

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

CELEBRATING IDEAS FOR US IN OUR 15TH YEAR OF ACTION



www.IDEASForUs.org
Headquartered in Orlando, Florida
United States of America



JEFF BENAVIDES

*Board Of Directors President of
IDEAS For Us, inc.*

“Hello supporters,

Celebrating our 15th anniversary in 2023 was a testament to our unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in communities worldwide. Throughout this milestone year, we took pride in continuing to excel at what we do best – executing hyper-local action projects in collaboration with exceptional partners and dedicated volunteers.

While we continued our signature tree plantings, clean-ups, school garden builds, native landscapes, educational events, and more, we took a big step expanding our community engagement to Maryland with our Avanza EV program. We also hosted our inaugural community-scale IDEAS Hive in Bolivia! We launched our Green Jobs Youth Initiative throughout three Florida regions (Miami, Tampa, and Orlando) training youth in aquaponics, hydroponics, and solar energy industries.

Since 2008, we have taken action in 40 countries and engaged thousands of passionate volunteers worldwide. As we welcome 2024, we continue our mission to provide real on the ground projects and services to help communities achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

We express our heartfelt gratitude for the continued support from individuals like you. Your unwavering commitment enables us to create measurable and tangible impact across the expansive IDEAS for Us network. As we embark on the journey ahead, we look forward to further collaboration and collective efforts in creating a more sustainable and resilient world. Thank you for being a vital part of our transformative journey.”

-Jeff Benavides





CLAYTON LOUIS FERRARA

*Chief Executive Officer, Co-Founder of
IDEAS For Us, inc.*



"Dear Reader,

We at IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) would like to extend our profound thanks and appreciation to our supporters, volunteers, donors, team members, staff, Advisory Board, and Board of Directors for an amazing 2023. Since our founding in 2008 as a student club at the University of Central Florida, IDEAS has been the culmination of so many helping hands. This year was no different and since our rebound from the COVID-19 Pandemic, our ambition, scope of projects, and impact has grown exponentially year after year.

IDEAS is evolving. We are refining our methods to address regional energy, water, food, waste, and ecology challenges from both top-down advocacy and bottom-up action, simultaneously. Our approaches and methods are expanding too, especially as we address the economic, social, and environmental struggles from within the communities we work. Workforce training and multi-state campaigns have attributed greatly to our expanding view as an environmental nonprofit.

Now, I look forward to 2024, as this year will be all about refining the new and celebrating the old. I look forward to sharing IDEAS Stories from across the last 15 years of our movement to a much greater degree than ever before. I hope you join in on the fun!

Thank you and let's keep up the great work for our Planet, communities, and ourselves!

In service to the IDEAS Movement,

-Clayton Louis Ferrara

ABOUT IDEAS

IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) is a 501(c)(3) grassroots environmental non-profit organization and accredited NGO of the United Nations. IDEAS creates global environmental solutions through local action.

Our mission is to develop ideas, fund action, and scale solutions that solve the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Our vision is to contribute to a future where humanity thrives in harmony with nature and in peace with one another.

Since 2008, we've led thousands of eco-action projects across 39 countries worldwide, utilizing the model of solving global environmental challenges with local solutions.

OUR FOCUS

Our pillars of sustainability or focus areas are the lens in which IDEAS For Us views the world. Like our values, our focus areas are sacrosanct features of IDEAS For Us identity. Our five focus areas of sustainability are Energy, Water, Food, Waste, and Ecology. We encourage you to show and use your hands when speaking about our values and focus, as this powerful gesture communicates across cultures the importance to view the world through the intersectionality of these pillars of sustainability.





Energy connects and separates everything in the known universe. IDEAS For Us prioritizes the education in, advancement of, and use of renewable energy. We also seek to understand the science behind energy and use that science to inform our strategy for prioritizing action projects. We view the Energy Pillar through the lens of sustainability.



Water shapes our world and enables all biologic life and its presence affects the abiotic conditions that determine habitats themselves. Our water projects aim to improve and enable access to water, clean and protect water ecosystems, and focus on mitigating flooding and sea level rise for inland and coastal communities.



Food is deeply personal. Food shapes culture and we acknowledge that most people in the world are at the end of very long supply chains for their daily needs. Our projects aim to advance urban agriculture, grow food and not lawns, build gardens at schools, and to create and train for employment in the decentralized, localized urban agricultural movement.



Waste is an opportunity that we must act upon. We acknowledge that human beings are the only animal to create non-biodegradable waste and that we need to not only decrease our single use plastic waste but that waste technology and waste behavior change are important factors to invest our time and resources into.



Ecology is the pillar that connects our humanity to one another and all life on Earth. Ecology is the biotic animals and plants we share the world with and it is also the way we interact with the biosphere.

OUR MODEL

Our model is to educate, engage and mobilize communities in creating localized solutions to global climate challenges. This happens through educating people with our monthly Hive meetings and creating eco action projects based on the information learned. IDEAS provides opportunities for people to take hands on environmental action with the ideas shared.

THE IDEAS HIVE

The IDEAS Hive is an interdisciplinary, inter-generational community Think + Do Tank designed to educate the public about sustainability and develop their ideas into local action projects. The IDEAS Hive brings together community members and subject matter experts to educate the public in sustainability topics in the focus areas of water, waste, food, energy, and ecology. These events harness hands-on community brainstorming. Then, at the end of the month, our non-profit engages in an environmental action project associated with the topic of the month. Since 2009, The IDEAS Hive led over 50 engaging IDEAS Hive events through out of IDEAS For Us branches.



ECO-ACTION PROJECTS

IDEAS For Us is an action-oriented organization, working to solve climate issues with boots on the ground eco action projects. These projects include shoreline restoration projects, tree plantings, pollinator garden installations, community garden creations and more. Each of these works to heal ecosystems and help the locals. Each project creates an event where the community can take hands on action towards solving climate change. Most projects incorporate one or more other local groups to bring diverse audiences working on the same goal. This creates spaces for the community to come together with like minded people, reminding us that we are not alone in this mission.



2023

IMPACT





2023 IMPACT



600

households
impacted with EV
education



1,650

Shoreline Plants
Planted

12,690 IN OUR LIFETIME



3,126

lbs of Food
Harvested

20,927 IN OUR LIFETIME



1,053

lbs of Waste
Removed

4,620 IN OUR LIFETIME



24,862

Trees Planted

78,066 IN OUR LIFETIME





2023 IMPACT



2,370
VOLUNTEERS



13,787 IN OUR LIFETIME



270
EVENTS



1,000+ IN OUR LIFETIME



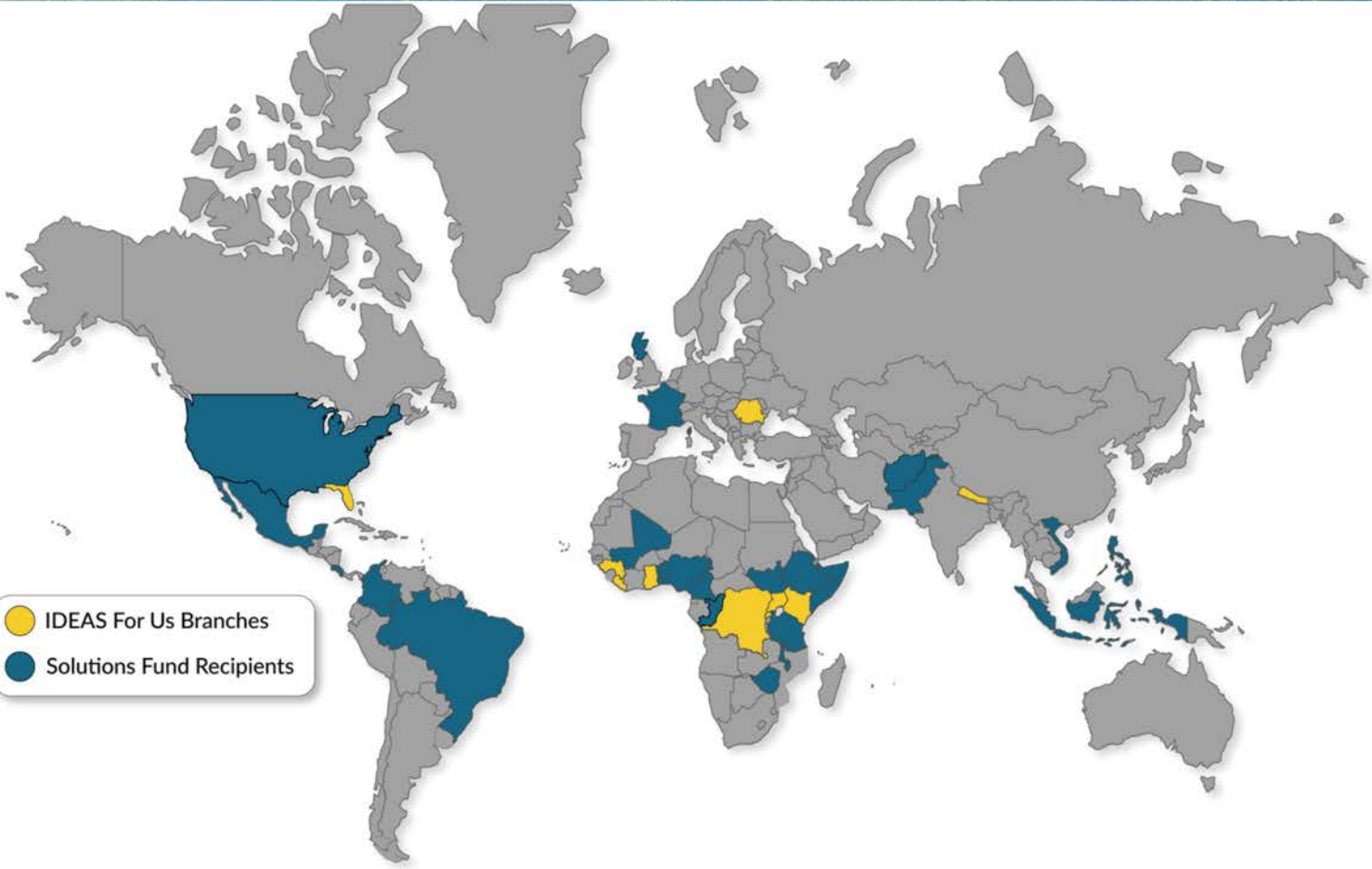
\$1,500,000
FUNDRAISED



OVER 8M RAISED
IN OUR LIFETIME



GLOBAL ECO - ACTION



Think Global Act Local

Our model allows for community members to come together with local solutions to contribute towards global goals set by the United Nations. These Global Goals exemplifies the main focuses of our projects.

IDEAS For Us currently has branch leaders in Bolivia, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, U.S.A., and Uganda.



GLOBAL URBAN FORESTRY

PAKISTAN

In partnership with One Tree Planted, IDEAS For Us Pakistan executed a community wide urban forestry project in Pattoki, one of the top most polluted cities in the world. They successfully planted **7,400** native trees in five different locations in their community, targeting mostly schools. The trees chosen are targeted for combatting heat islands and soil degradation. The long term success of the trees are guaranteed through maintenance funds.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Restoring hillsides and combatting erosion has been a huge focus for our incredible IDEAS For Us DRC branch. Thanks to One Tree Planted, the DRC team was able to plant **4,500** native trees, and support several jobs that focus on nurturing the trees to maturity. These trees were planted in 5 different schools, and each event mobilized students in the planting and educated them on environmentalism.



UGANDA

Urban forestry is essential for frontline communities of climate change, helping to reduce heat islands, provide ecosystem services, and sequestering carbon. The Uganda team successfully planted **4,000** trees in 5 locations across the Kamuli Municipality, serving hospitals, schools, parks and more. All the trees will be maintained into maturity to ensure success!

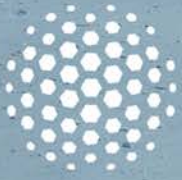


NEPAL

The IDEAS For Us Nepal team worked to plant **515** trees on six different roadsides in Pokhara, Nepal. This is a heavily polluted city, and the targeted tree planting locations were areas that needed the most carbon sequestration. These variety of fruit trees and native trees will serve to not only provide ecosystem services, but also fresh and free fruit for communities. These trees will be monitored and maintained until establishment.







FLORIDA ECO-ACTION SUCCESS STORIES

GARDENS FOR KIDS

IDEAS For Us was able to create 4 new community gardens this year for the benefit of the kids of our community. These projects include Hungerford Elementary School with ESA Solar, Oviedo Boys and Girls Club with the Oviedo Garden Club, and Callahan and Rock Lake Neighborhood Center with Wells Fargo. Thank you to our partners for making this possible!



TREESILIENCE PROGRAM

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, IDEAS For Us was honored to be one of many amazing organizations to participate in a neighborhood tree planting project. Our team worked with TNC, and Infinite Zion Farms to identify households in Pine Hills that need trees, and planted 48 fruit trees in 12 households to provide local food and ecosystem services.



POLLINATOR PROJECTS

There is a great need for habitat for native plants and insects in urban spaces. We have worked to implement pollinator planting and education projects at Pinewood Elementary, and Gertrudes Walk Orlando, and maintained our several other gardens. We also successfully launched a beekeeping certificate course, and created 80 bee hotels to disburse to these gardens.



URBAN FORESTRY IN SCHOOLS

In partnership with One Tree Planted, our team curated a strategic urban forestry project for schools to combat heat islands and provide shade and fruit for children in underserved communities. We planted 140 native and fruit trees throughout schools in Central Florida including Pine Hills Elementary, Hungerford Elementary, Legacy Middle, and Oakridge High School.







FLEET FARMING



A key program of IDEAS For Us that came out of The IDEAS Hive think/do tank, Fleet Farming is an urban agriculture program that transforms the average American lawn into a micro farm including: Fleet Farmlettes (lawns-to-farms program), Edible Landscapes service, & Fleet Education.

CHANGING THE CYCLE

Fleet Farmlettes is an urban agriculture initiative that creates a localized food system in select residential neighborhoods in Orlando, Florida. This serves as a model for communities to learn how to grow food and about sustainable food systems from farm to local market to table. These are common lawns that have been converted into productive urban farmland that the Fleet Farming team helps to maintain by bicycle. This system contributes to promoting healthy life-styles, a healthy planet, & communities connected to food.



PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

This year thanks to our partners we were able to launch new projects such as revamping five of our in ground Fleet Farmlettes into raised bed row models. We are very grateful to the **Sprouts Foundation** for their contribution to this Urban Agriculture program and dedication to serving their local community. One project they helped us to fund and build were the new raised beds at East End Market. East End Market was our first Fleet Farmlette created back in 2015 and is central to our operation in Audubon Park Garden District. Of course, this work could not be done without **Volo Foundation** continually funding our Fleet Farming team and we are grateful to their generosity to helping Florida become more environmentally friendly. We look forward to continuing to cultivate food and serve the local community.



LIVING AND LEARNING

This year we have officially kicked off our new educational classes called the "Living Learning" class series. These dynamic classes are meant to display a focused presentation followed by a hands on activity such as pickling, vermicomposting, Softneck Garlic production, and seasonal gardening lessons. In total we have educated over 100 gardeners in these classes.







ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

SCHOOL GARDEN CLUBS

IDEAS For Us has continued to conduct weekly garden education at our legacy schools, providing students with meaningful time outdoors as well as access to nutritious healthy food that they have grown themselves. The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) garden club serves children aged K-2 and is generously supported by Keep Orlando Beautiful, Eat the Change and Wells Fargo. The West Lakes ELC Garden, in partnership with Advent Health serves preschool aged children and has recently been remodeled thanks to the generosity of the Arnold & Winnie Palmer Foundation. In the new year, we hope to expand our ongoing education to other schools in the Orlando area such as Audubon Park K-8 and more.



NEIGHBORHOOD NATURALIST

The Neighborhood Naturalist Program has continued to thrive at Lake Lorna Doone under the support of the Arnold & Winnie Palmer Foundation and guidance of the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve. We have continued to host the Ecology in Action and Nature Walk events for elementary aged students and even expanded this program to several community centers surrounding the Lake Lorna Doone area. We have also hosted highly successful nature-focused events such as the Discovery Day with the Orlando science center, library days with the Orange County Library System and community cleanups with high school students looking to gain experience and volunteer hours. We look forward to continue watching this program grow and adapt to the needs of the surrounding area and we hope to reach even more students next year.



ADULT EDUCATION

2023 has been a banner year for IDEAS For Us adult education initiatives. In addition to continuing to offer monthly nature & garden focused classes at the Center for Health & Wellbeing, we have instituted the new “Living Learning” class series on our very own Fleet Farmettes! These classes help new and experienced gardeners learn through an interactive “hands on” approach and encompass a variety of subjects from irrigation, garlic growing and more. We have also expanded our citizen science education initiatives through our partnership with the Ocean Research & Conservation Association (ORCA). IDEAS For Us has “adopted” two sites in Cape Canaveral where we participate in monitoring several key factors such as nitrate presence, turbidity and more.







EDIBLE LANDSCAPES

Edible landscapes is a garden installation service of the Fleet Farming Program.

LANDSCAPING COMMUNITIES

Edible Landscapes focus on supporting the Central Florida community, building gardens and horticultural spaces that help to create a societal shift through the cultivation of our land. We provide these services not only to the people whom we serve, but to the many creatures that find food, habitat, and protection through them. Over the years, we've had the pleasure of working in numerous yards, schools, churches, and community centers. Our aim is to rehabilitate life in soils and healthy plants fostering a healthier people and community. In 2023, we built 73 gardens, over 40 seasonal maintenances, and led 12 special edible tree planting projects.

SCHOOL GARDENS

We built 11 school gardens in 2023. Most notably we have installed gardens at schools in underserved communities such as Pine Hills, Parramore, Oak Ridge, Union Park, Lockhart and more. It is important to us that all are given opportunities to grow food and have hands on environmental life science education experience.

This year at Lake Silver Elementary, we worked with the school to initiate its shift into a Green STEM Academy. This process began with creating a large garden where students are able to grow food and learn about sciences. The garden will be at the center of STEM education.

SEASONAL MARKETS, WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

At the heart of our work, we believe that community engagement and fellowship are vital. As students of life, we understand that with collaboration we become infinitely stronger; able to share and accrue wealths of knowledge. In 2023, we led various educational events such as, seasonal markets, the Plant Swap and Talks, garden workshops, and more. Through this programming we further our mission.







WELLS FARGO PARTNERSHIP

Wells Fargo is committed to building an inclusive, sustainable future for all through a focus on opening pathways to economic advancement, championing quality, affordable homes, empowering small businesses to thrive, and driving an equity-focused transition to a low-carbon economy.

In 2023, Wells Fargo Supported several programs that focused on community equity, health, and environmental wellbeing. Between 2022-2023, Wells Fargo supported an open funding grant for the communities of Pine Hills and Parramore, where we were mobilized to do monthly environmental projects in these communities.

The projects included a community-led initiatives including fruit tree plantings, pollinator garden installations, educational community events, and so much more. We were only able to do this through amazing partners in these communities including Seeding Pine Hills, Infinite Zion Farms, Parramore Mainstreet, Pine Hills Community Council,

Robinswood Community Improvement Group, Parramore Asset Stabilization Fund, and more.

We are continuing this partnership in 2024 with an amazing program to install free edible and native landscaping for the 32805 zip code. We will be installing over 10 household gardens and several gardens in affordable housing units with Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Cooperation. We are thrilled to be investing in the environmental and community wellbeing of these spaces with Wells Fargo.







CLEAN ENERGY FOR DISADVANTAGED LATINO COMMUNITIES

In 2023, IDEAS For Us partnered with Citizen Energy on a General Motors grant crafted with the purpose to provide clean energy to latino communities.

Conducting site visits at 176 low-income multifamily housing sites, our dedicated team engaged property owners and managers, educating them on the advantages of clean energy and the potential for electric vehicle (EV) integration within their communities. Securing site control at three locations, we successfully installed EV chargers, providing accessible and sustainable transportation options for community members. Our bilingual EV education programs reached 600 households, building a contact list of 116 individuals eager to explore the benefits of clean energy. Guiding 16 households through Federal and State incentives, we facilitated their pledge to purchase an EV, with a 50% discount on charging rates as a reward. Establishing a Community Benefits Advisory Committee with 10 community organizations ensured our initiatives aligned with the unique

needs of the communities we served. Through 100 collected surveys, we gained valuable insights, with 52% expressing a willingness to consider EV adoption, and 38% citing incentives as a significant influence.

Thank you to Citizen Energy who led this grant in partnership with IDEAS For Us. Thanks to this effort, IDEAS For Us has won \$750,000 with General Motors on an expansion of this project in 2024.







IDEAS FOR US BOLIVIA

In 2023, the IDEAS For Us Bolivia began its activities. First, with a 500 fruit tree reforestation project supporting 35 Quechua indigenous families. Second, empowering 200 urban elderly women and young volunteers with the installation of a 8.3 x 23 ft sized educational medicinal plant garden accompanied by the execution of 8 training workshops in the use of medicinal plants. Finally, a 25 x 20 ft school greenhouse was built in an Aymara rural community to increase the food security of students, teachers and parents. In addition, participants benefited from 6 workshops on climate change, organic agriculture, vermicomposting, harvesting and post-harvest of vegetables.

Within the year, we won the Collaboration for Community Impact grant. Those funds were partially used to bring IDEAS For Us Orlando CEO and staff members to Bolivia in order to learn first-hand about the country's environmental challenges, and to make formal local alliances. Over the course of a 7 day trip, 3 staff members joined our Bolivia branch

manager, Joaquin Chila, in over 15 meetings, and 3 community events. We hosted a public Hive meeting to gather public input, and connected with 10 partners in the community for how we can implement solutions. As a result, so far 5 MOUs were signed with local NGOs, volunteer groups, and universities, to start collaborative fundraising in environmental eco-action projects.

We increased the food security and life quality of students, teachers and parents through the construction of a school garden, which produced a wide variety of vegetables and medicinal plants, in the rural community of Pantini, Bolivia. Likewise, the beneficiaries were trained through agricultural workshops. This project had the support of young volunteers of the Bolivian Platform Against Climate Change (PBACC). Additionally, local talent was hired to boost the economic movement of the community.







GREEN WORKFORCE TRAINING

In 2023, IDEAS For Us was awarded our first Florida State Appropriations Bill for a comprehensive and innovative project titled **"The Florida Green Jobs Youth Initiative"**. This project was launched in various locations across Florida and hosted green workforce training and sustainability focused workshops to empower young individuals from 13 - 35 years old with the knowledge and skills needed towards a greener future. These training events aimed to promote green entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture, aquaculture business training, hydroponics production, and solar energy training. Each location actively participated in events fostering a sense of community engagement and responsibility towards a greener and more environmentally-friendly future. Green workforce training events occurred in three key areas of Florida: Parramore located in Orlando, Overtown located in Miami, and Sulphur Springs located in Tampa. In Parramore, workshops included events such as "Food Production" and "Market Garden & Food Production" and attracted

participants interested in the urban sustainable food production movement, working with groups such as Knowledge For Living while engaging our program Fleet Farming. In Sulphur Springs, diverse events like "Intro to Apiary", "Edible and Native Landscaping Workshop", again "Food Production and Market Garden & Food Production" highlighted the significance of landscape stewardship working with groups such as Meacham Urban Farm, Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association, The Sustainable Living Project, and more. Overtown showcased workshops on "Business of Aquaculture," "Hydroponics," and "Aquaponics," shedding light on opportunities in sustainable aquaculture partnering with The University of Tampa, Touching Miami with Love, and Together We Stand.

This bill proved successful for IDEAS For Us, surpassing our initial goals by tripling impact with 990 certifications administered and involving 1,084 individuals.





OUR TEAM

Change is not possible without a dedicated team.
Our environmental professions are leading the cause of local action in Florida & beyond.

STAFF



Clayton Louis Ferrara
Chief Executive Officer



Caroline Chomanics
Chief Operations Officer



Kristin Anderson
Chief Branch Officer



Alex Luna
Director of Ecosystem Services



Dawson Amico
Farm Manager - Orlando, FL



Kellie Antonowicz
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Samuel Somers
Edible Landscapes Manager



Jonathan "Jae" Ortiz
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Farm Manager - Sebastian, FL



Simone Daniels
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**Sinamakosa Issac,
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IDEAS For Us - Uganda

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THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!



& MORE!

GET INVOLVED



Join Our Events

We lead monthly eco-events all over the world. Take action in an event near you. Details at ideasforus.org/events



Become A Member

Join our network of change makers. We offer special benefits for members. Join today at ideasforus.org/memberships



Donate

Every penny goes towards environmental action in meaningful projects across the global. Donate today at ideasforus.org/donate



*Leading Direct Environmental
Action Worldwide*



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