OH YEAH, THAT GUY

Emmy nominee Stephen Root talks about his journey into acting and his love of the Gators. p32

WILDLIFE ABCs
Do you know these top animal experts? p20

PROFESSOR PLANET
Meet professors whose worldwide work helps your environment. p38

FORESTS FIRST
This CEO says his big-time success stems from his small-town start. p48
AS FLORIDA GATOR CONTINUES ITS YEARLONG CELEBRATION of Gators who tirelessly work to help the environment, UF leaders extend their heartfelt thanks to each and every person. Among those are the board members of the 1923 Fund, a charitable organization created by the late Gainesville physician Dr. David Cofrin and named for his birth year.

Cofrin and his family, who are perhaps most known for launching the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art (named for Cofrin’s father-in-law), have consistently fueled UF’s environmental efforts over the years. For instance:

The board facilitated the purchase of 24 land parcels that expanded UF’s Ordway-Swisher Biological Station by more than 460 acres, greatly enhancing UF’s land management research efforts.

Fund gifts have enhanced numerous Florida Museum of Natural History exhibits, including a new storytelling project about Florida’s water that empowers visitors to become advocates for — and stewards of — this precious resource.

1923 Fund members also supported research and programs at UF’s Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience, which increases the lab’s efforts to boost the health of marine life.

Remarkably, the board has contributed almost $4 million toward UF’s efforts to help the environment. Meanwhile, the 1923 Fund also supports UF programs in healthcare, arts and culture, education, social and human services, and community development. For these gifts and the many other ways 1923 Fund members demonstrate the Gator Good, the Gator Nation thanks them. Their consistent efforts will be greatly appreciated by generations of Gators for many, many years to come.

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74 FINISH LINE: Softball’s Stacey Nelson (BA ’09)

ON THE COVER
Stephen Root (AA ’72) says he would have likely followed in his father’s footsteps and worked in construction if his passion for acting hadn’t been sparked at UF. Find out more about his prolific acting career on page 32.

FEATURES

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Gator experts are everywhere. Meet these alumni and UF professors who are among the world’s top animal scientists.

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How and why one couple’s shelter pooch and kitty became hiking buddies, and now Instagram stars.

32 Oh Yeah, That Guy!
Stephen Root has appeared in more than 200 films and TV shows (1,000-plus if you count each episode). But this humble star is just a Gator at heart.

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These UF researchers are moving mountains to help your environment, thanks to private support.

42 The Incredible Journey of Mariel White
This UF junior survived harrowing odds and — thanks to the support of Gator Nation — started her comeback this fall.

48 Power Ranger
Gator Terry Baker says his small-town Panhandle upbringing and his UF experiences are what helped him rise to the top of the forestry industry.
Passion
It’s a Gator thing.

Great teams are driven by a passion to succeed. At UF Health, we’re no different. As home to the No. 1 research hospital in Florida and consistently ranked among the best in the nation by U.S. News & World Report, we have galvanized our resources to solve the most pressing challenges in medicine. Because when you win, you win. We put our passion to work for you and your family.

Conversation with Kent Fuchs
WHAT DO GATORS HAVE TO GAIN AND LOSE?

As UF rises in national rankings, leaders take a close look at what this means for the heart of the University: its students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Shortly after last fall’s news that UF had moved up to 7th among public universities in the U.S. News & World Report ranking, I asked in my monthly student newspaper column, “As UF rises, what should we expect?”

My question was whether our rise in the rankings poses a risk of undermining the values, attributes and culture that define who we are at UF. I also asked readers to share the things they most cherish about our university.

The responses I received expressed both concerns and hopes.

At the heart of the concerns was a fear that our push to rise in the rankings would damage the exceptional education we provide students.

For example, one alumnus wrote that as faculty strive to be even more competitive in their research, this could distract them from their teaching excellence and the individual time and attention they devote to students.

At the same time, respondents were hopeful that UF would continue to prioritize education and students as the heart of our rise.

For example, one alumnus wrote, “The most special thing about UF has always been the students, and the fact that the faculty and administration and alumni recognize it, and that they will do anything to help these extraordinary students succeed in school and in life. If you protect that value, valuing students as the very most, it will carry you to that top-five ranking.”

I wholeheartedly agree and note that key elements of raising our ranking, such as improving our student-faculty ratio, are intimately tied to our commitment to students and to their education.

In fact, many of the faculty we are hiring are national leaders in their exceptional teaching.
Once again UF has improved its ranking on the U.S. News & World Report Top Public Schools list, climbing to No. 7. Last year, UF tied with Georgia Tech for the No. 8 spot and two years ago tied for No. 9 with the University of California, Irvine, and the University of California, San Diego.

"I am incredibly excited by this news," said Mori Hosseini, UF Board of Trustees chairman. "It clearly demonstrates that UF is on an unstoppable trajectory. We are tremendously grateful for the support of the Legislature and Gov. [Ron] DeSantis."

President Kent Fuchs expressed his gratitude and congratulations to the entire UF community, emphasizing that this news reinforces the rise of UF’s graduate programs, which was announced earlier this year.

"The rankings are an indicator of our national stature among the nation’s very best research universities, the quality of the education our students are receiving and the steadily increasing value of a University of Florida degree," he said.

UF’s overall rise is attributed to improved scores in numerous ranking categories, including alumni giving (14%, up from 13% last year), peer reputation, student-to-faculty ratio (18:1, up from 19:1 last year and 21:1 four years ago) and the percentage of students who graduate within six years (90%, up from 88% last year). Several of these improvements are the result of UF’s drive to hire 500 additional faculty. More than half of those are in place.

This win, related to UF’s undergraduate programs, compliments a parallel sweeping rise in UF graduate rankings. Among public universities nationwide, UF now has 39 graduate programs ranked in the top 30 (up from 38); 33 in the top 20 (up from 30) and 12 in the top 10.

UF remains the most highly ranked university in Florida and the only university in the state in the top 10.

On Sept. 9, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joined UF Board of Trustees members and other Gators to announce UF’s rise to No. 7 in the U.S. News & World Report best public colleges list.

PHOTO BY UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA | BERNARD BRZEZINSKI
NUMBERS OF NOTE

22

New faculty hired this quarter as part of Provost Joe Glover’s drive to add 500 faculty and reduce UF’s student-to-faculty ratio. These additions bring total hires to 253, and UF’s ratio down to 18-to-1 from 21-to-1 two years ago. The colleges with the most new hires are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>New Hires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Life Sciences</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$3.14

Return on investment in research funding for every state dollar UF used to hire faculty in preeminent focus areas.

$776.2M

Research funding UF received in fiscal year 2018-19. Of that amount, 68% came from federal grants, 5% came from state grants, 7% from industry grants and 13% from foundation and non-profit organization grants.

“It’s as important as ever to teach future journalists the power and importance of essential journalism...”

— SARA GANIM, PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING JOURNALIST AND FORMER CNN CORRESPONDENT who will spend the next year as a Hearst Journalism Fellow in UF’s Brechner Center for Freedom of Information, striving to bridge the lapses in government data that deprive the public of civically essential information.

“I want people to be inspired by it and see that you can create beautiful work out of garbage.”

— SAMANTHA LEWIS, THIRD-YEAR COLLEGE OF THE ARTS MASTER’S STUDENT who creates UF theater sets out of 100% recycled/reused materials

4 YEARS

Length of UF/IFAS plant pathology professor Pamela Roberts’ $3 million, USDA-funded research study that is expected to produce better ways to reduce bacterial diseases in many types of peppers. She’s leading a team of pepper experts from Georgia, Ohio, North and South Carolina. In 2018, bell and chili peppers alone were a $181 million industry in Florida and a $628 million industry nationwide.

ABOVE: Lewis stands in the set shop at UF’s School of Theatre + Dance. AT RIGHT: The set of “Hills on Fire” in the Black Box Theatre. Scenic design by Lewis, lighting by Jordan Lindquist, junior BFA lighting student.

FLORIDA GATOR | 9
Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government for these professionals:

- Aging and Geriatric researcher David Clark, whose work on mobility function in people with neurological impairments, including the elderly and stroke or spinal injury patients, was nominated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Electrical and computer engineer Domenic Forte, whose work on counterfeit electronics detection and avoidance was nominated by the Department of Defense.

- Biomedical engineer Aysegul Gunduz (PhD ’06) whose development of smarter therapeutic deep brain stimulation for people with neuropsychiatric disorders was nominated by the National Science Foundation.

- Civil and coastal engineer Maltane Olabarrieta (MEng ‘08) whose development of smarter therapeutic deep brain stimulation for people with neuropsychiatric disorders was nominated by the National Science Foundation.

- UF is the 2019 American Society of Civil Engineering’s National Concrete Canoe race winner. UF engineering club members propelled their vessel (called Free Floatin’ in memory of musician Tom Petty) through 200- and 400-meter sprints with 180-degree hairpin turns. What’s more, the team’s title helped UF win the 2019 Engineering Dean’s Cup. Akin to athletics’ All-Sports trophy, the award is based on how university student engineering clubs fare in various national and global competitions. UF’s clubs took part in 30 competitions this year.

- UF student Casey Patterson was honored with the 2019 Student Award for Excellence in Computing by the University of Florida Information Technology.

- UF student Whitney Montgomery was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

- UF student Morgan Verret was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

- UF student Andrew Liu was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

- UF student Amanda Miller was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

- UF student Taylor Johnson was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

- UF student Elizabeth Black was named the 2019 Student of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida Section.

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2 YEARS
Length of a campus safety and security study which resulted in the creation of UF’s Physical Security Department this fall. Led by Joseph Souza, this team will create security policies, procedures and standards to keep the campus and its faculty, staff and students safe. Souza comes from the University of Central Florida’s Department of Security where he planned, designed and oversaw construction of its Global Security Operations Center.

Who’s calling, please? Have you ever received a phone call from what looks like your bank or credit card company, only to find out it was a nefarious attempt to get you to divulge your financial or personal information? UF researchers in the Department of Computer and Information Science and Engineering have invented AuthLoop, a system that thwarts criminals’ attempts to manipulate the name displayed on your caller ID, thus preventing criminals from what looks like your bank or credit card company.

SAFER DEVICES: A plethora of devices use USB protocols that allow the transfer of both data and power. However, this universal connection leaves many computing platforms vulnerable to malicious attacks. UF researchers have developed a vetting system that examines and validates USB devices, eliminating the need for source codes and speeding up analysis.

FASTER PHONE NETWORKS: Electrical engineering assistant professor Roozbeh Tabrizian and graduate research assistant Mayur Ghatge (SENG) invented a frequency filter that enables mobile phone companies to deliver more data in less time because it eliminates some of the interference between cell tower transmitters and phone receivers. This development is expected to make 5G and future networks more efficient and reliable.

LONGER-LASTING IMPLANTS: Many medical implant devices, such as heart valves (at left) are made with protein-based materials that can break down after long-term use, causing calcifications and cell death. Some chemicals developed to fix this issue can provoke an immune response, increasing the likelihood of implant rejection. UF scientists have developed a new procedure that stabilizes these proteins, increasing the lifespan of implants.

MICHAEL GANNON
Documenting an extraordinary life

For many Gators who attended UF between the late 1950s and early 2000s, Michael Gannon was a quiet source of strength and a sounding board on a host of issues. He was a Catholic priest turned UF professor and historian, prize-winning author, war correspondent, mediator and radio announcer. He was the first priest appointed to the St. Augustine Catholic Church and Student Center when it opened in 1959, and he retired in 2003 as a UF history professor. Gannon died in 2017, but his work lives on in the Smathers Libraries collection that bears his name. In the collection’s 70 boxes and four oversized folders, literary patrons can find his writings, research notes, correspondence, photographs and even eight chapters of his unfinished autobiography that he was working on at the time of his death.

Among these many documents are Gannon’s interviews with National Review magazine founder William F. Buckley, historian and Ko Khao Kian documentarian David Mark Chalmers and Norton Baskin, the husband of renowned author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It also includes Gannon’s conversations with experts on poetry, Everglades hydrology, energy conservation, microsurgery and the history of St. Augustine.

Digital items in the collection, such as videos and audio recordings, are available online at ufdc.ufl.edu/Gannon.

To support this or other library collections, contact Sara Piety at 352-273-2505 or spiety@ufl.edu.

1. Gannon served as a correspondent during the Vietnam War.
2. Gannon presents President John F. Kennedy with a copy of the oldest written document on American record from St. Augustine. The president was assassinated four days later.
4. Gannon worked to diffuse tensions between police and students in this 1972 local protest.

$11,000+
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1 IN 5
Children from 2 to 19 years old who are obese, UF’s Michelle Cardel, an assistant professor in the Health Outcomes & Biomedical Informatics team, received a five-year, $782,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to develop a weight loss intervention specifically for teenagers. Learn more at uff.to/Cardel.

47
Years David Colburn served UF before he died Sept. 18 due to complications from an extended illness. His numerous UF roles included history professor and department chair, provost, International Center dean and Bob Graham Center for Public Service director. The week he died, the three-time teacher of the year was to receive a lifetime achievement award from the Florida Humanities Council. The only other recipient of that distinction was his longtime friend, UF history professor Michael Gannon (see opposite page). Graham Center student Caroline Nickerson (BA ’17, BA ’19) summed up her grief this way: “Dr. Colburn taught me what it means to be a good citizen. I am one of the many students he inspired to embrace the study of history, uphold democratic values and pursue service.” He was 77.

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FACULTY SUPERSTAR

TARA SABO-ATTWOOD — ENVIRONMENTAL & GLOBAL HEALTH

WHERE HUMANS & POLLUTANTS MEET
ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICOLOGY
EXPERT SAYS EXPOSURE CAN INFLUENCE EVEN THE COMMON COLD AND FLU

Q. What specifically does your team study?
A. We know that environmental pollutants impair health and cause disease in humans and wildlife. But the world’s understanding of how this happens on the molecular level is limited. My team’s work focuses on the extremely small (1-100 nanometers) synthetic particles in consumer products, such as sunscreens and electronics, and their potential toxic effects on living things, from fish to humans. For instance, exposure to these nanomaterials can increase our susceptibility to pathogens, like viruses.

Q. What has your team found so far?
A. We were the first to show that lung exposure to certain types of nanoparticles can significantly impact an infection with the flu — increasing viral particles in a mouse model by over 60 fold. Our work is informing environmental regulators, who seek to protect humans and ecosystems.

Q. Why UF?
A. UF offers a remarkable environment for collaborative interdisciplinary research. I worked here as a student and was glad to come back because I know what outstanding environmental toxicologists UF has. Also, the College of Public Health and Health Professions has empowered me to integrate my STEM training with public health practice to offer the One Health degree for the first time in the nation. Through these, we can address complex global health problems by teaming up with experts in other disciplines, such as infectious and environmental diseases, air/water contamination and other ecosystem challenges.

Q. How can Gator Nation help the environment?
A. Communicate its importance to younger generations (K-12). Teach them what we have learned so far and encourage them to create better ways to preserve and interact with our environment. Integrate the outdoors into everyday activities.

Q. How do you encourage young women in this male-dominated field?
A. When I started out I was the sole female in the department. I saw this as an opportunity to become a role model for my peers and students. There is great power in mentorship and I’m grateful to have experienced strong women mentors during my journey. Also, I started college-wide initiatives that address gender issues as part of routine wellness. To protect people by better understanding how human-environment interactions influence health. We tend to study large-scale pollution, but there are also unique settings where we can help. For example, we are monitoring air quality at UF Shands along a high-traffic road that is the future site of a garden where pediatric patients will visit. My team ensures the air quality is acceptable for those who may be more susceptible to pollutants.

2000
The year UF Hall of Famer Thaddeus Bullard graduated from UF. Known across the globe as WWE Superstar Titus O’Neil and a widely recognized children’s advocate and champion, Bullard will serve as UF’s university-wide commencement speaker this spring in Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Thousands of Gators gathered in Gainesville for homecoming festivities that included:

-SOULFEST: Student clubs showcased their culture and talents in an effort to inspire, teach and connect Gators from different backgrounds. The group winner, Danza Dance Company, and the solo/duo winner DJ McDuffie who sang “Feeling Good” by Nina Simone, performed at Gator Growl.

-LEADERSHIP PAGEANT: A faculty judging panel selected three king finalists and three queen finalists from more than 40 contestants, who participated in a pre-pageant interview, resume review, opening number, Gator spirit round, business dress round (aided by UF’s Molm Family Gator Career Closet) and an on-stage question round for semi-finalists.

“It’s not about who has the most leadership positions,” said pageant director Sydney Brandenburg (4 MAR). “It’s about whether their impact on campus can be really felt.”

- GATOR GALLOP: A 2-mile fun run
- PARADE: With 120-plus organizations, this event is billed as the largest student-run parade in the nation.
- FESTIVAL: On the Plaza of the Americas after the parade, it includes live music, bounce houses, vendor and student booths.
- GATOR GROWL: Pep rally featuring country musician Chase Rice, Trailer Trap artist Blanco Brown and encores Scooter Magruder (BS&TU ’11)
- ASSOCIATION OF BLACK ALUMNI REUNION: Festivities included all these events plus a reception and brunch.
9 TIPS FOR NEW GRADS
Accomplished health and fitness author, former Men’s Health magazine editor and Department of Journalism chair Ted Spiker, who was UF Teacher of the Year in 2016-17, offered these bits of advice to new graduates at this summer’s commencement ceremonies.

1. Electricity. Think about what kind of energy you bring to others. Be a power source, not a drain.
2. Plasticity. The ability to change/adapt over time.
3. Humility. Let others do the bragging for you.
4. Generosity. In a world with lots of pressure and expectations, remind yourself what it means to get behind someone. You can fuel their spirit, too.
5. Tenacity. Keep asking the important questions. Keep searching for answers. Keep pushing the limits to make our world better. Keep going.
6. Embrace criticism. While your UF grades have stopped, your critiques have not. Challenge yourself to learn from them. They’ll make you better.
8. Consider your words. You’ll speak and write millions of words during your life. Not all of them will really matter, but you never know which ones might. Choose your words intentionally and know they may stick with someone for a very long time.
9. Fortify your verbs. Verbs define how you work and live. You will fall, fail and flourish; text, snap and post; create and conquer. And you will always chomp.

Watch Spiker’s full speeches to graduate uff.to/TedSpikerPHD and undergraduate uff.to/TedSpikerUG students

NEW SCHOOL YEAR, NEW HOUSE
After five years of planning and 12 months of construction, the new $10 million Delta Gamma house at SW 13th Street and Museum Road (south of Norman Field) opened this fall. While DG was the first permanent sorority house built on UF’s campus in 1952, alumni involved with the project said its tech-laden replacement will provide living quarters for 73 UF student members well into the future. A plethora of Gators were involved in the project, from DG alumna Debbie Filipe (BSADV ‘84) who led fundraising efforts and former cheerleader Martha Newton (BAART ‘82) who designed the wallpaper and rug patterns, to former UF baseball player John Jokinen (BSBA ‘85) of E.J. Victor who provided custom furnishings, and Domenic Scorpio (BDES ‘94, MBC ‘96) whose construction firm built the home. “The opportunity to partner with so many fellow Gators on this project made it particularly special and fun,” Scorpio said. “Any time the Gator Nation gets together to make something happen, you know it is going to be extraordinary.”

GAMING WITH GRANDMA
Online gaming with friends or family members — remotely or directly — could be one solution for seniors who feel increasingly isolated, says a UF College of Journalism and Communications study.

UF Telecommunications Assistant Professor Yu-Hao Lu surveyed more than 1,000 seniors who play video games online and found that when they play with family or friends (established friends or new ones made through gaming), they tend to be more informed and engaged in civic or political activities, and feel stronger connections to others. The survey did not differentiate between types of games (collaborative vs. competitive).

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Online gaming with friends or family members — remotely or directly — could be one solution for seniors who feel increasingly isolated, says a UF College of Journalism and Communications study.

UF Telecommunications Assistant Professor Yu-Hao Lu surveyed more than 1,000 seniors who play video games online and found that when they play with family or friends (established friends or new ones made through gaming), they tend to be more informed and engaged in civic or political activities, and feel stronger connections to others. The survey did not differentiate between types of games (collaborative vs. competitive).

9 TIPS FOR NEW GRADS
Accomplished health and fitness author, former Men’s Health magazine editor and Department of Journalism chair Ted Spiker, who was UF Teacher of the Year in 2016-17, offered these bits of advice to new graduates at this summer’s commencement ceremonies.

1. Electricity. Think about what kind of energy you bring to others. Be a power source, not a drain.
2. Plasticity. The ability to change/adapt over time.
3. Humility. Let others do the bragging for you.
4. Generosity. In a world with lots of pressure and expectations, remind yourself what it means to get behind someone. You can fuel their spirit, too.
5. Tenacity. Keep asking the important questions. Keep searching for answers. Keep pushing the limits to make our world better. Keep going.
6. Embrace criticism. While your UF grades have stopped, your critiques have not. Challenge yourself to learn from them. They’ll make you better.
8. Consider your words. You’ll speak and write millions of words during your life. Not all of them will really matter, but you never know which ones might. Choose your words intentionally and know they may stick with someone for a very long time.
9. Fortify your verbs. Verbs define how you work and live. You will fall, fail and flourish; text, snap and post; create and conquer. And you will always chomp.

Watch Spiker’s full speeches to graduate uff.to/TedSpikerPHD and undergraduate uff.to/TedSpikerUG students

NEW SCHOOL YEAR, NEW HOUSE
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GOING GREATER FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

UF EFFORTS TO BOOST WILDLIFE AND PLANET HEALTH ARE ON THE RISE

“In the end, we protect what we love; we love what we understand; and we understand what we are taught,” said Ron Magill (AA ’80) at a Go Greater campaign reception in October. Magill, Miami-Dade Zoological Park and Gardens’ communications director and spokesman explained how his UF education led him to love, study and work to preserve wildlife and the environment. Magill appeared at the event to help Gators understand the importance of UF’s programs and research that support environmental health. UF is in the midst of a $3 billion fundraising effort, which will support numerous UF programs including those that seek to improve the environment.

Explaining the current extinction event, in which the planet is expected to lose 1 million species within the next 50 years — the highest extinction rate since the loss of the dinosaurs, Magill emphasized UF’s role in educating and preparing students who can slow this rate and take actions that will help in coming years. “This affects all of us, even if you don’t care about animals, wildlife or the environment,” he said. “It’s a delicate chain with every species connecting to something else.”

See a highlight video from the event at uff.to/MagillEnv.
Support UF’s environmental efforts at uf.to/environment.
A beehive isn’t just UF’s mascot; it’s also an archosaur, a type of animal a group that predates reptiles and birds, going back 35 million years. Although they prefer to eat fish, birds, small mammals and other reptiles, alligators will occasionally snack on fruit.

Mark Hostetler and his department colleagues are among the nation’s leading alligator experts. Their work includes teaching people how to interact safely with alligators, conserving the species and studying the impacts of Burmese pythons and invasive species on gator groups, called "congregations."

A beekeeper since age 12, Jamie Ellis leads UF researchers who are working to strengthen the world’s bee colonies. The team’s focus: combating the deadly varroa mite, pathogens and other stressors that are rapidly killing off bee colonies — last year by nearly 40 percent.

Beekeepers can combat this die-off by splitting strong hives so new queens produce more baby bees each year, says Ellis. We can’t afford to lose honey bees: They are essential to pollination of fruit, flowers and vegetables, supporting about $20 billion worth of U.S. crop production annually.

Of the 20,000 species of bees, only nine produce honey.

Male frogs snort loudly to attract females during mating season.

An invasive nuisance in Florida for over 100 years, Cuban tree frogs gobble up native frogs and insects, take over birdhouses and clog indoor drains. They’ll even eat their own kind if food resources are low.

Herpetologist Steve Johnson has been studying these color-morphing cannibals for two decades. He recommends using this humane method of euthanasia if you catch one: (1) apply benzocaine to frog’s back or belly; (2) plop it in a plastic bag; (3) store in freezer for 24 hours; (4) dispose. (Wear gloves to protect yourself from the frog’s toxic mucus.)
DOBBERMAN PINCHER

Amara Estrada (BS ’93, DVM ’98)
Professor of Cardiology, Small Animal Clinical Sciences,
UF College of Veterinary Medicine

Dobermans are prone to a fatal heart-muscle ailment known as DCM (dilated cardio-mypathy), which strikes nearly half of all Dobermans. After a decade of preliminary research involving 1,000 Dobermans, veterinary cardiology specialist Amara Estrada and two of her peers are undertaking the first-ever lifetime study to evaluate the influence of genetic mutations in the progression of DCM.

**EVENING BAT**

Terry Doonian (BS ’77)
Mammal Conservation Coordinator,
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

During morphology alums Terry Doonian’s 25-year career, he’s sought to help the 13 bat species in Florida. But he says his last five years have been a race through given buildings and other roosting locations to survey the number, health and environmental conditions of tiny evening bats and their cousins before the dreaded White-Nose Syndrome reaches Florida colonies. This disease has killed millions of bats across North America. “We need a lot more information — so we can better understand problems that occur when it reaches Florida,” he said.

**FLORIDA MANATEE**

Dianne Behringer
School Programs Coordinator,
Florida Museum of Natural Science

On the brink of extinction, the Florida manatee is making a comeback. The sea cow’s numbers in Florida waters are now at 6,500, after having dwindled to a few hundred in the 1970s. One reason for the bounce back: town “no wake” zones for boats. Each year, between 8,000 and 10,000 schoolchildren flock to the Florida Museum where they discover the origins of this gentle beast, thanks to Dianne Behringer and her fellow educators. Students use inducement reasoning to figure out the identity of a partial manatee skeleton. They also contrast the skeletons of a modern manatee and its extinct ancestor to understand how this mammal evolved over millions of years.

“One major difference students can observe is the extinct sea cow had hind limbs,” says Behringer. “These fossil remains show that modern manatees derived from four-legged land mammals.”

**GALAPagos Tortoise**

Peter Pritchard (PhD ’90)
Director, Chelonian Research Institute;
TIME magazine’s “Hero for the Planet”

Centuries of hunting and other threats have seen the number of giant Galapagos tortoises dwindle. Some subspecies have already gone extinct.

In June 2012, a male Pinta Island tortoise named Lonesome George drew his last breath, leaving no descendants. Renowned zoologist Peter Pritchard was among the devoted scientists who spent decades trying to find a mate for George.

“He had one unhappy defect, that he had no interest in reproducing,” said Pritchard.

For decades, the Charles Darwin Foundation offered a $5,000 reward to anyone who could procure a female Pinta tortoise for George. He was never claimed.

**HOUSE CAT**

Julie Levy
Fleming Endowed Prof of Shelter Medicine Education, UF College of Veterinary Medicine

With 94.2 million owned pets in the country, house cats are America’s most popular pet. Along with that popularity comes over-population. Researcher Julie Levy founded Operation Caring, a life-saving program that has spayed, neutered and vaccinated more than 55,000 free-roaming cats in Gainesville since 1998.

Levy is also working on contraceptive vaccines and expanding spay/ neuter to young kittens.

“Tim excited to be teaming up with wildlife biologists to develop practical methods to count and track elusive free-roaming cats,” she says. “That’s going to be a powerful tool for managing outdoor cat populations.”

**INDIAN RHINOCEROS**

Jon Magill (AA ’80)
Zoo Miami Communications Director

Zoo Miami made history in April 2019 when a rare one-horned Indian rhinoceros gave birth via artificial insemination and induced delivery of female calf Sara. With only 3,000 to 3,500 Indian rhinos left in the wild, Saata’s birth is “an insurance policy against a very uncertain future in the wild for these animals,” says Magill.

White rhinos are solitary animals, a group of males and females is called a “crash.” Also, each cow has a unique dung scent, so they create large pumphounds to communicate with each other about their health, age and readiness to mate.

**JUMPING SPIDER**

Lisa Taylor
Assistant Research Scientist, UF Department of Entomology and Nematology

Most spiders cannot see colors, but jumping spiders do, notes entomologist Lisa Taylor. Her research reveals these tiny spiders evolved vivid colors on their bodies to facilitate communication during courtship. “Females are voracious predators that sometimes attack and eat males before they have a chance to mate,” says Taylor. In other words, spider Roman wows his brightly colored arms to assess his Juliet, “Hey, hey, I’m not dinner!”

National Geographic filmmaker and fellow Gator Felipe DeAndrade tapped Taylor’s expertise for an episode of “Untamed: The Weird Sex Lives of Jumping Spiders.”

**COLLARED KINGFISHER**

David Stadium (MS ’75)
Curator of Ornithology, Florida Museum of Natural History

With its white “collar” and vivid blue-green plumage, the collared kingfisher is one of the most striking birds of the tropical Pacific islands. Casrine David Stadium was one of the first researchers to survey this species on Tonga, and he says the plentiful birds are worth watching — not just for their beauty but for the diet environmental message their absence signals.

“It is one of the last species of birds to leave when an island’s habitat is destroyed or modified,” he says. “If kingfishers are gone, the place is in really rough shape.”

Collared kingfishers perform aerial courtship flights, after which the male offers the female a fish, small lizard or other treat.
Having lived on humans for millennia, head-kneading lice provide valuable clues in our gene pool about our evolutionary past, says biologist David Reed. By sequencing ancient louse DNA, Reed has confirmed hominid speciation began wearing clothes while in Africa 80,000 to 100,000 years ago, long before the need for warm clothing in places like Europe and Asia.

Most modern humans have a tiny bit of Neandertal DNA due to interbreeding between the two species long ago, Reed says, and lice are the same way.

“We are using lice collected from people all over the world to pin down when and where modern humans and Neanderthals overlapped,” Reed says.

CLEOPATRA WAS BURIED WITH A GOLDEN NIT comb — a sign of status in ancient Egypt, where only the rich wore wigs. Plebs and feathers,” says Smith. “They need to be bold to survive in a city.”

Burrowing owls are a big personality packed into a tiny ball of fluorescence, thanks to Owl Watch volunteers on this urban resort island. In 2019, they weighed nearly everywhere except Marco Island, thanks to Owl Watch volunteers.

Weighing less than a can of soda, the tiny Florida burrowing owl is a nonnative species, but many locals object to the disruption it’s causing. Florida panther kittens are born with dark spots to camouflage them on forest floors.

Brought from Asia to Silver Springs in the 1930s to entice tourists, wild white macaques are now a growing threat — destroying wildlife, attacking humans and carrying a deadly herpes B virus. A 2013 study by Jane Anderson and UF’s Steve Johnson predicted the number of feral monkeys in Central Florida would double from 175 to 350 by 2022.

We know the state wants to eliminate the nonnative species, but many local objects to killing such an adorable animal. Anderson estimates you could reduce the population by one-third by culling the females.

The report said they are not close to being listed as threatened, but if they were, residents would likely object strongly.

Gracillariid leaf-mining micro-moths still flourish hundreds of undescribed species in the tropical Amazon. But curator Akito Kawahara is working to change that. He has searched for them in Brazil, Ecuador and French Guiana, identified new species and collaborated on an illustrated catalogue that revises the insect’s classification.

“Don’t hate the white blotches and tunnels that leaf miners inflict on leaves, Kawahara says. “We’re not talking about the same pests that destroy crops.”

“Their camouflage patterns are common in the insect’s habitat,” Kawahara says. “They are adapted to the environment to produce to last much longer,” Kawahara says.

Gracillariidae comes from the Latin word that means graceful and slender.

Quahog. When a swallowtail isn’t sucking nectar, it may be on a plant with beautiful red and yellow flowers. Among the tallest is the Schaus swallowtail, a chocolate-brown species that once flourished in Miami and the Florida Keys. By 2012, there were only four Schaus swallowtails left in their native habitat, making the insect an endangered species. The state’s northeast coast is the only place in the world where they live. Today, the Florida panther population is up to 230 healthy animals.

“Michigan’s leaf miner population is up to 230 healthy animals.

Weighing less than a can of soda, the tiny Florida burrowing owl is an ancient nonnative species, killing the economy in Cedar Key’s historic fishing village. The state’s northeast coast is the only place in the world where they live. In 2019, ecologist Mandan Oli and peers from the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission released a study showing efforts to increase the Florida panther’s genetic diversity have rescued it from extinction. In the 1990s, there were only 20 to 30 Florida panthers in the state, many suffering from physical abnormalities due to inbreeding. Between 1995 and 2003, eight female Texas pumas were temporarily released in Florida to mate with local males. Today, the Florida panther population is up to 230 healthy animals.

“Florida panther kittens are born with dark spots to camouflage them on forest floors.”

The report said they are not close to being listed as threatened, but if they were, residents would likely object strongly.

Gracillariidae comes from the Latin word that means graceful and slender.

Florida burrowing owls number 250,000 pairs, according to a study by UF grad student Allison Smith. “Owls are so beautiful,” she says. “They are a symbol of beauty and strength.”

FLORIDA BURROWING OWL

Allison Smith (PhD ’17)
UF IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Weighing less than a can of soda, the tiny Florida burrowing owl is disappearing nearly everywhere except Marco Island, thanks to Owl Watch, a community/scientific research collaboration started by UF experts and funded by Audubon of the Western Everglades.

UF grad student Allison Smith manages 60 Owl Watch volunteers, who monitor burrows on this urban resort island. In 2019, they stepped in to help the town refocus its unique skills after harvesting seawater daily and removed more than 25 thousand pounds of nitrogen and 761 thousand pounds of carbon from Florida’s coastal environment.

Sturmer’s study of the town’s 2012 quahog harvest (115 million clams) showed that the animals filtered 548 million gallons of seawater daily and removed more than 25 thousand pounds of nitrogen and 761 thousand pounds of carbon from Florida’s coastal environment.

It takes 25 to 30 months for quahog larvae to reach market size. Left in the wild, their average life span is 33-36 years. However, in 2007, scientists discovered a specimen of quahog pearls that were between 405 and 410 years old.

The study showed that leaf miners in tropical Amazon. But curator Akito Kawahara is working to change that. He has searched for them in Brazil, Ecuador and French Guiana, identified new species and collaborated on an illustrated catalogue that revises the insect’s classification.

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MALAYAN TIGER
Kae Kawanishi (PhD '02)
Director, Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT)

With fewer than 200 animals left in the wild, the Malay tiger is the most critically endangered tiger species on earth, notes wildlife biologist Kae Kawanishi. She has spent the last 21 years trekking through remote Malay rainforests to study and protect these big cats; first as a doctoral student (her research was the first-ever population study of Malay tigers) and then as the founder and director of MYCAT.

Today, the MYCAT Citizen Action for Tiger Wish program draws NGOs and 2,000 people from 37 nations to patrol tiger habitats. While most people assume Kawanishi’s job is dangerous, she has never encountered a Malay tiger in the wild — they are that rare. Her worst injury doing fieldwork: “I had an anaphylactic reaction to an insect sting,” she says. “I fainted and cracked my canine and a rib.”

UNGULATES
Samantha Wesley
Associate Professor, UF
IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Ungulates are hoofed mammals, a diverse group including deer.

In the late 1800s, there were fewer than 20,000 deer in Florida. Today, after intensive management and reintroduction, there are 700,000, says wildlife expert Samantha Wesley. Her team is working with Blue Genetics to test a new vaccine to prevent a deadly hemorhaging disease in the animals.

“Nationally, deer trophy hunting is an $8 billion industry, so keeping deer healthy is economically important for farmers, and it helps improve the health of wild deer populations,” she says.

Deer see about five times better than we do, but they only perceive the colors yellow and blue.

VOLCANO HUMMINGBIRD
Filipe DeAndrade (BSTEFL '12)
National Geographic Wildlife Filmmaker

Measuring only 3 inches long with purple throat feathers, the tiny volcano hummingbird is a mighty pollinator. This species feeds on nectar from brightly colored tubular flowers in the forests of Central America.

Documentary filmmaker Filipe DeAndrade happily spent months in Costa Rica filming these and other hummingbirds — up close and in slow-mo — for Nat Geo Wild.

“They’re one of the most colorful, charismatic, vibrant and lively creatures in the animal kingdom — little rainbow tspedees,” he enthused on social media.

“Everything I do in life is just a cover-up so I can spend time with hummingbirds,” he added, jokingly.

A volcano hummingbird’s tongue licks at a flower’s nectar 13 times per second.

WHITE IBIS
Peter Frederick
Research Professor, UF Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

With its white plumage and curved orange beak, the white ibis is the quintessential southeastern wading bird. Its native habitat is shallow wetlands, but flocks will also forage in urban parks and lawns, where they seek up mercury and other dangerous toxins.

In 2011, an experiment by UF’s Peter Frederick showed mercury contamination reduces white ibis reproduction by 50 percent. Male ibis exposed to mercury had low levels of testosterone, and more than half paired off with other males, behaving as though they had laid eggs.

“Hormones can be easily upset,” Frederick told CBS News. “I think that’s the scary part. We see so many events controlled by what we are exposed to.”

The University of Miami’s mascot is a white ibis named Sebastian.

YELLOW FEVER MOSQUITO
Barry Alto (PhD '06)
Associate Professor, UF/IFAS Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory

If there is a mosquito you should fear most, it’s the yellow fever mosquito, says entomologist Barry Alto. This species carries not just yellow fever but dengue, West Nile virus, chikungunya and Zika, infecting hundreds of millions of people per year.

Alto heads the bioassay level 2 and 3 facilities for UF’s medical entomology lab, where he routinely oversees experiments on live mosquitoes carrying viral diseases. To prevent infection, all scientists follow strict safety protocols and wear a body suit, gloves, head hood and a respirator. So far, Alto has never been bitten in the lab, but he admits he’s gotten “thousands” of mosquito bites doing fieldwork outdoors.

Only the female mosquito feeds on the blood of humans and other animals. Males stick to plant nectar.

XENOPUS LAEVIS
Dr. Jeff Hill (MS ’98, PhD ’03)
Invasion ecologist, UF/IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory

Almost 80 years ago, doctors commonly used Xenopus (zebra-fish, no-pan) aquatic frogs, also called African clawed frogs, for pregnancy tests. But when better test were invented, many labs released the frogs into the wild creating an invasive species on four continents. Rovever, south of Tampa, is home to one of these populations. Associate Professor Jeff Hill and his doctoral student Allison DuBland say the frogs aren’t quite at the same level as other invaders, such as pythons, lizards or snails, yet the carnivores can survive harsh environmental conditions and will eat just about any small aquatic animal. Hill’s research is being used to track environmental impact, teach fish farmers how to protect their ponds, identify which fish stop or slow the invasion and help the aquatic industry profit, since the little frogs don’t mind when owners forget to clean their fish tanks.

“Xenopus’ eyes are fixed on top of their head so they can see food particles falling from above. They grab food with their front claws and push it into their mouths, unlike other species that use long, sticky tongues.

ZEBRAFISH
James Liao
Associate Professor, UF Department of Biology, Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience

Part of the mummichog family, the zebrafish is prized in research because scientists can peer through its transparent body to see organs and systems developing and functioning in real time.

Biomechanist/neuroscientist James Liao channels this unique feature to understand how delicate sense organs in the zebrafish (identical to those in the human ear) enable it to navigate. His highlights currents.

“Want to know how underwater animals move and what they’re sensing so we can harness the genius of their evolutionary designs,” Liao recently told Hakai magazine.

Liao’s results can help us understand human deafness and balance disorders.

Zebrafish are frequent fliers on the International Space Station, where researchers study their bone degeneration and muscle atrophy in space for clues about old age in humans.

Florida Gator | 27
To say they are bonded is an understatement.

More accurate: They are soldered together — the lanky German Shepherd-Husky-Boxer-Staffordshire Terrier-Aussie mix and, perched atop his head on a hiking trail, or affixed to his back as they ford a stream, or snuggled next to him in a sleeping bag, his Siamese-mix sidekick.

Henry and Baloo, as they are known, are more than just a dog and cat who defy interspecies stereotypes. They are Instagram stars, their cuteness attracting 1.5 million followers as their adventures together cavorting across the Great Plains and Western states are documented and shared by their human companions, Andre Sibilsky (BSBA ’10) and Cynthia Bennett. There’s a Henry and Baloo calendar. And guest appearances at conventions and on television shows. And, when the two join Sibilsky and Bennett at cafes in Denver, plenty of fawning by an adoring and disbelieving public.

The most frequently asked question: How the heck do you guys do it?

“As much as we’d love to take credit, a lot of it is that they really just complement each other,” says Sibilsky, who came to UF from Dallas as a National Merit Scholar.

Immediately evident when the couple adopted Henry five years ago: the energetic puppy loved being with Sibilsky and Bennett. Also immediately evident: he hated not being with Sibilsky and Bennett. Partly to keep Henry company, the couple adopted Baloo who, as part of a rejected litter, had his own baggage.

Turns out, a dog with separation anxiety and a cat with abandonment issues make great emotional support animals for each other. The clingy (literally and figuratively) kitten seemed to view Henry as a surrogate mother. This suited the needy Henry just fine. Add to that a shared love of the outdoors and a beautiful friendship was born.

As for their human counterparts, Sibilsky, who works in finance for TSYS, said he, Bennett, Henry and Baloo are loving the life they’ve built. They head for the trails, foothills, canyons and open road whenever possible. And they’ll keep sharing their adventures. “We want to put positivity out there,” says Sibilsky. “There’s enough of the other stuff. We’ll just have to say ‘Go Gators’ more often.”

For more on Henry, Baloo, Sibilsky and Bennett, follow HenryTheColoradoDog on Instagram and visit OurWildTails.com

Henry (dog) and Baloo nap during a hike break in Colorado. ABOVE: Andre Sibilsky (BSBA ’10) and his girlfriend, Cynthia Bennett, pause for a selfie while Baloo relaxes in his usual hiking pose on top of Henry’s head.
From backpacking to canoeing to lounging, Henry (dog) and Baloo want to join in the fun no matter where Colorado’s trails and their Gator dad, Andre Sibilsky, take them. When Sibilsky isn’t hiking, he’s a brand development and marketing consultant.
By Bobby Ampezzan

Art may mirror life, but actor Stephen Root (AA ’72) has discovered that sometimes it’s a fun house mirror. In his two seasons on the HBO series “Barry,” his malignant character Monroe Fuches has been beaten bloody, bound and threatened with dismemberment, tortured by tooth filing, arrested and attacked by a “feral mongoose” of a tween martial artist who sinks her full bite into his cheek. Tough go for Fuches. Bully for Root!

“I want Stephen Root to get an Emmy nomination for this season of ‘Barry,’” tweeted Vox TV critic Emily VanDerWerff.

“... He’s never been so much as nominated for an Emmy despite being a phenomenal actor who has appeared in every show made on television since he was born,” tweeted New York Times staffer James Poniewozik in response. “From a standpoint of universal justice he deserves at least 10 of them.”
Indeed, the Television Academy included Root as an Emmy finalist this year in the best comedy supporting actor category, but another actor walked away with the award. No matter, after almost a half-century in the business, Root’s stock is still rising. And as a character actor, he’s happy to remain “that guy” and add even more titles to his 12-page-long IMDb list of credits.

Root’s epic talent for turning small roles into completely memorable characters — such as Milton from the film “Office Space,” whose red Swingline stapler remains a pop culture classic 20 years later — is what led him to rewarding and serious supporting characters in award-revered turns in Coen Brothers movies, later — is what led him to rewarding and serious supporting characters in award-winning TV shows. But it’s his turn as “Newman” — are both University of Florida football fans — and the Gators. The die-hard fan was in Orlando in August for the football season opener against Miami — preferring to sit among fans, rather than in the President’s Box.

His actor friends, Brian Reddy and Wayne Knight, say Root’s proselytizing.

Hall and, finally, in his Emmy nomination. Root says he’d had little time to celebrate the honor, however.

This fall he worked opposite Glenn Close in the filming of “Four Good Days.” In December, the acclaimed #McTiern movie “Bombshell” was released with Root’s role supporting those of A-listers Nicole Kidman, Charlize Theron and Margot Robbie. He’s also in filming for the comedy thriller “Happily,” a “Perry Mason” episode and a crime drama “Empy Man” that’s due out in August.

“Always a Gator”

At 68, the affable and approachable Root says he loves his life, his work, his family — and the Gators. The die-hard fan was in Orlando in August for the football season opener against Miami — preferring to sit among fans, rather than in the President’s Box.

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According to Academy’s notice

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Conference and caught the eye of the National Shakespeare Company. He left UF just three credits short of his degree.

Small Stage to Big Screen

After more than a decade of traveling and performing “Sondheim: The Country Witch” and “Corin The Old Man” the same night, as he’s put it in interviews, he decided to make the leap to the screen. His first credited role in 1988’s Crocodile Dundee II is “DEA Agent (Toilet)”. His second is a mad scientist in “Monkey Shines,” a horror movie. Two years later, on the set of “Ghost,” playing a police sergeant, he and Demi Moore bonded over raising young kids in this peripatetic occupation.

Then, in 1995, came what Root still considers his defining career break: He was cast as Jimmy James, the “idiot or idiot savant” station owner in “NewsRadio,” a critically acclaimed five-season sitcom. Only Root, star Dave Foley and co-star Andy

Dick, appear in all 97 episodes.

“I think I became known within the industry … that is where the name ‘Stephen Root’ stuck. ‘Oh, the guy in News Radio.’” he says. Then, Root says his Coen Brothers projects brought “another level” of recognition.

Nestled snug in between came the role Root says is 90% of what prompts complete strangers to ask him for selfies: the “squarrely” Milton Waddams in Mike Judge’s “Office Space.” He’d been lending his voice to Judge’s primetime Fox show “King of the Hill,” but in a later interview, Judge admitted he had to go to bat for Root with studio execs because “you’re not a name, and it’s a fairly important part,” Root recalls.

The following year, however, Root dispelled any doubt with his performance as a blind Southern radio station man in the Coen Brothers’ “O Brother Where Art Thou.”

“If you’re looking for the best guy, like the principal in ‘Buffy the

National goes back to the ‘70s when they met in the National Shakespeare Company. Reddy and Knight, both known for their roles in “Seinfeld” — Reddy as the “High Talker” and Knight as “Newman” — are both University of Georgia alumni.

“For years Steve has been shootin’ this [crap] about Florida being better.” says Reddy, who recalls a time about 20 years ago when Root set up a three-way phone call so the friends could talk while watching the Florida-Georgia football game on TV. “He said, ‘We gotta watch it boys! No, the truth is, in the early days, we [UGA] were getting our butts whipped pretty bad, and the reason he wanted that phone call was because he knew Florida would win!”

Steve has a wonderful quality of subsuming himself in a role,” Reddy says. “Even in the Coen Brothers’ stuff, I’m the odd guy.”

“We can do that, too.” Then you can take a comedy or two again,” he said.

Reddy says Root’s strategy has worked perfectly.

“Steve has a wonderful quality of subsuming himself in a role,” Reddy says. “For many years, people didn’t know who he was because he was so convincing in his characters.
Reddy says Root can also be a chameleon. “Physically, Steve is right in the middle — perfect as a character actor. I’m balding, and you can’t change me too much. Steve … can change himself. Just very versatile as an actor, and smart as a whip,” Reddy says.

“Diligent, disciplined and kind”

Despite his hectic work life, Root continues to stay connected with his alma mater. His gift in 2003 provided an acting studio in the J. Wayne Reitz Union. His current family, the cast of “Barry,” renews soon. Root expects to begin shooting his third season within the next few months. The Coen Brothers have also called him into action again. This time, it’s a billing that harks back to those roles that first called him away from UF: Shakespeare, and specifically, “the Scottish play” (Macbeth).

Root says he’s happy to retrace those steps today. It reminds him that if it hadn’t been for his journey through UF he might have ended up wearing hard hats instead of costumes.

“My whole background for my family was construction. … I would have ended up wearing hard hats instead of costumes. … I cling to memories of Vince Dooley and Steve Spurrier, and seemed to do every guest spot around the globe to support family and friends, fearlessly been there for those on the precipice, and celebrated his friends’ triumphs, performances and life events.

He can reach comedic heights by taking on Stephen Root to sympathetically laugh at the emotional pain the character feels in his fantasy dinner party: Frank Morgan, Strother Martin and W.C. Fields.

Once said: “I don’t want the name Stephen Root to come up because that’s not who you’re supposed to be naming. That’s why I’m not on social media. I want you to think of me as the character, whoever you see up on the screen”

Says the strength of his work comes from preparation.

STEPHEN ROOT: Gator Emeritus and Friend of a Bulldog

I’ve known Stephen Root for almost 40 years. We met in New York as theatrical luminaries; I was doing my first play on Broadway and Steve was touring nationally in “Driving Miss Daisy.” We sized each other up and have been competitors and friends ever since.

Root preceded me to Los Angeles and seemed to do every guest spot imaginable until I arrived. We became much closer on the Left Coast as we didn’t have so many friends readily available and had to make do with each other. Since that time, Stephen has become one of my best friends in the world. He was the best man at my wedding, he’s the godfather of my son, and when my mother passed away shortly after my wife gave birth and couldn’t attend the funeral, Stephen flew to Georgia and took care of me during that time as a true brother.

He’d do just about anything for me except get the name Stephen Root to come up because that’s not who you’re supposed to be naming. That’s why I’m not on social media. I want you to think of me as the character, whoever you see up on the screen.”

Says the strength of his work comes from preparation.
FROM LOCAL BEE HIVES TO THE AMAZON FOREST, UF EXPERTS SHARE HOW THEY’RE HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION, THANKS TO GATOR INVESTORS.

JENNIFER HOLMES (above) is president of the Florida Beekeeping Association

PROFESSOR POLLINATION OR “THE BEE GUY” Jamie Ellis leads the UF Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab and serves as North America’s representative to the International Bee Research Association and a North American representative to the Prevention of Honey Bee Colony Losses Group. He is interviewed below by Jennifer Holmes, president of the Florida Beekeeping Association, whose political support and financial contributions led to state funding and subsequent construction of Ellis’ lab last year.

HOLMES: How long have you worked with bees?
ELLIS: I’ve kept bees since I was 12, so 29 years.

HOLMES: Are managed bee populations still declining?
ELLIS: This is tricky to explain. On average, beekeepers experience about 40% gross loss rates yearly because of various stressors. (If you have 100 colonies, you stand to lose 40 of them in a year.) However, beekeepers can split up the 60 surviving colonies so new queens will produce more bees. And, beekeepers import/purchase more colonies each year. Together, that brings the net change in U.S. bee numbers to a 1% increase annually. (If you begin the year with 100 colonies, you will end the year with 101.) The net number of colonies is driven by economics. When it’s financially feasible to have more colonies, the numbers go up despite the high gross loss rate.

HOLMES: How is your team helping bees?
ELLIS: We study the main stressors of bee colonies (varroa, a mite that feeds on honey bees; nutrition; various pests/pathogens; etc.) in an effort to identify new control options, develop better strategies for managing pests and more. We also invest heavily in extension and instruction efforts aimed at educating beekeepers/students and improving the sustainability of beekeeping for the long term.

HOLMES: Why is UF’s new bee lab important?
ELLIS: Its amazing infrastructure allows us to conduct top-quality bee research, develop and implement state-of-the-art extension and instruction programs, and house our growing team under one roof. We now have dedicated teaching space, a teaching apiary and a permanent home for UF/IFAS Bee College. Our new faculty are already expanding instruction and recording new podcast series on beekeeping. One new scientist focuses exclusively on research to help commercial beekeepers. And a new lecturer is teaching three courses on beekeeping. We have room now for our many undergrad volunteers and international visiting scholars. I could go on.

HOLMES: What can we all do to help bees?
ELLIS: Become beekeepers. Landscape with pollinator-friendly and native plants. Provide nesting habitat for native bee species. Use pesticides sparingly. Support bee research as volunteers or even financially.

HOLMES: Describe the importance of bees.
ELLIS: Honey bees are responsible for an estimated 20-30% of the food we consume. No other agriculture commodity can claim that. They contribute to healthy ecosystems, as well, through the pollination services they provide to plant communities.

HOLMES: How many times have you been stung?
ELLIS: Tens of thousands of times.

Y es, the Gator Nation is everywhere. Meet two UF professors who go above and beyond — and around the world — to share their expertise with people who are helping people preserve our planet — including future generations of planet-keepers.

PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

FLORIDA GATOR | 39 | WINTER 2019
SPEAKING UP FOR THE LAND, AIR AND SEA

Environmental attorney Tom Ankerson directs UF’s Conservation Clinic, which allows UF law students to take part in active legal matters involving land, water and air. While his focus has been on Latin America and the Caribbean, his work has led to domestic and international agreements, including a United Nations treaty system.

He is interviewed below by Larry Sellers (BSBA ’75, JD ’79), a Holland & Knight partner in Tallahassee, who also specializes in environmental and land use law. Sellers and his wife, Cathy (BS ’76, MEd ’82), a Florida administrative law judge, personally support the Conservation Clinic.

SELLERS: Having worked/brought in 30 countries, what is one legal issue you’ve faced the most no matter the locale?
ANKERSEN: Property disputes. Whether negotiating safari concessions on tribal lands in Africa to protect wildlife habitat, writing briefs in international tribunals on the human right to communal property, drafting conservation easements in Florida or ensuring local ordinances do not “take” private property, the sanctum sacrum of property has been paramount.

SELLERS: What revelations do your students often have at the clinic?
ANKERSEN: Much of what environmental and land use lawyers do doesn’t always involve the law. The hardest expectations to manage are your own. The world doesn’t run on semesters. Even in the age of the internet you have to pick up the phone.

SELLERS: From sea grass restoration and turtle conservation to beach access and forest protection, which environmental issue meant the most to you and why?
ANKERSEN: The protection of marine and coastal environments, especially beaches. I grew up in Melbourne on the Indian River Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean. My childhood was a relatively unfettered exploration of these ecosystems at a time when Melbourne was changing from a Florida frontier town to the epicenter of the space program. Sea turtles occupy every jurisdiction under the law of the sea, and I have followed them.

SELLES: Why contribute your talents to UF over other law school?
ANKERSEN: I knew I was going focus my career and law on Florida and in addition to being my alma mater, it is the best law school in the state. Also, I credit former Dean Joe Mills with giving me the space, literally and figuratively, to flourish. The ’70s were exciting times. You could fit all the international environmental lawyers in the world in a small room. With UF’s tropical conservation reputation preceding me in Latin America, and a home base in subtropical Florida, I was able to become one of them.

SELLERS: What value does the Conservation Clinic bring to Floridians?
ANKERSEN: We undertake projects that our clients might not pursue, if it weren’t for our services. In many cases, these projects represent policy innovations that then diffuse across the state. The clinic’s fingerprints can be found in a number of areas of state and local law, and internationally. I am fortunate to have developed a long-term relationship with Florida Sea Grant and UF/IFAS extension and with the Tropical Conservation and Development Program in the Center for Latin American Studies, which support our work by providing scientific support and community access at home and abroad.

PARTING THOUGHT: “Our clinic — and the law school as a whole — is fortunate to have a strong alumni network,” Ankerson said. “I’m grateful to UF law grads like you, Larry (Sellers), who mentor students and support the travel that is required of students, which then helps them stand out. I worked directly with clients on complex legal issues. For instance, my work with the Sea Turtle Conservancy involved the evaluation of sea turtle management in coastal parks throughout Florida and the development of best management practices for state and local stakeholders. My fellowships are undoubtedly attributed to my time with the Conservation Clinic.

ANKERSEN: How has the clinic helped you?
ANKERSEN: As he does with each student entering the Conservation Clinic, Professor Ankerson paired me with clients and projects that allowed me to explore my interest in water law and policy. My work with the Florida Springs institute and Sea Turtle Conservancy recommending more stringent regulations for outstanding Florida springs and sea turtle management has been instrumental as I launch my career.

NEXT GEN BEEKEEPER

Emily Noordyke, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a second year master’s student working for Dr. Jamie Ellis in UF’s Bee Research and Extension Lab.

What’s your job like?
It’s amazing because Dr. Ellis is first and foremost a beekeeper; that’s how he started. Because of that, he’s well prepared for applied honey bee research.

Why UF?
Dr. Ellis thinks about our work from the beekeeping perspective. That was a big reason why I came here. I started as a beekeeper in Michigan five years ago. I was an art major and heard about this beekeeping student club. I fell in love with it and started doing research on honey bee nutrition. Coming down here and getting a completely different beekeeping experience was a great draw. We have a prolonged session for research, which allows me to get into more projects. UF’s entomology department is very strong, giving me a good diversity of experiences working with everyone and not just on bees. There are a lot of visiting professors, too, so it’s been easy to connect with experts worldwide. Also, Dr. Ellis’ former students have great careers worldwide; so I think my prospects are good.

How many times have you been stung?
I can’t even count how many times, but it’s been a while since the last one.

NEXT GEN DEFENDER

Katie Slattery (JD ’19) of Satellite Beach worked in the Levin College of Law’s Conservation Clinic while earning her environmental and land use law degree. This fall, she became the clinic’s fulltime Sea Grant Legal Fellow. In 2020, she will gain more experience as a Knauss Marine Policy Fellow.

What’s your job like?
In a competitive law school environment where it can be difficult to distinguish yourself, the clinic provided me with experiences and skills that helped me stand out. I worked directly with clients on complex legal issues. For instance, my work with the Sea Turtle Conservancy involved the evaluation of sea turtle management in coastal parks throughout Florida and the development of best management practices for state and local stakeholders. My fellowships are undoubtedly attributed to my time with the Conservation Clinic.

How has the clinic helped you?
As she does with each student entering the Conservation Clinic, Professor Ankerson paired me with clients and projects that allowed me to explore my interest in water law and policy. My work with the Florida Springs institute and Sea Turtle Conservancy recommending more stringent regulations for outstanding Florida springs and sea turtle management has been instrumental as I launch my career.

BEE FACT: Honey bees are not native to North America, South America, Australia and various islands around the world. They came to the U.S. with the earliest European settlers (plus some importations after that). There are only nine honey bee species on the planet. All but one are native to Asia; the other comes from Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

LARRY SELLERS, a Holland & Knight partner in Tallahassee, and his wife, Cathy, a Florida administrative judge, both mentor UF law students.
Two years ago, near-fatal complications from a rare disease interrupted a sophomore’s quest for her degree. Now this brave Gator is back on campus — getting by with a little help from her UF friends.

STORY BY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA ’04)  
PHOTOS BY AARON DAYE

Tattooed on the wrist of 21-year-old Mariel White (2HHHP) are two words: “She persisted.” That phrase only hints at the epic battles Mariel has fought and won in the last two years.

In September 2017, Mariel was an active sophomore — taking a full load of classes, cheering at Gator games with her Phi Mu sisters, running at the gym, working two part-time jobs — when severe neck pain and a fever landed her in UF Health Shands Hospital. Back home near Atlanta, she was diagnosed with Churg-Strauss/EGPA, an extremely rare vascular disease with only 2 to 5 new cases per year out of every 1 million people. Doctors started her on oral chemotherapy and steroids. But in January 2018, complications from the incurable disease caused Mariel to suffer four strokes. She lost partial vision in one eye and was permanently paralyzed from the waist down.

Friends and family guarded Mariel fiercely in early 2018, assuring her she “would return to UF one day.” That phrase became the young woman’s rallying cry over the next 18 months as she courageously fought to overcome her physical and cognitive impairments and to master caring for herself as a paraplegic.

“It was never an option not to go back to UF,” Mariel said. “I knew I was going to work as hard as possible to make that happen.”

On August 2, 2019, nearly two years after falling ill, Mariel returned as a student to UF. Whatever lies ahead, Mariel, now 21, is determined to graduate from UF with a Bachelor of Science in sports management, and a minor in mass communications, ideally in fall 2021. Her goal is to be a sports reporter and analyst.

“I’ve never let anything stop me from dreaming big and setting big goals and high standards,” Mariel wrote on her new blog. “This is no different. I am strong. I am capable. I am not defined by my disability.”

Here are scenes from her first semester back at UF.
Move-in day is monumental for Mariel. It’s equally so for her mother, Jill Olney, who is doing a heroic job of letting go of her daughter for a second time. “I’m super happy, super nervous to have her here. Really, she is ready for this. Plus I’m only five hours away,” Jill says, reassuring herself.

Another safety net to calm Jill’s fears: every inch of her daughter’s room in Cypress Hall, hailed as “the most accessible residence hall in America,” has been planned and outfitted for people with mobility impairments: a zero-entry shower, a height-adjustable sink, easy door openers and a computerized system to control lights and window blinds. Plus, a personal assistant will be helping Mariel with weekly shopping and room cleaning.

Moving in day is a time to take charge of one’s space. Mariel is already taking charge of her space. Now that she can fully support her own weight with her arms, she no longer needs the room’s overhead lift system. “We can take that down,” she says.

Mariel has a strong social life, too. Friends, family, and the Gator Nation have enveloped her in their care and willed her to fight back. For instance, nine months into her recovery (October 2018), the Tim Tebow Foundation W15H program hosted Mariel and her family in Gainesville for the LSU vs. Florida game. Mariel’s VIP treatment included attending practice with the team and being Tebow’s guest on ESPN’s “SEC Nation.” Tebow also introduced her to ESPN host and sideline reporter Laura Rutledge (BStel ’11).

But perhaps Mariel has no greater friends than her Phi Mu friends, who live by their sorority’s motto, “The Faithful Sisters.” When she was first paralyzed, they sat by her hospital bed in Georgia and held fundraisers to help pay for her medical expenses. Now Phi Mu is doing all it can to make her and future sisters with disabilities feel welcome, including installing an elevator and a wheelchair-accessible shower.

“We’re really, really happy to have her back,” says senior Riley Marshall (4ENG), who has been known to carry Mariel piggyback. “It was so incredibly hard when she was ill.”

At 6 p.m., 80 new Phi Mus come running down the hill to their new home. Three years ago, Mariel was one of them. “I’m glad my friends are learning about accessibility and how it really impacts me,” Mariel writes later. “It’s something I never even noticed or considered before, but now I have to think about it everywhere I go.”
Mariel plans a group presentation with her classmates. “Public speaking is something I would’ve been terrified of a year ago, but now I feel like I’ve had enough experience that I’m prepared,” she says.

ACCESSIBILITY AT UF

UF’s national rank for inclusion of students with disabilities, per U.S. News & World Report. Criteria include classrooms and dorms accessibility, and campus awareness of inclusion.

255

Occupancy of UF’s Cypress Hall dorm, which features numerous amenities including 35 rooms with ceiling lifts, door openers and custom-fitted furniture, carpet-less rooms for students with allergies, single rooms for those with anxiety and depression, and accessible workout rooms.

3,000

UF students with physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities who receive services from UF’s Disability Resource Center.
This seasoned leader goes out on a limb to fight for our nation’s wild areas — and for diversity in forestry.

Story by Barbara Drake (MFA ’04)
Photography by Steve Johnson (BSJ ’11, MS ’15)

March 12, 2012, McKenzie River Ranger District, Willamette National Forest, western Oregon

Terry Baker, a new district ranger, had battled dozens of raging fires in his 13 years with the U.S. Forest Service. But the one facing him tonight in the crowded Upper McKenzie Community Center threatened to dwarf them all — and not a single match had been lit.

For months, environmentalists had been protesting the “Goose Project,” a wildfire-prevention plan designed by his Forest Service predecessor to thin 2,100 overgrown acres of the 1.7 million-acre Willamette National Forest, with the trees being sold to local timber companies. Just months after Baker (BSF ’04) took command of the McKenzie River Ranger District in late 2011, opposition to the Goose Project had exploded, with the local paper, River Reflections, as the chosen forum for community outrage. In its pages, readers sparred about potential harm to the forest and its northern spotted owls, and labeled Baker and his fellow foresters “greedy” — to name the mildest of epithets.

The controversy was tearing apart this rural community in the Cascade Mountains.
Baker had called tonight’s meeting to share the forestry science behind the plan and discuss people’s concerns. He’d talk first; then his staff would take over. No uniforms, he had told them: “You’ll find out why later.”

At 7 p.m., sharp, wearing his green Forest Service work shirt and pants, Baker stepped to the podium and smiled at the 180 or so faces glaring back. Taking a deep breath, he welcomed everyone, stressing the need for openness and mutual respect.

Then, as an ornithologist might say, the proverbial owl droppings hit the fan.

Audience members shouted that the project would damage the forest, ruin their peaceful community and destroy the owls’ nesting habits. To their surprise, Baker calmly explored each objection, demonstrating that most of their fears were unwarranted. The threats to wildlife? The Forest Service had considered those, but maybe a more detailed risk assessment needed to be done, he admitted, taking notes.

Gradually tension in the room eased. But a core group wouldn’t give up. “You don’t care anything about the community?” one man yelled.

An hour in, Baker asked the Forest Service employees sitting in the audience to stand. “I want you to look at these people,” he told the crowd as his staff rose. “They go to church with you, they’re your kids’ baseball coaches. They live in and care about this community as much as you do, and you have a responsibility to treat them with respect.”

“I’m in uniform,” continued Baker, his voice rising. “I’m doing this so you can hurl all your anger at me. But they are your neighbors, and you should talk to them as such.”

That was the switch that turned an angry town hall into a community-building effort, says Baker, recalling the moment seven years later. The most vocal opponents quietly left the building; most people stayed to have one-on-one with the staff.

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Baker’s problems with the Goose Project were far from over — the Forest Service ended up being litigated and was forced to conduct an environmental impact statement, leading to small changes in the original plan. However, the 2012 meeting marked a watershed in Baker’s evolution as a leader.

“I realized my beliefs about valuing people resonate with others,” Baker told Leadership Nature podcast in 2017. In 2018, based largely on his exemplary leadership at McKenzie River, Baker was tapped as CEO of the Society of American Foresters, becoming the first African American in the role. As such, he represents 11,000 foresters and forestry students across the nation, doing public outreach and advocating in the halls of Congress so everyone understands the importance of trained foresters to our ecosystem.

“You can manage anyone,” he said on Leadership Nature. “If you want to lead people, you have to make an effort to connect with them and give them reason to believe in you.”

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS (ON WOOD)

Baker’s path to forestry was serendipitous. A native of Marianna, in the Florida Panhandle, Baker grew up helping his grandparents on their small farm. His earliest memory is of taking part in the annual family ritual of making sugarcane syrup. It was the children’s job to feed the stalks through the press, and 8-year-old Terry and his older brother, Tyrell, grabbed handfuls of cane as their smiling led an old white hull in circles to power the classic setup.

Education was highly valued by the Baker family, especially by his hardworking single mother, Velma, and so in high school Terry’s thoughts turned to college. A talent at nurturing flowers made him consider majoring in landscape architecture or ornamental horticulture at Florida A&M University.

One night, while working at a convenience store during his senior year, Baker got a surprise phone call. It was a recruiter who had tracked down Baker through a college fair, and he was offering a full scholarship through the Multicultural Strategic Workforce Initiatives program. This federal partnership between the US Forest Service and historically black land-grant universities provides tuition and benefits so minority students can enter the natural resource fields. Baker would spend his first two years at FAMU before transferring to UF/IFAS’ School of Forest Resources & Conservation, where he would earn a bachelor’s degree, plus a second bachelor’s in Agricultural Sciences from FAMU.

Baker was intrigued but still somewhat mystified by the field that was welcoming him with open arms.

“I had no idea that forestry as a profession existed,” he says. “Not only that, I had no idea that one of the largest national forests east of the Mississippi was 40 miles from my house.”

With his mother’s blessing, Baker said yes to the scholarship, interned that summer at the nearby Apalachicola National Forest, home to pine sand hills and swamps, spring-fed rivers, bobcats, black bears and alligators. He would continue interning at national forests throughout college.
Baker's walk down name tag lane reflects his incredible journey.

“Little did I know that he would later be running the entire organization” says Stein. “He has put a personal face on the forest profession.”

A secret to Baker's success, says Stein: “He doesn't pretend forestry is all about the ecological sciences,” adding that timber, grazing, wildlife, water quality and more. Baker served at nine of them, in Florida, Oregon, Nebraska, Arizona and Colorado, rising from forester to district ranger to deputy forest supervisor. Whatever standard-issue Forest Service headgear he wore — yellow hard hat, green baseball cap — Baker always followed the advice his mother gave him long ago: Never put yourself above anyone else, and always pitch in when there's work to be done.

Even as an undergraduate, Baker possessed the "soft skills" needed to interact with a wide variety of interest groups, says Professor Tim Martin, co-director of UF's Forest Biology Research Cooperative. "I think Terry's understanding of the value of interpersonal relationships is one of the strengths he carried into his professional life," says Martin.

INCLUSION IN THE FOREST

In 2017, Terry married fellow Forest Service professional Jessica Baker, and the couple moved to Colorado, where Terry became deputy supervisor of the Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forest. They had barely finished unpacking in 2018 when Terry got an unexpected call: How would he like to become CEO of the Society of American Foresters?

Stepping away from his federal career was something Baker had never planned, he says. But an opportunity to lead the prestigious 119-year-old non-profit was too good to pass up.

Terry and Jessica relocated to D.C. in fall 2018, with the new CEO trading his drab Forest Service duds for tailored suits and ties. As the face and voice of SAF, Baker raises the profile of forestry and foresters, while making the profession more inclusive.

"I'm just a little different," he laughs, noting his racial visibility gets him a foot in the door with the media, who might otherwise overlook forestry concerns.

People of color are rare in forestry for many reasons, Baker says, but a major factor is the profession’s often white, male and upper-class nature. Unlike most major professions, the forestry profession is widening that effort by promoting environmental education in primary and secondary schools. The more children and teens understand the good that forests and foresters do, the more young people will aspire to become natural resource professionals, the organization reasons.

Martin says he admires the "pragmatic, non-confrontational approach" Baker brings to diversifying forestry. "Terry has helped SAF and his fellow foresters understand what it means to be a minority in forestry, what some of the barriers might be to entering and staying in the profession, and how we can work together to make things better," says Martin.

Baker is also assisting the UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation's efforts to diversify their student body and the profession.

Baker "is a brilliant example of what a successful forestry student can be like," says Stein.

HARD-EARNED ACCOLADES

Baker's leadership has not gone unnoticed elsewhere in the Gator Nation. This Baker, like UF's Alumni Association honored Baker at the annual 40 Under 40 event.

Terry and Jessica flew down to Gainesville for the April ceremony, where College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean Elaine Turner praised Baker’s “career path and achievements [which] show future students the possibilities available to them with an agricultural and life sciences degree.”

The shiny 40 Under 40 plaque now rests proudly on the desk in Baker's office. But tucked away in a drawer is a humble object he treasures just as much. It's a yellowed clipping from River Reflections, the small Oregon paper at the epicenter of the Grove Project controversy. In its ink-stained pages, locals denounced the Forest Service's plans and lambasted Baker himself.

But not in the newspaper's subsequent editions, especially on Jan. 9, 2014. Its banner announces "Reader's Picks for the Best of the McKenzie River," with Baker's smiling face underneath the headline, “Man of the Year.”

(From left) Jessica and Terry Baker took this photo by Emerson Alumni Hall during their recent UF visit.

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NEW ROCKSTARS

Gator Filip Molina (far right) and a full staff of alumni from Theater Strike Force, the UF student improv club, are gaining an enormous YouTube following by celebrating the nerd in everyone. Called “New Rockstars,” Molina’s team delivers intensive breakdowns of TV shows, films and even movie trailers, including “Game of Thrones,” “Stranger Things,” “Avengers Endgame” and “Frozen 2.”

From pointing out obscured props to making connections between wardrobe choices, musical scores, lyrics and other symbols and references, the team provides — fire hose style — a torrent of details easily overlooked by even the most obsessive fans.

Molina (Microbiology ’03–’06, English ’06–’08) said the success of their channel has proven that “the most popular things in pop culture right now are also the nerdiest.”

Lead writer and co-host Erik Voss (BSJ ’10), right, says delivering so much content each week is a skill he developed in reporting class. He and Molina add that their comedic approach and penchant for seeing “just how far we can push a concept” came from their experiences with Theater Strike Force (TSF).

Voss and Molina were part of the TSF team that pranked fellow students in 2008 with the “We Are Gary” fake presidential campaign, which resulted in cable TV ads, T-shirts and a massive Reitz Union rally. Another project, “New Low,” a full-length movie, ended up at the Sundance Film Festival. “I’ve never found a group of people who are as talented and as smart as those I met in TSF,” Molina said.

Voss, the youngest of five siblings who all attended Florida State University, said he opted for UF after his friends in Jacksonville told him about TSF. Molina, the youngest of seven, is the first in his Miami family to attend college.

In 2010, Molina, Voss and three other friends took a chance and moved to Los Angeles. Nine years later, their YouTube following — almost 2.5 million at press time — continues to grow daily. They also just launched NRDS, New Rockstars Digital Studios, expanding into podcasts and other evolving media platforms.

Molina’s wish: to teach a UF class on developing social media-based businesses.

“It’s time for UF to officially teach those skills,” he said.
STUDENTS TO SALESMEN

Brad Gamble (BSBA '99) is founder of The Selling Factory, a Gainesville company that employs and trains UF students in sales, customer service, entrepreneurship and other business skills. Along with his partners Ian Massenburg (BA '01) and Adam Grossman, a former UF Hillel rabbi, the company recently celebrated the graduation of its 100th student, about half of which are business majors. Gamble said many of the business-to-business campaigns his company uses to train students come through partnerships with other Gator-owned companies. “They like having UF students working on their campaigns, and they feel like that supports UF in a way,” he said.

JUST IN TIME

Storytellers Steve Johnson (BSU ’11, MSEnt ’15) and Ryan Jones (BSJ ’14, MS ’19) completed a project with TIME Magazine in which they built the first AR experience that tracks illegal deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. See their imagery at Seeboundless.com or download the TIME immersive app for the AR experience.

WHEN IN ROME ...

In June when Matthew Cole (BA ’93) and Karen Johnson (BSPR ’93), far left, married and honeymooned in Rome (they met as UF freshmen in 1989), Matthew was able to meet the Vatican Athletic team and take a casual run with them through many landmarks in Rome. During their brief meeting with Pope Francis (right), he also exchanged zucchettos (skullcaps) with the Supreme Pontiff. See videos from their adventure at www.bit.ly/mattandkaren.

ON THE RISE IN D.C.

UF Alumni Association Board member Jessica Furst Johnson (JD ’07) is a partner at the law firm Holtzman Vogel Josephik Trecshinsky in Washington, D.C. She is the former general counsel for the National Republican Senate Committee and has held numerous roles within the National Republican Congressional Committee.

FROM SEA TO SEA

J. Powell Brown (BA ’89) of Winter Park (above, left) and George Pollock (BSAC ’89, MACC ’90) of Lithia participated in Race Across America, a 3,100-mile team endurance bicycle trek that started at Oceanside, California, on June 15 and ended in Annapolis, Maryland on June 23. Brown has raised more than $1 million — partly through this race — for mental illness awareness. This time his proceeds benefited Skyland Trail, an Atlanta-based non-profit that offers support for people coping with mental illness. “Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10 to 24. I’m riding to change that,” said Brown, who is CEO of Brown & Brown insurance in Daytona Beach. Pollock said he rode to raise money for the FSH Society, which funds research on a specific type of muscular dystrophy. The longtime friends say their marathon ride was truly memorable. “Being able to participate in this race alongside George while raising awareness for causes that are personal to us is a tremendous honor,” Brown wrote. “I appreciate all of the support … and I’m proud of the positive impact these funds will have on education, research and treatment of these serious diseases and disorders that can affect our friends, family and colleagues.”
“...Users may be prone to believing that others are more likely to share false news than themselves, confirming the third-person effect.”

— JOURNALISM RESEARCHER PAUL MENA, (PHD ’19) IN HIS ARTICLE “CLEANING UP SOCIAL MEDIA: HIS FINDINGS ABOUT FAKE NEWS, FACT-CHECKING AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WARNING LABELS TO CURB THE SPREAD OF ERRONEOUS INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON UF’S COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS SITE: JOU.UFL.EDU/ TAG/PAUL-MENA. MENA NOW TEACHES JOURNALISM AT UC-SANTA BARBARA.

FAMILY FOCUS
Jennifer Boston Williams (BA ’06, BA ’06) recently earned Florida Board certification in adoption, an accomplishment held by only 29 other attorneys in the state. She works in Jacksonville.

RIDING HIGH
Joe Mohan (BA ’91) is vice president of American Airlines. He manages the airline’s global alliances, international planning activities and interline product distribution, as well as oversees joint business agreements. Mohan is the former CEO of VivaLatinamerica, an airline holding company, and served in several management posts at Continental Airlines. However, he says his career began when he served as an aide to Sen. Bob Graham (BA ’59), working in foreign policy and intelligence.

GATOR STRONG
May-li Cuypers (DVM ’92) finished 15th at the 2019 ITU Cross Triathlon World Championship in Pontevedra, Spain. The 53-year-old veterinarian also volunteers on the UF College of Veterinary Medicine’s disaster response team that provides emergency support for animals after natural disasters. This year Cuypers also made a gift to her college through her will that supports shelter medicine efforts. She lives near Clearwater.

Jennifer Lawson (BA ’01, JD ’11) is a real estate attorney who supports her Jacksonville nonprofit, where she helps former inmates secure housing.

John Farese (BSBC ’84) and Patti (Thomas) Farese (BSPT ’84) wore their Gator shirts while sailing and cycling through the Greek Islands in June 2019.

Jim Mackie (BSPE ’74), a Gators athletic trainer from 1972-88, wrote this book about the staff and students who worked in UF sports medicine and with the Gatorade development team. A portion of the proceeds from the book will support former UF athletes with medically related financial issues and athletic trainer education.

Rediscover Gainesville. Come cheer for the home team, but stay for the adventure. With a perfect blend of restaurants, craft breweries, outdoor excursions, a thriving music scene, theatre and the arts, you’ll have fun reminiscing about your favorite places and create fond memories discovering new ones.

Text WhatsGood to 22828 for the weekly events guide.

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GATOR NATION

HEAD, HEART, HANDS, HEALTH
Deborah Nistler (PhD ’14) is the 4-H youth development state program leader for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. She is the former UF/IFAS’ state civic engagement and 4-H legislature program coordinator, as well as the Bradford County, FL, extension director.

SCOUTING FOR LIFE
John Searcy (BEE ’55), 87, of Jacksonville received the National Eagle Scout Association’s Outstanding Eagle Scout Award this fall, recognizing his personal and professional contributions at the local, state and regional levels. “I was shocked and humbled,” Searcy said about the award. “Scouting has been an important part of all aspects of my life — family, church, education, business and community. The principles I learned as a young Boy Scout still guide my actions.”

Andy McCaddin (BS ‘08, MS ’14) took this photo of his wife, Vanessa Walthall (BS ’08, MPH ’17, DVM ’17), and their son, Warren, at the summit of Bald Rock Mountain near Lincolnville, Maine.

Nancy Lomax Leslie (BS 60) and Richard Leslie (BA 58) of Coral Gables shared their Gator spirit with hundreds of penguins in Antarctica.

Vicki Cotto of Gainesville represented the Gators at the Women’s World Cup in Lyon, France.

Amy Husted (BSTEL ’96) of Coconut Creek wore her Gator jacket on her first trip to Ireland this year.

Jonathan Adkins (BSEE ’98) of Madison, Ala., chomped it up at Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, Alaska.

Send your photos & captions to: FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu
Numbers of Note

34

Years Steve Futch (BBA ’75, PhD ’79) served as a citrus extension agent in multiple Florida counties before retiring in June. His first experience with citrus was working in his great-grandfather’s Wauchula grove (est. 1905). But after freezes in the 1980s claimed his own grove, he took his first extension agent job at UF, helping a plethora of growers with pest, fungus and other issues from Lake Alfred and other issues from Lake Alfred and Indian River, DeSoto, Manatee, Hardee, Manatee and Sarasota counties.

34

Number of consecutive years Jack Bierley (BA ’58, LLB ’63), now 82, has made a contribution to UF. He’s tied for the longest cumulative years of giving at 55 years. The international attorney who has volunteered in many capacities at UF, in addition to his monetary gifts, says philanthropy has always been an important part of his life.

I received great things from the university and have always supported things where I feel I have an obligation — where I feel I benefited from it,” he said.

Bierley said during his college years he engaged in as many opportunities as he could to become involved in student life by serving, among other roles, as a student politician, Florida Blue Key member and, in 1962, homecoming general chairman.

“I learned how to become a leader and bring people together through my activities at the university,” he said. “Those skills translated into my career, which is why I’m able to give back today.”

Bierley’s lifetime of UF donations, including a law school scholarship, an international visiting professor fund and even a Japanese art piece for the Harn Museum, have enhanced 11 UF programs.

“A lot of people don’t realize the status of UF in the context of the public universities in America. It’s a leading and outstanding institution, and one we should support.”

53

Years Carl Stein (BSR ’73) was a photojournalist with KCBS-TV in Los Angeles. He retired in 2014, but this year received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Press Photographers Association of Greater Los Angeles. Over the course of his career, Stein covered the LA riots, wildfires and earthquakes, the full DJ Simpson trial, the Oscars and Emmys, Dodgers and Angels, Clippers and Kings, USC and UCLA, the Olympics in Nagano, the Pope’s visit, a 2007 May Day protest during which he was beaten by police and a plethora of other news events.

“I shot the very first chopper TV news live shot in Miami @WPLG-TV back in 1978,” he said. “And, how the TV news business changed dramatically with the advent of live coverage anytime, most anywhere with satellite trucks, portable ‘live’ packs and then the transition into the digital realm.”

He lives in Scottsdale, AZ.

59

Years since Mario Cartaya (BAARCH ’74, MABC ’75) left Cuba with his parents to seek a better life.

This fall, the Fort Lauderdale resident celebrated his architecture firm’s 40th anniversary at one of its buildings, the Charles F. Dodge City Center in Pembroke Pines. At the event, U.S. Congress member Debbie Wasserman Schultz (BA ’88, MA ’00) presented him with a proclamation honoring his accomplishments in Broward County and throughout South Florida. He talked about the community he loves and his lifetime of service.

“From [arriving] as a scared 9-year-old refugee with dreams greater than my family’s income, to having my name enshrined into the Congressional Record is a validation of my journey and my parents’ sacrifice, leaving their dreams behind so I could have mine,” Cartaya said.
Extending the University of Florida’s Reach to EMPOWER AMERICA’S VETERANS

The UF Veterans Entrepreneurship Program is an intense learning and development opportunity that equips veterans with the tools to launch or grow a business. Qualified veterans with service-connected disabilities and those who have uniquely distinguished themselves in the military are provided the experience at no cost.

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MEET FELLOW GATOR SELYNE SINGH

“While studying at UF, I had the pleasure of meeting Gators from around the world. I joined the UF Alumni Association to maintain the friendships I have formed and to establish new ones. The Gator Nation is everywhere!”

— Selyne Singh (BA ’18) of Tampa is a recruiting administrator for McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting business.

Members receive a plethora of benefits, but more importantly, their dues support career networking programs, scholarships and fellow and future members of the Gator Nation. Your UF Alumni Association is proud to keep Gators connected to campus and to each other.

JOIN TODAY by visiting ufalumni.ufl.edu or calling 352-392-1905.
It was the Age of Aquarius — a time to love, and a time to hate, a time of war, and a time of peace.

Across America, protesters implored politicians to stop the Vietnam War. Pastors, college students and housewives marched for social justice. Police scattered crowds with fire hoses and dogs. Men burned draft cards. Women burned bras. The Ku Klux Klan burned crosses. The Cold War smoldered. Assassins took the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Yet, in the midst of that decade’s unrest, astronauts walked on the moon. Schools were integrated. The first black U.S. Supreme Court justice was appointed. Voting rights became law. On UF’s campus, the graduates of 1969 would be forever changed. As they were inducted into UF’s Grand Guard this year, some shared these memories:
murdered, as some other students did, while there were controversies and drug culture that were riling up the rest of the country,” he says.

Nevertheless, between the draft and the ROTC requirement for all male underclassman, the thought of going to war loomed. Not long after graduation, he went to Vietnam as a U.S. Army intelligence officer.

Aptheker, now a Port St. Lucie attorney, says he recalls that Gator football got more attention than anything happening in Washington, D.C. or Vietnam. “Until the horrible events of 1968, I think it was a time was worth it: ‘UF bleed nothing but orange and blue.’ ”

One of UF’s few black students, Girard said she didn’t feel welcomed at UF. “I remember well the sit-in at Tigert Hall (April 1971), the armored police vehicles parked across the street, the march on the ROTC building and the gatherings in the Plaza of the Americas. President (Stephen C.) O’Connell did an excellent job controlling/diffusing the situation with no violence that I can recall.

A Florida Alligator student newspaper reporter, Andrews had a front-row seat to UF events. He was now an attorney with GrayRobinson in Jacksonville, focusing on labor and employment law and actively participating in civic groups.

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Tankard was a member of Theta Sigma Phi (now Association for Women in Communications), helped create the then-women’s leadership group UF Savant (an alternative to the then-all-male Florida Blue Key) and was editor of the women’s handbook “The Florida Coed.” She is now a freelance editor in Austin, Texas.

The woman who led the movement to prohibit prayer in schools spoke on campus in 1968. A passionate speaker with strong opinions, she effectively defended atheism, the use of Anglo-Saxon cuss words, women’s rights and the growing opposition to the Vietnam War. An ROTC cadet and son of an admiral, she was an officer in UF’s Young Republicans Club, Dungey became a teacher, social worker and assistant school principal. She lives in Stuart and retired in 2006 from Fort Pierce’s Saint Anastasia Catholic School.
UF’s ACCENT Speakers Bureau hosts “Dimensions of Freedom” series on the Vietnam War, religion, drugs, sex, civil disobedience, race and other topics

African American students protest inequality at Tigert Hall

Gay Liberation Movement begins

Astronauts walk on moon

Woodstock: Three Days of Peace and Music

UF students and faculty hold Plaza of the Americas “Gentle Wednesday” peace rallies

In November, the Class of 1969 returned to UF for its 50th reunion and induction into the Grand Guard Society, an elite group that celebrates Gator Nation’s rich history and revels in meaningful experiences around this milestone anniversary. During Grand Guard Weekend each year, UF welcomes a new class with a full slate of activities followed by the induction ceremony. All Grand Guard Society members are invited to participate and help welcome the new inductees. For video highlights from the 2019 event, or to learn more about Grand Guard Society, visit uff.to/GrandGuard.

Sources: America’s Best History, PBS and UF Archives

1960s: A Glimpse

1961
- Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba
- Americans begin to build backyard nuclear bomb shelters

1962
- UF’s first black undergraduates enroll
- Cuban Missile Crisis

1963
- UF students regularly protest whites-only policy at College Inn Cafeteria
- Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech
- Gainesville Women for Equal Rights established
- President Kennedy assassinated

1964
- Beatles U.S. tour launches “British Invasion”
- Vietnam War begins

1965
- UF honors Vietnam War veterans with Operation Appreciation
- Malcolm X assassinated
- UF students take part in Selma, Ala., march for civil rights
- Voting Rights Act ends discrimination at polls

1966
- National Organization for Women (NOW) formed
- Black Panther Party formed
- Stephen Stills (1963) records “For What It’s Worth” with his band, Buffalo Springfield
- Steve Spurrier (BSPE ’81) wins Heisman Trophy

1967
- Thurgood Marshall confirmed to Supreme Court
- Race riots across U.S., including Tampa

1968
- Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated
- Spencer Boyer, UF law’s first African-American visiting professor, receives death threats
- Ron Coleman becomes UF’s first African American student-athlete (track and field)
- Robert Kennedy killed

1969
- UF’s ACCENT Speakers Bureau hosts “Dimensions of Freedom” series on the Vietnam War, religion, drugs, sex, civil disobedience, race and other topics
- African American students protest inequality at Tigert Hall
- Gay Liberation Movement begins
- Astronauts walk on moon
- Woodstock: Three Days of Peace and Music
- UF students and faculty hold Plaza of the Americas “Gentle Wednesday” peace rallies

1970
- First Earth Day
- National Guardsmen kill four Kent State University protesters; UF students strike to cancel classes in response

Sources: America’s Best History, PBS and UF Archives

(Clockwise from top left) Howard Rosenblatt (BAE ’69, JD ’81), Steve Spurrier (BSPE ’81), David Clark (BSOT ’65), Susan Copeland Lee (BSOT ’69), and Carol Gwin (BSOT ’69) share memories and reconnect at the reunion.
Kim Kaupe (BSBA ’98) is co-founder and CEO of The Superfan Company, an agency founded in 2011 that creates one-of-a-kind products for extreme fans, as well as programs and strategies for celebrities and brands. So far, she’s produced fan packages for Katy Perry, the New York Mets, KISS, Shawn Mendes, ACE Comic Con, Miller Coors and Paul McCartney, to name a few.

She’s been named to numerous prominent entrepreneurs-to-watch lists, won several offers on ABC’s “Shark Tank,” served as a 2019 Miss USA pageant judge and contributed many articles to media outlets, such as Forbes, The Wall Street Journal and Forbes Woman. Her most recent side project is a series of entrepreneurship video classes for LinkedIn.

Despite her hectic schedule, Kaupe has purposefully carved out time to meet with UF students and share her lessons learned. She’s headlined events hosted by the Gotham Gator Club, UF Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and UF Alumni Association.

How has your success changed you?
I’ve had a lot of opportunity to grow as a leader and a businesswoman. Success has taught me to become a better listener, and more empathetic to what people are going through around me. Leadership comes from getting into the not-so-fun stuff. The word mentorship scares people because it seems so official and time consuming. But it could mean having breakfast with someone once a quarter or a phone call once a week.

Which Gators inspired you or shaped your approach?
That’s one thing about the Gator Nation that’s so great. There are so many Gators in New York and Manhattan who have helped me countless times. There’s tons of great Gators who constantly inspire me from Adam Schwarz (BS’14 ’08) at TapTheU to Myka Meier (BSPR ’07) at Beaumont Etiquette. Other Gators have been so generous with their time and experience, advice and contacts that have been invaluable. We are so fortunate to be Gators because not only do we graduate with a great degree, we become a part of a great community.

Anything else you’d like to tell Gator Nation?
It’s so important to give back. Sometimes people get it into their head that they can’t give back until they’re accomplished or older or rich. But your most valuable asset is time. The sooner you can give back in whatever way that looks like, that’s really the key in how we’re going to keep our community of Gators going strong.

You recently partnered with LinkedIn to offer tips for people who want to start their own businesses. How does it feel to be positioned as a career-path sage at 30-something?
LinkedIn has been a fantastic partner. I started working with them a year ago doing short videos on tips and hacks. I had been doing my own version [through social channels] because I thought I should share my mistakes and all this knowledge that I was picking up along the way. But now with LinkedIn, it’s been great to reach different audiences. Not only is it touching people in the U.S., I’ve also received emails from people in India, the UK and Brazil who say the course has helped them. I still give my time to UF and meet with students up here in New York, but by partnering with LinkedIn people can access information on their own time and even in their pajamas whenever they feel like it.

Of all the tips you offer, which one is a must for anyone in any industry?
Mentorship — in all caps. It’s so important to have mentors around you who can listen to you and be a sounding board to your life, your career. I believe in having lots of mentors. The word mentorship scares people because it seems so official and time consuming. But it could mean having breakfast with someone once a quarter or a phone call once a week.

How do you stay involved with UF?
I’ve lived by the saying “If you can’t see it, you can’t be it.” I remember participating at the business school while I was at UF and we had tons of Gator guest speakers come talk to us — heads of companies and retired executives. All their roles and titles and experiences were amazing to hear, but I didn’t see myself in any of those people. So I think it’s important to get out there and talk with students while my company is still growing and I’m in the thick of it. Don’t wait until you’re 50 to give your perspective. In my case, I’m 33 and a founder. The more the students can see themselves in you and your story, the more they can get that spark and confidence that they can do it, too.
Stacey Nelson (BA ’09) brushed away her still damp hair as she sat in a hotel lobby on one of the biggest days of her life. But her mind was in Uganda. It’s always there. “They’re such a happy, loving people,” she said. “I miss them all the time.”

The former Florida softball star pitcher — arguably the best to ever play for the Gators — made quite a journey from Los Alamitos, Calif., to Gainesville to play softball for four years at Florida. But that pales in comparison to the many trips she has made to a remote village (Pader Town Council) in northern Uganda where she has worked with the Acholi people to try to find answers.

Once she was finished with an amazing career at Florida that included a gaudy 136-36 career record and 0.99 ERA (as well as Florida’s first appearances in the Women’s College World Series), Nelson was off to pitch in Japan.

“It’s sad for me to say because the game of softball has given me so much,” Nelson said. “Pro softball was a bit of a disappointment for me because I didn’t have the camaraderie I had in college.”

“When it became all about the money, I knew I needed to stop.”

She had dreamed about going to law school since she was a little girl. But first there would be a stop in Uganda in 2011. The people she had never met had never left her heart. The issue was that the Acholi people had been trained for the workforce that was no longer there. The issue was that the Acholi people had been trained for the workforce that was no longer there.

“People in Uganda don’t know where it is.”

She decided there had to be a way to build something to offer employment to so many people who had never left their village. She said, “and then I was at this party and someone introduced me to a guy who was from the exact village I had been working with. I can’t tell you how remote it is. People in Uganda don’t know where it is.”

His message to her was simple — the bread factory is fine. But what northern Uganda really needed was agriculture, the backbone of the area. So she started working to do both.

Nelson ended up spending a year in Uganda working toward the goal of finding employment for people after the chaos of war.

“I try to stay on top of the finances,” she said. “You can’t come in as an American and create solutions. They were so used to being given things, getting handouts. We had to teach them how to work for them, to empower them to create wealth and have a livelihood.”

As her mother Karolyn says, the seed was planted early in Stacey, and it continues to grow.

“What a difference she’s made over there,” Karolyn said. “She hit the ground running and had to do a lot of adjusting, but her goal was to help the people. I’m very proud of her.”

Nelson swears away praise, much like she credits her teammates for her All-American softball career. There’s more to do.

“It’s not satisfying because I worry if I’m doing all I can,” she said. “When you cross cultures, you don’t know if you are doing the right thing or the wrong thing.”

At the same time, she can smile because not only has the Kope Foundation (named after the word for “the problems are not there”) empowering women to work but reducing domestic violence in the community.

And there’s this — she coached a little softball team in Uganda, securing donations from her old pitching coach and others for equipment.

For now, though, she is back in the Los Angeles area working as a lawyer for the office of the inspector general monitoring the Los Angeles police. And there’s this — she coached a little softball team in Uganda, securing donations from her old pitching coach and others for equipment.

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“T’m 32 and I’m kind of wondering what’s next,” she said. So is everyone else.

https://www.gofundme.com/f/kope-foundation or www.kopefoundation.org

FROM SOFTBALL TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Stacey Nelson

“It struck me so deeply, but what could we do?” Nelson said. “It took hold of me and after that I just wanted to learn more about the problem.”

Part of it was being on a college campus and being exposed to more viewpoints. Part of it was just being a Gator. “A large part of who I am was developed by UF: academically as well as the human aspect, volunteering, giving back to the community. It became a part of my nature. It was a part of who I was when I left UF.”

While Nelson was still at Florida, she knew she wanted to do something. So she went to area high schools encouraging teenagers to study about Uganda’s situation.

The winner of an essay contest would receive a $1,000 scholarship. Nelson worked with Steve Noll, a Florida history and UF disability professor, turning a six-month independent course study into a year-long exercise.

“She’s intellectually curious,” said Noll. “I’ve never met someone who can flip the switch like her, be a bulldog on the field and totally different off the field. It tells a great story that you can be an athlete at such a high level and still have this academic interest.”

It was like there were two Stacey Nelsons with different levels of passion.

“(Uganda) was something she was really passionate about,” said UF head softball coach Tim Walton. “I was actually afraid when she was playing here she’d leave in the middle of a semester and go abroad.”

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https://www.gofundme.com/f/kope-foundation or www.kopefoundation.org
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