



## Gulf Coast REC

August 2008

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*AUGUST - the month that you learn a seat belt makes a pretty good branding iron.*

### August Birthdays...

- 1.....Todd Test
- 2.....Patty McClain
- 2.....Jeremy Edwards
- 3.....Joyce Jones
- 5.....Trish Todd
- 5.....Laverne Barnhill (ret)
- 6.....Craig Stanley
- 13....Pauline Bansept
- 18....Andrew MacRae
- 21....Cathy Provenzano
- 23....Hector Ortiz (ret)
- 28....Amy Shober
- 29....David Schuster

Two elderly gentlemen from a retirement center were sitting on a bench under a tree when one turned to the other and said, "Slim, I'm 83 years old now and I'm just full of aches and pains. I know you're about my age, How do you feel?"  
Slim said, "I feel just like a newborn baby."  
"Really?! Like a newborn baby?!"  
"Yep. No hair, no teeth, and I think I just wet my pants."



## Welcome New Employee!

**Justin B. Harris** has joined the staff of Gulf Coast REC - Plant City Campus as the new Geomatics Specialist assisting Dr. Amr Abd-Elrahman. Justin graduated from the University of Florida with a BS degree in Mechanical Engineering and is currently working on his BS degree in Geomatics. Justin worked for Georgia Pacific for eight years prior to working for Pickett & Assoc. as a project manager before accepting the Geomatics position at Plant City. He lives in Lakeland with his wife, Lindsay. Welcome to the GCREC family, Justin!

### New Graduate Assistants this Fall:

**Maninder Chahal** - Masters student in Soil & Water Science for Dr. Gurpal Singh Toor (began Summer B session)

**Kamaljit Banger** - PhD student in Soil & Water Science, also for Dr. Gurpal Singh Toor

**Jozer Mangandi** - Masters student in Environmental Hort for Dr. Sydney Park Brown in Plant City

**Chenzhao Xie** - PhD student in Plant Pathology for Dr. Gary Vallad



ment is about in the Center auditorium lately, you need look no further than Dr. Steve Johnson's research team of Monica McGarrity and HCC student, Aaron Dennis, who have been assisting Steve with research of a non-native "pest" to Hawaii, the coqui frog. While this cute little frog appears to pose no "hazard", it has become quite invasive. Like many non-native "hitchhikers" that travel unintentionally around the world on plants and produce, the coqui frog has become an invasive pest in Hawaii due to their numbers and noise. Yes, little as it is, this small frog packs enough noise that their presence on property in Hawaii actually reduces the property value.

The team is testing a lung parasite (*Rhabdias*) to see if it will affect the frogs' fitness and possibly be used as bio control for the frog. This parasite is particular only to this frog in Puerto Rico (home of the coqui) and not to those in Hawaii. The research, simply put, is making the frog jump in an arena until exhausted. The number of jumps and how far they go is recorded (hence the paper flooring). After infecting the frog with *Rhabdias*, they wait 2 weeks and send them to the jump arena again to see how much the parasite affects their endurance. They are measured and weighed for 3 months to see if it also affects their growth. With each frog color-coded and the jumps documented with lines and dots on a "floor map", it looks a little confusing from a casual observer standpoint, but their goal is to find a bio control for this invasive species before it spreads further.



### Good Luck, Jay!

Jay Spiers, Post Doc Associate, who has been teaching a summer course at Plant City campus, is leaving this month for Auburn University for a permanent position. Jay has been a great asset to the horticulture program at Plant City. Good luck, Jay!

### Mark Your Calendar!

8/4/08...Mon...10:00 AM – Main Conf Rm.; Melissa Crowder will be here for hearing tests and respirator

8/5/08...Tues...3:00 PM – Auditorium; *mandatory* Heat Stress training (with ice cream!)

8/8/08...Fri....8am-4:30pm – Auditorium; Dupont Meeting with area growers

8/18/08..Mon...10am-4pm – Main Conf Rm; Green Industry BMP (Jemmy Hinton)

8/20/08...Wed...8am-5pm – Auditorium; Service Pile Burn Training; County Extension & Forestry

8/28/08...Thur...9am-3pm – Main Conf Rm; Florida Farm Bureau meeting