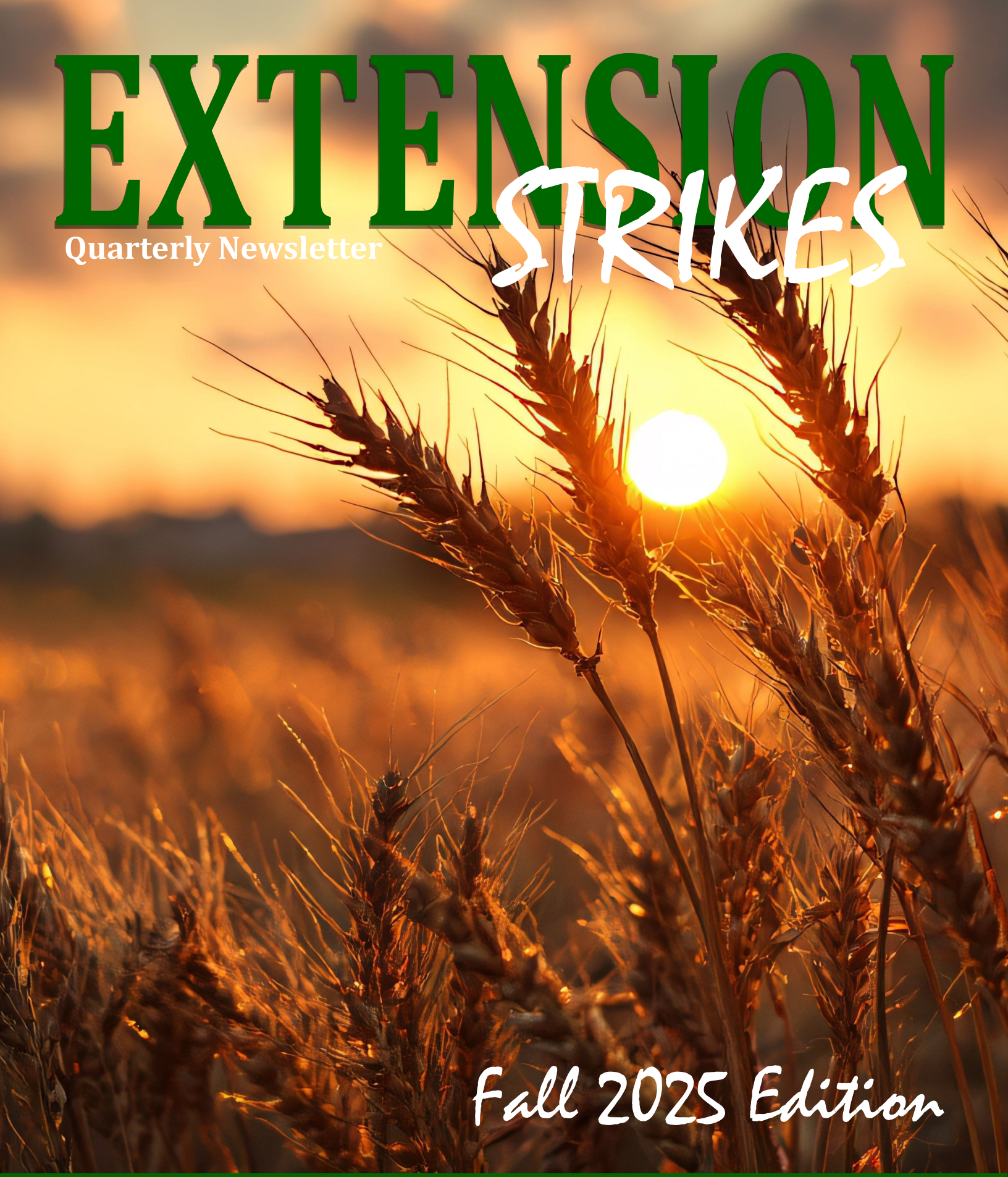
EXTENSION STRIKES

Quarterly Newsletter



Fall 2025 Edition

4-H Youth Development | Agricultural & Natural Resources | Community Resource Development | Youth, Family & Community

Message from the Director

The role of taking the University to the People is the foundation of FAMU Cooperative Extension as the outreach arm of the University's land-grant mission. A thriving Florida economy will require empowered and well-informed citizens and workers. FAMU Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic profitability and sustainability as well as social well-being. We bring experience and research-based solutions to help individuals, families and communities thrive in Florida's ever-changing economy.

An expanded knowledge base, innovations for families, farmers, and business leaders, positive leadership and development for youth, and community and economic development opportunities are just part of FAMU Cooperative Extension's approach to meet challenges and make contributions to the state of Florida and the world that are bold and exceed all expectations. As a unit of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, FAMU is also a cooperative partner with USDA National Institute of Agriculture, University of Florida Institute of Food &Agriculture (1862), and state and local entities.

-Vonda Richardson, Extension Director/Administrator

FAMU FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

Stay Connected with FAMU Cooperative Extension. Catch up on the latest highlights in our quarterly report, featuring new programs, success stories, and impactful outreach efforts. FAMU Cooperative Extension remains dedicated to empowering farmers, ranchers, producers, seniors, youth, entrepreneurs, small business owners, and rural and urban communities across Florida.

Together, we're growing stronger communities—one initiative at a time.

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Extension Strikes
Quarterly Newsletter

October-December
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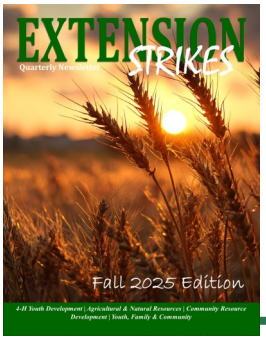

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1890 2025

19-Strong
1890 LAND GRANT UNIVERSITIES

135 Years of Providing Access and Enhancing Opportunities

Alabama A&M University
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Central State University
Delaware State University
FAMU Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
Fort Valley State University
Kentucky State University
Langston University
Lincoln University Missouri
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
Prairie View A&M University
SC State University 1896
Southern University
Tennessee State University
Tuskegee University
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff 1873
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Virginia State University
West Virginia State University

In 1890, the Land-grant University System was expanded to include institutions for Black citizens. Today, these institutions continue to provide access to higher education for underserved communities, and their research and Extension programs impact people worldwide through advancements in agricultural productivity and sustainability, food security, human health, and community and youth development.

Awareness, Action, and Equity: Honoring Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Contributor: Amelia Davis

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month — a critical time to shine a spotlight on breast cancer, its risks, its impacts, and the disparities that affect women of color. In the U.S., about 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. Although overall incidence rates are comparable — and in some cases lower for Black women compared to White women — the outcomes tell a very different story for women of color.

For example, Black women in the U.S. have a roughly 40% higher breast cancer death rate than White women, despite similar incidence rates. The survival gap persists: Black women have the lowest 5-year survival rate of any racial/ethnic group. One contributing factor is that Black women are more likely to be diagnosed at younger ages and with more aggressive subtypes — for instance, the triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) type, which is harder to treat, is significantly more common among Black women.

These disparities aren't simply a matter of biology. Social determinants — such as access to high-quality screening and treatment, socioeconomic status, geographic barriers, and systemic inequities — play major roles. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it's vital that we highlight not only the message "get screened," but also "ensure equity in care and support."

For women of color, early awareness means: knowing your personal risk, discussing screening timing and options with your healthcare provider (especially if you are under 50), and advocating for timely follow-up of any abnormalities. Communities and health systems must also work to ensure that screening, diagnosis, and treatment work equally well — for everyone. Together, we can move toward better outcomes and true health equity.

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YFC Agents Promote Health and Safety Through Interactive Learning

Contributor: Teron Speer

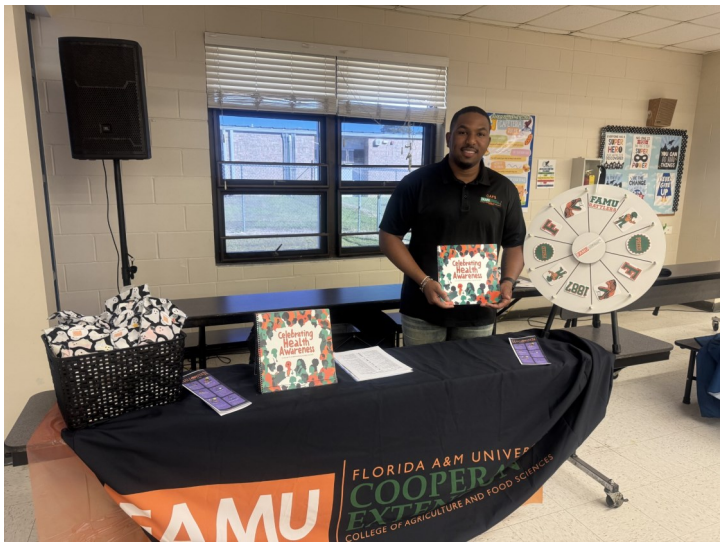
FAMU Youth, Family & Community (YFC) agents continue to lead the way in empowering individuals and strengthening communities through education on health, wellness, and safety. During the recent Sunbelt Ag Expo, YFC agents shared valuable information to help families make informed decisions that support healthier lifestyles and safer homes.

At the event, participants of all ages had the opportunity to engage with an interactive "Fact or Fiction" display, designed to challenge common myths and spark conversations about everyday health choices. Visitors tested their knowledge on topics such as physical activity, nutrition, food safety, and personal well-being, while learning practical tips they could take home and apply immediately.

Adults and children alike enjoyed the hands-on experience, which made learning both fun and informative. Many participants expressed surprise at the facts they discovered, highlighting the importance of continued education in helping families build healthy habits and environments.

The YFC team also brought this same interactive learning experience to Oak Ridge Elementary School's Fall Festival, where students enthusiastically participated in the activity. Through engaging games and demonstrations, children learned about the benefits of eating nutritious foods, staying active, and practicing safe habits in their daily lives.

By delivering educational programming in both community and school settings, YFC agents continue to fulfill their mission of improving the overall quality of life for individuals and families. Whether through expos, festivals, or workshops, these outreach efforts reinforce the vital role that YFC programs play in promoting community health, safety, and lifelong learning.



Photos: Top: Teron Speer at the Sunbelt Ag Expo; Middle: Ciara Holloman at the Oak Ridge Fall Festival and Bottom: Mr. Speer at the Oak Ridge Fall Festival.

FAMU Extension Strengthens Community Impact in Gulf and Franklin Counties

Contributor: Cheyenne Martin

The First-Time Homebuyer Program, a partnership between FAMU Cooperative Extension and UF/IFAS Extension, continues to make a meaningful impact in Gulf and Franklin Counties. The program has seen a strong increase in local residents registering for and completing homebuyer education classes. It is encouraging to witness more families taking that important first step toward homeownership—building stronger, more stable communities along the way.

FAMU Extension also announced that its Community Resource Health Fair, in collaboration with the Franklin County Health Department, has been rescheduled for Saturday, December 6, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Living Waters Assembly of God Church. The event will feature a variety of resources, health screenings, and information designed to support the well-being of families and neighbors throughout the community.

The FAMU Extension team will also be active in the community during the 62nd Annual Apalachicola Seafood Festival, taking place October 31–November 2, 2025, at Battery Park, 1 Bay Avenue, Apalachicola, FL. FAMU Extension Agents , Carla Adams Lippett, Cheyenne Martin, and Linda Sapp will share valuable information on energy efficiency, heirs' property, and natural resources. This outreach provides an opportunity to connect with festivalgoers, celebrate local culture, and promote tools for sustainability and success.

FAMU Extension is also celebrating a special entrepreneurship success story. One of its dedicated clients from the FAMU Extension Entrepreneurship Program has successfully grown her business, Sweet Pops, transitioning from a tent setup to a fully equipped food truck. She now serves up delicious treats at Gulf and Franklin County football games. Her success is a shining example of how FAMU Extension supports local entrepreneurs in growing their businesses and giving back to their communities.

Looking ahead to 2026, FAMU Extension is maintaining its momentum by collaborating with FAMU SBDC, CareerSource Gulf and Franklin Counties, and the Franklin County ECCC Elder Care Program to expand business development and opportunity initiatives across the region.

The future remains bright for Gulf and Franklin Counties, and FAMU Extension is proud to continue empowering residents through education, entrepreneurship, and community engagement.

FAMU Summer Undergraduate Water Resources Program

Contributor: Katherine Milla, Ph.D.

Top Row: Students analyze water samples for nitrogen and phosphorus. Left to right: Nabil Murad (rising freshman, TSC), Kayla Morris (FAMU), Paige Babushkin (FSU), Amari Holmes (Morehouse College), and James Coleman (TSC). ***Second Row:*** Summer program students tour the Tallahassee Thomas P. Smith Water Reclamation Facility; Summer program undergraduate students Amari Holmes (front) and Nabil Murad (back) collect soil leachate samples under the guidance of FAMU graduate student Adeiza Adonuja (middle).

During June FAMU Cooperative Extension partnered with the FAMU Center for Water Resources to conduct an experiential program for undergraduate students focusing on water resources in urban environments. The program was open to undergraduate students from any university in any major.

From June 2-13 five undergraduate students representing Florida A&M University, Florida State University, Morehouse College, and Tallahassee State College participated in classroom lectures, field trips, field water sampling, laboratory sample analysis, and preparation and delivery of a PowerPoint presentation. The program traced the pathways and interactions of water as it travels through the Tallahassee urban environment and eventually emerges at Wakulla Springs and flows into Apalachee Bay. The program was led by Dr. Katherine Milla, Dr. Daniel Solis and graduate students from CAFS and the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering.

The summer program was supported by the Center for Advancing Sustainable and Distributed Fertilizer Production (CASFER) as part of its Engineering Workforce Development initiative. CASFER is a National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center dedicated to promoting a nitrogen circular economy by developing new technologies to recover nitrogen from human and animal waste streams. FAMU participates, along with the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering, in CASFER with four other universities (Texas Tech (lead institution), Case Western Reserve, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Georgia Tech University).

For more information about the summer program contact Dr. Katherine Milla, katherine.milla@famu.edu.

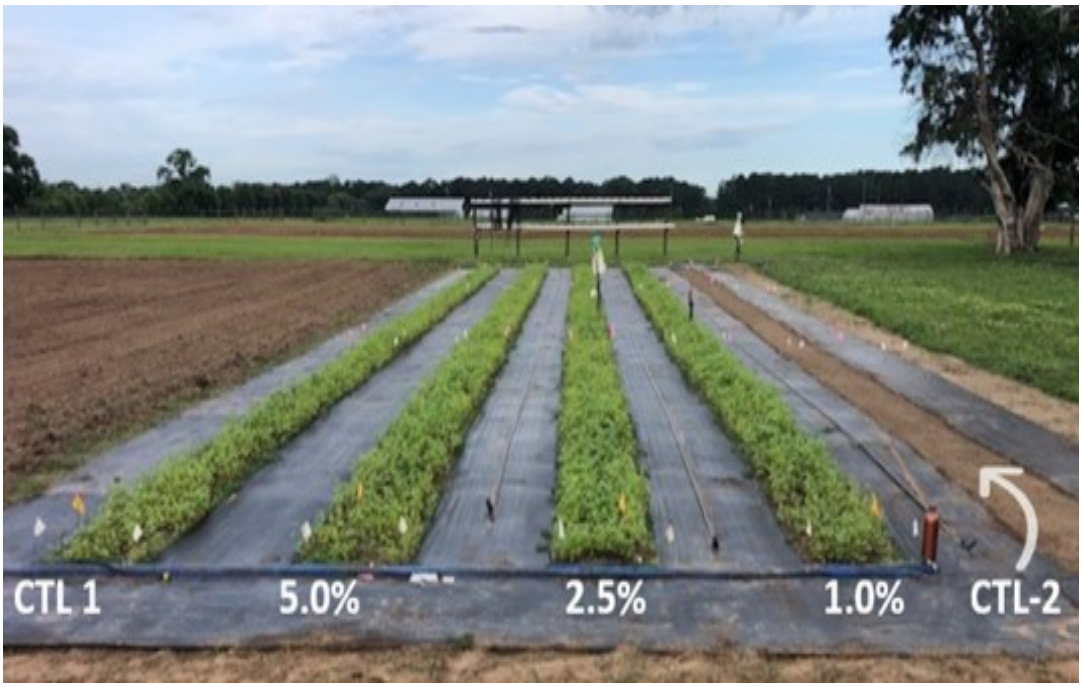
Effects of Biochar and Cover Crops on Yield of Collard Greens *(Brassica oleracea)*

Contributor: Alejandro Bolques, Ph.D.

Collard greens (*Brassica oleracea*) are among the oldest members of the cabbage family. The crop is unique to the southeastern United States and is highly popular in traditional cuisine. Today, collards are a nutritious, low-calorie item in school lunch programs and a cash crop for small-scale farmers. This new role is sufficient justification for researching new techniques for maximizing collard green production yields.

A study is being conducted at the FAMU Research and Extension Center in Quincy, FL, to evaluate the effects of biochar and how it can improve soil health productivity in combination with a cover crop, Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*). Applications of 0, 1.0, 2.5, and 5.0 percent biochar were made to a sandy clay loam native soil and applied accordingly to the experimental plots. Collards were grown in the late Fall and harvested in late winter, followed by two applications of Buckwheat as a cover crop in the late Spring and again during the Summer.

Preliminary results have shown no significant difference between the control and the biochar treatments applied to the soil. An annual timeline for the study has been established to collect yield and core soil samples to determine how biochar can improve soil health and other soil properties.



Buckwheat cover crop across treatments:

- ◊ CTL 1 (Control 1, no biochar plus buckwheat)
- ◊ CTL 2 (Control 2, no biochar and no buckwheat)
- ◊ 1.0% biochar plus summer buckwheat
- ◊ 2.5% biochar plus summer buckwheat
- ◊ 5.0% biochar plus summer buckwheat.

Collards seedlings are planted in the Fall and harvested in February, with two rounds of buckwheat planted during the summer. Soil core sampling were taken in the Fall prior to planting next year's crop.

Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Showcases Programs at 2025 Sunbelt Agricultural Expo

Contributor: Amelia Davis

The Florida A&M University (FAMU) Cooperative Extension proudly participated in the 2025 Sunbelt Agricultural Expo in Moultrie, Georgia, held over three days of agricultural innovation, education, and networking. Known as "North America's Premier Farm Show," the Sunbelt Ag Expo attracts thousands of producers, researchers, educators, and agricultural enthusiasts each year—and FAMU Cooperative Extension was once again front and center showcasing its diverse programs and impact.

Throughout the event, all four FAMU Cooperative Extension program areas were represented: Community Resource Development (CRD), Youth, Family and Community (YFC), 4-H Youth Development, and Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR). Attendees had the opportunity to learn about FAMU's research-based outreach initiatives, educational resources, and support services that strengthen Florida's agricultural and rural communities.

Teron Speer, Extension Agent II, assist attendees with the prize wheel, as he provided information on health and wellness.

FAMU Extension faculty and staff engaged visitors with interactive displays and demonstrations highlighting topics such as sustainable farming practices, agribusiness development, youth engagement in agriculture, healthy living, and community empowerment. These exhibits reflected FAMU's ongoing commitment to supporting small farmers, families, and youth through education, innovation, and hands-on learning opportunities.

Cheyenne Martin-Mardashian and Linda Sapp at the UF/IFAS building, where FAMU Extension and IFAS partnered in collaboration.

The Expo also provided an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between FAMU Cooperative Extension and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). This partnership underscores the shared land-grant mission between the 1890 and 1862 institutions—to ensure that all Floridians, regardless of background or location, have access to quality education, agricultural resources, and community development support.

"We look forward to the Sunbelt Expo each year. It is a great opportunity to showcase FAMU Cooperative Extension and the great work supporting small farmers, families and communities in Florida." said Vonda Richardson, Director, FAMU Cooperative Extension.

The FAMU Cooperative Extension team's participation in the Sunbelt Ag Expo highlights its dedication to fostering partnerships, promoting agricultural innovation, and advancing economic and environmental sustainability throughout Florida and beyond.

Giant FAMU Adirondack chair on display at the UF-FAMU building

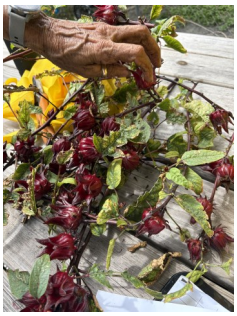
Photos: **top row**: Linda Sapp with an attendee, explain sand crabs; FAMU Extension booth attendees with FAMU educators, Eunice Stevenson, Barbara Floyd and Britney Clark.

Second row: Group Picture of the Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) team; Group picture of both Community Resource Development (CRD) and Youth, Family and Community (YFC) teams with Director, Vonda Richardson.

Photo credit: Linda Sapp and Cheyenne Martin

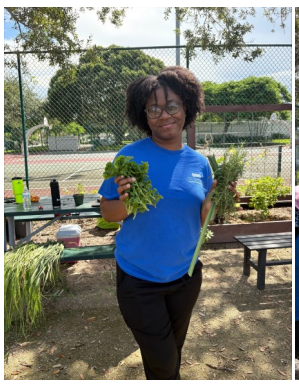
Community Garden Days

Composting



Harvesting

Volunteering



Growing Together in West Palm Beach: Garden Days at Coleman Park and Pleasant City Community Gardens

Contributor: Amelia Davis
Photo Credit: Tavia Gordon

Under the leadership of Tavia Gordon, Urban Agriculture Extension Agent, the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Cooperative Extension Program and the City of West Palm Beach continue to nurture community growth—one garden day at a time.

At the Coleman Park and Pleasant City Community Gardens, volunteers come together to learn, share, and dig into sustainable gardening practices. Participants get their hands in the soil while learning how to compost, propagate lemongrass, and harvest a bounty of fresh produce including sweet potatoes, papaya, oregano, rosemary, callaloo, green onions, and sorrel.

Each garden day offers an opportunity to learn, grow, and give back to the community. Volunteers play a vital role in keeping these gardens thriving by weeding raised beds, adding materials to compost bins, organizing tools and supplies, and harvesting nutritious herbs and vegetables.

The shared commitment and teamwork displayed at each session reflect the heart of community gardening—building connections, promoting sustainability, and cultivating wellness for all who participate.

These thriving green spaces in West Palm Beach stand as a testament to what collaboration can achieve. Together, with FAMU Cooperative Extension and local residents, the City of West Palm Beach continues to sow the seeds of a healthier, greener future.

Community Roots: Urban Agriculture in Action

West Palm Beach Edition

As we close out the year, we are excited to feature several articles submitted by Tavia Gordon, Urban Agriculture Extension Agent for Palm Beach County. From summer workshops to fall community events, Tavia's updates reflect the dedication and impact of our Extension team in advancing sustainable agriculture and strengthening local communities.

Café Compost and FAMU Cooperative Extension Partner for a Community Compost Build at Pleasant City Garden

July 10- The City of West Palm Beach Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF) microgrant recipient, Café Compost, partnered with Florida A&M University (FAMU) Cooperative Extension to host a hands-on compost build at the Pleasant City Community Garden.

The YCAF supports youth-led projects that address urgent climate challenges and advance the goals of the City's Sustainability Action Plan. Through this initiative, young leaders are helping create tangible environmental change in their own communities.

Café Compost, a team of Suncoast High School students, developed an innovative project focused on reducing food waste and supporting urban gardens through community -based composting. Partnering with FAMU's Urban Agriculture Extension Program, West Palm Beach the group designed and constructed a functional compost bin for the Pleasant City Community Garden.

The new compost system will help the garden recycle organic materials on-site, reduce waste sent to landfills, and provide nutrient-rich soil for vegetable and herb production. Together, Café Compost, FAMU Cooperative Extension, and the City of West Palm Beach are turning climate action into community impact, one compost pile at a time.

Sustainability in Action at Coleman Park!

On ***July 25,*** we had the pleasure of welcoming The Breakers Palm Beach Environmental Impact Team to the Coleman Park Community Garden for a hands-on Composting Workshop led by Tavia Gordon, FAMU Urban Agriculture Extension Agent.

As part of their ongoing sustainability initiatives, this incredible team contributed their time, energy, and resources to help advance our urban agriculture and waste reduction goals. Composting plays a vital role in reducing food waste, enriching garden soil, and inspiring eco-conscious practices throughout the community.

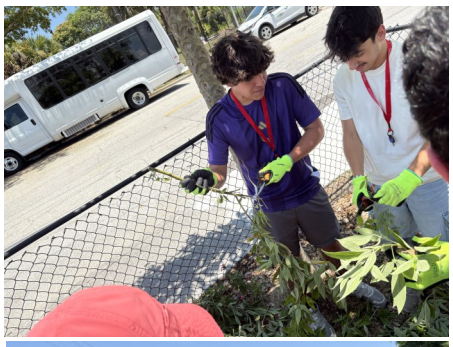
FAU Pine Jog Students Visit Pleasant City Community Garden for Climate READY Experience

On **July 29, 2025**, high school students from FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center's *Climate READY Program* visited the Pleasant City Community Garden in collaboration with the City of West Palm Beach Office of Sustainability and Florida A&M University (FAMU) Cooperative Extension.

The Climate READY Program is designed to empower youth as future environmental leaders by engaging them in real-world sustainability and climate resilience activities. During their visit, students learned how urban gardens can help strengthen community food systems, promote sustainability, and address climate challenges.

FAMU's Urban Agriculture Extension Agent, Tavia Gordon, led the hands-on session, introducing students to sustainable gardening practices such as composting, soil health, and food production in urban spaces. Students helped with garden maintenance, composting and discussed how local food production supports both environmental and community resilience.

This partnership between FAU Pine Jog, the City of West Palm Beach, and FAMU Cooperative Extension highlights the power of collaboration in preparing youth to take meaningful action toward a more sustainable and climate-ready future.





Fall Gardening Series: Rohi's Readery

September 2025- At Rohi's Readery, our little gardeners got their hands dirty and their hearts full during the Seed Sowing Workshop!

From digging in the soil to learning how plants grow, each child planted more than just seeds, they planted curiosity, care, and confidence.

Young gardeners sowed collard greens, tomatoes, bell peppers, lettuce, cucumbers, broccoli, kale, radishes, spinach, and more! A special highlight was the intergenerational experience, as children planted alongside a senior who shared valuable gardening knowledge and wisdom.

Pigeon Pea (Cajanus cajan): Florida's Protein-Packed Powerhouse for Profitable, Sustainable Farming

Contributor: Gilbert Queeley, Ph.D.

Pigeon pea, a resilient legume with deep cultural roots and impressive agronomic benefits, is gaining traction among Florida growers. Known for its high protein content, soil-enhancing properties, and compatibility with diverse markets, fast-bearing determinate varieties of pigeon pea offer a compelling case for farmers seeking sustainability and profitability.

Perfect Fit for Florida's Climate

Pigeon pea thrives in USDA Hardiness Zones 9a–11b, making it well-suited for Florida's warm, subtropical conditions. Determinate varieties—such as 99-W, 76-W, 'ICPL 92016' DO and '2B Bushy'are especially attractive for commercial cultivation due to their shorter growth cycles, predictable harvest windows, and compact size. These varieties typically begin flowering within 60–90 days and can reach full maturity within five to six months.

ROI and Market Value

In U.S. specialty markets and Caribbean communities, dried pigeon peas retail between $2.50–$4.00 per pound, while fresh green pods fetch premium prices at farmers markets and ethnic grocers. With yields ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 lbs per acre, pigeon pea offers solid ROI, particularly when sold directly to consumers or niche distributors.

Nutritional and Market Versatility

Pigeon pea is a nutritional powerhouse, boasting:

- High protein content (20–25%)
- Rich in fiber, potassium, magnesium, and iron

Its versatility spans multiple industries:

- Food & Beverage: Used in soups, stews, curries, and canned goods.
- Pharmaceuticals & Nutraceuticals: Studied for its potential in managing diabetes, cholesterol, and inflammation.
- Plant-based protein markets: Ideal for vegan and vegetarian products.

This broad appeal allows growers to tap into health-conscious, ethnic, and export markets.

Soil-Building Benefits

Beyond its economic value, pigeon pea is a natural soil enhancer:

- Nitrogen-fixing legume: Improves soil fertility for subsequent crops.
- Deep taproots: Break up compacted soil and improve water infiltration.
- Low input requirements: Thrives in marginal soils with minimal fertilizer.

These traits make pigeon pea a valuable rotation crop or companion plant in regenerative farming systems.

Cultural Relevance and Market Demand

Pigeon pea is a staple in Caribbean, African, Indian, and Latin American cuisines. Florida's diverse population—especially in South Florida—creates a built-in demand for fresh and dried pigeon peas. With increasing interest in climate-resilient, protein-rich crops, pigeon pea is poised for expansion in both local and global markets.

Final Takeaway

Fast-bearing determinate pigeon pea varieties offer Florida farmers a high-protein, soil-building crop with strong market potential. Its adaptability, low input needs, and cross-industry appeal make it a smart choice for sustainable agriculture and profitable diversification.

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3. https://www.theunrulygardener.com/swfl-summer-gardening-pigeon-pea/

Disaster Strikes: Be Ready to Strike Back!

Contributor: Kimberly Davis

FAMU Cooperative Extension is committed to building resilient Florida communities. We help Florida families and communities stay safe, healthy, and resilient. Each issue shares tips, resources, and stories to help you prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, from hurricanes to everyday health and safety challenges. We also provide guidance to keep your home safe, comfortable, and healthy, including advice on disease prevention, food and water safety, and creating a secure environment for all ages. Together, our communities can stay informed, stay prepared, and strike back stronger.

As the seasons change and we enjoy fall football, festivals, fairs, and the holiday season — including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year celebrations — it's a perfect time to put preparedness into practice. Staying safe while celebrating is just as important as planning for larger disasters, so we've put together practical tips to help your family and community stay healthy and secure:

- Stay hydrated and take breaks during outdoor events.
- Follow traffic and parking guidelines to avoid accidents in crowded areas.
- Monitor children and seniors closely to prevent getting lost or injured.
- Practice food safety during holiday meals — cook, store, and serve food properly.
- Wash hands regularly to reduce the spread of germs at public events and family gatherings.
- Be aware of weather alerts and have a plan in case of sudden storms or extreme temperatures.
- Dress in layers and keep warm during colder fall and winter days.
- Prevent slips and falls on wet, icy, or snowy surfaces.
- Check heating devices, fireplaces, and Christmas lights to reduce fire and carbon monoxide risks.
- Plan for safe travel during busy holiday periods — allow extra time and drive cautiously.
- Shop safely online — use secure websites, avoid sharing unnecessary personal information, and track packages to prevent theft.
- Choose age-appropriate toys for children and check for small parts, sharp edges, or other hazards to prevent injuries.

By preparing ahead and staying aware, you can enjoy the season safely while keeping your home, family, and community protected.

Roselle (Sorrel): Florida's Crimson Goldmine for Farmers and Entrepreneurs

Contributor: Gilbert Queeley, Ph.D.

Roselle *(Hibiscus sabdariffa*), also known as Jamaican sorrel or Florida cranberry, is emerging as a high-value crop for Florida growers. With its vibrant red calyces, cultural significance, and expanding market demand, roselle offers a compelling return on investment (ROI) and versatile applications across industries.

Why Roselle Thrives in Florida

Roselle flourishes in USDA Hardiness Zones 8–11, making it ideal for most of Florida's climate. It's a short-lived perennial in warm regions but typically grown as an annual. Trials conducted by FAMU, UF/IFAS and the University of the Virgin Islands have confirmed its adaptability to Central Florida soils and growing conditions. The plant requires minimal inputs, tolerates heat well, and is relatively pest-resistant—making it a sustainable choice for small and mid-sized farms.

Return on investment (ROI) and Market Potential

Roselle's ROI is driven primarily by its multi-use appeal and premium pricing:

• Fresh calyces retail for up to $67 per box in specialty markets.

• Dried calyces, used in teas and extracts, command even higher prices due to their shelf stability and concentrated flavor.

• A single acre can yield up to 1,500–2,000 lbs. of calyces, depending on variety and cultivation practices.

With growing demand from Afro-Caribbean communities and health-conscious consumers, roselle offers strong margins for direct-to-consumer sales, farmers markets, and boutique distributors.

Cross-Industry Compatibility

Roselle's tart, cranberry-like flavor and deep red pigment make it a favorite in:

- Food & Beverage: Used in teas, jams, syrups, cocktails, and desserts.
- Pharmaceuticals & Nutraceuticals: Rich in antioxidants, vitamin C, and anthocyanins, roselle is studied for its potential to support cardiovascular health, reduce blood pressure, and boost immunity.
- Cosmetics & Wellness: Extracts are used in skincare for their anti-inflammatory and anti-aging properties.

This versatility allows growers to tap into multiple revenue streams, from culinary to wellness sectors.

Cultural and Economic Relevance

Roselle holds deep cultural significance in Afro-Caribbean cuisine, especially during holidays. Florida's large Caribbean population—particularly in Orlando and Tampa—creates a built-in local market. Additionally, global interest in hibiscus-based products is rising, opening doors for export opportunities.

Final Takeaway

Roselle is more than a vibrant plant—it's a profitable, culturally rich, and climate-suited crop for Florida farmers. With low input costs, high market value, and broad industry appeal, it's poised to become a staple in Florida's agricultural diversification strategy.

Sources:
1. https://hos.ifas.ufl.edu/media/hosifasufledu/fruit-crops-diversification/documents/10.pdf
2. https://seedy.farm/growing-guide/roselle-hibiscus-sabdariffa/
3. https://miamifruit.org/products/fresh-hibiscus-roselle-calyx-box

FAMU Celebrates Central Florida History

A celebration that honors history, connects communities, and highlights the future of agritourism.

Contributor: Cheryl Danley

Readers of the Emancipation Proclamation (FAMU & Community Leaders). Front row (l to r): Rev. Dr. Emery Ailes, Brooksville; Kayce Hawkins, Hernando County School Board; Patricia Green-Powell, Ph.D., Professor, Florida A&M University (FAMU) and former director of FAMU Brooksville Agricultural & Environmental and Research Station (BAERS); Frank Bell, Historian, Buffalo Soldiers - Woods & Wanton, Chapter Tampa; Fred J. Gainous, Ph.D. President Emeritus of Florida A&M University (FAMU) and former director of FAMU Brooksville Agricultural & Environmental and Research Station (BAERS). Second row (l to r): Cynthia Brown-Jackson, Hernando County School District ; J.W. McKethan, Brooksville City Council; Brian Hawkins, Chair, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners; Top Row: Fred Hearns, Curator of Black History, Tampa Bay History Center.

Florida A&M University marked a milestone this spring with its first-ever FAMU Farm Fest in Central Florida, held May 17 at the Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station (BAERS). The event — Florida Emancipation Day: A Family Reunion & FAMU Farm Fest Celebration — brought together families, farmers, educators, and community leaders for a day that honored both Florida's Emancipation history and expanding FAMU Cooperative Extension presence in the region.

The Brooksville station, established on 3,800 acres granted to FAMU by USDA in 2015, now anchors Extension programs across Citrus, Hernando, Marion, Pasco, and Sumter counties, as well as the Tampa Bay area.

The celebration was made possible through partnerships with the Tampa Bay History Center (TBHC) and the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival. For the past three years, TBHC has hosted Emancipation Day observances at nearby Chinsegut Hill Historic Site; this year's collaboration added an agricultural focus, blending cultural history with Extension learning.

Farmers, vendors, and community groups showcased sustainable farming, healthy food demonstrations, and youth activities—illustrating how agritourism can open new doors for farm income and public education. By welcoming visitors onto farms for festivals, tours, and learning experiences, producers can strengthen local economies while celebrating Florida's agricultural heritage.

With BAERS as its Central Florida base, FAMU Cooperative Extension is cultivating new partnerships and empowering communities—proving that agriculture remains at the heart of Florida's story of growth, resilience, and unity.

Musician Jim "Boe" Anderson, band leader of the Cool Corporate Cats ; G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS); Marlene Amey (let) and her granddaughter Brooke Smith of the Hernando County Cattlewomen .

Crishuana Williams and Yohan Azteca of Saint Petersburg; Cheryl Danley, FAMU Extension Agent/Small Farms, and Carla Adams-Lippett, FAMU Extension Agent, Youth, Family and Community.

Top Row: Pam Carter, Vendor, Crafting with Pam, Brooksville; Tamara Bennett, Vendor, CandyJamz, Brooksville. Second Row: Tesha Jackson, Nubianz Farming, Marion County; Crystalgale Hayes, FAMU Cooperative Extension Agent, 4-H Gadsden County ; Festival crowd stage view participants gathered at FAMU's BAERS, for the inaugural Farm Fest and Emancipation Day celebration.

Photos courtesy of FAMU Cooperative Extension and community partners.

Agricultural Market Outlook

Contributor: Daniel Solis, Ph.D.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Florida's economy, generating over $387 billion in sales revenue and supporting nearly 2.5 million jobs across production, processing, and distribution. The state's favorable climate and diverse geography allow for the cultivation of a wide range of crops and the development of multiple agricultural sectors.

Florida is a national leader in citrus production, particularly oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines, which are primarily grown in the central and southern regions. Sugarcane, cultivated mainly in South Florida, accounts for more than half of the nation's output. Other key crops include tomatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, sweet corn, peanuts, and potatoes. In the realm of specialty crops, Florida ranks first in floriculture, with annual sales exceeding $1.2 billion. The state also produces a variety of tropical fruits, blueberries, and nursery plants, reinforcing its status as a specialty crop leader.

Forestry plays a vital role in rural economies, with timber and forest product manufacturing contributing approximately $47 billion in revenue. There is a growing emphasis on sustainable forestry practices to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship. Florida's livestock sector includes cattle, dairy, and poultry.

As of 2024, the state had over 1.5 million head of cattle, with beef and dairy operations making up a significant portion of agricultural cash receipts. The state's extensive coastline supports a thriving fishery and aquaculture industry. These sectors provide fresh seafood and employment opportunities, though they face increasing challenges related to environmental sustainability and resource management.

Starting in 2026, the FAMU Agribusiness Program, in collaboration with the FAMU Cooperative Extension, will launch a series of Agricultural Market Outlooks. These regular reports will provide in-depth analyses of Florida's key commodities, helping to identify emerging market opportunities and offering strategic guidance to farmers. The initiative is designed to support the development of profitable and sustainable agricultural enterprises across the state.

Dr. Daniel Solis is a contributing Professor in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences and Leader of the FAMU Agribusiness Program.

FAMU and DISC Village Revive Community Garden Through Partnership

Contributor: Linda Sapp

The FAMU Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the FAMU Community Garden Extension Team have partnered with DISC Village to revive a once thriving garden that had been unused over the years. Educators, Agent, Linda Sapp, along with Extension educators, Lester Gaskins, Patrick Burks and Eunice Stevenson worked to clear the gardens in both the women's and men's areas.

The team mowed the overgrown grass, tilled the soil, and prepared the garden for planting. In the past, produce from the men's garden was used in the cafeteria to prepare lunch and dinner for everyone at the facility. This renewed effort aims to bring that tradition back, with hopes that residents will continue maintaining the garden. FAMU's garden team provided seeds, and trays to help sustain this collaborative effort.

Butterfly pollinating the flowers at the garden

Photos (left to right): Lester Gaskins mowing the area; Eunice Stevenson and Lester Gaskins, prepping the soil; Linda Sapp, assist in prepping; Patrick Burks and Lester Gaskins, tilling the area before planting.

Photos courtesy of Linda Sapp

4-H in Action

Stephen Hayes Inspires Future Leaders at Wakulla 4-H Teen Summit with Powerful Closing Speech

Contributor: Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D.

Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D. and Stephen Hayes at the 4-H Teen Summit

Returning to his roots, Hayes stood before a crowd of over 40 youth participants from Florida 4-H District Three, which included teens from Wakulla, Leon, Gadsden, and Liberty counties. His presence was more than ceremonial—it was symbolic. As someone who once sat in the same seats as the attendees, Hayes embodied the summit's mission: to empower young people to become confident, capable leaders.

In his speech, Hayes reflected on his own journey through 4-H, crediting the organization for instilling in him the values of service, perseverance, and community engagement. "Leadership isn't about titles," he said. "It's about showing up, listening, and lifting others as you climb."

The summit, hosted by Wakulla 4-H at the Extension Office, was a full-day event packed with interactive workshops on financial literacy, communication skills, wellness, and career readiness. Held on a school holiday, it offered a rare opportunity for teens to engage in hands-on learning and network with peers and mentors.

Hayes praised the initiative, calling it "a launchpad for the next generation of changemakers." He encouraged participants to take what they learned and apply it not just in school, but in their communities.

Hayes's closing remarks were met with enthusiastic applause. He urged attendees to "be bold in your dreams and humble in your actions," leaving them with a challenge: to return next year not just as participants, but as mentors and leaders.

His speech was a fitting end to a day that celebrated potential and planted seeds for future impact. As the teens filed out, many were visibly energized, inspired to take their first steps toward leadership.

Bringing Innovation Home: FAMU 4-H Showcases Creativity and Leadership at the NAE4-HYDP Conference in Atlanta

Contributor: Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D../Crystalgale Hunter

NAE4HYDP Board of Directors: Proudly representing youth development professionals nationwide, this dynamic team stands united in leadership, innovation, and service. Here's to a year of impact, collaboration, and growth!

The 2025 National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals (NAE4-HYDP) Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, brought together the brightest minds in youth development to share ideas, strategies, and innovations shaping the future of 4-H programs nationwide. For the Florida A&M University (FAMU) 4-H team, the conference was both a celebration of progress and a call to action—an opportunity to elevate their practices, expand their network, and deepen their Beyond Ready initiative focused on preparing youth for leadership in a rapidly changing world.

Sharing Innovation Through STEM

FAMU 4-H proudly represented Florida by presenting a poster session highlighting their creative use of 3D pens as a tool for STEM engagement. The project showcased how incorporating hands-on technology encourages not only scientific exploration and creativity but also essential leadership skills such as teamwork, communication, and collaboration. Youth participants learn to design, build, and problem-solve together, skills that extend far beyond the classroom into real-world leadership contexts.

In addition to the poster presentation, the FAMU 4-H team conducted a dynamic hands-on workshop titled “Junior Engineering”, designed as an introduction to engineering principles for K–2 students. This interactive session demonstrated age-appropriate strategies for sparking curiosity in young learners while strengthening their understanding of how science, technology, and creativity intersect. By engaging professionals in these activities, the FAMU team modeled how educators can use playful learning to develop foundational STEM literacy and confidence at an early age.

Strengthening Professional Excellence

The NAE4-HYDP Conference served as a powerful professional development experience for youth development professionals across the country—and for FAMU 4-H, it reaffirmed the essential role that continuous learning plays in organizational growth. Attending workshops on program innovation, community partnerships, and inclusive leadership helped the team identify new ways to enhance local programming and better serve the diverse communities of Florida.

Through these experiences, FAMU 4-H reaffirmed its commitment to being innovators in youth education, ensuring every activity aligns with the Beyond Ready initiative's goal of equipping young people with the mindset, skills, and adaptability needed for future success.

Bringing It Back Home

Armed with new insights and strengthened partnerships, the FAMU 4-H team is eager to bring the energy of Atlanta back to campus and local communities. Building on the momentum of their national presentations, they plan to expand on the 3D pen and Junior Engineering projects, inspire fellow educators, and refine hands-on methods that blend creativity, technology, and leadership development.

By investing in both youth and professional growth, FAMU 4-H is ensuring its members, and its educators are always Beyond Ready. The conference was more than a professional milestone; it was a reminder that innovation thrives when knowledge is shared, curiosity is encouraged, and community remains at the heart of everything 4-H does.

Top Photo: Collaborative Creativity in Action: Building connection while building robots, focusing on teamwork to spark ideas and solve challenges at the NAE4-HYDP conference. **Middle Photo :** FAMU NAE4HYDP Representation: Bringing Rattler Pride to the NAE4HYDP Conference, celebrating leadership, collaboration, and the vibrant spirit of youth development. **Bottom photo:** Junior Engineers' presentation: Thai proudly presents the completed robot—proof that hands-on engineering and teamwork lead to impressive results. A standout moment from the Junior Engineers Workshop!

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

Display in the 4-H Building

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FAMU FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES


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we wish you and your family

Upcoming Events

CALENDAR

October 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 National Farmers Day	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 Ready, Set, Go 4-H Workshop (BAERS)
26	27	28	29	30	31 Apalachicola Seafood Festival 10/31– 11/2	

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

National 4-H Week!

Sunbelt AG EXPO

Happy Homecoming Rattlers

November 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
National Diabetes Month						1 Apalachicola Seafood Festival
2 Apalachicola Seafood Festival	3	4	5 Sugar Cane Field Day FAMU REC 9 am	6 North Florida Fair Extension display in Building 1 & FAMU 4-H display in 4-H Bldg.	7 Sorrell Harvesting! FAMU Community Garden	8
				North Florida Fair - Tallahassee, FL		
9 Sorrell Harvesting! FAMU Community Garden	10	11 VETERANS DAY HONORING ALL WHO SERVED University Closed	12	13	14	15
North Florida Fair-Tallahassee, FL						
16 North Florida Fair-Tallahassee, FL	17	18	19	20	21	22 Florida Blue FLORIDA CLASSIC EST 1978
23 30	24	25	26 University Closed	27 HAPPY THANKSGIVING	28	29 Ready, Set, Go 4-H Workshop (BAERS)

December 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THUIRSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5  World Soil Day	6 Community Resource Health Fair Franklin County, FL
7	8	9	10	11	12 Fall Commencement	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 	26	27
	University Closed					
28	29	30	31 			

University Closed– January 5, 2026

FAMU

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