

UF/IFAS Celebrates 100 Years of Extension with Displays, Critters and Lunch

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. – Alligators, an insect-petting zoo and lunch prepared by a former White House chef are among the highlights of the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences’ 100th Anniversary of Florida Extension celebration at the Plaza of the Americas April 17 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914, creating the Cooperative Extension Service, which, for a century, has conveyed agricultural-related scientific research from land-grant universities to the public.

Florida has a UF/IFAS Extension office in each of its 67 counties. Residents benefit from educational programs that include everything from agricultural best practices to marriage-preparation courses, to money-management help and water-conservation and environmentally conscious gardening programs.

Large and small producers of Florida’s more than 300 agricultural commodities and related industries benefit from Extension’s technical advice on best practices for growing, marketing and safely distributing food.

The celebration will include an airboat and an unmanned aircraft system, both courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey; alligators from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; a fire tower converted to a “lab,” used by forestry and art students, courtesy of the UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation and the UF School of Art and Art History; a Florida commodities exhibit from UF/IFAS Extension; an arthropod petting zoo from the UF/IFAS Department of Entomology and Nematology and a tractor from UF/IFAS’ Plant Science Research and Education Unit in Citra.

Event speakers include Nick Place, dean and director of UF/IFAS Extension; Jack Payne, UF senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources; Joe Glover, UF provost and senior vice president for academic affairs and Adam Putnam, Florida’s commissioner of agriculture. Their remarks begin at 11:30 a.m.

“This is a chance for everyone at UF to see first-hand some of what makes Extension in general, and UF/IFAS Extension in particular, so exciting,” Place said. “Specifically, those who attend will have a much better appreciation of the statewide outreach mission of our land-grant university. Everyone who attends can see, taste, smell and feel how Extension and its many partners work with stakeholders to solve life’s agricultural, natural resource, family, youth and community-related issues.”

A tent will house displays that highlight Extension programs such as agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community development and natural resources.

Lunch will include seafood chowder, vegetarian chowder and homemade bread – all prepared by chef David Bearl, a visiting associate in regional food systems education with the UF/IFAS Program for Resource Efficient Communities. All the food will be fresh from Florida, Place said. Cake and beverages will be provided by Classic Fare, a catering service with a branch at UF's J. Wayne Reitz Union.

Anyone attending can earn a free lunch by completing a card with information found at each of the Extension displays.

UF/IFAS and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are co-sponsoring the event.