

GATOR

FLORIDA

SUMMER 2021

A First-Class

FIRST CLASS!



Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars,
15 years later. Where are they now?

PAGE 16

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PAGE 16

THE ARCHITECTS OF OPPORTUNITY

Meet the leaders behind the mission of MFOS.

PAGE 2



BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT ...

In honor of the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program’s 15th anniversary (see feature on page 16), the first class of MFOS alumni share their perspective about what your scholarship support has meant in their lives. Here are just a few of their notes.



“Many young people have the skills and desire to expand their experience and education, but the income barriers of attending a top university like UF are hard to overcome. I can certainly attest that MFOS allowed me to overcome that barrier and grow to now have a professional career.”
Michelle Hayes (BSAg '10)

““Thank you’ would never be enough. You are blessing students and families in ways they didn’t even know were possible. As a recipient, I can honestly say with full confidence that because of your generosity, the entire trajectory of my life was changed in the most positive way. And ‘thank you’ will never suffice.”
Jessica Wardell (BAEd '10, MEd '11)

“Thank you! MFOS was instrumental in helping me break out of the cycle of poverty I was born into.”
Anna Dilerma (BA '09)

“MFOS is a wonderful program that contributes to some of those people most in need of the opportunity to attend college, better themselves and their families lives, and ultimately achieve success.”
Tyler Lewis (BSBA '10, BA '10)

“It’s hard to put my gratitude into words — it is so deep and

so sincere. This program is very special. It goes beyond just funding college or living expenses for deserving kids; it’s a true equalizing force in our very unequal society. All donors who make MFOS possible should know they have changed lives in profound ways.”

Amelia Harnish (BA '10, BSJ '10)

“Thank you for your contribution to MFOS. The seed that you have sown into my life has not fallen on rocky soil. It has fallen on great soil. I was able to earn my B.A. from UF, then a master’s in education at Valdosta State, and now

I am at Howard University earning my doctorate. I work as a speech-language pathologist helping children effectively communicate, and this is thanks to your generous donation. Thank you so much for investing in my future!”
Jessica Jocelyn (BA '10)

“Thank you for believing in us.”
Sabrina Blake (BSR '10, EdS '13, MEd '13)

“MFOS can be life-changing for a first-gen student. It can be so scary and intimidating navigating college, and the cost can be too much for many. MFOS helps students like me succeed, and the financial help can be a game changer in helping students cross the finish line successfully.”
Alexandra Rodriguez (14 in Advance)

“Thank you so much for your donation. It absolutely changed the course of my life, both personally and professionally.”
Sylvester Lionel (BSBC '10)

“From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Thank you for helping me achieve an extension of my parents’ American dream when they left Colombia for the United States in the 1980s. Thank you for helping me become the first in my family to graduate from college and go beyond that accomplishment. Thank you for setting the precedent for other universities to follow in helping low-income, first-generation students. Thank you for allowing me to experience the amazing place that UF is, and for inspiring me to give back and do the same for the next generation of students like me.”
Mauricio Molina (BA '10)

DO YOU KNOW HOW MFOS BEGAN?

Meet three of the people Gator Nation has to thank for the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program, which continues to transform the lives of students, their families and their communities. Thank you for giving high-achieving students a chance to earn the most valuable college degree in Florida — one from the University of Florida.

BERNIE MACHEN

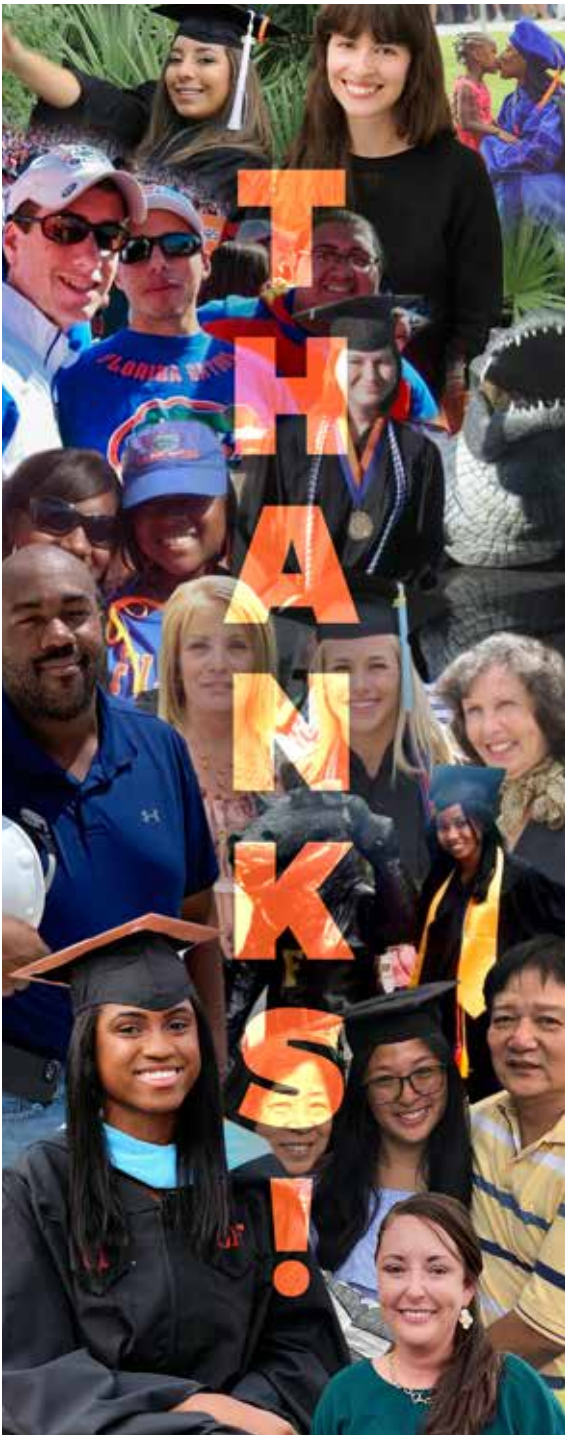
In fall 2005, then-UF President Bernie Machen tasked Student Affairs with designing a new financial aid access program for students who were academic super-stars and the first in their families to attend college, but who might not pursue a degree because of financial barriers. The proposal he approved in 2006, which was later endorsed by the Board of Trustees, focused on those first-generation students whose families earned less than \$40,000 per year. The scholarships continue to offer complete student support, from tuition, books, housing and food to advising and even a series of workshops that helps students navigate college and prepare to launch their careers. Machen is not only credited for creating the program — he has donated his personal funds to it, as well. The Florida Opportunity Scholars program would come to be known as the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars (MFOS) six years later.

JEB BUSH

Florida was ranked last (50th) in the nation for education when Jeb Bush was running for governor. Bush, who won and served from 1999 to 2007, recalls how infuriated he was about that statistic.
“To have a society where everyone has a chance to rise up, you need to tear down the barriers to make sure that they can,” he said. “Education is the most important one of those barriers.”
In 2006, then-UF President Bernie Machen approached Bush to consider supporting the new Florida Opportunity Scholars program. “I said, ‘Hell yes,’ not just ‘yes,’” Bush recalls. Not only did Bush endorse MFOS, as it would come to be known, he took it to Florida’s Legislature, found sponsors, and pushed for and won state funding to accelerate the program.
“And then [UF] took it to a whole new level with private support, mentoring and all the elements of the program that are a great template for all of the other universities to embrace,” Bush said. “It tore down that last barrier for students who want to earn the best education.”

DAVID BROWN (BSBA '73, JD '78)

This Florida native knows the state’s future depends on the vibrant young people who will influence its businesses, economy and residents’ quality of life. When President Machen shared his vision in 2005, Brown understood the broad extent and support Gov. Bush could provide. As the program flourished more resources would be needed. After collaboration with Tom Mitchell, leader of the UF Foundation, in 2012, Brown boosted the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program with a transformative gift. His contribution solidified the longevity of the program by deepening UF’s support. The gift also renamed the program for Bernie and Chris Machen.
A two-time UF trustee chair and the search committee chair who inaugurated Machen, Brown believes UF, as the state’s flagship university, is duty-bound to advance issues important to all Floridians, such as healthcare, energy, food and technology. Behind the scenes, he helps make connections between UF and industry leaders, whose teamwork can undoubtedly result in the Gator good.



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ON THE COVER



Sharda Jackson Smith (BAEd '10, MEd '11, EdD '17) gets a celebratory smooch from her daughter, Nevaeh, after her 2017 commencement. As UF celebrates the 15th anniversary of the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program, Florida Gator offers this tribute to MFOS alumni and the program's creators: former UF President **Bernie Machen**, alumnus **David Brown** and former Florida Gov. **Jeb Bush**. See story on page 16.

FOREVER GRATEFUL

Because of these great Gators, UF faculty, students and programs continue to thrive despite the pandemic's challenges. The following are just a few of the visionaries whose investments will improve thousands of lives through UF. Thank you for fueling UF's rise and laying the foundation for Gator Nation's future successes.

JOSEPH MONROE

When **Joseph Monroe** (BSR '00) of Odessa interned at the Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation Department, he loved the work and the people so much — and they loved him — that he accepted a fulltime position there after graduation. Twenty-one years later, he leads programs that give Tampa area residents opportunities for physical exercise and team- and leadership-building activities. Monroe is passionate about enriching his community. Likewise, he strives to do the same with his Gator community and has been giving annual donations since 2001. In July 2020, he felt compelled to uplift the Black community at UF, so he started a scholarship fund for students in his home college, Health and Human Performance, who are active members of UF's Black Student Union. Monroe says he wants to “continue to add value to the lives of others,” and hopes his scholarship will assist, motivate and prepare students to be successful.



DR. GERARDO & MARJORIE GONZALEZ

Dr. Gerardo Gonzalez (BA '73, EDS '76, PhD '78), a Cuban immigrant who once struggled to learn English and barely graduated high school, knows firsthand that encouraging teachers can make all the difference in a person's life. That's why he's spent his career paying forward the support he received in college. His passion resulted in numerous leadership roles at UF and Indiana University, and founding BACCHUS, an alcohol peer-education program for college students that in partnership with higher education student affairs administrators promotes student leadership on health and safety issues nationwide. Gonzalez, a father of four who is retired in St. Augustine with his wife, Marjorie, continues to pay forward his successes by establishing a scholarship to help UF College of Education undergraduates who are the first in their families to attend college.



KENNETH & ELLEN JAMES

Gainesville residents **Kenneth and Ellen** (BS '91, MSW '97) **James**, owners of KET Enterprises, a computer systems management company, say they love the way performing arts enhance communities. “Performing Arts is a bridge that brings cultures, races, religions and ethnicities together,” said Ken James.

Before the pandemic, they sponsored Phillips Center performances and contributed in other ways. But when the virus prohibited large gatherings, they partnered with UF Performing Arts to sponsor its second Driveway Theater project that hosts shows in area neighborhoods for rural or underserved residents who wouldn't typically have the opportunity to attend a performance.

“Music and dance are the common bonds of mankind regardless of your socio-economic status, the language you speak or your origin of birth,” Ellen James said. “With theatre, we all laugh and cry together; we cheer for the hero and hold disdain for the villain together.”

In addition, they are funding an audience diversification joint project between UFPA and UF's Center for Public Interest Communications to study/grow UFPA's audiences.



Conversation with UF President **Kent Fuchs**

MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER

WITH COVID-19 FADING IN OUR REAR-VIEW MIRRORS, FALL IS FOR CELEBRATING

Usually, the thrill of first experiencing fall at UF is reserved for freshmen.

But this fall, with the pandemic receding, it feels like we all get to share in that privilege.

For the first time since 2019, we will once again know the joy of crowding the stands at Gator athletic events, lining the streets for the Homecoming Parade and laughing together at Gator Growl.

Our hearts will soar to the sounds of The Pride of the Sunshine marching band. We will enjoy hugs, selfies and snapping pictures of children and grandchildren with Albert and Alberta, and we will delight in joining family and friends at home football game tailgates. Most importantly, our classrooms, laboratories, studios, libraries and concert halls will be filled to capacity.

We owe an immense thanks to the UF Health epidemiologists, scientists and frontline staff who have led our university's COVID response since March 2019. I'm also grateful to faculty, staff and students for their determination throughout.

While I hope we never see another pandemic, the experience strengthened my appreciation for our Gator community and for what we can achieve when confronting shared challenges and uniting in shared purpose.

I am grateful, for example, for how we advanced UF's mission and values even as we responded to the many hardships and difficulties of COVID. I saw this vividly in our community's embrace of positive

steps against racism and injustice that began last June, including by the UF Alumni Association, Gator Clubs and other alumni groups. While this work continues, our university is more focused than ever on welcoming and supporting all people in their quest for knowledge, education and a better life.

We also advanced our core mission of serving students, who arguably experienced some of the worst impacts of the pandemic. This played out in myriad ways, such as the expansion of the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars program (see “A First-Class First Class” on page 16). I am so impressed that faculty, staff, students and alumni donated \$25.4 million to UF on “Giving Day” in February, which was a record despite

the pandemic and which will support the MFOS expansion and many other programs across the university.

And finally, we stepped up our efforts to make significant and salutary change in the world. Mid-pandemic, our faculty achieved record research spending of \$942 million, one step closer to our goal of \$1 billion. Also mid-pandemic, we embraced, universitywide, a goal of becoming a leader in artificial intelligence education and research. This was made possible by the support of **Chris Malachowsky** (BSEE '80) and many of his fellow UF alumni.

As we begin the new academic year, I can't wait to join all of you in embracing our many cherished traditions anew — and in remaining united to raise the university and all we serve even higher.



PHOTO BY UF PHOTOGRAPHY

We look forward to the thrill of experiencing the University of Florida's many traditions together this fall, just like these fans did at the UF vs. South Carolina game in 2012.



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AI UNIVERSITY

UF EXPANDS ACCESS TO ITS NVIDIA-SUPERPOWERED SUPERCOMPUTER

UF's supercomputer, **HiPerGator AI**, the most powerful of its kind in the Southeast and the third most powerful in the country, was once only available to UF researchers and scientists. Now, UF is sharing this research tool with students and faculty throughout Florida's state university system.

This offering will extend UF's unparalleled computing power in artificial intelligence (AI) to projects that strive to improve lives, bolster industry and create economic growth across the state.

The recently enhanced machine is based on an NVIDIA DGX SuperPod of 140 DGX A100 systems and NVIDIA Mellanox HDR InfiniBand network — a system donated by **Chris Malachowsky** (BSEE '80) and **NVIDIA**, the leading AI computing company he co-founded.

"Already, AI and data science technology are impacting every sector of the economy, from manufacturing and agriculture to financial technologies and drug development," said **UF Provost Joe Glover**. "By ... offering unprecedented access to groundbreaking technology, we are opening doors for researchers and students across the state who are eager to play a role in building a 21st-century economy."

In April, UF used HiPerGator to train **GatorTron**, a natural language processing model that can analyze massive volumes of clinical data to identify patients for lifesaving clinical trials and fast-track the development of medical applications.

SEE MORE OF HOW UF IS USING AI, PAGE 10



**Amplified UF
Intelligence**

Other examples of ways the supercomputer has catapulted research efforts at UF include:

- An **analysis of the effects that having HIV** has in Alzheimer's patients
- Collaborators in multiple states evaluating data to improve **early childhood medical care** in underserved communities
- Postdoctoral students studying the **epidemiological patterns** of cholera in Haiti and HIV transmission patterns in South Africa
- English faculty **curating social media data** to understand the ways digital platforms influence opinion



Installation of the HiPerGator AI NVIDIA DGX A100 SuperPod at UF.



Chris Malachowsky, right, founder and NVIDIA fellow, **Jensen Huang**, left, founder, president and CEO of NVIDIA



RISING RANKINGS

Latest U.S. News & World Report ranking once again confirms UF's elite status

UF CONTINUES ITS UPWARD MOMENTUM with 12 colleges and 61 graduate programs ranked in the Top 25 among the country's public universities, according to the 2022 U.S. News & World Report Best Graduate Schools rankings.

"The excellence of UF's graduate programs continues to be recognized among the top universities in the country, which is a testament to the impact of our faculty in teaching and research," said **Joe Glover, UF provost**. "The continued rise in rankings not only recognizes the value UF offers to students across such a broad array of graduate and professional programs, it also highlights how their education will ready them for long-term success in their careers."

UF'S PROGRAMS IN THE TOP 10

#1	Tax Law, Levin College of Law
#3	Agricultural and Biological Engineering doctoral program, collaboration of the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
#3	Special Education, College of Education
#5	Student Counseling, College of Education
#6	Full-time Law program, Levin College of Law
#8	MBA in Marketing, Warrington College of Business
#8	MBA in Real Estate, Warrington College of Business
#8	Environmental Law, Levin College of Law
#9	Full-time MBA program, Warrington College of Business
#9	Executive MBA program, Warrington College of Business
#9	Materials Science & Engineering doctoral program, Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering
#10	Business and Corporate Law, Levin College of Law
#10	Elementary Teacher Education, College of Education

NUMBERS OF NOTE

\$2 MILLION

Amount of **Linda** (BSBA '73, JD '78) and **Ken McGurn's** (BSBA '72, MBA '73, PhD '81) gift to create UF fellowships to study disinformation and the technology that contributes to its spread. This research involves the College of Journalism and Communications, the Levin College of Law and the Consortium on Trust in Media and Technology. The McGurns are Gainesville real estate developers.



3 POWERHOUSES

JPMorgan Chase, UF's M.E. Rinker, Sr. School of Construction Management and **UF's Shimberg Center for Housing Studies**, which teamed up to create a flooding and storm surge risk prediction web app. "What we are trying to do is figure out what proportion of the state's affording housing, both assisted multifamily and 'naturally occurring' (or unsubsidized) housing, is at risk to flood hazards," said Shimberg Center Director William O'Dell. "Thanks to this app, we know a large percentage of affordable housing is, unfortunately, vulnerable to flooding." uff.to/j6jhg3

5,200+

UF students and Alachua County residents who received COVID-19 vaccinations in one week at **Ben Hill Griffin Stadium** in April when the age restriction for the vaccine was reduced to anyone older than 16. At one point in the massive effort, UF was able to administer doses to about 450 people per hour (photo below).



JESSE S. JONES/UF HEALTH

10

New species of non-native mosquitoes found in Florida since 2000. The latest, *Aedes scapularis*, had been concentrated near Central America and the Caribbean. However, Miami-Dade and Broward counties now have established populations. **UF/IFAS researchers** who study the insects suggest they may spread north along Florida's Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

18-75

Age range of people who are participating in a UF Health study that will test two medicines shown to reduce or prevent uric acid kidney stones. The medicines have been shown to treat the underlying causes of these types of kidney stones: obesity and diabetes. Learn more about the study at uff.to/mdhysq



3 MIN. 25 SEC.

Length of a virtual tour of renovated Norman Hall. Take the tour at uff.to/30eyh1

106

Epilepsy patients whose brain wave mapping test results (in an open-access database) were used in a **UF Health** study about **activity in the brain during sleep and wake cycles**. The study produced a 3D map of the brain that shows which areas go to sleep and which stay awake. "This is important for neuroscience generally and also our field of epilepsy, where some seizure types appear during one portion of the circadian cycle and not another," said UF Health study leader Dr. Giridhar Kalamangalam. "It is not clear why certain seizures behave in this manner, but our work is a step forward in understanding the puzzle."



MANUELA DAVIES/USTA


The UF men's tennis team celebrates its first national title at the 2021 NCAA D1 Tennis Championships on May 22 at the U.S. Tennis Association National Campus in Orlando.

MEN'S TENNIS SERVES UP NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The UF men's tennis team claimed the 81-year-old program's first national title in May, defeating Baylor, 4-1, in the NCAA Championship at the USTA National Campus. The fourth time was the charm for Florida, which in three previous trips to the Final Four lost in the national semifinals.

With this win, nine-year Gators head coach Bryan Shelton became the first head coach in college tennis history to win a women's national title (2007 at Georgia Tech) and a men's national championship. Coincidentally, Shelton's son, freshman **Ben Shelton**, was the team member who capped UF's victory with a clinching win.

Now, 13 of UF's 17 sports programs have earned national titles. This does not count the individual national championship won by UF boxing team captain **John Joca** in 1940.



MANY

Civilian scuba divers are needed by Florida Sea Grant program to help UF researchers monitor reefs for stony coral tissue loss disease. Ana Zangroniz, Florida Sea Grant extension agent, is offering free training to divers who can help. Email azangroniz@ufl.edu.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS TRANSFORMING EVERY SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY — and influencing every aspect of people’s lives — the way the computer and mobile phone did. Below are a few examples of how UF faculty and students are using AI to change the ways we think about small tasks and big questions.

GATORTRON



UF and NVIDIA researchers collaborated to create

GatorTron, an AI natural language processing model that will accelerate the identification of relevant patients for lifesaving clinical trials and other studies by extracting insights from massive volumes of clinical data with unprecedented speed and clarity. The language model is the first step forward in the

\$100 million AI partnership between UF and NVIDIA.

REAL-LIFE “MINORITY REPORT”



Police departments and courts around the world are looking

to artificial intelligence to prevent crime and sentence

offenders, but “**predictive policing**” and other AI

systems present their own ethical issues. Assistant

professor of philosophy **Duncan Purves** received

a **National Science Foundation grant** to study the

ethics of using AI in this way. He and his colleagues

intend to develop a report that will inform best practices

for its use by police departments. While algorithmic systems

do pose new ethical dilemmas, they also offer potential for more transparency in law enforcement and sentencing decisions.

“I SPY” WITH 30 EYES

UF agriculture and engineering scientists have teamed up to

create **PhenoGator**, a multipurpose vehicle that uses sensors and

cameras in combination with GPS technology to detect potential

plant disease symptoms and other crop problems. Also, onboard

pesticides and nutrient liquids can immediately treat problem areas

detected by the artificial intelligence system that runs the sensors.

FLORIDA-GROWN COFFEE?

Most of the world’s coffee is grown in tropical regions. However, a changing climate could allow coffee to grow farther north — for example, in Florida. **UF/IFAS scientists** are growing coffee plants near Gainesville, and are collaborating with UF engineering faculty who specialize in AI and machine learning to study the plant’s roots, of which little is known. **Funded by a USDA grant**, the collaborators are filming root growth with minirhizotrons, clear plastic tubes with tiny cameras inside, and using AI vision-based hyperspectral imaging systems to improve data and speed up and decipher information collected.

HUNTING A FARMER’S NEMESIS

Unlike their cousins that are good for the soil, **parasitic nematodes**

cause \$125 billion in agricultural damage around the

world each year. That’s why **UF entomology** and

machine learning scientists are using AI to rapidly

identify the bad varieties. When growers, residents

and golf course staff suspect the harmful variety

in their soil, they typically send a soil sample to the

UF/IFAS Nematode Assay Lab for analysis, which

receives about 7,000 samples each year. This AI solution is

expected to speed up nematode identification.



CANCER-FIGHTING TOOL

UF researchers developed a clinical test that uses a risk scoring

algorithm to inform **personalized pancreatic cancer**

treatments. Following a fine needle biopsy, the test

uses a protein signature to predict the development

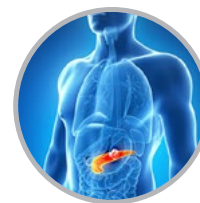
of tumors. Results in the form of a score provide

doctors with a better understanding of the tumor and

the most appropriate treatment options. Pancreatic

cancer has one of the lowest survival rates, due to late-

stage detection and limited treatment efficacy.



PhenoGator is one example of the technology utilized in UF’s AI

initiative that seeks to address society’s most pressing challenges.

In related news, UF is a partner in a **\$26 million National Science**

Foundation project to develop technologies and systems that will

help farmers produce more food with less energy and water, and

minimize environmental impact.

UF

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EVE EDELHEIT/THE WASHINGTON POST

4 Awards received by **Washington Post** video editor **Drea Cornejo** (BSJ '17) from the White House News Photographers Association. Her entries include “Laid Off from Her Job At Disney After 14 Years, A Server Struggles To Navigate The Pandemic” and “After Years of Living In Motels, A Family Finally Got Their Own RV. Then COVID-19 Came.” See her latter entry at: uff.to/jtzt1f

NINE

Credits awarded to students who complete UF’s new certificate in AI Fundamentals and Applications, which is intended to prepare students for a career in the 21st century where artificial intelligence is integrated into every industry.

1,000+

UF students who will receive COVID-19 vaccinations as part of a landmark national study to determine whether vaccinated young people can still spread coronavirus. Students are divided into two groups: the first receiving the Moderna vaccine, and the second being vaccinated several months later. This study is expected to reveal whether the vaccine prevents people from spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Ultimately, the study will attempt to enroll about 12,000 students at 22 universities and an additional 25,500 of their close contacts.



UF ENROLLMENT

52,750

Students who applied to become freshman at UF in 2021 — a 6% increase over last year’s applicants.

50%

Amount of those freshman admitted who had earned high school GPAs between 4.3 and 4.6.

16,000+

Undergraduates enrolled in face-to-face courses during the spring 2021 term, when UF began to offer limited in-person courses as pandemic restrictions were being lifted.

3 MILLION

Number of Americans who carry MRSA, a staph antibiotic-resistant bacteria, on their skin or nasal passages. According to a UF Health study of middle-aged and older adults, these people are twice as likely to die within the next decade as people who do not have the bacteria.

“Very few people who carry MRSA know they have it, yet we have found a distinct link between people with undetected MRSA and premature death,” said the study’s lead author, College of Public Health and Health Professions professor Arch Mainous.

The findings suggest that routine screening for undetected MRSA may be warranted in older people to prevent deaths from infection.



“It’s outrageous to see how little is actually going back to the athlete. The Olympics is a business ... a thriving business. And we as athletes are just not seeing the fruits of that. This should be a wake-up call for all of us.”



CHERYL TREWORGY/UFAA

— **CHRISTIAN TAYLOR** (BSSpMgmt '19), two-time Olympic and four-time world triple jump champ who won four NCAA titles (2009-11) before going pro.

A Canadian study revealed that only 4.1% of the International Olympic Committee’s \$1.4 billion (US) estimated revenue is shared with its athletes. The IOC disputed the report, which elicited public requests for transparency. In related news, alumnus Christian Taylor is president of the newly formed independent Athletics Alliance, which intends to “protect and advance the future of athletics by unifying and defending the voice of elite track and field athletes worldwide, ensuring ”they have input into decisions made about their sports, such as antidoping policies, broadcasting rights, scheduling and even COVID-19 precautions. Taylor is one of 11 athletes in the world (including Usain Bolt and Michael Johnson) to have won four or more outdoor world titles in one individual event.

IN MEMORIAM

UF Health biochemistry professor Mavis Agbandje-McKenna died in March from ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease.) Her world-renowned work on the detailed structure of viruses led to advances in the use of the adeno-associated virus, or AAV, as a leading method for gene delivery to treat a variety of human diseases.

Using an imaging method known as cryo-electron microscopy, her team’s discovery allowed scientists see the shapes of biological molecules more closely than ever — almost down to the level of a single atom. This provided a better understanding of how the human immune system recognizes viruses and how they enter the human body.

Her scientific interests included viruses that target the brain, particularly among young children and young adults.

Born in Nigeria, she was living with her grandmother when civil war broke out in her country in the late 1960s. Agbandje-McKenna was able to escape and moved to London to join her parents when she was 11 years old.



UF HEALTH

She and her husband (her research partner), **Robert McKenna**, also a biochemistry professor, both joined UF’s faculty in 1999. Other survivors include their children, **Nicole** (BS '14) and **Sean McKenna** (4LAS). Agbandje-McKenna was 57.

SHOW YOUR GATOR PRIDE

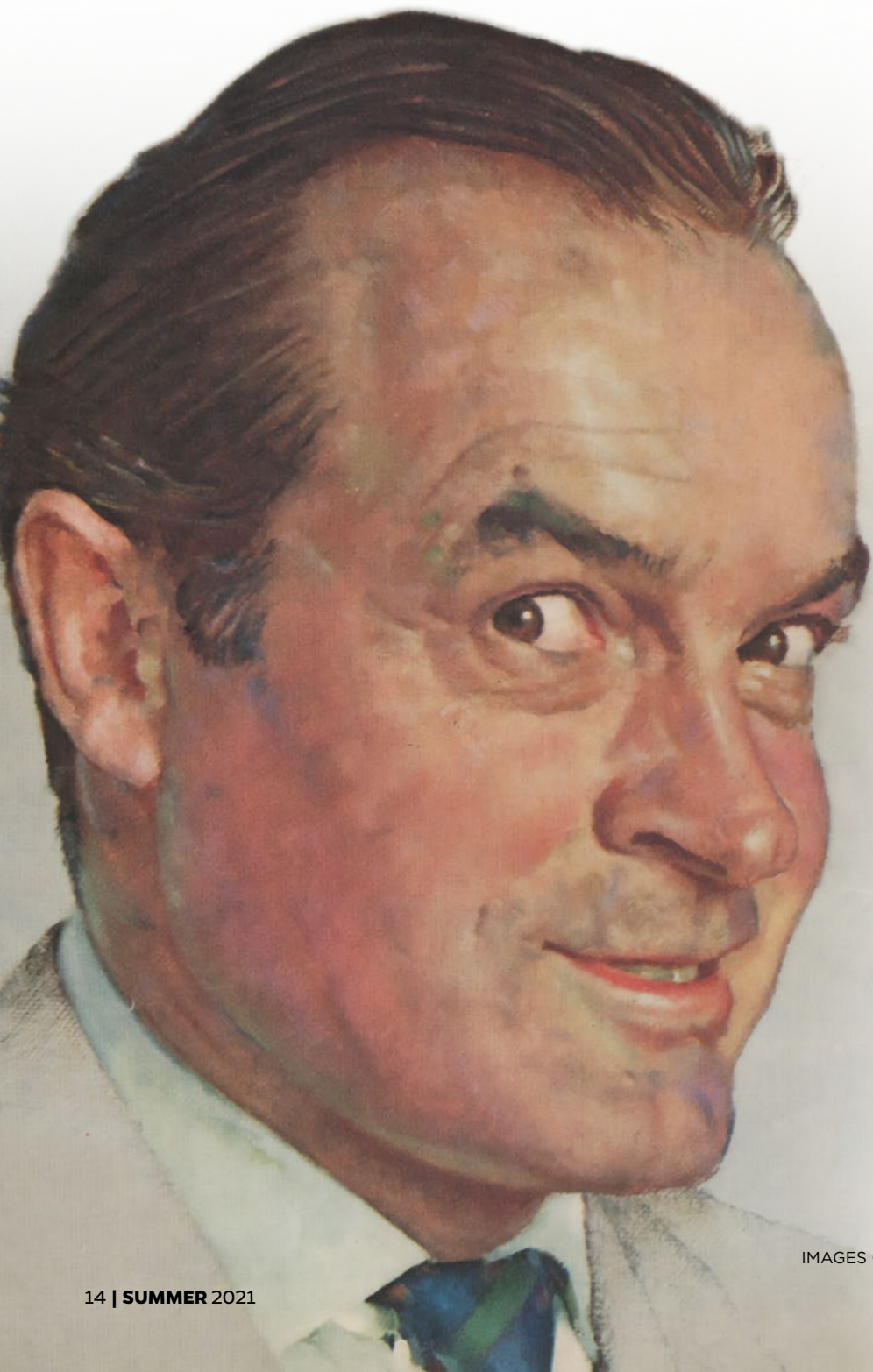
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CAMPUS COLLECTIONS: **BOB HOPE MEMORABILIA**

HOPE LIVES ON AT UF

UNIVERSITY RECEIVES GIFT OF A LEGENDARY ENTERTAINER'S MASSIVE COLLECTION



He's the most famous entertainer Gen Alpha students have never heard of. He holds the record for hosting the Academy Awards a whopping 19 times. He headlined Gator Growl three times. And, his IMBD list is so long, you might sprain your scrolling finger sifting through all his commercials, stage appearances, movies, books, albums and radio shows.

Comedian and actor Bob Hope was so popular in the mid-to-late 20th century that Hasbro released a GI Joe doll in his likeness and he had a long-running series of popular comic books, "The Adventures of Bob Hope," from the 1950s-60s.

Hope died in 2003 at age 100. In late 2019, his daughter, Linda Hope, who leads the Bob & Delores Hope Foundation, donated a large portion of his personal memento collection to the George A. Smathers Libraries. The first two of the gift's three shipments have included more than 500 boxes of scrapbooks, photos, stage costumes, awards, artifacts and one-of-a-kind memorabilia. The third shipment is slated to arrive soon.

Jim Liversidge, UF's pop culture collections curator who will spend 2021 cataloging Hope's ephemera and selecting pieces for a spring 2022 exhibit, took a few minutes to talk about this impressive gift.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITES SO FAR?

The "Kim Khanh" medal awarded to Hope on Christmas Eve 1972 from the South Vietnamese government at the close of his last USO tour there. When Vietnam was unified, the government did away with this highest civilian award, usually presented only

Norman Rockwell portrait of Bob Hope for the cover of the Saturday Evening Post, published on February 13, 1954.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE GEORGE A. SMATHERS LIBRARIES



ABOVE: Bob Hope and Bing Crosby on the cover of Life magazine. TOP RIGHT: A poster for "Road to Bali," one of Hope's many movies.

to heads of state. It's quite significant when you consider the political atmosphere of the time.

Also, an Oscar facsimile that looks like it has a broken arm in a sling. It was a gift representing the humorous physical lengths Hope would go to get an Oscar as an actor. He never won a competitive acting award, but he received four honorary Oscars for his humanitarian efforts and service to the Academy.

WHY IS THIS COLLECTION VALUABLE?

Hope's unparalleled 80-year career serves as a history lesson and a show business lesson because it spanned global wars, social change and celebrity culture during the 20th century. His style influenced modern stand-up comedy, which highlighted news of the day and well-known personalities. His jokes are in the Library of Congress, but now we have the finest ephemeral research collection related to him. In an academic setting that is gold. We have most of his Vietnam War material, which fills in gaps we didn't have in our special collections. It's a great honor that we have this collection here.

HOW MIGHT STUDENTS USE IT?

We've already identified a number of professors who want to use the collection to teach about pop culture, performing arts, 20th century history, military service and philanthropy. Hope was a prolific philanthropist.



Bob Hope (left) with Gen. George Patton (center) and other performers on a USO tour.

HOW DID THIS COLLECTION END UP AT UF?

A portion of this collection was stored at the World Golf Hall of Fame in St. Augustine after Hope was inducted in 1983. Through discussions with the Hope Foundation and the Hall of Fame, it was decided UF would accept the collection. UF has a great reputation for preserving collections, using them to further scholarship and maximizing public access.

WHAT IMPRESSES YOU MOST ABOUT HOPE?

Overall his unselfish work with the USO in war zones around the world is amazing. He performed for soldiers over 50 years (1941-1991) in every single war from WWII to Desert Shield. Yet, when I mention his name to most students, his name is not familiar. He's only been gone less than 20 years. But with his collection here, new generations of students will learn about his phenomenal career.

— LIESL O'DELL (BSJ '92)

JUST 10 OF BOB HOPE'S BEST MOVIES

- Road To Morocco
- The Ghost Breakers
- Road To Zanzibar
- Road To Singapore
- The Paleface
- The Princess and the Pirate
- My Favorite Brunette
- Sorrowful Jones
- My Favorite Spy
- Road To Bali

A collection of Bob Hope specials entertaining troops is available on Amazon Prime.

uff.to/ykttkc

Then, Now & WOW!



FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, UF MADE A BOLD MOVE FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY:

GIVE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS A SCHOLARSHIP PACKAGE THAT COVERS THE WORKS. *WHERE ARE THEY NOW?* WE CAUGHT UP WITH A FEW OF THOSE FIRST OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS.

BY NICOLE NEAL

IN 2006, 444 YOUNG FLORIDIANS WERE BOUNCING between euphoria and despair.

They had just gained admission to the University of Florida, the first in their families to attend college.

But how would they pay? As some of Florida's most economically disadvantaged high school graduates, they lacked both a financial cushion and, as their families' trailblazers, a blueprint to navigate the mysterious world of higher education.

And then, a letter.

"I am very pleased to inform you that you have been selected as a Florida Opportunity Scholar."

Celebrating 15 years, the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars (MFOS) program, as it would come to be known, has today seen 3,535 low-income, first-generation students graduate debt-free. The scholarship covers tuition, books and living expenses, as well as provides a host of supports, including peer mentors and financial literacy and life skills workshops, for between 300 and 400 entering freshman each year.

"MFOS changed my life," says **Marquitta Brown**, a member of that first class, "because college was a dream that became a reality."

As this inaugural class's stories bear out, MFOS creates expanding circles of success, with communities and family members reaping the benefits of just one person's improved path.

A path laid out, thanks to the scholarship, on a more level playing field.

"This program is a true equalizing force in our very unequal society," says **Amelia Harnish**, another graduate of that first cohort. "It's not just studying that makes success possible. I was able to do key unpaid internships, even one in New York City, that helped launch my career. I was able to join a sorority and find a home at UF. I was able to study without worrying about how I would eat or pay bills. It was very freeing."

And from that freedom, opportunity. To explore, to take chances, to pursue a life passion rather than settle for a paycheck.

And to ultimately see their talents given back to the wider world.

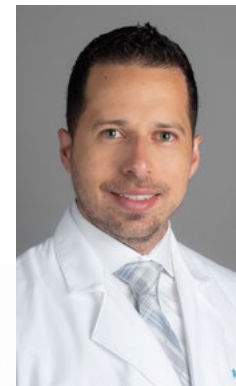
Says Opportunity Scholar Jess Wardell: "It was the biggest blessing I didn't know existed."

Here, catch up with a few members of that first MFOS class:



"It was a blessing."

Dr. Andres Felipe Sanchez

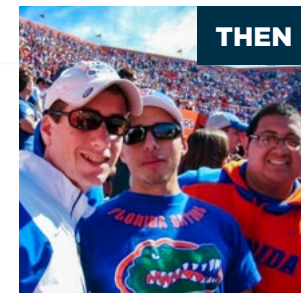


THEN: The son of an immigrant single mom who worked as a housekeeper, Sanchez nonetheless describes his childhood as full of opportunity: He was able to pursue many extracurricular activities, including aerospace academy and math club, and ultimately graduated fourth in his class at Felix Varela Senior High in Miami. His mother's hard work and dreams for her son motivated him. "It was a blessing

to learn tuition and boarding would be covered by the [Florida Opportunity] scholarship," he says.

THE UF EXPERIENCE: "There was a great balance between scholarship and building friendships."

NOW: Sanchez (BS '10) did his internal medicine residency at Yale. Recently married, he now works as a primary care physician in Charlotte, N.C.



Andres Sanchez, center, during his UF days.

"My family now has a point of reference for what education can do."

Sharda Jackson Smith

THEN: "My parents and grandparents worked blue-collar jobs," says Jackson Smith. They wanted better for her. "They thought my mind could take me further than my physical body could take me," she says. Jackson Smith set out to prove them right, taking AP and Cambridge program courses at Belleview High in Marion County. Her letter announcing the Opportunity Scholarship was met with "disbelief" — was this for real? "We were so excited when we found out it was legitimate!"

UF IN THREE WORDS: "Exciting, life-changing, stimulating."

NOW: Jackson Smith (BAEd '10, MEd '11, EdD '17) recently purchased her first home in Chesnee, S.C., and serves as interim assistant dean of the School of Education, Human Performance, and Health at the University of South Carolina Upstate. She married her high school sweetheart, and they have a 7-year-old daughter. "I serve on several community- and service-oriented committees and look to give back with my knowledge, as my late grandparents told me to do," she says. Her success has inspired those closest to her, too, "showing my immediate and extended family that there are institutions that care about the well-being of people from marginalized backgrounds," she says. "I am the first, but my family now has a living point of reference for what education can do."

Sharda Jackson Smith, a triple Gator, gets a celebratory smooch from her daughter, Nevaeh, after graduating with her doctorate in 2017.

PROVIDED PHOTOS

"Without MFOS, I don't know that I would have even attended UF."

Jess Wardell



Jess Wardell married a fellow Gator, Corey Wardell. They recently welcomed a third child.

THEN: Wardell's father passed away as she was entering Seminole High in Pinellas County. Watching her mother, a waitress, provide for the family inspired Wardell to "pursue excellence in everything I did," she says. "I loved school, always. But seeing her work ethic gave me the best role model to do the same." Wardell took AP and honors classes and worked throughout high school to save for the future. UF was her dream school, "but it felt slightly out of reach," she says. And then, the acceptance letter and scholarship. "To say I felt proud would be a great understatement."

UF IN THREE WORDS: "Growth, joy, inspirational."

NOW: After years as a full-time teacher, Wardell (BA '10, MEd '11) works part-time at an Atlanta-area start-up co-founded by her husband, a fellow Gator. She "designs and implements meaningful play experiences for kids" at the business, a club for families. They have three young children and a Goldendoodle and live in Marietta, Ga. "Without MFOS, I don't know that I would have even attended UF," she says. "I would have never received the level of preparation I got from the College of Education, would have never been the teacher I am proud to say that I am, would have never made the relationships that have shaped me as an adult. It was the biggest blessing I didn't know existed."



Jess Wardell with her proud mother and grandmother at graduation in 2010.

“MFOS changed my family’s life as well.”
Mauricio Molina

THEN: Molina’s parents left Colombia with the dream of giving Molina and his younger brother a better life. His father ran a small landscaping business, and his mother helped at times, and occasionally cleaned houses. Molina took his role as eldest sibling seriously: “I wanted to give my younger brother a blueprint I never had. I wanted to show him what we as a family could do, and what we as individuals were capable of.” That meant figuring out the mysterious world of college. He enrolled in the IB program at St. Pete High and took aim at UF “because it was the best institution in the state. ... In a way, looking back, I put all of my eggs in one basket.” He remembers the acceptance letter coming in the mail, and then the letter from MFOS. “Elated, speechless, beyond grateful,” is the reaction he recalls.

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Unforgettable, profound, special.”

NOW: Molina (BA ’10), who went on to get a master’s degree and Ph.D., is a research analyst with the Houston Education Research Consortium at Rice University. He married a fellow Gator, and they have two rescue dogs, one named Flo, for Florida. They enjoy the food scene in Houston and recently traveled to Vietnam and Colombia. Oh, and his younger brother? He ended up graduating as a Gator as well. “MFOS not only changed my life,” says Molina, “but it changed my family’s life as well.”



A relieved Dr. Mauricio Molina after defending his dissertation at the University of Houston.



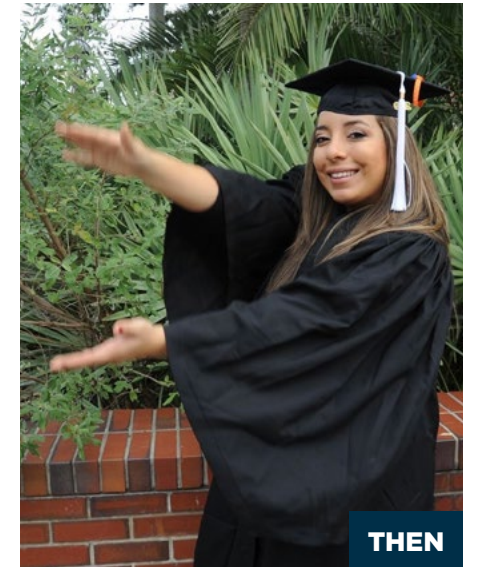
Since graduating from UF, Alexandra Rodriguez has traveled to 49 countries. France is one of them.

“I wanted to put myself on the path to success.”
Alexandra Rodriguez

THEN: “My path to UF was challenging,” says Rodriguez, who worked two jobs while taking AP classes at Spanish River High in Boca Raton and dual enrollment courses. “I over-extended myself for sure, but I wanted to do everything possible to put myself on a path to success.” Her parents — a housekeeper and teacher’s assistant who migrated to the U.S. from Venezuela and Colombia — were her motivation: “I wanted to make sure all of their hard work and sacrifice paid off.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Challenge, resilience, transformative.”

NOW: “My life now is busy but wonderful,” says Rodriguez (BA ’09), who went on to earn master’s degrees and now lives in San Jose, Calif., where she works as a senior brand marketing manager at Realtor.com. “Since finishing school, my career has taken me to Miami, Austin, San Francisco and San Jose. I’ve also had the opportunity to speak at Google to a group of executives — a big career achievement.” She’s traveled, mostly solo, to 49 countries and has also enjoyed exploring California with her partner and dog.



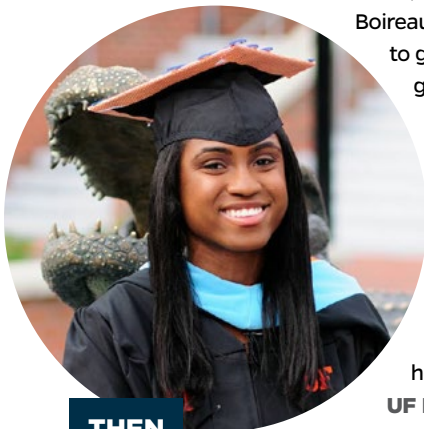
THEN

“MFOS helped me achieve both of our dreams.”
Ernestine Boireau

THEN: Boireau’s parents, the oldest of their siblings, had not been able to finish their studies. So they instilled in their children the value of education. “I can remember talks when my mom and dad would remind us that education was our only way out,” says Boireau. Always a strong student, Boireau’s plan at Maynard Evans High in Orlando was to get as much college credit as she could before graduating, so she packed her schedule with AP and dual enrollment courses. Her guidance counselor provided the map, pushing her to take higher level courses. “She saw something in me in the 9th grade when I believed I was worth nothing,” Boireau says. The scholarship provided the lifeline. “I am the daughter of immigrants whose only dream was that their kids would have a better life,” she says. “MFOS helped me achieve both of our dreams.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Impactful, life changing, fun.”

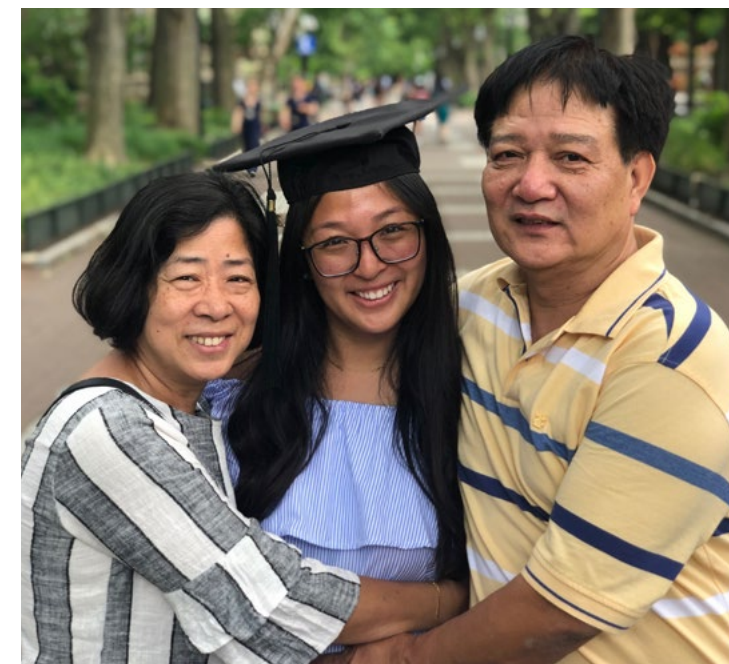
NOW: Like her high school mentor, Boireau (BSA ’10, Med ’15, EdS ’15) is a school counselor. She lives in Ocala, and although she loves to travel — Paris is a recent favorite destination — for now she has put down roots in Marion County. “In 2019, I became the first person in my family to own my own home!” she says.



THEN



Ernestine Boireau on the job as a school counselor.



Vanessa Kwong with her proud parents at her graduation from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

“Not having student loans allowed me to take risks.”
Vanessa Kwong

THEN: Kwong recalls a rough transition from her native Hong Kong to the U.S. at age 10. Her father found work as a waiter, but no one in the family spoke English, and Kwong became an easy target for elementary school bullies. A few short years later, though, she would be taking all gifted and honors classes at J.P. Taravella High in Coral Springs, drawing motivation from her parents’ journey. “They gave up everything they had, from family to career, for us to come to America and get a better education,” she says.

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Rewarding, developmental, foundational.”

NOW: Kwong (BSBA ’10), who would go on to the Ivy League to get an MBA from Wharton, is chief of staff in strategy and operations at Box in San Francisco. She is married — “all of my bridesmaids were from UF!” — and just bought a house. Her life has included travel to more than 25 countries. “Not having student loans allowed me to take risks in my professional career ... and develop an intentional career path to get me to where I’m today,” she says.



Marquitta Brown has settled in Gainesville, where she's a police sergeant.

“The acceptance to UF and the scholarship saved my life.”
Marquitta Brown

THEN: “My life was very traumatic, to say the least,” says Brown. “My teenage years were spent working, playing sports and doing schoolwork just to stay away from the house as much as I could.”



THEN

She took honors classes at Miami Carol City Senior High and credits good friends, her brothers and her faith for keeping her on track. “I remember praying so hard for good grades because I knew that was my ticket out of this situation,” she says. “I loved school, and I knew school was the only thing that would get me out of Miami.”

THE UF EXPERIENCE: “UF wasn’t just an opportunity,” she says, “it was my safe place. Looking back, the acceptance to UF and the scholarship saved my life.”

NOW: UF’s home became Brown’s home. She is now a police sergeant with the Gainesville Police Department, an answer to a lifelong dream to work in law enforcement, particularly with young people. Brown (BA ’09) and her husband are the parents of twins, and they have a Labrador. Free time is spent working toward a master’s degree, volunteering at church, playing flag football and basketball, coaching youth basketball and traveling with friends. “Life is amazing,” Brown says.

“I have the kind of stability and freedom I dreamed of growing up.”
Amelia Harnish

THEN: Harnish grew up with loving parents, but was always acutely aware of the precariousness of life for those without a financial safety net. Her mother was disabled when Harnish was young, and her father, a long-haul trucker, suffered from hepatitis C, likely undiagnosed for many years. By Harnish’s high school years, he was at end-stage liver disease. Harnish found solace in school and extracurriculars, motivated by her mother. “She was always very clear with my sisters and me: ‘Education is your way out,’” says Harnish, who took college-track courses at King High in Tampa. “If we wanted our lives to be different, we had to go to college. She was my tireless advocate.” She was also driven from within. “It was always very clear to me: Poverty is terrible and I wanted desperately to escape it.”



UF IN THREE WORDS: “Wild, challenging, special.”

NOW: Harnish’s father would pass away during her sophomore year at UF, but she is grateful he was able to see her accepted and help her move in. Two days after graduation, without a job or housing, Harnish (BA ’10, BSJ ’10) moved to New York City. “It was intimidating, but I had nothing to lose at the time,” she says. She remains in New York, where she works as a web content director and writer, and her journalism has been published in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Cosmopolitan, Refinery29, Vice and “a lot of the magazines I devoured as a kid.” She lives with her partner of 10 years, has traveled to six continents and serves on the advisory board for the UF College of Journalism and Communications. “I have the kind of stability and freedom I dreamed of growing up,” she says. “This program made my life and career possible.”



**MACHEN FLORIDA
OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS**
15 Year Celebration

Find out more about the MFOS program at

uff.to/163b1t

Inspired by these stories and want to help future Gators, make a donation at this site: uff.to/a3cek8



Tyler Lewis in 2017 with his mom, who encouraged him to excel in school.

“Having stability during undergrad allowed me to focus on my studies.”
Tyler Lewis

THEN: Lewis had a strong support system in his mother, who worked in customer service, and a community of relatives who celebrated his achievements. “I always had an internal motivation to continue my schooling to make my family, and especially my mother, proud and to achieve success and financial freedom,” he says. He attended Manatee High in Bradenton, where he took AP and honors classes. Upon receiving the Opportunity Scholars letter, “My family was extremely proud and overjoyed at the recognition.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Championships, excitement, friends.”

NOW: “Having financial aid and stability during undergrad allowed me to focus on my studies,” says Lewis (BSBA ’10, BA ’10). “I am six years into a fast-paced law career” — Lewis works as a private equity attorney — “and I’m a recent homeowner in Boston.” He travels as often as possible “to as many far-away destinations as I can.”

“MFOS opened my eyes to opportunities and people I might not have encountered.”
Katherine Gayahan



THEN: Gayahan grew up in a home where her parents — her father was a grounds maintenance worker and her mother a retirement home dietary service aide — prioritized academics and education beyond high school. “It was never a question of whether I would attend college,” says Gayahan, who also dual enrolled while at William R. Boone High in Orlando, “but more what I would be studying in college.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Fulfilling, adventurous, eye-opening.”

NOW: “In addition to easing the financial aspect of attending a university, MFOS changed my life by introducing me to classes and organizations that opened my eyes to opportunities and people I might not have encountered,” says Gayahan (BSA ’10). She lives in Atlanta, where she works as a structural designer focused on packaging. “When I am not taking online classes and workshops to further my knowledge in my field, I’ve been enjoying local hikes and camping trips in northern Georgia,” she says. She also volunteers at a food bank.

“I was eager to break that cycle.”
Sylvester Lionel



Sylvester Lionel on a job site in South Florida.

THEN: “I was born and raised in rough socioeconomic conditions and at times poverty,” says Lionel, the son of a construction subcontractor and homemaker. “I was eager to break that cycle.” Despite that desire, as well as having parents who provided encouragement and graduating with honors from Robert Hungerford Prep in Maitland, “I never really thought college was an option, much less the University of Florida.” A guidance counselor encouraged Lionel to apply, and his acceptance, and in particular the receipt of the Florida Opportunity scholarship, were joyous affairs for him and his family. “We were elated,” he says. “We were just so happy that we had a way to pay for college. MFOS is the sole reason that I continued my education at UF.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Memorable, valuable, life-changing.”

NOW: “I’m working for a top 5 homebuilder as a manager and loving life in South Florida!” says Lionel (BSBC ’10), who has received several professional accolades and is working toward a master’s degree. He and his wife, also a Gator, live in Miami and have two young daughters who keep them busy. They are also landlords, with an eye toward acquiring more rental properties. Of his full and happy life he says: “All of it is possible only because of MFOS and its donors.”



Latonya Delaughter with her husband and daughter.

“I now serve as a resource for my family.”

Latonya Delaughter

THEN: “The burning desire to create a better life for myself and my family motivated me to excel in school,” says Delaughter, who was raised by a single mom. Delaughter had support and encouragement along the way, taking honors and AP courses at Miami Norland Senior High, but her determination came from within. “Even when things were difficult,” she says, “the ambition to finish what I’d started kept me going. I knew that completing my undergraduate degree program would give me the tools to prosper in life.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Empowering, enriching, invaluable.”

NOW: Delaughter (BSHED ’10) went on to receive a master’s degree and is now a program manager at the Florida Department of Health in Miami. She has been recognized nationally, in South Florida and at UF for her career achievements in public health. She and her husband have two daughters and a dog, and are in the process of purchasing their first home. “Being a first-generation college graduate has brought a sense of pride to myself and my family,” she says. “I am viewed as one with an accumulation of knowledge, and I serve as a resource for my family.” Perhaps best of all? Her success has had a ripple effect, “motivating younger generations to follow in my footsteps.”



THEN

Latonya Delaughter, at left, with her college friends in 2010.

“I really wanted to get out of poverty, and I saw education as my path towards that future.”

Anna Dilernia

THEN: Dilernia, the youngest of seven children, grew up on a farm in rural Hawaii. When she was 10, “my father got a job at a hotel, and we moved across the world to Miami,” she says. But her father would become disabled, and her mother supported the family as a part-time file clerk. The local library became Dilernia’s escape — “We still struggled with poverty, but at least I could walk there for the internet and books.” She took honors courses and participated in Navy Junior ROTC at Miami Beach Senior High, and ended up at a competition at UF. “It was then I knew I wanted to go to UF, so I spent the rest of high school working towards that goal,” she says. “I really wanted to get out of poverty, and I saw education as my path towards that future.”

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Fun, challenging, new.”

NOW: Because she graduated without debt, Dilernia (BA ’09) says she was not pressured to take the first job she could land. She spent two years as an AmeriCorps member. “Since then,” she says, “I have been dedicated to social impact, and it wouldn’t be possible with my college experience.” Dilernia went on to earn an MBA and is now founder of a company that provides expertise to nonprofits and government agencies. “I am happily married, but unfortunately we are a house divided [he’s a Miami Hurricanes Fan]. We live in Miami with our four cats.” They recently purchased her grandmother’s old house in Hawaii, “so we now have a three-acre farm that my mom lives on with her cat and many plants.”

Anna Dilernia showed an interest in reading from an early age.



THEN



“If it wasn’t for the MFOS, I may have taken a completely different path.”

David Kolesky

THEN: “I had a bit of a tumultuous childhood,” says Kolesky, who was raised by a single father who worked as a musician and at a tech support call center. “He was a very loving man, but we did not have a lot of money. We bounced around a lot.” His grandmother was a stabilizing influence, and Kolesky would go on to take AP and honors courses at Northeast High in Oakland Park, where he was president of the science club — “We built some pretty awesome bottle rockets,” — and math club. “I wanted to be an engineer and help build the future,” he says.

UF IN THREE WORDS: “Life-changing, unforgettable, fantastic.”

NOW: Kolesky (BSMSE ’10) earned an engineering sciences doctorate at Harvard and is a senior associate at a life science innovation institute in Cambridge, Mass. He married a fellow Gator, and they just bought a house outside Boston that they share with a dog and cat. Although they miss Florida weather, Kolesky says he’s “having a great time building new companies, inventing new technologies, and I hope that they help improve people’s lives over time.” He credits MFOS with not only opening the door for him to pursue his chosen course of study, but with providing the steppingstones for other firsts in his family: the first to pursue a scientific career, to earn a Ph.D., to publish scientific articles, to be granted a patent. “If it wasn’t for the MFOS, I may have taken a completely different path,” he says.

“I had the chance to fully engage in university life.”

Murielle Gammons



THEN

THEN: “In my house, it was expected that we would perform well in school,” says Gammons, who took honors and AP classes at Miami Central Senior High. Her parents, who worked as hotel cleaners, instilled in their five children “that we were not beneath anyone and that education could provide us with endless opportunities.” When Gammons was 14, her mother passed away, but Gammons continued to focus on her studies, encouraged by

her three sisters and brother — all strong, serious students. When, during her junior year, the family was approved for green cards, “my siblings pushed me to apply for state universities and seek funding opportunities,” she says. “Since I was now eligible, I was motivated to do well not only for myself, but for them as well.” She would be accepted to all of the state universities, encouraged by her family “to pursue greatness.”

NOW: “The scholarship was a godsend,” says Gammons (BS ’09, MEd ’13, EdS ’13, PhD ’20), who points not only to coverage for tuition, books, food and rent, but to the equalizing effect of being free of work and worry. “I had the chance to fully engage in university life,” she says, “and to truly have an amazing undergraduate experience, like the majority of my peers.” And because she was not saddled by undergraduate student loans, she was able to continue her education at UF. She recently finished her Ph.D. in higher education administration, and, doctorate in hand, is looking for her next employment adventure and life adventure with her husband and three children. “My family and I love to travel,” she says, “and we’re debt-free.”



AT LEFT: Murielle Gammons’ siblings pushed her to pursue education and she has not let them down, earning a master’s degree, here, and, most recently, a doctorate from UF.

ABOVE: Gammons and her husband have recently welcomed a third child.

Of Florida, for Florida

A couple's coveted collection of Florida art, including paintings by such celebrated artists as Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent, captures the state in all of its beauty and complexity — and takes the Harn to new heights.

BY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)

AWESTRUCK. WEAK AT THE KNEES. That is how people have felt viewing *The Florida Art Collection*, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers, for the first time.

With more than a thousand Florida-based works of art dating from the early 1800s to the mid-20th century, the collection includes masterpieces by Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, Thomas Moran and Martin Johnson Heade — some of the greatest names in American art — who made their way to Florida when much of it was pristine wilderness.

Painted in 1880 when much of Florida was wilderness, Thomas Moran's *Fort George Island* depicts one of the Sea Islands, near the mouth of the St. Johns River. Moran painted this while on assignment for Scribner's magazine to illustrate a story on what was then a little-known region of Florida.

A special thanks to **Randy Batista** (BA '73) for photographing the works of art; all are part of *The Florida Collection*, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers.



PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

Native Floridians Sam and Robbie Vickers spent 40 years amassing their formidable collection of Florida art. Until they gifted it to the Harn Museum in December 2020, the only way for art lovers to see it was by personal invite to the couple's home on the banks of the St. Johns River. They are shown here in one of their art-filled rooms in January.

For 40 years, Jacksonville collectors Sam and Roberta (“Robbie”) Vickers sought out “Florida art with soul,” as one admirer puts it, acquiring one-of-a-kind works that celebrate the unique environment, history and struggles of America’s 27th state. Occasionally, the couple loaned their prized works to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in D.C., the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and other leading museums around the country.

But for most art lovers, the only way to view the collection was by personal invite to the couple’s two-story French Provincial home on the St. Johns River, long considered the “high temple of Florida art,” wrote reporter Jeff Klinkenberg (BSJ ’71). There, superb paintings lined cerulean-blue walls from floor to ceiling, and Sam and Robbie regaled visitors such as Gov. Bob Graham and musician Jimmy Buffett with tales of stalking treasures in dusty flea markets and exclusive art galleries.

(One Orlando collector nearly sobbed when he finally handed over a beloved Moran painting, a touching incident Sam likes to recount.)

Now, thanks to an extraordinary donation from Sam and Robbie, their once-private collection has found its public “forever home” at the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida. In late January 2021, Harn staff excitedly welcomed a truckload of around 1,200 oil paintings, watercolors and drawings — the

“This is a transformational gift for the university and the Harn that will increase the museum’s Modern Art Collection by more than double.”

— *Harn Director Lee Anne Chesterfield*

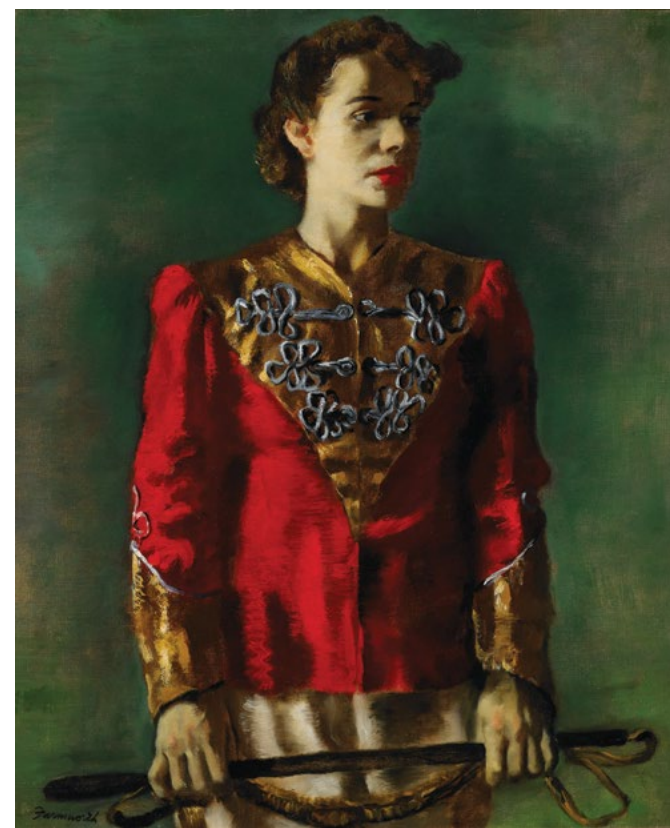
largest single art collection ever gifted to the university — and Chief Curator Dulce Román quickly organized an exhibition of must-sees.

The inaugural exhibition, *A Florida Legacy*, opened Feb. 26 and ran through Aug. 1, 2021. A new exhibit, *Florida Impressions: Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers*, opens Sept. 21, 2021, and will be followed by others in the future. The Harn’s free admission policy means highlights from this fabled collection can now be seen by everyone.

Depending on when they time their visit, art lovers and proud Gators can marvel up close at Robert J. Curtis’s iconic 1838 portrait of Seminole leader Osceola; Winslow Homer’s action-filled *Foul Hooked Black Bass*; John Singer Sargent’s masterful



***Foul Hooked Black Bass* (1904), by Winslow Homer**



***Madame Kovar, Ringling Lion Tamer* (1944), by Jerry Farnsworth**

Palm Thicket; Martin Johnson Heade’s rare *Oleanders*; Ralston Crawford’s soaring *Overseas Highway #2*; and Jane Peterson’s vibrant gouache, *Toucans, Parrot Jungle* — to name just a few of the delights in store.

“So many of the landscapes capture shimmering light effects on water, dramatic cloud formations and majestic sunsets,” noted Román. “I’m absolutely thrilled to work with and study this incredible collection for years to come.”

Leaders at UF and the Harn are still reveling in the pleasures of owning and caring for these magnificent works of art.

“We are very thankful to Sam and Robbie Vickers for their generosity,” said Harn Director Lee Anne Chesterfield. “This is a transformational gift for the university and the Harn that will increase the museum’s Modern Art Collection by more than double.”

“The Vickers Collection is unique in its power to convey both the exquisite natural beauty and the rich history of people in Florida — the ruggedness and grandeur of its landscapes and the highs and lows of its human history through the centuries,” UF President Kent Fuchs said. “We are thrilled to have the privilege of sharing it with all visitors to the Harn Museum.”

In the days leading to the opening of the inaugural exhibition, the museum’s social media pages buzzed with anticipation from excited fans.

“SARGENT?! I must devour with my eyes,” posted Jeannene Mironack (BSJ ’82). “Thank you to the Vickers!”

“I can’t wait to visit!” wrote Allison Brown.

“What a treasure of a gift to the Harn and all of us,” added Ilene Silverman (BSAC ’85).



Palm Thicket, Vizcaya (1917), by John Singer Sargent



Coconuts (1945), by Jane Peterson

Adventures in a New Eden

Anyone who has ever spent time in the Sunshine State will immediately connect with the works in the Vickers Collection, said American art specialist Debra Force, a New York gallery owner and a featured appraiser on PBS’s “Antiques Roadshow.”

“Sam Vickers really wanted to capture the history of Florida, as seen through the eyes of exceptional artists,” said Force. “Quality shines throughout the collection, whether the artist is a household name like Winslow Homer or Thomas Moran, or someone fewer people have heard of, like [Hudson River School painter] Maria a’Becket.”

“A lot of the scenes are now parking lots or covered up with big buildings,” said donor Sam Vickers, who is also an avid history buff. “You see the history of our great state as it was built over the years.”

The collection will especially appeal to those familiar with the topography and biota of specific regions of Florida,

said Gary Libby, director emeritus of Daytona Beach’s Museum of Arts and Sciences and editor of the 1996 book “Celebrating Florida: Works from the Vickers Collection.”

In the 1800s and early 1900s, Florida was being touted as a new Eden, and it drew curious, classically trained artists who had made their reputations depicting grand views in Europe and the American West. Sailing along the St. Johns River or strolling the white-sand beaches of St. Augustine, celebrated painters such as Louis Comfort Tiffany, William Morris Hunt and Christian Eisele found a brave new world that was short on heroic vistas but big on atmosphere, light and exotic wildlife.

Skunk cabbages, saw palmetto, snowy egrets, oleanders and Cattleya orchids: the artists painted these Florida species with the same attention to detail they had lavished on the Doge’s Palace in Venice or the Grand Canyon.

And the artists were experts at tucking

references to history, the Bible and Greco-Roman mythology into their works.

Robbie Vickers’ favorite painting, *Fort George Island* (1880), by Thomas Moran, appears at first glance to simply depict a brilliant sunset on a deserted beach. Closer inspection reveals a shipwreck in the distance. And it’s not any old ship, specialists note.

“Moran is referring, of course, to Ponce de León and the Spanish Conquest of Florida,” Libby said.

Even a “simple” scene of North Central Florida scrubland can turn out to be a cautionary tale on what is gained versus lost from human occupation of the landscape — Eden before and after the Fall.

“You see this beautiful wooded landscape, but in one corner, someone has chopped down a tree,” Libby said of depictions of Alachua County by German-born artist Herman Herzog. “You see just the stump, a hint of destruction. The painter is warning you in this painting.”

From Homosassa to Osceola

Other works capture Florida in all its fun and outdoor exuberance — bathers lounging on the beach, spectators cheering on racehorses at Hialeah, canoers paddling the Everglades and tarpon fishers hooking a big one.

There is even a detailed painting of a 1950s Florida trailer park, by Saturday Evening Post illustrator Stevan Dohanos. *Trailer Park Garden* shows a gleaming Airstream and two middle-aged snowbirds enjoying their sunny slice of heaven, complete with fishing pole and tackle, tiny shell-bordered garden and kitschy pink flamingo ornament.

“That painting makes you feel like you are right there,” said Force. “It really captures what Floridians and tourists were doing at the time — and still do.”

Winslow Homer was an avid fly-fisher, and it was on a 1904 trip to Homosassa Springs that he painted what many consider his greatest Florida watercolor, *Foul Hooked Black Bass*. Homer places the huge fish in the foreground as it grabs the hook, reeling the viewer into the bass’s life-and-death struggle.

South of Homosassa, many artists converged in Sarasota, the winter quarters



“The educational part of it is very important to us. Even though we know a great deal about the artists and the works ... students and faculty and scholars can research and find out more. We wanted [the collection] to go to a place where that’s going to happen.”

— Robbie Vickers

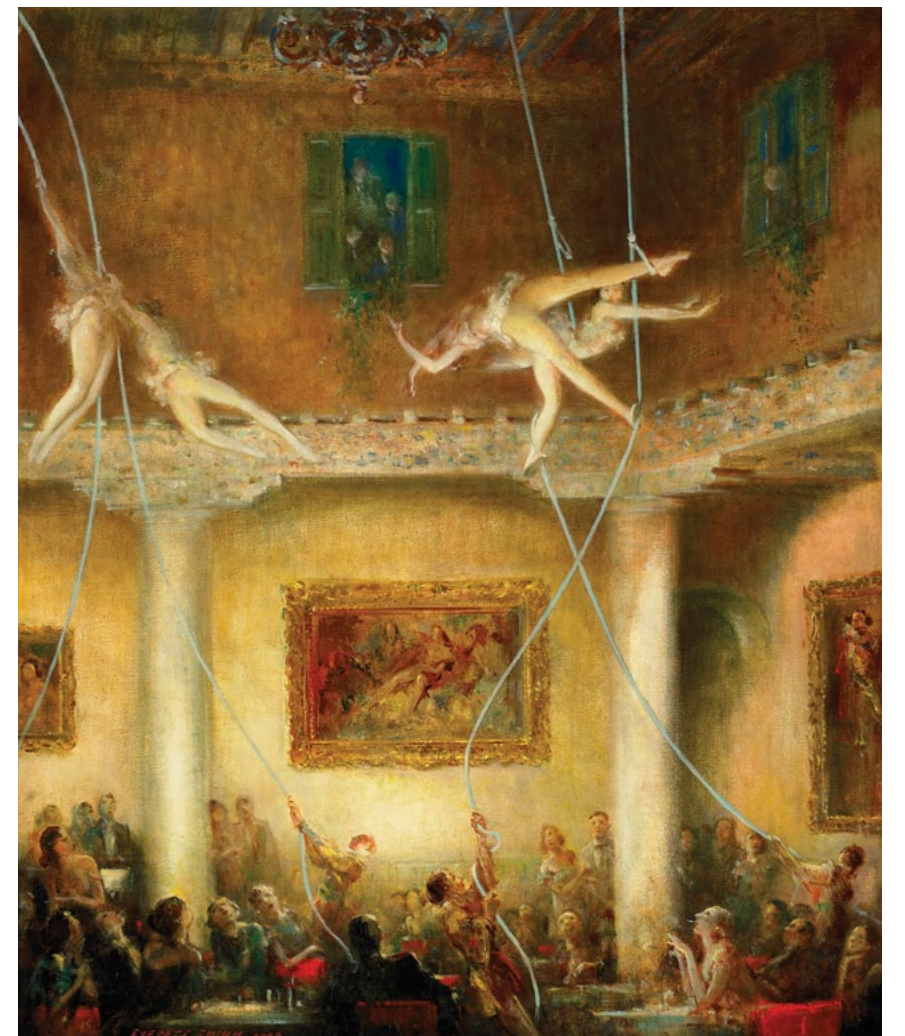


AT TOP: *Osceola of Florida* (1838), by Robert J. Curtis

ABOVE: *Sunset Near Low Creek, Florida* (c. 1900), by Herman Herzog



PHOTO BY AARON DAYE



AT TOP: Almost every room in the Vickers' home was decorated with Florida art.

ABOVE: *Jody and Flag* (1938), by N.C. Wyeth

RIGHT: *Oleanders* (c. 1885), by Martin Johnson Heade



ABOVE: *Tropical Sunset: Florida Marsh* (c. 1885-1890), by Martin Johnson Heade

TOP RIGHT: *Saturday Night at the Ringling Hotel* (1949), by Everett Shinn

BOTTOM RIGHT: *The Venetian Pool, Coral Gables* (undated), by Martha Walter

AT LEFT: *Mary Eliza's Cabin, Chipley, Florida* (1955), by Marguerite Zorach



of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. A memorable 1940s oil painting by Ashcan School artist Everett Shinn shows trapeze artists performing high overhead a roomful of diners at the Ringling Hotel, the elegant guests gaping upward in awe.

“I guess it was fine if nobody fell in your soup,” Robbie Vickers joked earlier this year.

Another outstanding circus-themed work is Jerry Farnsworth’s moody portrait of Madame Kovar, the Ringling’s legendary lion tamer. Known for her fearlessness, Kovar climbed in the cage without her whip on Dec. 21, 1949, when she was promptly mauled to death in front of her two children.

And then there are the works related to the three Seminole Wars (1816-1858). These include 19th-century sketches of Seminole people by George Catlin and John Roger Vinton’s 1843 oil painting, *Ruins of the Sugar House*, which depicts a Seminole warrior surveying the smoking ruins of a plantation destroyed by indigenous forces.

Of special note is Robert J. Curtis’s *Osceola of Florida*, painted in 1838, just after the Seminole leader was imprisoned at Fort Moultrie, in South Carolina.

The Charleston Mercury noted of the portrait that year: “[Curtis] has given, with great fidelity, the intelligent and melancholy countenance which distinguishes the chief.”

A Magnet for Research

With a cornucopia of superb Florida art now under its roof, the Harn will have to rotate selections seasonally to enable the public to see it all. Future plans include building a new wing with galleries, a print study room and a conservation center for the Harn’s growing collection.

But that doesn’t mean nonexhibited art will languish in storage until then.

The Harn’s curator of academic programs, Eric Segal, has created a course based on the collection, titled Florida in the Frame, which will be part of the UF Honors (Un)Common Reads program starting this fall. Guest speakers will include biologist Jack Putz, art historian Melissa Hyde and other UF faculty.



Trailer Park Garden (1951), by Stevan Dohanos

“Many Gators, not just those majoring in art history, will end up becoming familiar with the Vickers Collection,” Chesterfield predicts.

“We currently have three interns researching and working with the collection and are excited to engage more from all disciplines,” she added. “For instance, some of the landscapes illustrate parts of Florida that have since been developed. ... I can easily see a student in one of the scientific disciplines studying these artworks to better understand the natural history of Florida.”

Art specialists from near and far will want to explore the Vickers Collection, museum leaders anticipate. And that activity will only bring the Harn greater recognition.

“One of our strategic goals for the museum is to raise awareness of all our permanent collections,” said Chesterfield. “There is a plan now to digitize nearly 80% of our entire permanent collection, including the 1,200 new works in the Vickers Collection. This will bring international attention to the Harn and the collection, and I envision scholars and art lovers coming from all over the world to see the art in person.”

Those opportunities are exactly why Sam and Robbie Vickers chose to gift their collection to the state’s flagship university.

“Our collection will be studied and enjoyed for decades to come,” said Sam proudly. “That means a lot to us.”

The Original Florida Art Collectors: *Sam and Robbie Vickers*

He is a successful businessman and history buff with a hawk-like eye for detail. She is a singer and painter with a sense of color and a lively wit.

Together they are Samuel and Roberta Vickers, better known as Sam and Robbie — the dynamic art-collecting duo from Jacksonville whose recent gift of 1,200 Florida works to the Harn Museum of Art has sent ripples through the art world.

Recognized as the first serious collectors of Florida art, Sam and Robbie are as fascinating as the works of art they meticulously amassed over 40 years while raising two children (they now have six grandchildren).

Sam was born in Miami in 1937; Robbie, three years later, in Palm Beach. The two met while high school students in Georgia, and when Sam was offered a football scholarship to the University of South Carolina, Robbie soon followed. There, she was a cheerleader; Sam was the Gamecocks’ quarterback.

The pair married in 1957, back when “Florida art” often meant driftwood knickknacks and acrylic mermaids dabbed on black velvet.

Sam became CEO of a specialty packaging company in Jacksonville, and the couple enjoyed traveling around the world on his business ventures. But in the early 1980s, marvels closer to home caught their eye — little-known paintings of Florida by great 19th- and 20th-century artists. That sent them on hunts through yard sales, antique stores and art galleries, whose owners began referring to the Vickers as “the” collectors of Florida art.

“We’ve had some wonderful experiences along the way as we’ve acquired pictures,” said Sam.

Slowly and surely, they filled their house with sublime works, but it wasn’t until the mid-1990s when the state asked them to loan pieces for a traveling exhibit celebrating Florida’s



Samuel Vickers was a University of South Carolina quarterback, and Roberta was a cheerleader there.

sesquicentennial that the Vickerses realized their pastime was more than a hobby.

Curator Gary Libby’s reaction, when he walked into their art-filled home, cemented the couple’s understanding that they were serious collectors. Sam remembered: “When [Libby] walked in the front door, he stopped and said, ‘This is not to select some paintings for the [sesquicentennial] collection, this IS the collection.’”

Since then, the Vickers Collection has grown from 200 to 1,200 works with a distinct point of view. Although neither Sam nor Robbie formally studied art, they quickly trained their eyes to spot a masterpiece, specialists say, seeking out art that is intellectually challenging and captures the soul of its subject matter.

Finding a permanent home for their beloved collection took years of visiting institutions around the state. What persuaded the couple to choose UF, in the end, was the university’s commitment to making the collection central to research and teaching efforts, as well as regular exhibitions at the Harn.

“The educational part of it is very important to us,” Robbie said of the couple’s gift. “Even though we know a great deal about the artists and the works of art, students and faculty and scholars can research and find out more. We wanted [the collection] to go to a place where that’s going to happen.”

“It was pretty clear early on the UF would be the greatest home for the collection,” Sam agreed.



Overseas Highway #2 (1941), by Ralston Crawford

MORE ABOUT THE VICKERS COLLECTION

- See ***Florida Impressions: Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers*** at the Harn Museum of Art starting Sept. 21, 2021.
- Watch a **behind-the-scenes video** about the Vickers and the installation of the inaugural exhibition at uff.to/35pc0p
- **Take a deeper dive** into some of the works at uff.to/pxa35p
- Keep up with the Harn at www.harn.ufl.edu
Facebook: facebook.com/HarnMuseumofArt
Instagram: @harnmuseumofart
Twitter: @HarnMuseumofArt

GATOR GLORY

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW UF STUDENT-ATHLETES AND COACHES? TEST YOUR METTLE AND CELEBRATE THE TOKYO GAMES WITH THIS OLYMPICS-UF-THEMED QUIZ

By David Finnerty

1. Since the Olympics (as we know them today) began in 1896, how many Gators have participated?

- A. Fewer than 50
- B. Between 50 and 150
- C. More than 150

2. In how many sports have Gators won medals?

- A. six
- B. nine
- C. 12
- D. All of them

3. In which Games since Munich in 1972 did Gators win the most medals?

- A. Seoul in 1988
- B. Beijing in 2008
- C. London in 2012
- D. Los Angeles in 1984

4. Of all Olympians with ties to UF, who was the first to win a medal?

- A. Catie Ball (BAE '73), swimming
- B. Ronnie Jourdan (BSPE '73), track & field
- C. Neal Walk ('66-'69), basketball

5. Which Gator was the first to win a medal while an undergraduate?

- A. Christina McDonald (BSHSE '93), gymnastics
- B. Mark Everett (BSESS '92), track & field
- C. Tim McKee ('72-'74), swimming

6. Frank Shorter (JD '74) is one of UF's greatest Olympians. In what sport did he win a gold medal at the 1972 Munich Games?

- A. Boxing
- B. Weightlifting
- C. Marathon

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO EARN A MEDAL:

Gold: 21 or more correct answers

Silver: 16 to 20

Bronze: 11 to 15

Try again in four years: 10 or less

QUIZ ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 70

7. Baseball was only an official Olympic sport from 1992 to 2008, although it will be reintroduced in 2021. During that short span, two Gator greats competed. Who are they?

- A. David Eckstein (BA '12) and Herbert Perry (BSA '91)
- B. Matt LaPorta (BSR '09) and Brad Wilkerson ('95-'98)
- C. Josh Fogg ('95-'98) and Darren O'Day (BSA '06)

8. Swimmer Ryan Lochte (BSR '11) competed in four Olympic Games. How many gold medals did he win?

- A. two
- B. six
- C. 10

9. Gator swimmer, Dara Torres (BSTEL '90), was 41 when she became the oldest person to make the USA Olympic team. In how many Games did she compete? Hint: First one was 1984.

- A. three
- B. four
- C. five

10. Which two of these Gator basketball players also competed on a USA team?

- A. Tammy Jackson (BSR '07) and DeLisha Milton-Jones ('93-'97)
- B. Dwayne Schintzius ('87-'90) and Udonis Haslem ('98-'02)
- C. Al Horford ('04-'07) and Vernon Maxwell ('84-'88)

11. Beach volleyball and UF go together like sand and toes, so it's no surprise that Gator alumna Gudula Staub (1991-92) was in the 2000 Sydney Games, representing Germany. Conversely, in which winter sport have three alumni competed:

- A. Bobsleigh
- B. Alpine skiing
- C. Snowboarding

12. In which Games did Gators Jeanne Golay (BSBA '87) and Andrew Weaver (BDES '82) race on America's cycling teams?

- A. 1980 Moscow
- B. 1992 Barcelona
- C. 1996 Atlanta
- D. All the above, plus 1984 Los Angeles

13. Five Gators have been in the Olympics for diving, but only two of them on Team USA. What other three nations did they represent?

- A. Mexico, Brazil and Kenya
- B. Canada, Belgium and United Kingdom
- C. France, Italy and Germany

14. Gator gymnasts Marissa King (BA '14, BSTEL '14) and Bridget Sloan (BSTEL '16) competed against each other in the 2008 Beijing Games. Which countries did they represent?

- A. USA and Great Britain
- B. USA and the Philippines
- C. Great Britain and the Philippines



USA TODAY SPORTS

USA forward Abby Wambach (center) celebrates with teammates during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

15. Harry Winkler (BSPE '68, MPH '70) is a two-time Olympian in what sport?

- A. Fencing
- B. Ping-Pong
- C. Handball

16. In which sport did Colleen Rosensteel (BSESS '90, MESS '94) represented the US during three Olympic Games?

- A. Judo
- B. Water polo
- C. Shooting

17. UF has produced almost 100 Olympic swimmers, representing more than a dozen nations. Which nation has NOT been represented by a Gator?

- A. South Korea
- B. Iceland
- C. Libya

18. Four-time All-American Abby Wambach ('98-'01) won two gold medals in the 2004 Athens and 2012 London Games. Which Gators competed there with or against her?

- A. Andi Sellers (BSESS '01, MESS '03) and Danielle Fotopoulos (BSR '99)
- B. Melanie Booth (BSAPK '08) and Heather Mitts (BSADV '01)
- C. Sarah Yohe (BSESS '99) and Dena Floyd (BA '04)

19. Gators Jill Craybas (BSTEL '96), Jill Hetherington ('84-'87), Mark Merklein ('91-'94) and Lisa Raymond ('91-'93) all competed for tennis medals, but who actually had one hang around their neck?

- A. Lisa Raymond, 2012 in London
- B. Jill Craybas, 2008 in Beijing
- C. Jill Hetherington, 1988 in Seoul
- D. Mark Merklein, 2000 in Sydney
- E. All four won medals

20. Twenty years after his first Olympic appearance, track and field star Horace Tuitt (BS '77) competed in which Games?

- A. 1972 Munich and 1992 Barcelona
- B. 1976 Montreal and 1996 Atlanta
- C. 1980 Moscow and 2000 Sydney

21. Kelly Murphy (BAE '17), a four-time All-American at UF, was a volleyball bronze medalist in which Olympic Games?

- A. 2012 London
- B. 2016 Rio
- C. 2000 Sydney

22. Late 1990s UF swimming coach Ron "Stix" Ballatore spent decades coaching collegiate swimmers. How many countries did he coach in his five Olympic Games?

- A. two
- B. three
- C. four

23. Of the 13 Gator coaches who led Olympic teams, how many were in track & field?

- A. two
- B. four
- C. six

24. How many nations have UF athletes represented in the Olympics?

- A. 13
- B. 29
- C. 41

25. Although the USA boycotted the 1980 Games in Moscow, David Zuberger (BSA '83) won a bronze for swimming the 100-meter butterfly. What country did he represent?

- A. Spain
- B. New Zealand
- C. Bosnia

BONUS 1: Who is the only Gator to compete in both winter and summer Olympic Games?

- A. Liston Bochette (BFA '80)
- B. Hilda Luthersdottir (BSPR '15)
- C. Anthony Nesty (BA '94)

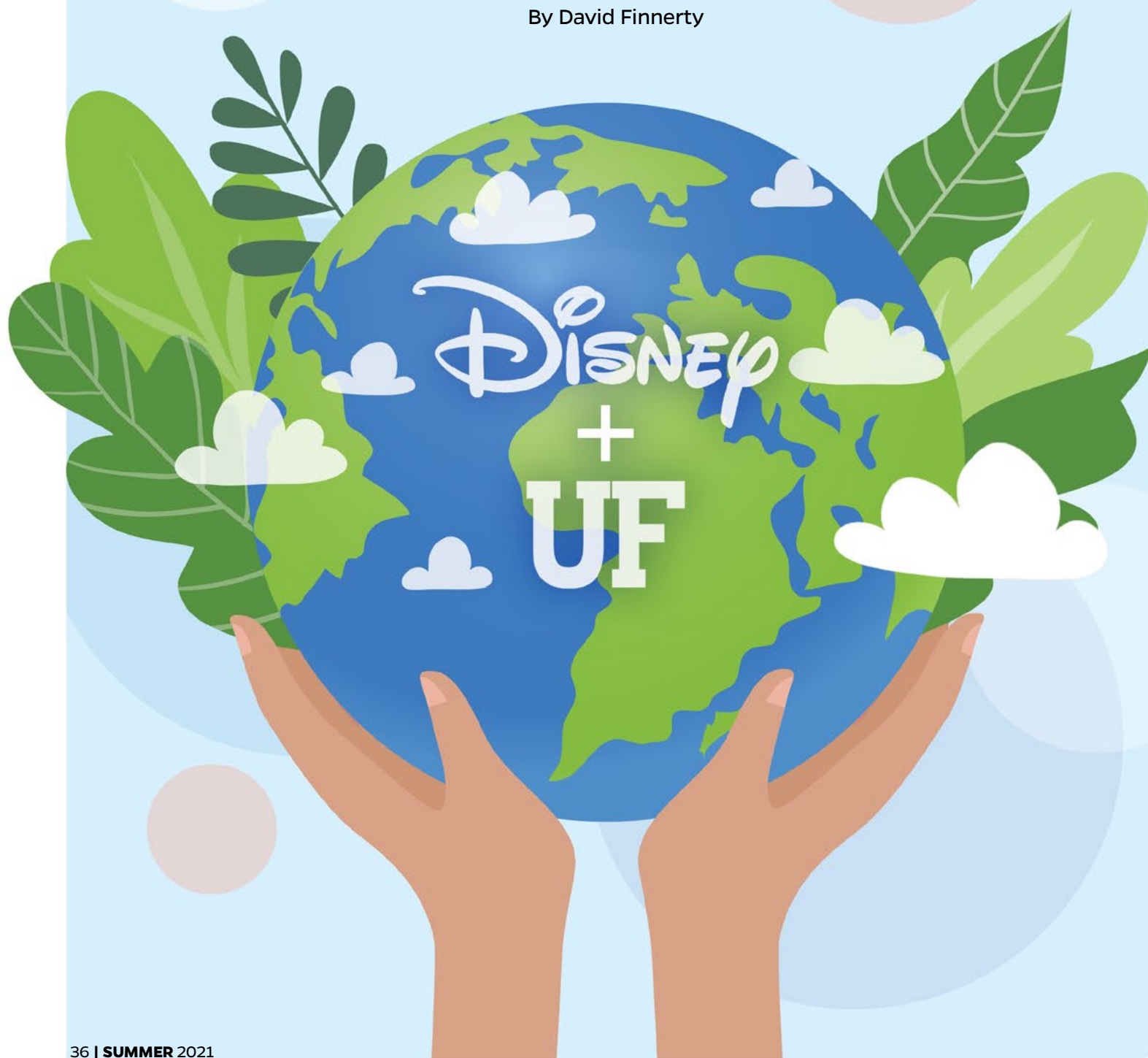
BONUS 2: Which Gator had his or her likeness placed on a stamp after winning a gold medal at the 1988 Games in Seoul?

- A. Mark Everett (BSESS '92)
- B. Jill Hetherington ('84-'87)
- C. Anthony Nesty (BA '94)

WHAT A SMALL WORLD NEEDS

Two Florida powerhouses — Disney and UF — are partnering to make sure future generations experience the magic of the natural world.

By David Finnerty



“Conservation,” Walt Disney wrote in 1950, “isn’t just the business of a few people. It’s a matter that concerns all of us. It’s a science whose principles are written in the oldest code in the world: the laws of nature.”

Protecting nature was personal to Disney. He loved the outdoors — the wild places and wild things that roamed there. Watching over it, he believed, is the right thing to do.

All these years later, the entertainment empire he created is saving endangered wildlife in jungles, forests, prairies and waters stitched across the continents. The Disney Conservation Fund — which turned 25 last spring — is working to slow, stop and eventually reverse the decline of at-risk species. Sea turtles and butterflies, two animals UF is famous for helping, are high on the priority list.

That won’t happen with pixie dust, said Kim Sams (BSJ ’79), who recently retired from being Disney’s corporate social responsibility director.

“While Disney is known for magical experiences, it takes a lot more than that to bring a species back,” says Sams. “When people collaborate and start paddling that canoe in the same direction, that’s when you have real magic that leads to true impact that you can measure.”

Supporting conservation is nothing new for the company. The Disney Conservation Fund for years has been awarding grants for environmental and wildlife causes — close to \$100 million so far has been given to hundreds of projects in 115 countries.

But in 2015 The Walt Disney Company went bigger, bolder and more strategic. That year, it began an ambitious program that focused extra attention on 10 animals. Along with annual contributions to other conservation agencies, Disney is investing millions more in a few select partners. The University of Florida is one of them.

“UF is in that very exclusive group because of the research that they’re doing,” Sams explains. “The university and the other organizations we’re collaborating with check all the boxes: commitment to measure impact, skills and talent to do the work, relationships around the world.”

Elephants, great apes and tamarin monkeys, cranes and coral reefs, and a few others joined butterflies and sea turtles on Disney’s initial species concentration list.

Its partners are a who’s who in the world of conservation — organizations like the International Crane Foundation, Perry Institute for Marine Science and Wildlife Conservation Society. UF is the only university in the group.

Teaming up with the university was a no-brainer, Sams says. She insists that when it comes to butterflies and sea turtles, the expertise is obvious in UF’s McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity and its Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research.

Alan Bolten, the Carr Center’s late associate director, called the association with Disney a “shot in the arm” for UF’s sea turtle program.

“From the very beginning working with Disney, going back 15 or more years, it immediately struck us that Disney wants to do things right,” he said in 2020. “That means a lot to us. It allows us to accomplish research and conservation efforts at the highest quality.”



Kim Sams recently retired from her post as Disney’s corporate social responsibility director.



McGuire Center Curator Jaret Daniels agrees.

It's a scientist's dream, he says, "to have the opportunity to make an impact, directly or indirectly, on the conservation and recovery of so many species in critical need ... and to have the opportunity to work with such a wonderful and exceptionally talented group of partners [and] collaborators across the nation."

WISH UPON A STAR

Walt Disney, the man, would drag a camera into the wilds to capture Mother Nature in her glory. A deer's gait, an owl's hoot, a lion's roar — he treasured it all.

That admiration twinkles throughout his 1942 movie "Bambi." Respect for the fawn and forest creatures is crystal clear from the opening scene to the closing credits. It's evident again in his award-winning nature documentary series "True-Life Adventures." The 14 standalone films — with titles like "Seal Island," "Prowlers of the Everglades," "Vanishing Prairie" and "Nature's Half Acre" — introduced children and their parents to a world of wonders in the 1950s.

"If we will use our riches wisely, if we will protect our wildlife and preserve our lakes and streams, these things will last us for generations to come," Disney promised before his death in 1966.

His wish is reflected in some of Disney's most popular theme park attractions ("Jungle Cruise" and "The Seas with Nemo & Friends" are two) and movies (like "The Lion King," "Wall-E" and "Brother Bear"), and especially in Disney's Animal Kingdom and the Disney Conservation Fund. Walt Disney Studios' Disneynature documentary films series

even brings nature's stories directly into living rooms via cable TV and DVDs.

"The environment has always been important to Disney — it was important to Walt Disney himself. The work we're doing through the DCF is a natural extension of that steadfast commitment," Sams says. "We want to carry forward Walt's legacy in conservation to protect wildlife and wild places."



Jaret Daniels, who leads UF's butterfly conservation program, calls his partnership with Disney a "tremendous honor." With Disney's support, he's spearheading the conservation of 40 endangered butterfly species in Florida and California.

"IF WE WILL USE OUR RICHES WISELY, IF WE WILL PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE AND PRESERVE OUR LAKES AND STREAMS, THESE THINGS WILL LAST US FOR GENERATIONS TO COME."

— WALT DISNEY

That's not easy. You'd have to go back 65 million years — the end of dinosaurs — to find the last time extinctions were happening this fast and were this widespread. Tropical rainforests alone are losing 27,000 plant and animal species each year, scientists warn.

The Hawksbill sea turtle might soon be gone, too. Same thing with the Cross River gorilla — fewer than 200 are in the wild. It's worse for the Javan rhino — just five dozen separate it from extinction. The list goes alarmingly on ... and on ... and on. Lions, orangutans, elephants, tigers, penguins, corals, Monarch butterflies, sharks, whales — thousands of species are teetering dangerously close to vanishing.

Disney's work with UF and other partners might be one of the last best chances to stop an environmental catastrophe.

The Disney Conservation Fund's new initiative took big steps in that epic task in its first five years. Three million trees were planted in Brazil's rainforests. In the Bahamas, a 40,000-acre conservation area was set aside to protect coral reefs. A 65,000-acre savannah corridor in Kenya and a 130,000-acre wild chimpanzee habitat in the Congo

were established. Projects in Indonesia, Cambodia and Sri Lanka are helping hundreds of species and providing fresh drinking water. There's a new snow leopard conservation program in China. Penguin breeding and feeding grounds near the Antarctic Ocean have become refuges.

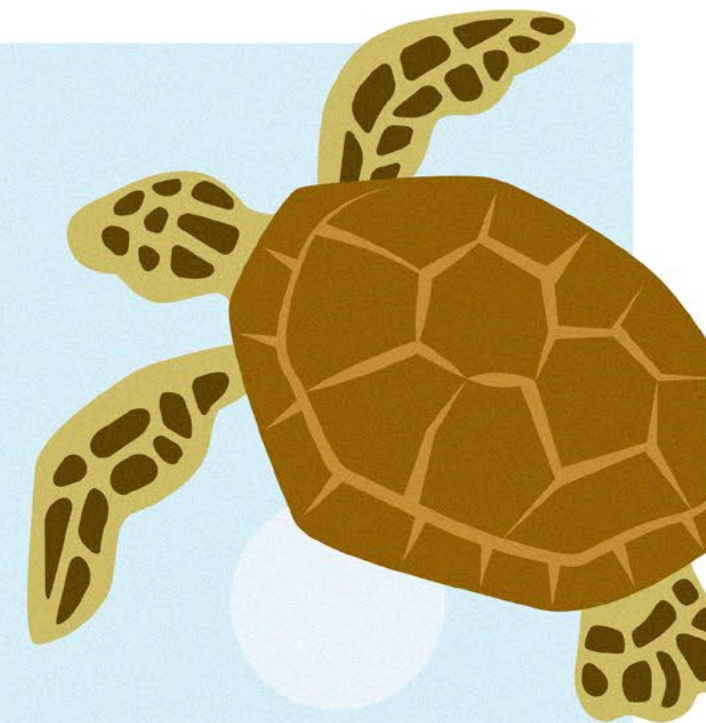
And at UF, the Archie Carr Center is reducing threats to sea turtles that are caused by commercial fishing, poaching, pollution, the loss of nesting beaches and warming seas. The McGuire Center is restoring habitats, and breeding and releasing captive butterflies to replenish dwindling numbers.

Without the partnership with the Disney Conservation Fund, some of those projects wouldn't be possible, Daniels and Bolten have contended.

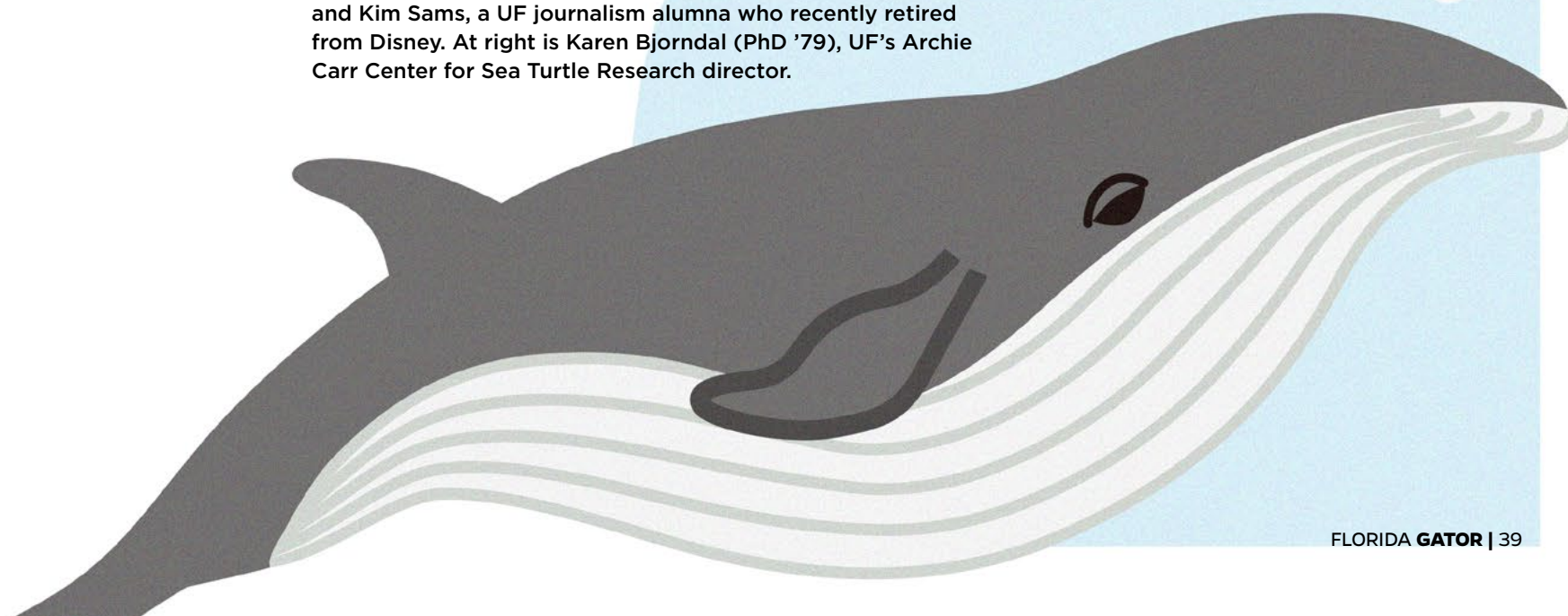
"Conservation is slow. Things just don't happen overnight," Bolten said. "You have to be patient to see



In recognition of its long relationship with The Disney Conservation Fund, UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean David Richardson (left) presented its Partner Award to the organization in 2019. Receiving the award (left to right) is Rachel Smith, conservation programs manager, who is also enrolled in UF's interdisciplinary ecology doctorate program, and Kim Sams, a UF journalism alumna who recently retired from Disney. At right is Karen Bjorndal (PhD '79), UF's Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research director.



UF TEAMS AND DISNEY HAVE REMOVED MORE THAN 2 MILLION POUNDS OF MARINE DEBRIS FROM SEA TURTLE HABITATS — SUCH AS THE GRASSES THAT FLORIDA'S GREEN SEA TURTLE EAT — AND RESTORED OR CLEARED 14 MILES OF NESTING BEACHES.



small steps forward. Disney understands that. Its long-term commitment allows us to strategically plan the research and conservation efforts we've involved in."

Even with all those strides it might not be enough, Sams worries.

"One of the concerning things is not enough people, especially children, are choosing conservation, zoology or biology as a career path," she says. "The job that we have is certainly to work to save animals today, but it's also working with the scientists of tomorrow. What's really critical is that there's someone to carry the torch."

MOUSE, MEET GATOR

UF's relationship with The Disney Company goes way back. Really, ever since the Magic Kingdom took root in Florida in the 1970s the two have been a duo — the state's most popular attraction and its flagship university. What was good for one was usually good for both. Disney needed engineers and artists and accountants and tourism professionals, UF had them. Gators needed jobs, Disney had those. Disney wanted innovation, UF had it. The university wanted student internships, Disney provided them.

So when UF and Disney each decided on their own that it was time to do something more for the environment, they turned to each other. The Disney Conservation Fund's investment in UF's sea turtle and butterflies programs is just one example. Water conservation is another. And there are numerous other tag-team projects in departments across campus.

As a UF alumna herself, that kinship pleases Sams (BSJ '79). (She was Kim Rester when a student.)

"What makes me proud as a Gator and fourth-generation Floridian is the fact that Disney has settled here and has made a positive impact in the environmental space in so many ways," she says. "Because of The Walt Disney Company, more than \$5 million has been contributed to the University of Florida to focus on wildlife conservation efforts where they are urgently needed."

Her own ties to UF have nothing to do with its partnership with Disney, she's quick to point out.

"WHAT MAKES ME PROUD AS A GATOR AND FOURTH-GENERATION FLORIDIAN IS THE FACT THAT DISNEY HAS SETTLED HERE AND HAS MADE A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SPACE IN SO MANY WAYS."

— KIM SAMS (BSJ '79)

"Although I'm really proud to be a Gator and proud of these projects, I have to remain objective," Sams says. "The entire Disney review committee makes the final decisions, and what makes me most proud is I can say without question that it's the quality of the research and the dedication of the students and faculty at UF that makes their proposals worthy of getting support, regardless of who's on the review committee."

The university's commitment to the environment and seriousness to science to solve conservation problems gives her reason to be optimistic, Sams insists.

"I've asked myself what's really important about these programs," she explains. "It's great that we're saving sea turtles and increasing butterfly populations. But to me what's most important is that UF is engaging thousands of people in conservation, whether through debris removal and beach cleanup or growing milkweed or butterfly releases or helping scientists with sea turtle research."

"You just can't put a price on the impact those experiences make on a person's future plans. It could be career, it could be how they live their daily lives — whether they recycle or get plastic bags at the grocery store — but the key to conservation is individual action," Sams says. "And it's great that the University of Florida has programs and leaders in conservation who are taking this forward."

TOGETHER, UF AND DISNEY HAVE RELEASED NEARLY 1,000 SCHAUS' SWALLOWTAIL AND MORE THAN 10,500 MIAMI BLUE BUTTERFLIES INTO THE WILD.

GROWING A CONSERVATIONIST

When Kim Sams was little, she'd sit with her father, and instead of reading bedtime stories they'd flip through John James Audubon's book "The Birds of America." He'd occasionally point to a picture and ask his daughter to name the bird. "Wild turkey," she'd answer with glee, "mockingbird," "blue jay" or whatever the bird might be.

"It brings tears to my eyes when I think about it," Sams (BSJ '79) says now. "If it wasn't for my dad, who sat me down with that big Audubon book of birds, I might not care so much about wildlife."

Turning children into conservationists might be as simple as that, she says: exploring nature, hand-in-hand.

"Each of us can take the responsibility of sharing something wonderful with a child we know," Sams believes. "As parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, take our children outside. That's where it starts."

The woods, a park, UF's Florida Museum of Natural History, the backyard — anything will do.

"You don't have to go very far to appreciate nature," Sams says. "You don't even have to leave your home if don't want to. You can sit on the couch with a bird book just like my dad sat on the couch with me 60 years ago."



Famed primatologist Jane Goodall, pictured with Kim Sams (left) and Jane Goodall Institute vice president Susana Name (right), is one of the many global leaders in conservation whom Sams worked with during her 30-year career with The Walt Disney Company.

Meet the man most mentioned in 2020

THE AMAZING, INDEFATIGABLE (AND INCREDIBLY APPROACHABLE) DR. MIKE LAUZARDO

BY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)

"From the very beginning, I always envisioned a career of service. Our parents encouraged us with the old saying, 'There but for the grace of God go I.'"

That is how Dr. Mike Lauzardo — deputy director of the Emerging Pathogens Institute and director of the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect initiative — explains his longstanding commitment to public health. The son of hardworking immigrants and a man of deep faith, Lauzardo (MD '91) has indefatigably led UF's efforts to keep campus and community safe since the coronavirus pandemic erupted in March 2020.

He oversees the university's screening, testing and communitywide vaccination protocols; has held more than 70 town halls for faculty and staff; writes a biweekly COVID-19 newsletter that reaches nearly 25,000 UF faculty and employees; helped UF Health and the Florida Department of Health in Alachua County vaccinate up to 20,000 individuals per week at the Swamp in the spring — and that is just a fraction of his efforts to improve the public good.

He holds town halls in Spanish for UF cleaning staff and farmworkers across the state. On weekends, you'll find him speaking at churches on Gainesville's east side to overcome vaccine hesitancy among people of color and marginalized groups.

About six times a year, he and his wife, fellow Gator physician Dr. Eileen Lauzardo (MD '91), travel to Latin

America to treat children with cancer through their Keira Grace Foundation, a nonprofit born from the ashes of personal tragedy.

He only gets four to five hours of sleep a night, and he's perfectly fine with that, especially in a pandemic — if the extra waking hours result in more lives saved.

"Of course, this work needs to be done," he said earlier this year. "And if there is time to be awake, it's time to do it. So, I'm extremely tired all the time, but I'm extremely exhilarated at the same time. It might sound crazy to say that, but these interactions keep me going and motivate my colleagues to do the same."

SHARE THE BLESSINGS

Lauzardo's path to becoming UF's pandemic outreach "guru" began in 1965 in Miami, where he was born, the youngest of two sons, to industrious Cuban immigrants. Father Jose was a carpenter and a glassworker; mother Alodia was a seamstress and a homemaker. They had come to the U.S. a decade earlier, and by the time Michael was born, more English than Spanish was spoken in their household.

Eventually, when he couldn't communicate with his relatives in their native tongue, his mother insisted he speak Spanish at home, for which he is very grateful now.

Early on, Mom and Pop Lauzardo emphasized to the boys that they should always do their part to help those in need.



Mike Lauzardo (being held by his mother, above) is the youngest of two sons, born to Cuban immigrants, Jose, a carpenter, and Alodia, a seamstress.

"I was born into good circumstances, but not everybody is," Lauzardo said. "Not everyone has had the same opportunities."

After studying biology at the University of Miami, Lauzardo earned his medical

He was seemingly everywhere at once: At testing sites and mass vaccination events. Behind church lecterns and leading town halls. Coordinating efforts at close to a thousand meetings. Penning a biweekly newsletter to keep UF faculty and staff in the loop.

PHOTO BY AARON DAYE

At right, Lauzardo’s family clockwise from top: Mike, his wife, Dr. Eileen Lauzardo, a UF Health family medicine physician, their daughter, Sophia, and their son, Ryan.



“At the end of the day, the first word in public health is ‘public,’ right? ... Our job is to protect people. We’re the guardians of their health, and we do it at the population level.”

— Dr. Mike Lauzardo

degree from UF in 1991 and trained as an internist and pulmonologist. A growing interest in the field of public health led him to study at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where he earned a master’s degree in epidemiology.

“Public health is a good way to get a big bang for the buck, to make a big impact on people’s lives with relatively small investments,” said Lauzardo.

“LIKE TB ON CRACK”

A faculty member at UF since 1997, Lauzardo is now chief of the College of Medicine’s Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Medicine. He teaches classes, practices medicine at UF Health Shands and directs Florida’s Tuberculosis Physicians Network, as well as the Southeastern National Tuberculosis Center. He also oversees TB research at UF’s

lab in Gressier, Haiti, a country with the highest TB incidence in the Americas.

He said his long work in TB research and outreach has been a “big advantage” in preparing him to battle COVID-19. Like tuberculosis, COVID-19 is mostly an airborne, respiratory disease, even though TB is caused by bacteria and COVID by a virus.

One thing that caught Lauzardo off guard was the “sheer speed” at which the coronavirus pandemic developed,

everything from how it spread worldwide to the development of new variants.

“We [public health specialists] jokingly say COVID is like TB on crack,” he said. “It’s just going a million miles an hour and in a million different directions. It has the same sort of big impact and problems communicating about it [as TB].”

But dealing with challenges like these is what public health specialists do every day, he stressed. Typically, the public is blissfully unaware of those efforts.

“The reason you don’t wake up in the morning and thank someone you didn’t get cholera is because public health is doing contact investigations, tracing and all these other things,” he said. “What we generally do in public health is focus on making things not happen.”

“COVID is like TB on crack. It’s just going a million miles an hour and in a million different directions.”

— Dr. Mike Lauzardo

COMBATING MISINFORMATION

COVID-19, though, did happen — just like the TB outbreaks in Haiti but more rapidly and on a global scale. What has made things especially challenging for public health officials with the coronavirus pandemic has been the

rampant spread of dangerous lies: about COVID-19 being a “hoax,” about masks being “unnecessary,” about quack cures and mRNA vaccines supposedly altering people’s genes (none of these things is true).

“You’re dealing with some political challenges, communicating in difficult environments,” said Lauzardo. “But at the end of the day, the first word in public health is ‘public,’ right? So, we are dealing with the public, and our job is to protect people. We’re the guardians of their health, and we do it at the population level.”

Explaining the science in laymen’s terms and addressing people’s fears and misconceptions is central to Lauzardo’s pandemic outreach. Communicating effectively is a delicate balancing act, he said.

“It’s very, very challenging, dealing with the fear and anxiety and, at the same time, on the polar opposite, dealing with the [virus] deniers. It’s hard to say to people, ‘Hey let’s meet in the middle, guys. The truth is somewhere in here, in the middle and not on either extreme.’

“So, it’s been challenging and, you know, exhilarating,” he added. “There’s no way to possibly be bored doing public health.”

“NO ONE LEFT BEHIND”

Like many of his colleagues, Lauzardo is driven to ensure that among marginalized communities — people of color, the poor and migrant workers — “no one is left behind” in the drive for health.

Dr. Mike Lauzardo by the Numbers

24,644	UF faculty and staff who received the Screen, Test & Protect biweekly e-newsletter
73+	COVID-19 town halls held since July 2020, mostly online
61,000+	Individuals vaccinated through UF Health/DOH partnership between December 2020 and Spring 2021
946+	Meetings he attended or led March 2020-March 2021, not counting phone calls, totaling nearly 800 hours
300	Average daily emails received
300+	Children who are alive today after having survived cancer, thanks to efforts of Keira Grace Foundation
6	Average trips to Latin America each year with the Keira Grace Foundation to help children with cancer
4-5	Hours of sleep per night
4 a.m.	Average time he wakes up
45 minutes	Morning ride on stationary bike before he starts his day
10 miles	Saturday morning run in Gainesville
0-1	Cups of coffee per day

“The thing is that public health is about everybody,” he said. “It’s about making sure we reach out and deal with the problems where they are.”

“My circle of concern is huge, but my circle of influence is tiny,” he said. “If I focus on that tiny little circle of what I can change, I’ll be a lot more effective and fulfilled.”

For Lauzardo, being effective means meeting with Black churchgoers on Sundays to share his own religious upbringing and to explain why, as a physician, he believes faith and science are compatible. It means doing 90-minute Zoom conferences with Spanish-speaking farmworkers in Immokalee to patiently debunk myths — yes, a person can be re-infected with COVID-19, and no, drinking herbal teas won’t cure someone of the virus.

And, since 2005, it has meant traveling with his wife — Dr. Eileen Lauzardo, who practices family medicine at the UF Student Health Care Center — to help children with cancer in Latin America, through their own nonprofit organization. That effort has its roots in a heartbreaking personal story.

In spring 2003, the Lauzardos faced an unprecedented situation when their infant daughter, Keira, after surviving open-heart surgery for a congenital heart defect, was diagnosed with leukemia, as was their son, Ryan. While 4-year-old Ryan survived his cancer, 17-month-old Keira did not.

The tragedy spurred the Lauzardos to form the Keira Grace Foundation, which delivers cancer treatments to children

in developing nations. The foundation connects in-country medical teams with oncologists and cancer centers in developed countries, improving survival rates by more than 400%.

In the last 16 years, the Keira Grace Foundation has helped thousands of children in the Dominican Republic and Colombia; operations are expected to expand to Brazil soon. That help included supplying medications, treatment facilities,

“What we generally do in public health is focus on making things not happen.”

— Dr. Mike Lauzardo

and free room and board for children and their families at the only Ronald McDonald House-style charity in the DR.

Some of the young patients saved have since had children of their own. One survivor is even a medical student.

Three years ago, the Lauzardos got an emergency call from their DR sister foundation that revealed the scope of their nonprofit’s impact, he recalled.

“They said to me, ‘We’ve got a problem. We’re not going to be able to have the children’s Christmas party like we normally do.’ I said, ‘What’s wrong? Is it the venue? Something else?’ And she goes, ‘No, there’s too many kids.’ It’s a survivor’s party that we have every year, and there were so many

kids who survived cancer, they had to spread it out into several events,” he said with a slight catch in his voice.

Today, those survivors number between 300 and 400 — young people who likely wouldn’t be alive today if it weren’t for the efforts and compassion of people like Mike and Eileen Lauzardo and the hundreds of fellow medical professionals who dedicate themselves to the public good.

In his role as a public-health director,

Lauzardo has become widely known to the general public, especially for his coronavirus outreach. But he doesn’t want that attention to obscure the heroic efforts of his many colleagues working behind the scenes to treat and eradicate diseases like COVID-19, TB and cancer, he stressed.

“I’m very much like the rooster who gets credit for the sun coming up in the morning,” he said. “But because I am comfortable speaking — and society tends to overvalue those of us who are good with words — I get some credit I don’t necessarily deserve.

“There are some truly great people I work with. And they are what motivate me to work even harder.”

Furry Farewells

For a record seven years in the Gator100, Lap of Love has been helping pet owners say goodbye with no regrets.

BY BARBARA DRAKE (MFA '04)
PHOTOS COURTESY LAP OF LOVE

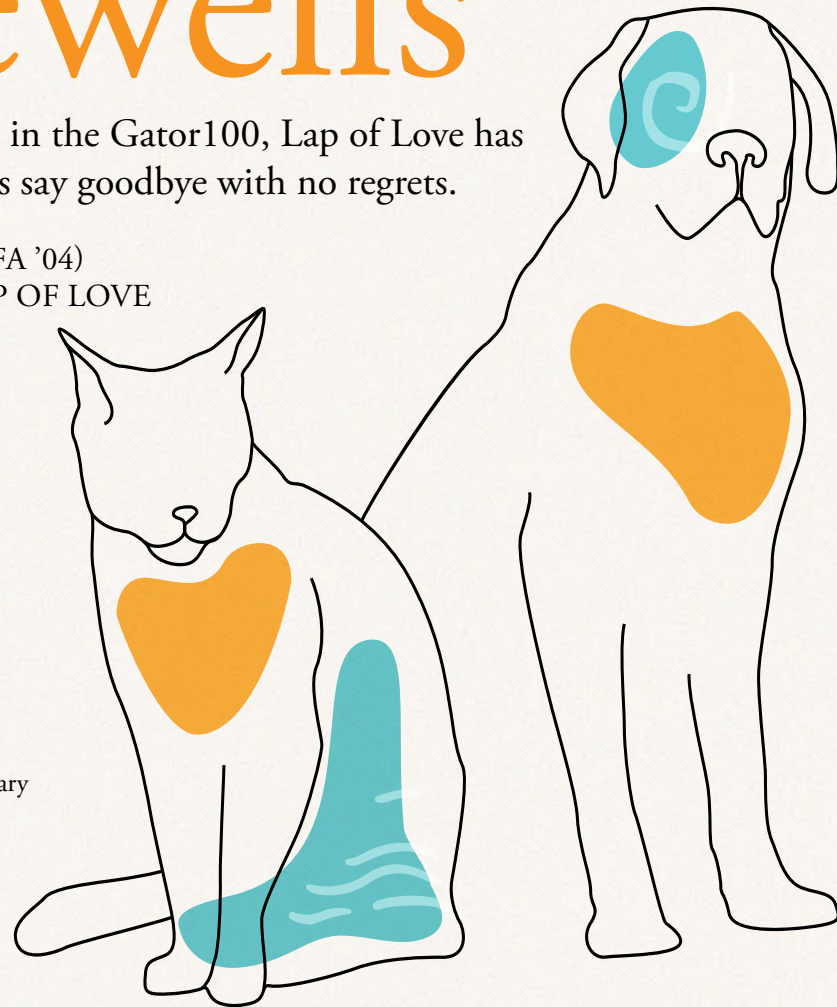
The tan Chihuahua lay quietly on the examination table, her distraught family gathered around her, as veterinarian Dani McVety (BSA '04, DVM '09) prepared to euthanize the 20-year-old pet.

As McVety readied the catheter, the tearful client met her gaze and said, "Please, please — can you leave her on my lap, instead of that cold, sterile table?"

Only three months out of veterinary school, McVety knew she was supposed to take the animal to a back "treatment room" to begin the short euthanasia process. But the woman's plea was too raw and too heartfelt to refuse.

Quickly improvising, McVety lifted the frail Chihuahua to the woman's lap and gave her a slow, peaceful passing, surrounded by the humans who loved her deeply.

Three months later, Lap of Love Veterinary Hospice was born in Tampa. What started as a way for McVety to pay off her student loans grew into a thriving nationwide business with cofounder and fellow Gator veterinarian Mary Gardner (DVM '08). Not just an at-home euthanasia service, Lap of Love provides hospice care for geriatric and terminally ill pets, as well as counseling for owners so they can say goodbye with no regrets.



Since its founding in 2009, Lap of Love has grown into the nation's largest network of veterinarians dedicated solely to end-of-life care at home. Known informally as "Dr. Dani" and "Dr. Mary," McVety and Gardner employ more than 225 veterinarians in 33 states, as well as 120 trained care coordinators who coach pet owners virtually and by phone (those coordinators handle roughly 10,000 calls a week, said Gardner).

For seven consecutive years, Lap of Love has made the Gator100 list of fastest-growing Gator-owned businesses in the world — the first company to sustain that record.



Gator veterinarians Dr. Dani McVety (shown here making a hospice visit) and Dr. Mary Gardner founded Lap of Love in Florida in 2009 as a way to give pets hospice care and a peaceful passing in the comfort of their homes. Lap of Love now has 225 veterinarians in 33 states and has made the Gator100 list of the fastest-growing Gator-owned or -led businesses for seven years in a row.

Friends since their first year of vet school, McVety and Gardner are seeming opposites who together create the perfect business "whole." McVety is gentle and empathetic, with a background in human hospice and

the comfort of the pet's own home ensures that its final moments are peaceful and dignified, rather than tainted with anxiety and fear — or worse, disrupted by a sudden medical emergency.

Since its founding in 2009, Lap of Love has grown into the nation's largest network of veterinarians dedicated solely to end-of-life care at home.

an entrepreneurial bent; Gardner is playful and upbeat, with software expertise and a passion for research, in addition to her medical training.

While neither intended for veterinary hospice to become their life's work, both embraced it wholeheartedly once they saw their influence on animals and "pet parents," as they like to call pet owners.

Their work might seem sad, but they disagree.

"The most challenging part is when we first get to the home and the families are struggling so much," said McVety. "That's a hugely important part of what we do, validating the decision to say goodbye."

Once owners understand their pets will be in no more pain and they are making the best decision, much of the guilt lifts, McVety said. Performing euthanasia in

Afterward, clients feel immense relief and gratitude, and they show it, McVety and Gardner agree.

"My greatest joy is the hugs we get at the end of the day," said Gardner. "I get hugs from big, burly guys that you would never expect. It's very humbling."

"I wish everyone on the face of this earth received the gratitude that we receive for what we do," said McVety. "At the end of the day, we [hospice veterinarians] are left with an intense humility for life and death; the work we do provides meaning."

For pets with weeks or months left to live, medically



Medically supervised pet hospice enables pets and their owners to get the most out of their last weeks or months together, with no regrets, says Lap of Love cofounder Mary Gardner, shown here.

Those regular visits mean veterinarians can treat age-related ailments and give a heads up when problems are terminal, meaning it is time to consider hospice. Timing is everything when it comes to senior pet care, Gardner stressed. “Ideally, I would like clients to approach us three months before the pet passes because so much can be done in that time,” she said. “Making bucket lists and doing those things — having a picnic in a favorite spot, doing a last photoshoot together while the animal is still well enough — that enables clients to have no regrets.”

The exponential success of Lap of Love points to a broader trend: the growth of geriatric and end-of-life veterinary medicine.

When Lap of Love began in 2009, few veterinarians were specializing in this type of medicine. Today, the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care has 1,220 members throughout the world, including 181 Lap of Love members,

supervised hospice can make a profound difference in their quality of life.

“Veterinary hospice is not about extending suffering, but rather preventing suffering from occurring at all,” explains an article on the Lap of Love website.

Lap of Love veterinarians and care coordinators advise clients on recognizing their pet’s pain and treating it,

“Veterinary hospice is not about extending suffering, but rather preventing suffering from occurring at all.”

helping senior pets with mobility issues, managing incontinence and more. As with human hospice, the goal is ensuring the pet’s comfort throughout the end stages of life, not on finding a cure.

If started early enough, hospice can help clients and pets make the most of their remaining time together. Sadly, studies Gardner has done show that more than 50% of dogs and cats will not be seen by their primary care veterinarian within a year before they die. Lap of Love would like to see that paradigm change.

“I’d like for all pets to be seen at least twice yearly by their primary care veterinarian by the time they hit the double digits,” said Gardner.

said IAAHPC Executive Director Coleen Ellis. The IAAHPC is one of several bodies that certifies veterinarians in animal hospice and palliative care, and its leaders say they have watched with pride as Lap of Love has grown along with the field.

“Dr. Dani and Dr. Mary are such pioneers in our field and are truly amazing ladies,” said Ellis.

The pair’s expertise has also come full circle with their alma mater. Since 2014, they have regularly taught an end-of-life medical course at the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. While it is an elective, more than 80% of UF students specializing in small animal medicine take it, noted McVety.



For hospice veterinarians, counseling pet owners is just as much a part of their work as tending to geriatric and terminally ill animals. “That’s a hugely important part of what we do, validating the decision to say goodbye,” says McVety. “At the end of the day, we are left with an intense humility for life and death; the work we do provides meaning.”

The college’s support has meant a great deal to the Lap of Love entrepreneurs, McVety said.

“When I first started doing hospice work, I heard from a lot of people inside and outside the veterinary profession, ‘You know, this is never going to be a full-time job, clients aren’t going to want this,’” she said. “I have got to tell you, right from the start, the UF veterinary school was always so supportive of us, being our cheerleaders.”

“Our anesthesiology professor at UF, Dr. Sheilah Robertson, is now Lap of Love’s senior medical director,” she added.

Increasingly, American pet owners are willing to keep their aging pets with them as long as possible, reports the American Animal Hospital Association. That includes being willing to take on home-nursing tasks and to reach out for hospice care and advice. Those trends suggest Lap of Love has many years of growth potential ahead. And at the heart of that ever-evolving success story is a true orange-and-blue friendship.

“It’s great to be in business with a classmate and a friend,” said Gardner. “I am so incredibly happy we can share this experience together.”

MORE ABOUT

Visit Lap of Love’s extensive, resource-filled website to learn about veterinary hospice and to find a provider in your area: <https://www.lapoflove.com/>

Browse the videos on Lap of Love’s YouTube channel to find out about senior pet care, creating long-lasting pet memorials, the company’s mission and more: uff.to/kycjch

GATOR100 2021

UF alumni have created and led some of the fastest-growing businesses in the world. The UF Alumni Association is proud to recognize these amazing business owners and entrepreneurs, whose grit, determination and efforts fueled the growth of their companies despite this past year's pandemic. See the fast-paced, virtual award ceremony at [Gator100.ufl.edu](https://gator100.ufl.edu).

TOP 10

- 1 **Titanium Wireless** | GULF BREEZE
- 2 **Engineered Design Services LLC** | WEST PALM BEACH
- 3 **Onicx Group** | TAMPA
- 4 **BHRS Companies** | JACKSONVILLE
- 5 **Nationwide Pharmaceutical** | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
- 6 **Stax by Fattmerchant** | ORLANDO
- 7 **Bryan Builders LLC** | LONGWOOD
- 8 **WPForms** | WEST PALM BEACH
- 9 **JWB Real Estate Capital LLC** | JACKSONVILLE
- 10 **Carbonxt, Inc.** | GAINESVILLE

MORE HONOREES

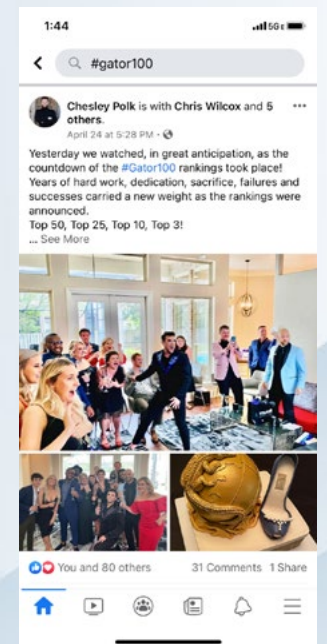
- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 11 Healthy Steps Nutrition | Deerfield Beach |
| 12 Park & Eleazer Construction | Clearwater |
| 13 Walk-On's Sports Bistreaux | Baton Rouge, LA |
| 14 Flipstone Technology | Austin, Texas |
| 15 Vitrazza | Golden, CO |
| 16 Anderson Construction Company of North Florida | Panama City |
| 17 Florida Contract Automated Shading | Newberry |
| 18 Passport | Charlotte, NC |
| 19 Four Seasons Concierge Transportation | Park City, UT |
| 20 Legacy Protection Lawyers LLP | St. Petersburg |
| 21 Bearbottom Clothing | Clearwater |
| 22 CEPRA Landscape LLC | Oakland |
| 23 Leader & Leader, P.A. | Fort Lauderdale |
| 24 Scott + Cormia Architecture and Interiors | Orlando |
| 25 LeadingAgile | Duluth, GA |
| 26 SSP Innovations LLC | Centennial, CO |
| 27 ShalePro Energy Services | Houston, PA |
| 28 Celebrate Primary Care | Gainesville |
| 29 J2 Solutions, Inc. | Venice |
| 30 AgAmerica Lending | Lakeland |
| 31 JK2 Scenic | Apopka |
| 32 Holliday Group LLC | Sarasota |

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| 33 Gulf Coast Underground LLC | Theodore, AL |
| 34 Burgess Civil LLC | Tampa |
| 35 Landsberg Bennett Private Wealth Management | Punta Gorda |
| 36 Embark Safety LLC | Orlando |
| 37 Zinnia Wealth Management | Ocala |
| 38 RND Automation | Lakewood Ranch |
| 39 Spotlight Energy | Houston, Texas |
| 40 Action Equipment | Miami |
| 41 Securifera | Charleston, SC |
| 42 Cartaya and Associates Architects | Fort Lauderdale |
| 43 Greek House | Santa Monica, CA |
| 44 Springer Construction | Lakeland |
| 45 Tellus | Deerfield Beach |
| 46 Miller Construction Company | Fort Lauderdale |
| 47 Foresight Construction Group, Inc. | Gainesville |
| 48 Gulf Building LLC | Fort Lauderdale |
| 49 Lamark Media | Boca Raton |
| 50 Paragon 28, Inc. | Englewood, CO |
| 51 Ironside Insurance Group LLC | Boston, MA |
| 52 Heatherwood Construction Co. | Bonita Springs |
| 53 East West Manufacturing | Atlanta, GA |
| 54 MechaSpin | Lake Mary |
| 55 Delta Capital Management LLC | Maitland |

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| 56 Carroll Bradford, Inc. | Orlando |
| 57 Rodda Construction, Inc. | Lakeland |
| 58 OnPay Solutions | Jacksonville |
| 59 JWB Property Management LLC | Jacksonville |
| 60 Avant Healthcare Professionals | Casselberry |
| 61 AIT Engineering | Orlando |
| 62 The FOCUS Group | St. Augustine |
| 63 Park Bar and 79 Rentals | Marietta, GA |
| 64 Cava Companies | Richmond, VA |
| 65 Piano In 21 Days | Baton Rouge, LA |
| 66 Marmer Construction, Inc. | Sebring |
| 67 Green Design Construction & Development LLC | Stuart |
| 68 Ovation Construction | Oviedo |
| 69 RB Marks Construction, Inc. | Winter Springs |
| 70 Spark, Inc. | Jacksonville |
| 71 Marquis Latimer + Halback, Inc. | St. Augustine |
| 72 DOME HEADWEAR CO. | Jacksonville Beach |
| 73 Group PMX LLC | Katonah, NY |
| 74 Encore Mechanical LLC | Southlake, Texas |
| 75 Jimerson Birr | Jacksonville |
| 76 AspirEDU | Anna Maria |
| 77 Kinetix Physical Therapy | Gainesville |
| 78 Planate Management Group | Alexandria, VA |

#1 TITANIUM WIRELESS

Titanium Wireless provides nationwide, concierge-level, mobile-device-related services including unlimited data (with no overage fees — all through major mobile and communication carriers) fleet tracking, data security, device maintenance and a host of other technology-connected needs for businesses large and small. Titanium has transformed the customer experience by creating a simple model to respond quickly, resolve issues and increase efficiency for their clients.



See the Titanium Wireless team's reaction when their No. 1 rank was revealed at: uff.to/tpfftk

Jessica Rhodes (MBA '14), Titanium Wireless founder and CEO



Archer Aviation unveiled this six-propeller autonomous testing model in June.

These two Gators are leveraging their degrees and expertise to create a brand new industry

By George Spencer

An Archer Aviation air taxi will fly you to airports in Miami and L.A. in 2024. They’re the first planned hubs for this electric aircraft company co-founded by **Adam Goldstein** (BSBA ’01) and **Brett Adcock** (BSBA ’08).

In February, United Airlines, eager to cut its carbon footprint, announced a \$1 billion deal to buy 200 of these aircraft if Archer wins FAA approval for its sleek four-passenger vehicle. Days later, Archer, valued at \$3.8 billion, announced an agreement with Atlas Crest Investment Corp. (NYSE: ACIC), which, when the transaction closes, will see Archer listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the new ticker symbol ACHR.

“Our drive is shaped by our years at UF,” says co-CEO Goldstein. “It’s had a strong influence on our mindset and approach.”

AIR TAXIS DEFINED

Air taxis are eVTOLs — electric Vertical Take Off and Landing vehicles. Each v-tailed aircraft has 12 five-bladed, highly tapered propellers that tilt up for takeoff and landing and rotate to horizontal for forward flight. They will travel up to 150 mph and go 60 miles on a single charge, ferrying travelers to airports and in and around urban areas from soon-to-be built ecoports. Each air taxi could cut CO2 emissions up to 50% per passenger compared to other forms of transportation on airport trips, according to United.

“Our biggest challenge is public acceptance,” says Adcock. “We’re already working on the long-term infrastructure we’ll need with city governments in L.A. and Miami, which have some of the nation’s most congested roads.”

Unlike helicopters, neighborhood-friendly air taxis promise to be far quieter. Airfare per passenger mile will be similar to a comparable Uber trip, according to Archer.

THE FOUNDERS

“We are true aviation nerds,” admits Adcock. He says he owes his “obsession” with all things flight-related to Neil Armstrong. He reveres the Apollo astronaut because he changed “the face of humanity” and for his aviation journey. “He even got his pilot’s license before his driver’s license,” says Adcock.

Both men admire would-be Mars colonizer Elon Musk. “His ability to push past the notion of ‘That’s impossible’ is almost unmatched,” says Adcock. “We take on that mindset at Archer. We ask ‘Why not?’ instead of assuming things can’t be done. If you’re constrained by old thinking, you’ll never succeed.”

But the past also has a special place in the co-founders’ hearts. Eric Wright, a descendant of the Wright Brothers, leads Archer’s FAA certification team. “It’s a great full-circle moment for us. We think Wilbur and Orville would be proud,” says Adcock.

UF’S ARCHER LAB



Peter Ifju

Archer first got off the ground — literally — at UF’s electric vehicle design lab headed by professor Peter Ifju, associate chair of the Department of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. He and professors Larry Ukeiley and Steven Miller, along with graduate students, built and flight tested a subscale prototype in 2018, a success that led to other prototypes and a “massive” half-scale flying model, according to Ifju. Last year the lab began studying the aeroacoustics of rotors to hush the sounds of the propellers.

Since then, Goldstein and Adcock helped create a space for Ifju’s lab near downtown Gainesville. The lab has been renamed the Archer Aviation eVTOL Lab and has helped Adcock and Goldstein in another way. The Gators didn’t know what to name their latest company until Goldstein saw the street sign outside the lab — Archer Road.

“Adam came in and said, ‘Archer Aviation. That’s what we want to call the company,’” Ifju recalls.

“WE ASK ‘WHY NOT?’ INSTEAD OF ASSUMING THINGS CAN’T BE DONE. IF YOU’RE CONSTRAINED BY OLD THINKING, YOU’LL NEVER SUCCEED.”

GREAT GATORS

WITH GREAT NEWS

IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Erica Loewe (BSPR '11) has joined President Biden's all-female communications team as the new director of African American Media for the White House. She previously served as deputy communications director to House Majority Whip James Clyburn and House Financial Services Committee Chairwoman Maxine Waters. During her time at UF, Loewe worked as the events coordinator in the UF President's Office. She was affiliated with the UF Minority Mentor program and the UF Center for Leadership and Service.



ONCE A GATOR, ALWAYS A GATOR

Longtime Gator fan **Abe Fraden** of Jacksonville (seated at right) celebrated his 100th birthday in February. He first began following the Gators football team as a boy because he loves football and UF was the best local team for Jacksonville. However, he didn't attend his first game until 1938 when he was 17 years old. Abe says Florida took on Mississippi State that day and was trounced 14 to nothing. "That's the way things went back then," he said.

Fraden made a point to attend every home and away game possible, although his service in WWII followed by his attendance at the University of Illinois for two years interrupted his streak.

Still, Abe stuck around to see his Gators improve: He was present when UF won all three of its football national championships in Tempe, AZ, New Orleans and Miami. He has not been able to attend games since the last national championship six years ago, but says he'll never stop rooting for the team.

His best memory about being a Gator fan: "When we beat Ohio State for the national championship. We were down, but came back to win it all."

Fraden predicts a 7-3 season this year, although he will "hope for the best." He'll be watching every game on TV.

Abe's "baby brother," Bernie Fraden, age 86, says Abe has a "very good recollection" of Gator football's milestones, old-time players, game scores and more. He also doesn't know of any other Gator who has been a fan for that long. "Eighty-eight years! I doubt there's anyone who can beat that," Bernie said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: LET US KNOW OF OTHER LONGTIME GATOR FANS AT FLORIDAGATOR@UFALUMNI.UFL.EDU OR 352-392-5491.



**"EIGHTY-EIGHT YEARS!
[AS A GATORS FAN]. I DOUBT
THERE'S ANYONE WHO CAN
BEAT THAT!"**

— BERNIE FRADEN, ABE'S BROTHER



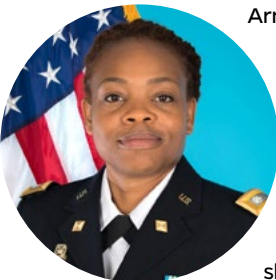
Happy Birthday!

David Aronson (BSAg '52), on the left in this photo, turned 90 this year. In 1972, as president of the Florida Board of Veterinary Medicine, Aronson had the honor of signing UF's first permit to practice veterinary medicine. This act cleared the path for UF to create its College of Veterinary Medicine. Aronson helped raise funds for the new college, as well. As such, Aronson's permit with his signature hangs in the college.

While a student at UF, Aronson was roommates with **Marshall Nirenberg** (BS '48, MS '52), on the right in this photo, at Pi Lambda Phi fraternity. Nirenberg would become a biochemist and geneticist who later won a Nobel Prize for deciphering the human genetic code. Nirenberg introduced Aronson to the Alachua General Hospital Nursing School valedictorian, Sherlee, in 1951. Aronson married Sherlee two years later, and they spent more than 66 years together before she died in 2019.

Aronson, a U.S. Army veteran who decided on his veterinarian career path while working summers during WWII at a dairy farm near Oneonta, NY, received a plethora of honors over the years from governors, Audubon Wildlife and other prestigious organizations. He helped create the national veterinary practical exam, accredit veterinary medicine schools and even retrain Cuban veterinarians who sought to practice in the U.S.

TALENTS REWARDED



Army National Guard Lt. Col. **Yasmeen Neal** (BABA '02), pictured at left and below in the orange shirt, is the 2021 Black Engineer of the Year, an honor bestowed by the Stars and Stripes National Guard Bureau. Neal serves as a program analyst and as the liaison to the Army Finance and Comptroller military deputy. For more than four years, she also has been a director and lead mentor with a youth robotics program she started to encourage girls to pursue STEM careers.

“Yasmeen Neal is an amazing talent who has a gift and a passion to turn today’s children into tomorrow’s leaders of America,” said Lt. Gen. Thomas Horlander, a military deputy who directs the Army’s budget. “Her singular efforts as a compassionate leader and team builder are touching the lives of America’s future.”

NEAL’S ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE:

- “Don’t always choose [mentors] that look like you or think like you, even if you’re uncomfortable starting the conversation with someone. If I only talk to people who are like me and think like me, what am I really learning and what am I really contributing?”
- “Educate yourself on the process [of your team] and [your] business. Put yourself in environments where you will learn. Be okay with not knowing everything.”
- “Be patient and learn as much as you can. Mistakes are OK. It’s OK to show up and listen to your team and peers. Humble yourself, sit back and observe until you see where you can add value. Your time will come.”



VOLUNTEER LEADER

Lori Killinger (BA '85) is a gubernatorial-appointed member of the Volunteer Florida Board, also called the Florida Commission on Community Service. She is one of 18 people advising the organization that plays a critical role in emergency management and coordination of volunteer services in Florida communities. Killinger is a governmental affairs, legislative and lobbying attorney, as well as executive shareholder in the Lewis, Longman & Walker law firm. She represents clients before the legislative and executive branches of government, regulatory agencies at the state and local levels, the Florida Cabinet, and legislative and gubernatorial commissions.



PRODUCT NAVI-GATOR

Courtnei Sanders (BAEcon '13, MSFin '14) of Atlanta is director of Biz Dev & Analytics at Ware2Go, a UPS-owned nationwide fulfillment network designed to help merchants position products closer to end customers for a fast and reliable order-to-delivery experience. Prior to this post, she worked with SunTrust Robinson Humphrey and was a mergers and acquisitions analyst for Wells Fargo.



VALUABLE INHERITANCE

Passing insights and lessons in leadership from generation to generation has been a hallmark of UF alumni, including those involved in student government. As a means of saying thank you to one such alumnus whose volunteering and service has spanned more than 20 years, UF Student Government created the **Brian Burgoon Outstanding Mentorship Award**, which will be given annually to a student or faculty member. At UF, Burgoon (BA '94, JD '97) of Atlanta has given his time and talents to numerous UF groups, including the UF Alumni Association (past president), UF Student Government and the Levin College of Law.

NEW VP

Daniel Young (BSCE '05) is vice president of CHW Professional Consultants, a development and construction services firm in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Ocala. He leads its land development and transportation engineering departments.



BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Naren Patel (BSAgEng '94) is the Georgia Associated Builders and Contractors 2021 chairman. He holds general contracting licenses in multiple states and is vice president of Alpha Insulation & Waterproofing, overseeing sales and operations in the Charlotte, Raleigh, Tampa, Miami, Atlanta and Orlando offices. He is also president of the Georgia Walls & Ceiling industry association. He lives in Marietta, GA.

INFLUENCER AMONG INFLUENCERS

Ian Rayder (MA '03), a former key staffer in the U.S. House of Representatives and Colorado’s deputy secretary of state, is now a principal at the Klein/Johnson bipartisan lobbying firm in Washington, D.C. His career has spanned federal, state and local government, as well as the private sector.



TOP SCIENTIST

Robert Newton Jr. (PhD '02) is chair of the Lifestyle Change and Behavioral Health Study Section for the National Institutes of Health’s Center for Scientific Review.

NIH Study Sections may annually review as many as 300 grant applications focused on promoting health behaviors or lifestyle changes that reduce health risks or help people recover from diseases, conditions or treatments. The proposed research typically uses behavioral strategies to improve study participants’ well-being, delay the onset of disease or to maintain recovery from diseases.

Aside from his NIH role, Newton’s personal research focuses on addressing health disparities in African Americans. He is co-principal investigator of two NIH-funded studies examining whether African Americans’ risk of Alzheimer’s disease can be reduced through exercise. African Americans have two times the risk of developing the disease compared to other racial or ethnic groups.





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INDUSTRY LEADER

Evan Morgan (BSAC '82) is principal at the Kaufman Rossin accounting firm in Miami. He's focused his 35 year career on income tax and compliance services for businesses, including construction, manufacturing, health care, real estate, technology and professional service firms.



HIGH FINANCE

Heather Slavkin Corzo (BSJ '01) is the new policy director at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. In this position, she will lead a team of policy experts who will advise SEC Chair Gary Gensler on rulemakings.



Corzo's previous roles include director of capital markets policy for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which represents 12 million active and retired union workers. She has also served as head of U.S. policy at the Principles for Responsible Investment, senior fellow at Americans for Financial Reform, director of the AFL-CIO's office of investment and senior legal and policy advisor for the labor union group.



STRATEGY CREATOR

Kris Wiebeck (BSAcc '06, MAcc '06) is chief strategy officer for Baldwin Risk Partners (BRP) Group, an independent insurance and risk management advisory and distribution firm in Tampa, serving more than 600,000 clients across the country and internationally. He formerly served as the company's CFO.

WORKING, PLAYING HARD

In January, **Josh Lane** (BSTel '14) was promoted to video production senior manager for the Miami Dolphins. He manages video content execution and is part of the videographer/editor production team for both the Miami Dolphins and Hard Rock Stadium. His previous jobs include producing video for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.



HIGHEST HONORS



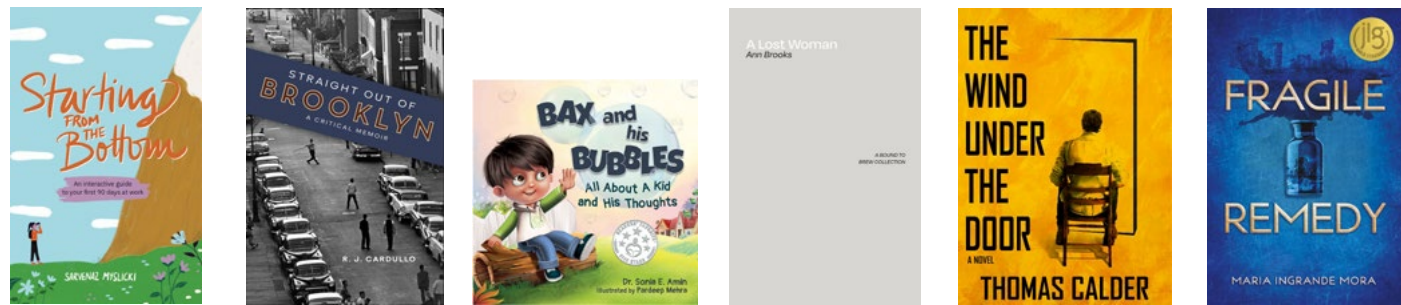
Ani Mathers (PhD '12) received the University System of Maryland Board of Regents' Faculty Award for Excellence, one of USM's highest honors. She is associate professor of finance and associate dean of Salisbury University's Franklin P. Perdue School of Business. In addition to teaching, she is credited with advising students in the university's

Financial Management Association chapter and Student United Way, and through her leadership as founding director of the Business Honors Program.

BUILDING DREAMS

Ekta Desai (BSDES '08) is design lead and **David Torbert** (BDES '92, MSBC '93) is partner and education leader for the SchenkelShultz Architecture firm. Desai, below left, first joined the firm as an intern in 2006. After graduation, she worked for firms in New York City and Mexico City. She rejoined SchenkelShultz in 2018. Torbert joined the firm in 1994, and has been at the forefront of projects encompassing more than 23 million square feet, including those for Orange County Public Schools, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.





GOOD GATOR READS & LISTENS

EARLY CAREER ADVICE

Sarvenaz Myslicki (BS CompSci '13) of Washington, D.C., wrote “Starting from the Bottom,” an interactive guide for new hires who are about to embark on their first 90 days in the workforce. Myslicki is a technology executive who started as an entry-level associate in 2013. Within seven years, she became one of the youngest vice presidents at a Fortune 500 company.

LESSONS THAT LAST

R.J. Cardullo (BA '73) wrote “Straight Out of Brooklyn: A Critical Memoir,” which explores his Italian-American roots and the profound effect that his extended, working-class family had on his life. Cardullo taught for four decades at the University of Michigan, Colgate and New York University, as well as abroad as a Fulbright lecturer. He now lives in his wife’s native Finland.

THOUGHTFUL RESOURCE

Sonia Amin (BSAg '02, DPharm '06) of Debary wrote the children’s book “Bax and His Bubbles” to foster healthy thinking habits. Amin is a wife, mother and pharmacist who loves encouraging others and believes being healthy is not just about physical well-being.

NOVEL REFLECTS GRIM REALITY

Anne MacDonald (BAEd '91, MEd '92) of Gainesville wrote “A Lost Woman,” a domestic thriller about a late-30s daughter who is forced to care for her terminally ill, abusive mother. MacDonald is a behavioral health expert whose work has borne witness to the long-term effects of the cycle of violence in families.

A NOVELIST IS BORN

Thomas Calder (BA '08) published his debut novel, “The Wind Under the Door,” about two strangers trying to start their lives over together in the mountains of Western North Carolina. He is the Arts & Culture editor at Mountain Xpress, a weekly publication based in Asheville, NC, where he lives with his family.

SCIENCE-FANTASY MEETS ROMANCE

Maria Ingrande Mora (BA '02) wrote “Fragile Remedy,” a young adult dystopian novel about 16-year-old Nate, a genetically engineered medical surrogate, who must choose to save himself or the life of the boy he loves. Mora is the content director for the Big Sea digital marketing agency in St. Petersburg, where she lives with her two children.



AVERAGE TO EXTRAORDINARY

Bobby Raymond (BSBA '84) is featured in chapter 30 of “The Walk-On Method,” which shares the stories of 31 “underdogs who became extraordinary.” Raymond was a 1981 football walk-on at UF, who became the team’s starting kicker and led the SEC in several categories in 1983. Today, the former St. Augustine Gator Club president owns Brightway Insurance, Fort Caroline, and lives in Atlantic Beach with his family.

IN MEMORIAM

PACESETTER, ADVOCATE, HERO

Ruth Alexander, founder of UF’s women’s intercollegiate athletic program in 1972, died in April in Gainesville at the age of 83. One of the national leaders of the Title IX movement in women’s sports, Alexander received the prestigious appointment of Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Exercise and Sports Science during her 36-year career at UF. As Florida’s first women’s athletics director from 1972 to 1981, she spearheaded a campaign to allow equal opportunities for female athletes to compete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, advancing intramural and club sports levels to varsity status.

President Richard Nixon appointed her to the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness and Nutrition, to which she was reappointed by presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. She also founded the Florida Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and was honored last year with the 2020 Women Leaders Nike Lifetime Achievement Award.

“She never made it a ‘men’s sports vs. women’s sports’ issue,” UF sports historian **Norm Carlson** (BSBA '56) said of Alexander, “but she also never backed down when it came time to help women students have an opportunity to compete in intercollegiate athletics.”

Amy Caulkins, who swam at UF from 1979 to 1983, knew Alexander as her athletic director and as a professor for a few of her classes. “Without women like her, I would never have had the academic and athletic opportunities afforded to men. Her work changed my future forever, and I thank her for her positive influence and efforts on behalf of all women athletes,” Caulkins said.

When Alexander retired as women’s athletic director in 1981, the program had grown to eight sports, and the swimming team had won the national championship. The Gators have now won 141 SEC titles and 20 NCAA national championships in women’s sports, produced over 100 female Olympians, and have been ranked among the nation’s top 10 combined collegiate athletic programs for an unprecedented 35 consecutive years.

“Her work changed my future forever, and I thank her for her positive influence and efforts on behalf of all women athletes.”

— SWIMMER AMY CAULKINS (1979-83)



Alexander



Mitchell

A PROUD FIRST

When **Sophy Mae Mitchell Jr.** (BSAg '53) came to UF, the first thing she did was seek out of Gator marching band Director Col. Harold Bachman.

“I have to march,” she said, knowing that the instrumentalists were all men at that time. Bachman said one of his two bell lyre positions was open and suggested she learn to play that instrument. She did just that.

On the day when Bachman announced instrument assignments, a male bell lyre-playing student showed up, as well. “He got the job,” Mitchell said. The following year, however, both bell lyre players had either graduated or left UF.

“So the next year, I became the first girl in the marching band,” Mitchell said proudly. Twenty years later, in 1973, Mitchell was a member of the first Gator Alumni Band, where she picked up the bell lyre once again. In the 48 years since then, she missed only two of the alumni band’s annual reunions.

“Sophy really loved meeting the younger alumni,” said Michelle Taunton, Gator Band Alumni Association president.

Professor Jay Watkins, current director of the Gator Marching Band, said generations of alumni recall Mitchell’s enthusiastic, contagious personality.

Mitchell died in January at age 90.

“There’s nothing quite like being the first girl in the Gator band,” Mitchell said in an interview several years ago. “UF will always be my place in the sun.”

— KRISTIAN JAMES (BMUS, BSPR '21)



Harris

SUPER FAN

Gordon “Stumpy” Harris (BA ’61, JD ’65) died in April at age 82. During his freshman football season in high school (Jacksonville), his coach noted he was as hard to move off the line as a tree stump, leading his teammates to dub him “Stumpy.” In keeping with his signature optimism, he embraced the nickname as a compliment. An eminent domain attorney, Harris’ career spanned 65 years, and he worked right up until shortly before his death. As a UF student, Harris continuously contributed his talents: He was Kappa Alpha Order member, president of the Interfraternity Council, Florida Blue Key member and eventually a UF Hall of Fame inductee. He considered his UF education to be the source of his success and continued to give back after graduation. Among his volunteer efforts, he was a UF Alumni Association past president, Gator Boosters legacy director and past president, and member of the UF Foundation and University Athletic Association boards. He leaves behind his wife, Ruthie, a daughter, two sons and many other family members.



Esposito

“RELENTLESS” VOLUNTEER

Lisa Esposito (JD ’92) of Riverview died of breast cancer in March at age 55. The employment attorney, who is described as a tough, competitive, hardworking, trusted friend with a wicked sense of humor and a giant compassionate heart, “didn’t have an off button,” says her friend **Gigi Pelosi** (BA ART ’84) of St. Petersburg. Esposito volunteered extensively with the Tampa Gator Club and other local non-profits, and had a gift for encouraging other Gators, including **Danny Wuerrfel** (BSPR ’96), **Jack Youngblood** (BSBA ’72), “Mr. 2-Bits” **George Edmondson** and **Charley Pell**, to participate. Her penchant for philanthropic activities was so varied and vast that Esposito was known to use her home and car to collect donated items during charity drives; stay up all night preparing for charity events; or introduce herself to homeless people before going to get them food, socks, clothes or even pet food. Shortly before her death, the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team selected Esposito as a “Community Hero” and awarded \$50,000 to three charities she selected. Over the years, Esposito served in the Tampa Gator Club through numerous leadership roles, including president and vice president.

“PRINCIPLED PRINCIPAL”

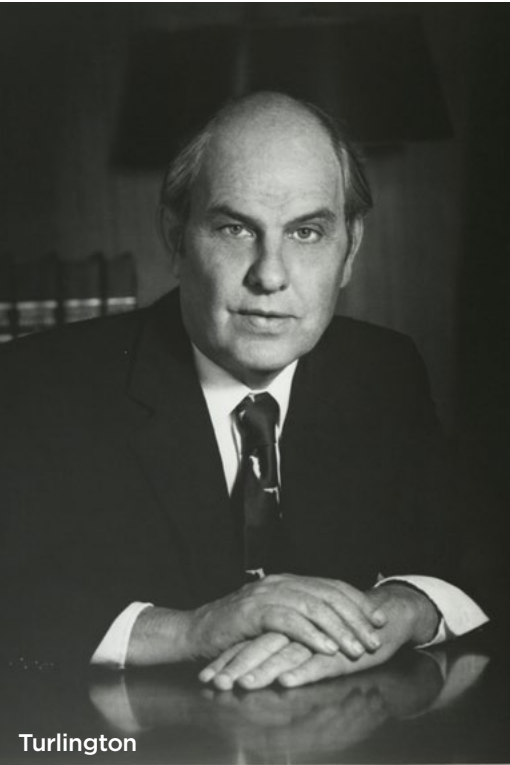
Gator by choice **Joe Louis Clark** died in December at age 82. Best known as New Jersey’s “principled principal” who wielded a baseball bat and bullhorn, Clark was the inspiration behind the film “Lean on Me,” starring Morgan Freeman. Clark retired to Gainesville and is also known for being the father of the most storied U.S. track and field family. His children include Olympian and businesswoman Joetta Clark Diggs, Olympic athlete and Bermuda Tourism Authority Director of Sports Business Development **Hazel Clark** (BA ’01), and former UF and Olympic track and field coach Joe “JJ” Clark Jr., who now directs Stanford University’s track and field program. His granddaughter, **Talitha Diggs**, is a current UF student track athlete.

Clark’s post-collegiate career as a U.S. Army Reserve sergeant and drill instructor gave him a respect for order and achievement, which came to define his more than three-decade career in education. His tough love methods won him both admirers and critics nationwide. President Ronald Reagan once offered Clark a White House policy advisor post, but Clark’s dedication to his students and community led him to decline the role. Clark authored a book about his efforts, “Laying Down the Law: Joe Clark’s Strategy for Saving Our Schools.” A CW network TV series based on his approach is reportedly in the works.

Learn more about Clark on pages 74-75.



Clark



Turlington

MOVER AND SHAKER

State Representative. Florida’s Speaker of the House. World War II and Korean War Veteran. Commissioner of Education. Professor of Business. Namesake of UF’s largest classroom building and the State Department of Education headquarters. **Ralph Turlington** (BSBA ’42) donned many titles during his lifetime, which spanned 100 years and ended at his home in Durham, NC, in May. During his career, he fought to integrate schools; led a citizens campaign that created the Florida Lottery; and pushed to create a fair apportionment of the state legislature. He also played a role in creating UF’s medical school and center.

He still holds the title of being elected to constitutional office in Florida more times than any other person in the history of the Sunshine State. He received the Distinguished Alumnus award from UF and from its (K-12) P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School, where he was a member of its first class.

His personal collection, the “Ralph D. Turlington Papers,” live on at UF’s Special and Area Studies Collections library on the second floor of Library East. From supporting Gen. George Patton’s Third Army during the Battle of the Bulge to voting on more bills than any other legislator in state history, Turlington’s strength, strategic thinking, passion and staunch moral compass influenced much of our society today.

A few more of his accomplishments: establishing the current state employee pension system, Florida’s Government in the Sunshine law, Florida’s Consumer Protection Agency, legislation that lowered Florida’s voting age to 18, and enacting Florida’s first corporate income tax.

TRAILBLAZER, PHILANTHROPIST

Judy Lynn Prince (BSJ ’64) of Washington, D.C., died in January at age 78. The UF Hall of Fame member and College of Journalism and Communications Distinguished Alumna award recipient retired from Mobil Corporation in 1995 after 21 years as its executive television producer. Prince’s broadcasting career began in high school with “Tampa Bandstand,” a local version of Dick Clark’s popular “American Bandstand.” She then worked in Tampa and New York City.

She is a past president of the New York City Chapter of American Women in Radio and Television and a past Public Relations Woman of the Year named by the New York City Chapter of Women in Communications.

In retirement, Prince focused on nonprofit work. Among her many contributions, she gave more than \$2.5 million to her UF college to support, in part, students and student assistants.



Prince

LIFELONG SCIENTIST

Irwin Pollack (bachelor’s 1945) of Ann Arbor, MI, died in January at age 95. The UF Phi Beta Kappa started his career as a civilian scientist at the Air Force Operations Lab in Washington, D.C., and the Cambridge Research Lab in Bedford, MS.

However, he spent the bulk of his career as a psychology professor at the University of Michigan (1963-1995). His research led him to Japan, New Zealand, China and various locations in the U.S. He was internationally known for his novel approaches to improve the understanding of the human auditory system. Irwin is survived by his wife of almost 72 years, Marcille Kaufman Pollack, and their three children.



Pollack

GATORS AROUND THE WORLD

Enjoy these reader-submitted photos from their past and present adventures.



Christine (Janowsky) White (BS '97, MAMC '99) of Tallahassee gave this Gator chomp in another “tropical paradise — gorgeous St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.” White is statewide director for the Office of Employee Well-being at the Florida Department of Children and Families.



Jeb Boyce (BSBA '81) showed his Gator pride while hiking in Sedona, AZ. He's standing in front of a “huge” sink hole which, he says, proves “they’re not exclusive to Florida.”

 Send your photos and captions to:
FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu



Marla (BA '98) and **Ryan Walker** (BSBA '98, MBA '04) of Sarasota with their sons Jake and Zach showed their Gator spirit at Glacier National Park in Montana.



Andrew (BSBA '74) and **Ana Manrara** of Miami showed their Gator pride in Moab, UT.



Rosie O'Bourke (BME '69, MEd '74) and Rusty Garner took this photo in Cienfuegos, Cuba. She lived in Cuba for the first 13 years of her life but now splits her time between Bryson City, NC, and Panama City, where she works at Gulf Coast Community College.



Fred Schirmer (BS '83 DVM '88), a veterinarian from Gainesville, paused for this photo on Kailua Beach in Oahu, HI, during his visit with relatives. He notes the MCBH Training Range in the background looks like a Gator head.



When **Graham Miller** (BAFin '17) of Islamorada spent a week in Beaver Creek, CO, with his girlfriend, he took with him a vintage UF ski jacket that he bought for the trip. While they were skiing, quite a few people shouted “Go Gators” in their direction. Then, they spotted another person with a jacket similar to Miller’s, who turned out to be a Gator, too. Pictured are Miller on his snowboard with **Bob Ford** (DMD '82), who splits his time between homes in Ocala and Colorado. Photo by Lindsey Heller, who says “Gators are everywhere!”



Atlanta Gator Club President **Kamelya Hinson**(BSTel'90) and outgoing UF Association of Black Alumni President, **Yvonne Hinson** (BAEd '71, MEd '72) of Gainesville chomped it up in Havana, Cuba.



From left, U.S. Army veterinarian **Greg Reppas** (BS '93, DVM '08) of Colorado Springs, CO; middle school principal **Michael Galbreath** (BA '93, MEd '94) of Cape Coral; and Siemens strategic procurement manager **Dave Gaedele** (BS '94) of Orlando show their Gator pride while snow hiking in the shadow of Long's Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park. The three became best friends while attending Spruce Creek High in Port Orange, then roomed together at UF.



Palm Beach Gator Club member and pharmacist **Cynthia Moreau** (BSA '10, DPH '14) celebrated Independence Day by taking her boat from Lake Boca Raton to Bimini, about 80 km east of Miami. “I have enjoyed watching many Gator football games aboard the boat while anchored here!”



Vote for the best of three official UF license plate submissions in the monthly Gator Nation News email newsletter. Winners receive a \$25 Gator prize pack.

You can win, too, as this year the UF Alumni Association is offering a \$25 rebate to Gators who switch from plain Jane tags to the official UF license plate. Learn more at: [UFPLATES.COM](https://ufplates.com)

Want to see your unique tag published?



Send photos with your name, town, degree info and occupation to:

FloridaGator@ufalumni.ufl.edu



DO YOU HAVE A CREATIVE WAY OF SHOWING YOUR GATOR PRIDE ON THE ROAD?



John Hampton (BSPhysics '63) of Crofton, MD, is retired after 57 years with US Army and defense analysis. He says he's used this 1984 plate on his car, while his wife's tag is a play on the former Gator chant.



Debbie Brill Bornstein (BSJ '86) of Maitland is president of Deb's Delights: chocolate confections and more. She shares this tag with her MIT alumnus husband who now claims membership in Gator Nation.



Nicole Owens Klatsky (BSBA '91, MBA '97) of Long Branch, NJ, is a transplanted Florida girl living the Jersey girl life. Her boat is named Nauti Gator and her son, Alex, is a sophomore at UF. She is director of communications for a life sciences company.



MSgt Karen Elizabeth Brown Acree (BSN '05) of Jacksonville is an aerospace medicine services craftsman and medical case manager in the Air National Guard and works as a registered nurse as needed.



Amy Mader Williams (BSTel '89) of Lakewood, CO, shows her Gator pride in the Centennial State, where she is an executive assistant.



Philip Maroney (BSBA '83) of Ormond Beach says "Go Gators!" with his official UF tags. He is president and CEO of the Root Co.



Scott Notowitz (AA '79) and his wife, **Shari Notowitz** (BA '79) show their Gator pride around Boca Raton with these tags. Scott is a financial advisor.



This is how **Randy Meyer** (BSAC '90) shares his Gator spirit in Austin, TX, where he is a senior revenue manager.



Laurie Castillo Paul (BSBA '98) of Fargo, ND, is a commercial executive for Microsoft.



Christel Carlson (BS '78, MD '81, HS '84) is a doctor in Spokane, WA.



Tony Streukens (BSN '96) of Gainesville has been a registered nurse in the UF Health Shands NICU for 27 years.



Charles E. Langbein, Jr. (BSME '56) of Winter Haven is a retired consulting engineer.



Native New Yorker **Joshua Weiner** (BS '97, MAcc '97) says he bought this tag the year after graduation when he spent a year working in South Florida. When he returned home, his NY tag said GR82BG8R. Last year he moved his family back to the Sunshine State, where he works for GP Fund Solutions in Fort Lauderdale, administering private equity venture capital and real estate funds. "I am hoping we are here to stay," he said.



Juan Mendez (BSAE '70) shared his "shiny" official UF tag. He lives in Doral, where he is retired, but uses his engineering skills to consult for airlines and aircraft engine repair facilities. His first job out of college was with Pratt & Whitney in West Palm Beach where he worked on the design and control systems testing for the F100 engine on the F15 fighter jet. He has owns the control system patent for the nozzle flaps on a two dimensional exhaust nozzle.



Brian Lind (BSM '08) says he's proud to show off his tag in Jacksonville, where he is owner and founder of the software consulting agency Magnanimous Consulting, where he leads a team that creates go-to-market strategies for venture-capital-backed technology companies in Silicon Valley. His tag means "Florida Send" because "Gator grads SEND IT!"



Wayne Moss (BSCHE '75) of Chapin, SC, said three years after he helped start the Columbia Gator Club, the university in their town joined the SEC. So, his club applied and won approval to have official UF tags produced in South Carolina. The club was given priority over the first 100 tags. He chose "3" for UF's three football national championships. His wife, **Debra**, chose "79," the year they met. And their daughter, **Laura Blizzard** (BSAPK '11) chose "89," her birth year.



GO GATORS, BEAT GEORGIA!

Christopher Ryan (BS '81, JD '88) of Dania Beach said this tag is special to his whole family because his late father, **A.J. Ryan, Jr.** (B.S. '50, J.D. '55) disliked the Bulldogs so much, whenever someone would say "Go Gators," he would reply "Beat Georgia." To this day, all of A.J.'s sons, **Archibald III** (BA '75), **Michael** (BA '76), **Timothy** (BS '78, JD '81), **Chris** and **John** (BA '87), "and even the underachiever in the family who graduated from the school in Tallahassee" repeat the refrain in his memory.



Marjan Rabbani (BS '04) is an internal medicine physician at Putnam Community Hospital in Palatka.



Dave Woodson (BSBA '71, MBA '72), a business developer in Crystal River, sports this tag on his motorcycle so everyone will know where his loyalty lies.



Cathy Gumtow (MSN '09) says it's "great to be" a Gator in Suffolk, VA, where she is a nurse and home health case manager.



Raymond Gorczyca (BHSPA '92) of Las Vegas is a retired cardiovascular physician's assistant.



William Wall (BSJ '64, MEd '65) sports this tag in Montgomery, AL, where he and his wife, Hallie, are retired.



William Schuller (BA '00) is the managing attorney of Litigator Law in Las Vegas, and a proud Gator.



Miami (305 area code) native and teacher **Ann Ioannides Deleon** (BSTel '89) who has lived in Kirkland, WA, since 2004, says her tag is a mystery to Pacific Northwesterners.



John Morris (BSBA '88) of Panama City is a former accountant with Florida University and Florida Community College systems, who is now self-employed.



Trafalgar Middle School principal **Michael Galbreath** (BA '93, MEd '94) in Cape Coral, says he's had this tag since graduation. He is the proud husband of Amy Galbreath (BA '94) and father of two daughters.



John Punzak (BSBA '84) of Tampa is a senior director at VMware. He says "the Swamp wasn't called the Swamp until Steve Spurrier's arrival in the '90s, but I thought the concept was okay, given that it's on a Jeep."



Thomas Bell (BSHSED '73, MAHSED '74) of Kennesaw, GA, "deep in enemy territory" is retired from the electric power industry. Now he teaches health science part-time at Kennesaw State University.



Bill Doubertley (BSAdv '67, JD '70) retired after working 50 years as an attorney. He and his wife of 50 years, Valerie Doubertley (BAE '69), live in Flat Rock, NC.



Jeyakumar Nagarathinam (BSCEN '92) of Plano, TX, is a cybersecurity executive who has fought cybercrimes since 2002 and has owned this tag since 2017.



Rico Pasqualini (BSPR '92) of Denver, CO, is vice president of sales for JanSport. His daughter, **Hanna Pasqualini** (1 JM) is a member of UF's class of 2024, studying telecommunications.



Michael Williams Sr. (BSCE '76), CEO of M H Williams Construction Group, says this is how he shows his Gator spirit when he's on the road, either in Park City, UT, or their Florida hometown of Indian Harbour Beach.



Deborah (BSBR '80) and **Rick Crews** say they are "keeping the Gator spirit alive out here in the wild west, Carson City, NV." She is an executive assistant at the Nevada Supreme Court.



Routledge Harris of Winter Park, who hopes to attend UF in 2022, ordered this tag to show his love for UF. His father, Orlando attorney **Stumpy Harris** (BA Math '61, JD '65), who was well known for his Gator pride and "GO GATOR" tag, died in March at age 82.



Roger Counts (BAPoliSci '93) says his degree and ROTC experience facilitated his 27-year career in the US Army Reserve and 23 years and counting career as a special agent for the U.S. Diplomatic Security Service. He is also a senior liaison to the FBI's Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell.

SHOW YOUR GATOR PRIDE



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“The UF DBA program helped me advance in my career as an educator and business professional.”



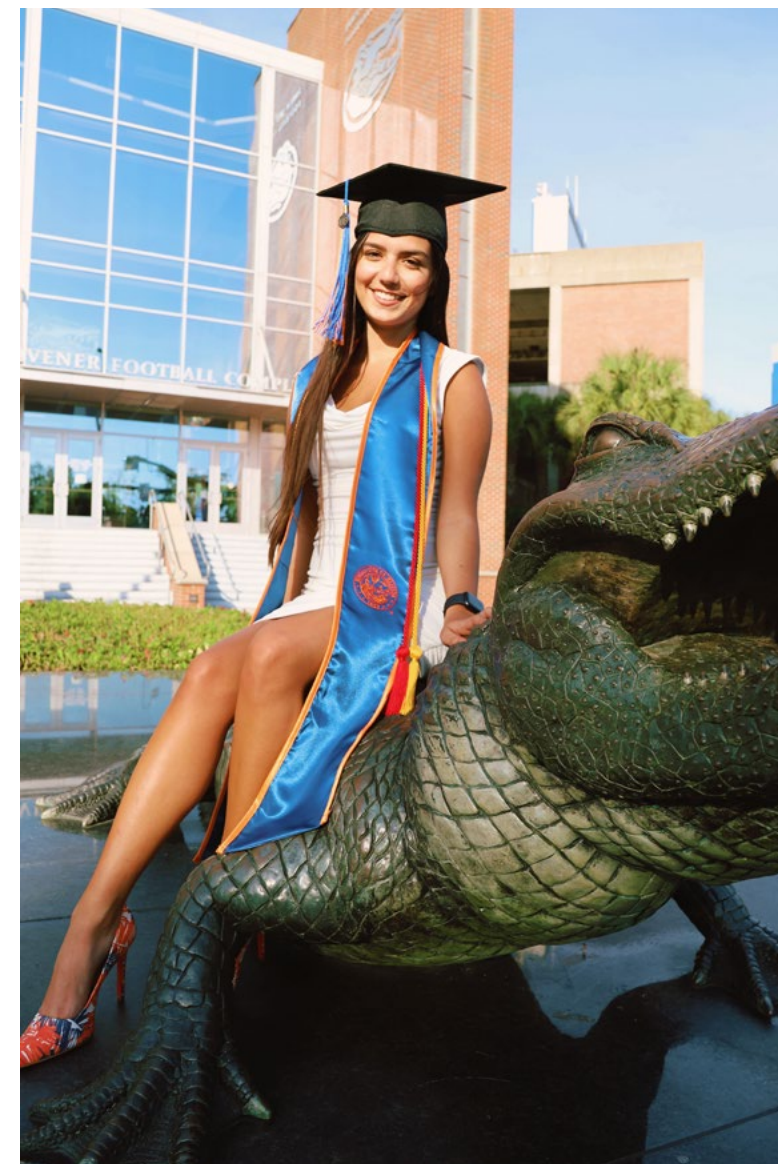
Shari Fowler (DBA '20)
“The education I received from UF has propelled me to the next level in my career, and it was the best professional decision that I have made to date.”

MORE INFORMATION

→ warrington.ufl.edu/DBA
or contact Angie at: angie.woodham@warrington.ufl.edu

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UFAA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MEET FELLOW GATOR
CHIARA MANHAS

“AS A FRESHMAN AT UF, I joined Students of Today, Alumni of Tomorrow in order to network with other Gator alumni as well as attend a variety of events. Having been exposed to exclusive events, guest speakers and other unique opportunities, I felt joining the alumni association was a must. Staying connected to Gator Nation and contributing to my school is so important to me!”

— Chiara Manhas (BDES '21) of Fort Lauderdale is continuing her education by pursuing a master's of interior design at UF, focusing on resilient sports facility design. She also works as an interior design assistant at Manhas Design with her mother, **Pam Manhas** (BDES '91, MAArch '93), a Gator and the principal of the company.

37,512

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TEST YOUR GATOR TRIVIA

BELOW ARE THE CORRECT ANSWERS FROM THE GATORS IN THE OLYMPICS QUIZ ON PAGE 34

1. C, more than 150: 180 Gators have participated since the 1972 Munich Games, winning 126 total medals.

2. B, nine: baseball, basketball, bobsleigh, gymnastics, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, and indoor volleyball

3. D, Los Angeles in 1984, at which UF athletes brought home 21 medals (14 gold, five silver and two bronze)

4. A, Catie Ball, was a 16-year-old high school junior when she won gold at the 1968 Games in Mexico City. Later, as a UF senior, she was hired to coach the new Gators women's varsity swim team.

5. C, Tim McKee, a freshman at the time, won two silvers in the 1972 Munich Games. Four years later he won another silver in Montreal.

6. C, marathon. Frank Shorter is the only American with two Olympic marathon medals — a gold in Munich and a silver in Montreal in 1976. He is known as the father of the modern running boom.

7. B, Matt LaPorta and Brad Wilkerson. LaPorta won a bronze medal in the 2008 Beijing Games; Wilkerson a gold in the 2000 Sydney Games.

8. B, six gold medals. Lochte was in the 2004 Games in Athens, 2008 in Beijing, 2012 in London, and 2016 in Rio, and won 12 medals: six gold, three silver and three bronze.

9. C, five. Along with Los Angeles in 1984, **Torres** competed in Seoul in 1988, Barcelona in 1992, Sydney in 2000 and Beijing in 2008

10. A, Tammy Jackson and DeLisha Milton-Jones. Jackson was a bronze medalist in the 1992 Barcelona Games; Milton-Jones won gold in Sydney in 2000 and in Beijing in 2008.

11. A, bobsled. John Amabile (AA '83) and **Liston Bochette** (BFA '80) were on the Puerto Rican bobsled team at the 1992 Albertville Games, 1994 in Lillehammer and 1998 in Nagano. **Steve Mesler** (BSESS

'00) raced for the USA in the 2002, 2006 and 2010 games in Salt Lake City, Turin and Vancouver.

12. D, all of the above. Golay cycled in the Barcelona and Atlanta Games; **Weaver** won a bronze in L.A.

13. B, Canada, Belgium and Great Britain. Debbie Fuller (BSADV '90) was on Canada's team in the 1984 L.A. Games and 1988's Seoul Olympics. **Tom LeMaire** (BSPE '83) dove for Belgium in 1984. **Chris Snode** (BAART '81) competed for Britain in 1976's Montreal Games, 1980 in Moscow and 1984 in L.A.

14. A, Sloan won a silver medal for Team USA; **King** was on the British team.

15. C, handball. Winkler was on 1972 & 1976 U.S. Handball teams and an assistant competition director in 1984.

16. A, Judo. Rosensteel was in the 1992 Barcelona Games, Atlanta in 1996 and Sydney in 2000. At UF, she was a six-time All-American in track and field.

17. A, South Korea. Sarah Bateman (BS '13) swam for Iceland in the 2008 Beijing Games and again in London in 2012; **Mercedes Farhat** ('09) was a member of Libya's team in 2008.

18. B, Booth and Mitts. Booth won a bronze with Canada in the 2012 London Olympics; Mitts joined Wambach in the 2004 and 2012 Games. She also won gold in Beijing in 2008.

19. A, Lisa Raymond won a bronze in 2012.

20. B, Montreal (1976) and Atlanta (1996). Tuitt competed for Trinidad and Tobago.

21. B, 2016 Rio. Murphy was one of 30 UF athletes in those Games, at which Gators won 13 medals combined.

22. C, four. Ballatore coached for Peru in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, Ecuador in 1972's Munich Games, Israel in 1976's Montreal Games and for USA in 1984's and 1998's L.A. and Seoul Games.

23. B, four. Those coaches include **Jimmy Carnes** for USA in the 1976 Montreal and

1980 Moscow Games; **Doug Brown** for USA in 1996's Atlanta Games; **Mike Holloway** (BA '00) in 2012 for USA in London; and **Larry Judge** for Trinidad and Tobago in the 2004 Athens Games. Holloway is this year's USA coach at the Tokyo Games, as well.

24. C, 41 countries. As of the 2016 Games (which does not count this year's competitors, as final team selections had not yet been made at presstime), Gators have been on teams for Australia (5), Bahamas (2), Barbados (2), Belgium (1), Bermuda (1), Bosnia (1), Brazil (2), Canada (21), Cayman Islands (1), Colombia (2), Croatia (1), Curacao (1), Estonia (1), France (1), Georgia (1), Germany (3), Great Britain (11), Guam (1), Haiti (2), Hungary (3), Iceland (2), Italy (1), Jamaica (7), Mexico (1), New Zealand (1), Peru (1), Philippines (1), Poland (4), Portugal (1), Puerto Rico (6), Saint Kitts/Nevis (1), South Africa (2), South Korea (1), Spain (8), Suriname (3), Trinidad (2), Trinidad & Tobago (1), Tunisia (1), United States (66), Venezuela (4) and Virgin Islands (2).

24. A, Spain. Zubero captured the lone Gator medal in those Games.

Bonus 1: A, Liston Bochette. He competed in track and field in the 1984 summer Games in L.A. and in bobsled in the 1992, 1994 and 1998 winter Games in Albertville, Lillehammer and Nagano, respectively.

Bonus 2: C, Anthony Nesty. Representing Suriname, he was the first black swimmer to win an Olympic medal. His home country used Nesty's likeness on a stamp, gold and silver coins, and a bank note to honor his accomplishment.

SOURCES:
FloridaGators.com,
Wikipedia & UF Sports
Communications

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3 MINUTES WITH DIANA TRUJILLO

PERSEVERANCE PERSONIFIED

MARS ROVER'S ROBOTIC ARM FLIGHT DIRECTOR TALKS ABOUT HER LIFE ON EARTH AND THE POSSIBLY OF LIFE ON MARS

Diana Trujillo (ENG 2005-06) came to the U.S. from Columbia at age 17 to learn English — an endeavor suggested by her father. Two years into her mission at then-Miami-Dade Community College, she decided to focus on math in order to “do something else that is not English.” When a professor mentioned knowing an astronaut, Trujillo’s interest in space as a profession piqued, which led her to UF’s aerospace engineering program, and then to a career at NASA. Today, she’s the fight director for the Mars rover’s robotic arm. In February, when the rover landed on Mars, Trujillo hosted NASA’s first ever Spanish-language broadcast of a planetary landing. In the following excerpt from the New York Times’ podcast “Sway,” hosted by Kara Swisher (KS), Trujillo (DT) shares how her career unfolded.

KS: Explain ... what is the NASA Academy and how did you get into it?

DT: The NASA Academy is ... a program where a lot of students apply. They only pick 20 students who go to Goddard Space Center. When I was about to graduate from UF, one of my professors sent me this link and said, “Hey, apply here.” ... The application was petrifying ... so many questions ... Every one was, “In no less than 300 words” ... So for me, English as a second language, I’m like, OK, this is not happening. I filled it out, and then I did not send it. I showed my computer to my friend. And he’s like, click. It’s like, “What did you just do?” He’s like, “Oh, no, I just sent your application.” And I’m like, “No!”

KS: Oh, he submitted for you. Wow. Why did you think you didn’t belong?

DT: It’s like, oh, I went to community college to do English, and I’m doing aerospace engineering at UF, which is a good school, but ... this is your biggest shot of your life. Like, the girl that didn’t know any English now is in an internship at NASA with the most brilliant college students. ... Through that, I got a job at the educational office at Goddard Space Flight Center. From there, I worked for a company called Orbital Sciences Corporation. From there, I jumped to JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena) known most for our interplanetary exploration missions.

KS: Perseverance isn’t your first mission to Mars, right?

DT: I worked on Curiosity [also]. As soon as I started to work at JPL, I worked for the Constellation Program, which was to take humans to the moon and Mars. Then I switched to Curiosity.

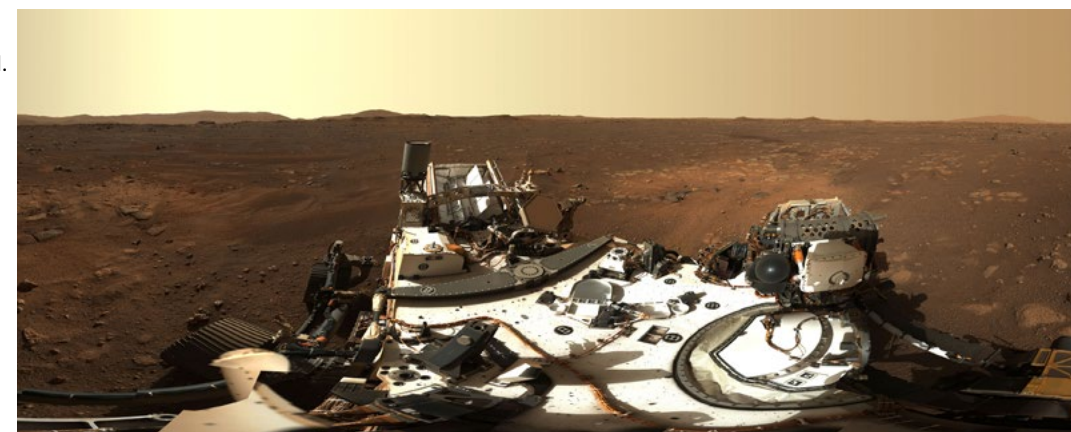
KS: And why is that?

DT: So when I was at the NASA Academy, I remember reading about this mission called MSL — Mars Science Laboratory. They also had this laser-beam eye instrument called ChemCam. ... So fast-forward, I’m working at NASA JPL. And I’m like, wait, on the other side of where I’m sitting at my cubicle are the people who work on the thing (ChemCam) that I — in college — was dying to know more about. ... I went to the Entry, Descent and Landing Lead at that point, who was the supervisor literally behind my cubicle. And I’m like, “Listen, I know you

don’t know me. But give me a job. I’ll do anything, anything you want. I’ll take the trash out every day if you want.”

KS: Why did that interest you?

DT: This mission ... sounds like a comic book. Like laser-beam eye, nuclear-power robot. Who does not want to work on that? ... Why would you not want to be part of the thing that’s going to start answering the pieces, the building blocks, of, “Are we alone?”



KS: [What is your role?]

DT: When I joined Perseverance, I was a deputy phase lead for the Sample and Caching System. I was [responsible] for the robotic arm — the two instruments that go on the turret of the arm. A way to picture is literally like ... two fingers of your hand — SHERLOC is one finger, PIXL is the other finger. ... Their job is to do a scan of the surface to actually understand the signature of what they’re looking at, and then get a better understanding of what’s the composition. ... The robotic arm ... has a drill ... [that] picks up the sample, puts it on the tube. We process those tubes, then cache it.

KS: Did you ever worry that it might not work?

DT: You know, no. That never crosses my mind.

KS: Talk me through what you’re doing every day.

DT: I have the blessing and the pleasure to be one of the flight directors for surface. ... If the rover weren’t OK, then it will be my team ... with project management and the anomaly response team to work out the problem and figure out how we’re going

to recover the spacecraft. But we’ve been doing so well, we’re not there.

KS: Why [search for life] on Mars?

DT: We know that there was water on Mars. We know it has a very thin atmosphere. We know from Curiosity that actually had the chemical composition to sustain life. So all the answers are like, check, check, check. Now, we got to ask, was there life?

KS: So let’s say everything goes according to plan. ... What do we do with that knowledge?

DT: “Why do we explore?” I think we explore for many, many different reasons. There’s people like me who feel the drive and the personal need to understand how things work. The other aspect is ... exploring other planets, particularly Mars, can help us understand what happened to Mars, so we can take care of our own planet in a much better way. And then ... [there is] the most basic fundamental question of our entire existence, [“Are we alone?]. Why would we not want to answer something like that? We can develop technology, help humanity, understand our place in the universe, all of that by doing space exploration and more.

KS: Without proof yet, you do not think we are alone, correct?

DT: No. I don’t think we’re alone.

Listen to the full podcast at [uff.to/jqngc1](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/science/mars-rover-perseverance-podcast). “Sway” is a production of New York Times Opinion and is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Pandora, Google Podcasts and Stitcher.

(L-R) Jearl Miles-Clark 2nd, Hazel Clark 1st, and Joetta Clark-Diggs 3rd pose on the winners platform after the Women's 800m Event of the 2000 U.S. Olympic Trials at the Hornet Stadium in Sacramento, CA.



LIKE A CHAMPION

ANDY LYONS / ALLSPORT

OLYMPIAN HAZEL CLARK SHARES HER SECRETS TO USING HER SKILLS FOR GOOD

BY LIESL O'DELL (BSJ '92)

Track and field was the last sport **Hazel Clark** (BA '01) wanted to pursue when she grew old enough to compete in school, says the three-time Olympian who was ranked 4th in the world for her track speed in the 800m before her retirement in 2010. After all, her two older siblings, Joetta and Joe Jr. "JJ," had already become well known for their prowess on the track, and Hazel had no intention of competing with their successes.

"They were such accomplished athletes in that realm," Hazel said. "I made up my mind that I'd do anything but track."

So Hazel went out for tennis, sailing, horseback riding and basketball before finally landing on figure skating as her chosen sport. But at age 16 when she fell during a jump and woke up in the hospital with a gash on her chin and a concussion, her father stepped in.

"He said, 'That's enough. You're running track. No more games,'" she recalls him declaring by her hospital bed. "He told me, 'You're going to be one of the best in the country if you work hard.'"

There was no further discussion: Her father was Joe Clark Sr., the U.S. Army sergeant turned New Jersey baseball bat-

and bullhorn-wielding inner city high school principal whom Morgan Freeman portrayed in the 1989 movie "Lean on Me." Clark's ability to turn around failing schools and inspire student success through tough love is legendary.

"My father's tactics wouldn't fly in a lot of places today," Hazel said, "but I do believe we have to hold young people accountable."

Hazel says it's true: Her father set extremely high expectations. But she adds his leadership, vision and intolerance for self-pity and laziness are some of the character traits that she misses most. He died in December after a slow decline.

"He was right," Hazel said about her father's directive to pursue track. One year after her figure skating mishap, she was ranked No. 1 in the nation in the 800-meters race, which conjured a mass of college coaches determined to recruit her.

Hazel chose UF for a host of reasons, including that her brother, JJ, was one of the track coaches. But leaving home was inconceivable at the time. Her mother had just barely survived a massive stroke, and Hazel wouldn't consider moving away. Again, her father's wisdom proved crucial. "Dad said, 'You have to do this. This is the right decision for your life. UF is a top school. They're going to foster your talent properly,'" she recalls.

"In hindsight I never could have imagined what that school would give me," Hazel continued. "I don't believe I'd be where I am today — I truly don't — if it weren't for UF. Between my brother, the coaches, my teammates who

became family members to me, the academics, the professors, it was just the perfect combination for me to thrive."

And thrive she did. Hazel's talent, hard work and focus produced undefeated showings against all SEC colleges. Sporting goods companies clamored to sign her to

"A CHAMPION IS SOMEONE WHO MAY NOT HAVE AS MUCH TALENT, BUT DOES EVERY SINGLE THING IN THEIR POWER TO GIVE IT THEIR BEST."

— HAZEL CLARK (BA '01)

apparel and appearance contracts because everyone knew she was destined for the world track stage, just like her sister, Joetta, and sister-in-law, Jearl Clark. In 2000, when the three of them — together — swept the Olympic trials in the 800 meters, the suggested moniker “royal family of USA track and field” stuck for good.

But Hazel’s elite races came with a price: She began to suffer from performance anxiety. Also, she experienced a series of setbacks, including falling in a pivotal race and getting burned before the Athens Olympics when a hairdresser tripped and spilled boiling water down Hazel’s back. She credits her teammates and her family for helping her through those tough times.

When Hazel decided to retire from competition in 2009 (14 years after her father’s decision in that hospital room), she says her UF academic training kicked in. She found an opening for a hospital health and wellness coordinator, prepared her resume and won the job. Since then, she’s held several high-profile posts, including Coca-Cola director of sports business development.

Today, she’s the director of sports tourism in Bermuda, running Nike youth camps, professional athlete events and other activities. What’s more, she’s pursuing her lifelong dream of being a mother. Her daughter, 3-year-old Hazel (the sixth Hazel, continuing a family tradition), is the light of her life, next to her husband, Shane McIlwain, a civil engineer and native Bermudan.

She’s scheduled for a TED Talk in October about tough love and has maintained close relationships with almost 20 of her UF track teammates.

“They’ve come to my races. Some just visited my house. We ... do family vacations together,” she said. “I cried so hard when they rolled through my dad’s funeral.”

Despite her many ups and downs, Hazel shares her excitement about the opportunities she now has to encourage others to be champions wherever they are.

“There are a lot of people who have tons of talent but don’t do everything they need to do to be on the top of their game. That’s not a champion,” she says. “A champion is someone who may not have as much talent but does every single thing in their power to give it their best. I hope every Gator will look at their tasks that way.”

HAZEL'S HIGHLIGHTS

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2x

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3


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