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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**UF Champions for Change awards celebrates 3 years outstanding contributors to sustainability or health and wellbeing**

GAINESVILLE, Fla. —UF's Office of Sustainability and the Healthy Gators Coalition recognized ten individuals and groups for the annual Champions for Change Awards ceremony on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

These awards are presented annually to those in the university community who have made significant contributions in the areas of sustainability and health during their time at UF. This year, the Champions for Change program received 23 nominations highlighting personal and professional achievements and contributions from faculty, staff, students, and organizations at UF. Nominations are judged based upon the uniqueness of the achievement, the level of effort required, the commitment to sustaining the achievement, and the significance for personal growth of the impact of the achievement on the UF community.

The 2022 Champions for Change winners in the category of Health and Wellbeing include the CALS WOWTeam, a group of College and Agricultural and Life Sciences employees who host a weekly workout; the SMART Couples Program, a federal grant project to strengthen marriages, relationships, and families among Florida residents of all ethnicities and income levels; Rachel Harnett, for her service as Program Coordinator for PODEMOS; the Consultation and Referral Team (CART), created by the Counseling and Wellness Center to reduce wait times and improve student access to services; and Jerne Shapiro for her contract-tracing work as the Lead Epidemiologist of UF Health Screen, Test & Protect during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2022 recipients in the category of Sustainability include Lisa Haynes, a champion for sustainability in the School of Architecture; the UF/IFAS Homeflow Team, a bilingual education program for first-time homeowners provided by UF/IFAS faculty; Randall Penn, UF/IFAS Extension Faculty – Sarasota for incorporating waste reduction into his teaching and work with the UF Active Learners Mentoring Program; the GatorsBEATWaste Station Research Team for its valuable insights on the accuracy of the waste sorting station; and UF Center for Outdoor Recreation & Education and Florida Alternative Breaks, who have partnered to offer low-cost service-based regional trips to the campus community.

The Champions for Change awards ceremony to recognize recipients and celebrate nominees and nominators typically takes place during the Campus Earth Week events, which occur in early April. This year, the in-person ceremony resumed for the first time since the 2019 awards. Champions for Change award recipients from 2020 and 2021, who received virtual recognition previously, were invited to join in on the excitement surrounding Champions for Change and Campus Earth Week.

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**“We value the opportunity to bring together individual and organizations across campus that are advancing sustainability or health and well-being at UF” said Matt Williams, director of the Office of Sustainability. “This**

**year, it is wonderful to return to an in-person celebration that recognizes the incredible accomplishments of the Champions for Change from 2022, 2021, *and* 2020.”**

**For more information about the Champions for Change awards program and to read about each of this year’s winners, visit: <https://sustainable.ufl.edu/news-events/champions-for-change-awards/>.**

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