



Gulf Coast REC

February 2006
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(813) 634-0000



*The first duty of love is to listen.
It's better to lose your pride to the one you love than to lose the one you love because of pride.*

BRADENTON Birthdays:



- 5.....B Watson
- 6.....Michael Andreu
- 8.....Melissa Friedman
- 13....Marco Toapanta
- 14....Nancy West
- 14....Guillermo Alverio
- 15....Brent Harbaugh
- 15....Yuanfu Ji
- 16....Lynda Chandler
- 16....Steve MacKenzie
- 16....Armando Ayala
- 21....Tim David
- 22....Annie Turgeau
- 23....Betsy Roznik
- 25....Esther Langan
- 27....Jack Rechigl
- 28....Jose Martinez

The hardest years in life are those between 10 and 70. - Helen Hayes (at 73)

Forward into 2006...

It hardly seems possible that this time last year we were moving PODS into Bradenton to pack for the move to Balm/Wimauma. Everyone can congratulate themselves on a successful and timely move (even though the greenhouse delay had us stretched between Bradenton and Wimauma for a period of time). It was a good chance for "creative housecleaning" and reorganization. I remember feeling so lost in the long and seemingly empty space which now feels as comfortable as home. All that empty space has managed to fill to capacity, leaving us looking for even more office space. There's a lot of cooperative research going on as we share space and ideas with county and industry people at our regional center. The auditorium and main conference room are in constant use with meetings, workshops and training sessions for not only center employees, but industry, state and county organizations (and even a poly-com wedding). This summer our diagnostic lab opened for business for personal, on-site assistance to local growers. Our partnership with State of Florida's Hillsborough Correctional Institute for women has been very successful and we're very proud of the service they provide - be it custodial, field assistance, or facilities maintenance. Beginning January 1st we have also partnered with University of Florida's Plant City Campus at HCC. We've become a significant "place on the map" that has attracted a good deal of press coverage for the research done here as seen by articles such as those in Hillsborough's *InTheField* agricultural magazine and featured in the Fall 2005 edition of IMPACT. Our center strives to continue to be responsive to producer and grower needs as we find ways to maintain a competitive edge in agriculture while balancing production and environmental issues.

State legislators and county commissioners visited the Center in January as part of the OPERATION AGRICULTURE 2006 tour.



GCREC Family Picnic scheduled for April 1st to celebrate our first year anniversary! More info next month.



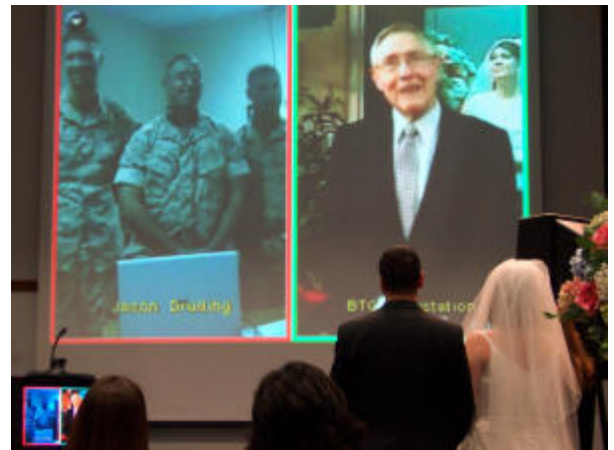


Strawberry Field Day...

Don't miss the strawberry field day at Gulf Coast REC on Monday, February 6th, from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm. Several important field trials will be highlighted and new soil fumigant and soil moisture monitoring technology will be demonstrated. Also included will be *an update on the future availability of methyl bromide soil fumigant, *a display of fruit from the newest varieties in the GCREC strawberry breeding program, and *the latest results on disease, pest, and nitrogen fertilizer management studies

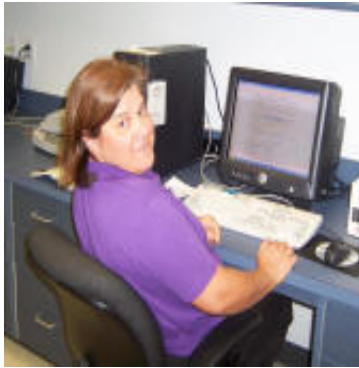
OPS Retirement Plan... OPS employees should see a change in their payroll deductions beginning January 13th (paycheck of February 3rd). This is the effective date of the *mandatory* plan that replaces Social Security deductions for **OPS employees only**. As December's newsletter informed, all OPS should have received a letter from BENCOR (administrator of the plan) explaining the plan and providing options to choose between a Guaranteed Pooled Fund (interest bearing account) and a variable investment option. In place of the 6.2% of salary and employer matching amount going to Social Security, 7.5% will be deducted for the new plan. If you have any questions regarding this retirement fund, please see Patty or long onto <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/benefits/ficaalternative.htm>

For those who missed all the excitement of the Polycom wedding at GCREC December 21st, here are a few snapshots of the unique wedding. The groom is a marine stationed in Africa, the bride is in Clearwater, and the officiating judge is in Montana (the only state that allows marriage by double proxy)! Freedom Calls, a New York City-based organization that helps military families communicate during wartime, located GCREC through a network of communications specialists. Our center was able to provide the technology for the video conferencing. The holiday atmosphere of December was a good opportunity for Jack Rechcigl, Center Director, to try his hand at Jack Rechcigl, Wedding Planner. The media-covered event bringing three distant places and a happy couple together was a first in long-distance, legal marriage.



(left) groom Jason Druding; (right) Montana judge; (front) groom's brother as stand-in with bride, Francie Mercado.





Welcome aboard this month to our newest Lab Technician, **Delores Cummings**. Dolly is working for Dr. Jay Scott in the Tomato Research program. She and her husband live in Ruskin. Dolly received her BS degree in Biology from State University of NY at Stony Brook and was instrumental in establishing the Camp Bayou Outdoor Learning Center in Ruskin.



While Steve MacKenzie has been a part of the Center since 2000 as OPS employee, he now has a new status of Post Doctoral Associate, working with Natalia Peres. Congratulations, Steve, on receiving your PhD this past October!

New but not pictured...

We would also like to welcome our partner center, University of Florida Plant City Campus. New hires for the Plant City campus are two grad students, **Travis Blunden** from Bradenton for Dr. Steve Johnson, and **Betsy Roznik** from Wisconsin for Dr. Michael Andreu. Also new to the Plant City campus are OPS employees, **Mary Thornhill** and **Erin Brown** for Michael Andreu; **Melissa Friedman**, formerly OPS for Dr. Steve Johnson has now accepted a position as Biological Scientist for Dr. Michael Andreu. In December, the Plant City campus hired a new Academic Support Services Coordinator, **Martin Wortman**.

Verify your benefits deductions

It is important to carefully review your payroll information each payday to ensure the proper premiums are being deducted for items like health and life insurance. Based on recent open enrollment elections, you may notice a change in deductions, or new deductions, for one or more of the following plans beginning on January 6:

- Medical/Dependent Care Reimbursement and the "new" Health Savings Accounts
- State health insurance monthly premiums
- Health Investor monthly premiums
- Long Term Disability, which includes new enrollments or changes to the 30 day elimination period
- Eagles Dental
- UF Term Life (Beginning January 20, some employees will also notice a slight increase in premiums caused by the yearly age recalculation associated with the plan.)

Premiums and coverage for new supplemental plans requiring medical application will not begin until approved by the company. Employees should receive notification of approval or denial from the company in the upcoming months. If you notice your paycheck does not reflect proper deductions for plans you currently have or may have elected during the 2005 open enrollment period, please contact University Benefits and Retirement at 392-1225 (SC 622-1225) or see Patty as soon as possible.

View Your Leave Balance History... A new myUFL enhancement now enables employees to review a history of their leave balances by navigating to My Self Service at my.ufl.edu. To check your leave balance, navigate to Payroll and Compensation > View Leave History. This enhancement will enable employees to review their leave activity for the most recent 26 pay periods.

Check the myUFL directory to ensure your information is accurate

Many employees are not receiving important personnel



2006 Holiday Schedule

New Year's Day - Monday, January 2
MLK, Jr's Birthday - Monday, January 16

information because their addresses are incorrect in UF's directory. The UF directory is the sole authoritative source of employee addresses and is used to generate mailings for W-2s, benefits information, and other important campus-wide updates. Because departments are not required to correct employees' contact information in the UF directory, all employees are responsible for correcting and updating their own contact information.

Visit my.ufl.edu to verify that your contact information is accurate. Click on "My Account" and then "Update My Directory Profile." To edit contact information, click on the orange link, "Addresses and Phone Numbers," then choose the address to be edited and submit changes.

Environmental Health & Safety

Thursday, February 23, 2006 Melissa Crowder from EH&S will be here to present training and overview. *At least one representative from each lab should plan to attend.* The sessions begin at 9:00 AM and conclude at 3:30 PM. Lunch will be provided. This Training and Overview is open to all centers. Please register with Patty McClain if you plan to attend so that we may provide sufficient lunches.



Congratulations!... Congratulations this past month to Logan and Jill Webb on the birth of their son, Nicholas Stonewall Webb on December 8th. The Center employees had a fun time with a baby shower to welcome little Nicholas.

Employees participated in some "interesting" games like 'dirty baby diaper', 'guess the baby food', and 'what's in the bag'



Memorial Day - Monday, **May 29**

Independence Day - Tuesday, **July 4**

Labor Day - Monday, **September 4**

UF Homecoming - Friday, **October 6 (1pm-5pm)**

Veterans Day (observed) - Friday, **November 10**

Thanksgiving Holiday - Thurs & Fri, **Nov. 23 and 24**

Christmas Day - Monday, **December 25**

New Performance Appraisals...

Beginning this March, all employee performance appraisals will be due each March. All supervisors should have participated in the training session for the new appraisal management form. If you were not able to attend, the recorded program is available at <http://personnel.ifas.ufl.edu>. Patty will present the new form with a brief overview at our staff meeting February 13. It is imperative that all employees and their supervisors be aware of this change in policy.

No Santa, but a good time, indeed!

The GCREC Christmas party may have missed Santa's schedule, but his "stand-ins" were terrific! Our employee Christmas party boasted an abundance of good food, a fun gift exchange (steal), and of course, our own brand of "characters". Many thanks to



Joyce Jones and Beilinski Santos for making the celebration complete!



Never a party here without good food!



A Parting Word About 411 Information Calls...

If you are one of those who still use the 411 number for phone information, this information is worth noting! Cell phone companies are charging us \$1.25 or more for 411 information calls when they don't have to. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial 1-800-FREE411 (or 1-800-373-3411) without incurring a charge at all except for the minutes required to make the call. Works on cell phones or home phones. I've put it into my contact information on my cell phone and have found it handy when I'm on the road without a phone book.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

Tuesday, January 31st, 10 AM to 3 PM- Redlands Christian Migrant Center - program & tour

Monday, February 6th, 1:30 to 4:00 PM - GCREC Strawberry Field Day

Monday, February 13th, 11:30 AM - GCREC Employee Staff Meeting

Wednesday, February 8th, 10 AM - Eckerd College Seniors tour

Tues & Wed, February 21 & 22nd - Florida Weed Society

Thursday, February 23rd, 9 AM to 3:30 PM - Environmental Health & Safety Overview/Training