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Breaking News from Florida's International Volunteer Agency



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The Outstanding Volunteer Achievement Award was created in 1989 and each year FAVACA recognizes top volunteers that go above and beyond. This year we will honor veteran volunteers, Timothy Holler and Danielle Romer for their dedication and service. Holler worked with the Ministry of Agriculture in Grenada and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) to alleviate problems with the West Indian Fruit Fly which hinder exportation of fruit from the island. Holler has provided similar volunteer expertise on invasive species control for FAVACA in Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Barbados. Danielle Romer provided post-trauma counseling immediately after the earthquake in Haiti to help children cope with many of the losses they encountered after the earthquake. Romer has volunteered in Haiti several times while also providing volunteer assistance in Antigua and St. Kitts & Nevis on issues of domestic violence.

The reception will be held March 30th at the Florida State University Conference Center during the Florida Chamber of Commerce "[International Days](#)". Please join us in recognizing outstanding Florida volunteers in Tallahassee, Florida. We look forward to seeing you there!

URBAN DESIGN IN ST. MAARTEN ENSURES CULTURAL INTEGRITY

The Foundation for Academic and Vocational Education (FAVE) is a vocational school in St. Peters, St. Maarten. Their mission is to inspire and provide a stimulating learning environment where their students can thrive vocationally, academically, and socially, both cooperatively and individually, and they seek to maximize their students' potential to meet the challenges and expectations of tertiary, higher education and the workforce. In 2003, FAVACA supported FAVE by sending Dr. Lavern Wells-Bowie, a professor of architecture from [Florida A&M University](#), to provide training on designing the University of St. Maarten and Pond Island. Wells-Bowie's training brought together planning officials and resulted in the reconstruction and expansion of the university. Due to the success of the first plan, FAVE requested a second training by Professor Wells-Bowie to help provide strategies on new development and environmental awareness that will benefit conservation of their culture and preservation of historic sites along with future development of the island. Wells-Bowie worked with the Ministry of Infrastructure, FAVE and planning officials to create an urban plan to redevelop much of the Pond Island area of St. Maarten. Wells-Bowie traveled to St. Maarten October 30-November 30, 2010.

DAIRY MANAGEMENT IN NICARAGUA IMPROVES PROFITS

The profitability of dairy farms is not always clear because there is a lack of adequate control and accounting systems (incomes and expenditures) leading to uncertainty among producers of knowing which dairy activities yield profits and which activities do not. Proper dairy farm administration requires skills in accounting but also an understanding of the whole production system and how to make best use of the natural resources. Farmers also have to make decisions regarding their farms potential in relation to opportunities in the market. [Partners of the America's](#) in-country partners, ASOGACAM Association (Cattleman's Association of Camoapa), Lacteos Nicarao Rivas Cooperative, Cattleman's Association of San Jose de los Remates, San Francisco Cooperative, and Masigüito Cooperative requested the assistance of a dairy manager. Stephanie Ward, Assistant Professor of Dairy Nutrition and Management, at [Mississippi State University's Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences](#) agreed to provide the dairy associations with the requested dairy management training December 5-19, 2010.



Ward worked with agriculture extension agents from the cooperatives on the importance of farm planning and administration. Ward provided a variety of techniques that the extension agents could replicate for their personal use and teach other co-op members. Training extension agents on working with farmers in managing basic accounting systems/book keeping (incomes and expenditures) also helped the extension agents work with the farmers on simple business plans that will yield greater profitability. Proper administration practices were identified by the volunteer as a key to improving production, controlling finances, conserving natural resources and increasing personal income. After this assignment, the extension agents now have the capacity to identify and assess the different administrative components to a dairy farm and are able to make the more appropriate decisions in regards to economic profitability of dairy farm activities.

GRAIN STORAGE IN NICARAGUA HELPS DAIRY FARMERS

The dairy value chain in Nicaragua depends on milk production based on tropical fodder of grains and legumes. The peak growing season for these crops coincides with the rainy season (May – November) during which time they are available for dairy production. However, reduced rainfalls during the dry season (December – April) negatively impact dairy production and cattle health due to the lack of high quality feed. Increasing the availability of fodder resources during the entire year would help maintain levels of production and productivity on dairy farms by allowing for planting, cultivation and storage of grains during the rainy season. Current problems with grain storage reduce the quantity and quality of grains for feed and greatly impact cattle nutrition. Jason Ward, Extension Associate, at [Mississippi State University's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering](#) traveled to Nicaragua December 5-19, 2010 to work with extension agents to analyze the availability of cattle feed during the dry season. Ward trained technicians and producers on a variety of feed storage systems with an emphasis in grain storage post-harvest. Lastly, Ward trained the technicians and producers on how to construct harvest systems and grain storage for cattle feed.



AVOCADO PRODUCTION INCREASED IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In recent years, the Dominican Republic has made a push to compete internationally on fruit production especially in the production of avocados. The Dominican Republic's unique climate and topography allows producers to be able to grow tropical varieties of avocados and another smaller variety which only grows in a Mediterranean climate which can be found in elevation in the Dominican Republic. However, production is still relatively low and in order to satisfy demand both domestically and internationally, Dominican producers need to improve their production methods.

The Association for the Development of San José de Ocoa (Asociación para el Desarrollo de San José de Ocoa) {ADESJO} and the Foundation for Future (Fundación sur Futuro) requested the assistance of an avocado production specialist to provide on-farm evaluations and trainings on young tree establishment and care as well as mature tree care. Dr. Jonathan Crane, professor and tropical fruit crop specialist with the [University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center](#) in Homestead, agreed to volunteer in a collaborative effort between FAVACA and Partners of the Americas from January 23- February 4, 2011.

While in the Dominican Republic, the FAVACA volunteer met with over 60 producers and numerous extension officers by providing workshop presentations and field trainings on a variety of topics to solve many issues affecting most avocado producers. In viewing orchard after orchard, Crane noticed that nearly all producers were suffering from similar problems which prompted him to create a document for common problems and solutions for avocado producers. Crane taught participants the



correct spacing needs for planting and how to prune the trees once mature to ensure optimal fruit production. Some producers have been suffering from diseases such as [red algae spot](#) or from pests such as the [Scolytid beetle](#) and Crane offered suggestions on the type of applications that would need to be applied to remedy the problems. The application of fertilizers was quite common however in discussion with producers and through viewing numerous orchards, Crane noticed that some of the trees either had too much or too little fertilizer which prohibited optimal production. The correct mixture of fertilizer and a recommended number of applications was provided to the farmers and once followed should increase the production of fruit. Lastly, Crane worked with several producers on irrigation issues especially those that have orchards on sloped terrain. Numerous suggestions were provided to the producers on how to correctly plant and harvest on sloped terrain while also solving several water issues that farmers have been plagued by during the dry season. As a result of the training, both extension officers and producers have the knowledge available to continually increase production. Dr. Crane also left extension officers numerous handouts translated into Spanish to further educate them on how to work with producers in correctly growing and maintaining avocado trees.

REGISTER FOR THE SOCIAL VENTURE CAPITAL & SUSTAINABLE HAITI CONFERENCE IN MIAMI- APRIL 4-6

The second annual Social Venture Capital & Sustainable Haiti Conference, Miami-2011 (www.connectionmiami.com), is being held at the Miami Beach Convention Center from April 4-6, 2011, and tickets are going quickly. The conference is a great way to learn, network and connect with hundreds of top social entrepreneurs/financial leaders and organizations from Florida, Latin America and the Caribbean. Individuals interested in attending the conference should register before the event. Tickets are available for single day and for the full three-day conference. To register for click on the following link: <http://www.connectionmiami.com/2011-registration>.

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Promoting social and economic development in the Caribbean
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