The Architects of Opportunity
Meet the leaders behind the mission of MFOS.

A First-Class
Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars, 15 years later. Where are they now?
THE ARCHITECTS OF OPPORTUNITY
Meet the leaders behind the mission of MFOS.

A First-Class
FIRST CLASS!

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

University of Florida Alumni Association
P.O. Box 14425
Gainesville, FL 32604-2425

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US Postage PAID University of Florida Alumni Association
GATOR NATION
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The UF Alumni Association invites all members and their guests to gather at Emerson Alumni Hall prior to each home football game this fall. Get ready to cheer on the Gators with fellow alumni while enjoying live entertainment, a face painter, tailgate games and food and beverages for purchase.

For more info visit uff.to/tg21

2021 DATES
September 4      Florida Atlantic University
September 18     Tennessee
September 25     Vanderbilt
October 9        Samford
November 13      Alabama
November 27      Tennessee
November 27      Florida State University

/Homecoming OPEN TO PUBLIC
NOTES OF HEARTFEL T THANKS
In honor of the Mascon Foundation Opportunity Scholars program’s 15th anniversary (see feature on page 16), the first class of MFOS alumni share their perspective about what their scholarship support has meant in their lives. Here are just a few of their notes.

"MFOS is a wonderful program that allowed me to see some of the people my mother helped through the opportunity of MFOS. It is such a blessing to them and especially to me," said Jessica Wardell (BAEd ’10, MEd ’11).

"To have a society where everyone has a chance to rise up, you need to tear down the barriers they don’t even know were possible. As a student of the University of Florida (UF), I have been supported by many scholarships that contributed to the opportunity to attend UF and achieve success," said Michelle Hayes (BSAg ’10).

"Thank you for investing in my future!" Sabrina Blake (BSR ’10, EdS ’13, MEd ’13).

"MFOS is a life-changing program for many students. It has its own set of expenses for deserving kids; so sincere. This program is so 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," Brown believes.

"When Hazel decided to retire from competition in 2009 (14 years after her Olympic trials), she said, "I cried so hard when they rolled out the tapestry of talent but don't do everything they need to do to be on the top of their game. That's what I'm doing."

"There are a lot of people who have tons of ups and downs, Hazel shared. "I've experienced a series of setbacks, but my passion for helping children never leaves me."

"When Hazel decided to retire from competition in 2009 (14 years after her Olympic trials), she said, "I cried so hard when they rolled out the tapestry of talent but don't do everything they need to do to be on the top of their game. That's what I'm doing."

"I hope every Gator will look to the future and continue to do what it takes to be on the top of their game. That's what I'm doing."
FEATURES

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

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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, alumns 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 ’80) of Odessa interned at the Hillborough County Parks & Recreation Department, he loved the work and the people so much — and they loved him — that he accepted a full-time 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, Ph.D ’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 success 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 connects people across backgrounds,” Kenneth says. When the virus prohibited large gatherings, the Jameses, along with Kenneth’s brother, John, who runs KET, contributed in other ways. But when the virus prohibited large gatherings, the Jameses, along with Kenneth’s brother, John, who runs KET, contributed in other ways. In 2016, they established a scholarship to help UF students who are the first in their families to attend college. "Performing Arts is a bridge that connects people across backgrounds," Kenneth says.

U

ually, the thrill of first experiencing fall at UF is reserved for freshmen. But this fall, with the pandemic reeding, 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 am 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 Mache 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 MFO’s expansion and many other programs across the university.

And finally, we stepped up our efforts to make significant and necessary change in the world. Mid-pandemic, our faculty achieved record research spending of $942 million, one step closer to our goal of $1 billion. 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.

UP ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

President Mark W. Crisler
First Vice President. Alumnus/Alumna
Mark, who is also the president of
the University of Florida Alumni Association, brought a record-breaking number of gifts
at the end of the fiscal year 2020. The total was
$82 million, which included a $20 million donation
from the UF Alumni Association. The record breaking gift
helped us reach our goal of raising $500 million in gifts
for our university and all we serve even higher. But this fall, with the pandemic reeding, it feels like we all get to share in that privilege.

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UF expands access to its NVIDIA-supersized 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.

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.
RISING RANKINGS

Latest U.S. News & World Report Best Graduate Schools rankings once again confirm UF’s elite status.

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 UF provost.

“RISING #3

NEWS & WORLD REPORT BEST GRADUATE SCHOOLS

#3 RANKING

In Environmental Engineering

#4 RANKING

In Computer Science

#8 RANKING

In Public Health

#9 RANKING

In Biomedical Engineering

#10 RANKING

In Mathematics

#10 RANKING

In Physics

#10 RANKING

In Chemistry

3 POWERHOUSES

JPMorgan Chase, UF’s M.E. Stiermer, St. 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 affordable housing, both assisted multifamily and ‘naturally occurring’ (or nonsubsidized) housing, is at risk to flood hazards,” said Shimberg Center Director William O’Deil. “Thanks to this app, we know a large percentage of affordable housing is, unfortunately, vulnerable to flooding.”

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.

#10 MILLION

Amount of note

$2 MILLION

Amount of Linda (BBA ’73, JD ’78) and Ken McGurn’s (BBA ’72, MBA ’73, PhD ’82) 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 MIN. 25 SEC.

Length of a virtual tour of renovated Norman Hall. Take the tour at uff.to/3zdhyzt.

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 Jeyarajah.

2022 U.S. News & World Report ranking

106

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

1 MILLION

Amount of note

$2 MILLION

NUMBERS OF NOTE

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 Ben Shelton.

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.

For now, 15 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.

JESSE S. JONES/UF HEALTH

Joca

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.

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.

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AI @ UF

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 specializes 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.

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- Ph.D.

Learn more at jou.ufl.edu/graduate
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 evaluate whether the vaccinated young people can still spread COVID-19. The 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 evaluate whether the vaccinated young people can still spread COVID-19.

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 Maiman.

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.”

— 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.

CAME. See her latter entry at: EVE EDELHEIT/THE WASHINGTON POST

AND “AFTER YEARS of Living In Motels, A Family Finally Got Their Own RV. Then COVID-19 Her Job At Disney After 14 Years, A Server Struggles To Navigate The Pandemic”}

White House News Photographers Association. Her entries include “Laid Off from Washington Post video editor Drea Cornejo

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UF HEALTH

IN MEMORIUM

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. 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.
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 IMDB 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 & Dolores 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 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.

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)
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

I N 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 financial aid, and provides mentors and academic advisors to help students stay on track. And from that freedom, opportunity. To explore, to take chances, to pursue a life passion rather than settle for a paycheck. “Without MFOS, I don’t know that I would have even attended UF,” says Andres Sanchez (BS ‘10) of his time at UF. “It was a blessing.”

“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 for what education can do.”

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 three young children. “My parents and grandparents worked blue-collar jobs,” says Smith. They wanted better for her. “They thought my mind could take me further for what education can do.”

“At my first opportunity scholarship...I have the best role model to do the same.”

Dr. Andres Felipe Sanchez

THEN: “I have the best role model to do the same,” says Dr. Andres Sanchez. “At my first opportunity scholarship...I have the best role model to do the same.”

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.

“My story is an example of opportunity: He received the level of preparation I got from the University of South Carolina Upstate. He married his high school sweetheart, and they have three young children.”

Jess Wardell

THEN: “It was the biggest blessing I didn’t know existed,” says Jess Wardell. “It was the biggest blessing I didn’t know existed.”

NOW: Wardell married a fellow Gator, Corey Wardell. They recently welcomed a third child. 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.”

NOVEMBER 2021
“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, he put all of his eggs in one basket. “I remember the acceptance letter coming in the mail, and then the letter from MFOS. “Elated, speechless, beyond grateful,” is the reaction he recalls.

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.”

“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.”

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. Boireau’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, he put all of his eggs in one basket. “I remember the acceptance letter coming in the mail, and then the letter from MFOS. “Elated, speechless, beyond grateful,” is the reaction he recalls.

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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.”

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 Wayfair.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.

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.

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.


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

**Tyler Lewis**

THEN: Tyler 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 Mararibbe 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.”

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.”

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**

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 Hilderford 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 scholarships, 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.”

NOW: “I’m working for a top 5 homebuilder as a manager and loving life in South Florida!”

Find out more about the MFOS program at [uf.to/1638kX](http://uf.to/1638kX).

Inspired by these stories and want to help future Gators, make a donation at this site: [uf.to/j3ckb8](http://uf.to/j3ckb8).
“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 near 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 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.”

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.”

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

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

“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 classes at Northeast High, 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 others 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.

UF IN THREE WORDS: “A great experience, wonderful.”

Anna Dilernia, at left, with her college friends in 2010.

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

Murielle Gammons

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, EdD’ 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.”

Anna Dilernia 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 others 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.

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

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)

A WESTRUCK. 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.
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 banks of 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 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 Palm Thicket; Martin Johnson Heade’s rare Oleanders, Ralston Crawford’s soaring Overseas Highway #2, and Jane Peterson’s vibrant gousache, 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).
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.

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 racchorses 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 of [Palm Thicket, Vizcaya (1917), by John Singer Sargent](#)
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, Rafts 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 Oviedo 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 museum leaders anticipate. And that activity will only bring the Harn museum is to raise awareness of all our opportunities are exactly why 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 Gators’ 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.

“Their interest in 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 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 important early on the UF would be the greatest home for the collection,” Sam agreed.

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 Samual 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.

“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. … We can easily take 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 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.”

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

Roberta T. Vickers at the Harn Museum of Art

“Of special note is Robert J. Curtis’s Oviedo of Florida, painted in 1838, just after the Seminole leader was imprisoned at Fort Moultrie, in South Carolina. There, she was a cheerleader; Sam was the Gators’ quarterback.”

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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 gold medal at the 1972 Munich Games?
   A. Tammy Jackson (BSA '70) and Herbert Perry (BSA '71)
   B. Matt LaPorta (BSA '09) and Brad Wilkerson (95-'98)
   C. Josh Pogg ('95-'96) and Damien O'Day (BSA '06)

6. Which Gator swimmer competed for the USA in both winter and summer Olympic Games?
   A. Melissa Rey
   B. Jenny Thompson

7. Baseball was only an official Olympic sport from 1992 to 2000, although it will be reintroduced in 2021. During that short span, two Gator greats competed. Who are they?
   A. Dave Eckstein (BA '12) and Michael Bucknor (BSA '91)
   B. Matt LaPorta (BSA '09) and Chad Voltaggio (BSA '09)
   C. Josh Pogg ('95-'96) and Damien 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. Ten

9. Which two of these Gator basketball players also competed on a USA team?
   A. Tammy Jackson (BSA '70) and Darrell Miller (BSA '70)
   B. Dwayne Schintzius ('87-'90) and Udonis Haslem ('97-'02)
   C. Al Horford ('04-'07) and Vernon Maxwell ('94-'96)

10. Which two of these Gator basketball players also competed on a USA team?
    A. Tammy Jackson (BSA '70) and Darrell Miller (BSA '70)
    B. Dwayne Schintzius ('87-'90) and Udonis Haslem ('97-'02)
    C. Al Horford ('04-'07) and Vernon Maxwell ('94-'96)

11. 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

12. Which Games did the 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 more than a dozen nations. Which nation has NOT been represented in the Olympics?
    A. USA
    B. Great Britain
    C. Libya

14. Gator gymnasts Marissa King (BA '14, BSTEL '14) and Bridget Sloan (BSTEL '16) competed in the 2012 Olympic Games. Which countries did they represent?
    A. USA
    B. USA and the Philippines
    C. Great Britain and the Philippines

15. Which Gator was the first to win a medal for the USA in 1952?
    A. Liston Bochette (BFA '80)
    B. Hilda Luthersdottir (BSPR '15)
    C. Anthony Nesty (BA '94)

16. In which sport did Gator swimmer Dara Torres (BSTEL '90, MESS '94) represent the US during three Olympic Games?
    A. Aquatics
    B. Swimming
    C. Skiing

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

18. Four-time All-American Abby Wambach (‘96-’02) won two gold medals in the 2004 Athens and 2012 London Games. Which Gators competed against her in these Tours?
    A. Andi Sellers (BSESS '01, MESS '03) and Danielle Fotopoulos (BSA '99)
    B. Melanie Booth (BSAPK '08) and Heather Mitts (BSADV '01)
    C. Sarah Yoho (BSESS '09) 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, 1992 in Barcelona
    D. Mark Merklein, 2000 in Sydney

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 “Six” Ballester 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 Zubero (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)
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.”

“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.”

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

By David Finnerty

Kim Sams recently retired from her post as Disney’s corporate social responsibility director.
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 fawns 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 before his death in 1966.

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small steps forward. Disney understands that. Its long-term commitment allows us to strategically plan the research and conservation efforts we’re 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 Walt 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 is 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. “It’s great that the University of Florida has programs and leaders in conservation who are taking this forward.”

“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 you 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.”

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 you 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.”
“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.

“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...
At right, Lauzardo’s family clockwise from top: Mike, his wife, 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

Dr. Mike Lauzardo by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count/Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>UF faculty and staff who received the Screen, Test &amp; Protect swipekey e-newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19 town halls held since July 2020, mostly online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals vaccinated through UF Health/DGV partnership between December 2020 and Spring 2021</td>
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<td>Meetings he attended or led March 2020-March 2021, not counting phone calls, totaling nearly 800 hours</td>
<td>946+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average daily emails received</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children who are alive today after having survived cancer, thanks to efforts of Keira Grace Foundation</td>
<td>300+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average trips to Latin America each year with the Keira Grace Foundation to help children with cancer</td>
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<td>Hours of sleep per night</td>
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<td>0-1</td>
<td>Cups of coffee per day</td>
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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 in 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 Tuberculosis Physicians Network, as well as the Southeastern National Tuberculosis Center. He also oversees TB research at UF. Isb 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.”

“I'm the kind of person who thinks about something and then goes a million miles an hour 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 quick 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 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 he bound 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.

“The thing 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 fansroworkers in Puerto Rico to 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 45 minutes and not on either extreme.’

‘Hey let’s meet in the middle, guys. The

And 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 oncolgists 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, 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 virus? 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.

“Now, I’m not saying that I’m a hero. I’m not saying that I’m even a great physician. I’m saying that I’m just an ordinary person who is doing extraordinary things.”

— Dr. Mike Lauzardo

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.

“My name is Mike Lauzardo, and I’m a physician. I do this 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 studied 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.

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 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.”

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.”

“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
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, 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. 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, said IAAHPC Executive Director Coleen Ellis. The IAAHPC is one of several bodies that certify 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. "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.

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.”

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.

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.”

“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.”
**TOP 10**

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**MORE HONOREES**

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| 78 | Planet Management Group | Jacksonville |
| 79 | Edge Construction | Orlando |
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| 81 | Teaming Vacation Rentals | Jacksonville |
| 82 | Emerald's Development, Inc. | Jacksonville |
| 83 | Shutter + Sudden LLC | Jacksonville |
| 84 | Audience, Inc. | Jacksonville |
| 85 | kasper architects + associates | Orlando |
| 86 | Prince CPA Group | Orlando |
| 87 | Lap of Love Veterinary Hospice | New York, NY |
| 88 | United Energy Services | Jacksonville |
| 89 | J.E. Decker Construction Group LLC | Jacksonville |
| 90 | Sticlin & Dreyer Law Firm | Jacksonville |
| 91 | PACE Creating | Jacksonville |
| 92 | Search Discovery | Jacksonville |
| 93 | Honest Autos | Jacksonville |
| 94 | Current Builders, Inc. | Jacksonville |
| 95 | Atmosphere Apps | Orlando |
| 96 | Schopis | Sarasota |
| 97 | SpiderBoost | Gainesville |
| 98 | Plata Schott Attorneys & Counselors at Law | Jacksonville |
| 99 | Wiztix | Jacksonville |
| 100 | The Scarlett Group LLC | Jacksonville |
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
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.
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 Jacksonvilleians. 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

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.

Happy Birthday!
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 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 ’89) 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.

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 Ruyder (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.

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 alumna 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.

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.

PRODUCT NAVI-GATOR

Courtnei Sanders (BACEcon ’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.

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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.

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/producer 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.

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GATOR NATION

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 to helping 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 me. 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.

“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.

When Sophy Mae Mitchell Jr. (BSAg ’53) came to UF, the first thing she did was seek out of Gator marching band Director Carl 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.

“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)
“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 Javetta Clark Dogg, 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 “Ju” 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.

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Learn more about Clark on pages 74-75.

“RELENTLESS” VOLUNTEER

Lisa Esposito (JD ’93) 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 and UF alum Charley Pell (BSPR ’96), 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.

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 23 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.

MOVER AND SHAKER

State Representative. Florida’s Speaker of the House. World War II and Korean War Veteran. Commissioner of Education. Professor of Business. Ancient UF alumna

Ralph Turlington (BSBA ’42) donned many titles this 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 offices in Florida more times than any other person in the history of the Sunshine State. He received the Distinguished Alumni 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.
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.

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.

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.

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.

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When Graham Miller (BAPin ’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!”

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 60 km east of Miami. “I have enjoyed watching many Gator football games aboard the boat while anchored here!”
DO YOU HAVE A CREATIVE WAY OF SHOWING YOUR GATOR PRIDE ON THE ROAD?

John Hampton (BSPhysics 13") of Crofton, MD, is retired after 37 years in the 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 Bell-Bornstein (BJS '16) of Mount Dora is president of Deb’s Delights, a chocolate and confections company. She shares this tag with her MHT alumus husband who now claims membership in Gator Nation.

Nicole Oviedo-Klotz (BSBA '91, MBA '97) of Long Branch, NJ, is a transgender Florida girl living the jersey girl life. Her boat is named Nauti Gator and her son, Aloe, is a sophomore at UF. She is a director of communications for a life sciences executive assistant.

Miquel Karen Elizabeth Brown Acree (BSBM '95) of Jacksonville is an aerospace engineer and flight services craftsman and medical case manager at the US National Guard and works as a registered nurse as needed.

Philip Moroney (BSBA '15) of Orem, UT, has an official UF tag. He is a president and CEO of the Red Co.

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

Scott Notzolotz (SA '79) and his wife, Shari Notzolotz (DA '79), show their Gator pride around Boca Raton with these tags. Scott is a financial advisor.

This is how Randy Moyer (BSAC '90) shares his “Gator pride” around Little Rock, AR, where he is a senior revenue manager.

Tony Streekkers (BSN '81) of Greenwich, CT, shows his loyalty lies around Boca Raton with these tags. Tony is a retired consulting engineer.

Wayne Moss (BSCHE '76) show his “flip side” official UF tag. He lives in a trailer where he is a retired contractor and 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 Virginia 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.

Charles E. Langbein, Jr. (BS '81, JD '88) of Dania Beach said this tag is a play on the name of his father and teacher Charles E. Langbein, Sr. (BS '50, JD '55) who disliked the Bulldogs. “And even the underachiever in the family who graduated from the school in Tallahassee” repeat the refrain in his memory.

Tony Mendez (BSAE '15) of Miami, FL has a retired UF tag. He lives in Doral, where he is a retired software consultant for airlines and aircraft engine repair facilities. His first job out of college was with Pratt & Whitney in West Virginia 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 (BSBM '01), a retired UF tag, is owner and founder of the software consulting agency Magnanimous Consulting. While he's been around, he does go-to-market strategies for venture-capital-backed technology companies in Silicon Valley. His tags mean “Florida Gator because gators send SFG!”

Raymond Gonzaga (BHS '82) of Las Vegas is a retired cardiovascular physician’s assistant.

Deborah Brill Bornstein (BSB '78, MEd '81, HS '84) is a nurse practitioner in the Air National Medical Case Management Program. She shares this tag with her daughter. The tag in Montgomery, AL, is a mystery to Pacific NorthWesters.

Bill Douberley (BSAdv '67, JD '70) retired after working 50 years as an attorney. He and his wife of 50 years, Valene Douberley (BAE '65), live in Flat Rock, NC.

Debra Williams (BSBA '95) of Colorado Springs, CO, shows her Gator spirit in Austin, TX, where she is a nurse and home health case manager.

Debra, chosen "79", the year they met. And their daughter, Laura Blizzard (BSAP '11) chose "89", her birth year.

Amy Mader Williams (BSBA '19) of Lakewood, CO, shows her Gator pride in the Centennial State, where she is an executive assistant.

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

Rico Pasqualini (BSPO '92) of Denver, CO, is vice president of sales for JazzPort. His daughter, Hanna Pasqualini (J '24), is a member of UF’s class of 2024, studying telecommunications.

Deborah Brown (BS '78, JD '81), a retired UF tag, is living the Jersey girl life. Her boat is named Nauti Gator and her son, Aloe, is a sophomore at UF. She is a director of communications for a life sciences executive assistant.

Maurice Robinson (BS '54) is an internal medicine physician at Palm Beach Memorial Hospital in Palm Beach Delights: chocolate chip cookies.

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

Bill Williams (MEd '15) sports this tag in Montgomery, AL, where he and his wife, Hallie, are retired.

Christopher Ryan (BS '63, JD '68) of Dana 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 “Bash ‘em Georger!”.

Jeyakumar Nagarathinam (BScEn '92) of Las Vegas is a retired medical case manager at the VA.

Kevin Anderson (BSB '96) of Gainesville has an official UF tag. He lives in Doral, where he is part-time at Kennesaw State.

David Woodrow (BSA '71, MBA '72), a business developer in Crystal River, sports this tag on his motorcycle so everyone will know where his loyalty lies.
Membership dues support alumni programs, student scholarships and UF’s ranking as a top public university. Your UF Alumni Association is proud to keep Gators connected to campus and to each other. **JOIN TODAY** by visiting ufalumni.ufl.edu or calling 352-392-1905.

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**37,512 OF YOUR FELLOW GATORS ARE LIFE MEMBERS OF THE UF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

**FLORIDA GATOR | 69**
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, basketball, 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 on the 1988 unified gymnastics team in Seoul in 1988, won two silvers in the 1972 Munich Games.

5. C, Tim Mckee, of the modern running boom.

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.


11. A, boogled. John Amabile (AA ’83) and Lisson Bocher (BFA ’90) were on the Puerto Rican bobsled team at the 1992 Albertville Games, 1994 in Lillehammer and 1998 in Nagano. Steve Mosler (BSEE ’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. Golya cycled in the Barcelona and Atlanta Games. Weaver won a bronze in L.A.


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


16. A, Judi 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 Buzatman (BS ’13) swam for Iceland in the 2008 Beijing Games and again in London in 2012. Mercedes Farhat (’95) was a member of Libya’s team in 2008.


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

22. C, flour. Ballatore coached for Peru in the 1984 L.A. Games, in 1992 in Barcelona, 1994 in Lillehammer and 1998 in Nagano. 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.

23. B, flour. Those coaches include Jimmy Games 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 preselection), 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 (12), 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 (11), 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).

SOURCES:

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 want 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.

KS: [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.
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. “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...
NOTES OF HEARTFELT THANKS

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 scholarship support has meant in their lives. Here are just a few of their notes.

MACHEN IS a wonderful program that opens doors to some of those people who thought that the opportunity was not there to better themselves and their lives, and ultimately achieve success.

— Sylvester Lionel (BSBC ’10)

“Thank you for believing in us.”

— Alex Rodriguez (14 in Advance)

“I’ve had so much support. I’m able to pursue my dreams now that I have the opportunity to go to college.

— Mauricio Molina (BA ’10)

Thank you for giving high-achieving students a chance to earn the most valuable college degree in Florida — one from the University of Florida.

— Berrie Machen

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 2005, then-UF President Bernie Machen launched Student Affairs with a $48 million proposal for an opportunity scholarship program for students who are academically superior and the first in their families to attend college. The program funds tuition, books, fees and board and a stipend for a degree location of $40,000 per year. The proposal he approved in 2005, which was later endorsed by the Board of Trustees, builds on the success of other programs which families earned him widespread praise and support from the University’s board of trustees, alumni, students and parents. He is a performing artist and actor who has a master’s degree in education at Valdosta State, and now

“I feel like I’ve gained confidence that because of your generosity, they didn’t even know were possible. As are blessing students and families in ways hard to overcome. I can certainly attest attending a top university like UF are education, but the income barriers of desire to expand their experience and so sincere. This program is so important to all Floridians, such as healthcare, energy, food and technology. Behind the Behind the Barriers to make sure that they can,” he said. “Education is the most important one of the program.

— 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 scholarship support has meant in their lives. Here are just a few of their notes.
Meet the leaders behind the mission of MFOS.

The Architects of Opportunity

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

A First-Class Event!

The UF Alumni Association invites all members and their guests to gather at Emerson Alumni Hall prior to each home football game this fall. Get ready to cheer on the Gators with fellow alumni while enjoying live entertainment, a face painter, tailgate games and food and beverages for purchase.

For more info visit uff.to/rg21

2021 DATES

September 4   Florida Atlantic University
September 11  Florida State University
September 28  Vanderbilt
October 9  Vanderbilt, Florida State University
November 13  Samford
November 27  Florida State University

Homecoming: Open to Public