Electronic Newsletter

Always IFAS
University of Florida

Objective or purpose of project:

The objective of the Always IFAS newsletter is to engage retired and emeritus University of Florida Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) faculty and staff through news, articles of interest, and events, with the intent to cultivate future gifts to UF/IFAS. The idea came from UF/IFAS Senior Vice President Scott Angle, who charged the UF/IFAS Advancement team with the task. Always IFAS uses UF branding fonts, logos and colors. It has a professional tone, while colorful photos and sidebar keep it friendly and engaging. A condensed version is distributed as an e-newsletter through Mailchimp, while a longer, printable pdf version is available for download, to accommodate retirees with differing technology comfort levels. For consistency, the pdf version mimics the email format, with a sidebar of short articles accompanying the longer articles. A calendar of upcoming events is listed at the end, along with a link to give online.

Audience:

The intended audience for this piece is broad and diverse. The newsletter strives to offer a balance of teaching, research, and Extension content that will engage a mixed readership of County Extension agents, research faculty from Research & Education Centers across the state, teaching faculty from the main campus in Gainesville, and support staff. The majority of these retirees are located across Florida, which itself is a multicultural state with distinctly urban and rural areas. Furthermore, UF/IFAS is a large, diverse land-grant institution that encompasses myriad topics in agriculture, natural resources and human systems. Always IFAS engages these diverse audiences through a variety of topics within each newsletter and through a variety of themes within the suite of five newsletters published to date.

Project Outcome:

To date, we have published five editions of this biannual newsletter. It is sent to more than 500 retirees, with an average of 33% open rate and 11% click through rate (Mailchimp analytics). Some of our endowment donors and emeritus faculty with high giving capacity are included in this audience and have opened the emails. The reach of the newsletter has gained traction, as communicators in other UF/IFAS units regularly reach out to request placement of their content in the next newsletter.

What makes this project exceptional?

While many individual UF/IFAS departments and programs produce newsletters to engage their alumni and friends, this is the only UF/IFAS newsletter that aims to engage every retired UF/IFAS faculty and staff member—a key group for planned giving. With its carefully balanced teaching, research and Extension content, which includes news, opinions, memorials and announcements, Always IFAS successfully connects with its heterogenous audience, while strategically weaving in donor impact pieces, soft asks, planned giving information, stewardship, and engagement opportunities. Some content is written specifically for the newsletter, while other content is pulled from press releases, blog posts, etc., increasing the reach and longevity of those efforts. Similarly, the newsletter's hybrid Mailchimp/printable format allows for hyperlinks to longer articles, videos, podcasts and websites, making it richer than a traditional print newsletter, while still being as accessible. Our office already has a Mailchimp account, so there is no cost to distribute the newsletter. This newsletter keeps our branding present and advertises that UF/IFAS is an option for tax-deductible giving. It is released twice a year, in winter and summer. Winter editions highlight tax deadlines for charitable giving and the upcoming Gator Nation Giving Day, while summer editions recap our Flavors of Florida stakeholder engagement event. The newsletter is produced by the UF/IFAS Advancement office, with collaboration from UF/IFAS Communications, the UF/IFAS College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and UF/IFAS administration offices. Email addresses are provided by UF/IFAS HR.

Read Always IFAS.