

Sports & Classified

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INFORMING TODAY, SHAPING TOMORROW

South Florida earns sweep

South Florida State College's Tobias Culpepper takes a cut during Friday's opening-day win over Ave Maria University at Panther Field.



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

Panthers baseball team takes 2 from Ave Maria

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College baseball team made opening day a good one, taking both games from Ave Maria University at Panther Field on Friday.

The Panthers narrowly beat the Gyrenes 5-4 in the first game that went into extra innings and defeated them 9-4 in the second game.

In the opener, in the top of the first inning, Ava Maria's Chris Lentine smashed the first pitch of the game over the right field fence, putting the Gyrenes in the lead 1-0.

The second inning saw the Gyrenes increase their lead with a two-run base hit to make it 3-0.

In the bottom of the fifth the Panthers tied up the game. John Tatum's ground ball to first allowed Chris Kazen to run home from third.

With Rodney Forbes on second base, Harrison McClure stepped up to the plate and hammered the ball over the

left-field fence for a two-run homer to tie the game at 3.

Ave Maria scored a run in the top of the seventh to take a 4-3 lead.

South Florida rallied in the bottom of the frame as McClure scored on Jorge Flores' grounder to short to force extra innings.

The Panthers loaded the bases in the bottom of the ninth and Austin Bingham's sacrifice fly scored Tatum with the winning run.

"When you don't play your best baseball you still have to find a way to hang around and

BASEBALL, Page 2

Baseball

From Page 1

give yourself a shot and that is exactly what they did today," said Panther coach Rick Hitt. "We got the big play made that tied the game and then we just hung around until the end. Then a chance paid off for us. Perseverance for game one. I always like getting the win especially on opening day."

The Panthers started a bit quicker in the nightcap, as McClure knocked in Alfred Brown and Isaiah Dean in the first inning and Cullen Lovett scored to make it 3-0 when Jordan Jackson's grounder was mishandled.

Jackson hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the third inning to make it 5-1. Hernando Sierra, Kazen and Tobias Culpepper each scored, increasing the Panthers' lead to 8-1.

The Gyrenes cut the margin in half in the top of the sixth inning, scoring three runs to make it an 8-4 contest,



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's John Tatum tags out Ave Maria University baserunner Alex O'Conner during Friday's first game at Panther Field.

only to see Sierra score on a wild pitch in the bottom of the sixth to make it 9-4, which would be the final score of the game.

The Panthers will now begin an ex-

tended road trip that will see them play their next eight games on the road. South Florida will return home on Feb. 11 when they face Seminole State College at 6 p.m.

Panthers split on opening day

South Florida State College softball team rebounds in nightcap

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College softball team played a doubleheader on opening day. Palm Beach State was victorious in game one with a score of 5-1, but South Florida won the second game by a final score of 6-4.

"We've got to be consistent on fielding the ball, catching, and throwing," said South Florida coach Carlos Falla. "In the first game we shanked them off of our gloves and then didn't get them where they need to be. We were very impatient after the third inning.

"Seven of nine of our players were freshman in the first game. We are trying to get all those nerves out."

The Palm Beach Panthers dominated the first game, but South Florida State Col-

lege took control in the second game.

Danielle Garcia hammered the ball over the centerfield fence for a home run in the bottom of the second, putting South Florida in the lead with a score of 1-0.

In the bottom of the third, South Florida increased its lead. With Shelby Press on third, Haley Pinterich hit a sacrifice fly to right field allowing Press to score, making South Florida's lead 2-0.

SOFTBALL, Page 2



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Danielle Garcia (3) is greeted at home plate after hitting a home run in Friday's game against Palm Beach State.



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida's Kala Thompson makes a throw to first base during Friday's game against Palm Beach State.

Softball

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Palm Beach had the lead going into the bottom of the fifth with a score of 4-3. South Florida had Elizabeth Fording on third and Paige Davis on second when Pinterich hit a ground ball single to second base allowing Fording and Davis both to score to put South Florida back in front.

Kelly Olson hit a single to shortstop, putting runners on first and second. The catcher dropped the ball, allowing both runners to advance.

Pinterich was tagged out trying to slide home for the second out but Olson advanced to third.

Kala Thompson hit a ground ball past the second baseman for a double, driving home Olson and increasing South Florida's lead to 6-4.

South Florida was able to keep Palm Beach from scoring in the last two innings and won game two 6-4.

"In the second game we did a little bit better job," Falla said. "We are just trying to get everybody to settle in a little bit.

"Palm Beach's shortstop covers an immense amount of ground. She was picking up balls on the other side of second base and was slinging them. She overthrew one ball and we scored on that. We took advantage of it."

Falla said the team showed their youth at times.

"My freshmen have given me a good and bad surprise," he said. "I'm surprised they handled their first college game so well and I'm a little surprised that their approach at the plate was so erratic because they were so calm all fall.

"They know what they can hit but I chalk that up to nerves. That many young kids playing it had to be nerves."

South Florida will be home on Tuesday when the Panthers host Lake-Sumter State College for a doubleheader at 5 p.m.

Panthers taste victory

SFSC baseball sweeps, softball splits on Opening Day

By JAMES TAYLOR
NEWS-SUN Correspondent

AVON PARK – Perfect weather that featured billowing clouds floating on a subtle breeze enhanced opening day for the South Florida State College baseball team, which pulled out a come-from-behind win in the first game en route to a 5-4, 9-4 doubleheader sweep of visiting Ava Maria last Friday.

Meanwhile, on the softball field, South Florida State split a doubleheader with Palm Beach State College, losing the first game 5-1 and then winning the second 6-3.

South Florida State's baseball team looked like it would lose its opener, as well. The Panthers trailed

3-0 after 4 ½ innings. But then they rallied.

SFSC manufactured one run and then Harrison McClure tied the game with a two-run home run over the leftfield fence. McClure also scored the game-tying run in the bottom of the seventh to force extra innings with the game tied at 4-4.

The Panthers pulled out the win in the bottom of the ninth on a sacrifice fly by Austin Bingham that drove

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Right: SFSC softball players greet Danielle Garcia (3) at home plate after she hit a home run early in the second game to give the Panthers a 1-0 lead against Palm Beach State College. SFSC went on to win the nightcap, earning a split.



Photos by James Taylor/News-Sun

South Florida State College's Harrison McClure (4) is greeted by Rodney Forbes (11) and Cullen Lovett (10) at home plate after hitting a two-run homer to tie the game against Ava Maria last Friday. The Panthers went on to win and sweep the doubleheader.



SFSC

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in John Tatum.

Juan Terron started for the Panthers, pitching 4 ½ innings, allowing three runs on four hits. Isaiah Dean, Max Boling and T.J. Vasquez combined to pitch the final 4 2/3 innings, giving up just one hit and one run, with Vasquez picking up the first win of the season.

"When you don't play your best baseball," said South Florida State College head coach Rick Hitt after the opener, "you still have to find a way to hang around to give yourself a shot and that is exactly what they did today."

In the second game, the Panthers built an 8-1 lead after three innings. They scored three runs

in the first, highlighted by a two-run double by McClure and a run-producing single by Jordan Jackson.

Jackson then ignited a five-run third inning for SFSC with a two-run homer over the leftfield fence. Pitchers Jason Plyn and Garrett Albritton combined to give up four runs on seven hits in the blowout win. Albritton picked up the victory in relief.

Dean, Jackson and Hernando Sierra each collected two hits, with Jackson also driving in three runs. "In the second game, the guys did a much better job at the plate on waiting for pitches to hit and delivering good solid swings," Hitt said.

The Panthers followed up their sweep with a split of two games last Saturday. South Florida

State lost the first game, 8-4 to Chipola College, ranked No. 2 by the FCSAA. The Panthers then stunned top-ranked Miami Dade College 4-0.

Rodney Forbes had three hits, including two doubles, and two RBIs to lead SFSC against Miami Dade. Teammate Alfred Brown also had three hits.

Tyler Knowles pitched six scoreless innings, allowing five hits, for his first win of the season. Jonathan Struck threw three scoreless innings in relief for the save.

SFSC plays its next six games on the road before hosting Seminole State College on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 6 p.m. SFSC visits Seminole State College in Sanford today at 2 p.m., and the College of Central Florida in Ocala on Friday at 1 p.m.

SFSC softball splits opener

AVON PARK – South Florida State College's softball team opened its season with a doubleheader split against Palm Beach State College.

Shelby Press and Paige Davis had two hits apiece in the opener to account for four of the Panthers' six total hits in a 5-1 loss.

After falling behind 2-0 in the top of the first, SFSC answered with a run of its own as Press hit the first of her two doubles. Two batters later, she scored on a single by Davis to make the score 2-1.

The score stayed that way until the fifth inning when Palm Beach plated three more runs to take a 5-1 lead, capping the scoring. Despite pitching well, Haley Pinterich suffered the loss in six innings of work. She gave up five runs, four earned, on nine hits. Gennifer Raulerson pitched a final scoreless

inning in relief.

"We hurt ourselves in the first game," South Florida State head coach Carlos Falla said. "We have to be consistent in fielding, catching and throwing. Then, we got impatient after the third inning, swinging at bad pitches."

In the second game, Danielle Garcia led off the second inning with a solo homerun to give SFSC an early 1-0 lead. The Panthers went up 2-0 in the third inning when Press scored on a sacrifice fly by Pinterich.

A solo home run in the top of the fourth by Palm Beach State cut the lead in half, but SFSC regained its two-run lead in the bottom of the fourth when Shae Coughlin singled in Kala Thompson to make the score 3-1.

SFSC scored three more runs in the bottom of the fifth off of two hits and two errors by PBSC. Elizabeth Fording and

Kelly Olson led SFSC with two hits each in a 6-3 win.

Raulerson pitched four innings, giving up just three hits and one run. Davis pitched the final three innings, giving up two runs on five hits, to earn the win in relief.

"Second game, we did a little bit better," Falla said. "We were able to take advantage of some mistakes on their part. This is a good group of kids and a joy to be around. They will get better."

SFSC was unable to maintain its momentum on Saturday, going 0-3 in the Kickoff Classic in Clearwater. The Panthers fell to top-ranked Indian River State College 11-6, Odessa (Texas) College 6-1, and Chipola College 11-1 to fall to 1-4 on the season.

South Florida State was scheduled to play Lake-Sumter State College on Tuesday before visiting Miami Dade on Thursday at 1 p.m.



SFSC student-athletes help out at Woodlawn Elementary

Forty-three student-athletes at South Florida State College had the opportunity Friday to work collaboratively with Woodlawn Elementary students to build bridges out of recycled materials during the school's Building Bridges-themed Literacy Week. This is the fourth supported educational partnership this year for SFSC student-athletes at Woodlawn Elementary as a part of SFSC Athletics' annual service to community effort.

A year of a half-century for SFSC

College anniversary activities begin Saturday, more scheduled throughout the year

BY PAUL CATALA
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Timothy Backer remembers the mid-1970s when the college was no-frills and most students went to classes and went home without many extracurricular activities to do.

During the years Backer attended, 1974 and 1975, he recalled the campus of what was then South Florida Junior College was made up of six to seven buildings with no pool, gymnasium, sports facilities or auditorium.

Now a real estate appraiser working in DeSoto and Hardee counties, Backer was part of the early years of a 50-year instructional timeline that has spanned decades of teaching and years of learning for students, staff and administration at South Florida State College.

To mark SFSC's half-century of guiding students into advanced education and into careers, the college will host a year's worth of activities at its three campuses in Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto campuses.

The whole shebang begins Saturday
HALF-CENTURY, Page 5

Half-Century

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from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the SFSC DeSoto campus, 2251 NE Turner Road, Arcadia, when a family-fun day takes place.

Locally, the 50th anniversary begins Feb. 14 with a family activity celebration and anniversary kickoff from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Panther Field where students, alumni and members of the community are invited to join in a free celebration. That day will feature an SFSC Panther baseball doubleheader against Santa Fe College, a reunion of SFSC's cheerleaders and children's activities, including a bounce house, face painting and obstacle course.

Throughout the remainder of 2015, nine more major anniversary-themed activities and events are scheduled at all campuses, including Hardee County's campus, 2968 N. U.S. 17, Bowling Green.

From the Highlands SFSC campus, Deborah Latter, SFSC director of community relations and marketing department, said the main purpose for all the celebration activities is to thank folks from Highlands and surrounding campus areas for 50 years of support and dedication to the college. She said they're also to get people to see what the campuses have to offer.

"This (Highlands County) community helped develop this state college. This community embraced us with open arms and helped develop our first campus," said Latter, who has worked at SFSC since 1998. "It's an opportunity to take a look and see how far this college has come from 1965 to this point."

SFSC was established in 1965 by the Florida Legislature to serve Highlands and Hardee counties and the college started in August 1966 in temporary facilities offered by the city of Avon Park. The facilities were renovated, air conditioned and partly furnished through contributions by individuals and

organizations in Highlands and Hardee counties and Avon Park, Bowling Green, Lake Placid and Sebring, according to SFSC's website.

"I think they've always pushed for quality education, there's just more opportunities for different subjects and areas of study now," said Backer, 58, who went on from SFSC to get a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of South Florida-Tampa and serves on SFSC's board of trustees.

Currently, SFSC serves residents of Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto counties, offering over 60 areas of study for associate degrees in arts, science and applied science; college credit; and occupational certificates.

In 1992, SFSC became one of the first community colleges in Florida to offer bachelor's degree programs through partnerships with public and private universities and now offers 13 bachelor's degree programs and three master's degree programs through eight colleges and universities, said Latter.

The chance for four-year degrees and having actual campuses didn't exist when Harvey Jackson taught at SFSC. Jackson, 66, retired after 25 years teaching Southern History at Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama. In 1966, he started teaching history at South Florida Junior College at 23 years old when it was housed in the upstairs of a long-gone downtown Avon Park hotel. He said over the years, the college's mission has been the same, no matter how big or small.

"It was small then, but like now, it gave an opportunity for kids to go to college who might not have had any opportunities to have gone. It's always been a very familial-type atmosphere there," said Jackson, who got his doctorate degree from the University of Georgia in 1972.

For information on upcoming events, see www.southflorida.edu or call (863) 784-7250.

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INFORMING TODAY, SHAPING TOMORROW

Panther 5K becomes big fundraiser

50-mile bike ride
added to event
this year

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The sixth annual Panther 5K will take place March 7 at South Florida State College. The event serves as a fundraiser for Panther athletics.

"This event helps us to promote health and wellness among our community, raise funds to help support SFSC athletics and allows us to promote our beautiful campus here at

SFSC," said Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach.

The entry fee is \$25 for adults, \$20 for students with a current ID and \$15 for children ages 6 to 12. Children under the age of 6 are admitted free with a completed form but do not receive a shirt. The first 250 registered participants receive a goody bag and an official Panthers Dri-Fit shirt for adults and students or T-shirt for children. The entry fee remains the same through race day. Shirts or specific sizes cannot be guaranteed for those who enter after Feb. 20.

Registration forms for the

event are available at www.southflorida.edu/panther5k/.

The Panther 5K will take participants on a path through the beautiful SFSC Highlands Campus and along College Drive. Participants can choose to run the 5K as a race or to take a more leisurely, family-friendly walk. Four-legged friends and strollers are welcome.

In celebration of SFSC's 50th year of service to its community, the event will feature a new 50-mile bike ride that will take participants from the SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park to the SFSC Lake Placid Center

PANTHER 5K, Page 2



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

Runners take off at the start of the inaugural South Florida Community College Panther 5K Run/Walk.

Panther 5K

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and back.

Registration is between 7 and 7:45 a.m. on race day in the Panther Gymnasium. Bikers will depart from the SFSC campus at 7:30 a.m., followed by an 8 a.m. start for runners and walkers.

Scrambled eggs and fruit will be available to participants after each race. A special awards ceremony will follow the Run/Walk. Awards will be given to the first three finishers in each age (6 and up) and gender category as well as Overall, Masters and Grand Masters for runners. Each bicyclist that completes the 50-mile ride will receive a participation medal.

"We greatly appreciate all the people who come out to participate in the event, all of the volunteers who support the effort, and our outstanding committee of people who work hard to make this event



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

The third annual Panther 5K attracted a large crowd. A 50-mile bike ride has been added to this year's event.

bigger and better every year," Hitt said. "It has become an outstanding event, and with the college celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, we look forward to supporting

that celebration."

Participants can mail completed registration forms to the SFSC Foundation Inc., 13 E. Main St., Avon Park, FL 33825; fax them to (863)

453-8023; or email them to foundation@southflorida.edu.

The Panther 5K is sponsored by the SFSC Foundation Inc. and the Jarrett Family Foundation.

Let the party begin

50th ANNIVERSARY
1965 - 2015
SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE



Katara Simmons/News-Sun

In 50 years, South Florida State College has gone from a room on Main Street in Avon Park to building a stand-alone campus on Lake Glenada (the inset is the program from the ground-breaking ceremony in 1968) to a towering facility that has become a center of education and culture in the Heartland. The kick-off event for the 50th anniversary celebration is Saturday.

SFSC kicks off 50th anniversary Saturday

By PHIL ATTINGER

NEWS-SUN STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK —

Regular patrons of South Florida State College Panthers baseball will get to take part in a party to kick off the college's 50th anniversary at this weekend's doubleheader.

"We'll be doing something every month," said Don Applequist, executive director of SFSC Foundation Inc.

Since the charter was signed on July 7, 1965, trustees and college officials agreed to hold events throughout this year to give residents, supporters

and alumni plenty of opportunities to celebrate, he said.

Starting at 11 a.m. Saturday, the college will have a free community event with music, a bounce house and face painting centering around the Panthers' games against Santa Fe College.

The only cost, Applequist said, will be the barbecue from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., catered by Cowpoke's Watering Hole: \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under.

Mandy Ramos, also of the Foundation,

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50th ANNIVERSARY
1965 - 2015

PANTHERS FROM THE PAST

Neil Durrance

Years attended: Fall 1972-Spring 1974

Current occupation: Sports merchandise wholesaler

Looking back: Durrance, a 1972 Sebring graduate, played baseball at what was then South Florida Junior College with teammates old and new. He continued on to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville to play baseball, and graduated with a degree in journalism. He loved the mountains so much, he's stayed there ever since. "If I lived (near SFSC), I would strongly recommend going to school there," Durrance, 60, said. "It was great to stay another couple of years. It allowed me to play baseball with family and friends around."



DURRANCE

SFSC

FROM PAGE 1

said Cowpoke's will serve barbecue chicken, pulled pork, baked beans, coleslaw, bread, cookies and a drink. Meal tickets may be purchased from:

- Sebring Chamber of Commerce, 227 U.S. 27, Sebring.
- Sherwin-Williams, 1132 Lakeview Drive, Sebring.
- The Hotel Jacaranda, 19 E. Main St., Avon Park.
- Cashiers at the SFSC Bursar's Office, Building B, ground floor.

Barbecue tickets are also available Saturday, but will be limited, Ramos said.

Visitors may also get to ask about the "old days," Applequist said, since alumnus Bob Terrell, one of the two first graduates in 1967, will be on hand.

Anne Kahn, now deceased, was the other 1967 graduate.

SFSC trustee and alumna Tami Cullens and her grandson, Cullen Fells, will throw out the first pitch of the first game at noon, Applequist

said. Lorrie Key, director of Corporate and Community Education, will throw the first pitch of the second game.

Key, with the school since 1980, sponsored the college's co-ed cheerleading program from 1989 to 1996. It was discontinued a couple of years after a change in her job meant she couldn't devote time as a sponsor, but she'd like to see it return as a competitive squad.

When the squad existed, she said, the men and women who cheered for Panthers basketball (also discontinued) acted as ambassadors for the school through parades, fundraisers and recruitment.

"They were the hub of the college," Key said. "People wanted to be like them."

They also attended and did well at national competitions, she said.

To celebrate that era, which Key considers an exciting time in her life, she organized a cheerleader reunion this weekend to coincide with the kickoff event.

She expects many of the 65 alumni she's contacted may be busy with families, their

companies or careers. Many live out of state, Key said, but have told her they took pride in SFSC, especially after seeing gymnasiums at other schools.

"I knew our facility was one of the best," Key said. "I think this is the best hidden secret in central Florida. You can tell people really care about the school."

Head Coach Rick Hitt, who's been with SFSC for 17 years, said he's hoping for good games against Santa Fe, which beat SFSC in a doubleheader last weekend. The Panthers bounced back Sunday with a 10-0 win against Lake Sumter State College in Leesburg.

"(SFSC) is a great school in many ways," Hitt said. "Athletics has always been one of the ways it has been seen as great."

More than that, SFSC has treated students like people, he said, "not a Social Security number."

Phil Attinger may be contacted at 863-385-6155, ext. 541, or phil.atinger@newssun.com and followed on Twitter @PhilAttinger.



COURTESY PHOTO

Fourteen South Florida State College students were among the top winners in events testing their knowledge of accounting, finance, marketing and management during the Phi Beta Lambda District IV Leadership Conference & Competition held on Jan. 31 at Pasco-Hernando State College. SFSC's chapter competed in 22 events and had a combined total of 43 top-five finishes, including 15 first-place finishes and 11 second-place finishes. Shown are (front row, from left) Raymond Tuason, Kerry Mushrush, Kimberly Wasdin, Glenn Powers, Martile Blackman, Kylee Martin, Deldre Shankle, Teresa McGovern and Hannah Belcher; (back row) Mike Nyhan, Mario Barajas, Shane Meeks, Catherine Steiner and Elizabeth Batts.

SFSC Brain Bowl Team to compete at nationals

South Florida State College's Brain Bowl team has earned a spot in the National Academic Quiz Tournaments Community College Championship Tournament, taking place Feb. 27 -28 in Atlanta, Ga.

SFSC's Brain Bowl team visited State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, on Jan. 23 to compete in the NAQT South Florida Community College Sectional Tournament. Among the field of 12 teams, SFSC's Brain Bowl team tied for fourth place, with seven wins and four losses. Based on this

performance, SFSC's team is ranked seventh nationally by the NAQT and earned an invitation to the field of 24 teams to compete for the Community College National Championship.

"These are not easy questions," said Cheryl John, SFSC Brain Bowl co-advisor and professor of developmental mathematics. "It is not like Jeopardy. These students practice several times a week with Dr. Brian Deery, SFSC Brain Bowl co-advisor and professor of psychology, going over questions for hours. They also have their own

packets of questions that they are expected to 'own,' meaning that when those questions come up in a tournament in some manner, they have the responsibility of buzzing in before the other team to get the 10 points. It was not easy getting into a national slot. We are proud of the team's hard work."

"The team showed great spirit and never gave up," Dr. Deery said. "I'm proud of their success and I'm looking forward to nationals."

Logan Boyd, Mike Cao, and

Christian Reitnouer represented SFSC at the NAQT South Florida Community College Sectional tournament. They will be joined by Garrett Edenfield, Matthew Estima, and Jordan Thorton of DeSoto County at the NAQT Community College Championship Tournament. Other Brain Bowl team members include Tiffany McDonald of DeSoto County, Jorge Lopez, Jose Guerrero, and Maria Zompa.

For more information on NAQT, visit <https://www.naqt.com/>.

GUEST OPINION

Florida College System trains the state's workforce

Florida businesses need an academically and technologically prepared workforce to succeed, which makes the strength of our higher education system a major factor in attracting new business to Florida. We are fortunate to have the Florida College System as the primary access point to higher education in Florida. Serving nearly one million students annually, FCS is committed to providing access to high-quality, affordable academic and career education programs that maximize student learning and success. Our college system supports the state's economy by providing education and training for Florida's critical workforce needs.

Ninety-eight percent of FCS graduates stay in Florida, contributing their acquired skills and training to the state's economic development. With 28 public colleges throughout the state, the FCS has a \$27 billion economic impact.

It is more important than ever to prioritize the goals of the Florida College System for the upcoming year as the Florida economy continues to expand and the demand for skilled workforce grows exponentially.

The system has been highly successful as evidenced by the many national awards and recognitions received by our institutions from the American Association of Community Colleges and the Aspen Institute, to name a few. Nevertheless, we know that changing times and demographics demand that we enhance traditional, access-oriented education by focusing on ensuring our students are successful once they achieve their ultimate goal of completion and employment. The year ahead offers opportunities to continue improving our student-centered approach.

Higher education is evolving to have an increased focus on performance funding and the economic landscape in Florida is changing. The FCS has always been and will continue to be accountable for student performance. It is imperative that the FCS responds rapidly and strategically to serve the state. We can do this in three effective ways:

- **Expand critical workforce areas:** By expanding workforce training programs, the FCS can provide the opportunity for more Floridians to gain skills that are critical to the region in which they live. The college system will work to respond efficiently to meet the demand of employers in 2015 by optimizing alignment of certificate and degree programs with regional workforce needs. These efforts will build a pipeline of talent helping Floridians gain employment while supporting the state's economy.

- **Expand academic support:** Services offered outside of the classroom are critical components that drive student success. Academic and support services are valuable assets that guide students through their academic careers. Services such as academic support, learning assistance, advising and mentoring improve a student's ability to ultimately secure upon graduation either job

GUEST

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placement or transfer through our seamless 2+2 to a college or university. Expanding academic support services plays a crucial role in student success and will be a major focus in 2015.

- **Maintain affordability:** A college's capacity to serve is based on two factors – tuition and state investment. Maintaining affordable tuition is a priority for the colleges, the Legislature and Gov. Scott. Without tuition increases, we must increase our capacity to serve by committing as a state to an investment in our future talent. Florida is recognized nationwide for its overall value in public higher education – affordable tuition being a large component. The FCS

wants to ensure the cost of college is not a burden to the student, and therefore needs an appropriate investment from the state.

Following years of dramatic growth during the Recession, FCS student enrollment is plateauing at an unprecedented level. An increased investment from the state is essential to help us enable more students to excel in Florida's most in-demand occupations. As one of the most successful college systems in the nation, the FCS, with the vital support of the Legislature and Governor Scott, will continue to concentrate on delivering the talent Florida needs to become the number one job creator in the nation.

— *Dr. Jim Henningsen is the Chairman of the Florida College System's Council of Presidents and President of the College of Central Florida.*

SFSC

FROM PAGE 1

a change in her job meant she couldn't devote time as a sponsor, but she'd like to see it return as a competitive squad. To celebrate that era of Panther pride, Key has organized a cheerleader reunion this weekend to coincide with the kickoff event. She expects many of the 65 alumni she's contacted may be busy with families or careers. Many live out of state, Key said, but have told her they took pride in SFSC.

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Baseball, BBQ kicks off SFSC celebration

By PHIL ATTINGER
NEWS-SUN STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Fans of South Florida State College Panthers baseball will take part in a party to kick off the college's 50th anniversary at a Saturday doubleheader. The day will be a community event with music, a bounce house and face

painting centering around the Panthers' games against Santa Fe College.

The only cost will be for barbecue meals to be served from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., catered by Cowpoke's Watering Hole. A donation of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under will bring barbecue chicken, pulled pork, baked beans, coleslaw, bread,

cookies and a drink. Meal tickets may be purchased from Sebring Chamber of Commerce, 227 U.S. 27, Sebring; Sherwin-Williams, 1132 Lakeview Drive, Sebring; the SFSC Bursar's Office, Building B, ground floor; or The Hotel Jacaranda, 19 E. Main St., Avon Park.

Barbecue tickets will also be available Saturday, but will be limited.

SFSC trustee and alumna Tami Cullens and her grandson, Cullen Fells, will throw out the first pitch of the first game at noon, Applequist said. Lorrie Key, director of Corporate and Community Education, will throw the first pitch of the second game.

Key, with the school since 1980, sponsored the college's coed cheerleading program from 1989 to 1996. It was discontinued a couple of years after

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Courtesy photo/cfl-sports.com

South Florida State College baseball fans are in for a treat Saturday when the Panthers play a doubleheader at the Avon Park field. Admission is free as part of SFSC's 50th anniversary celebration.



Law Enforcement Academy At SFSC Graduates 13

Thirteen graduates of South Florida State College's Basic Law Enforcement Academy, Class 242, were recognized at a ceremony on Feb. 5 in SFSC's Theatre for the Performing Arts on the main campus in Avon Park.

The prospective police officers receiving occupational certificates that evening included Michael Barger, class leader; Todd Dow, executive officer; Nicholas Knapp, first squad leader; Manual Bruno-Cintron; Sean R. Colburn; Victoria Fuentes; Tiffany Shaddock; Jacqueline Current Moron, second squad leader; Joshua Fogle; Anthony Nizza; Brad Webster, third squad leader; Lina Miller; and Trevor Smith.

Mark Anthony Cintron, of Amazing Grace Ministries of Wauchula, was invited by Class 242 to give the invocation and benediction for the program, and Barger gave parting words as class leader on behalf of the graduating class.

Before receiving individual awards and certificates, cadets and guests listened to keynote speaker Ofc. David Hernandez of the Lake Wales Police Department, who shared wisdom from his own career experiences and reminded cadets about the commitment, honesty and integrity required to be a law enforcement professional.

He also thanked the families and friends who supported the cadets and the instructors who provided important training to prepare them to transition into service as a public safety officer.

"Make sure you hold yourself to a higher standard," Hernandez said. "Remember to stay vigilant, stay grounded, and remember you're not the only ones affected by this career. The people that supported you through this academy will support you throughout your career."

Special awards were presented to Webster for "top firearms

score" for completing 194 out of 203; Smith had the "top academic score" with a final grade of 96 percent; and "class leader" was presented to Barger.

"Basic Law Enforcement Academy, Class 242, was an evening academy, running for over 44 weeks, 11 months of training," said Richard Morey, coordinator, criminal justice. "That kind of commitment, willingness to learn, and sacrifice away from their families' shows the professionalism of those who attended. They did a great job and should make fine officers serving their communities."

SFSC's academy trains students to become law enforcement officers in Florida by passing the state certification exam. For more information about the Basic Law Enforcement Academy, call SFSC's Criminal Justice Academy at 784-7285, or e-mail publicservice@southflorida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

The academy at South Florida State College prepares students for a career in law enforcement.

ARCADIAN

Thursday, February 12, 2015 - 24 pages / 75 cents

SFSC celebrates 50 years with Fun Fest

By **SUSAN E. HOFFMAN**
ARCADIAN EDITOR

South Florida State College and the DeSoto Arts and Humanities Council combined to give the community a weekend of family fun.

SFSC is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and the DeSoto County campus led the festivities with a Family Fun Fest on Saturday. At the same time, the Arts Council staged its third annual Art of the River show, highlighting the beauty and wonder of the Florida lifestyle. Forty artists entered more than 100 two- and three-dimensional pieces which were judged by Mollie Doctrow, curator of SFSC's Museum of Florida Art and Culture, and by Mark Renz, noted photographer and fossil expert.

A private reception was held Friday evening for artists, sponsors and guests, and awards were announced.

On Saturday, the art show was open to the public, and the Family Fun Fest provided entertainment with



Jane O'Neal paints the face of one of the South Florida State College student volunteers who helped out Saturday with the Family Fun Fest and the Art of the River exhibit.

live music, two bouncehouses, a rock climbing wall, pony rides and food, plus informative displays.



ARCADIAN PHOTOS BY SUSAN E. HOFFMAN

Some of the winners in the Third Annual Art of the River show, from left: Cindy Rose, Jerry Waters, Jim Smith, Thomas Petro, Cathy Futral, Pat LaBree (for her late husband, Guy LaBree), Bruce Trewyn and Rhett Butler.

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Left: DeSoto Arts and Humanities Council President Jane Hilton, left, shares a smile with artist Jeni Novak after she receives her prize winnings for her entry in the three-dimensional category.



Right: Victor Amemiya grins as he shows the check for winning second place in the two-dimensional category for his scratch-board illustration of a fox.



Rhett Butler shows one of his photos on his phone to some of the visitors at Friday's opening reception for the Art of the River exhibit, sponsored by the DeSoto Arts and Humanities Council.

Arts, family fun mix over weekend at college



ARCADIAN PHOTOS BY SUSAN E. HOFFMAN

Mac Martin, left, sings an impromptu duet with the guitar player of the Kenny and Keys duet who played during the Art of the River reception Friday night at South Florida State College.



Gordon "Mac" Martin, center, talks with George and Faith Pratt about the art on display at South Florida State College during the opening reception Friday evening.



Meagan Segroves, 8, plans her moves as she climbs the rock wall at the South Florida State College Family Fun Fest. The rock wall was brought by the Army National Guard.



Jane O'Neal paints an Indian Princess headband during the Family Fun Fair and Rio de la Paz Festival held Saturday at South Florida State College.



Above: Jasmine's Dream Ranch and Rescue offered horse and pony rides Saturday at South Florida State College as part of the 50th anniversary celebration. The festival was held in conjunction with the Art of the River, organized by the DeSoto Arts and Humanities Council.

Left: Two bounce houses provided plenty of fun action for children at Saturday's Family Fun Fest.



Clai Shore takes a look around South Florida State College where the Third Annual Art of the River exhibit is on display.



Left: DeSoto Arts and Humanities Council Secretary Karen Smoke is the chief organizer of the Art of the River art exhibit. She worked with a team of volunteers to ensure the exhibit ran smoothly.



South Florida State College President Thomas C. Leitzel, left, and Tim Backer, a member of SFSC's Board of Trustees, talk about the quality of art entered in the exhibit held last weekend at the DeSoto campus.



Representatives of the Peace River Audubon Society and Sierra Club talk with visitors at Saturday's Family Fun Fest, held at the DeSoto campus of South Florida State College to help celebrate SFSC's 50th anniversary.

FEST

FROM PAGE 1

DAHC is grateful to its sponsors and volunteers, including The Mosaic Co., DeSoto Automall, Arcadia All-Florida Championship Rodeo, Florida Power & Light, Martin Realty

Co., Ryals Cattle Co., Seacoast National Bank, SOAR Inc., Glass Antique or Not, and South Florida State College. Thanks also to the Peace River Quilt Guild for displaying its beautiful hand-made quilt display, and to the DeSoto County School District for displaying art created by our school children (more on that next week).

2015 ART OF THE RIVER WINNERS

Two-dimensional:
1st - Guy LaBree
2nd - Victor Amemiya
3rd - Cathy C. Futral
Honorable Mention: Sandra Robinson, Maureen Fulginetti and

Jim Smith.
Awards of Merit: Thomas Petro, Jim Fitch, Lisa Mayle and Dottie Bade

Three-dimensional:
1st - Bruce Trewyn
2nd - Bruce Trewyn
3rd - Jeil Novak

Photography:
1st - Rhett Butler
2nd - Quinn E. Bass
3rd - Jerry Waters
Honorable Mention: Susan E. Hoffman, Jean Evoy
Award of Merit: Water Lily Earth
• See next week's Arcadian for highlights of the student art show.

Review deems SFSC president's performance 'outstanding'

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK

— South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel earned top marks in his first annual performance review based on a full year on the job.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel received an outstanding performance review recently from the college's board of trustees.

Leitzel started July 1, 2013, with the college, so the board of trustees' evaluation was based on his performance in 2014.

Board of Trustees Chairman Kenneth Lambert said Wednesday that Leitzel received an "outstanding" annual performance review from the board.

Each board member rated the president on four or five performance measures that were compiled by the board attorney, he said. In every single instance, Leitzel received an out-

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standing performance review.

"We were just enormously pleased and excited about the things that he is doing," Lambert said. "He has done an outstanding job of blending all the successes of the past and the legacies of the organization and at the same time charting a new course."

Board of trustees member Tami Cullens said, "We are extremely happy; Dr. Leitzel meets or exceeds all our expectations at the college."

She noted that the college's new marketing program (Experience Orange) has been wonderful in its efforts to reach out to increase enrollment. It has given the college a

whole new look.

"I also believe having ... another accreditation with zero recommendations again is a legacy that we have been carrying and moving forward," Cullens said. "I think it has been wonderful."

"Dr. Leitzel continually improves our college so year after year from one president to another we are always increasing and improving. He is taking us to a whole new level."

Board of trustees member Joe Wright also noted the Experience Orange marketing effort but emphasized the importance of long-term planning.

"We have an outstanding state college," he said. "It was outstanding before he got here. We want to make sure it remains outstanding and you don't do that by resting on

your laurels."

Wright said that Leitzel is doing an excellent job of assessing the college's vision and determining what needs to be done to continue as an outstanding state college in Florida and the nation.

Also, Leitzel has motivated other staff members to look ahead to improve the college, Wright said.

Wright noted that when the board of trustees interviewed Leitzel for the president's position, he stated that the college's 50th anniversary would be an excellent opportunity to make people aware of the college.

"That's how we attract students who otherwise wouldn't go to school," Wright said.

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Collegiate high school closer to reality

School board to consider
agreement with SFSC for
dual-enrolled students

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — A Collegiate High School program will likely start in the fall of 2015 offering high school students an accelerated track to a college degree and high school diploma.

At its Tuesday meeting, the School Board of Highlands County will consider an agreement with South Florida State College to create a dual-enrollment program dubbed the Collegiate High School.

When a student passes a dual-enrollment course, they simultaneously receive college credit and high school credit toward their high school graduation requirements.

School District Secondary Programs Director Ruth Heckman said the Collegiate High School agreement between the school district and the college is in response to legislation last year.

"Basically it is going to take the place of our full-time dual-enrollment kids who go to the college," she said. "But this requires that they can actually can get their AA (associate in arts degree) in their junior and senior year."

Students can be enrolled in the Collegiate High School in just their senior year or for both their junior and senior years, she said.

It's free for the student because it is dual enrollment, Heckman said. But, students have to provide their own transportation to the college.

The main point is that it is another opportunity for students to get their associate degree at the same time

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School

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they graduate from high school, she said.

Students will continue to be able to take one or more dual-enrollment courses at their high school or at the college.

According to the agreement, students participating in the program will attend college classes at the college campus for at least one full year. All college classes taken must apply toward high school graduation and an associate or bachelor's

degree.

Heckman said currently a few dual-enrollment students attend the college full-time.

She noted that some students prefer to stay at their high school where they are involved in other activities so they may take two classes at the college and take the rest of their classes at their high school.

The student eligibility requirements include an unweighted grade point average of 3.0.

Collegiate high school students may be involved in high school clubs, athletics and extracurricular activities but will be expected

to meet college course attendance and performance requirements, according to the proposed agreement.

Students participating in the program will not be assessed registration, tuition or laboratory fees.

The Collegiate High School students must complete at least 30 credit hours during grade 12 or may begin earlier in grade 11 with the potential to complete the entire associate degree (60 credit hours) within two years, the agreement states.

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INFORMING TODAY, SHAPING TOMORROW



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Chris Kazen puts the ball in play during Friday's game against College of Central Florida at Panther Field.

Patriots pounce on Panthers

Offense paces
College of Central
Florida past SFSC

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College watched an early lead evaporate under a barrage of hits as College of Central Florida cruised to a 13-6 win on Friday at Panther Field.

The loss dropped South Florida to 5-6 overall.

"I thought that we got off to a good start," said South Florida coach Rick Hitt. "We knocked a couple of good runs early but then we simply didn't

play good defense the remainder of the game. You have to play good defense against anybody, but especially against a team as good as Central Florida."

South Florida came out swinging the bats and struck early as Tobias Culpepper and Cullen Lovett both scored in the bottom of the first inning to give the Panthers a 2-0 lead.

Central Florida got on the scoreboard in the top of the fourth inning to tie the game at 2.

The Panthers answered in the bottom of the frame as Culpepper singled to center field with the bases loaded to plate Jorge Flores. With the bases still loaded, Patriots relief pitcher Bryan Garcia was called for a balk to score Hernando Sierra to increase the lead to

4-2.

"I thought we swung the bats pretty well," said Hitt. "We had an opportunity to play a lot better and we just didn't."

South Florida began to unravel in the top of the fifth with six errors helping Central Florida retake the lead.

The Patriots had runners on second and third when Ryan Crile roped a double to right field to plate David Rodriguez. Christian Khawam lofted a sacrifice fly to center field to score Dalton Mauldin.

Justin Ambrosino drilled a double to score Crile to make it 5-4.

With runners on second and third and two outs, Trevor Phillips hit a pop-up just behind first base. The ball was

PANTHERS, Page 2

Panthers

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dropped for an error, allowing both runners to score to give Central Florida a 7-4 lead.

"We have to play better on defense," Hitt said. "There is no excuse for the mistakes we made because it's the stuff we do everyday. That's a lack of approach on the players and it's my fault and I will take care of it."

Central Florida increased its lead in the top of the sixth inning as Ambrosino lined a bases-loaded single to right field to score Mauldin.

Brown followed with a sacrifice fly, and a hit batter plated another run for a 10-4 advantage.

South Florida put to-



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

College of Central Florida's Dalton Mauldin (6) hustles down the first-base-line as South Florida's Austin Bingham looks for the ball during Friday's game.

gether a rally in the bottom of the eighth inning as Culpepper rocketed a double to right-center field that scored Chris Kazen and Isaiah Dean to trim its deficit to 11-6.

Central Florida tacked

on a couple of insurance runs in the top of the ninth inning to seal the victory.

The Panthers are back on the diamond on Monday with a home game against Daytona State College.

50 hopefuls apply for SFSC vice president position

College to review applications
Friday; president has yet to
name search committee

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will have a large pool of candidates from which to select its next vice president for academic affairs and student services.

So far, 50 have applied for the position that oversees all academic activities and student services at the college. The college posted the opening Jan. 5. Human Resources Director Susan Hale said the college will start reviewing the applications Friday.

"We want to make sure they all meet the minimum requirements and then we will go from there and release them to the search committee to start reviewing. Hopefully, within a couple of weeks we will have a list of candidates to review even

Candidates

From Page 1

more in-depth," she said.

College president Thomas Leitzel is still in the process of formulating his search committee for the position, Hale said.

The requirements for the position include a doctorate from a college or university accredited by one of the regional accrediting bodies and a minimum of five years administrative experience in higher education in a senior leadership capacity (dean level or above).

Leana Revell will be retiring June 30 after serving 11 years in the position.

College Board of Trustees member Joe Wright said the hiring of a vice president follows a different process compared to the college president.

It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to hire the president, he said. Although the board has an overall responsibility to the college, the board will not be hiring Revell's successor.

He described it as an important position with a "wonderful history under Revell's leadership," adding, after the accreditation reviews of the college there have been no comments.

Board of Trustees Chairman Kenneth Lambert said the number of applicants shows the college is an environment where people want to come.

"They want to come to our communities; they want to come to the staff that we have; they want to come to the credentials that the schools have and they want to come to the leadership," he said.

The duties of the vice president of academic affairs includes advising the president on all academic and student matters, serving as the chief academic and student services officer of the college, providing academic leadership for college programs including transfer, vocational/technical, adult and community education, baccalaureate programs, workforce development and applied research activities.

The position also directs or coordinates the academic and student services areas of the college which include: instructional divisions, library, athletic programs, student services, academic support, the e-learning department and curriculum support.

The anticipated start date is July 1.

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Ex-AP star is walk-off hero for SFSC

By JAMES TAYLOR
NEWS-SUN CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – Many kids who play baseball dream about coming to the plate with two outs, their team down and being the last hope for victory.

With one mighty swing, the ball soars over the fence to end the game. The player blissfully rounds the bases with arms raised or pumping and arrives at home plate into the arms and congratulations of teammates.

It is a fantasy that few have the opportunity to live through. But for Alfred Brown, former Avon Park High School standout, it is one more item he can cross off the bucket list for his athletic career.

With two outs in the bottom of the ninth

inning, the South Florida State College Panthers found themselves down 1-0 when Brown came up to bat.

With one swing, he crushed the ball over the left field fence to lift the Panthers to a 2-1 win against the Daytona State College Falcons. The victory snapped a five-game slide for the Panthers, who improved to 7-9 on the season.

"Two-out, two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth walked us out of the ball game," South Florida State College head coach Rick Hitt said. "He got a breaking ball and did a good job with it, good swing."

"Their guy pitched extremely well all day," Hitt said. "We never really had anything

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James Taylor/News-Sun

HERO

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going against him. We had one or two innings where we had first and third or first and second with nobody out and we maneuvered our way out of the inning by not executing a few plays."

In a pitchers' duel, the Panther's Juan Terron and the Falcons' Phoenix Sanders threw nothing but donuts in a scoreless game through the first four innings.

South Florida had opportunities in the second and four innings, with runners in scoring position, but was unable to score.

Daytona broke the scoreless tie with a run in the top of the fifth. Two-out singles by Kyle Cunningham and Luke Johnston put runners on first and second. An error on a routine ground-ball by Austin Marrs to second base allowed

Cunningham to score for a 1-0 lead.

Terron would pitch a total of six innings, giving up just three hits and no earned runs, but left the game trailing 1-0.

In relief, Jose Munoz-Rivera pitched 2 1/3 innings, not allowing a run on two hits, and Max Bolling closed out the game for the Panthers, getting the final two outs in the top of the ninth.

Isaiah Dean led off the bottom of the ninth with a walk for the Panthers. The next two batters popped up and struck out as Sanders continued to dominate on the mound.

The stage was set then for Brown, who had struck out, was hit by a pitch and grounded out earlier in the game.

Sanders, who up to that point had scattered four hits over 8 2/3 innings, left a curveball hanging in his delivery to Brown. Brown swung at the mistake and blasted it

over the fence to give the Panthers the 2-1 win.

For Brown, it was not only his first college home run, but his first homerun ever.

"I never hit a homerun in high school," Brown said. "I am not going to hit 20 homeruns now. I'll leave that to the power guys. I am just trying to get on base and do what I do."

Hitt praised Brown for getting the big timely hit, but noted that the pitching staff and defense kept them in striking range.

"When that happens," Hitt said, "anybody can get a big hit for you and Alfred Brown was the guy today and that was nice to see."

The Panthers hope to carry their momentum into today's 4 p.m. home doubleheader against Dundalk Community College from Maryland. On Friday, SFSC hosts Daytona State College at 3 p.m.

South Florida State College's Alfred Brown shows the ball he hit over the left field fence to beat Daytona State College 2-1 on a two-run walk-off homer. It was Brown's first-ever career home run.

SFSC kicks off 50th anniversary celebration

By JIM TAYLOR
HIGHLANDS SUN
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK—A baseball double-header, music, food and bounce houses were all a part of the fun Saturday, Feb. 14 when South Florida State College Panthers kicked off its year-long 50th anniversary celebration at the college's sports complex.

At the center of it all were the back-to-back baseball games pitting the SFSC Panthers against a tough squad from Santa Fe College.

Most of the day's events were free. The only cost was for barbecue meals served from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. and catered by Cowpoke's Watering Hole. A donation of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under brought barbecue chicken, pulled pork, baked beans, coleslaw, bread, cookies and a drink. Meal tickets were sold in advance with only a scant few available Saturday.

SFSC trustee and alumna Tami Cullens and grandson Cullen Fells threw out the first pitch of the first game at noon. Or that was the plan, at least. Seems the toddler liked the idea of holding a baseball but had



A large, colorful sign welcomed the opening of a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of what would become South Florida State College.

little desire to throw it to the catcher or anyone else. It was only after persuasion from Grandma Cullens that the ball was retrieved for a "first pitch" to open the first game.

Lorrie Key, director of Corporate and Community Education, threw the first pitch of the second game. That ceremonial pitch went off without a hitch.

Key, who has been with the school since 1980, sponsored the college's coed cheerleading program from 1989 to 1996. It was discontinued a couple of years after a change in her job meant she couldn't devote time as a sponsor, but

she'd like to see it return as a competitive squad.

To celebrate that era of Panther pride, Key organized a cheerleader reunion to coincide with the kickoff event. But many of the 65 alumni she's contacted were busy with families or careers. Many live out of state, Key said, but have told her they took pride in SFSC. A few former cheerleaders were able to attend and were recognized during the day.

Visitors also has a chance to ask about the "old days," since alumnus Bob Terrell, one of the two

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Jim Taylor/Highlands Sun

Cullen Fells, with his grandmother Tami Cullens (kneeling beside the toddler) and South Florida State College Head Coach Rick Hitt (at left), prepares to throw the first pitch. The youngsters ended up changing his mind and decided to keep the ball.



Tami Cullens tries to coax her grandson, Cullen Fells, into giving up the ball so the first pitch can be thrown.



After a little persuasion, Tami Cullens was able to get the baseball from her grandson and throw the first pitch herself.



County staff, including County Commissioner Don Elwell (third from left) helped serve barbecue dinners to a hungry crowd at a 50th anniversary celebration at South Florida State College at Avon Park.



Jim Taylor/Highlands Sun

With clockwork precision, volunteers quickly filled dinner plates with mouth-watering barbecue from Cowpoke's Watering Hole.

SFSC

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first graduates in 1967, will be on hand Saturday. Anne Kahn was the other 1967 graduate. It was incorrectly reported last week that Kahn was deceased.

A charter was signed on July 7, 1965 to create South Florida Junior College which later transitioned to South Florida Community College and finally, last year, as South Florida State College. To commemorate those years of higher education, trustees and college officials agreed to hold events throughout this year to give residents, supporters and alumni plenty of opportunities to celebrate, he said.



The News-Sun is a proud sponsor of the year-long 50th anniversary celebration at South Florida State College. The News-Sun is a sister publication of the Highlands Sun.

"We'll be doing something every month," said Don Applequist, executive director of SFSC Foundation Inc.



Food, fun and fellowship were all a part of the excitement Saturday at the baseball fields at the Highlands campus of South Florida State College.



Bounce houses kept the little ones happy while a double-header of baseball action and good food kept the grown-ups satisfied Saturday when South Florida State College hosted a 50th anniversary celebration.

SFSC hosts College Goal on Saturday

PROVIDED By SUMMER MILLER
SFSC

South Florida State College is one of multiple host sites for College Goal Sunday, an annual state-wide program that provides information to college-bound students and their families applying for financial aid. SFSC will host the College Goal Sunday event from 8 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21 in Room 204 of the DeSoto Campus.

Nationwide, the event is officially named College Goal Sunday, but it may be held on a Saturday. The free event is open to all and is not limited to students interested in attending South Florida State College.

College Goal Sunday at SFSC will provide on-site expert help from financial aid staff to students and parents completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Florida Financial Aid Application. The FAFSA is the federal

application required to receive federal financial aid including the Federal Pell Grant, student loans, as well as some need-based state scholarships and grants.

"Completing the FAFSA is the first step in applying for federal, state, and some institutional aid," said Susie Johnson, director of financial aid at SFSC. "Filling out the FAFSA form can be a daunting task for many students and parents, but having one-on-one help simplifies the process."

Those interested in attending College Goal Sunday and getting assistance with completing the FAFSA should first obtain their federal student aid personal identification number online. This will allow you to electronically sign your FAFSA for faster processing on the day of the event. If you do not already have a pin, visit www.pin.ed.gov to obtain one. Participants should bring the PIN, as well as the following documents to the event: social security

number; driver's license; your most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money; bank statements and records of any investments, records of untaxed income; as well as alien registration cards for non-U.S. citizens. For more information on what documentation students will need as they complete the form, visit FAFSA.gov.

The FAFSA and FFAA are key to funding a college education and helping families to overcome financial barriers that otherwise prevent students from attending the institution they want. Studies show that a student is 50 percent more likely to attend college when they complete the FAFSA. The intent of this event is for students to plan ahead and know how they will pay for their education to insure a successful college career.

While walk-ins are welcome, registration is encouraged and can be completed at <http://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/>

financial-aid-scholarships/college-goal-sunday. Registration for SFSC's College Goal Sunday event at the Desoto Campus closes at 5 p.m. Feb. 19. Participants can also register by calling SFSC's DeSoto Campus at 863-993-1757. On-site check-in opens at 8 a.m. on the day of the event. For more information on SFSC's College Goal Sunday, call SFSC's Financial Aid Office at 863-784-7254 or visit <http://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/financial-aid-scholarships/college-goal-sunday>.

The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education. It is currently operated by USA Funds. For more information about Florida's College Goal events, visit <http://www.navigatingyourfinancialfuture.org/CGS!FLORIDA/Locations.aspx>.

SFSC volunteer receives award from Gov. Scott

Lea Ann Curry is 1 of 3
to receive Champion
of Service Award

Special to Highlands Today

TALLAHASSEE — Retired and Senior Volunteer Program volunteer Lea Ann Curry was presented the Champion of Service Award on Feb. 5 by Volunteer Florida and Gov. Rick Scott at a Florida Cabinet meeting.

Curry, along with Rachele Duroseau and K9s for Warriors, was one of three Floridians recognized for their "outstanding efforts in volunteerism and service," a news release states.

Curry was selected for being instrumental in leading Disaster Preparedness efforts for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, helping over 4,000 families build evacuation plans and kits.

She also holds the rank of lieutenant colonel as a volunteer with the Civil Air Patrol.

Curry is a registered nurse with over 49 years of emergency



COURTESY PHOTO

From left: Pam Bondi, attorney general; Lea Ann Curry, Champion of Service recipient; Gov. Rick Scott; Michael McLeod, commissioner; Kris Juve, RSVP coordinator at SFSC; Chester Spellman, CEO of Volunteer Florida; Adam Putnam, commissioner; and Jeff Atwater, state CFO.

response experience, involving disasters such as Hurricane Andrew, the Oklahoma City bombing, Hurricane Katrina, the 9/11 attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon, and Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne.

"It is an honor to recognize these great Floridians for their service to Florida's veterans, at-risk children and families, as

well as disaster preparedness and response," said Scott.

"Rarely do you meet someone of Lea Ann's caliber," said Kris Juve, RSVP coordinator at SFSC. "In the world of volunteerism, which is full of altruistic individuals, she is one of our RSVP shining stars."

For more information, visit www.volunteerflorida.org.

SFSC Presents 2 Concerts

Two different musical acts will be in concert this week as two different performance series take the stage at the University Center Auditorium in Avon Park.

The Anderson Quintet, virtuosos on clarinet and saxophone accompanied by drums, guitar and bass, performs during the South Florida State College Jazz Series today (Thursday) at 7:30 p.m., while soloist Terry Barber sings in the Kaleidoscope Series on Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

The Andersons will play selections from the Great American Songbook, Latin, Dixieland, and jazz standards. They've headlined at New York City's Jazz at Lincoln Center, the New Orleans Jazz Festival, Sarasota Jazz Festival, and

South Carolina's Jazz Corner.

Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs, explained, "SFSC brings top-notch musicians to Highlands County, and it's one of the few places in the area to hear fantastic jazz. I encourage you to come visit our 250-seat venue to enjoy traditional jazz by outstanding veteran and up-and-coming musicians."

Tickets for the Anderson Quintet start at \$23 and are available online.

With an extraordinarily broad vocal range and natural fluency in a wide range of musical styles, Barber is a performer in a class by himself.

Whether performing opera, jazz, or popular favorites, he breathes new life into everything he sings, and crafts what

the Los Angeles Times calls "performances of great vitality and verve."

A truly international artist, Barber has been a soloist for the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, and Moscow's Svetlanov Hall.

Tickets start at \$20.

In addition to online sales, people may call the Box Office at 863-784-7178, or visit it at 600 W. College Dr. in Avon Park. The Box Office is located in front of the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts and is open Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Tickets will also be available in the SFSC University Center Auditorium beginning one hour prior to show times.



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Anderson twins of the Anderson Quintet.



Soloist Terry Barber.

TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN



PHOTOS BY JIM KELLY

Danielle Ochoa, college success coach, spoke to the Wauchula Kiwanis Club on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at the Panda Restaurant about the Take Stock In Children program, sponsored by South Florida State College. Mentors are needed to help children in grades 7 to 12. There are 17 mentors now, and several more are needed. For more information call 863-245-4793. In photo from left are Kiwanis president Laura Marinelarena, Danielle Ochoa, and Noey Flores. She also spoke recently to the Wauchula Lions Club at their Thursday luncheon meeting at the Java Cafe.

Brain Bowl Team Heads To Nationals

The Brain Bowl team from South Florida State College has earned a spot in the National Academic Quiz Tournaments' Community College Championship Tournament, which will take place Feb. 27-28 in Atlanta, Ga.

Hardee County students on the team include Logan Boyd, Mike Cao and Garrett Edenfield.

SFSC's Brain Bowl team visited State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, on Jan. 23 to compete in the NAQT South Florida Community College Sectional Tournament. Among the field of 12 teams, SFSC's Brain Bowl team tied for fourth place, with seven wins and four losses.

Based upon this performance, SFSC's team is ranked seventh nationally by the NAQT and earned an invitation to the field of 24 teams to compete for the Community College National Championship.

"These are not easy questions," said Cheryl John, SFSC Brain Bowl co-advisor and professor of developmental mathematics. "It is not like 'Jeopardy.' These students practice several times a week with Dr. Brian Deery, SFSC Brain Bowl co-advisor and professor of psychology, going over questions for hours.

"They also have their own packets of questions that they are expected to 'own,' meaning that when those questions come up in a tournament in some manner, they have the responsibility of buzzing in before the other team to get the 10 points," she continued.

"It was not easy getting into a national slot. We are proud of the team's hard work."

"The team showed great spirit and never gave up," Deery agreed. "I'm proud of their success and I'm looking forward to nationals."

SFSC EMS program earns national accreditation

AVON PARK — South Florida State College now offers the only nationally accredited emergency medical services program in its service district of Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto counties.

The program received initial accreditation through Jan. 31, 2020 from the largest programmatic accreditor in the health sciences field, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs.

CAAHEP accreditation is a mark of distinction, certifying that an EMS program adheres to the highest national standards of education. Notification of SFSC's EMS program accreditation came to SFSC president on Jan. 16 in a letter from CAAHEP

President Dr. Thomas Skalko, congratulating SFSC on its achievement and commitment to continuous quality improvement in education.

SFSC's site visit report listed no deficiencies and 100 percent compliance with CAAHEP standards and minimum outcomes thresholds.

To be accredited, programs must meet a set of nationally established standards and undergo an intensive process that includes a peer review and on-site visitations conducted by the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions and CAAHEP's board of directors.

Those standards encompass not only faculty



Courtesy photo

SFSC emergency medical services program use a medical dummy to practice clearing an airway.

but also administration, resources, facilities, equipment, progress and competency, and clinical partnerships related to the accredited program.

To become a certified paramedic in Florida, students must attend an accredited program and pass the state of Florida Paramedic certification examination. Graduates are also eligible to take

the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician paramedic skills examination and computer-based test.

While awaiting the full accreditation, graduates of the SFSC's EMS program have been eligible to take these exams thanks to a Letter of Review from CAAHEP.

As a result, students who graduate from CAAHEP-accredited institutions are more readily accepted into other advanced degree EMS programs and have broader employment opportunities—nationally and internationally.

“Even though SFSC's paramedic program has provided quality education for more than 10 years, CAAHEP accreditation validates

the excellence of our program,” said Steve Ashworth, chair of SFSC's EMS and Fire Science programs. “National accreditation is the benchmark for all paramedic programs in the nation.”

SFSC offers a two-year generic Associate in Applied Science degree in Emergency Medical Services program, an Emergency Medical Technician Advanced Technical Diploma, and an 11-month paramedic college credit certificate. The curriculum provides students with classroom, lab, field, and clinical experiences in a variety of emergency care environments and facilities.

These EMS programs are among several Allied Health programs offered by SFSC that includes

dental hygiene, dental assisting, radiography, paramedic, and emergency medical technician.

CAAHEP is responsible for the specialized accreditation of EMS education programs, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, a diploma, or a recognized professional degree. In collaboration with its Committees on Accreditation, CAAHEP reviews and accredits more than 2,000 educational programs in 24 health science professions.

For more about CAAHEP, visit www.caahep.org. For more information on SFSC's EMS program, contact Steve Ashworth at 863-784-7272 or visit <http://www.southflorida.edu/academic/apsci/emergency/>.



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Jorge Flores (13) is tagged out on a steal of second base by Dundalk's Travis Hash during Wednesday's first game at Panther Field.

Panthers sweep Lions

South Florida State College beats Dundalk in doubleheader

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The Dundalk Lions of Maryland seemed to have brought the frigid weather with them to the Sunshine State.

South Florida State College welcomed Dundalk with a sweep of a doubleheader by scores of 15-3, 3-0 at a wind-swept Panther Field on Wednesday.

The wins improved South Florida's record to 8-9 on the season.

"Obviously we swung the bat very well," said South Florida coach Rick Hitt. "We took advantage of a lot of opportunities to score. We are building on Monday's game and trying to take it a week at a time."

We had some tough games last week and then Monday we did well. We had 14 hits and we were swinging pretty good. The challenge will be to get better from game to game."

South Florida came out swinging in the bottom of the second inning as Austin Bingham lined a double to left field, Max Boling singled and Chris Kazen walked to load the bases.

Isaiah Dean worked a walk to force in Bingham and Tobias Culpepper tripled to center field to plate Boling, Kazen and Dean to give the Panthers a 4-0 lead.

South Florida went back to work in the bottom of the third inning as Bingham singled to left field and Jordan Jackson was hit by a pitch.

PANTHERS, Page 2

McClure scampered home on a passed ball to give the Panthers a commanding 11-3 lead.

Bingham stepped to the plate and lined a double down the left-field line to score Flores, and Kazen singled to center field to score Bingham for a 13-3 advantage.

Bottom of the sixth, Culpepper walked, McClure singled, Flores ripped an RBI double to plate Culpepper, and Bingham capped the offensive explosion with an RBI single to cap off the 15-3 victory.

Boling pitched all seven innings to earn the win for the Panthers with five strikeouts.

South Florida is back on the diamond Saturday with a doubleheader against Lake Sumter State College.

First pitch is set for noon at Panther Field. There will be a barbecue lunch available, which is a fundraiser for South Florida.



South Florida's Jordan Jackson takes a cut during Wednesday's win over the Dundalk Lions at Panther Field.

Panthers

From Page 1

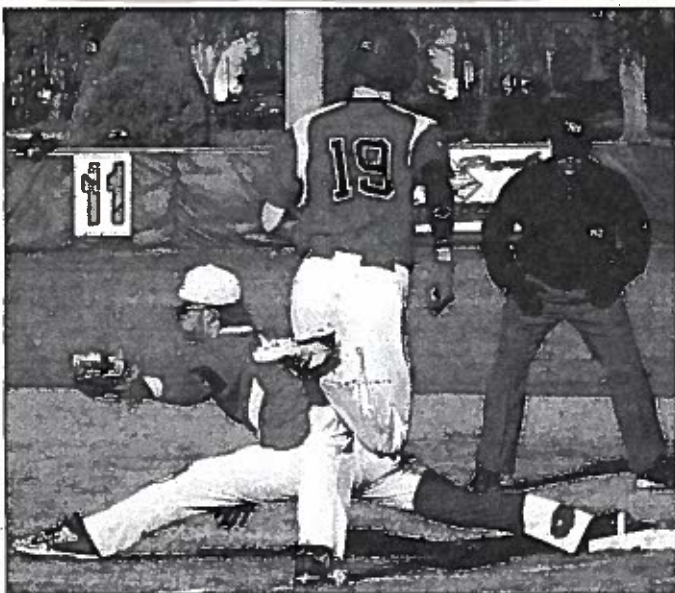
Dundalk brought in right-hander Jarel Solomon, but the Panthers didn't miss a beat as Boling put down a sacrifice bunt to move the runners into scoring position, and Kazen followed with a double to left field to score Bingham and Jordan and increase the lead to 6-0.

Dundalk trimmed its deficit in the top of the fourth inning to pull within 6-3.

South Florida answered in the bottom of the frame as Alfred Brown walked, moved to third base on a wild pick-off throw and scored on a Harrison McClure double.

Jorge Flores stroked a double down the right-field line to plate McClure, and the Lions switched pitchers again.

Right-hander Richard Nesler II didn't fare much better as Boling roped a bases-loaded single to left field



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida first baseman Jordan Jackson (14) stretches for the ball as Dundalk runner Brandon Plummer hustles down the line.

to score Flores and make it 9-3.

The Panthers continued to swing the bat as Brown singled and advanced to third

on a wild pitch and a stolen base, McClure was hit by a pitch and Flores walked.

The fleet-footed Brown scored on a wild pitch and

SFSC's past meets presidents

Two former presidents, current leader Leitzel address forum

BY PAUL CATALA
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — A bit of its past returned to the classroom, bringing living memories of campus yore to the front of the room and into the minds of a seemingly enthralled audience.

As part of South Florida State College's celebration of its 50th anniversary, the school administration invited three past college presidents to speak

Thursday at a "President's Forum" during a meeting of the Lifetime Learners Institute. In addition, in college Building T, current SFSC President Thomas Leitzel addressed the audience of about 25, of which about 15 were Institute members, and spoke about the state college's future.

The 9 a.m. to noon event was a rare opportunity for all of the college's living presidents to

PRESIDENTS, Page 8



PAUL CATALA/STAFF

Current South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel stands with past presidents Catherine Cornelius and Norman Stephens following a "President's Forum" at the college. The gathering of the college presidents was part of the program series for the Lifetime Learners Institute, which offers educational and social programs for those members 50 and older.

Presidents

From Page 1

get together and address a group: Catherine Cornelius, 1984 to 2002; Norman Stephens, 2002 to 2013; and Leitzel, who started in July 2013. SFSC's first president, William Stallard, now deceased, served as president of what was then Highlands-Hardee Junior College from 1965 to 1983.

According to SFSC archives, in 1960, work to open a junior college in Avon Park began, and by 1965 the college was founded as South Florida Junior College. A Highlands-Hardee Junior College Advisory Committee was appointed by the Florida State Board of Education and college began in temporary quarters

in Avon Park on Aug. 22, 1966, with a full-time faculty of 14, 164 full-time students and 119 part-time and evening students.

The forum was moderated by Donald Appelquist, executive director of the SFSC Foundation, which works to enhance community awareness and raise funds for the school.

The main point of the forum, said Lorrie Key, SFSC director of corporate and community education, was to recognize the contributions of each president and inform the public of the college's history while giving it insight to its future.

"This is pretty cool to have three presidents together. Our leaders drive us; they work to inspire. If we're not empowered ... we won't be able to do our

jobs," she told the audience.

From a podium in front of a computerized graphic presentation, Cornelius — affectionately known as "Dr. C" — recalled working on the college's budget in June 1984. She holds a doctorate in education from the University of Florida.

"It was 27 paper ledger sheets taped together; it was that rudimentary," she said and smiled. "But the academics of this place were outstanding. We were a vocational school with the college hanging off the ends of it."

Cornelius recounted getting land from the Sachsenmaier family to build a road around the campus and having a \$3.2 million budget to work with as the state contemplated consolidating col-

leges. She also remembered asking 10 random people in Avon Park if they knew where SFSC was located.

"Seven didn't know. I told the (college) board, 'We have a problem,'" she said.

That epiphany led to opening the library of SFSC — then known as South Florida Community College — to the public, starting a cultural series, getting staff involved in campus activities and finding means of securing financial aid. In 1984, that amounted to \$117,000; now, it's about \$4 million. The total budget went from \$3.2 million to \$32 million.

"I wanted people to feel like they've reached somewhere important when they drove here," she said. "We had some good staff.

We had people who were the best staff I've ever had the privilege to work with."

Stephens, who has a doctorate of education from the University of Florida, touted the fact SFSC only had two presidents before him, both of whom served 18-year tenures. He said that showed him the administration had its leaders' backs.

Stephens listed seven "highlights" of his tenure including offering the first bachelor's degree; adding, repurposing and renovating facilities; and the development of new programs.

"It tells you there's a supportive board of trustees. I spent 11 terrific years here with the best team of people anyone can hope

to work with," he said.

As for SFSC's future, Leitzel touted SFSC's number two graduate rate in the state; an increase in enrollment of 3 percent; new bachelor's degree programs; and the school's commitment to raise \$10 million in unrestricted endowment funds. He said the school is focusing on getting students ready for jobs "that don't yet exist."

"We must prepare our learners for those jobs so they're entering the job marketplace with the skills they'll need," he said.

In 2003, the SFSC Dental Education Center and Hardee and DeSoto campuses opened. On July 1, 2012, the college officially changed its name to South Florida State College.

Panthers ease past Conquistadors

South Florida sweeps Pasco-Hernando in softball

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida Panthers defeated the Pasco-Hernando State College Conquistadors in a doubleheader by scores of 6-4 and 13-5 on Thursday at Panther Field.

South Florida overcame bone-chilling weather to improve to 6-9 on the season.

"We didn't pitch well and we made a few errors," said South

Florida softball coach Carlos Falla. "We got behind on a majority of the hitters that we faced and we never pitched ahead. When you pitch from behind you give up runs and hits. Offensively we need to swing at better pitches. We have kids that think it is not a strike and it takes them out of their ball game for the rest of their bat. We need to mature. We are immature when it comes to stuff like that. We need to grow up."

South Florida got its bats warmed up in the first game in the bottom of the second inning as Lauren Harris stroked a single to center field to plate Kala

Thompson with Shantel Coughlin moving to third base.

Coughlin raced home on a double-steal to give the Panthers a 2-0 lead.

Pasco-Hernando answered in the top of the third inning with a pair of runs to tie the game at 2.

South Florida reclaimed the lead in the bottom of the frame as Paige Davis crushed a home run over the right-field fence to put the Panthers back on top by a score of 3-2.

Harris followed with a two-run double to center field to make it 5-2.

Pasco-Hernando rallied in the

PANTHERS, Page 2



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College players welcome Paige Davis at home plate after her home run during Thursday's win over Pasco-Hernando State College at Panther Field.



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida third baseman Kala Thompson (12) applies a tag on Pasco-Hernando's Montana Childs during Thursday's first game.

Panthers

From Page 1

top of the fifth inning as Noemi Chavez lined a triple to center field and Brooke Gonzalez lofted a sacrifice fly to center field to score Chavez and trim the Conquistadors' deficit to 5-3.

South Florida added an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth inning when Thompson singled and Rachel White came on as a pinch runner.

White took second on a wild pitch and raced home on a base hit by Olson to put the Panthers on top by a score of

6-3.

Pasco-Hernando tallied a run in the top of the seventh inning, but South Florida's Haley Pinterich was able to get the final out to seal the win for the Panthers.

South Florida's Jennifer Raulerson pitched five innings to earn the win, while Pinterich earned the save with two innings of work.

South Florida got the bats working early in the second game and cruised to the 13-5 victory.

The Panthers host the Santa Fe College Saints at 1 p.m. today.

SFSC to host 17th Annual Career Connection Expo

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK —

Whether you're just starting out, looking to re-enter the workforce, or wanting to switch careers, but you're not sure about an area of study, South Florida State College's 17th Annual Career Connection Expo will introduce participants to career options in a variety of academic areas.

The expo will be 8-11 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 26, in SFSC's Panther Gymnasium. The free event is open to anyone interested in learning about career opportunities. Over 75 guest exhibitors representing a wide array of occupations will be on hand to discuss educational and employment opportunities, the nature of their work, and opportunities for advancement in their fields.

These exhibitors will include professionals from the agriculture industry, construction and building trades, art-audiovisual, business and finance, health and medical science, human services, law and government, computers/information technology, transportation and logistics, marketing, manufacturing, U.S. military, and many other professions.

The event will give community members and prospective students the chance to discover what each career might offer in the future, learn about academic requirements and job options, hear from current and former students about their experiences in the program, and find out how to get started at SFSC and pay for school. Prizes will be given away in drawings.

Representatives

from SFSC's admissions, financial aid, advising and counseling, veteran's services, academic divisions and Career Development Center will be available to answer questions from prospective students and the public.

SFSC offers baccalaureate degrees, two-year associate degree programs, and numerous occupational training programs for people who wish to enhance their employability skills through shorter courses of study.

For more information or to access SFSC Career Development Center services, call 863-784-7410, visit the Career Development Center on the first floor of Building B, Room 111, Highlands Campus, or visit <http://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/career-development-center>.



Courtesy photo

(From left) Pam Bondi, attorney general; Lea Ann Curry, Champion of Service recipient; Governor Rick Scott; Dr. Michael McLeod, commissioner; Kris Juve, RSVP coordinator at SFSC; Chester Spellman, CEO Volunteer Florida; Adam Putnam, commissioner; and Jeff Atwater, CFO, State of Florida.

Curry honored for work with RSVP

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK —

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteer Lea Ann Curry was recently presented the Champion of Service Award by Volunteer Florida and Gov. Rick Scott at a Florida Cabinet meeting on Feb. 5. Curry, along with Rachelle Duroseau and K9s for Warriors, was one of three Floridians recognized for their outstanding efforts in volunteerism and service.

Curry was selected for being instrumental in leading Disaster Preparedness efforts for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, helping over 4,000 families build evacuation plans and kits. She also holds the rank of Lt. Col. as a volunteer with the Civil Air Patrol.

Curry is a registered nurse with over 49 years of emergency response experience, involving disasters such as Hurricane Andrew, the Oklahoma City Bombing, Hurricane Katrina, the 9/11 attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon, and

Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne.

The Champion of Service Award was established in 2013 by Volunteer Florida. Recipients must demonstrate excellence in volunteerism, community service, national service, civic, social, or corporate responsibility; be creative in the use of people, resources, and opportunities; have a role in advocating for volunteerism in their local community; make an outstanding contribution to community service efforts; and have an honorable commitment to volunteer service.

"It is an honor to recognize these great Floridians for their service to Florida's veterans, at-risk children and families, as well as disaster preparedness and response," said Scott.

"Volunteers have a significant and positive impact on our communities, and I am honored to present these outstanding individuals with the Champion of Service Award for their commitment to the well-being of all Floridians."

"Rarely do you meet someone of Lea Ann's

caliber," said Kris Juve, RSVP coordinator at SFSC.

"In the world of volunteerism, which is full of altruistic individuals, she is one of our RSVP shining stars."

"Rachelle Duroseau, Lea Ann Curry, and the team at K9s For Warriors have a willingness and motivation to serve and better their community," said Chester Spellman, CEO of Volunteer Florida. "Our volunteers help to make Florida the best state in the nation to live, work, and raise a family, and I applaud these great Floridians for their valued service."

Volunteer Florida, the Governor's Commission on Community Service, was established in 1994 by the Florida Legislature to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

For more information, visit www.volunteerflorida.org.

For more information on SFSC's RSVP, contact Kris Juve, RSVP coordinator, at 863- 784-7189 or Kristini.Juve@southflorida.edu.



James Taylor/News-Sun

South Florida State College second baseman Isaiah Dean makes the throw to first to complete the double play against the CCBC Dundalk Lions on Wednesday. The Panthers swept the doubleheader 15-3, 3-0.

Panthers crush Dundalk

By JAMES TAYLOR

NEWS-SUN CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – Just two days after beating Daytona State College on a walk-off home run, South Florida State College's baseball team put the bat on the ball again in blowing out the CCBC (Community College of Baltimore County) Dundalk Lions 15-3 and 3-0 on Wednesday in a home doubleheader.

With the sweep, the Panthers extended their win streak to three games and improved their record to 8-9.

The Maryland-based Lions are in Florida on an eight game, nine-day trip that included the doubleheader against the Panthers on Wednesday. Though the weather precipitation-wise was better than its home state -- Dundalk was projected to get about a foot of snow on Wednesday -- the chilly temperatures seemed to follow it down south.

But the chill in the air did not slow down the smoking hot bats of the Panthers. In the first

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PANTHERS

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game, SFSC peppered Dundalk pitchers for 14 hits; that combined with 10 walks, two hit batsmen and three errors, allowed the Panthers to score 15 runs.

"We are building off of Monday's game and trying to take it a week at a time," SFSC head coach Rick Hitt

said. "This being a new week after playing some tough games last week, losing a couple of those, we wanted to bounce back this week."

After a quiet first inning for both teams, SFSC's Jorge Flores led off the second inning with a single to right field, but was thrown out at second trying to stretch it into a double. It would be the first of three hits for Flores, who hit doubles in

the fourth and sixth innings.

Austin Bingham followed with a double that would be the first of five hits and later scored on a bases-loaded walk.

Tobias Culpepper capped off the scoring on a double to center-field in which the Lion centerfielder tripped, allowing three runs to cross the plate for a 4-0 Panthers lead after two.

SFSC's Chris Kazen doubled in the third to

drive in two runs for a 6-0 advantage.

After the Lions scored three in the top of the fourth, the Panthers answered in the bottom half of the inning with three runs on four hits.

Harrison McClure and Flores hit run-scoring doubles and Max Boling brought in the third run with a single to left field as the Panthers built a 9-3 lead heading into the fifth inning.

SFSC scored four more in the fifth and two in the sixth while Boling blanked the Lions the final three innings to earn the complete-game win. Boling gave up three runs on four hits, while striking out four and walking three over seven innings.

"Obviously, we swung the bat very well and took advantage of a lot of opportunities to score," Hitt said. "Max Boling pitched

well, throwing strikes all day."

The Panthers continued their stellar pitching in the second game, winning by shutout.

SFSC was scheduled to play Daytona State College on Friday, but results were not available by press time. The Panthers host Lake-Sumter State College in a doubleheader today at noon, and Indian River State College on Monday at 5 p.m.

SFSC Briefs

Annual Career Connection Expo scheduled

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's 17th annual Career Connection Expo will introduce participants to career options in a variety of academic areas 8-11 a.m. Thursday in Panther Gymnasium.

The free event is open to anyone.

Over 75 guest exhibitors representing a wide array of

occupations will be on hand to discuss educational and employment opportunities, the nature of their work and opportunities for advancement in their fields.

They include professionals from the agriculture industry, construction and building trades, art-audiovisual, business and finance, health and medical science, human services, law and government, computers/information technology,

transportation and logistics, marketing, manufacturing, U.S. military and many other professions.

Representatives from SFSC's admissions, financial aid, advising and counseling, veteran's services, academic divisions and Career Development Center will be available to answer questions from prospective students and the public.

Prizes will be given away in drawings.

Highlands Career Institute

Getting a jump-start

RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Marlesa Turner, an 11th-grader at the Highlands Career Institute, works on a math problem in class Monday. Turner is studying in the school's medical administrative specialist program.

Promotional video,
new program aim
to boost enrollment

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Students say they are getting a free jump-start on college and a career at the Highlands Career Institute at South Florida State College.

But, enrollment in the partnership program between the school district and the college has stagnated over the years from around 100 students to a current count of 84.

The institute's lead teacher, Karen Edsall, said she is looking for a boost in enrollment from a new promotional video and a new program being offered next school year.

With the help of the college, the high school students attending the institute produced a promotional video touting the benefits of the program where students earn a high school diploma while working toward vocational certification and college credit.

The 9½ minute video is being shown during recruiting visits to the three high schools.

Edsall said the discontinuation of the cosmetology program affected enrollment this year.

The institute started the 2013-14 school year with 102 students and started the 2014-15 school year with 92 students, she said, which wasn't that far off from the enrollment totals from recent years. But a few students moved and others went back to their high schools.

The loss of the five students in the cosmetology program made it look worse, Edsall said.

A cybersecurity occupational certificate program will be offered next

CAREER, Page 7



Michelle Rivera, a senior at the Highlands Career Institute, works during her history class on Monday. Rivera is studying in the school's automotive technology program.



Connor Moran works on an assignment in his history class at the Highlands Career Institute on Monday. Students at the school take regular high school classes half of the day and study a vocation the other half.

Career

From Page 1

school year for the first time at the institute, which should increase enrollment, she said.

The institute's students have been providing guided field trips for ninth-graders, Edsall said. "Our current students give them a tour of the programs that we have and provide them a tour of our little miniature high school campus and answer any questions that they have. So we are hoping that generates some interest, too."

The program started as the Career Academy with 60 students in the 2008-09 school year.

The name changed last year in part to avoid confusion with the school district's alternative school — The Academy at Youth Care Lane.

Senior Selena Badillo worked on her American government homework assignment Monday, which involved elections and campaigns.

She is in the medical assistant program and plans to continue her studies in the college's nursing program to become either

a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse.

"It's a better environment than the high school where you can be more focused on your work and get better grades, easily," Badillo said.

Senior Michelle Rivera is in the auto technology program, which she notes is a more traditional field for men than women.

As a woman, she believes it is important to be strong and independent, which builds character.

"Do not look at somebody else's work, but focus on you being able to do it," Rivera said.

Senior Connor Moran is studying computer networking and plans to continue his studies next year, in digital forensics, at the college.

After being home schooled, Moran came to the Career Institute last year as a junior. He likes it because it has fewer students than the high school, which allows for a better relationship with the teachers.

After relocating from Palm Beach County, social studies teacher Rebecca Mathews started teaching at the Career Institute in November.

While outlining the requirements for a Supreme Court case presentation project, she told her students, "this is your project; it should be from your mind, your soul."

Mathews said they call "this place teacher heaven."

The students have laptop computers in every room, and the class sizes are fairly small so teachers have a lot of one-on-one time with the students, she said. It is a comfortable atmosphere for the students who know each other.

There is no fighting, tension or bullying, she said.

"The resources here are unbelievable — the smartboards, the books, the computers," Mathews said. "Even in Palm Beach, which is a fairly wealthy county, we just didn't have it."

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HIGHLANDS TODAY

AN EDITION OF
THE TAMPA TRIBUNE
and The Tampa Times

**Celebrating our
remembered land**

Sebring library will host author's son, Rick Smith. The show will combine humor and storytelling with videos, family photos, music and more.
Library Lines, Page 9



HIGHLANDSTODAY.COM

INFORMING TODAY, SHAPING TOMORROW

WEDNESDAY, February 25, 2015



COURTESY PHOTO

The Jive Aces will perform 7:30 p.m. March 5 at the Theatre of Performing Arts at South Florida State College.

What shows do you want SFSC to bring?

College's cultural programs department wants to hear from those who have never attended a show there

BY PALLAVI AGARWAL
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College's cultural arts program wants to hear from you, especially if you have not been to a show at the college.

As part of a series of focus groups the college's Director of Cultural Pro-

grams Cindy Garren is holding, residents between the ages of 21 to 65 who have never attended a show at SFSC, are asked to provide their input on what they'd like to see and why they haven't attended a performance.

The group, which will be comprised of about 12 people, will meet from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday in Room 108 at the University Center Auditorium. Those interested in participating have to contact the college, which will extend an invitation; attendees also get a complimentary ticket to an upcoming show.

Garren, who has been at SFSC for less than a year, wanted to get a feel

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Shows

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of what people liked and wanted to watch.

"It's a way for me to meet our patrons and find out what type of art groups they support," she said.

As part of that conversation, the college also wants to connect with folks who have never been to an SFSC show, from mothers with elementary school-age children to those who go to shows in Orlando or Tampa but not here.

"We wanted to hear from those who don't go to the performances, why they don't come. Are you not coming because you don't know how to get tickets? Are you not coming because you don't know we exist?" she said.

Contact the college by calling the box office at (863) 784-7178 or email culturalperformances@southflorida.edu. Box of-

fice hours are from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

By the end of the week, Garren should have completed meeting with five focus groups and might schedule one more in March.

While this is the first time they have held focus groups, the college routinely surveys patrons.

For instance, if performers have been well received and patrons want them back, the college invites them again, as was the case with the three matinee series performers the college is going to bring back, Garren said.

♦ ♦ ♦

Performances are held at both the University Center Auditorium and the much bigger Theatre for the Performing Arts.

The artist series and the matinee series are hosted at the Theatre for Performing Arts.

In the fall of 1984, the college began its artist series, which focuses on or-

chestras, musicals, pops, dance and comedy. Some internationally acclaimed entertainers the artist series has hosted are Victor Borge, Roger Williams, the Smothers Brothers, Bob Newhart, Marie Osmond and others.

The matinee series, which began in the winter of 1980 under a different name, comprises 10 performances that are held every Tuesday afternoon.

"The Matinee Series features performances by outstanding local and regional talent as well as well-known names such as JoAnn Castle, The Diamonds, and John Davidson," the college said.

Events held in the University Center Auditorium include the jazz series and the kaleidoscope series, which features storytellers,

musicians, scholars and other "thought-provoking presentations."

Garren said some of the focus group participants she has talked with think the shows are well-organized and like the facility. One described it as the "Carnegie Hall of Highlands County."

Some of the suggestions she has received include bringing in dinner theater shows, a music festival, more classical music shows, operas, and Broadway and Shakespeare plays.

While some ideas didn't surprise her, others did, such as the one for more classical music.

"Those are our lowest attended shows," she said.

Whatever input the college gets from the focus group meetings will go

into a survey for season ticket holders.

Someone has suggested the shows start at 7 p.m. As part of a questionnaire, people might be asked what time they want — 7 p.m., 7:30 p.m. or 8 p.m., Garren explained.

♦ ♦ ♦

Glenn Little, the college's vice president of administrative services, said the college's cultural programs are an auxiliary enterprise and are required by state law to be self-sustaining.

While ticket sales provide some of the revenue, sponsorships are crucial, he said. Acts from the artist series can cost an average of \$30,000 to \$40,000 and some have exceeded \$70,000, he said.

While some shows, such

as the Golden Boys and the New Orleans Night-hawks, have been sold out, others have not, Garren said.

Packing the auditorium with more patrons will help relieve the pressure on the sponsors and allow the college to use the sponsorship money to get better-name shows, Little said.

"We want more people to get engaged," he said.

The college's goal is to make sure the cultural programs at least break even, and any profits are plowed back into say, buying equipment, or in the operations of the college, he added.

So far the college has managed to do that, he said, although during the economic downturn they "barely" broke even.

Panthers claw back

By JAMES TAYLOR
NEWS-SUN CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Panthers slowly, but surely, are clawing back to relevance.

SFCS's baseball team broke the .500 barrier last Saturday with a pair of wins against the Lake-Sumter Lakehawks. With the 6-1 and 3-2 victories, the Panthers improved to 10-9 for the season and increased their win streak to five games.

SFSC went on to lose to Indian River State College 6-4 on Monday, but the Panthers remain red-hot heading into the

second full month of the 2015 season.

The Panthers won the first game against Lake-Sumter behind the pitching of Tyler Knowles, who did not surrender a base hit until the top of the seventh inning.

"Tyler Knowles pitched outstanding," South Florida State College head coach Rick Hitt said. "He had all his stuff working, pitched ahead of the count all day and really forced contact with the other team.

"That's how you win, it is really simple on how to be successful," Hitt said. "You force contact, you mix

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James Taylor/News-Sun

South Florida State College pitcher Tyler Knowles threw a no-hitter into the seventh inning. He ended up giving up one hit and one run in a 6-1 opening-game win over Lake-Sumter State College in a doubleheader last Saturday.

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pitches and do it confidently and he did that."

The Panther also struck early with four runs in the first inning. Jackson Jordan drove in Jorge Flores for the first run with a single. With the bases loaded, Hernando Sierra smacked a two-out double to clear the bases

and give the Panthers a 4-0 lead.

"Big swing by Hernando Sierra," Hitt said. "I thought that was a big at-bat in the game. You don't want to get out of the first inning with the bases loaded like that without getting some runs out of it and his double to bring in three runs was huge."

SFSC added two runs in the bottom of the fifth off

singles by Jackson and Jason Plyn for a 6-0 lead. Heading into the seventh and final inning, Knowles' no-hitter remained intact until Taylor Westbrook hit a double down the left field line. Knowles finished the game.

The Panthers benefited from more outstanding pitching in the second game as they held off the Lakehawks for a one-run win.

Brad Landers pitched five

innings, giving up two runs on six hits, but left the game with the score tied and was not part of the decision.

The Panther took a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the third on a bases-loaded walk and a sacrifice fly by Jackson.

The Lakehawks rallied for two runs in the fifth and sixth innings to tie the score.

But then the Panthers won it in the bottom of the

seventh on an error that allowed Tobias Culpepper to score and end the game. Austin Bingham pitched the final two innings for the Panthers, holding the Lakehawks scoreless on one hit.

SFSC travels to Southeastern College in Lakeland today at 6 p.m. The Panthers then host Southeastern Friday at 6 p.m.

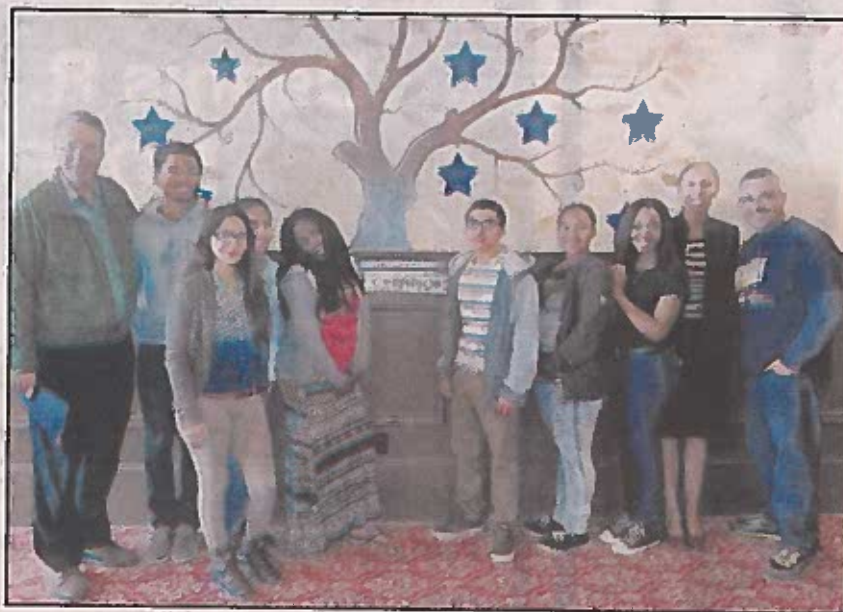
SFSC's PYP students contribute to Drug Free Highlands strategic plan

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

SEBRING — For the third year, students from South Florida State College's Panther Youth Partners (PYP) program participated in the Drug Free Highlands (DFH) retreat on Feb. 13 at the Champions for Children Theater.

High school and middle school students from Highlands County schools are invited each year to attend the retreat where the students are educated on the consequences of drug abuse and are involved with providing input on ways to improve prevention efforts in our community.

SFSC's PYP students took part in DFH planning process for the strategic plan that addresses the concerns of the community in regards to drug abuse each year. Drug Free Highlands mission is to organize, inform, educate, and unite the community in its efforts to reduce substance abuse among youth.



Courtesy photo

(From left) Kevin J. Roberts, chief executive officer for Champion for Children; Daniel Contreras; Marcela Badillo; Selena Badillo; Edeline Bebe; Honorio Marquez; Nyara Whitlock; Tikira Battle; Aisha Alayande, director for Drug Free Highlands; and Eddie Cuencas, coordinator for SFSC's Panther Youth Partners program.

The Drug Free Highlands retreat was a team-building work day spent educating coalition members about the substance abuse response

guide (SARG) process. The first part of the day was spent conducting logic

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SFSC

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models which help identify problems in the county and why they exist, the members then analyzed how our environment may support the behavior, and then the coalition located data to support the findings.

The second part of the day was spent on environmental strategies and DFH's action plan. This time was dedicated to looking at already existing resources or finding new resources that change social norms, deter risky behaviors, and support healthy choices for all. The group then revised and updated the action plan to reflect the coalition goals. Within the action plan, the strategies, responsible parties, and timeline were all documented. The action plan is then used as a guideline to eradicate substance abuse in our

community and enhance the lives of our residents and beyond.

"Students involvement and creativity in addressing the issues our community face day to day in regards to drug abuse is the best and most effective way to reach our youth," said Eddie Cuencas, PYP coordinator at SFSC. "The goal of the coalition and its partners is to

work together as a team for the community and the future of our youth."

SFSC's PYP program is a federally funded workforce program that offers services to students ages 16-21 that help them gain skills to obtain employment. The services include academic support; financial aid and financial literacy advising;

career development assistance; personal, academic and career counseling; job shadowing; and employability skills workshops. The program also works in conjunction with agencies such as the Health Department, Drug-Free Highlands,

the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Alliance, Ridge Area Arc and the Heartland Workforce to provide students instruction on topics such as health awareness, drug and pregnancy prevention, table etiquette, job interviewing

and resume skills, as well as volunteer and job shadowing opportunities.

For more information on SFSC's PYP, visit www.southflorida.edu/pantheryouth or call Cuencas at 863-784-7161 or Eddie. Cuencas@southflorida.edu.

South Florida State College Baseball



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Alfred Brown slides into third as Indian River's Kutter Crawford reaches for the throw during Monday's game.



South Florida's Jordan Jackson takes a cut during Tuesday's game.

Pioneers rally past Panthers

Indian River overcomes early deficit to take victory

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON
Special to Highlands Today

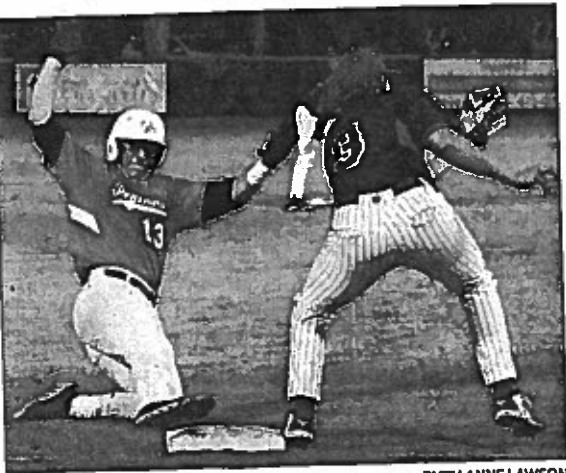
AVON PARK — The Indian River State College Pioneers rallied past the South Florida State College Panthers on Monday night by a score of 6-4. South Florida had grabbed an early 3-1 advantage but was unable to hang on for the win.

"We made some routine mistakes in the middle of the game," South Florida coach Rick Hitt said. "On a couple of plays we gave them some freebies. We

walked too many guys from the mound tonight and then our hitters extended the strike zone way too often."

The Panthers took an early lead. In the bottom of the first, South Florida had Tobias Culpepper on third and Isaiah Dean on first when Jorge Flores hit a fly into the right-center field gap driving home Culpepper for an RBI and Dean advanced to third, putting the Panthers in the lead 1-0. Harrison McClure hit a sacrifice fly to center field bringing

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RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Jorge Flores slides safely into third as Indian River's Kutter Crawford waits for the throw during Tuesday's game.

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home Dean and increasing the Panthers' lead to 2-0.

The Pioneers cut the deficit in half in the top of the second. Tyler Leonard hit a ground ball into left field for a single. Leonard then stole second and Panthers catcher, Flores, threw down to second in an attempt to get Leonard out but overthrew, and the ball rolled into center field. Leonard took advantage and made it home, making the score 2-1.

The Panthers extended their lead in the bottom of the second. Jason Plyn was hit by the pitch and took first base. Chris Kazen hit a sacrifice bunt to advance Plyn to second. Culpepper stepped to the plate and hammered the ball to center field for a standup triple driving Plyn home for an RBI and increasing the Panthers' lead to 3-1.

In the top of the fourth the Pioneers cut the deficit. Barry Buchowski hit a line drive to the center field fence. South Florida's Culpepper was looking at the ball when he slammed into the fence and fell to the ground.

Buchowski got a triple and the game was stopped while Culpepper was attended to. Seddon Henry hit a fly ball into right field for a single, driving home Buchowski to make it a 3-2 game.

The Pioneers took control

in the top of the fifth, scoring three runs putting them in the lead 5-3, and added another run in the top of sixth.

The Panthers tried to rally in the bottom of the seventh. Dean drew a walk, and Flores hit a groundball past the second baseman and into right field for a single. Jordan Jackson singled Dean home to make it 6-4, but the Panthers couldn't get any closer.

"We got a little overaggressive and nonintelligent on the base paths a couple of time and ran ourselves out of a situation," Hitt said. "We can play aggressive but we can't play nonintelligent at the same time; there is a difference. That was the difference in the game for me."

Hitt said it was a game of missed opportunities for the Panthers.

"I'm sure it was a good game to watch," he said. "We left a small village on base easily tonight. We couldn't seem to get the right guy to the plate, in the right situation in the game, and sometimes that is baseball."

"We will bounce back. We were a little sloppy on defense in a couple of spots tonight, we walked players from the mound, and not getting timely hits. Those things will come back to haunt you."

The Panthers are now 10-11 on the season and return to Panther Field on Friday when they host the Southeastern University Fire at 6 p.m.

DRIVE TO JIVE



South Florida State College's Artist Series will present "Swingtime" on Thursday, March 5, at 7:30 p.m., in the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts, just a short drive away in Avon Park. Swingtime will feature The Jive Aces and present songs by Louis Prima, Cab Calloway, Benny Goodman, Bobby Darin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Ella Fitzgerald. The Jive Aces' repertoire stretches from tunes of the swing era to the glitz of the Rat Pack with rhythm and blues, swing, and jazz. Tickets for Swingtime start at \$28 and are available online at sfscarts.org, by calling the Box Office at (863) 784-7178, or visiting the Box Office at 600 W. College Dr. in Avon Park.

COURTESY PHOTO

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!



COURTESY PHOTO

South Florida State College officially kicked off its 50th Anniversary Celebration on Feb. 14 with a Panther Baseball doubleheader, a reunion of SFSC cheerleaders, a catered barbecue, and children's events and activities. Since its establishment in 1965, South Florida State College has responded to this area's educational and cultural needs, becoming an integral part of the communities it serves. SFSC will present other 50th anniversary events throughout 2015. All members of the community are invited to participate in all events.

Star Parties reveal universe mysteries

AVON PARK — South Florida State College physics and astronomy professor Erik Christensen invites the public to a star. Telescopes will be provided. Deep sky objects, which are stars and galaxies outside of the solar system, will be viewed Thursday, Feb. 26 from 8 to 9.

Star parties are highly weather dependent and will be cancelled in the event of heavy cloud cover or rainy weather. Check the current status at <http://sfcc-astronomy.wikifoundry.com>. Attendees are welcome to bring blankets and lawn chairs and should dress accordingly.

The star parties meet near Ridge Area Arc, located along College Drive, one mile east of SFSC, or just off Memorial Drive. Parking is on Baltimore Street. For more information, contact Christensen at 784-7363, or email christee@online.southflorida.edu.

SFSC cosmetology clinic now open

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Cosmetology clinic is open for public appointments now at the Highlands Campus. The clinic offers hair design, haircuts, perms, coloring, facials, makeup, eyebrow arching, and manicures performed by SFSC Cosmetology students at low cost. Clinic hours are by appointment, Tuesday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To schedule an appointment, call 863-453-4949.

"Clients time and time again say how much they like the salon environment," said Timothy Johnson, cosmetology program manager and

instructor, "and the fact that the students take their time to complete the services they render and that the instructor is always near if needed."

The Cosmetology program at SFSC is a 10 ½ month course that focuses on careers in hair design, nail services, and skin care. For more information on the program, call Johnson at 863-784-7143.

SFSC, Links2Success host financial aid workshop

By **ASHLEY COONE**
LINKS2SUCCESS

On Feb. 21, South Florida State College and Links to Success teamed up to host "College Goal Sunday." The event is staged annually during a weekend in February. The workshop provided free information and assistance to students who are applying for financial aid for college.

Volunteers helped students complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), a federal application used to determine a student's eligibility for federal Pell Grants, student loans, and some need-based state scholarships and grants.

Dozens of prospective college students attended and completed the FAFSA as the first step in determining how they will pay for their college education. Studies show that students who complete the FAFSA are 50 percent more likely to attend college.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ASHLEY COONE

Several students came to the workshop sponsored by Links2Success and South Florida State College for help in applying for financial aid for education.

Students who attended were entered to win a \$250 college scholarship.

"The FAFSA can be quite difficult for students and their parents to maneuver through. We were ecstatic to work with SFSC to provide this much needed service to DeSoto County students," said Ashley Coone, co-founder of Links to Success.

College Goal Sunday was open to all college-bound students, whether or not they plan to attend SFSC. Students who weren't able to attend the workshop can still receive assistance with the FAFSA by calling SFSC at 863-993-1757. (Also see the article on page 2 of this issue of *The Arcadian* for more information.)



Ashley Coone, left, helps a student navigate the complex information on financial aid for college during a session held Saturday by Links2Success.

SFSC Theatre seeking focus group participants

AVON PARK — South Florida State College Theatre for the Performing Arts is searching for participants for a focus group. Needed are community members, ages 21 to 65, who have never attended a performance at SFSC.

The session will take place Thursday, Feb. 26 from 7 to 8:30 p.m., in Room 108, SFSC University Center, Highlands Campus, Avon Park. Participants will receive a complimentary ticket to an upcoming performance.

Participants can reserve a spot by emailing sfsctheatre@gmail.com, by calling the Box Office at 863-784-7178, or visiting the Box Office at 600 W. College Drive Avon Park. The Box Office is located in front of the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts and is open Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Take Time For A 'Girls Night' Out On Sunday

"Girls Night: The Musical" has earned rave reviews from entertainment critics nationwide since it began touring the country after its sensational Off-Broadway debut.

Leave the husband and kids at home, get your girlfriends together, and come see this hilarious musical this Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Theatre for the Performing Arts on the Avon Park campus of South Florida State College.

"Girls Night" is packed with

hits like "Lady Marmalade," "It's Raining Men," "I Will Survive" and "We Are Family."

This touching and hilarious tell-it-like-it-is musical takes audiences on a journey into the lives of a group of female friends as they relive their past, celebrate their present, and look to the future on a wild and hilarious night out.

Audience members can't help but laugh, cry, and even sing and dance in the aisles to hit songs of the 1980s and '90s.

Tickets for "Girls Night: The Musical" start at \$29 and are available online at sfscarts.org, by calling the Box Office at (863) 784-7178, or by visiting the Box Office at 600 W. College Dr., Avon Park, between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. weekdays.

Groups of 15 or more get 15 percent off plus a free ticket. This show contains adult material and is not recommended for younger audiences.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Off-Broadway hit "Girls Night: The Musical" will make a tour stop at the Theatre for the Performing Arts in nearby Avon Park. Tickets are still available.