Engaging Students and the Community with Florida Agriculture

VOLUME 20  WINTER 2013/2014

AEC Student Experiences West Africa Agriculture

Teaming Up to Stop Hunger
Engage and Give Back

Greetings and Happy 2014! It’s another special year in the life of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and our partners in UF’s land-grant mission, the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station and Florida Cooperative Extension Service. This year we celebrate 100 years of Extension and the signing of the Smith-Lever Act, which on May 8, 1914 created the federal-state-county partnership we know as Cooperative Extension. 2014 is also the 50th birthday of IFAS, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, which is the structure that houses Extension.

This issue highlights just a small sample of student and alumni activities and accomplishments. A common element in many of these stories is the importance of teamwork, whether students are competing for a national championship or raising awareness about hunger. You will find our students working with the latest technology, such as the futuristic BodPod and horse trainers, but to make students aware of what it means to train and market as a 2-year-old. By the end of their training, the horses will be desensitized and know how to lead, ride and trailer load, McQuagge said.

“His sire was an American Quarter Horse Association World Champion Junior Cutting Horse and finalist in eight major National Cutting Horse Association aged events,” Davila said.

Davila said some benefits of buying a program horse, said that the courses teach students that all horses absorb and retain training at their own pace. “One day they can do everything you planned and more,” Davila said. “But then there are days that you have to change your strategy for the day because the horse is not cooperating.” McQuagge said that the courses serve a great purpose to students in the animal sciences department who are focusing on the equine industry. “Students who plan to work in the equine industry need to have that groundwork of horse behavior,” McQuagge said.

Prospective buyers have the opportunity and are encouraged to come see the horses as often as they would like, he said. “If you are looking for a green broke 2-year-old, this is a great place to shop,” McQuagge said.

The 2014 sale will be May 9 at 1 p.m. Prospective buyers may visit the UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit between 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays beginning April 1 to view the horses and talk to student trainers.

Students are exposed to different training methods to best fit their horses. “We want to create nice horses with willing attitudes,” he said. Marvin Davila, past student and a buyer of a program horse, said that the classes teach students how young horses react to new training methods. “You learn to change your approach to each horse if they are not on the same page or game plan as you,” Davila said. Students are assigned a yearling horse to train and market as a 2-year-old. By the end of their training, the horses will communicate, learn and be able to do their best.

The horses are bred through the University of Florida’s breeding program and are located at the UF/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences’ Horse Teaching Unit.

“We have great support from the industry; so we have horses with excellent pedigrees,” McQuagge said. “We have a great set of brood mares and not many universities can say that.” McQuagge said that Horse Psychology and Training presents an in-depth examination into the methods by which horses communicate, learn and are trained.

“The goal isn’t to make commercial horse trainers, but to make students better with horses,” he said.

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Undergraduate students are getting real-world experiences training and marketing yearling and 2-year-old horses for a performance horse sale. Each year, students in ANS 4131L Horse Psychology and Training and ANS 4141L Intermediate Horse Training prepare for the annual sealed bid sale which offers 2-year-old horses these students have been training for the past nine months.

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Two AEC Students Served as 2012-2013 National FFA Officers

BY SYDNEY STONE

Two students in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department served the National FFA Organization while advocating for the organization and the agriculture industry.

Clay Sapp and Joenelle Futrell were elected as the 2012-2013 National FFA President and Eastern Region Vice President at the national convention in Indianapolis in October 2012.

Sapp said several factors played a role in deciding to run for national office, but one particular experience helped him make the final decision.

I had the chance to facilitate a chapter officer training a few months after I had finished serving as the Florida State FFA president,” Sapp said. “Working with those chapter officers allowed me to realize that I still had a desire to serve FFA members and build the organization that I loved.”

Futrell’s first at UF. Instead of returning to the University of Kentucky, Futrell chose to enroll in the AEC department.

“I felt I needed something fresh,” said Futrell. “I kept hearing that I loved. Throughout the year, I wanted to use the skills I learned as a national FFA officer and help other students.

Throughout the past year, Sapp and Futrell served as leaders to more than 500,000 FFA members and traveled across the nation to visit high school FFA chapters.

Sapp said he learned valuable lessons throughout his year of service that have shaped him into the person he is now and that he wants to continue to be.

“The one thing that I have learned that I will take with me throughout the rest of my life is that no matter how busy you may be, you can always make time for the things that you believe in and care about,” Sapp said.

Sapp said he credits many individuals for helping him reach his goals, but one in particular.

“I would be remiss if I didn’t mention my dad because he played a large role in developing me into the leader in agriculture and leadership that I have become,” Sapp said. “He is my high school agriculture teacher and FFA adviser, and he has provided so much guidance along the way.”

When his term as national president ended, he said he felt like he had put everything possible into his year of service.

“I felt fulfilled,” Sapp said. “It has been an amazing year and I have learned so much, so I took a lot of pride in knowing that I had accomplished more than I could have even imagined when I took office last year.

Sapp said he looks forward to using the skills he learned as a national FFA officer on campus.

“I am most excited to get more engaged on campus. I was only a student at UF for two semesters before I was elected into this position, so I hope to get more involved with student government and some of the social aspects that are offered on campus,” he said.

Three Generations of High School Agriculture

BY EVAN KEGLER

After graduating from the University of Florida last May, Andrew Heavner became the third generation of high school agriculture teachers in his family.

Heavner graduated with a degree in agricultural education and communication with a minor in plant science, and then accepted a teaching position at the Career Academies of Seminole. The small vocational school located in Seminole, Fla., will be his first opportunity to experience life as a teacher and FFA adviser.

“I teach at a pretty small school, but it is a unique program,” Heavner said. “The administration is very supportive of agriculture and the agricultural programs on campus.”

Having a passion for and background in agriculture played a major role in his career choice, Heavner said. His father, Howard Heavner, and grandfather, Bob Heavner, were both agricultural educators in Illinois. This influenced Heavner to be involved with agriculture early in his life.

“He always hung around and participated in a lot of the FFA activities,” Howard Heavner said.

Even though Heavner was involved with his family in agriculture from an early age, there wasn’t any “twisting his arm” or making him want to do it, Howard Heavner said. Instead, Heavner showed self-motivation, even when others might have dropped their agriculture classes, his father said.

“A lot of people would drop agricultural education for no reason,” Howard Heavner said.

Bob Heavner, like Howard Heavner, has also had an extensive career in agricultural education and was his son’s high school agriculture teacher.

The two-generation combination in Illinois makes for a 51-year legacy at the same school, Bob Heavner said.

Heavner’s teacher and mentor, AEC professor Kirby Barrick, Ph.D., said that Heavner has great aspirations for his future career in agriculture.

“I think he’ll do well,” Barrick said. “He is the third-generation agriculture teacher in his family, so he knows what he is getting into.”

Heavner attributes his teaching style to his father’s dedication to his students and the community.

“He is the third-generation agriculture teacher in his family, so he knows what he is getting into.”

With Andrew Heavner beginning his teaching career this fall, the Heavner family has three generations of agriculture educators, Bob, Andrew and Howard. Photo courtesy of Andrew Heavner.
UF Students learned about the most food insecure countries at the HungerU mobile display and packaged more than 25,000 meals to feed those in need. Photos by Marisol Amador and Raychel Rabon.

Kaley Mialki and Tonika Jones measure a student participant’s height, weight, and waist and hip circumference before having her body composition measured by the BodPod. Photos by Tyler Jones.

CALS Students get Hands-on Research Experience with the BodPod

BY AMBER HUFF

Two University of Florida students gained practical research experience with a tool called the BodPod last summer.
A research study conducted at UF during the summer of 2013 examined body composition and the physical activity and food practices of college students.
Kaley Mialki, a senior in food science and human nutrition with a specialization in dietetics, said the study was divided into two parts. First, college students would sign consent forms, fill out electronic surveys, and complete a food and physical activity journal for one week.
Mialki said that in the second part of the study, students would return after one week with their completed journals and have their height, weight, and hip and waist circumference measured. She said that students then had their body composition measured by a device called the BodPod.

Karla Shelnutt, Ph.D., an assistant professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Community Sciences and Food Science and Human Nutrition, said the study was “a really enriching research project experience even if it is not necessarily something you research) even if it is not necessarily something you think you may be interested in,” Jones said, “because you never know what you could learn from the experience.”

When I actually got involved with the research,” Jones said, “it helped me learn about myself, the university and students.”

Jones said that her duties included recruitment, making and handing out fliers, contacting different departments, and spreading the word about the study. She said that it was fun interacting with other students and classmates.

Jones and Mialki conducted the research as part of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences’ Summer Research Internship Program with the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station.

Jones said that having the research project experience and learning about health was “a really enriching experience.”

Don’t be intimidated,” said Mialki, “and know that there are a lot of research opportunities available.”

Mialki said that she did not expect many of the activities she took part in, such as interacting with people, to be a component of research.

“Not all research is sitting at a lab bench mixing chemicals,” said Mialki.

She said that this project clarified concepts she had learned in the classroom and even made her consider pursuing a career in research.

“Don’t be intimidated,” said Mialki, “and know that there are a lot of research opportunities available.”

Jones attributed the research experience with helping “expand her horizons” and showing her the many opportunities that research has to offer.

“In my opinion,” Jones said, “all students should participate in research.”

She said that this opportunity provided her insight on different assistantships and graduate programs she could participate in while pursuing her master’s degree.

Jones described her research experience as invaluable.

“You will learn something,” Jones said, “and it may spark an interest in you.”

UF Students learned about the most food insecure countries at the HungerU mobile display and packaged more than 25,000 meals to feed those in need. Photos by Marisol Amador and Raychel Rabon.

T he College of Agricultural and Life Sciences worked to educate University of Florida students about world hunger this fall with the help of HungerU, a tour dedicated to stopping hunger around the globe.

Funded by the Farm Journal Foundation as a project of the Farmers Feeding the World initiative, the HungerU tour started in 2012. The purposes of HungerU are to inform students about the world hunger crisis and allow them to put forth their efforts in beating it.

The HungerU tour came to UF on Nov. 14 and 15. UF marked the end of a semester-long tour down the East Coast. Before coming to campus, HungerU hosted a Stop Hunger Now meal-packaging event in Gainesville. Stop Hunger Now is an international hunger relief organization that coordinates the distribution of food and other life-saving aid around the world.

This meal-packaging event took place on Nov. 1 at the Gator Wesley Foundation Center. More than 125 UF students showed their support for the hunger crisis by packaging a total of 25,019 meals which were sent to Honduras.

Charlotte Emerson, director of student development and recruitment in CALS, viewed this event not only as an opportunity to impact the hunger crisis but also as an opportunity to teach students how to give.

“Our job, at an educational institution, is to plant a seed,” Emerson said. “For me this was about planting a seed in students so that they would understand what philanthropy is and what giving back is.”

While on campus, the HungerU tour set up an exhibit in the form of a 40’ x 40’ mobile classroom at UF’s Plaza of the Americas. By using TVs, printed materials and interactive games, the tour staff taught UF students about the global hunger crisis.

“All we wanted to do was get a discussion started about world hunger,” said past HungerU staff member and CALS alumnus Tiffany Dale, “basically how technology and agriculture are really working to alleviate hunger and what schools are doing on their campuses to help defeat hunger and how students are involved.”

Emerson said the HungerU staff was able to reach more students at UF than at any of the other previously visited universities, reaching more than 1,600 students in one day versus only 500 at other institutions.

Even though the HungerU mobile unit will not return to campus again, Emerson said the university would find new ways to keep students informed about world hunger issues.

“With a new crop of students every single year, so we have to plant the seed over and over and over again,” Emerson said. “Hopefully, when we plant that seed and students get out and become productive members of society, they remember what it is to give back.”

For more information about HungerU please visit http://hungeru.com.

Jones and Mialki conducted a hands-on research project experience with the BodPod.
Engaging Students and the Community with Florida Agriculture

BY GRETCHEN WULFF

It is hard to imagine almost five acres, just down the road from the Florida Museum of Natural History, was almost lost to the weeds and forgotten. Originally a poultry farm, the Agronomy Teaching Farm is now an interdisciplinary teaching farm that features predominant and diverse farming systems important to the state of Florida’s crop production.

The Agronomy Teaching Farm hosts 12 undergraduate and two graduate courses, as well as getting students and the community involved with agriculture. Photos courtesy of Judy Dampier.

The initial goals are to meet the needs of current agronomy department courses, expand to meet the needs of the diverse departments across the University of Florida campus, participate in campus and community outreach, and improve the infrastructure of the facility, said Judy Dampier, Agronomy Department biologist who, along with Diane Rowland, coordinates activities at the farm.

On site, the farm offers 3-4 acres of farm plots, a smart classroom, conference room and lab rooms. “The idea would be to have a class able to go out, collect samples and return to the lab,” said Dampier.

The farm supports two undergraduate and two graduate courses ranging from tropical plant production and plant breeding to soil physics and curriculum and program planning. The farm is also home to a family of sandhill cranes and a hawk that nests and hunts nearby, said Dampier.

Each instructor that uses the farm is assigned a specific plot for his or her course. The remaining empty plots are filled with as many different crops as possible, said Dampier. Crops such as sesame and millet are planted for their rarity in Florida. Corn, cotton and peanuts are planted to show the diversity of agronomic crops grown in Florida. The farm also features a tropical nursery, fertilizer trial and plant breeding studies. The Agronomy Teaching Farm participates in the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS), a national agricultural program conducting surveillance, detection and monitoring of exotic plant pests of agricultural and natural plant resources and biological control agents.

According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website, the survey targets include plant diseases, insects, weeds, nematodes and other invertebrate organisms. “We are trying to make the Agronomy Teaching Farm as informative and engaging as possible for students and visitors,” said Dampier.

Andrew Thoron, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, used the farm this fall to teach AEC 4504 Curriculum and Program Planning for Agricultural Education. Students enrolled in this course have an interest in becoming high school agriculture science teachers and the farm provides a unique learning experience for these students unlike any place on campus, said Thoron. “The best part is, it gives them the ability to apply the production aspects, which they are not typically introduced to,” said Thoron. “As future teachers, they are going to need to know the basics.”

Through the course, students participate in a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) similar to those of their future students. They are responsible for the maintenance of their farm plot and are required to visit the farm every week outside of class, said Thoron. “Students will have an authentic experience to base their knowledge on and will be able to apply the skills learned from class,” said Thoron.

Thoron also hopes to teach AEC 4228 Laboratory Practices in Teaching Agricultural Education at the farm to help students learn what it takes as an instructor to manage student projects and class laboratories.

The farm also hosts many student club activities and outreach events. Events such as the Agronomy Fall Festival give students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom as well as to share their passion with visitors.

The farm has hosted both local high school and international visitors. High school students participating in the Gainesville Summer Service Project, part of the UF Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Sustainability program (YELS), spent time working on the farm as a service project. The YELS summer program gives college bound high school students the opportunity to live, work, eat and play on the UF campus for five weeks each summer while learning about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, being inspired to solve social problems, and practicing sustainability.

The farm hosted and helped organize a weeklong trip visiting various venues of agricultural interest throughout Florida for students from the Universidad Nacional de Agricultura in Honduras, said Dampier. “This is not just a UF resource,” said Dampier. “We’re here to provide services to the community as well. To learn more about the Agronomy Teaching Farm visit http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/teachingfarm/.

“We are trying to make the Agronomy Teaching Farm as informative and engaging as possible for students and visitors.”

Classes Currently Utilizing the Agronomy Teaching Farm

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<td>AEC 4504 Curriculum &amp; Program Planning for</td>
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<td>Agricultural Education</td>
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<td>AGR 3501 Environment, Food and Society</td>
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<td>AGR 4212 Alternative Cropping Systems</td>
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<td>AGR 4214C Applied Field Crop Production</td>
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<td>AGR 4231 Forage Science and Range Management</td>
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<td>AGR 4320 Plant Breeding</td>
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<td>AGR 4932 Tropical Crop Production</td>
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<td>AGR 6442C Physiology of Agronomic Plants</td>
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<td>ALS 3153 Agricultural Ecology</td>
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<td>PLS 2003 Plants that Feed the World</td>
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<td>PLS 3004C Principles of Plant Science</td>
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<td>PLS 4601C Principles of Weed Science</td>
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<td>PLS 6655 Plant/Herbicide Interaction</td>
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<td>SWS 4602C Soil Physics</td>
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<td>SWS 4932 Urban Soil and Water Systems</td>
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The Agronomy Teaching Farm gives students and the community a unique look at Florida agriculture. Photos courtesy of Judy Dampier.
AEC Student Experiences West Africa: Agriculture Firsthand

BY SYDNEY STONE

A n agricultural education and communication senior worked with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Africa as part of an international FFA experience.

Nicole Liles was chosen as one of six students across the nation to travel to Burkina Faso in West Africa. The Global Outreach: Africa program is an experience provided by the National FFA Organization and sponsored by the Howard G. Buffet Foundation. The GO: Africa program is an opportunity offered only to college students who are members of Collegiate FFA or who hold an alumni membership with the National FFA Organization, said Liles.

“Thankful, humbled and motivated. These three words describe my feelings as I think about my experience in Burkina Faso,” Liles said.

Liles saw multiple perspectives of foreign aid and was personally impacted in a positive way by CRS.

“I learned of the hardships, as well as the positive impacts, of foreign aid administration through the gracious staff of CRS,” Liles said. “Because of these eye-opening experiences, I am motivated to take what I have learned and share it.”

For two weeks the team of six worked with CRS in the agricultural division and learned about the aid CRS is doing within the agriculture and natural resources sector in the country. CRS is a mission-based group headquartered in Baltimore and not only deals with agriculture, but also healthcare, relocation and other needs internationally.

“It was really cool to see some of the practices that CRS does, like what they teach them and what they have the field animators teach them,” Liles said.

In the country of Burkina Faso, a field animator would be similar to an extension agent in the U.S. The animators teach them, “Liles said. “Thankfully, the Burkinabé (the residents of Burkina Faso) are open to trying new practices.”

CRS is working to develop and implement practices that assist the people in making the most out of their land. Liles said that CRS makes individual needs a priority and prepares the people for a stable, sustainable future.

As the future of Burkina Faso lies on the horizon, these values of community, openness and generosity are advantages in progress toward a sustainable lifestyle,” Liles said, “because no matter the challenges they face, the people will always have each other.”

The opportunity to travel and see how other countries produce their food is one she could not pass up, said Liles.

“Once word: GO! I would say if you’re thinking about it, do it. And then be prepared for your life to change,” said Liles. “College may be the only time in your life when you have the freedom to take off and explore, so why not?”

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences now offers 21 graduate-level and nine undergraduate-level certificates.

Certificate programs recognize students for completing a minimum of nine credits of specialized study with minimum grades of C or S in each course. Certificates may include additional experience including internships and international exchange. Both degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking students may pursue certificates at the University of Florida.

“Each of the certificates has specific learning outcomes,” said CALS Interim Dean Elaine Turner.

Personal and Family Financial Planning is one of the newest certificate programs offered to undergraduate students.

According to the UF Undergraduate Catalog, this certificate “requires 18 credits and addresses the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) Board of Standards education requirement for the certification examination, including insurance, personal investing, retirement planning, tax planning, behavioral finance and financial planning practice management.”

The courses for this certificate give students a basis in finances that they will be able to utilize both now and in the future, said Michael Gutter, Ph.D., family, youth and community sciences associate professor and primary faculty adviser of the certificate.

One of the required courses, FYC 4003 Financial Management, provides an overview of family financial planning including an introduction to time value of money, financial goals based on family values, budgeting, credit, insurance, investments, estate planning, taxes and transfer of assets, according to the UF Undergraduate Catalog.

“I think this certificate is a very practical option for students, no matter what their major,” said Turner, “because ultimately we all have financial decisions to make.”

Gutter teaches students through a combination of lecture, self-learning, problem sets, readings and case studies to prepare them for the certification exam.

“Financial planning is a lot of math and technical things, and, as a result, if you don’t practice, then you won’t know it for the CFP exam,” Gutter said.

David Melnyk, a finance senior, said his major courses are more focused on corporate finance and the certificate gives him a chance to learn personal finance.

“I’d like to become a financial adviser and be able to get to know my clients,” said Melnyk. “The certificate steers me academically toward my career.”

Students pursuing the Personal and Family Financial Planning certificate also take part in outreach projects such as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, where they prepare taxes for free for lower-income families and students on campus.

To learn more about undergraduate certificate programs at UF, including Personal and Family Financial Planning, visit http://catalog.ufl.edu.
crySTAL KELTS
SNODGRASS
BSA ‘03 Entomology
and Nematology
MS ‘05 Entomology
and Nematology

Like many students, Snodgrass’ initial aspiration was to attend medical school; however, an internship with Bayer CropScience opened her eyes to a whole new world. Snodgrass began her role as the Manatee County Vegetable Extension Agent in 2008. As a result of her work, Manatee County growers have reduced fertilizer rates by an average of 80 lb/acre, resulting in total savings of more than $1.1 million and a reduction of approximately 1.6 million pounds of nitrogen fertilizer applied in the environment.

Snodgrass resides with her husband John in Wimauma and was nominated by Monica Ozores-Hampton, Ph.D.

ARLEN N. JUMPER
BSA ’53 Animal Husbandry and Horticulture MAG ’58

Attending UF on a football scholarship, Arlen Jumper received his bachelor’s degree in 1953. After spending three years in the U.S. Navy, he returned and received his master’s degree in 1958. Jumper has been a leader in Florida agriculture for more than 50 years, having worked in the citrus, peach, timber, pasture and sod industries in Marion, Alachua, Lake, Polk, Orange, Martin and Palm Beach counties. He has been a major cooperator with IFAS in testing new varieties of grasses as well as new materials and methods for control of insects, weeds and diseases. Jumper has been instrumental in providing funds for research in turf through serving as director of Florida Turf Grass and Florida Sod Growers Co-op, both major contributors to IFAS Research.

Jumper was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2003. He resides in Ft. McCoy with his wife Celete and was nominated by T. Richard Barber, Jr.

ANDY ANDREASEN
BSA ’74 Animal Science
MAG ’82 Ag and Extension Education

Numerous panhandle farmers and ranchers credit the success of their operations to Andy Andreasen. He received his training at UF and began working for Extension in 1983. Andreasen had a distinguished career in both Jackson and Washington counties, establishing the Northwest Florida Beef Production Conference and pioneering the UF/IFAS Beef Cattle Reproduction Management Schools. He is passionate about working with youth and coached numerous livestock and meats judging teams, giving young people the life skills they need to pursue careers in agriculture, veterinary medicine, human medicine and law.

Following retirement in 2012, Andreasen returned to his 98-year-old family farm to carry on a cow-calf operation, enjoy nature and do a little fishing. He resides in Marianna with his wife Jenny and was nominated by Shepard D. Eubanks.

KELLY PADGETT MOSLEY
BSA ’04 Agricultural Education and Communication

Raised on a 5th generation family farm, Mosley has been an ambassador for agriculture her whole life. While pursuing her bachelor’s degree at UF, Mosley served as a CALS Ambassador, Block and Bridle President, and Gator Colle- legiate CattleWomen Vice President.

After graduating, Mosley began working for the Clay County School District where she has served as career and technical education specialist since 2008. She organized and implemented the Clay County Agriscience College and Career Fair to expose students to college and career opportunities.

Mosley resides in Green Cove Springs with her husband and daughter. She was nominated by Bridget Carlisle.

CRRYSTAL KELTS
SNODGRASS
BSA ‘03 Entomology
and Nematology
MS ‘05 Entomology
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