

**Chris Machen**  
**First Lady**  
**University of Florida**

Chris Machen has worked to better the University of Florida and North Central Florida region since her husband, Bernie, became president in 2004 – applying her trademark good humor and gentle resolve to furthering numerous campus and community causes.

Mrs. Machen may be best known for her leadership in advancing sustainability at UF. Her participation began shortly after the Machens arrived in Gainesville, when she learned of longstanding discussions among UF professors and students about an environmental initiative known as “Greening UF.” She quickly became immersed in the cause. With a patience and capacity for listening born of a longtime career in nursing – and the power of the presidency at her side – she helped align Greening UF with the university’s strategic priorities.

In 2006, UF hired its first director of sustainability. What had been a peripheral movement steadily mushroomed into a central university initiative – one that has fundamentally altered UF’s approach to buildings, transportation and waste. Today, UF constructs only LEED-gold certified buildings, encourages and rewards public and alternative transportation, aggressively recycles and has set a goal of UF reducing its waste to zero. All of these changes, says Mrs. Machen, are the result of “allowing UF faculty and staff to act on their best hopes for UF and the environment.”

Mrs. Machen’s commitment to sustainability is rooted in a lifelong love of the outdoors. As a girl, Mrs. Machen treasured her dad’s stories of riding pack horses with cowboys in Colorado. Those stories led to an interest in cowboy culture that she nurtured in Salt Lake City, where Dr. Machen served as president of the University of Utah. Mrs. Machen was active in the Nevada-based Western Folklife Center and its National Cowboy Poetry gathering.

When the Machens moved to Gainesville, she immersed herself in Florida Cracker heritage. A board member of the Florida Folklife Council, she helped develop the traveling exhibit "Florida Cattle Ranching: Five Centuries of Tradition." The show appeared in conjunction with an exhibit of Florida cowboy photographs at the Florida Museum of Natural History in 2011.

Mrs. Machen has elevated numerous other causes and organizations at UF. As chairwoman of Healthy Gators 2010, she lent her visibility to a continuing campaign to promote a healthy body, mind and spirit among members of the UF community. Healthy Gators spearheaded a campus-wide tobacco-free policy that took effect in July of 2010. The organization promotes healthy food and healthy eating and is campaigning for scooter-riding students to wear helmets.

In the Gainesville community, Mrs. Machen has served on the Child Advocacy Board, the Boys and Girls Club Board and the Florida 4-H Board, among other organizations. Her most cherished community activity is far less formal. With local veterinarian Dale Kaplan-Stein, Mrs. Machen founded and operates a clinic at Gainesville’s St. Francis House to provide care to the pets of low-income residents and the homeless. Since starting the clinic nearly four years ago, Mrs. Machen, Dr. Kaplan-Stein and volunteers have cared for hundreds of dogs and cats whose

owners had nowhere else to turn. The clinic recently began partnering with UF's law and medical colleges, with the law college distributing information about domestic violence and the medical college seeking to work with clients on health issues.

“It's easy to start up a conversation surrounding an animal,” says Mrs. Machen. “And we have discovered that if we can help these pet owners care responsibly for their pets, it's a step toward taking better care of themselves.”

Mrs. Machen's leadership and volunteer work at the university and in the community cap a 25-year career in nursing. She graduated with a degree in nursing from St. Louis University, taught nursing at the University of Iowa, and spent 12 years in the neonatal intensive care unit at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's University Hospital. Later, Mrs. Machen switched from the neonatal intensive care unit to pediatric home health nursing. She ended her career in 1996, when Dr. Machen became provost at the University of Michigan, the job he held prior to becoming president at Utah.

The Machens have two sons: Lee, an engineer at Intel in Portland, Oregon; Michael, an attorney in Chicago; a daughter, Maggie, a veterinarian and resident in small-animal cardiology at the University of Pennsylvania, and four grandchildren. They also have two dogs, two African leopard tortoises, a Harley, and a horse. The horse's name is Zippy because, as Mrs. Machen says, he isn't.