

Alumna raises organ-donation awareness through life story

Rachel Nates, a UF graduate, took Hurley, her long-haired Chihuahua, for long walks before she was diagnosed. She used to go to work, cook dinner for her husband, Brian, and laugh until she cried with her best friend, Alexis Southcott.

Rachel was diagnosed with Lymphangiomyomatosis in May 2007, at the age of 27. Lymphangiomyomatosis (pronounced lim-fan-gee-o-lyo-myo-ma-toe-sis) or LAM is a rare lung disease that results in the progressive destruction of healthy lung tissue. It prevents the lungs from providing oxygen to the rest of the body, making breathing a daily battle.

Rachel described how it felt in her own blog: "Run around the room until you get out of breath. Then put a plastic bag over your head and try to breathe. That's what I feel like every day."

Rachel died on July 21 at 4:15 p.m. after waiting for almost two months on the transplant list. An average of 18 Americans die each day from a lack of available organs.

One of Rachel's main goals was to raise awareness of LAM and organ donation, according to Southcott.

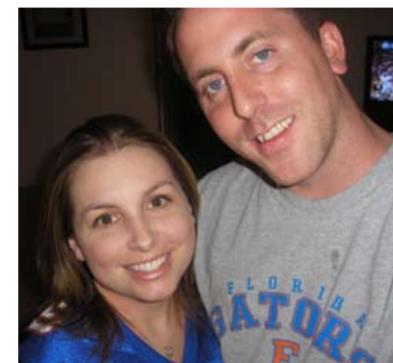
More than 250,000 women worldwide have LAM while only about 1,500 cases have been identified, according to the LAM Foundation's Web site. The disease exclu-

sively affects women, usually of child-bearing age. There is no treatment or cure for LAM, although scientists are working to find one.

Shands at UF is one of the sites participating in the first clinical trial, named the Multicenter International LAM Efficacy of Sirolimus, or MILES, trial. The UF clinical trial officially began in June and will last for two years, according to Angeline Leong, the principal investigator for the Shands at UF trial. If the trial is successful, Sirolimus, the drug being tested, would slow or halt the growth of abnormal muscle cells. The abnormal growth is the reason it is so hard for people with LAM to breathe.

Rachel documented her struggle through her Web site, www.rachelnates.com. She blogged about her own experience, in hopes of helping other transplant patients. She also created the Rachel Nates Breath of Hope Foundation to raise money for her transplant. Rachel created T-shirts, bags and postage stamps with sayings like "Recycle yourself. Be an organ donor."

Today the Web site continues to provide Rachel's story, and the foundation is run by family and friends. Proceeds go toward various organizations that support the research



The late Rachel Nates (pictured with husband Brian) was an avid Gators fan.

and awareness of LAM and organ donation.

Rachel's dream lives on as she continues to be a constant inspiration to her friends and family.

"I feel so lucky to have met her," Southcott said. "She is truly a sister of my soul."

If interested in becoming an organ donor, visit www.donateliflorida.org or the national organization, www.donatelife.net.

By Claibourne Smith

For more of the Rachel Nates story, click on the blue "InsideUF" on the UF homepage (www.ufl.edu).

UF Voices

Malaria and more studied at EPI

The distance between Florida and far-off places is shrinking as global trade and travel import more products and people to our state from across the world. Unfortunately,



David Smith

new diseases may travel to our state along with these tourists. They may unwittingly bring malaria, or a plant or animal that transmits or carries a new pathogen. Endemic pathogens, like staph, become more virulent or drug resistant. These emerging pathogens eventually come to Florida and threaten people, horses, cattle, dogs, cats, bats, bees, citrus and oaks.

The newly formed Emerging Pathogens Institute (EPI), housed at the University of Florida, is bringing together researchers from diverse fields to identify and mitigate these threats.

I have a particular interest in malaria, which annually kills 1.2 million people. Sadly, most are African children. This humanitarian crisis attracts new research money, but there are also new challenges.

Today's malaria parasites have evolved resistance to old antimalarial drugs. Recently I co-hosted a conference in South Africa to discuss strategies for making the most of new artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs), which can effectively treat the disease. Participants included scientists, representatives from foreign countries and international institutions, and topics spanned from basic science to operational challenges.

Malaria epidemiology is changing as national drug policies switch from failing drugs to ACTs and insecticide treated bed nets are mass distributed. I'm interested in understanding how nets and ACTs work together to reduce malaria risks in populations.

Malaria is one example of a pathogen that is of concern at the Emerging Pathogens Institute. Together, our researchers are working to protect Florida's people, wildlife, agriculture and economy.

For more information on the malaria research, please visit: www.koshlandscience.org/exhib_infectious/malaria_vector_control_01.jsp and www.map.ox.ac.uk.

David Smith,
Director of Disease Ecology,
Emerging Pathogens Institute

Top Stories

UF researchers track big snakes in Everglades Park

The story at first appears to be plucked from the plot of the iconic 1984 "Ghostbusters" movie: three researchers, armed with electronic devices, attempting to save the world from pesky invaders.

But this is no humorous movie script. The invaders and researchers are real, and the setting is South Florida.

Giant Burmese pythons, native to Southeast Asia, are the invader in this unscripted story in Everglades National Park. It's a story that rivals larger-than-life movie proportions with snakes that grow to a length of as much as 23 feet and a weight of nearly 200 pounds. The mere size of the reptile creates great potential for harm to the ecosystem and humans, and the pythons are rapidly multiplying. As many as 85 eggs have been found with Everglades females.

While an exact population is unknown, "it's certainly in the thousands," University of Florida Associate Professor Frank Mazzotti said.

Mazzotti leads a sort of UF "snake busters" group that is comprised of Wildlife Biologist Mike Cherkiss and Wildlife Research Assistant Mike Rochford. Using hand-held radios to track snakes that have been implanted with special tracking devices, the group studies how the snakes live and move throughout the region. The UF efforts are coordinated with the U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey and South Florida Water Management District, as part of a special Python Science Support Team.

Weekly, a team member flies over a vast section of the Everglades to plot the location of the five transmitting snakes. This enables researchers to more easily find the snakes by foot when closer observation is desired.

During breeding season, the team is led to large groups called aggregations. The non-transmitting snakes are captured and euthanized, but the python population continues to rapidly grow.

It's feared that as the population rises, an increase in incidental contact with humans is inevitable.

According to Mazzotti, there is no evidence that wild Burmese pythons hurt humans, yet he added that the reptiles

occasionally have killed their owners while in captivity.

"The greater risk (than attack) to humans is pythons in the roadways," Mazzotti said.

Pythons are especially troublesome in the Everglades because of the hot, humid climate and dense, subtropical vegetation create a perfect environment for the species to thrive.

Pet owners play an important role, too. A small, docile reptile may be purchased at a trade show or pet store, but then a few years later, an owner may be unable to care for a huge predator.

"Large pythons can easily outstrip the ability of most snake owners to care for them — or more importantly, to contain them. Then, either through intentional, illegal releases or accidental escapes, the snakes are introduced into the wild," Mazzotti said.

During hurricane season, the risk of accidental escape increases when pet owners may evacuate their homes,

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Frank Mazzotti
University of Florida

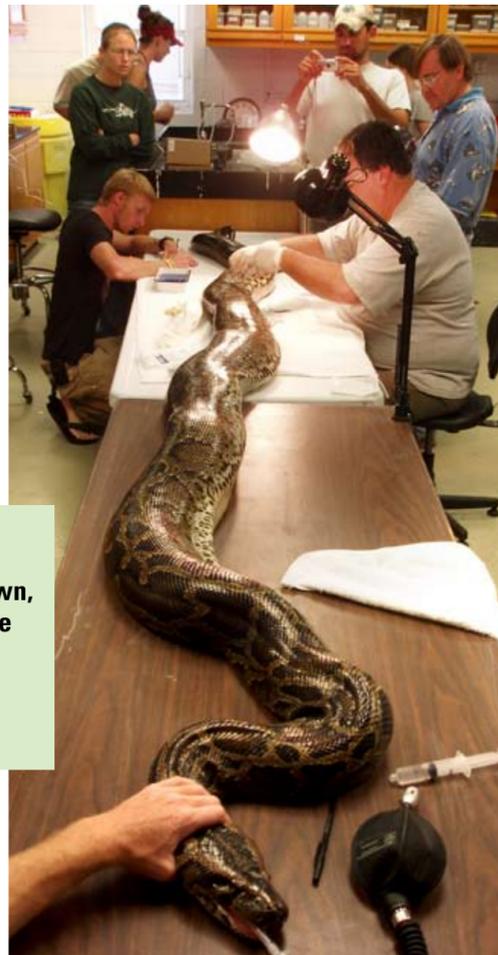
leaving a snake unattended.

"The best thing to help the python problem is for pet owners to be responsible," Mazzotti said. He credits Florida for creating a Pet Amnesty Day when pet owners may turn over their unwanted pets. "I'd love to see it be even

more than once a year. Maybe someday it will be all year," he said.

For additional information about UF python research, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW286>. Information about Pet Amnesty Day is available at www.myfwc.com/nonnatives.

By Susan Stewart



Matt Brien

A radio-transmitting device is surgically implanted in an Everglades python.

Happenings

Listings in this section are a sampling of events at the University of Florida, compiled from entries listed in the full calendar that appears on the Web at calendar.ufl.edu. To submit an event online, visit <http://calendar.ufl.edu/submit/>.

Sept. 23-24
Career Resource Center presents "Fall Career Showcase." O'Connell Center, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Sept. 23 is for non-technical majors. Sept. 24 is for technical majors. Free and closed to the public. Call 352-273-2322 for more information.

Sept. 23
Libertarian Activist Network presents "Bob Barr Speaks to UF!" Reitz Student Union Outdoor Amphitheater, 7 p.m. Free and open to the public. Call 954-270-7329 for more information.

Sept. 25
UFPA presents "The High Kings." Phillips Center, 7:30 p.m. Reserved seating: \$25-55. Call 352-392-ARTS (2787) for tickets.



Oct. 2
O'Connell Center presents Brad Paisley. O'Connell Center, 7:30 p.m. Admission fee and closed to the public. Call 352-392-5500 for more information.

Oct. 3
Human Resource Services presents "Benefits Fair." Reitz Student Union Grand Ballroom, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Free and closed to the public. Call 352-392-2477 for more information.

Oct. 5
Harm Museum of Art presents Lecture: "Adventures in Conservation." Harm Museum of Art, 3 p.m. Free and open to the public. Call 352-392-9826 for more information.

Oct. 6
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents "Disney College Program Presentation." Pugh Hall Ocora Room, 4 p.m. Free and open to the public. Call 352-727-8721 for more information.

RECURRING EVENT
Florida Museum Exhibit presents "Charles R. Knight: Studies of Lost Worlds." On display until Jan. 31. Florida Museum of Natural History, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Free and open to the public. Call 352-846-2000 for more information.

Seen & Heard

UF's 'green' efforts receive recognition

Two national publications recently paid accolades to the University of Florida for sustainability initiatives.

The September edition of Sierra ranked UF No. 7 of 10 schools "that get it." The article cited several of UF's sustainable initiatives, including the 3-million-gallon-per-day waste water treatment facility that provides reclaimed water for more than 90 percent of campus irrigation needs, and a goal to divert, reclaim or reuse 100 percent by 2015.

Plenty Magazine earlier this month awarded UF winner of the "Greenest Buildings" category, saying "The Gators have 55 projects - covering 3 million square feet - registered for LEED certification, the most at any campus nationwide."

Levin receives top-10 ranking for Hispanic students

The University of Florida Levin College of Law was recently recognized as being on the forefront of recruitment, retention and quality education for Hispanic students. The

assessment conducted by HispanTelligence, the research arm of Hispanic Business Magazine, ranked UF No. 10 overall, and No. 5 among public law schools in the U.S.

Two faculty-in-residence named for Hume, Broward

David Barber, undergraduate coordinator in Food and Resource Economics, has been named the Honors Residential College at Hume Hall faculty-in-residence. Travis L. Smith, assistant professor of religion, has been selected as faculty-in-residence in the Broward Area.

Faculty involvement in residence facilities includes leading workshops or discussions on current events, specific interests, hobbies or leisure activities, as well



David Barber



Travis Smith

as sharing meals and attending sports or cultural events with students.

Dentistry professor receives international award

Dr. K. David Stillwell, clinical associate professor in the Department of Operative Dentistry and director of patient admissions and treatment planning for the College of Dentistry, recently received the Lifetime Learning and Service Recognition Award at the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) 56th Annual Meeting.

Fewer than 60 of the 35,000 international AGD members have received this award, which is presented to nominees who demonstrate ongoing commitment to continuing dental education, volunteer services to communities in need, mentorship to associates and new dentists and participation in organized dentistry.



David Stillwell

Note This

Register to vote before Oct. 6

Voting is a constitutional right. To exercise your right, be sure to register. This includes not only first-time voters, but also anyone who may have moved to Alachua County and not yet been registered to vote here.

The last day to register to vote in the general election is Oct. 6. To register or for more information, visit www.VoteAlachua.com or call 352-374-5252.

Walking Gators begins Oct. 7

The Healthy Gators 2010 coalition encourages faculty, staff and students of all fitness levels to de-stress during the weekday, meet new people and get fresh air and exercise with the Walking Gators program.

This year's lunch-hour walking program will begin on Tuesday, Oct. 7, with six routes throughout campus. Walks will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday throughout the fall semester. Registration is not required. For more information and route maps, visit www.HealthyGators.hhp.ufl.edu.

Gators may give online until Oct. 10

Last year, employees contributed more than \$1 million to the University of Florida Community Campaign, in support of 77 charitable agencies. The benefitting agencies provide ongoing services that range from shelter for the homeless to environmental protection.

This year's goal is \$1.3 million, and giving to the UFCC has never been easier. A new addition to the campaign in 2008 is that employees now may donate online (www.ufcc.ufl.edu) through payroll deduction, check, cash, bank card or direct billing. The campaign ends on Oct. 10.

