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[UF receives grant to help in the fight against childhood obesity](#)

Monday, [August 7, 2017](#) at 5:00 by [Aida Mallard](#)

The University of Florida, Rutgers University and West Virginia University are joining forces to combat childhood obesity.

Armed with the knowledge parents serve as their children's role models, and buy most of the food their children eat, researchers from the University of Florida, Rutgers University and West Virginia University will work with a five-year, \$4 million grant to try to change home eating habits to help curb obesity, according to a release from UF/IFAS, which is receiving about \$650,000 over the five-year grant. The funding comes from the Agriculture Food and Research Initiative, part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which is an arm of the U.S Department of Agriculture.

Karla Shelnutt, a UF/IFAS associate professor of family, youth and community sciences, is one of the project leaders and will work with Melissa Olfert, an associate professor at West Virginia University and Carol Byrd-Bredbenner, a professor at Rutgers, who leads the project.



Karla Shelnutt, Family, Youth and Community Sciences, is the principal investigator for the UF/IFAS Food Nutrition Program and one of the project leaders in the fight against childhood obesity.

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Jonathan Crane, scientist, tropical fruit Extension specialist and professor at the University of Florida Institute of Agricultural and Life Sciences, has been honored with a Presidential Gold Medal Award from the Florida State Horticultural Society. The Society bestows the award to the person who

contributed the most to Florida horticulture through work published in the "Proceedings of the Florida State Horticultural Society" during the previous six years.

According to a release from UF/IFAS, Crane, who is a faculty member of the tropical fruit Extension in Homestead, has spent most of his adult life trying to help South Florida farmers grow crops in Florida's hot, humid weather. In the past two-years, Crane has been working with research colleagues and growers to address laurel wilt, a pathogen with the potential to cause great damage to the \$100 million-a-year avocado industry in South Florida.

In addition to research, Crane works closely with growers of avocados, mangoes, papaya and other tropical fruit.



UF/IFAS scientist Jonathan Crane honored by horticultural society.

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Partnership for Strong Families' three resource centers- Library partnership, SWAG Family Resource Center and Cone Park Library Resource Center -, have been recognized for innovation in improving outcomes for children and families in three of Gainesville's most at-risk communities by Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families in the U.S. Community of Hope refers to collaboration between Department of Children and Families and Partnership for Strong Families along with community partners like the Alachua County Library District.

According to a release from Partnership for Strong Families, the resource centers provide tailored support and preventive services, such as food banks, clothing closets, job-readiness training, parenting classes and academic activities for children. The success of centers is data-based and show 44-58 percent reduction in the rates of verified child maltreatment from 2009-2015 in the zip codes served.

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The Florida Virtual School® Board of Trustees member Robert Gidel Sr. has been elected chairman of the Board of Trustees. He replaces Dr. Dhyana Ziegler, who served for a two-year term, remains a member of the board.

According to a release from the Florida Virtual School, Gidel is the managing partner of Liberty Capital Advisors LLC. A graduate of the Warrington College of Business at the University of Florida, Gidel was elected life member of the Board of Directors of the University of Florida Foundation and was past chairman of the finance committee. He was also elected Distinguished Director of the Board of Directors of Gator Boosters, Inc., and most recently, served as its president. He now serves on the Board of Directors of the University of Florida Investment Corporation.

Gidel was the founding chair of the Board of Trustees of Florida Polytechnic University. He is a Hoyt Fellow, which honors industry leaders in professional real estate.

Gidel is past member of the Hankamer School of Business Advisory Board at Baylor University. He is a member of the board of directors and was elected vice-chairman of the James Madison Institute in Tallahassee and the Florida House in Washington, D.C. The James Madison Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and educational organization and the Florida House is a privately-owned educational information center. Gidel previously served on the Statewide Board of Directors of Workforce Florida, and also was a member of the board and past chairman of the Investment Advisory Council to the State Board of Administration in Tallahassee.

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Gainesville resident Kristina Danka is a "Top Ten" contestant chosen from a pool of hundreds of participants for the "Faith Counts' Film Your Faith" video contest, a national competition with a \$20,000 top prize and a \$10,000 fan favorite prize. The grand prize winner will receive the award on Sept. 8 in Nashville.

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