and stakeholders. To find out more about HBEET, please contact Amy Vu at [amy.vu@ufl.edu](mailto:amy.vu@ufl.edu), for PEET, please contact Dr. Jay Ferrell at [jferrell@ufl.edu](mailto:jferrell@ufl.edu) and for SWEET, please contact Dr. Carissa Wickens at [cwickens@ufl.edu](mailto:cwickens@ufl.edu).

### PESTICIDE EXAM ADMINISTRATORS TRAINING

There are over 25,000 licensed pesticide applicators working in Florida in areas that range from agricultural fields to highways to lawns and even in-home pest control. To be a licensed applicator, individuals must pass a pesticide exam as mandated by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). To meet this high demand, FDACS partners with UF/IFAS Extension to develop training materials and ultimately deliver exams to potential license holders. These exams are offered at every county Extension office throughout the state and are administered by county faculty and staff.

In an average year, over 8,000 tests are provided by UF/IFAS. But 2020 brought unique challenges, with COVID suspending testing for several weeks and continuing to reduce opportunities due to social distancing restrictions. Even in these difficult times, our dedicated Extension faculty still administered over 4,000 exams!

To ensure that these exam administrators have the proper training, the Pesticide Information Office recently updated

and overhauled the process to make it more transparent and user-friendly. Using the online learning platform Canvas, training materials have been delivered to over 100 exam administrators. After reviewing multiple online education modules, these administrators learned about the different categories of licenses the state offers, how to administer these exams, and how to ensure it is done in a secure and consistent manner. Through video clips and quizzes, the Pesticide

Information Office is ensuring that ALL pesticide applicators in the state of Florida have testing made available to them and that it is delivered fairly and professionally.

For more information about pesticide licenses and exam administration contact the Pesticide Information Office:

Dr. Brett Bultemeier, Erin Harlow, Dr. Jason Ferrell  
352-392-4721  
[pested@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:pested@ifas.ufl.edu)

## UF/IFAS EXTENSION ALACHUA COUNTY GROUNDBREAKING

*Cindy Sanders, Livestock CED IV, Alachua County*



*Official Groundbreaking ceremony of the UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County Building.*

On October 15, UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County broke ground on their new Extension office to be built at the Alachua County Ag & Equestrian Center in Newberry.

"It has been a long road with some bumps along the way," said UF/IFAS Extension Director Dr. Cindy Sanders.

Speakers at this event included Alachua County Manager Michele Lieberman, Newberry Mayor Jordan Marlow, former Alachua County Commissioner Lee Pinkoson, Florida State Representative Chuck Clemons, UF/IFAS Vice President Dr. Scott Angle, and Alachua County Extension Director Dr. Cindy



*UF/IFAS VP Dr. Scott Angle was one of the guest speakers at the UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County Groundbreaking ceremony.*

Sanders. The new Extension office and fairgrounds have been in the works for about 30 years, and with determination and support of the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners and the City of Newberry, this dream will soon be a reality!

The new facility will house the Extension office, an auditorium and outdoor gardens. The auditorium will seat 300-400 and include a state-of-the-art teaching kitchen. The 2021 Alachua County Youth Fair & Livestock Show will be held at the new Ag & Equestrian Center in March. The Extension office is set to be completed in the fall of 2021.

## FLORIDA'S HARVEST 4-H SUMMER CAMP GOES VIRTUAL

*Wendy Mussoline, Agriculture EA II, Flagler and Putnam County*



What do citrus, dairy, watermelon, potatoes, pork and beef have in common? They are all commodities harvested in Florida, and they each represent the expertise of uniquely qualified UF/IFAS Extension agents. In the season of

COVID-19, a multi-county effort was made to develop a 4-H Virtual Summer camp that incorporated educational videos, youth activities, and farmer interviews about each commodity. The "Commodities, Careers, and Cooking Camp" was offered as one of the 31 virtual 4-H summer camps this year through the state office. As soon as we got the word that 4-H would be virtual over the summer, we assembled our team and started our planning efforts. We elected to cover one commodity a week for six consecutive weeks on Thursday afternoons from 2-3 PM. This was a fantastic opportunity for agents to form a "TEAM" outside of their respective counties and learn from one another about different crops in Florida. The Microsoft TEAMS platform served as our meeting place, where we



gathered, shared lesson plans, supply lists and uploaded files for our google website (<https://sites.google.com/ufl.edu/floridas-harvest/home>).

Kristie Popa, 4-H agent in Charlotte County, led the organizational effort, teaching a class on the Dairy Industry in Florida. She took the kids on a virtual tour through a dairy and provided a live, step-by-step demonstration for making “rock-n-roll” ice cream. Kristie felt that the camp was successful in providing an opportunity for youth to interact with farmers and those deeply rooted in the various industries. Youth were able to explore specific farming careers and ask questions that were not only relevant to their current or future 4-H projects, but might also help them in choosing a career.

Dakota Treffeisen, 4-H Program Assistant in Sumter County, made sure participants understood different cuts of pork and the many ways they could be prepared. Dakota enjoyed the experience of creating a camp in a different way and collaborating with other agents around Florida.

Emma Cannon and Chandler Mulvaney, 4-H agents in Marion County, contributed their extensive knowledge on the watermelon and beef industries, respectively. Emma explained the life of a watermelon from seed to plate, had live interactions with farmers, and ended with a delicious watermelon salsa-making demonstration. Chandler helped 4-H'ers understand why cattle are important to the State of Florida, discussed their favorite cuts of beef, and equipped them to represent the agricultural community as “beef ambassadors.”

Shreemoyee Ghosh, 4-H agent in Polk County, provided some juicy tidbits about citrus and took the lead on developing our Google site. As an agriculture agent in Flagler and Putnam Counties, I was able to share videos of commercial potato planting and harvesting activities with the kids and introduce them to two teenage potato farmers. The joint effort from this TEAM was extraordinary, and we recognize moving forward that these types of multi-county efforts should be embraced as part of our “new normal.”

## SARASOTA COUNTY EXTENSION COMPOSTING EDUCATION WINS AWARD

Randall Penn, Faculty Waste Reduction EA II, Sarasota County



Randy Penn (center, blue shirt) leads a composting class.

The UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County Waste Reduction Program has earned the Outstanding Higher Education Program award from the National Recycling Coalition for 2020.

The award recognizes Sarasota County Extension's educational efforts to help divert food waste from landfills, part of the overall Sarasota County aim to achieve a 75 percent landfill diversion rate.

The waste reduction program targeted several areas to create a comprehensive program.

First, the program focused on two primary areas: educational classes and event food waste collection. The educational classes evolved into an active-learning “Let’s Make Some Black Gold” workshop that focused on the issue of food waste, composting basics, how to build a compost pile, screening your finished compost and vermiculture.

For the 2020 calendar year, we hosted 16 total workshops at the Sarasota County Extension office, as well as at parks, libraries and schools across the county to allow for increased localized participation. Attendance was free-

of-charge and open to all ages, with activities including lectures, presentations, and hands-on experiences, to maximize learning. Participants also had the option to purchase a Geobin composter for \$25, available for pickup at the workshop.

Next, the waste reduction program partnered with local event organizers to provide food waste collection and education using Extension-supplied (and branded) composting bins. Extension agents and volunteers taught event attendees the process of composting and the importance of reducing our impacts on the environment through one-on-one interactions, demonstrations, and tabling displays.

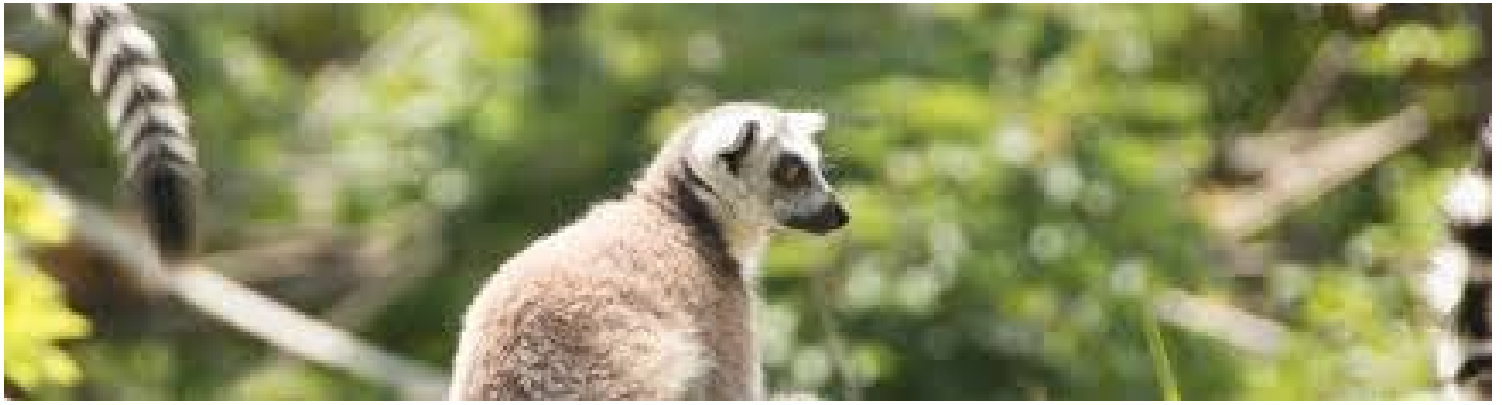
Finally, we have transitioned the composting education efforts from in-person events to online offerings, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That included developing and delivering eight online webinars, a multi-county composting workshop, and a first-ever UF/IFAS online composting certificate course. Additionally, a recording of the “Black Gold” webinar was converted and uploaded to the Sarasota County Extension Youtube channel (available via [https://tiny.cc/ufsaraext\\_youtube](https://tiny.cc/ufsaraext_youtube)), along with a youth-focused composting video created for our LIFE and 4-H programs.

Sarasota County residents have demonstrated that there is a need and demand for composting education here. As a result of our Extension education programs, the waste reduction program is implementing additional courses for residents, youth, and schools. The program is part of a UF/IFAS-identified “super issue” to promote awareness and appreciation of food systems and the environment.

Learn more about composting at [sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/compost](https://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/compost), and find “Let’s Make Some Black Gold” and other Extension classes via [ufsarasotaext.eventbrite.com](https://ufsarasotaext.eventbrite.com).

## LEMURS GO BANANAS

Randall Penn, Faculty Waste Reduction EA II, Sarasota County



It's not often that you get asked to come hang out with lemurs as part of your workday, but life as an Extension agent sometimes has its perks. The Lemur Conservation Association reached out to Randall Penn, UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County, for guidance on creating a composting system for the property near Myakka City.

Home to six species of lemurs, the reserve includes a refuse area, located away from the main center and consisting of a mound of mulch, dirt and lemur waste. The area looked perfect to try a composting method known as a "banana circle."

The concept is simple: banana plants ring a compost pile and feed off the nutrients. Start by digging a large, rounded pit to contain the mixture of food waste, lemur excrement and floor pine shavings. Then plant a circle of banana plants around it. Fill the pit with the waste mix and let the natural composting processes break down the materials and provide nutrients for the bananas.

Once the bananas are mature, they can even be used as lemur food. A true closed-loop system, and a natural "Farm to Table" concept. As a bonus, the resident gopher tortoise, Compost Carl, also has been seen enjoying the banana circle.

The staff and 75 volunteers at the reserve took on the project, 100 percent. Since the installation, the banana plants have taken off in the circle, and the approach has proven to be a hugely successful composting method for the center. Future plans include working with Venture Scouts to plant four more banana circles to reduce more waste and grow more bananas.

To learn more about the reserve, visit the Lemur Conservation Association website at <https://www.lemurreserve.org/>.



## 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

Victoria "Allie" Anderson, 4-H YD EA I, St. Johns County

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

### RETIREMENTS

Ada Medina-Solorzano, FCS EA I, Palm Beach County