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THE REDLAND

Group honors student trio for hard work

The Redland Citizens Association honors three students striving to improve local farming by setting up a scholarship in the name of the late 'Strawberry King,' Charlie Burr.

By Sophia Pino

Special to The Miami Herald

Tara Tarnowski, Marcio Pereira and Isaya Kisekka are three researchers with a common goal: improving South Florida agriculture.

On Saturday, their hard work was honored with a ceremony and a check.

Friends, family and local officials converged upon Burr's Berry Farm in The Redland to honor the three students with a \$750 grant to aid them in the pursuit of their research in subtropical agriculture.

All three are pursuing advanced agricultural degrees at the Tropical Research Education Center at the University of Florida.

The award, known as the Charlie Burr Scholarship, is named for the late Charlie Burr, known as The Redland's ``Strawberry King."

Burr, a native of the area, began selling strawberries from his family's farm in the 1960s.

He was also an activist for the preservation of the rural character of The Redland and a member of The Redland Citizens Association.

The idea for the award came about after Burr died in 2001 at age 79.

"When Uncle Charlie died, we were all trying to figure out the best way to honor him. Hopefully, this scholarship will help to carry on his legacy," said his nephew Robert A. Burr.

"These students' work is incredibly important to the future of agriculture in Miami-Dade," added Pamela Grey, president of The Redland Citizens Association.

Tarnowski's research investigates diseases affecting mangoes. Florida is the major producer of mangoes in the United States.

Pereira's work deals with the postharvest treatment of avocados, to improve their shelf life without affecting their flavor.

Kisekka's studies involve the management of water on farms, specifically evapotranspiration sensors. Evapotranspiration sensors are devices that measure the amount of water an area requires and are used to regulate irrigation systems.

"Originally, we were only going to choose one recipient," Grey said. "These three were just so outstanding that we just could not decide."

The agricultural industry is crucial to Florida's economy. It is the second largest industry in the state after tourism.

Florida is also the nation's largest producer of winter fruit and vegetables.

"We really want to encourage people to carry on the agricultural tradition and stay in the field," said Sidney Robinson, who together with his wife Maryannette is on The Redland Citizens Association's board of directors.



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Old friends Gilbert Ogden and Idena Burr widow of Charlie Burr who grew up together talk after the ceremony that gave three grad students scholarships in Honor of Charlie Burr at Burr's Berry Farm in Homestead.