

Senior Moments



The official Newsletter for ESP/Alpha Delta Life Members / Special Edition

UF Cuts Threaten IFAS/Extension Budgets

Land Grant Mission in Jeopardy. . . .

With the passage of Florida's tax amendment in the February 5th primary, many expected major cuts in services from county governments across the state, but few expected our own university to be swinging the biggest ax of them all. It is being said that UF President J. Bernard Machen, in his quest to make UF a top ten university, is questioning the land grant tradition and the importance of agriculture in Florida's economy. It is rumored that IFAS will have to ante up more than its share when it comes budget cuts in the coming months. Bottom line. . . it is a very dire situation and one that could drastically impact 4-H, Family and Consumer Science, agriculture and research within the IFAS family. Given the anticipated county cuts, the big question looming on the horizon is can Extension survive both cuts?

Florida Farm Bureau is understandably one of our most respected and ardent supporters and they have drafted a Grassroots Action Plan that is currently circulating among the organization's leadership. I am attaching this Plan in this issue of *Senior Moments* for your study and review.

Here is what we can do as IFAS/Extension Retirees:

- Familiarize yourself with the facts (see attachment).
- Voice your opinion to your elected legislator.
- Localize the issue by outlining IFAS and Extension's contribution to your county and send that data to your legislator and to the Presidents office.
- Be positive and refrain from negative communication with Dr. Machen, but PLEASE contact the president by mail or email to express your support for IFAS, Extension and the Land Grant Mission.

Dr. J. Bernard Machen, President
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PLEASE....ACT NOW. Together we CAN make a difference!



Retiree Spotlight. .

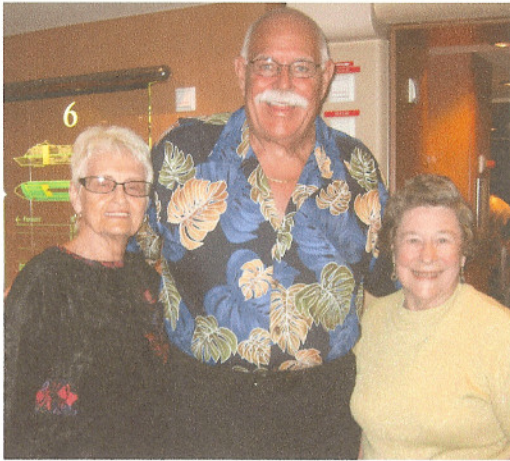
. Ruth Ann Fowler Melzer

We have just heard from former Extension Home Economist (Hillsborough County) Ruth Ann Fowler who is now retired from the faculty of the University of Arizona. Ruth Ann dedicated 30 years of service in both Indiana and Florida before she became the County Director in Maricopa County (Phoenix) Az. After being a widow for twenty years, she married Ronald Melzer in 2004, has two grandchildren and is now extremely involved in her Design & Decorating business in Tucson. Ruth Ann celebrates the "big" one on March 31st. Her address is: 36890 S. Ridgeview Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85739/ RandR@wbhsi.net. Congratulations and good luck to an old friend and colleague.



Email Addresses Requested: If you would like to receive electronic updates, please send your email address to: mckear@msn.com. We have incomplete email addresses for Marilyn Tileston, Luther Rozar, Tom Braddock, Kent Price, and Jukdy Wakefield.

Floridians Sail on ESP's Maiden Voyage. . . .



Joy Satcher, Mike McKinney and Pauline Calloway (pictured above) took part in the first ESP Family & Friends cruise to the Western Caribbean in January. Eighteen ESP members, family and friends from throughout the nation set sail on the worlds largest cruise ship, *The Freedom of the Seas*. Dick Stouffer, a retiree from Georgia and now living in Florida, also attended. Ports of Call included Miami, Labadee, Ocho Rios, George Town, and Cozumel. Those participating on the cruise will be asking our national ESP Board to authorize another cruising event in 2010.

Taking The University To The People

by Wayne D. Rasmussen (1989)

If you haven't already read it, you should find a copy and read about the rich history of the land-grant system and the impact that Extension has made on our society and country since it was created back in 1914. Rasmussen delineates the process by which Extension provided "quality information, education, and problem-solving programs of real concerns," particularly in agriculture, home economics and youth development. This is a must read, especially in these unsettling times. Let us not forget that our forefathers established the land-grant colleges in 1862 to teach subjects related to "agriculture and the mechanic arts" to the children of the "common" man. Prior to this time our national higher education system was for the elite and few

* No county, state or university funds or equipment were utilized in the production or mailing of this Newsletter.

ESP Member News. . .

* If you know a fellow retiree who's not an ESP Life Member, please encourage them to join so we can keep them involved and informed. Retirees can now pay their \$200. life dues in two installments over a 12 month period. **JOIN NOW!**

* Happy 99th Birthday to Oscar Harrison (1/25/1909) who served as a County Agent in Walton, Washington, and Dixie Counties.

* Send your email address to: mckcar@msn.com to receive electronic updates.

Editorially Speaking...Dr. Mr. President

Dear President Machen,

We applaud your vision to make our beloved UF one of the top ten universities in the nation, BUT please do not do so at the expense of our land-grant heritage, our agricultural research, our programs for urban families, and especially our Florida youth. We urge you to look at IFAS and Extension as your friends and true ambassadors for the University of Florida. No other Florida university can boast of having a campus in each county or reaching the vast numbers of community based students participating in informal learning opportunities. The University of Florida has proudly served as a beacon for providing off campus learning to the citizens of Florida. One would think this could only enhance UF's credibility and likelihood of achieving your top ten goal. This letter represents over 140 Extension retirees with over four millennia of service to the University of Florida and to the citizens of this great state. Please let IFAS, Extension, and the great people of Florida assist you on your quest. TOGETHER we can and will make the University of Florida a GREAT institution of higher learning and research.

Respectfully,

Michael McKinney

Epsilon Sigma Phi

Life Member & Retirees Committee

Grassroots Action Plan: UF/IFAS Funding

Problem: With the down turn in the economy the State of Florida is facing major shortfall in funding which affects the State's budget. Within the University system there has been an anticipated budget cut of roughly 4%. With that in mind the IFAS administration has been developing a plan to implement those budget cuts. They were informed by the University of Florida President Bernie Machen that IFAS would have to make more substantial budget cuts but no amounts have been given. That raises the concern that UF/IFAS will have to shoulder more than its proportionate share of budget cuts within the University of Florida. In separate discussions with President Machen and Senate President Ken Pruitt and Chair of the Education Appropriations Chair, Senator Evelyn Lynn, comments have been made that agriculture is a dying industry in Florida, IFAS is flush with money and resources, IFAS needs to be downsized and restructured, IFAS research is not pertinent to the State and they need to be doing better research and that being a land grant institution does not help the University of Florida become a recognized top ten University in the nation. Florida Farm Bureau Federation heard some of the rumors both from Tallahassee and across the state and asked Senior Vice-President of IFAS, Jimmy Cheek, to sit down and discuss the rumors we are hearing. Dr. Cheek confirmed that he was told that the cut would be more than anticipated but was not given a dollar amount or percentage of that cut by President Machen. He also said that the President did have reservations about the future of agriculture in Florida and the role of a land grant in his quest to move UF to a top ten university nationally. He also confirmed that the Senators wanted to see IFAS restructured and were talking about substantial budget cuts but again no amounts or percentages were given. They felt that the research and extension components of IFAS were not relevant to the agricultural community or the citizens of the state.

Summary: With over 42,000 commercial farms that supply over 280 essential commodities throughout North America and to over 100 international trading partners the value to the state is staggering. The agricultural industry is also made up of more than just farms. Services, processing, packaging, marketing, transportation, wholesaling and retailing all are components of the Florida agricultural industry that rely on research and extension through UF/IFAS. Florida's agricultural industry creates almost 800,000 jobs with an economic impact of close to \$100 million annually. Nationally Florida consistently ranks in the top 5 or 6 states in cash farm receipts. We rank behind California, Illinois, Iowa, and Texas. Agriculture is not a rural phenomenon. In fact when we look at Florida counties Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Orange and Hillsborough they are consistently the top counties in Florida for agricultural cash receipts. Florida agriculture is a major economic driver along with tourism and construction, but the agricultural economy does not respond or react to economic downturns in the same way that the other drivers do. Generally the Florida agricultural economy is made up of a diverse mix of production. That diversity creates a very stable economic platform that doesn't overly react to prices or yields for a single commodity. Florida also has a broad

area of ancillary services such as lawn care, pest control, golf courses, natural resources and recreational areas that benefit from research and extension from UF/IFAS. Florida Farm Bureau Federation is concerned that a substantial or disproportionate budget cut for UF/IFAS would effectively destroy the research and extension component of IFAS. That translates into limiting and reducing the competitiveness of the agricultural and natural resources industries. Through the Agricultural Education and Research Centers that are spread across Florida the research and extension component are major resources that Florida agricultural producers rely upon to remain competitive and in business. With a unique climate and over 280 agricultural commodities produced in Florida UF/IFAS is the research and development arm for this industry. In a vast majority of these commodities no other university or college is doing the needed research. With the commodities that may be found in other states, Florida's unique climate often creates distinct and separate research and technology transfer needs for those commodities.

Action Plan: This Action Plan is designed to be a grassroots program.

We should present a solid front and not fall into the trap of giving up one sector of IFAS research and extension to keep another. This divide and conquer tactic will work in favor of those wanting a larger cut in the IFAS budget.

- When cuts are to be made it should be the IFAS administration that makes those decisions and not the Legislature or others in the University system.
- Extension and research within IFAS cover more than just agriculture. For this situation that is a good thing because it can add to the agricultural voice. County Extension offices and 4-H programs offer a face for the University of Florida at the county level. This gives exposure for UF that other Universities don't get and provides a strong recruitment role for UF. Most youth in 4-H do not go into agriculture but they have positive experiences in 4-H and have some association with agriculture. The Research and Education Centers around the state provide a strong base of faculty members to work with and teach graduate students. The number of graduate students is one of the benchmarks for evaluating universities.
- As UF enters in their third Capital Campaign IFAS has met its fund raising goals on the previous two and plans to meet them on this one.
- If the research and extension budgets are significantly reduced and faculty are laid off then gifts and grants will also be reduced, another benchmark for evaluation of universities.
- Currently faculty members have multiple appointments that are split between teaching, research and extension. Most if not all faculty members have two appointments such as teaching/research, or teaching /extension. If significant cuts are made to the research and extension budget then there will be many faculty members that are simply part time and may leave voluntarily. This could and would affect many of the best and brightest faculty. It would also make it extremely hard to hire replacement faculty.