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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UF Champions for Change awards promotes outstanding achievements in sustainability, health and wellbeing

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — UF's Office of Sustainability and the Healthy Gators Coalition recognized seven individuals and groups for the annual Champions for Change awards.

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. 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.

This year's Champions for Change winners in the category of Health and Wellbeing include the UF-GAU Family and Childcare Committee & UF-GAU Bargaining Committee, who changed the amount of paid leave graduate assistants are eligible to receive from zero to eight weeks; and Manda Wittebort, who has created the successful Change Makers' Dialogue program within the Brown Center for Leadership & Service.

Winners from the category of Sustainability include the CALM Update Team, who advocated for and implemented substantial updates to UF's 31 conservation area plans; Sean Trainor, Warrington College of Business Management Communications faculty for advocating for non-tenure track faculty; the McCarty Woods Restoration Team for leading invasive species removals and reintroducing native plants to the area; Solar Gators, a student-run engineering team dedicated to designing and racing solar power electric vehicles; and Florida Home Energy Efficiency & Equity Coalition, a formal collaboration between UF-IFAS and the CWC (Community Weatherization Coalition) to improve housing security, financial stability, resilience, and overall quality of life for Floridians.

The nomination period is open for approximately one month starting in February each year. This year, the Champions for Change program received 18 nominations highlighting personal and professional achievements and contributions from faculty, staff, students, and organizations at UF.

The Champions for Change awards ceremony to recognize recipients and celebrate their success took place on Tuesday, April 18th. The in-person ceremony was held at an exciting new location this year – the George Brand Center Court Club at the O'Connell Center. The Office of Sustainability collaborated with Palm & Pine Catering to provide award-winning local samplers. Following the presentation of awards, attendees enjoyed the delicious food and spectacular views of the O'Connell Center.

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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