

A Newsletter for IRREC Advisory Committee Members, Faculty, Staff and Students

**From the Director**



Photo by  
 Velma Spencer

On behalf of the University of Florida administrators, staff and students, both current, and those who have graduated, I would like to take this moment to thank all of the organizations, families and personal donors who support our students with scholarships. For the last academic year, IRREC students have been honored with \$12,000 in scholarship funds towards bachelor's and master's degrees, and doctoral work as well. For many of the students, the scholarship awards make a profound impact on their ability to pursue their academic dreams.

Angie Nino, from Colombia, is a Fulbright Scholarship Award recipient. It is an honor and a privilege for Angie to pursue a doctorate at IRREC.

Organizations which have provided generous scholarships to our students are: The Treasure Coast Gator Club, The Garden Club of Indian River County, The St. Lucie County Master Gardeners Scholarship Award, and the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. The University of Florida/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has provided five separate memorial and university awards.

Private scholarship donors are: the Bud Adams Family Scholarship Award, and the Simpson Family Foundation Graduate Student Scholarship Award.

IRREC students were recently honored at the Garden Club of Indian River County 85th Anniversary Celebration,



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New this year to the list of organization that have provided our students with generous scholarships is the Martin County Gardeners Scholarship Award. For the next year academic year, the Garden Club of Fort Pierce is offering IRREC students a scholarship award.

I applaud the thoughtfulness and service these organizations and individual families have made to our students. Education is an unquestionably valuable gift and a fulfilling one to give to a deserving student.

Please recognize the student recipients' accomplishments as they are presented in this newsletter. We thank each scholarship donor and each student who accepts and applies these valuable scholarship awards to their own betterment, and to the improvement of our environment, and to the industries we serve.

*Pete Stoffella*

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## Fulbright Scholarship Recipient and Doctoral Candidate Angie Niño studies at IRREC



**F**ulbright Scholarship recipient Angie Niño is researching methods to thwart damage to Florida's organic vegetable crops made by an invasive insect as she pursues a doctorate in entomology at IRREC.

In her pursuit of a Ph.D. in Entomology with UF, the research she conducts will aid Florida's growers, and growers in her native country, Colombia, in the fight against the yellowmargined leaf beetle.

She is from Bogotá, Colombia, South America; Niño's career goal is to complete her studies and return to her country where she will assist the agricultural industry there with its fight against insect pests.

"I want to be a part of improving the food we produce in Florida, and for our citizens in Colombia," said Angie. "Colombia's government representatives want people who have doctorate degrees related to science which can be applied back in Colombia."

Angie said she recognizes organic agriculture as one of Florida's, and her nation's, most important economic activities and that insects are harming high-value food crops. In Florida, she said, growers face the same problems with pest resistance to pesticides, and issues

related to the impact of pesticides to human health, wildlife, and natural resources. She believes food production will increasingly be accomplished in a way that protects life and natural resources.

She graduated summer, 2013 with a Master of Science degree in Entomology at IRREC, working under the direction of Dr. Ronald Cave, an internationally well-known entomologist who specializes in biological control of insects and the in taxonomy and faunistic studies of beetles. Angie's doctoral studies will continue with Cave's supervision.

Dr. Cave said Angie's research addresses biological control in sustainable agriculture because organic farmers in both countries struggle to protect crucifer vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, cabbage, collards, mustard, radish, turnip, and watercress.

Angie is seeking integrated pest management methods to control the yellowmargined leaf beetle, which is native to Argentina. The ecologically-friendly methods she is testing include the use of predatory insects, cultural control such as trap crops and polycultures, and the use of biopesticides.

The Fulbright Program is arguably the world's leading prestigious educational exchange program and is sponsored by the U.S. government. The program's mission is to heighten mutual understanding between Americans and citizens from other nations. Recipients of Fulbright scholarships and grants are selected on academic merit, professional achievement, and demonstrated leadership potential in their respective fields.

Angie earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology at the Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, in Bogotá, Colombia in 2007.

Prior to her graduate studies with the University of Florida, she had lived and worked in the service industry in London, while studying English. She also worked as a research assistant at the Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, in Bogotá, Colombia, working with mites and bees in a biological control laboratory.

## Simpson Family Foundation and St. Lucie Master Gardeners Scholarship Award Recipient Ellen Cochran



Ellen Cochran participated in UF Gainesville graduation ceremony, as do many IRREC graduates

**S**t. Lucie County Master Gardeners and university officials representing the Simpson Family Foundation have selected IRREC student Ellen Cochran for their organizations' annual scholarship awards.

Ellen, who was recently accepted to the university's Master of Environmental Horticultural program, will concurrently continue her studies at the Fort Pierce UF location while employed full-time at the US Department of Agriculture US Horticultural Research Laboratory near Fort Pierce.

At the federal laboratory, Ellen has for two years served as a biological science technician under the direction of Dr. Ed Stover, who heads a citrus scion breeding laboratory. Her work at the laboratory involves tissue culture analysis and biotechnology, and the propagation of citrus plants to mass produce many others. At this time the laboratory is to promote fruit resistant to citrus greening, a plant disease which is at this time the industry's greatest challenge.

Last year she completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Management, Summa Cum Laude, with the university's highest honors. In addition to a perfect academic record she completed a required honor's thesis in a topic related to her degree. Her honor's thesis involved the study of two separate soils commonly found along the Treasure Coast and the ability of those soils to move nutrients rapidly, onto water sources. The research she conducted took place in soils situated on horse farms.

Ellen attended Indian River State College prior to the local UF center. There she earned an Associate in Arts degree in Biology, while employed as a laboratory technician in the college's science labs.

The Florida Master Gardener program was initiated in 1979 as a "learn and return" program taught by county and state extension personnel. By providing education-based instruction methods incorporated with the latest scientific research, the program capitalizes on the desire of Florida citizens to learn more about horticulture in exchange for a predetermined number of volunteer hours returned to the individual county. The St. Lucie County Master Gardeners work in collaboration with the UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Office of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Since 2003, St. Lucie County Master Gardeners have recognized seven IRREC scholars with the scholarship. The award is for students seeking a career in environmental management, environmental horticulture, or agricultural management, and who have matriculated into a degree program at the UF Fort Pierce location.

## Simpson Family Foundation Scholarship Award Recipient



**D**octoral candidate Cristina Pisani was selected as the most recent Simpson Family Foundation Scholarship Award recipient. A native of Florence, Italy, she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Horticultural Science IRREC.

"I am the only research student who is working on Florida's avocado crop in the Fort Pierce area and I am honored that research for this crop has been selected for this award, as this crop is under serious threat," she said. "I would like to personally thank the Simpson Family, who I understand fund graduate students throughout Florida."

Cristina was born in the Italian countryside in the Chianti region, where as a youth she lived at her family's winery. When she was an elementary school student, her family immigrated to the U.S. and lived in Miami. There, Cristina gained an appreciation for tropical fruit trees, their value, and for their care.

Annual value of Florida's avocado crop is ~\$13 million, with most of the six thousand production acres in Miami-Dade County. While citrus remains the most important crop along the Treasure Coast,

many local citrus growers are now producing or considering avocado as a supplemental commodity for cultivation.

Her doctoral research focuses primarily on the fungal avocado disease known as laurel wilt, which is carried by the redbay ambrosia beetle, an invasive insect from Asia. The insect and the laurel wilt pathogen it spreads comprise the greatest threat to Florida's avocado industry.

Her research will continue another three years and is expected to identify avocado cultivars that are resistant to the disease and allow cultivation of the crop even when laurel wilt is present in the area.

"The research is very early but there are preliminary indications that some avocado genotypes from the more freeze-tolerant Mexican and Guatemalan races are more resistant than the West Indian material which is the foundation of the South Florida production," she said.

Her doctorate research is being directed by Dr. Mark Ritenour, an UF Associate Professor of Horticulture at IRREC, whose expertise is with postharvest quality and technology; and, Dr. Ed Stover, a horticulturist and geneticist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture U.S. Horticulture Research Laboratory, adjacent to IRREC. Additional UF/IFAS and USDA research scientists stationed in the Miami-Dade areas are also collaborating with the research.

Cristina said her career goal is to work directly and specifically with tree crop and vine grape producers for the protection of their crops. She said a doctorate degree in horticulture will enhance her expertise in plant pathology so that she will be prepared to assist fruit tree and grape producers' specific needs.

Cristina earned a master's in Plant Pathology at the University of California Davis and a bachelor's in Biology at Florida International University.

The Simpson Family Foundation was established by Mr. and Mrs. Mason Simpson, on behalf of their family in 2011. Mr. Simpson is a prominent luxury real estate developer well known for successful projects completed throughout the Treasure Coast and in Palm Beach County. The scholarship award is available for students who seek graduate degrees at UF's 13 research and education centers, which are part of the university's statewide Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

For more information about Florida's avocado industry and the threat of laurel wilt, please access the website: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/>

## Martin County Master Gardeners Scholarship Award Recipient



**P**alm City native and resident Kara Krueger has been recognized with a Martin County Master Gardeners Scholarship Award. She recently received a Master of Science degree in Environmental Horticulture at the University of Florida Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce.

Kara's primary interest is in urban gardening; her career goal is to work in a large metropolitan area to plan and implement sustainable 'greenway,' or sustainable landscaping spaces.

As part of her graduate degree, Krueger conducted a research project under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Wilson, a professor and expert in environmental horticulture. The

research project involves native switchgrass and little bluestem grasses, low maintenance, attractive ornamental grasses.

According to Dr. Wilson, the research assessed twelve grass varieties' performance in landscapes in Fort Pierce. The research carried out at the Fort Pierce location is one of 15 locations across the U.S., that is concurrently trialing these selections. The ornamental grasses are evaluated for plant growth, visual quality and flower impact in Fort Pierce. For the first year of the investigation, Krueger identified initial establishment success, growth, and ornamental landscape potential of the selected cultivars under low input conditions."

The grasses which are the subject of the study have potential for greater use in home landscapes and at botanic gardens. They have added benefits of erosion control and use in high population areas inside median strips and along parking lot borders. The plants add aesthetic value and grow well in poor to fertile soils.

Wilson and Krueger's study is part of a nationwide experiment led by Dr. Mary Meyer, a professor of horticulture at the University of Minnesota. Florida is one of ten 10 states looking at ornamental grasses.

In addition to her academic work, Krueger is employed full time with a software company in Palm City. Her duties there are with administration, handling records, accounts, and travel and event coordination.

Kara earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with minors in both Math and Spanish, from Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina. She attended Gardner-Webb on a sports and academic scholarship and participated on the university's division 1 soccer team.



## Jennifer Brown, Martin County Master Gardeners Scholarship Award Recipient

Jennifer Brown among her palms

Following a long and successful banking career, Stuart resident Jennifer Brown has realized a passion for Florida native landscaping and for the state's natural resources.

She is one of the first three UF/IRREC students to have been recently honored with a Martin County Master Gardener's Scholarship.

The scholarship will offset tuition for a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Management with a minor in Environmental Horticulture she is earning at the local UF location.

Jennifer's goal for her second career is to complete more education, advance her knowledge in Florida's unique landscapes, and affect change in the local region's ecology restoration efforts.

A previous full-time employee at Palm City Palms and Tropicals, LLC., Jennifer was a nursery customer service specialist and is now a full-time UF student. She retired from a banking career that spanned 20 years in Florida and in her native Ohio. Her final post prior to retirement was as Assistant Vice President for Seacoast Bank in Stuart. She and her family relocated to Florida 10 years ago; it was then that she discovered an interest in native palm trees.

"I started cultivated palm trees at home in my family's yard and my grove grew to

more than 80 trees," said Jennifer. "I realized I loved Florida's wildlife and flora and decided to pursue a new career doing something I love."

To enhance her personal gardening interests she enrolled in horticulture courses at IRSC and earned two degrees: an A.A. degree in Forestry and Wildlife Ecology, and an A.S. degree in Horticulture Technology. During her studies at IRSC, she was recognized with two Martin County Orchid Society Scholarship Awards and a first scholarship award from the Martin County Master Gardeners.

She said her new studies in environmental management have expanded her interests into environmental conservation. A wetlands course helped her to understand Florida's unique ecology and the value of water to the natural landscaping. She said she hopes to make a contribution to the protection of the state's natural resources. In addition to being one of the first UF students to have been recognized with the Martin County Master Gardeners Scholarship, she has also garnered the James H. Davis Memorial Scholarship from the National Foliage Foundation administered by the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, and a John F. Smoak Memorial Scholarship for students of agriculture.

"In my own neighborhood I am now able to see how homeowners and industry alike impact the Indian River Lagoon every day," she said. "Our residents must realize the actions they take everyday impact the Indian River Lagoon."

Jennifer believes educating all of the state's residents on ecologic issues. Some of the most compelling issues she has noticed are that homeowners who own waterfront property along rivers and oceans may need to replace outdated sewage infrastructure and to use pesticides and fertilizers more responsibly.

## Martin County Master Gardeners Scholarship Awards, new to three IRREC Students



Lea-Ann Zub, friend to our wetlands

**S**t. Lucie West Centennial High School science instructor Lea-Ann Zub was selected by the Martin County Master Gardeners as one of the organization's annual scholarship recipients. A Martin County native, she is seeking a Master of Science degree in Ecological Restoration at IRREC.

Lea-Ann said her passion is to inspire the Advanced Placement high school students she teaches to understand how their daily actions impact the environment around them.

"What I like most about teaching is when students recognize their vital role in the preservation or destruction of our environment," she said. "By the end of the academic year they are more fully aware of their surroundings and how they impact the environment on a personal level. The students develop a habit to "green" their home: they recycle, turn off faucets while they brush their teeth, and live with the temperature inside their homes a little higher--all of these habits impact the environment."

Her students are enrolled in junior and senior-level advanced placement courses, which often earn them qualifications

for college credits. She said she hopes the students learn the long-term consequences of their actions and how it pertains to environmental sustainability, politics and economics. Some students who elect her courses do so because they plan to pursue a college degree in environmental sciences or a similar course of study.

"A student who graduated this year was accepted to the UF's competitive environmental engineering program," she said. "They leave high school full of excitement about making a difference in their local environment's ecology--and they pass their knowledge onto others."

Excited about her own new educational pursuits, Zub's mid-career goal is for advancement in her position, or a possible teaching position at the university-level. She also considers public outreach programs to teach others how to protect Florida's diverse ecosystems.

"Degradation of the entire Indian River Lagoon has been taking place for decades," she said. "With social media we are finally getting the support we need to pressure elected officials."

She believes education is the best tool for protection of Florida's beautiful natural resources. She implements broad-scheme environmental protection programs in her courses and thinks about broader school-wide programs that may be adopted first at Centennial High School. This year her planned projects may be: gardening with native plants, use of rain barrels, and composting; education for purchasing products from environmentally sustainable companies. She is seeking grant funding to start an on-campus recycling program that would possibly save money for the school district.

In addition to teaching courses, Lea-Ann serves as a board member on the Northeast Everglades Trails Association in Palm Beach County. The association designates, improves, and maintains multi-use trails for horseback, hiking, mountain biking and running. She also volunteers at local state parks for reef.org, conducting species counts.

Lea-Ann completed a Bachelor's degree in Biology Education at Florida Atlantic University and has taught science courses in St. Lucie County public schools for the last eight years.

## Garden Club of Indian River County, UF/CALS Scholarships Recipient, and Bob Graham Center for Public Service Civic Scholar Kimberly "Kimmy" Jones



IRREC student Kimberly "Kimmy" Jones explains the value of wetlands to the Indian River Lagoon.

article highlights rapid county population growth and cautions officials to plan and fund necessary water resource improvements. In addition, she recommends a county-level comprehensive plan that will account for future water needs.

Kimmy said she believes the construction of man-made wetlands will filter agricultural and residential run-off water and serve as the county's most efficacious solution for improving water quality in its impaired waters. Strategically placed wetlands, she said, will mediate run-off, removing excess contaminants before they reach the lagoon.

Indian River County native and burgeoning environmentalist Kimberly "Kimmy" Jones believes local residents' concerns about the Indian River Lagoon are warranted. But, she says, concerned residents may want to turn their attention to successful projects designed to improve, protect and restore one of the world's most important estuaries.

"Water supply and water quality issues involving the Indian River Lagoon are at the forefront of all Treasure Coast residents' minds," said Jones. "The good news is there are many plans already working to clean up our lagoon.

She was recently named a Bob Graham Center for Public Service Civic Scholar for her studies at IRREC, will complete a bachelor's degree in Environmental Management later this year. She intends to enroll in the center's Master of Science degree in Ecological Restoration. This newest scholarship award is in addition to other scholarships granted to her by the university. In addition, she was earlier this year presented with the Garden Club of Indian River County Scholarship Award, and the UF/CALS Florida Rural Rehabilitation Corporation Off Campus Scholarship Award.

The Bob Graham Center presented her with a scholarship recognizing her research article that contributed to the center's evaluative efforts to determine the state's future water supply requirements. In the article, she points to water crises events worldwide. She also identifies Indian River County's current water needs, water sources and infrastructure; the

"All of the residential and agricultural contaminants from our entire county are carried with irrigation and rainfall into ground and surface water flows and eventually lead to the lagoon," she explained. "Wetlands offer the most feasible, least expensive, and most effective long-term solution to the county's water management issues."

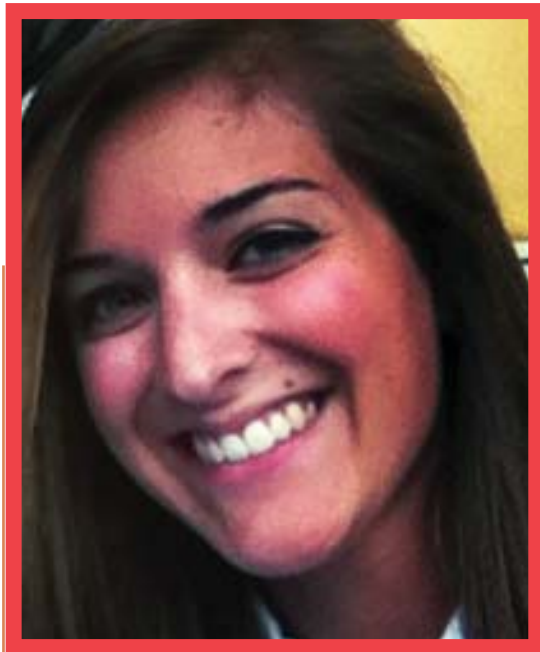
She references the county's newest recreation installments as leading wetlands preservation systems. The wetlands are serving as recreation parks and are the newly opened Indian River Lagoon Greenway and the county's West Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility Wetlands.

"Historically, the general perception of wetlands was as a wasteland," said Jones. "In Florida we have degraded almost half of our original wetlands in order to accommodate development and agriculture. But as we have come to recognize the irreplaceable values wetlands provide, it becomes imperative that we preserve them."

During Kimmy's undergraduate studies, she was recognized with a number of scholarships and is a member of Delta Epsilon Iota National Honor Society. She has held a place on UF's Dean's List for three consecutive semesters. While a resident of California, she earned a degree in geology. She was employed with the City of South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Department and the United States Forest Services. It was during her work in this position that she realized her passion for environmental education programs and the protection of natural resources. This passion brought her back home to Vero Beach to continue her education, with a goal to "protect the fragile lagoon habitat I grew up with."



## Garden Club of Indian River County, and UF College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Recipient Ashley Witkowski Pursuing Career in Legendary Citrus Industry



IRREC student Ashley Witkowski is employed at the USDA in Fort Pierce

**A** lifelong resident of Vero Beach, Ashley Witkowski has devoted her career to sustain the region's renowned citrus industry.

She is the most recent recipient of the Garden Club of Indian River County Scholarship Award and a current student at IRREC. In addition to her educational pursuits she is employed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory, situated in the Treasure Coast Research Park, adjacent to the UF center.

Ashley has been employed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture laboratory for nearly two years. She works as a laboratory biological science student intern under the direction of Dr. Ed Stover, a horticulturalist and geneticist for the federal laboratory's

horticulture and breeding unit. Specifically, Dr. Stover heads a citrus scion breeding program. Ashley's work at the laboratory involves field work and citrus greening resistance experiments. At this time the laboratory's goal is to promote citrus trees resistant or tolerant to Huanglongbing, or citrus greening disease.

Currently, Ashley is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Management with a minor in Environmental Horticulture. In 2010, she earned an Associate in Arts degree in Biology at Indian River State College, while dually enrolled as a high school student at Indian River Charter High School in Vero Beach.

While a student at Indian River State College, Ashley earned a 2-year Quail Valley Charities Scholarship, awarded by the Dollars for Scholars program. A second scholarship was presented to her by Seacoast National Bank.

Her career goal is to continue her employment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and gain advancement within the federal laboratory. The course in which she realized her strong interest in horticultural research was plant propagation. She said she found it most relevant to the work she conducts at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Growing up in Vero Beach showed me how important the citrus industry is to Florida," said Ashley. "The ability to help protect the agricultural industry and help make citrus trees resistant to its most challenging disease is a wonderful opportunity."

## CALS Scholarship Recipient



Hayley Alber

Hayley Alber has been recognized with the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Florida Rural Rehabilitation Corporation Off Campus Scholarship Award.

She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Microbiology and Cell Science at IRREC and her career goal is to become a physician, specializing in ear, nose and throat medical care.

Upon completion of the UF Bachelor degree, she intends to apply to medical schools and continue with her education to reach her goal.

Her interest in the field began at an early age as a patient. She wanted to understand why doctors had to respond to so many possibilities for one symptom.

"So many people had to examine me for a medical problem somewhere in my sinuses and I asked so many questions about their procedures. I was amazed how the smallest issue can affect so many other areas of the body," said Hayley.

She graduated with Honors from Indian River State College with and Associate in Arts degree in General Studies.

Hayley has for seven years been employed at Indian River Estates Retirement as a Certified Nursing Assistant, or a CNA. There she works along with the community's physicians and nurses, assisting them with patient care.

When Hayley earns the B.S. degree her next step will be pursuit of a master's degree and certification to become either a Physician Assistant or a Nurse Practitioner.

Hayley was also a recipient of the IRREC Bud Adams Scholarship Award in 2012.



Sarah Ford

## Bud Adams Family Scholarship Recipient

Stuart resident Sarah Ford has been recognized with a Bud Adams Family Scholarship Award for her studies at IRREC.

Sarah is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Microbiology and Cell Science, with a minor in Family, Youth and Community Science. Upon completion of the bachelor's degree she intends to seek full-time employment in the medical field. Her interests in medicine include work as a nurse, public health educator, or a pharmaceutical company sales representative.

Having worked full-time as a successful Assistant Event Manager for a prominent South Florida marketing company, Ford has returned to her passion and commitment to serve the medical field. It was her early work as a Certified Nursing Assistant and in multiple volunteer capacities that she found her aspiration. As a volunteer she has worked in clinical medical settings at the UF Hospital (formerly Shands) and at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Gainesville. Other volunteer work in which she has participated are marketing for non-profit organizations and charities, and with clinical care.

Additional scholarships Sarah has garnered as a student at the UF Fort Pierce location are a Florida Rural Rehabilitation Corporation Scholarship, for students who pursue degrees at locations situated off of a university's main campus; and, a second Bud Adams Scholarship Award.

Ford earned an Associate in Arts degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville. There, she was a recipient of a Bright Futures Scholarship Award.

The Bud Adams Scholarship Award is provided to UF/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center students who are pursuing a higher education. Since 2006, more than \$6,000 has been distributed to local students from the award. The Alto "Bud" Adams family is a prominent St. Lucie County agriculturalist family who has operated Adam's Ranch since the 1930s. The ranch is known worldwide for its high quality cattle and distinguished agroecology practices.

## Bud Adams Family Scholarship Recipient Pursues Doctorate



Eduardo Chavez examines cocoa beans in the IRREC Soil and Water Science Laboratory

of the country's most important crops and is exported to European countries.

Eduardo said he is interested in research for cocoa because the crop absorbs nutrients quickly. Cocoa he said, will take up heavy metals. His research is with soil additions in an effort to mobilize the heavy metals and block them so the plant will not absorb the metals. The blocking must take place while the crops are in the field.

"We sell our cocoa to European countries and these countries are now regulating the amount of metals in the soil where the crops are grown: lead and cadmium are regulated," he said. "This is why the research will assist the growers in Ecuador."

Chavez's academic tenure in the U.S. is sponsored with a scholarship that was provided to him by members of the Ecuador government. His scholarship is part of an effort in his country to train those who will lead the nation's agricultural industry in Ecuador.

Prior to his doctoral work at IRREC, Eduardo completed an internship at Oregon State University. There, he worked with an agricultural research professor to conduct research with blueberry crops and organic fertilization. He was also formerly employed in Ecuador at a national agricultural research station.

Eduardo earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Engineering from Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, or Polytechnic University, otherwise known as ESPOL, a national university in Ecuador.

University of Florida doctoral candidate Eduardo Chavez is a recipient of the Bud Adams Family Scholarship Award. He is pursuing a Ph.D. at IRREC.

A Fort Pierce resident and a native of Ecuador, South America, Chavez is working towards a Doctorate in Soil and Water Science, under the direction of Dr. Zhenli He. Dr. He is a Professor of Soil Fertility and Environmental Chemistry at IRREC. Dr. He's expertise is with management of soils, pesticides and wastes.

As part of his doctoral research program he is studying the presence of cadmium in soils in which cocoa is produced, and the use of soil additives to block the cadmium from plant absorption. When he returns to Ecuador, he will lead an extension program to assist cocoa growers with their production methods. The growers are seeking to produce their crops with more organic methods. His research will identify soil amendments and other practices to grow crops in organic soils.

Eduardo said Cocoa is produced on about 470,000 hectares in Ecuador. Cocoa is one

## Garden Club of Indian River County, Honors IRREC Students at Club's 85th Anniversary Celebration Event



**Garden Club of Indian River County Club President Renae Senn, and IRREC students Kimberly "Kimmy" Jones and Ashley Witkowski**

Members of The Garden Club of Indian River County celebrated its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Sunday, October 20, during which IRREC students Ashley Witkowski and Kimberly "Kimmy" Jones were recognized. Kimmy and Ashley are this year's recipients to the Garden Club of Indian River County Scholarship Award.

During the club's event, officials representing the city, county and the state honored the club for its local civic and beautification contributions to the county.

The event was attended by about 200 club members, local officials, two IRREC students and others interested in the club. A rousing iced tea and best-recipe homemade cookies party, nine stunning flower arrangements stood on display, created by each of the club's nine member circles.

"We are proud to support these deserving students who are studying conservation and agriculture, said Garden Club President Renae Senn. Renae introduced Kimmy and

Ashley during a speech and the students spoke before the gathering about their educational goals and thanked the group for their scholarships.

Vero Beach Mayor Craig Fletcher delivered a proclamation from the City; County Commissioner Joe Flescher represented the county to thank and congratulate the club with its milestone. Emily Palmieri of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs presented the president with a Double Diamond Certification.

The Garden Club of Indian River County Scholarship Award was established by the Garden Club of Indian River County board in 2006 to further the club's mission to serve education and environmental protection. Since its inception, 11 UF students have received \$11,000 towards their tuition for studies with the University of Florida. The Garden Club of Indian River County Scholarship Award is available to students seeking degrees at Indian River State College and the University of Florida Indian River Research and Education Center, both situated in Fort Pierce.

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