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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 Aldrari.

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

UF/IFAS Extension *Comings & Goings*

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION



CHICAGO STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT MICROPLASTICS IN FLORIDA

Maia McGuire, Sea Grant EA IV, Central District



Students from Polaris Charter Academy in Chicago, IL use quadrats to study microplastics on Marineland Beach.

In May 2019, a group of 13 middle school students and two teachers from Polaris Charter Academy in Chicago made a field trip to Marineland, FL to participate in an intensive two-day microplastics program with UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County Sea Grant Agent Dr. Maia McGuire. Their science teacher had been using the topic of plastics to address chemistry standards in their curriculum. She had contacted Dr. McGuire after discovering the [Florida Microplastic Awareness Project](#) website, and had the class

conduct literature research on the topic prior to selecting a group of students for the trip.

The agenda for the two days started with the students listing things they knew and wanted to know about plastic in the ocean. These items were listed on flip charts and addressed at the end of the two days to see what students had learned. The students heard presentations about microplastics and bioplastics, and then conducted several hands-on activities to investigate plastic density, collect data about microplastics and macroplastics on the beach, look at live plankton and learn how plastic pollution affects sea turtles. In addition to touring the Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience, including the sea turtle hospital and Dr. Todd Osborne's marine biogeochemistry lab, they also visited Marineland Dolphin Adventure.

On returning to Chicago, the students acted as ambassadors by teaching other seventh and eighth grade students what they had learned in Florida. Each student had been assigned to take notes on particular presentations and activities so that they could



Students investigating the density of different plastic resins

replicate them on their return. Dr. McGuire shared her PowerPoint presentations and gave them materials for some of the activities. Their teacher wrote, "The Ambassadors were so great! They used all the slides you sent and went through most of the experiences with the rest of their classmates. The students that did not get to attend were in awe of seeing 'actual microplastic.' I had no idea it meant that much for them so see & hold it personally. I am super excited to build out this expedition and hopefully repeat it with my next group of middle schoolers in 2020-21."



Students and Dr. McGuire looking at marine debris items collected at Marineland Beach

Many of the students attending Polaris Charter Academy have never seen the Chicago River or Great Lakes, despite being in close proximity to these water bodies. Learning about plastic pollution has helped them make connections between their activities and potential environmental repercussions of those activities. All students took a pledge to reduce the amount of plastic waste that they produce. The activities used with the students can be found on the K-12 resources page at www.plasticaware.org.

QUARTER HORSE PRODUCER RELIES ON EXTENSION FOR FORAGE MANAGEMENT

Cindy Sanders, Livestock EA IV, Alachua County



During 2019, UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County's livestock agent developed a forage management program for a large quarter horse producer, with help from the state forage specialist. The producer breeds mares from all over the southeastern US and South America. The producer has started taking soil samples and fertilizing based on recommendations from the agent and specialists. The producer also planted oats for winter grazing and received a no-till drill through USDA cost-share to over-seed winter and summer annuals, thus increasing forage quality for mares. "I have more forage this fall than ever and the horses love the oats," the producer later said. "I can see this has made a big difference in my pastures and body condition of the horses." In addition, the producer will be planting Tift Quick this spring, based on our recommendations. This horse client has also voluntarily signed up for horse BMPs in 2019 through FDACS.

MANAGING PRODUCTION COST IN PEANUTS

Christopher Vann, Agriculture EA II, Lafayette County



Area agents scouting peanut trials at the NFREC-Suwannee Valley.

In 2019, over 60,000 acres of peanuts were planted in the Suwannee Valley area with an economic value to the region of approximately \$48 million. However, over the last several years, peanut prices have been stagnant at around \$400 per ton, compared to prices of \$600 in the past. The recent lower prices can be attributed to several factors, including higher yields, lower returns for other commodities, farm policy changes and trade issues.

Unfortunately, peanut producers have little to no control over prices—but they can control costs in order to stay economically viable. Thus, over the last 5 years, area Extension agents, state specialists, and the staff of the North Florida Research and Education Center—Suwannee Valley have been conducting trials to compare the effectiveness of lower- and higher-cost fungicides on peanuts.

Plots were sprayed, monitored and rated for disease pressure at 14-day intervals. This also allowed area agents to gain valuable experience identifying potential issues and discuss the observations in area fields. At the end of the growing season, the plots were harvested, weighed and graded, and on average no significant differences in the yield were noted between the higher- and lower-cost spray programs. However, using the lower-cost fungicide program can lead to saving \$30-45 per acre, depending on the year and the spray program used. Under the right conditions, producers may want to consider this option to reduce production costs.

YOUTH SUCCESS STORY

Becky Jordi, Environmental Horticulture EA IV, Nassau County



Susan Fowler with members of the local Cub Scout troop. It is never too early to learn!

On the Eastern part of Nassau County, the presence of 4-H is very small. One of our new Master Gardener volunteers, Susan Fowler, decided she would introduce her Cub Scout troop to the benefits of being involved in 4-H. She brought them over to the Amelia Island Lighthouse where the Master Gardener volunteers have planted native plants and had each of youth identify the plants. As part of their community service project, Susan instructed the scouts to plant wildflower seeds at the historic Lighthouse on Amelia Island. One of the learning experiences of the lesson was to introduce them to Florida's State Flower – the coreopsis. The scouts did not know Florida had a state flower and were excited to plant seeds at the lighthouse site. Fowler talked about the importance of cooperation, enhancing the community property and giving back to the community where they lived, and their parents worked. The children gladly pulled weeds at the site and planted the native wildflower seeds. Fowler also talked about the importance of protecting our native wildlife and how planting wildflowers would encourage native bees and butterflies to stop over at the lighthouse for food and rest. What a great 4-H lesson in giving back to the community! Fowler has been an active participator in Extension programs, joining the Master Gardener volunteer program this year after attending our Crash Course in Florida Gardening.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON: NEW FACILITY OPENS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY

Heather Janney, 4-H CED II, Columbia County

UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County has moved from its old location in an old hospital to the newly remodeled "Hall of Fame" building at 437 NW Hall of Fame Drive, Lake City. This location was previously the Sports Hall of Fame and Columbia County Welcome Center. The move started over two years ago when Columbia County discovered that the cost of leasing the previous office building and the quality of facilities were not at a high enough standard for the county. In May 2018, when Heather Janney interviewed for the position of County Extension Director, the changes in location were mentioned and discussed. It all seemed like a distant possibility. Stories of fleas, rats, and even alligators showing up on the loading dock of the old building were passed among agents. All very large issues that were causing not only possible health



Rainbow over the new UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County office.

concerns but additionally extreme anxiety and distress in the staff and faculty at the location. Ground-breaking on the renovation of the Hall of Fame happened in April 2019 when the construction crews started putting up walls and redoing the interior.

While construction continued, we were busy preparing for the move, submitting budgets, planning office space, buying equipment, landscaping and telling people about the new

location. As with any Extension Program, things did not come to a halt. Between April and October, the show had to go on. The date for opening the new building was October 21, 2019. But until then, we were limited in what we could do (i.e., no internet connectivity), so we told people about the new location and asked them to please bear with us. While faculty and staff worked together to get everything packed and moved, we also had to prepare a booth for the Columbia County Fair. Faculty made trips across town to access the internet as needed, used their own data from their personal phones, and even worked remotely when needed. Additionally, programming continued with classes being held and trainings going on at both the old and new locations.

Finally, everything came together, the fair booth was put together perfectly, and the move officially completed on February 26, 2020 with the UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County Open House/Grand Re-Opening. The move may have been emotionally and physically draining, but faculty and staff have shown positivity through the whole process in being happier with their new office environment. In the end, “the show must go on” and UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County has succeeded at making sure that happened.

UF/IFAS EXTENSION VEGETABLE SYMPOSIUM OVERFLOWS WITH INTEREST

Ralph Mitchell, CED III, Charlotte County



The UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte Vegetable Symposium was held in September 2019. It was an overwhelming and exceeded our room capacity in short order with 89 people in attendance! This half-day program was geared toward veggie gardeners with raised beds and backyard gardens,

community gardens or school gardens. Beginners and seasoned backyard vegetable growers alike increased their knowledge with the help of three speakers. Master Gardener Mike Stevens provided some basics with Vegetable Gardening 101. This was followed by a presentation by Horticulture Agent Ralph Mitchell on

Pests and Diseases of Vegetables, where he outlined an array of insects and vegetables diseases and how best to manage them. The final speaker, Master Gardener Bob Prier, discussed best management practices related to Growing the Perfect Tomato—something every gardener wants to do!

An end-of-program evaluation recorded that 100% Agreed/Strongly Agreed that they had increased their knowledge concerning general backyard vegetable growing. Additionally, 100% of the group Agreed/Strongly Agreed that they felt more confident about making good decisions concerning the identification and management of common vegetable pests. An encouraging 97% of the participants Agreed/Strongly Agreed that they plan to adopt one or more tips that they learned at the workshop about growing the perfect tomato. Based the degree of interest in this popular educational workshop, another is planned in 2020. For more information on this workshop and others provided by UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County, please call 941-764-4340 for more information or check out our website at <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/charlotte/>.

UF/IFAS EXTENSION CHARLOTTE COUNTY HOSTS 2019 UF/IFAS GATEWAY MEETING

Ralph Mitchell, CED III, Charlotte County



Dr. Nick Place addresses participants at the Gateway meeting in the new North Charlotte Regional Park.

UF/IFAS holds an annual gathering of county partners called the Gateway meeting. In 2019, Charlotte County hosted this event at the new North Port Regional Park in Port Charlotte. Approximately 48 participants attended from 11 counties in the Southwest District. Headed by District Extension Director Brenda Rogers, the committee of county Extension directors assembled an interesting agenda, sharing programs, resources and services that might be useful to our county partners.

Ralph Mitchell, county Extension director in Charlotte County, opened the gathering with a few words about the new facility and our county partner, Tommy Scott, director of Community Services. Our association with Mr. Scott and Charlotte County Community Services has always been positive. “Mr. Scott is an advocate, a cheerleader and a customer of UF/IFAS Extension,” Mitchell said in his opening remarks. This was followed by a welcome from Deputy Administrator Hector Flores, who mentioned the positive relationship UF/IFAS Extension has had with Charlotte County over the past 85 years. Brenda Rogers then introduced Dean for Extension Dr. Nick Place, who set the stage with opening remarks about the innovative programming and opportunities provided to the counties by UF/IFAS Extension, including Innovation Through Engagement and Engagement in Action.

Dr. Michael Gutter, associate dean for Extension and state program leader for 4-H, Families and Communities, began a discussion on Partnering for Health and Rural Prosperity. Dr. Gutter was followed by Randall Penn, Extension agent with Sarasota County, who talked about Impacting Environmental Change Through Sports. Mr. Penn’s program efforts focused on composting and waste management within sports facilities. Next, Pamela Bradford, Hillsborough County Extension agent, presented a program on Food is Health - A Nutritional Education Partnership.

The next session of the Gateway meeting involved the local Algal Bloom Update and Effort. Dr. Lisa Krinsky, regional specialized agent for water resources, and our own Sea Grant Agent Betty Staugler, began by giving our partners an overview of the UF/IFAS response to Harmful Algal Blooms. Dr. Abbey Tyrna with Sarasota County Extension gave an update on Water Quality Efforts in Sarasota County, followed by Dr. Angela Collins of Manatee County Extension with a discussion about how she assisted the shellfish aquaculture industry during red tide events.

Al Carlson, the regional director of UF Innovation Station, next talked about his work with the University of Florida’s first engineering Extension office, including programs supportive of economic and workforce development across the region.

Disaster Preparedness was another important topic discussed at the Gateway meeting. Dr. Angela Lindsey, assistant professor of Community Issues Education, discussed her work, which focuses on helping communities become more resilient in the face of disasters. Her outreach work includes helping with Continuity of Operation Plans (COOPs); she developed and implemented a Disaster Response & Recovery Mental Health First Aid Training in Charlotte County earlier this year.

Dean Place and Brenda Rogers wrapped up the event and took additional questions from our partners. In addition to Hector Flores, Assistant County Administrator Emily Lewis was in attendance, asking good questions and taking notes.

It was an honor to have all of these other county administrations visit our new facility and literally gush over the new North Charlotte Regional Park. This Gateway meeting was a success and a great opportunity to showcase what UF/IFAS can accomplish using synergy with our county partners.

COMINGS AND 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!

HIRES

Arielle Pierce, 4-H EA I, Lee County
Ronnie Cowan, 4-H CED II, Okaloosa County
Emma Cannon, 4-H EA I, Marion County
Mimi Vreeland, Residential Horticulture EA I, Flagler County
Evie Blount, 4-H EA I, Gadsden County
Grace Carter, 4-H EA I, Duval County
Angelika Keene, Community Development EA I, Brevard County

TRANSFERS

Brooke Moffis, Environmental Hort Lake County to Urban/Commercial Horticulture EA III
Melanie Taylor, FCS Gulf County to FCS EA III to Bay County
Geraldyn Sachs, 4-H St. Johns County to 4-H RSA III, Central District
Melanie Thomas, FCS Duval County to FCS CED II, Flagler County
Hannah Wooten, Sustainable Ag/Food Systems Seminole County to Commercial Horticulture EA I, Orange County

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

DEPARTURES

Derby Sale, 4-H EA I, Suwannee County
Stephanie Herzog, FCS EA I, Jackson County
Mary Beth Henry, Pest Management & Small Farms EA III, Polk County

RETIREMENTS

Sharon Fox Gamble, Agriculture CED IV, Volusia County
David Holmes, Horticulture CED IV, Marion County