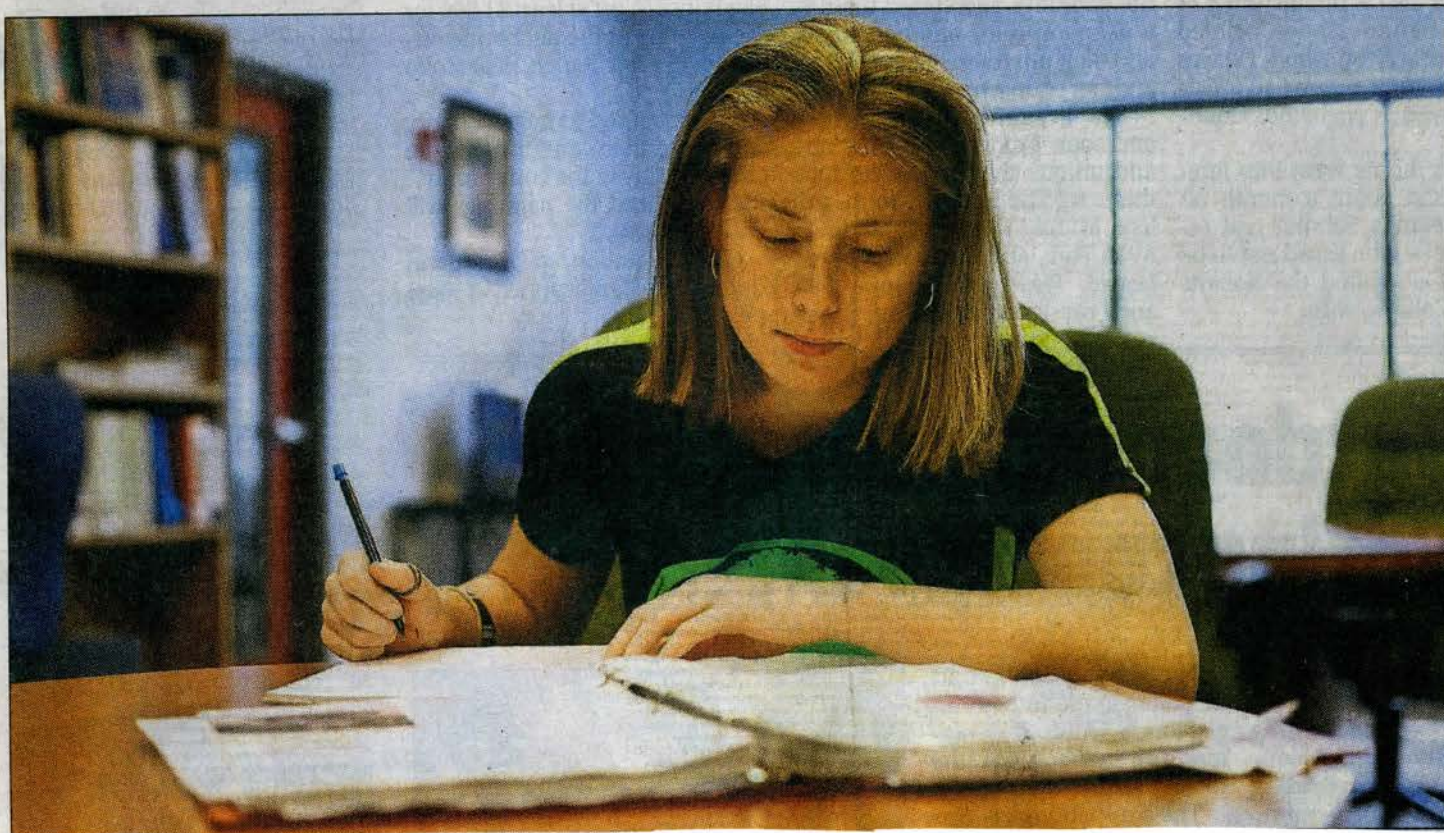


RIGHT DIRECTION

More students taking advantage of career 'shadowing' opportunities in SFSC co-op program



BY PAUL CATALA

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — For some, it's a way to gain more appreciation and insight for what may possibly be their future careers. For others, it's a fairly quick way to find out if the career direction they're heading in just might need a detour.

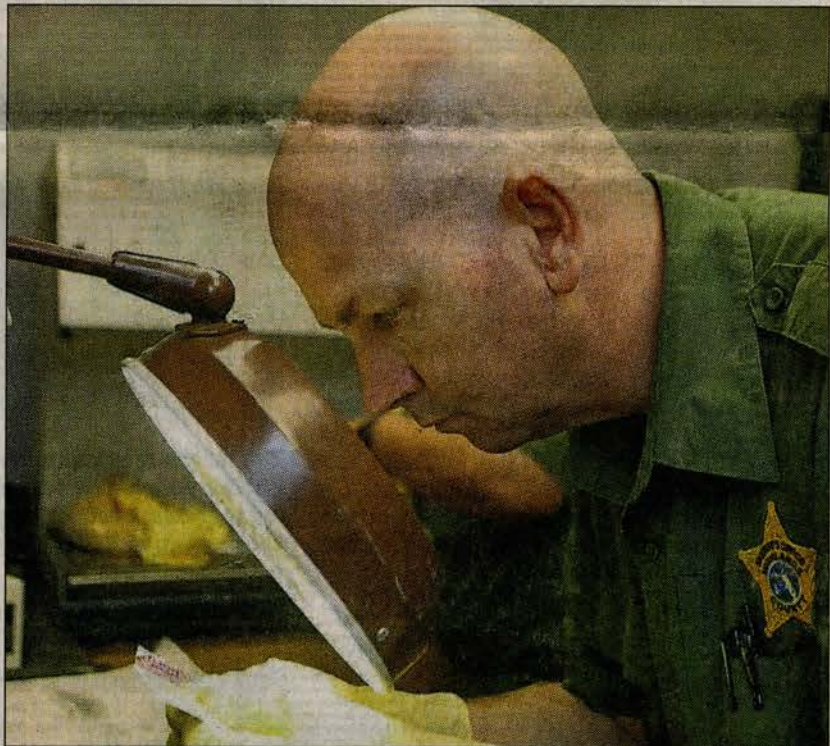
In either case, over the years, students at South Florida State College have been involved in the school's cooperative education program; the insight and hands-on lessons they've learned have remained invaluable throughout their work careers.

For SFSC's recent spring, summer and fall semesters, Colleen Rafatti, the college's director of the Career Development Center, said a total of about 50 students participated in the program — the highest number in the past five years.

Rafatti, who has directed the career center since 2010 and been on SFSC staff since 2006, said during the 2008-2010 recession — when there wasn't much money to spare for students to take an elective co-op semester — the number of students participating fell off, down to about 10 or 11.

Since 2011, Rafatti said the number of students participating has slowly crept up, giving more students the chance to "shadow" professionals and get a first-hand look at what a

CO-OP, Page 8



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

Top: Allison Mann works on classwork in the career center at South Florida State College on Wednesday morning. Mann is finishing up her associate degree at the college and plans to transfer to the University of Central Florida in the fall. Above: Sgt. Jeff Fennell examines a fingerprint in the Highlands County Sheriff's Office crime lab on Feb. 26, 2014. South Florida State College student Allie Mann shadowed Fennell for a co-operative learning program.

Co-op

From Page 1

job entails.

And she said she's happy to see more students getting involved in what she called a way to see if a career is "a right fit for them."

Participating students earn between one and three credit hours during each co-op semester.

"Even if at the end of the co-op, they find the field is not for them, that's still a positive because students won't end up wasting time and money pursuing training in a field that's not for them," said Rafatti at her desk in the Career Development Center office.



When students visit the career center to register for the co-op, they are given a folder containing an overview of the program, requirements, an objective contract, a time log and a training agreement. The program overview in the folder states, "In a Co-Op college, credit is granted not merely for working/spending time in the workplace, but instead, for what you document that you have learned as a result of that work experience."

In addition to student requirements, co-op employers have documentation responsibilities, including signing a training agreement, providing verification of hours a student worked, providing feedback at the end of the term and verifying if the student accomplished his or her learning objectives. Those goals are developed through



Allison Mann completed a co-operative learning program with a Highlands County Sheriff's Office crime scene detective while studying at South Florida State College. Mann plans to transfer to the University of Central Florida to study forensics.

RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

input from a faculty adviser, the employer and Rafatti.

Students' time logs are required to be kept and submitted at the end of the co-op experience, which helps program participants, like Allison Mann, learn structure and organizational skills.

Mann, 19, a sophomore from Sebring, is studying criminal justice and hopes to get into crime scene field work.

She did a co-op with the

Highlands County Sheriff's Office and since October and through the spring semester, shadowed sheriff's Sgt. Jeff Fennell, a detective with the crime scene unit.

She said she put in 135 hours in the semester, working Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Fennell, and the experience she gained was a way to see if she had the "stomach" for the job before pursuing a criminal justice degree at the University of

Central Florida.

She spent time at crime scenes helping with laboratory work, like fingerprinting, and even witnessed an autopsy performed in Winter Haven.

"It was definitely motivating. This was a great experience for me to see what's involved. I was nervous about the job duties, but this experience put me at ease," said Mann, a 2013 Sebring High School graduate. "It was a good way to see if I liked it be-

fore I spent hours in the wrong field."



Fennell said the SFSC co-op gives students he's worked with a chance to see the law enforcement profession in its actuality, not what's shown on TV. He said Mann was the first SFSC student-intern to work exclusively for his department.

"This showed her different crime scenes can be solved by taking different routes," he said. "We were able to give her a flavor of crime-scene work because she wants to get into that field."

Another aspect of the co-op shadowing experience is the career interview assignment, which requires students to interview someone who has actual experience with a particular job.

The goal is to give the student insight and in-depth information that can't be taken from standard career resource references, which is one of the co-op's main goals, said Dr. Brian Deery, SFSC psychology professor. He said he had an invaluable intern experience at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, and he gave Mann the 2015 "Independent Studies Award" for her outstanding studies and co-op work.

"I really feel strongly about that (co-op experience); it gives students hands-on experiences they wouldn't otherwise get," he said.

For information, call (863) 784-7410 or email rafattic@southflorida.edu.

pcatala@highlandstoday.com
(863) 386-5855

SFSC Nursing Program Graduates 12

Twelve graduates of South Florida State College's nursing program were honored in a traditional pinning ceremony recently in the University Center Auditorium on the Highlands Campus.

The students are graduates of the college's one-year Transition-Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) to Registered Nursing (RN) program.

Graduating were Cheryl Baker, Danielle Boyle, Charmaine Cruz, Janna English, Leticia Garcia, Lisa Garduno, Jacquelyn Graziani, Chelsea Longabaugh, Dominica Lozano, Grace Race, Michelle Taylor and Ana Torres.

Guest speaker Adam Kless, chief nursing executive at Highlands Regional Medical Center, addressed the students: "I want to impress upon you tonight the sacredness of the relationships you are entrusted with as healer and caregiver. You greet new life as it enters the world, and you have the privilege of saying the final farewell as life passes on.

"In a while, you will light a lamp to symbolize your oath and duty as a nurse. The light of that lamp is for the lives you are entrusted with, for the people that will depend on you, for those that need your comfort and care."

During the ceremony, gradu-

ates accepted their nursing pins from a person of their choice, in most cases a relative or friend whom they credited with being supportive throughout their lives.

The nursing graduates awarded Gloria "GiGi" Reschke, an emergency room RN at Florida Hospital in Wauchula, with the 2015 Golden Duck. The award is presented to a group or individual who contributes to the learning experience of the students and has gone above and beyond to educate and accommodate members of the class.

The award's significance is based on the D.U.C.K. motto: Developing, Understanding, Compassion and Knowledge.

The practice of pinning new graduates has been a nursing school tradition in the United States since 1916. The pin is worn prominently on a nurse's uniform throughout her or his career. One story of the ceremony's beginning goes back to 1883, when Queen Victoria awarded Florence Nightingale the Royal Red Cross on St. George's Day for her service to the sick and injured during the Crimean War.

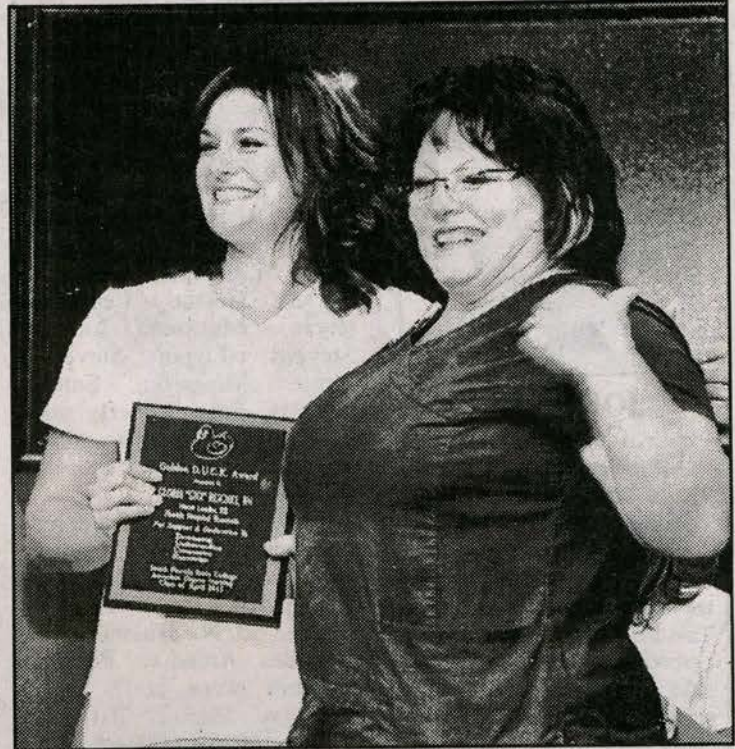
In turn, Nightingale later extended the honor to her outstanding nursing students by presenting them with a medal of excellence.

Graduates of the nursing pro-

gram become registered nurses by passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses exam. SFSC nursing graduates are usually fully employed in nursing within a few months of graduation.

SFSC offers Associate Degree Nursing options for students interested in becoming

registered nurses: a two-year Generic-RN program and a one-year Transition-LPN to RN program. The college also offers a one-year practical nursing occupational certificate program. For program entry requirements, consult the SFSC College Catalog online at southflorida.edu.



Gigi Reschke (on right), a registered nurse in the emergency room at Florida Hospital Wauchula, is presented with the 2015 Golden Duck Award.



Graduating nurses light a lamp to symbolize their oath and duty as a nurse.

COURTESY PHOTOS

SSS/TRiO recognizes first-generation college grads

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Student Support Services/TRiO program recently recognized 43 soon-to-be graduates who have demonstrated academic excellence at a special ceremony on May 1.

SSS/TRiO students recognized were Adan Badillo, Julie Badillo, Michael Baker, Stephanie Belmares, Julio Berrones, Austin Bingham, Amanda Carnahan, Michael Carpenter, Alexander Chung, Jeisa Colon, Martin Damaso, Carlos DeLoera, Kesso Diallo, Denise Fernandez, Carolina Flores, Juniett Gonzalez, Chantell Harris, Liyo Hecto, Eduardo Hernandez, Damiah Hostetler, Chelsey Hughes, Michelle Hunter, Liliana Iniguez, April Jones, Joseph Juarez, Joni Kalinowski, Juliette Perez, Erika Pascual, Yunet Puentes, Tania Salinas, Olivia Sanchez, Ingri Suarez, Lucero Suarez, Brandi Thomas, Cynthia Valencia, Brandon Vargas, Craig Williams, Cheyenne Wise, Christopher Kilpatrick, Gabriel Lambert, Araceli Marquez, Cody Torres, and Jose Torres.

"No matter what you're going through, the SSS/TRiO staff have always made us a priority and are focused on our success," said Craig Williams, SSS/TRiO student speaker. "I know that each and every one of you have had your own struggles and have accomplished so much in order to walk across that stage. I believe that our struggles are what makes accomplishments such as this worth it. May you all strive to be the best that you can be and let nothing stop you on your way."

"The staff at SSS/TRiO is committed to student retention, graduation, and transfer," said Colin Nicholas, director of SFSC's SSS/TRiO program. "We are fully aware that we do not work with our students in



Courtesy photo

South Florida State College's Student Support Services (SSS)/TRiO program recently recognized 43 first-generation graduates who have demonstrated academic excellence.

isolation, so we continue to express our sincere gratitude to everyone at the college for their abiding commitment to our students' success to graduation and beyond."

"Our students' success is a product of their hard work and sacrifice as well as a reflection of the support that they receive from their relatives, friends, and the entire college community," Nicholas said. "We all share in the celebration of their achievement and wish them continued success as they continue to pursue their academic and career goals."

SSS/TRiO is a federally

funded program that helps first-generation, low income, and students with disabilities with demonstrated academic need to overcome class, social, and cultural barriers to higher education. The goal of the program is to increase retention, graduation, and transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions of eligible students. The program is a student-focused center of excellence in academic advising, career exploration, disability services, mentoring, supplemental instruction, student development, and tutoring.

High schoolers told 'Free is for me' at SFSC

By **CARISSA MARINE**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — South Florida State College is currently holding orientation meetings for high school students interested in enrolling in SFSC's Dual Enrollment programs. High school students can begin taking free college courses during their junior and senior years, taking advantage of advanced academics and accelerated paths to obtaining college degrees. Students can enroll in state-approved courses that count toward both their high school and college coursework. Classes are offered at the high school and college campuses, as well as online, with full or part time enrollment options.

With the passing of new state legislation, SFSC has now added a Collegiate High School Program to their dual enrollment options. The first Collegiate High School Program at SFSC will begin this Fall.

SFSC's Dual Enrollment Director, Dr. Kimberly Batty-Herbert, encouraged students attending the first Collegiate High School Program orientation on Wednesday, April 29, to think "Free is for me." High school students from Polk and Highlands County, and several parents, attended the orientation.

The Collegiate High School Program differs from other dual enrollment options as it is a full time program. Dr. Batty-Herbert cautioned that the Collegiate Program is not for everyone.

Courses are not modified for younger students; the rigor and maturity level are not reduced. Collegiate high school students must maintain at least a 2.0 to remain in the program. The coursework is comparable to a full time job, requiring a lot of time and effort. Students remain connected to their high school through participating in activities such as sports,



Carissa Marine/Highlands Sun

High school students Andrea Cordoba, Meghan Griffin, Kiara Lopez, and Tashida Buchanan learn SFSC online course systems, and gain student access during the first Collegiate High School Program orientation class at SFSC.

prom, and graduation.

However, absences for high school activities such as sports games are not excused.

The Collegiate High School Program offers new opportunities for students with free college courses and an emphasis on building career pathways. Program applications must be submitted by June 15, and the next Collegiate High School Program registration and orientation class is on May 13.

"You have a Top-10 college in your back yard," stated Dr. Batty-Herbert, "take advantage of it and think 'free is for me!'"

Contact Dr. Kimberly Batty-Herbert at battyhek@southflorida.edu, or Courtney Green at greenc@southflorida.edu for program-specific information.

SFSC Commencement 2015

Defining moment



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Student speaker Juliana Jackson told her fellow graduates that their potential for success is great and failure should serve as motivation to succeed.

Old and new honored during college's 50th year

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

From its first graduate to its latest graduates on its 50th anniversary, South Florida State College celebrated the accomplishments of its students and dedication of its faculty and staff on Thursday at the 2015 commencement.

SFSC President Thomas Leitzel noted that the college was established by the Florida Legislature in 1965.

Leitzel announced at the college's first graduate, Robert Terrell, was present. Terrell, who was seated on stage with faculty and college administration, received an ovation from the large crowd in the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Leitzel noted the members of the college staff who will be retiring this year including Vice President of Educational and Student Services Leana Revell and Dean of Resource Development Donald Appelquist, who has been with the college for 45 of its 50 years.

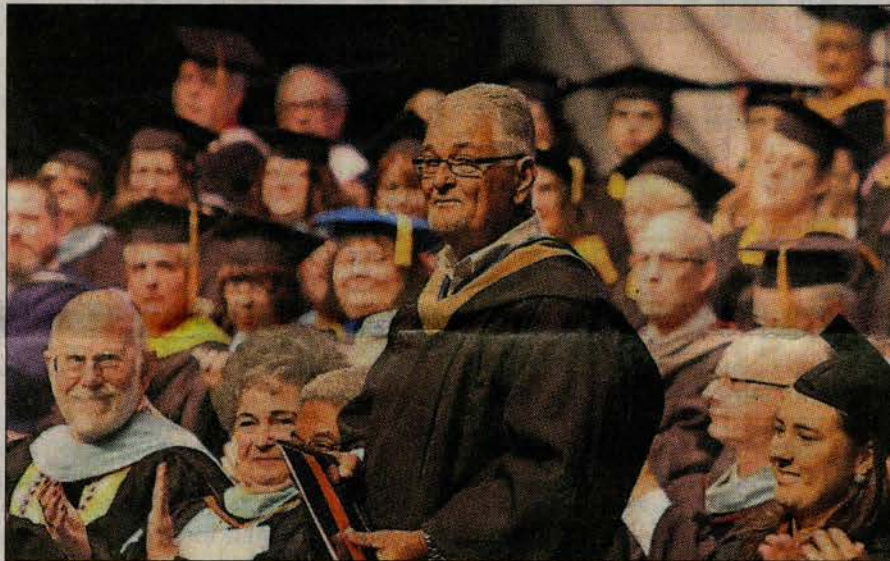
Revell told the graduates to strive for excellence each day and to give back to their community.

"Be a lifelong learner and listen to the earth that nurtures us," she said.

Board of Trustees Chairman Ken Lambert said defining moments come rarely in life. "Today is a distinct defining moment for each and everyone of you."

Be reluctant to set your goals based on what others have set for you, he said, encouraging the graduates to set their own course in life.

"Congratulations on this major accomplishment," Lambert said. "We



Robert Terrell was recognized as one of the first graduates of the college.



South Florida State College graduates preparing to enter the Theatre for the Performing Arts on Thursday for SFSC Commencement 2015.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College Commencement 2015 was held Thursday in the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Commencement

From Page 1

are here to celebrate your success.”

Student speaker Juliana Jackson, who earned an associate degree with honors, told her fellow graduates, “Our families, friends and teachers have helped us to get this far, and now it’s time to continue to steer ourselves in the direction of our careers.

“No matter what direction we choose, we’re going to encounter failure and struggles along the way. My hope for this group, graduates and their supporters alike, is that we do not let the fear of failure keep us from taking risks or following our dreams.”

Jackson is a dual-enrollment student and will also graduate this month from Avon Park High School.

After the commencement exercises, Christopher Robbins,

who graduated with an associate degree, said he will go to the University of Central Florida, where he will study physical therapy.

Robbins graduated from Avon Park High in 2007.

Stella Maldonado, an honors program graduate, earned an associate degree.

“I am going to FIU (Florida International University) to study dietetics and nutrition,” she said. “I plan on working with patients in hospitals and specializing in cancer patients.”

Some 441 students met the SFSC graduation requirements. Of these, 283 received their associate degrees, 132 received vocational certificates or college credit certificates, four were graduates of the Adult Education program and 22 received a Bachelor of Applied Science in supervision and management degree from SFSC.

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South Florida State College honors 43 soon-to-be grads

TRiO students demonstrate academic excellence

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Student Support Services/TRiO program recently recognized 43 soon-to-be graduates who have demonstrated "academic excellence."

SSS/TRiO students recognized at a ceremony May 1 are Adan Badillo, Julie Badillo, Michael Baker, Stephanie Belmares, Julio Berrones, Austin Bingham, Amanda Carnahan, Michael Carpenter, Alexander Chung, Jeisa Colon, Martin Damaso, Carlos DeLoera, Kesso Di-

allo, Denise Fernandez, Carolina Flores, Juniett Gonzalez, Chantell Harris, Liyo Hecto, Eduardo Hernandez, Damiah Hostetler, Chelsey Hughes, Michelle Hunter, Liliana Iniguez, April Jones, Joseph Juarez, Joni Kalinowski, Juliette Perez, Erika Pascual, Yunet Puentes, Tania Salinas, Olivia Sanchez, Ingri Suarez, Lucero Suarez, Brandi Thomas, Cynthia Valencia, Brandon Vargas, Craig Williams, Cheyenne Wise, Christopher Kilpatrick, Gabriel Lambert, Araceli Marquez, Cody Torres and Jose Torres.

"No matter what you're going through, the SSS/TRiO staff have always made us a priority and are focused on our success," said Craig Williams, SSS/TRiO stu-

dent speaker. "I know that each and every one of you have had your own struggles and have accomplished so much in order to walk across that stage. I believe that our struggles are what makes our accomplishments such as this worth it. May you all strive to be the best that you can be and let nothing stop you on your way."

SSS/TRiO is a federally funded program that helps first-generation low-income youths and people with disabilities overcome social and cultural barriers in pursuit of higher education.

The program's goal is to increase retention, graduation and transfer rates of students from two-year institutions to four-year schools.



Courtesy photo

Front row (left to right): Tonimarie Hutchinson, Bonita Gonzales, keynote speaker Rhoda Kublickis, Cayla Dixon, and Samantha Moore. Back Row: Dallas Carlisle, Emily Pickles, Heidi Mortimer, Joshua Quellette, and Jamela McFadden.

SFSC Dental Hygiene grads recognized at pinning ceremony

AVON PARK — Nine graduates of South Florida State College's Dental Hygiene program were honored in a traditional pinning ceremony May 6 in the SFSC University Center Auditorium on the Highlands Campus.

The graduates were Dallas Carlisle, Caylah Dixon, Bonita Gonzalez, Tonimarie Hutchinson, Jamela McFadden, Samantha Moore, Heidi Mortimer, Joshua Ouellette, and Emily

Pickles.

Keynote speaker was Rhoda Kublickis, president of the Florida Dental Hygiene Association (FDHA), who complimented the students on their commitment to the field of dentistry and expressed how proud she is of the graduates.

"Job prospects continue to grow for the future of dental hygienists," Kublickis said. "The Center for Disease Control had added oral health as number eight to the

list of leading health indicators along with mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and obesity. Think of the opportunities you have as dental hygienists outside the clinical setting such as prevention specialist or oral health coaches in diabetic or pregnancy centers. Each one of you can make a difference, do the right thing."

"You may be graduating today, but know and understand your

GRADS

FROM PAGE 6

journey of lifelong learning has just begun," Kublickis said. "My parents continue to say that education and knowledge is the key to opening doors. Join me in diversifying dental hygiene by letting your passion, heart, and intuition guide you."

During the ceremony, graduates accepted their dental assisting pins from Dr. Deborah Milliken, chair of SFSC's Dental Education program. Darlene Saccuzzo, dental education professor, then led the dental assisting oath.

"The SFSC dental hygiene program requires five semesters of rigorous study and practice to earn the knowledge and skills it takes to be a great dental hygienist," Dr. Milliken said.

"These students are perfect examples of the determination it takes to achieve that goal. We expect that any dentist who employs one of these graduating hygienists will get a jewel in their offices."

"Because so many people have periodontal (gum) disease, dental hygiene is a pivotal profession. Dental hygiene is no longer considered just about how pretty teeth look when they are clean, it is about overall health, longevity, and quality of life. The dental hygienist's job is to treat and educate patients about healthcare — for the mouth and the body."

SFSC offers a two-year Associate in Science degree program in dental hygiene. Upon completing SFSC's Dental Hygiene program successfully, graduates become dental hygienists by

passing the National Dental Hygiene Board Examination and the Florida State Clinical Licensure Examination. SFSC also offers an 11-month occupational certificate program in dental assisting.

Upon completing SFSC's Dental Assisting program successfully, graduates can become Certified Dental Assistants (CDAs) by passing the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) exam and qualify for Expanded Functions Dental Assisting Certification as well as Orthodontic Assistant Certification.

For program entry requirements, visit <http://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/degrees-programs/academics/dental-education>. For more information, contact the SFSC Advising and Counseling Center at 863-784-7131.

SFSC nursing students begin professional careers

AVON PARK — A dozen graduates of South Florida State College's nursing program were honored in a traditional pinning ceremony recently in the SFSC University Center Auditorium on the Highlands Campus.

The students graduated the college's one-year Transition-Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) to Registered Nursing (RN) program.

The graduates are Cheryl Baker, Danielle Boyle, Charmaine Cruz, Janna English, Leticia Garcia, Lisa Garduno, Jacquelyn Graziani, Chelsea Longabaugh, Dominica Lozano, Grace Race, Michelle Taylor, and Ana Torres.

"I want to impress upon you, tonight, the sacredness of the relationships you are entrusted with as healer and caregiver," speaker Adam Kless, chief nursing executive at Highlands Regional Medical Center, told the students. "You greet new life as it enters the world, and you have the privilege of saying the final farewell as life passes on. In a while, you will light a lamp to symbolize your oath and duty as a nurse. The light

of that lamp is for the lives you are entrusted with, for the people that will depend on you, for those that need your comfort and care."

Dr. Michele Heston, director of SFSC's nursing program, spoke of change. "We thank [the students] for having the courage to change, to accept more responsibility in their chosen discipline," she said. "We also challenge them that as they face new career challenges, they always carry with them that courage to be positive agents for change, exhibiting competence and compassion in every nursing encounter."

During the ceremony, graduates accepted their nursing pins from a person of their choice, in most cases a relative or friend whom they credited with being supportive throughout their lives. To honor Dr. Leana Revell, the students presented her with a special nursing pin of her own. Dr. Revell is not only the SFSC vice president for academic affairs and student services, but she is an RN as well. She retires from SFSC next month.

The nursing graduates awarded Gloria

"GiGi" Reschke, an emergency room RN at Florida Hospital in Wauchula, with the 2015 Golden Duck. The award is presented to a group or individual who contributes to the learning experience of the students and has gone above and beyond to educate and accommodate members of the class. The award's significance is based on the D.U.C.K. motto: Developing, Understanding, Compassion, and Knowledge.

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the Royal Red Cross on St. George's Day for her service to the sick and injured during the Crimean War. In turn, Nightingale later extended the honor to her outstanding nursing students by presenting them with a medal of excellence.

Graduates of the

nursing program become registered nurses by passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX) exam.

Positions that some of SFSC's nursing graduates hold are director of a wound care center, charge nurse at a medical-surgical diabetic center, director of nursing in a 130-bed skilled nursing facility, operating room nurse, charge nurse for a progressive

care unit, hospice nurse, school nurse, clinical supervisor in home health care, and emergency room nurse manager.

SFSC offers Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) options for students interested in becoming registered nurses: a two-year Generic-RN program and a one-year Transition-LPN to RN program. The college also offers a one-year practical nursing occupational certificate program.

Thursday, May 14, 2015

SFSC offers Basic Law Enforcement training course

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy is accepting applications for its next Basic Law Enforcement course. This is the course required to become a state of Florida certified law enforcement officer.

Basic Law Enforcement classes will be held Monday through Friday, plus some Saturdays and Sundays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., beginning Monday, Aug. 17.

By successfully completing 770 contact hours of training, students earn occupational certificates and are eligible to take the state certification examination for correctional officers.

50th anniversary Commencement at SFSC

AVON PARK — South Florida State College hosted its 50th anniversary Commencement on Thursday, May 7, in the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus.

SFSC faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, and families of over 208 new graduates came together to celebrate the students' accomplishments and encourage them in their future endeavors.

"Defining moments come rarely in life, and yet inevitably, we all know of just such an event," said Ken Lambert, chair of SFSC's district board of trustees. "With every success that you achieve, there are people to thank along the way, for no one succeeds without a team of support. Reflect on your team, and do not fail to thank them for believing in you, motivating you, and encouraging you at every step of the journey."

The student commencement speaker, Juliana Jackson, opened her presentation with a light-hearted selection from Dr. Seuss, *Oh, The Places You'll Go*: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."

"The last time we heard this quote from Dr. Seuss was probably in kindergarten, but it still rings as true today as it did then," Jackson said. "Over the last few years, we've been using our brains to acquire an education that will help us succeed in life. Our families, friends, and teachers have helped us to get this far, and now it's time to continue to steer ourselves in the direction of our careers."

"Although we look to the future, we should recognize that reaching commencement is a great accomplishment and something to be very proud of," Jackson said. "Education is the gateway to opportunity and success, but is also not easily earned. For the hard work that we have put in to acquire this degree, we can know that even though we aren't finished yet, success has been reached. As many of us continue on to universities and careers, I am certain that this hard work and success will continue."

Jackson, a resident of Avon Park, graduates with an Associate in Arts degree with honors and also graduates from Avon Park High School in May 2015. While a student at SFSC, Jackson was an active member of the SFSC student organizations Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), Campus Christian Club, and Rotaract, while participating in the Avon Park High



A pair of 2015 South Florida State College graduates with the school's Panther mascot.

School student government association, Future Business Leaders of America, and cheerleading.

After graduation, she plans to attend Florida Southern College in Lakeland to double major in mathematics and secondary education. She aspires to work toward a master's degree in education so she can return to Highlands County to teach mathematics in high school.

Earlier in the commencement program, graduates received congratulations and words of wisdom from Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president: "Commencement is the highest and most revered of all ceremonies we have in American higher education," Leitzel said. "Its purpose is to honor student achievement and to recognize hard work and sacrifice. This is a humble and respectful event that embraces tradition from decades past. 2015 is a meaningful year for SFSC. Fifty years ago, in 1965, SFSC was chartered. The roots of this amazing institution began in downtown Avon Park.

"Tonight, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we are pleased to honor the first graduate from South Florida Junior College from the class of 1967, Mr. Robert Terrell."

Dr. Charlotte Pressler, director of SFSC's Honors Program, recognized two Honors Program graduates for academic excellence, outstanding leadership, and strong citizenship. They were Tyler Brice Akins, Gary Scott Gergen, Isabela Lucia Gonzalez, Christina Marquerite Gourley, Katelynne Louise Leman, Stella Maldonado Enchautegui, Araceli Marquez Diaz, Christopher Neil Robbins, and Victoria Michelle Warren.

Faculty selected to serve as marshals were Davida Austin, Thomas Bush, Kathleen Cappo, Dr. Ellen Cover, Robert Hampton, Dr. Theresa James, Melanie Jackson, Claire Miller, and Lena Phelps. Steven Ashworth, SFSC Faculty Council president, was chief marshal and macebearer. Members of the SFSC District Board of Trustees in attendance were chair Ken Lambert, vice chair Kris Rider, Timothy Backer, Tami Cullens, Derren Bryan, Dr. Louis Kirschner, Lana Puckorius, and Joe Wright.

Distinguished guests were Robert Terrell, SFSC alumnus; John Scherlacher, president, SFSC Alumni Association; Christy Crews, chair, SFSC Foundation Board of Directors; Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius, SFSC president emerita; and Dr. Norman L. Stephens Jr., SFSC president emeritus.



Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president, (at right) congratulates a member of the Class of 2015.



Courtesy photos

Juliana Jackson was the student commencement speaker when South Florida State College celebrated its 50th anniversary graduation this week.



A procession of graduates make their way to the Theatre for the Performing Arts for commencement ceremonies at South Florida State College.

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"The last time we heard this quote from Dr. Seuss was probably in kindergarten, but it still rings as true today as it did then," Jackson said. "Over the last few years, we've been using our brains to acquire an education that will help us succeed in life. Our families, friends, and teachers have helped us to get this far, and now it's time to continue to steer ourselves in the direction of our careers."

"Although we look to the future, we should recognize that reaching commencement is a great accomplishment and something to be very proud of," Jackson said. "Education is the gateway to opportunity and success, but is also not easily earned. For the hard work that we have put in to acquire this degree, we can know that even though we aren't finished yet, success has been reached. As many of us continue on to universities and careers, I am certain that this hard work and success will continue."

Jackson, a resident of Avon Park, graduates with an Associate in Arts degree with honors and also graduates from Avon Park High School in May 2015. While a student at SFSC, Jackson was an active member of the SFSC student organizations Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), Campus Christian Club, and Rotaract, while participating in the Avon Park High



A pair of 2015 South Florida State College graduates with the school's Panther mascot.

School student government association, Future Business Leaders of America, and cheerleading.

After graduation, she plans to attend Florida Southern College in Lakeland to double major in mathematics and secondary education. She aspires to work toward a master's degree in education so she can return to Highlands County to teach mathematics in high school.

Earlier in the commencement program, graduates received congratulations and words of wisdom from Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president: "Commencement is the highest and most revered of all ceremonies we have in American higher education," Leitzel said. "Its purpose is to honor student achievement and to recognize hard work and sacrifice. This is a humble and respectful event that embraces tradition from decades past. 2015 is a meaningful year for SFSC. Fifty years ago, in 1965, SFSC was chartered. The roots of this amazing institution began in downtown Avon Park.

"Tonight, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we are pleased to honor the first graduate from South Florida Junior College from the class of 1967, Mr. Robert Terrell."

Dr. Charlotte Pressler, director of SFSC's Honors Program, recognized two Honors Program graduates for academic excellence, outstanding leadership, and strong citizenship. They were Tyler Brice Akins, Gary Scott Gergen, Isabela Lucia Gonzalez, Christina Marquerite Gourley, Katelynne Louise Leman, Stella Maldonado Enchautegui, Araceli Marquez Diaz, Christopher Neil Robbins, and Victoria Michelle Warren.

Faculty selected to serve as marshals were Davida Austin, Thomas Bush, Kathleen Cappo, Dr. Ellen Cover, Robert Hampton, Dr. Theresa James, Melanie Jackson, Claire Miller, and Lena Phelps. Steven Ashworth, SFSC Faculty Council president, was chief marshal and macebearer. Members of the SFSC District Board of Trustees in attendance were chair Ken Lambert, vice chair Kris Rider, Timothy Backer, Tami Cullens, Derren Bryan, Dr. Louis Kirschner, Lana Puckorius, and Joe Wright.

Distinguished guests were Robert Terrell, SFSC alumnus; John Scherlacher, president, SFSC Alumni Association; Christy Crews, chair, SFSC Foundation Board of Directors; Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius, SFSC president emerita; and Dr. Norman L. Stephens Jr., SFSC president emeritus.



Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president, (at right) congratulates a member of the Class of 2015.



Courtesy photos

Juliana Jackson was the student commencement speaker when South Florida State College celebrated its 50th anniversary graduation this week.



A procession of graduates make their way to the Theatre for the Performing Arts for commencement ceremonies at South Florida State College.

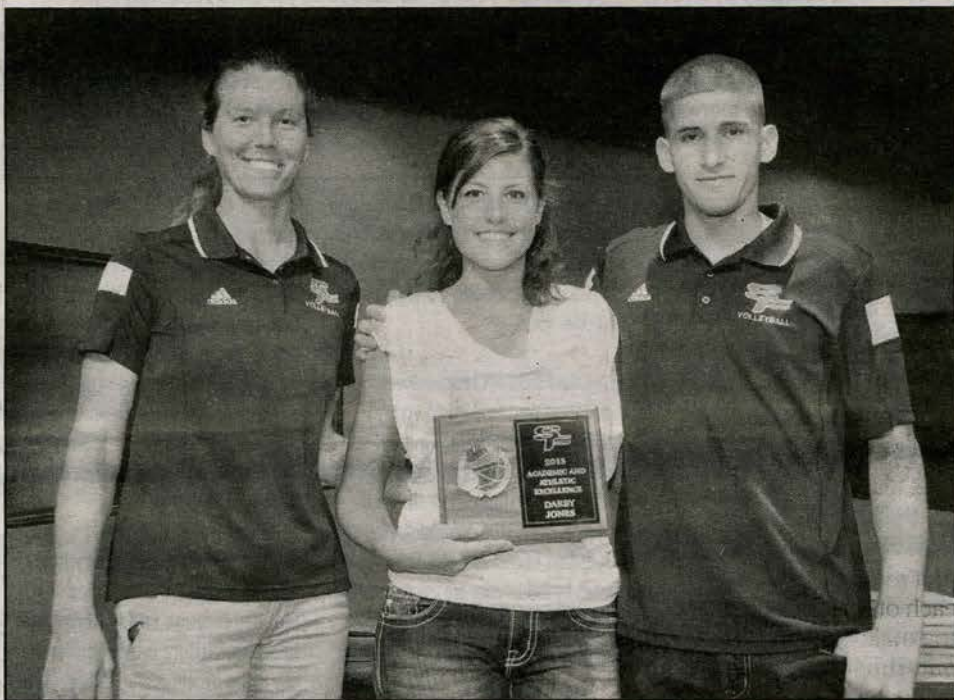


Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach; Dr. Leana Revvella, Panther Athletics Distinguished Service Award recipient; and Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president.

SFSC honors student athletes



Dr. Leana Revell, vice president for academic support and students services at SFSC, and Chris Kazen, Male Scholastic Athlete of the Year.



Kim Crawford, SFSC head volleyball coach; Darby Jones, Female Scholastic Athlete of the Year and Academic and Athletic Excellence award recipient for the Panther Volleyball team; and Carlos De Loera, volleyball manager.

AVON PARK — South Florida State College recently celebrated another sensational academic and athletic year as the college and its athletic department announced the annual award winners at the 2015 Athletic Awards Day in the SFSC University Center, Highlands Campus.

Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach, delivered his remarks and greetings to a packed house, touching upon the Panthers' many successes of the year for the Lady Panther volleyball team and softball teams, and the Panther baseball team.

"We are proud of our student athletes here at SFSC," said Hitt. "Yes, we gave out some individual recognition last night, but more than anything else we hope that each one of our players this year truly understands what a difference they can make as a member of a team. The world revolves around successful teams in all forms of life. For example, our families are a team, successful businesses are a team, and collegiate institutions are a team. Being a good, contributing teammate within the athletic arena, provides you with a chance to be a good teammate in life. We hope our student athletes grasp that concept."

"One of the unique qualities of our athletic program is that academic excellence is first and foremost with our terrific student athletes," said Dr. Leana Revell, vice president for academic support and student services at SFSC. "It is always a pleasure to celebrate the top male and female student scholar in the program. They are

smart as well as talented athletes."

It was a historic night as the event not only marked the year-end accomplishments for the SFSC student-athletes, but also for Dr. Revell, who steps down from her position this year after 11 years at the college. In celebration of all that she has done for athletics and SFSC, Dr. Revell was recognized and presented the 2015 Distinguished Service Award.

"Dr. Revell was chosen for this award because she is awesome," Hitt said. "She has meant so much to our college in so many ways during her time here, athletics is just a piece of that. Her support of SFSC athletics has been tremendous and greatly appreciated. We will miss her leadership and support when she retires."

"It has been a great joy to work with the athletic department over the years," Revell said. "I was surprised and certainly appreciative of this high honor. It has certainly been my privilege to work with the coaches and the program. This special award is special to me and will indeed be treasured by me."

During the SFSC athletics banquet, each athlete was honored with a participation award from his or her coach. Athletes who received special awards were:

Volleyball

Honored for Academic and Athletic Excellence were Jada Spano, Darby Jones and Breighly Bolton.

Softball

Recognized as Best Offensive Player was

Haley Pinterich; Best Defensive Player was Kelly Olson; and Paige Davis was named Most Valuable Player.

Baseball

The Most Improved Player of the Year was Rodney Forbes; the Top Gun Award for pitching went to Max Boling; and the Coach's Award went home with John Tatum. Rodney Forbes and Max Boling were tagged

as Fantasy Baseball Champions; and

Fantasy Baseball runners up were Harrison McClure and Tyler Knowles.

Scholastic Athletes

Scholastic Athletes of the Year are Chris Maven and Darby Jones. That award is given to a male and female sophomore with the highest cumulative grade point average.

Special Awards

Special recognition came when the prestigious 2015 Panther of the Year honor was bestowed on Callie Bobo. That was followed by Dr. Leana Revell being presented the Panther Athletics Distinguished Service Award.



Bill Rogers/News-Sun

South Florida State College elementary education students practice a science lesson during a recent class.

SFSC elementary education program completes 1st year

AVON PARK — There is a saying that timing is everything and it is unfortunate that the students in the South Florida State College elementary education bachelor's degree program aren't graduating this year.

The Highlands County school district has more than 100 positions to fill for the 2015-16 year, according to the staff, but SFSC just recently completed the first year of its elementary education degree program.

To get accepted into the program, students must have earned an associate's degree or its equivalent and passed the General Knowledge Test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination. Kim Dos Santos, lead instructor for the program, said the program started the school year with 18 students and ended with 15.

Dos Santos was pleased and said it is "a great number."

She said the college compiled a lot of data and determined that an elementary education program was needed.

"We met the need of the service area," she said, referring to Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto counties.

A brochure produced by the college stated that in the next decade job opportunities for elementary teachers are expected to grow by as much as 17



Bill Rogers/News-Sun

Kim Dos Santos is the lead instructor for the elementary education program at SFSC.

percent in Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's 2013 employment projections.

Dos Santos believes that a majority of the students in the program want to remain in the area to teach.

Leigha Gersper of Lake Placid plans to stay and wants to teach there.

"I went to school there and so I would like to teach where I've grown up," she said.

"I see such a diverse background of kids in the classes," she added. "I've been in several different classes for my observation and I want to be able to help those with diverse backgrounds."

If she had a preference, she would like to teach second grade.

"They are still at the age when they want to please you, and they

love their teachers," she said.

She said especially for her first year in the profession, being able to work with the younger students will not be easier but they will be more eager to learn.

"Wherever I get hired, I will be happy," she said.

Gersper is glad the college started the degree program and said it has "been a growing experience for us."

"We kind of have become like a family with each other," she said. "We really look toward each other to help each other out. We're all going through the same thing. We're all going through the same stress."

The work load has been heavy because a bachelor's program is being fit into two years. Technically one year, she said, because the students are scheduled for internships next year.

"It has been a really great program," Gersper said. "We've all learned so much. There is stuff I've never even heard of before until I got into this program. It is such an eye-opener. We've learned a lot about English Language Learners and accommodations. I never even thought about the students who don't speak any English but are thrown into a class full of English students and they don't understand a thing. The teacher is expected to teach them and the other students."

SFSC professors receive endowed teaching chairs

Awards given in dental education, nursing, mathematics

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Three South Florida State College faculty members received 2015 endowed teaching chairs at the Tuesday meeting of the SFSC Foundation's board of directors.

The awards were presented to Joanne Foote, professor of nursing; Darlene Saccuzzo, professor of dental education; and James J. Moye, professor of mathematics.

Moye received the Carol Emery Endowed Teaching Chair, which was established by a former SFSC mathematics instructor and designated for math faculty.

Although the endowment is not tied to a specific project, Moye plans to use it to expand the use of technology in his math classes. He said the award was especially meaningful, since he is one of Emery's former students.

Foote is devoting her Endowed Teaching Chair in Nursing to facilitating professional development and promoting improvements in health care.

Part of that effort will be directed toward establishing an SFSC chapter of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which offers free online courses to students and health care providers through its "open school."

Courses are related to patient safety and improving the delivery of health care and professional development for health care professionals and could be integrated into all of SFSC's Health Sciences programs.

Saccuzzo's Endowed Teaching Chair in Dental Education is helping to install new technology in the dental education clinic that will make it easier for students to watch her demonstra-



COURTESY PHOTO

South Florida State College nursing professor Joanne Foote, third from left, accepts her endowed teaching chair in nursing. Also pictured are, from left: Michele Heston, director of SFSC's nursing programs; Don Appelquist, executive director of the SFSC Foundation; and Tom Leitzel, SFSC president. Other recipients were James J. Moye, mathematics professor, and Darlene Saccuzzo, dental education professor.

tions of the proper use of dental hygiene instruments.

A camera with zoom capabilities is being installed at Saccuzzo's station in the center of the clinic so that she can broadcast her demonstrations to 12 dental hygiene stations.

Students will be able to see Saccuzzo's work close up and follow along while she and other instructors answer questions and supervise their work. The new technology should be in place by the fall term.

"Until now, students gather around my station and try to watch what I'm doing," Saccuzzo said. "This new technology should be able to cut down on remediation time and increase our students' success in their state board exams."

The endowed teaching chairs in nursing and dental education are funded by the Highlands County Health Facilities Authority.

Endowed teaching chair appointments are highly competitive. Recipients are chosen by a selection committee and the college faculty as a whole. Selections are then confirmed by SFSC President Tom Leitzel. Each \$5,000 endowment is awarded over a period of two years with half going toward projects or improvements related to the professors' profession and half being an honorarium.

"The endowed teaching chair program has enabled the SFSC Foundation to show its appreciation to outstanding faculty members at SFSC," said Donald Appelquist, the foundation's executive director. "We presently have five named teaching chair endowments and the pledge of a sixth. Being able to make these awards allows the college to help attract and keep the very best educators with the ultimate benefit redounding to our students."

Thursday, May 21, 2015

Star Parties at SFSC

AVON PARK — South Florida State College physics and astronomy class will host a star party Friday, May 15. Telescopes will be provided. Lunar sky observations, which are the moon and its craters will be viewed from 10-11 p.m.

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 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 Erik Christensen at 863-784-7363, or email christee@online.southflorida.edu.

SFSC hosts appreciation dinner, sets plans for new cultural series

INFORMATION

For more information, visit <http://performances.southflorida.edu/> or call 863-784-7178.

AVON PARK — What's it like to be on stage at SFSC's Theater for the Performing Arts, looking out across the seating areas, sneaking a peak up to the balconies? Those attending the 2015 Cultural Programs Sponsor Appreciation Dinner were able to savor the experience.

Six long, exquisitely decorated tables were set up right on the stage, hosting nearly 100 attendees. The view from the stage was quite an experience to see what the entertainers actually see when they perform. The low lighting made for a relaxing evening to enjoy with friends in the community.

Prior to an evening of entertainment and a gourmet meal, there was a 'meet and greet' in the lobby of the Performing Arts Center. An array of delightful hors d'oeuvres were artfully prepared and served by the Jacaranda culinary arts students. Student Chef Brandon Adkins served stuffed mushrooms and batter-dipped shrimp. Non-alcoholic 'mocktails', with a choice of margarita or cosmopolitan, were also served.

"This is our annual thank you banquet for our sponsors," said Mitzi Farmer, volunteer events and performer manager. It's been a tradition here for 35 years. The stage seats about 98 people. Next year we will be changing the format and the time of year as other events are held around the same time."

"The Culinary Arts students get to show off their skills during the reception and we're delighted to have them assist at this event," continued Farmer.

Everyone moved into the auditorium and found their assigned place on the stage. Cindy Garran, director of Cultural Programs, welcomed the attendees. "Welcome and thank you all for coming," she said. "Dr. Thomas Leitzel and I are both relatively new. We both have had big shoes to fill."

Garran succeeds Doug Andrews; Dr. Leitzel succeeds Dr. Norm Stephens.

"We thank you all for your support of the arts

and our shows. We appreciate your faithful and continued support. The Arts and Theater are major forces here in our academic structure," said Leitzel.

Dinner was sponsored by Chicanes and consisted of boneless breast of chicken with prosciutto, pan seared in olive oil, finished with a lemon butter sauce. It was served with grilled asparagus and lyonnaisie potatoes. Dessert was a meringue with fresh fruit.

Entertainment was provided by Jimmy Mazz, a regular at the Golden Nugget in Las Vegas. He sang and did impersonations including Tom Jones, Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

Garran introduced the shows for the 2015-2016 season. "I'll be calling on all of you very soon," Garran said with a smile. The start time for evening shows is now 7 p.m. The Kaleidoscope Series has been retired and replaced by the new "Trending Now Series."

Some of the shows coming up in the Artist Series include 'Live from Nashville', 'Bobby Vinton', 'The Buddy Holly Story' and the 'Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra'.

The Matinee series includes 'An Afternoon with Groucho', 'The Piano Music of Floyd Kramer' and 'New Odyssey'. Performing in the Jazz series is 'Eddie Metz', 'The Salty Dogs' and 'The Allan Vache Quintet'.

The new series introduced, "Trending Now", is fresh and new. Scheduled performers for this series include, 'Turnstiles: The Music of Billy Joel', 'The Nutcracker Ballet', 'The Willis Clan' (of America's Got Talent fame), 'The McCartney Years' and 'Blue Highway'.



Dinner on the stage of the Performing Arts Theatre at South Florida State College gave attendees a new perspective of the vast hall.



Photos by Sharon Weatherhead/Highlands Sun

Meet and greet before dinner. Hors d'oeuvres were prepared by the Jacaranda culinary arts students from South Florida State College.

SFSC retirees celebrate college's 50th anniversary

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK – John Dzewiatkowski, a former South Florida State College employee, drove down from Michigan. For Jim Brooks, a former trustee, it was a hop from Avon Park. Dr. Elver Hodges, 102 years old and a college founder and trustee, came from Wauchula.

On Thursday, they joined 75 other college retirees and current and former trustees for a luncheon to celebrate SFSC's 50th anniversary. The gathering was one of a series of yearlong events to commemorate the college's founding in 1965.

Receptions were held the night before at the Hotel Jacaranda as well as prior to the luncheon at the SFSC Highlands Campus, giving current employees a chance to swap stories and catch up with old friends and colleagues.

The group settled down to lunch provided by the Palms of Sebring as part of its 55 Acts of Kindness. The retirement community is sponsoring community events throughout the year to showcase its 55th anniversary.

"If it weren't for you, this place wouldn't exist," former president Catherine P. Cornelius told those who had gathered in the SFSC University Center for lunch. "You've helped make this the fine institution what it is today, which in my mind is the best in the state."

She recognized Hodges, who served on the first board of trustees. Cornelius, SFSC's second president, asked him, "How old are you, Dr. Hodges, if I may ask?" Raising his hand to gesture numbers with his fingers, he said, "O 2." "That a hundred and two," said Cornelius to the applause of the



Former trustee Dr. Elver Hodges, 102, attended the event this past week.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Ken Lambert, chair of the SFSC trustees, former trustee Jim Brooks and former President Dr. Catherine Cornelius attended the ceremony celebrating the college's 50th anniversary.

other guests.

After lunch, the guests assembled in the SFSC University Center Auditorium to hear a selection of songs from the early 1960s performed by business instructor Adam Martin and retiree David Hale.

SFSC's current president, Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, followed up with a presentation highlighting the accomplishments for 2014 and on his vision for SFSC.

He said the college's future lies with precision agriculture, aerospace

technologies, bioenergy and health care.

"Change is happening now, and we have to prepare our students for the future," Leitzel said. He noted that more than a dozen high-demand jobs today did not exist 10 years ago.

He thanked those who had brought the college to where it is today, including SFSC's third president, Dr. Norman L. Stephens Jr., who was listening in the audience. "You've passed the baton on to us, and now we have to run with it."



Phil Attinger/News-Sun

Wellington 'Beach' Longley of Alan Jay Automotive Network tosses a heavy garbage bag into Dumpsters behind Champion for Children's Circle Theatre in Sebring during Wednesday's United Way Day of Caring.

Day of Caring gets lots done

By PHIL ATTINGER

STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Wednesday's Day of Caring got such a good turnout that local charities got a year of work done in just one day.

Several people made that observation after the annual United Way Day of Caring, including County Commissioner Don Elwell, who cleaned and organized at Highlands Little Theatre along with other Alan Jay Automotive Network employees.

In all, 365 people volunteered to help local nonprofits and community aid organizations Wednesday with everything from dusting, cleaning and vacuuming to sorting donations, painting murals and clearing out dusty cellars.

Kristin Handley, director for the United Way of Central Florida Highlands County Division, said the volunteers were able to provide work that the organizations otherwise could not, either because they lack the funds or available volunteers to get it all done.

Courtesy van drivers from Alan Jay actually went to the wrong location, arriving at Champion for Children's Circle Theatre instead of Highlands Little Theatre, where the rest of their team was to work. No matter: They simply went to work helping clear out the building's cellar of debris and old equipment, including heavy iron machine housings.

South Florida State College staff helped clean out old donations to the Boys and Girls Club



Phil Attinger/News-Sun

Alma Lloyd of Alan Jay Automotive Network takes debris from a fellow team members during United Way's Day of Caring on Wednesday. She and other team members helped Champion for Children's Circle Theatre clean out its basement for extra storage.

Emporium thrift store in Sebring. Nearby, Florida Hospital employees cleaned up and repainted exhibits at Children's Museum of the Highlands.

Highlands County schools took part this year with two teams from Lake Placid High School: One repainted at STR8 UP Youth Ministry, while the other helped at Redlands Christian Migrant Association's Child Development Center in Lake Placid.

SFSC retirees celebrate college's 50th anniversary

AVON PARK — Former South Florida State College employee John Dzewiatkowski drove down from Michigan. For Jim Brooks, a former trustee, it was just a hop from Avon Park. And 102-year-old Dr. Elver Hodges, a college founder and trustee, came from Wauchula.

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colleagues.

The group settled down to lunch provided by the Palms of Sebring as part of its '55 Acts of Kindness'. It was explained that The Palms is sponsoring events throughout the year to showcase its own 55th anniversary.

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Retired staff member Roberta Flowers and retired faculty member Carol Emery found time to catch up on memories.

"That a hundred and two," said Dr. Cornelius to the applause of the other guests.

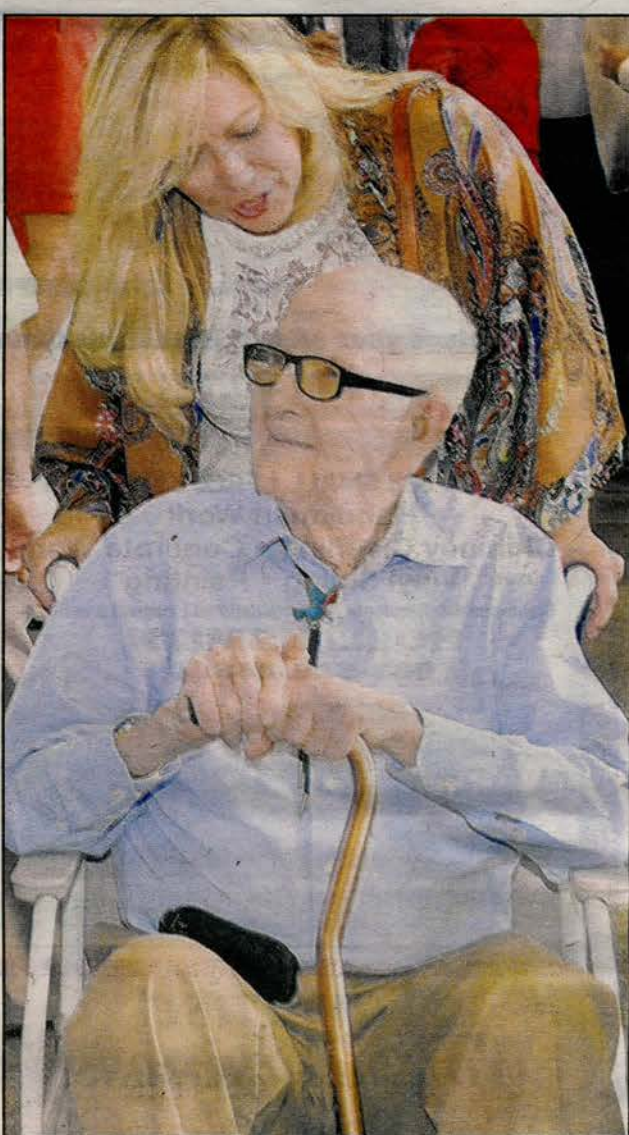
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Courtesy photos

102-year-old Dr. Elver Hodges, former SFSC trustee, came from Wauchula for the celebration.



Retired SFSC counselor Betty Carlisle and retired SFSC Director of Nursing, Dr. Barbara Kurtz

Scenario-based training for concealed weapons holders

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy (CJA) is offering a Scenario-Based Training for Concealed Weapons Holders course. This course provides training to anyone who already has a valid concealed weapons permit. Instruction will include live range exercises using various scenario exercises. Authorized weapons include revolvers or pistol handguns in calibers .22, .25, 32, 380, 9mm, 38, 357, 40, 45, and 44. Handguns chambered in rifle calibers or fully automatic weapons will not be allowed.

The course will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 30. The cost is \$50. Anyone interested in taking this course must bring their concealed weapons permit, a handgun with holster and belt, and 50 rounds of factory ammunition.

For information contact Richard Morey, coordinator, at 863-784-7285. Register at any SFSC campus or center, pre-registration is required.

SFSC's Testing and Assessment Center receives national certification

AVON PARK — The Testing and Assessment Center at South Florida State College is one of only six testing centers in Florida to have been recently awarded Test Center Certification by the National College Testing Association (NCTA).

"This certification allows us to offer the best opportunity for testers to demonstrate their knowledge, potentially improving the accuracy of the test results," said Mary Ann Little, director of SFSC's Testing and Assessment Center. "By receiving the certification, students and the community know that we have aligned our procedures with the recommended best practices. We have demonstrated that

we have established an optimal environment for enrolled and potential students, distance education students, and community members."

NCTA certification criteria are rigorous, and the Testing and Assessment Center initially submitted a pre-application to determine if the center met the professional standards and guidelines to be considered, according to Little.

Following application approval, the center submitted documentation including floor plans of testing center rooms, photos, policy and procedures manual, test administration, and training manual to a NCTA advisor for review. An on-site evaluation was the final step before

certification approval by NCTA board members.

The NCTA said SFSC's Testing and Assessment Center "has set the bar high for other post-secondary test centers and achieved national status as a leader in excellent testing practices."

"There is a limited window of time to submit a pre-application each year and a limited number are accepted," Little said. "We have been working on developing policies and implementing the requirements for about 18 months, so that when we applied we would be fully ready."

"Every staff member contributed to the development, documentation, and implementation of

the policies, which follow the NCTA standards in areas of policy, contractual agreements, staffing, college representation and coordination, physical environment, testing accommodations, and specific guidelines for paper-based and computer-based tests," Little said.

The National College Testing Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of professionalism and high-quality service in the administration of testing programs, offers certification to college and university test centers that demonstrate exemplary practices.

SFSC's Testing and Assessment Center provides online and



Courtesy photo

Pictured is the Testing Center staff from South Florida State College with their NCTA certification plaque: (from left) Peggy Becerra, Amanda Farmer, Testing Center director MaryAnn Little, Janie Ferguson, and Princess Shannon.

paper-based testing services to SFSC students and the public in its friendly, secure environment. The Testing and Assessment Center is located in the Catherine P. Cornelius Student Services and Classroom Complex (Building B) on the Highlands Campus. Some

testing services are also available at the DeSoto and Hardee campuses and the Lake Placid Center.

For more information about SFSC's Testing Center, contact the Testing Center at 863-784-7214 or visit <http://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/testing-center>.

Student veteran thrives in supportive environment at SFSC

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — While growing up as a “military brat,” Kevin Brown was forced to make friends quickly, accept new surroundings, and have a deep appreciation to adapting and changing on a moment’s notice.

After many years of struggling with behavioral problems, lack of job options, and financial instability as a young adult, the 33-year-old had to make a life-changing decision at the age of 24. Brown decided to turn his life around and follow in the footsteps of his father, mother, sister, aunts, uncles, and cousins by entering the military.

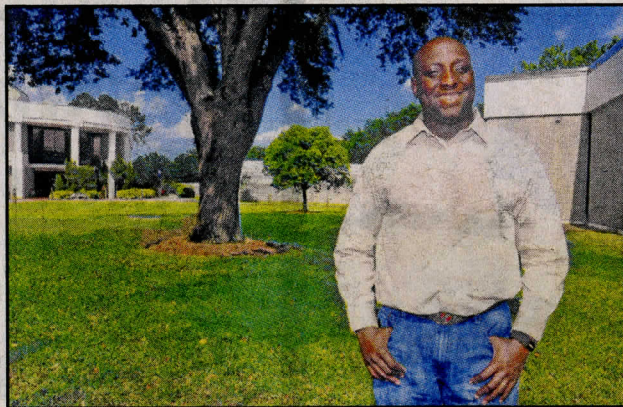
“The military was just the right direction for me to go in at the time,” Brown said. “It straightened me out, and I

started to see myself working there long-term. Although some may look at the military as a job, it was a calling for me.”

He was passionate about the opportunity to serve his country, turn over a new leaf, and become the first marine in his family. Unfortunately, Brown’s life plans didn’t turn out as he had hoped.

After serving just four and a half years in the Marines, Brown was medically discharged and unsure about his future. He had always dreamed about becoming a paramedic, working with computers, or becoming a culinary genius, but life circumstances always seemed to get in the way. As cliché as it sounds, he knew God had a plan for him.

At that point, Brown



Courtesy photo

Kevin Brown is an example of how SFSC strives to make a smooth and successful transition for all veterans.

decided to do something for his family that would enable his future success in life. He decided to go back to college. This was his second chance at life and an opportunity to better support his family.

He wanted to make sure he received clear advice on getting back to college and managing

the next phase of his education. And that’s exactly what he found with South Florida State College. Thanks to his service in the Marines, he was able to take advantage of the G.I. Bill which covered all of his costs for attending SFSC.

Although it was important to him,

college always seemed a little selfish because he already had so much on his plate. “Being employed full-time, having a home and family to take care of, and going to college did not seem like a workable choice,” Brown said. “I worried about whether my family would be taken care of if I took this big step.”

More than a decade older than most of his peers, Brown was not the typical student you would see on a college campus. Upon separation from the military, he was hit with the realization that civilian life was wasn’t the easiest but he would have to make the best of it.

“Transitioning from the military to civilian life is something you cannot put into words,” Brown said. “Being employed full-time, having

a home and family to take care of, and going to college has been quite the challenge. But, my wife has been my biggest rock and has supported me through everything.”

SFSC strives to make it a smooth and successful transition for all veterans. When veterans like Brown come home from war and try to put their lives back together, there’s often a giant missing link in their transition.

“Many veterans face a difficult transition to civilian life, ranging from readjustment issues to recovery from physical and mental injuries,” said Robert Hampton, veteran advisor. “Statistics show that without proper guidance, many will fail to graduate. But, Kevin

VETERAN

FROM PAGE 14

is the perfect example of a veteran who has used the discipline the Marine Corps taught him. He has invested so much of his time, money, and determination so he could achieve his objective, a college degree."

After it's all said and done Brown is happy that he took on the challenge of going back to college. His experience at SFSC has been positive and has filled a huge void that he's had in his life. He believes that his choices are more educated and based on facts, instead of in-the-moment choices that lead to nothing but headaches. He shared that he can truly say that he is a father and husband who is proud and loving of what he has as a family.

"Graduating with my

associate degree has been 13 years in the making," Brown said.

"It's reassuring to know that time or age is not a factor. After everything is said and done, you got to know what you want. You have to feel driven to do it. Then, everything else will fall into place by itself. It's pretty awesome to finally fulfill this chapter in my life."

After graduating from SFSC this may with an associate's degree in computer information systems, Brown plans to complete his bachelor's and master's degrees in information systems management at Hodges University. The path may be long, as he said, but his passion for an education and a better life has remained constant.

SFSC's Spring Commencement ceremony will be held Thursday, May 7, 6:45 p.m., in the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts, Highlands Campus.

Bateman tapped to succeed Appelquist at SFSC Foundation

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — Sebring native Jamie Bateman has been named executive director for institutional advancement to include oversight of the South Florida State College Foundation Inc. In that role, she will work directly with the Foundation board members and SFSC's leadership team to oversee the Foundation's fundraising efforts to support the continued growth of the college.

Bateman begins her tenure at the SFSC Foundation on July 1

and follows Donald Appelquist, who retires on June 30 after 45 years of



BATEMAN

service with SFSC and the SFSC Foundation.

"Institutional advancement is critical, and Jamie is key to leading us to embrace new and exciting opportunities," SFSC President Thomas C. Leitzel said.

"She is a skilled leader who understands the importance of building a better community through a strong educational underpinning. The legacy established



Bill Rogers/News-Sun

Don Appelquist, dean of resource development and the executive director of the SFSC Foundation Inc., tries out a chair he was given during a reception Thursday marking his upcoming retirement. Appelquist has worked for the college for 45 years.

through the stellar accomplishments of Don Appelquist will continue through Jamie's leadership."

Bateman is currently the executive director for the Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center Foundation, where she has worked since 2003. "I'm

humbled and honored to accept the executive director over the SFSC Foundation," Bateman said. "This a rewarding and exciting opportunity, and I look forward to partnering with the community to strengthen existing friendships and building new relationships."

Summer Bridge Program planned

High school students who will be entering grades 11 and 12 in the fall can boost their skills in reading, writing, and math through a free program being offered at two South Florida State College campuses.

SFSC's Summer Bridge Program is open to students who meet certain eligibility criteria but particularly demonstrate a need to improve their basic skills in language and math. SFSC instructors work with participants to strengthen their abilities in these areas and to develop the attitudes that foster academic success. As part of the program, participants explore careers, gain a better understanding of topics related to science, technology, engineering, and math, and learn how they can use their last year or two of high school to prepare for entering college.

The Summer Bridge Program is being held at the Highlands Campus, June 15-19, and at the Hardee Campus, June 22-26. Hours are 8:30 a.m.-3:10 p.m.,

Monday-Thursday, with a field trip on Friday for students who attend all four days. This year's field trip is exploring Florida Gulf Coast University and Bowditch Point Regional Park and Preserve in Fort Myers.

Get more information by visiting the website www.southflorida.edu or by calling Magie Hulbert at 784-7209 or Dr. Kimberly Batty-Herbert, dean, Arts and Sciences, at 784-7329.

SFSC Hispanic Student Organization raises money for Child Abuse Prevention Month



Courtesy photo

South Florida State College's Hispanic Students Organization raised \$150 to help local kids overcoming child abuse. Their efforts came in response to Child Abuse Prevention Month, observed annually in April as a time to focus attention on preventing child abuse and neglect. The SFSC students hosted a luncheon that included hotdogs, chips, and drinks for a donation of any amount. They raised the money during a 30-minute lunch break, with students, faculty and staff coming out to support the club members' fundraising drive. Club members Stella Maldonado and Joshua Cuencas (left) present the check to Jeffrey Roth, director of the Champion for Children Advocacy Center.

Panthers get a helping hand

Alan Jay Wildstein donates \$1,600 to SFSC baseball team



COURTESY PHOTO

Alan Jay Wildstein, center, is surrounded by South Florida State College baseball players and coaches. Wildstein donated \$1,600 to the Panthers team.

Special to Highlands Today

South Florida State College's Panther Baseball team recently had the opportunity to create a lasting community partnership and accept a gracious donation of over \$1,600 from Alan Jay Wildstein.

"We greatly appreciate the partnership and support from Alan Jay Kia and appreciate Mr. Wildstein's extreme generosity," said Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach. "Our athletic programs take great pride in in-

volving us in our community and are grateful for the continued support SFSC athletics receive."

Alan Jay Kia held a fundraiser for SFSC's Panther baseball team on April 19 at the dealership in Sebring. Car buyers were entertained with live music, food, an apple pie-eating contest, a dunk tank and a bounce house for kids. For every vehicle sold during the party, a portion of the proceeds were donated to Panther baseball.

SFSC to hold softball camp

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

The South Florida State College 2015 Panther Softball Summer Camp will be held in June on the Panther softball field at the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

The camp, open to youths ages 6 to 18, will be held Monday and Tuesday, June 15-16, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Registration and check-in begins at 8 a.m., followed by the camp. Cost is \$45 per player. Pre-registration is not required, and walk-ups will be accepted.

Campers will receive quality softball instruction, with an emphasis on fundamentals and improvement in all areas of the game. Campers on a daily basis will receive instruction from SFSC

assistant coach Heather Barnes, members of the Lady Panther softball team and other college coaches.

Registration is being taken online at www.southflorida.edu/athletics/softball or registration forms can be printed out and mailed to the school at SFSC, 600 West College Drive, Avon Park, FL, 33825-9356 or brought to camp.

SFSC volleyball camps

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will be holding three weeklong volleyball camps this summer. Camp dates are June 8 to June 11, June 15 to June 18 and July 6 to July 9. There are three different camps: Beginners (grades 1 to 6), Experienced (grades 7 to 12) and sand volleyball (grades 7 to 12). Beginners meets 9 a.m. to noon, Experienced meets 2 to 5 p.m. and sand volleyball players meet from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$100 per week or \$30 per day for the two three-hour camps or \$50 per week and \$15 per day for the sand volleyball camp. More information and registration forms can be found at <http://www.southflorida.edu/community/athletics/volleyball/camp>.

SFSC baseball camps

AVON PARK — South Florida State College is offering two summer baseball camps from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day. The camps are Mondays through Thursdays, from June 8 to 11 and June 22 to 25. Registration will take place between 8 and 8:30 a.m. Cost is \$80 for each camp. Both can be attended for \$150, and there is a \$5 discount per each additional family member. Camps are for ages 5 to 14. Cost includes T-shirts for all campers. Camps will focus on offensive and defensive fundamentals, baseball-oriented agility and game situations. For more information, call Panther coach/AD Rick Hitt at (863) 784-7036, email hittr@southflorida.edu or visit www.southflorida.edu/baseball.