



Continuing to contribute, even in retirement

By Jack Payne, jackpayne@ufl.edu, @JackPayneIFAS

There's a particularly active group of emeritus faculty at the Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC), and they continue to play a key role in the fight against HLB.

When you ask the old-timers why they're spending their golden years doing jobs they were supposed to have retired from, they don't talk about how great the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) is. They get to that later.

Instead, they say they feel a powerful tug to keep contributing solutions at the moment of greatest challenge for Florida citrus.

RESEARCH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Take Gene Albrigo, for example. His plan when he "retired" in 2010 was to move to Daytona with his wife and enjoy his golden years by the shore.

After 49 working and retirement years at CREC in Lake Alfred, Albrigo said he's still getting ideas for research on the HLB problem. "It's kind of hard to turn that off and watch waves at the beach," he says.

So for years, he has commuted from Daytona to Lake Alfred.

Jim Syvertsen, a friend who nominated Albrigo for the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, remembers asking him



Rachel Smith, 2017 Miss Florida Citrus, congratulates the newest members of the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, Marvin Kahn (left) and Gene Albrigo.

30 years ago why he hadn't applied for a desirable job at another major university. Albrigo replied that he couldn't be happy without having the industry relationships that he had in Florida.

Those relationships deepened over ensuing decades as generations of Albrigo's students graduated and became the backbone of the Florida citrus industry. That connection with industry also deepened as he developed tools such as the online citrus flowering monitor that he continues to support with research and advisories. It's being used to improve the timing of sprays for the Asian citrus psyllid.

In fact, industry helped him make that tool much more valuable than he had originally envisioned. Albrigo was just trying to predict flowering and give growers advance notice of bloom. But when Joe Davis,

Jr. looked at the model, he suggested it could be used to predict crop yield. Coupled with mature tree yield potential, the flowering monitor model turned out to be remarkably accurate at such crop forecasts.

So it was no surprise to see industry leaders support Albrigo's nomination and testify in a video tribute at the hall of fame induction ceremony.

EXTENSION EXCELLENCE

Tim Hurner is another UF/IFAS retiree who continues to serve the industry. He spent 30 years as an Extension citrus agent in Highlands County. He spent many hours putting together the hall of fame nomination for citrus grower Marvin Kahn.

Hurner and Kahn worked together to give the industry the best possible science as Hurner conducted demonstrations in Kahn's groves. One of Hurner's greatest gifts to industry was raising his daughter Laurie with the same service ethic he exemplified in his career. Today she is a citrus agent and the UF/IFAS Highlands County Extension director.

PARTNERSHIPS EXPAND POSSIBILITIES

The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame singles out extraordinary men and women for their contributions to the industry. At the same time, the acceptance speeches and videos remind us that none of the inductees acted alone, that their achievements were made possible by relationships with colleagues.

The hall of fame celebrates strong partnerships between scientist and producer communities that are a core element of the land-grant mission.

So when John Jackson calls for nominations, UF/IFAS answers the call. Syvertsen and Hurner nominated this year's inductees, and IFAS employees are surely considering nominations for the class of 2019.

It's another way we try to thank the industry for its support of public science. 🍊

Jack Payne is the University of Florida's senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources and head of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.