

In the Spotlight

We hope you are enjoying being part of our journey showcasing our wonderful women of the Florida Mosquito Control Association.

For this installment, we wanted to Spotlight the Deputy Executive Director of Collier Mosquito Control District, Keira Lucas. Keira was very gracious and agreed to be interviewed. Here is a little insight into what makes Keira Lucas tick.

We asked Keira what advice she would give someone who wants to enter her field and she told us, from operations staff to pilots to scientists, there are so many avenues to enter the field of mosquito control. Her focus in vector biology and mosquito-borne disease during her PhD research led her to mosquito control. Keira started as a Seasonal Inspector at Lee County Mosquito Control District before becoming a Biologist at Collier Mosquito Control District, then moved into Director of Research and now Deputy Executive Director. For a student or early career scientist just entering the field, she advises to not be above internships or entry level positions and be ready to learn. She continued by saying mosquito control has such a diverse group of professionals they might just find their niche where they least expect it.

Keira loves the connection to public health and making direct impacts on her community. She uses applied sciences and works with a diverse group of professionals in the field to develop a science-based approach to mosquito control. Making a difference in her communities has been especially rewarding and is what Keira loves the most about her industry.

When we asked how she defines success, she told us success is relative, and can be defined in so many ways. Keira defines success in life as happiness and growth. She believes if you are achieving your personal goals, are happy with what you are doing and stepping outside your comfort zone to not only learn more about the people and world around you, but also yourself, then you are doing awesome!

Keira had some fantastic mentors that helped her get to where she is today, all of whom have been a great source of inspiration, recognizing her scientific abilities and encouraging her to stay the course. Keira wanted to give a shout out to her undergraduate advisors/mentors, Dr. Drake Stenger, Dr. James Prince, and Dr. Nigel Gapper, as well as her PhD advisor, Dr. Alexander Raikhel.

You may not know when Keira was younger, she had three horses and trained in show jumping and dressage. The barn was where she spent most of her free time in high school and college. Keira is an avid reader, preferring books to watching television, she reads at least one book a week. She recently finished *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides (psychological thrillers are her favorite).

Having two toddlers, Keira has little time for her hobbies, which include hiking, fishing, and boating, but looks forward to getting back into that lifestyle when her daughters are a bit older. In the meantime, Keira and her daughters picked up shelling. They walk for miles on the beach in Marco Island and collect all kinds of shells. They have learned shell identification, and how to clean and polish them.

Keira currently has nothing on her bucket list, other than taking care of two toddlers, but visiting Brazil and Peru are at the top of that list. However, this summer, she will be headed to California to visit family and meet her new niece/nephew.



It's not a surprise that, like many of us, Keira can't live without her phone. However, you may not know that the first concert she attended was Blink 182, Green Day and Jimmy Eat World in Bakersfield California in 2001. Thank you, Keira, for taking the time to share with us!

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Let us know and we will be happy to interview and showcase them.