

SFSC Briefs

Aquabics classes on tap

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate and Community Education will offer Aquabics classes 5:30-6:30 p.m. Monday and Wednesdays, Aug. 17-Sept. 30.

Aquabics is a moderately paced aerobic water exercise class for toning, weight loss and building strength. It's easy on the joints but still provides resistance.

The cost is \$68, and the course number is 10393.

Register at any SFSC campus or center or by calling 784-7405.

Paramedics graduate

AVON PARK — South Florida State College graduated 13 new paramedics July 28 during an evening ceremony at the SFSC University Center Auditorium.

Receiving their paramedic certificates were James Kyle Bodeck, Brody Carr, Paul Brian Coker, Nicholas Paul Esposito, Kenneth W. Fritz, Robert Allen Goudy, Misha Ellen Hahn, John Ross Howerton, Michael Gene Kennedy, David A. Morales, Paul Michael Shannon, John O. Stan-

ton and Bilie Kay Williams.

The graduates completed an 11-month college credit certificate course. Paramedics work as part of an emergency response team called out to traffic accidents, fires and other life-threatening situations.

Randy Chancey, a recently retired paramedic instructor at SFSC, served as the ceremony's guest speaker. He was one of the first instructors in SFSC's paramedic course, and he offered his advice to the graduates.

"This job is about people," Chancey said. "It's about people who depend on you and the very best you have to offer."

He called upon the graduates to remember the people they encounter in emergencies are often ordinary people going about their days in the most ordinary ways; ordinary, until disaster strikes.

"Lives hang in the balance based on how you respond to their emergency," he said.

Steve Ashworth, chairman of the Emergency Medical Services and Fire Science programs, presented Chancey a plaque for his service and dedication to the college's training program.

"Randy Chancey has been a stalwart part of our training program," Ashworth told the graduates. "He is the one who made possible this paramedic program, which is an outstanding one."

Several graduates received special awards. Kenneth W. Fritz, Hardee County EMS, earned an award for the highest overall grade point average. The award for highest test scores on the final practical examination went to Paul Michael Shannon, of the Avon Park Fire Department.

Bilie Kay Williams earned awards for highest grade point average in classroom work and in the laboratory. Robert Allen Goudy received the "Most Heart" award for his dedication. Michael Gene Kennedy took an award for displaying the highest level of professionalism. All three work for the Polk County Fire Department.

SFSC offers also a 16-week course for emergency medical technician. EMTs provide entry-level patient care as part of an emergency response team.

For more information, contact Ashworth at 784-7272 or ashworths@southflorida.edu.

Register now for SFSC fall term

AVON PARK — It's not too early to register for fall term at South Florida State College. Students may register now for Fall Term 2015. Classes begin Aug. 21.

The SFSC Welcome Center on the Highlands Campus,

Avon Park, accepts walk-in registrations from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays. Students can also register at the DeSoto Campus in Arcadia, the Hardee Campus in Bowling Green, and at the Lake Placid Center.

Call 863-453-666 for more information.

Hardee County Duo Among New Paramedics

Thirteen new paramedics graduated last week in an evening ceremony at the South Florida State College auditorium.

Receiving their paramedic certificates were Hardee Countians James Kyle Bodeck and Kenneth W. Fritz along with Brody Carr, Paul Brian Coker, Nicholas Paul Esposito, Robert Allen Goudy, Misha Ellen Hahn, John Ross Howerton, Michael Gene Kennedy, David A. Morales, Paul Michael Shannon, John O. Stanton and Billie Kay Williams.

The graduates completed an 11-month college credit certificate course offered by SFSC's paramedic program. Paramedics

work as part of an emergency response team called out to traffic accidents, fires, and other life-threatening situations.

Randy Chancey served as the ceremony's guest speaker. He was one of the first instructors in SFSC's paramedic course.

Said Chancey, "This job is about people. It's about people who depend on you and the very best you have to offer."

He called upon the graduates to remember the people they encounter in emergencies are often ordinary people going about their days in the most ordinary of ways. Ordinary, Chancey said, until disaster strikes.

"Lives hang in the balance based on how you respond to their emergency," he said.

Several of the graduates received special awards. Fritz, Hardee County EMS, earned an award for the highest overall grade-point average. The award for highest test scores on the final practical examination went to Shannon of the Avon Park Fire Department.

Williams earned awards for highest grade-point average in classroom work and in the laboratory. Goudy received the "Most Heart" award for his dedication. Kennedy took an award for displaying the highest level of professionalism. All

three work with the Polk County Fire Department.

SFSC offers also a 16-week course leading to employment as an emergency medical technician. EMTs provide entry-level patient care as part of an emergency response team.

SFSC also offers a two-year Associate in Science degree program in Emergency Medical Services, which includes training in both EMT and paramedic programs. Upon completing this program, graduates can work in a supervisory EMS capacity.

For more information, contact Steven Ashworth at 784-7272 or at ashworths@southflorida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

Graduating as paramedics last week were (from left) James Kyle Bodeck of Hardee County, Brody Carr, Nicholas Paul Esposito, Kenneth W. Fritz of Hardee County, Robert Allen Goudy, Misha Ellen Hahn, John Ross Howerton, Michael Gene Kennedy, David A. Morales, Paul Michael Shannon, John O. Stanton and Billie Kay Williams. Not pictured: Paul Brian Coker.

SFSC graduates new crop of practical nurses

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College graduated 20 practical nurses at a ceremony July 30.

With scores of family, friends and well-wishers looking on at SFSC's Theatre for the Performing Arts, the graduates, wearing traditional white uniforms, took to the stage, sitting 10 abreast under a large banner depicting the college's seal.

They had just completed SFSC's 11-month practical nurse program and will soon sit for their licensing examinations, looking to start hands-on work later this summer.

Craig Pyle, a critical care nurse at Highlands Regional Medical Center with 20 years of clinical experience, accepted the students' invitation to serve as the guest speaker.

Pyle, a graduate of SFSC, told the students that while they work intensely in a one-on-one relationship with a patient, nurses are not solo practitioners.

"Nurses work best as part of a team," Pyle said. "A team that includes physicians, technicians, aides and other nurses, too. But you must never forget the patient and the family is an important part of that team."

Pyle went on to tell the graduates that the responsibility for quality health care rests not solely with the nurses and physicians. He said patients shoulder a good share of that burden.

"The more the nurse does to educate his or her patients that they share in that responsibility, then the better outcomes they will have," he said.

The class president, Rani Gobble, then recalled the ups and downs of the students' 11 months together



COURTESY PHOTO

Graduating LPNs stand on stage with lighted lanterns July 30 in the Theatre for the Performing Arts.

and marveled at how much they had learned.

"At the start of the course we thought we know how to wash our hands properly," Gobble said. "Boy, were we wrong."

Saying they weren't just a class but a pack that had forged special relationships among themselves, Gobble exhorted her fellow graduates to remember always how far they had come.

But before the class could take its turn observing ceremonies stretching back to the 19th century, they had an award of their own to confer. The class tapped Denis Morales, a staff assistant at SFSC's nursing education program, as the recipient of the Golden Duck award.

Each graduating class of SFSC nursing students gives the award to a person who contributes in a special way to their learning and development as a nurse. The award's significance is based on the D.U.C.K. motto: Developing, Understanding, Compassion and Knowledge.

Continuing a custom initiated by Florence Nightingale, recognized as the founder of modern nursing, the graduating students then received their nursing pins, a symbol of their hard work and achievement.

In recent graduation ceremonies, students accept their nursing pins from a

person of their choice, in most instances a relative who they see as a pillar of support in their lives.

One by one, husbands, mothers and children mounted the stage, embraced their loved one and pinned their new nurse.

The graduates, with the lapels of their uniforms now sporting their pins, then clasped a lighted white lantern. This tradition, a rite of passage also initiated by Nightingale, signifies the courage, compassion and selflessness each new nurse is called to. Dr. Michelle Heston, SFSC's nursing program director, told the assembly.

"Be ever mindful of the nurses who have gone before you," Heston said. "And be ever mindful of nurses who will serve with you."

The new nurses then filed off the stage.

The graduates were: Kristen Angel, Emmy Austin, Cristal Badillo, Veronica DeLoera, Stephanie Esquivel, Tina Evans, James Garza, Vanessa Garza, Rani Gobble, Robert Keene, Jenise Lopez, Maria Lopez, Katherine Love, Lindsey Lovett, Adna Metayer, Kelsey Murray, Tania Salinas, Christy Singletary, Kattie Vanderpool and Manuela Vela.

For more information on nursing at SFSC, visit www.southflorida.edu or call 784-7225.

Leadership Highlands taking applications

Class of 2016
participants will
learn about county

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Leadership Highlands is accepting applications for the class of 2016.

The program familiarizes participants with the infrastructure, agencies and economic enterprises that exist in Highlands County; exposes them to the range of needs in the community and identifies resources to meet those needs; provides them with the opportunity to

meet and exchange ideas with each other and existing community leaders; and encourages civic participation and volunteer involvement in the community.

The program is a partnership between South Florida State College and the Avon Park, Lake Placid and Sebring chambers of commerce and is administered by SFSC.

Each class includes an orientation in August, retreat in September and nine month-long themed sessions that include an overnight trip to Tallahassee and graduation ceremony in June.

Previous classes have includ-

ed visits to the Lake Placid murals, Sebring Regional Airport, local hospitals, city and county governments and the court system.

For information and an online application, visit the SFSC website and search "Leadership Highlands," or contact Kris Juve, program director, at 784-7189 or juvek@southflorida.edu.

The application must be returned by Aug. 31 to the Avon Park, Lake Placid or Sebring chambers of commerce, or mail to: Leadership Highlands, Attention: Kris Juve, SFSC, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park, FL 33825.

New SFSC vice president loves his job

Sid Valentine moved from South Carolina to work on Avon Park Campus

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — On his first visit to South Florida State College, Sid Valentine jokingly told his wife, Mandy, that there must be something in the water. Everyone seems so happy and dedi-

cated, he remembered. When he interviewed for a vice president position, Valentine told college officials that he had been trying to find a "chink in the armor." After reviewing data for weeks prior to his interview, he could not find any shortcomings in the college, he said.

After the SFSC president offered him the job as vice president for academic affairs and student services, he started work at the college on July 6.

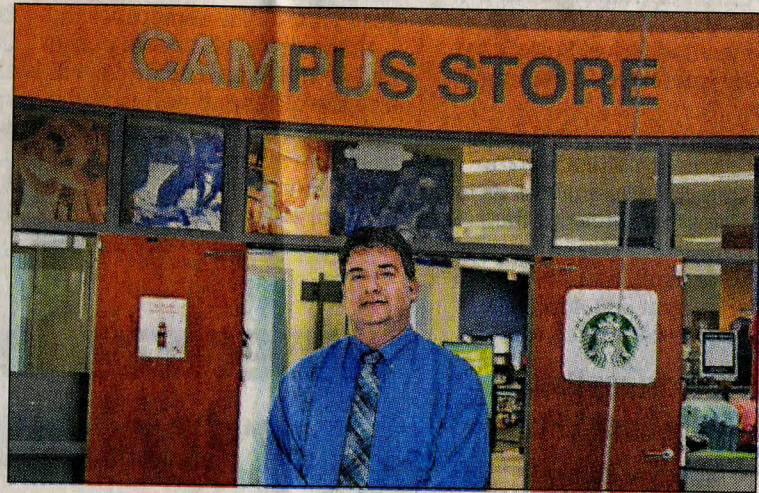
"I absolutely fell in love with this campus," he said Wednes-

day in his office on the Avon Park Campus. "When I interviewed here you could tell the faculty were world class; you could tell the facilities are world class; you could tell that everybody was extremely dedicated to what they do here."

He came from York Technical College in Rock Hill, South Carolina, which is a bedroom community of Charlotte.

"I have a 4-year-old son (Jake) and it is very nice to be able to bring him somewhere

VICE PRESIDENT, Page 3



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Sid Valentine is South Florida State College's new vice president for academic affairs and student services.

Vice President

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that I am looking forward to raising as opposed to being on the outskirts of a city like Charlotte," he said.

Valentine was preparing for the annual convocation week, Aug. 17-21, where faculty return for a meet-and-greet luncheon.

"It is time we have allotted to do training, to do meetings, to do everything we need to do to prep to get ready for all the students coming back," he said.

The fall term starts Aug. 21.



Valentine shared some information on the projects he and his staff are working on.

The college is looking into providing more health care programs and expanding its bio-energy program, he said.

Advanced manufac-

turing is another area the college is exploring, he said. "Looking at how we can help grow the economic development in the community. Having something in place that would allow us to help kick-start different industries that are looking to come in here and help expand the industries that are here," he said.

The college is working closely with the local economic development agencies, Valentine said. The idea is a step beyond a business incubator where the college looks at ways to help a proposed business fast-track its ideas into something that can be taken to the market very quickly, he explained. It's not on the short-term radar, but it is something the college is looking into doing.

Valentine noted that in South Carolina the state funds only about 15 percent of the colleges' budgets, which makes it difficult. The counties offset a lot of the funding, but the

tuition rates are extremely high.

"The tuition rates in South Carolina were roughly double to what they are here," he said. "It made it very difficult at times for those citizens to come in and have to pay double what they pay here to advance their education."

Florida is generally seen in the community college world as "leaps and bounds" ahead in a lot of different areas, and affordable tuition is one of them.

Valentine earned his doctoral degree and Master of Science degree in computer engineering from the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, and his Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from the West Virginia University Institute of Technology in Montgomery, West Virginia.

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(863) 386-5826

SFSC offering police officer crossover to corrections

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy (CJA) is offering a law enforcement officer crossover to corrections officer course. This course is for current certified law enforcement officers who wish to become a certified corrections officer.

The course will be held Mondays through Thursdays, beginning Monday, Sept. 28, with class times from 6-10 p.m.

For information, contact coordinator Richard Morey at 863-784-7285 or visit www.southflorida.edu/publicservice.

Register at any SFSC Campus or center, preregistration is required. Applications must be picked up in-person by appointment only.

Highlands Sun

Thursday, August 13, 2015

Cosmetology clinic now open on SFSC campus

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.

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 graduate scores dream job

Ricki Vann became on-air reporter after completing her education at UF

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Ricki Vann, class of 2011, chose South Florida State College thinking she would play intercollegiate volleyball, earn her associate degree and then transfer to a four-year university.

Vann had options for admission at several universities. Still, she had a special choice — one she thought might prove too daunting.

"As I was nearing graduation from SFSC I thought I would apply to Barry University in Miami Shores," Vann said. "But I really wanted to go to the University of Florida."

Vann said she had a respectable GPA at SFSC. But with thousands of high-performing transfer students from across the state vying for a seat at the Gainesville-based university, Vann thought she might have set her sights too high.

When not on the volleyball court or in class, the Highlands County native interned at a Sebring country music radio station. It was there she realized a career in broadcasting was in her future. Her most pressing decision was where she would finish her education.

In her second year at SFSC, Vann recalled struggling through a biology class taught by James Broen, who was keen to offer her tips on how to prepare for class examinations. One day he asked where she planned to finish her undergraduate work.

"I told Dr. Broen I wanted to be a Gator but wasn't sure if I would apply," Vann said. "He told me I could make it into the University of Florida. 'After all, Ricki, you'll be getting your degree from SFSC, so you can do it.'"

Vann said that Broen's words of encouragement gave her the boost she needed to get through his class and



COURTESY PHOTO

Ricki Vann, a Highlands County native and graduate of SFSC, reports on air at WEAR-TV in Pensacola.

the motivation to apply to the University of Florida.

"I applied and got accepted," Vann said. "Broen's support was awesome and it made all the difference for me."

At Florida, Vann studied broadcast journalism, earning her degree in 2013 and gaining invaluable experience through two internships at local radio stations.

Vann parlayed that education and experience into the job that she had wished for: a spot as an on-air reporter with WEAR, an ABC affiliate in Pensacola.

Vann's classmates at SFSC will remember her as Ricki Vann Albritton. She now uses her middle name as her surname in her professional role.

"I always remember my time at SFSC and the solid foundation that made my success possible," Vann said. "Playing volleyball I learned teamwork, I acquired knowledge in the classroom and learned how to treat people from my time with the faculty and staff at SFSC."

Vann said she's on the career path of her dreams, one that keeps her busy. In addition to her current assignment, she will take on sports reporting for a sister

station later this month.

"I won't be going back to Sebring until Christmas," Vann said. "I sleep now whenever I can, sometimes even in my car," she joked.

Looking back on her choice of colleges coming out of high school, Vann said that while she chose SFSC mainly to take advantage of the volleyball scholarship, she has come to appreciate another benefit of studying at a college where the headcount was under 2,500.

"One of the fondest memories I have is the individual attention I received from faculty and counselors," Vann recalled. "I also got a chance to play volleyball, serve in student government and really get to know people, which is not easy to do at large university like Florida."

Now 24 years old and one year into her marriage with husband Riley Stewart, Vann said her tight schedule has her putting off plans to start a family anytime soon.

Does Vann have any advice for folks trying to settle on a college? Drawing on her experience at SFSC and the University of Florida, Vann takes a practical view. "I'd tell them not to cancel out plans to attend SFSC because they want the so-called four-year experience," Vann said. "You can get that college experience at SFSC and in a more intimate setting."

She said students can enhance their time at SFSC by getting involved in student government, spending more time hanging out on campus and nurturing a sense of school spirit.

What's more, when she left SFSC for the University of Florida, she had already completed all her core courses, allowing her to focus exclusively on her major's coursework.

"I was amused meeting students who were worrying about History 101 with 900 students in the same room," Vann said. "I was way past that and focusing exclusively on my major. I can thank SFSC for that."

Concealed course revealed

Weapons permit
course to be
held Aug. 22

BY PAUL CATALA
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — After a visit to a local shooting range where she learned about gun safety and shooting, Colleen Rafatti began to think about buying a gun for home protection.

But in order to properly purchase one, to know what to look for and to learn how to handle a firearm safely, Rafatti decided to get help from the pros. So she signed up for the South

Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy's Concealed Weapons Permit Course.

Held every two to three months, the academy will be firing up another course from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 22 at the academy complex, 600 W. College Drive.

"I don't have a gun in my house right now, but if I'm going to have a one, I want to know how to handle and store it safely and how to use it properly," said Rafatti, director of SFSC's Career Development Center. "I wasn't sure of the quality of training I might get at other locations. The main

CONCEALED, Page 9



PAUL CATALA/STAFF

Richard Morey, co-coordinator for the South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy and instructor for the Academy's Concealed Weapons Permit Course, holds a "simunition" practice gun. The guns will be used in the Academy's Permit Course on Aug. 22.

Concealed

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reason I chose SFSC for my class is for a high-quality, comprehensive program taught by law enforcement professionals."

And the administrators for the SFSC Criminal Justice Academy said Rafatti's purpose for taking part in the academy's program isn't unusual, as an average of between 25 and 30 people generally sign up for the course for the same reasons.

During the class's four hours, required to carry a concealed weapon in Florida, a range of gun ownership, care and use topics will be covered, said Richard Morey, Criminal Justice Academy co-coordinator.

On Thursday — along with Michael Austin, academy co-coordinator, and Curtis Ivy, academy director, in the academy's office and classrooms — Morey, a former Lake Placid police officer, said the topics are relevant whether a gun owner has a firearm for self-defense or for sport.

Among the topics covered under Florida statutes, instructors teach about state carry requirements, how to fill out a carry application, statutes regarding the use of force, types of weapons and, finally, basic live-fire marksmanship, where training rounds using training "simunition" guns are used.

Morey said as of Thursday, 18 people have registered and there were seven openings still available. He said of those 18, five are couples, and over the run of the courses, more females are signing up.

"It's just some people have guns in their houses but no training. Some people take it to know what it entails to carry a gun," he said.

The will to learn that knowledge formally began in Highlands County a year ago. Tax Collector Eric Zwyer said the first Concealed Weapons License Application was processed Sept. 18, 2014, and

as of Aug. 13, 1,071 have been processed. Permit renewals start locally Aug. 24, and from Highlands County, information is sent electronically to the Florida Department of Agriculture.

"We are very excited to offer this additional service to our customers," said Zwyer. "We are getting customers from our county and all of our surrounding counties. It has been a very smooth process."

Morey and Ivy said following the Aug. 22 course to qualify for getting a permit, two other courses will be offered to help build on initial training. One is a live-fire range course and the other is "scenario-based firearms training." Dates for both will be announced and will be held at a range off Arbuckle Creek Road.

Morey and Ivy said attendees have often said they were impressed with the scope of information they had received.

James and Jody Dow, of Sebring, took the permit course once in 2012 and another time in February. James Dow, 70, owner of Sebring's Furniture Doctors, said he needed to carry a gun for his business and learned the "responsibility of having and carrying a weapon." He said he recommends anyone bearing arms to make taking the course a priority.

"It brings a lot of reality to what you're actually doing. It becomes part of you, not just an attitude," he said.

Cost for the Concealed Weapon Permit Course is \$55, and preregistration is required. For information, call (863) 784-7285.

To renew a license, it must be within 150 days of the expiration and the following information must be given: concealed weapon or firearm license number, last name, date of birth and proof of identity. Resident fees are \$72, nonresidents pay \$114 and fingerprints are required.

Leadership Highlands continues 'Year of Giving'

By **SHARON WEATHERHEAD**
CORRESPONDENT

SEBRING —

Leadership Highlands has been developing local leaders since the first pilot class graduated in 2000.

The program was founded by the three Highlands County chambers of commerce (Sebring, Avon Park and Lake Placid).

The Leadership Highlands program has a mission of helping to "develop leaders with a thorough understanding of, and strong sense of commitment to, Highlands County and an appreciation for the strength found in our county's abundant diversity."

A group of dedicated ladies, who are part of

the 2015 graduating class of Leadership Highlands, are currently working at HLT (Highlands Little Theater), assisting with set design and creation, painting and a myriad of other activities as part of "giving back to the community".

"In Leadership Highlands we go through the whole year learning about leadership, our community and the operations of Highlands County. At the end of each year the class works on a big project. Our class decided to use the theme of a 'Year of Giving' instead of one big project. Every month we are helping a different organization. This month is HLT; next month we are doing some cleanup around Lake Jackson," said Courtney Green.



Suzanne Schilffarth and Kevin Hacker explain the painting.

Supervising the workers were Allan Grosman, who is the Director of the play they are working on the set of, Kevin Hacker, actor and set construction and design and Suzanne Schilffarth, actor and director.

They were pleased to have the additional hands available to assist in their creation of the set for "The Sensuous

Senator', which will be opening in September.

"This is so exciting! We show them what needs to be done and they just jump in and do it. It's wonderful having them here to help us out," said Schilffarth.

Some of the ladies were painting, others were creating bricks and still others were moving furniture and props. All



Sarah Albritton measuring material to make bricks.

seemed to be having a great time sharing the work, sporting wide smiles.

"We like doing the smaller monthly service projects for local non-profits," explained Sarah Albritton. "It's been a great experience and we're really sad it's

almost over. We're trying to give back to multiple organizations as we were exposed to so many in the program."

Those present that were working at HLT included Courtney Green (South Florida

GIVING

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State College), Sarah Albritton (Clifton Larson Allen CPA), Cindy Weed (Highlands County Tax Collectors Office), Karen Kensington (Supervisor of Elections Office), Cathy Truelove (Highlands County Clerk Office) and Amy Smith (Mason G. Smoak Foundation).



Suzanne Schilffarth explains how to measure and cut the materials.



Allan Grosman, director of the 'Sensuous Senator,' and actor Kevin Hacker.



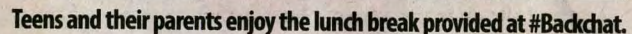
By KIM LEATHERMAN
CORRESPONDENT

Exchanges on dealing with mean tweets and the pros and cons to being

Trey Griffin was the guest speaker who related his experiences to the teens' lives. Aisha Alayande acted as emcee and facilitator.

"We tend to think that our teens aren't engaged," said Alayande. "They are,

Jessica Keyser facilitated dialogue in the Parent's Lounge where she introduced positive clubs such as Go Girls and the Positive Action Club. She provided brochure resources and an abstinence-based book to



TEEN

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assist parents in talking with their children about sex.

A representative from the Tri-County Human Services was on hand to promote drug prevention and other resources that

are available through the organization. The Life Skills program they offer is an eight-week program dealing with self-esteem, communication, social skills and more.

The teens all stated they were happy they participated in the event.

"We are so glad we came," said Kirsten

Williams. "It was awesome. We will come back again."

Alayande was happy with the turnout and the progress.

"This was a great turnout for our first event," she said. "I can see us doing this quarterly in the other cities throughout Highlands County."



Larry Moore is the owner of Moore Performing Arts and sits on many advisory boards that deal with youth. He helped the parents understand their teens better.



The youth from "The Show Must Go On" performed a skit for the teen audience at #Backchat held at South Florida State College.

Left: Jessica Keyser facilitated in the Parent's Lounge and had many handouts and books for the adults to use as resources.



Trey Griffin (left) was the guest speaker at #Backchat and Aisha Alayande performed as emcee and facilitator.

Leadership Highlands taking applications for 2016 class

AVON PARK —

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the range of needs in the community and identifies resources to meet those needs; provides participants with the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with each other and existing community leaders; and encourages civic participation and volunteer involvement in

the community.

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Each class includes an orientation in August, a

retreat in September, and nine monthly themed sessions that include an overnight trip to Tallahassee and graduation ceremony in June.

Previous classes have included visits to the Lake Placid murals, Sebring Regional Airport, local hospitals, city and county

governments, and the court system.

For information and an online application, visit the SFSC website and Search "Leadership Highlands," or contact Kris Juve, program director, at 784-7189 or [juvek@](mailto:juvek@southflorida.edu)

southflorida.edu.

Return the application to the Avon Park, Lake Placid, or Sebring chamber of commerce, or mail to Leadership Highlands, Attn: Kris Juve, SFSC, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park, FL 33825.

Local history in peril

Late resident's collection of Florida,
Highlands County artifacts could be lost

BY PAUL CATALA
Highlands Today

LORIDA — From the 1950s through 2015, she meticulously documented and cataloged historic moments and neatly organized and tucked away documents, newspaper clippings, drawings, books and personal memorabilia.

But over the seven months since Audrey Vickers died, the material vestiges of her career as a reporter around South Florida and the Heartland and the time she served as a Highlands County commissioner have become disorganized, cluttered and overwhelming for her family.

HISTORY, Page 9



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Nancy Pyle, daughter of the late Audrey Vickers, stands in her mother's office at her home in Lorida on Wednesday.

History

From Page 1

ily.

Vickers died Feb. 20 from kidney cancer at 80 years old and left her ranch-style Lorida home and separate office space off Wright Lane filled with thousands of historic documentation.

One of her daughters, Nancy Pyle, said she's at a red-alert moment, trying to decide what to do with the cache and collection of items she feels are invaluable to not only Highlands County's history but also Florida in general.

Pyle said she's hoping a school, gallery, museum or government entity will step in. Otherwise, it could all possibly be destroyed by an estate sales company.

"No one knows the worth of all of it. There's more there than I ever thought possible. She had been an avid Florida collector all her life; she had everything Florida," said Pyle, as she walked around the home and property surrounded by woods and pastures her parents, Marion and Audrey Vickers, bought in 1962.

The home is where Pyle and her sister, Kelly Vickers, and two brothers, John and Ed, spent their formative years growing up after their parents moving from Hollywood in the mid-1950s.

♦ ♦ ♦

What was a quaint, cozy abode is now slowly being encumbered by a lack of daily maintenance. Yet, a hint of the home's former gallery-like ambiance remains.

In the living room, den and hallways, works of art by artists such as Alice Hansen line walls and lean floor-bound against walls bearing paintings of the Highlands Hammock State Park boardwalk, the Kenilworth Hotel, the Edna Pierce-Lockett Estate and various landscapes.

However, it's what's in Vickers' personal office that bears the majority of her collections, now hap-

hazardly stacked in boxes and piles around the rooms: copies of newspaper articles she accumulated over 40 years as a reporter, including the Hollywood Sun-Tattler, the Palm Beach Post (where she was bureau chief), the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, The Sebring News-Sun and Highlands Today.

Working before the days of email, there are also boxes full of Highlands County commission minutes from the mid-1970s; letters and correspondences to local, state and national officials; and a variety of press ID cards for formal government events — including one signed by former Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles and U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

Vickers served on the Highlands County Commission in the early 1990s, and in 1999, she started the first of two four-year terms as a South Florida State College trustee, when it was a community college.

A cache of dozens of 35 mm color slides still in their boxes, bearing 1970s

and 1980s images of long-gone Highlands County landmarks and nearby areas such as downtown Arcadia, are stored in a container.

Then there are thousands of bound books in the office and the house, fiction and nonfiction, bearing state and local history.

And that's just a fraction of what's contained in the time capsule Pyle inherited.

"I need advice on what to do with it all. Everyone tells me something different," lamented Pyle, as she walked around the office. "When I was younger, I wasn't interested, but I should have been because I also was a reporter. I just wasn't that interested in the history. I was more interested in going to school and being a journalist."

Although Pyle is at a loss for what to do with the collections, local and state entities have reached out to literally lend a hand.

"She is welcome to reach out to the state archives and we'll be happy to work with her and review the items," said Mer-

edith Beatrice, director of communications for the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee. "I encourage her to contact us and we review items case by case."

At the Sebring Historical Society, Archivist Carol Goad said she would hate to see the collections tossed out. She said she would personally go through historical stocks to see what should be kept.

"I'd hate to see it all lost. It sure would be a big loss to our community to let this stuff go. Just bring it here and I'll go through it," she said.

As for the artwork, Anastasia Saunders, operations manager for the Highlands Art League, said Vicker's collection is "something we'd definitely be interested in."

"I can talk to our executive committee and look at everything. We need to preserve some of the paintings for the future. It all needs to be saved," she said.

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Back to 'The Jac'

Jacaranda's SFSC student residents move in for a new school year



BY PALLAVI AGARWAL
Highlands Today staff

AVON PARK — Boxes of clothing, bedding, mini-fridges and microwave ovens slowly made their way to their destinations Thursday in the north side of Avon Park's Hotel Jacaranda.

Highlands County residents may know "The Jac" — as the historic, 1920s-era building is affectionately known — for its Southern-style buffets and charming lodging, but there is more to the imposing brick building than meets the eye.

For several years, a part of the Jacaranda has been a dormitory for South Florida State College students, and just like in past years, students Thursday were busy moving in for the new semester.

Most of the students who live in the Jacaranda are on athletic scholarships, said SFSC Dean for Student Services Timothy Wise, although the college does not differentiate between athletes and non-athletes and all students are welcome to stay. Five or six of the hotel's student residents, in fact, are not on any

JACARANDA, Page 9



Top: Gus Ramirez helps students take a luggage cart full of their belongings up the elevator at the Hotel Jacaranda during move-in day on Thursday. The hotel serves as dorms for South Florida State College's athletes and a few non-athlete students. **Above:** Kassidy Stawicki, a sophomore on the SFSC softball team, sets up her alarm clock while unpacking in her dorm room. **Left:** Ashley Vega, a freshman softball player at SFSC, unpacks her belongings in her dorm room.

RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Jacaranda

From Page 1

athletic scholarships, he said.

While it is unique for colleges with two-year degree programs to have dormitories, combining a traditional hotel with college student housing perhaps sets the Jacaranda apart from most other dorms.

The south side of the hotel, facing Main Street, houses traditional guests. On the opposite side, students occupy about 60 or more beds, some with one bed per room and others with two, on two floors, for male and female students each.

The dorm side of the hotel is separated from the hotel guest side by doors that are locked at all times, Wise said, and students need keys to get in. If the separating door is open for more than a minute, an alarm goes off and security is immediately alerted.

The South Florida State College Foundation Inc., which owns the hotel, bought it to preserve its historic character and has been working to upgrade

the building while keeping its historic character alive. A good example of that would be the hotel elevator — it has to be cranked to get it into motion. Thursday, Wise also showed some of the old-style sinks in the rooms, and nowhere is the old-world feeling greater than taking a stroll through the lobby.

Jamie Bateman, executive director for institutional advancement and the person who also oversees the foundation, described the historic building as a “gem” for the community and a great place to house students since the SFSC campus does not have its own dorm.

Its expansive lobby and old-world charm aside, the historic hotel is not just a local historic jewel; its existence as student housing has helped SFSC attract student athletes, Wise said.

“Without it, we couldn’t have done it,” he said. Depending on the scholarships they receive, some students may pay part of their housing costs; others may have full scholarships.

Food stipends include meals on campus — at a

Subway restaurant on the college cafeteria. Either way, Wise said, they break even on the costs of operating the dorm.



Some of the students

moving in Thursday were Shelby Press, from North Miami Beach, and Vangie Futch, from Fort Meade, both softball players who came to SFSC because they wanted to play for SFSC head softball coach Carlos Falla.

Press is a sophomore and by 11 a.m. Thursday had everything set up in her room, with help from dad, Michael.

Press said she found the dorms and Avon Park relaxing and, depending on games and practice, visits home whenever she can.

Futch, who is a freshman, was a little bit more apprehensive about her first year in college but was looking forward to kicking off her higher education.

This year, some of the returning students could not have failed to notice the new furniture in the rooms and a new person to lean on — Andrea Lott, newly appointed coordinator for residence life and

Title IX compliance.

While the foundation continues to own the Jacaranda, the college’s student services department now runs the student resident program, and getting Lott on board was part of that re-alignment, Wise said.

With the help of two resident assistants, Lott’s job is to make student residents’ stay more meaningful, so they can have fun and learn together.

A former student-athlete herself with a master’s degree in higher education, Lott hopes to create a “more inclusive community” of students at the Jacaranda.

One of the plans is for the students to attend each other’s games, she said. There are trips planned to Bucs games, social activities and pool-time activities.

Almost two-thirds of the students moving in this year are freshmen, and being away from home for the first time can be a little daunting. Many have had their own rooms at home, and sharing a room with someone else or living under more stringent rules may be a new experience for some, Lott said.

Amanda Byers, assistant coach for women’s softball, knows how the gig goes. She herself was a student living at Jacaranda.

“It’s difficult with mom and dad not being there to do laundry,” she said.

Byers said students of-

ten rely on each other and learn fast: “You teach me to do this and I’ll teach you to do that.”

She has also seen the resident program change a lot, pointing out how bringing Lott on board is one of them.

Donor pays for naming rights to SFSC venue

Benefactor's name
to be unveiled Oct. 1

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College is gearing up for a major announcement about its Theatre for the Performing Arts.

A donor has entered into an agreement for the naming

**“(This) was
a significant
opportunity
for the
college ...”**

rights to
the per-
formance
venue.

The college's board of trustees voted unanimously July 22 to give col-

lege President Thomas Leitzel the authority to complete and sign a contract to grant the naming rights.

Leitzel confirmed Thursday that he signed the naming agreement on Monday.

At the request of the donor,

NAMING, Page 6

Ken Lambert
Board of Trustees
member

Naming

From Page 1

the college will be announcing the benefactor's name and more details behind the agreement at an Oct. 1 news conference, he said. The college hopes to get media coverage from "beyond our area," including radio and TV, Leitzel said. SFSC board of trustees member Ken Lambert said Friday that a "significant" donation is involved in the naming agreement and that the donation has already been earmarked, but he could not provide details.

Lambert, who was the board chairman at the time, explained how he added the item to ap-

prove the naming rights on the board's agenda at the beginning of the July 22 meeting so it could vote on it the very same day.

"I made the judgment call as the chairman of the board that this was a significant opportunity for the college," he said. "We needed to stay on a timeline so all the pieces could fall into place appropriately to make it happen."

Lambert said, since it was not on the agenda, he could not have presented the naming rights issue to the board unless the board was willing to amend the agenda.

"I asked for an amendment to be able to add that on to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting," he said. It was added

to the agenda and approved by the board.

"In my opinion, it would have been irresponsible of me not to do so, knowing that this was a significant opportunity for the college and it had a timeline that needed to be met," Lambert said. "We are trying to do it in a way that it benefits everybody — the donor, the college community and the community at large."



The college's auditorium on the Avon Park campus underwent a total rebuild during a \$12.5 million renovation project in 2009 that was completed in early 2010.

After the renovation, the au-

ditorium was named the Theatre for the Performing Arts.

The venue is used for a variety of college and community events and is also rented for other activities. The college's Artist Series performances and the now twice-a-year commencement ceremonies are held in the facility.

It is also used for the Avon Park High and Lake Placid High graduation ceremonies and concerts by high school and community bands, choruses and orchestras.

"I think it is going to be very exciting for everybody; it's a terrific thing," Lambert added.

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CHRISTY SWIFT

Culinary professor Tim Hansen wears his whites in his office in the Hotel Jacaranda. A retired cooling unit in the office is used to store cooking utensils.

What's cooking?

SFSC culinary professor trains students for food, hospitality careers

BY CHRISTY SWIFT

Highlands Today correspondent

AVON PARK — If you ask what's cooking at South Florida State College, you'll get the best answer from Tim Hansen, professor of culinary arts and hospitality.

Hansen, 62, has been preparing Highlands County students to work in the food and beverage industry for 15 years now. "We cover everything from soup to nuts," Hansen quipped.

That includes making sauces, baking and restaurant management. Hansen pointed out that all the cooking is done from scratch.

"They don't need to be taught to open up a can and heat it up," said the jovial professor.

A native of Clinton, Iowa, Hansen loves cooking all types of food and trained at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in New York City. In his career he moved up from sous chef to apprentice to executive

chef and worked in a number of high-end clubs across the Midwest.

"It was really fun," Hansen reminisced. "Back then the night clubs had food and beverage."

He worked under a German master chef and another European-trained chef who studied at France's best culinary school, the Cordon Bleu. When he was not much older than some of his students, Hansen recalled pre-

Cooking

From Page 1

paring food as an executive chef for a huge black tie event under the European master chef.

"It was an electric atmosphere. We did ice carvings, we did Old World hors d'oeuvres and appetizers," he said. There was a mountain of ice filled with oysters and clams; there was lobster Newburg; there was tournedos rossini (beef tenderloin topped with goose liver pate and sauce).

"We got a standing ovation from a roomful of people in tuxedos. It was as cool as could be," Hansen smiled.

But it was the frigid winters that prompted him to move down to Avon Park in 1986. At the time he was working as executive chef for a country club in Danville, Illinois.

"There were 30 days where it never got above 30 degrees below with the wind chill. I had had enough," Hansen recalled.

His parents were living



CHRISTY SWIFT

Professor Tim Hansen checks out the coats his students will wear in the kitchen as they learn to cook everything "from soup to nuts."

in Avon Park and told him about a woman who was in trouble with her restaurant business and needed an executive chef.

Hansen ended up partnering with her as executive chef of Crawford's Chateau in Avon Park. The pair ran the restaurant for 11 years before the woman passed away and Hansen went to work as executive chef at the Oaks Country Club in Avon Park.

It was at Crawford's Chateau that Hansen met his wife, Bernadette. On

Valentine's Day, with 800 reservations on deck, two of his servers didn't show up.

It was Bernadette's first night as a server. A few years later they began dating and got married. That was 16 years ago, and Hansen's two grown step-children now both work in the medical field.

"I think when they were young they had to roll so much silverware that they ran screaming (from the restaurant industry)," Hansen joked.

This semester Hansen is looking forward to another group of aspiring chefs, about 12 in his morning class and 12 in the afternoon class.

They will learn how to make proper sauces from scratch and how to cook fish to perfection, and they'll even cater some events for the college, including a favorite meal that Hansen introduced a few years ago — the "turducken" dinner.

"It's a chicken in a duck in a turkey," he explained.

The students, who train in half of the Hotel Jacaranda's kitchen but do not cook for hotel guests, will also cater the college's upcoming Jubilee and Oktoberfest events.

And while he's had many exciting experiences in his career, even as a young chef, Hansen warned that nobody becomes a great chef right out of college.

"It's like coming out of school as a lawyer. You don't start out as a senior partner. You have to go out and learn your trade," he said.



BACK IN ORANGE

SFSC welcomes students to fall semester

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — New and returning students attending South Florida State College Monday found the welcoming committee ready to greet them and point them in the right direction to start the fall semester.

At the welcome location near Building B, Dean of Student Services Timothy Wise noted that Monday was the first “full day” of classes as some of the vocational classes started Friday.

A lot of new students are showing up, he said, and while students already attended orientation they have to find their classes now.

“It looks like a good crowd; we have a lot of returning students,” Wise said. “We are planning on an enrollment increase of around 3 percent.”

As students continue to add and drop courses, it will take most of the week before the enrollment numbers “settle out,” he said.

College staff and student government association members manned three welcome back locations on the campus: at Building B, Building I and the Health Science Education Center.

The greeters offered students free planners, a water bottle and a campus map and answered questions.

This year the college has more student greeters stationed inside Building B, Wise noted. They have been helping students all summer find the right office, whether advising or financial aid.

Student greeters will be inside



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Top: Student Jumar Moffatt walks down a balloon-lined sidewalk at the main entrance to South Florida State College's Avon Park campus on Monday morning. **Above:** Student planners sit out on a table while staff from South Florida State College welcome students back for the fall semester on Monday morning. **Below:** Chance McCall gets directions from Summer Miller at South Florida State College during the first day of the semester on Monday. The college's administration and other staff set up around campus giving directions, bottles of water and planners to new students.



Building B the entire week.

Wise sat at the inside greeting table for a time to help students.

A male student asked, “B 306.” Wise pointed and told the student to take the elevator to the third-floor.

Wise advised another student,

who was headed to the Health Science Education Center, to drive to the center and park in one of the numerous lots near the building.

President Thomas Leitzel said it is always exciting when a new academic year begins.



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Kris Rider, chairwoman of the college's board of trustees, hands out student planners while welcoming students back for the fall semester at South Florida State College on Monday morning.

SFSC

From Page 1

"We just want to welcome our students and let them know we care about them and thank them for selecting South Florida State College," he said.

The college's Director of Testing/Assessment Amy Hart welcomed students and handed out planners.

"I am new; this is my sixth week," she noted.

She previously worked for Pasco-Hernando State College in New Port Richey.

Hart said she relocated here because she likes the small, family atmosphere at SFSC.

Board of Trustees Chair-

man Kris Rider was among the group at Building B that was welcoming students.

While students were offered small bottles of water, a few seemed ready to take a long hike because they brought their own one-gallon water jug with them.

Matt Portis explained he is on the baseball team and the coaches want the players to carry drinking water with them.

"We have got to stay hydrated with all this heat. So we try to stay ahead of the game by carrying around water and drinking it throughout the day," he said.

Portis, who is studying chemistry, said it is his first year as a college student, but he has amassed

enough dual-enrollment credits from high school to be classified a sophomore.

Angie Reyes said she was nervous about her first class at SFSC.

She was among a group that grew to about 20 students who waited for class on the benches that encircle the pendulum in Building B.

The Avon Park High graduate arrived more than an hour early for her 9:30 a.m. compressed development math class because she rode to school with her sister, who had an earlier class.

The welcome back effort will be held again 7:30-11 a.m. today.

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Tom Staik/News-Sun

Loretta Jackson, an employee of the South Florida State College Career Development Center, speaks with student Ninoshka Sala on Tuesday.

Welcome back: 3,000 students return to class at SFSC

By **TOM STAIK**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The sidewalk in front of the Catherine P. Cornelius Student Services and Classroom Complex at South Florida State College was a hub of activity this week as the college welcomed students for the start of fall term.

Loretta Jackson, who works in the college's Career Development Center, donned a "I love SFSC" shirt as she headed the welcome line of staff members and administrators who volunteered their time to greet students.

"Summertime is very quiet," Jackson said. "I could definitely tell fall term had started this week."

The Career Development

Center, Jackson said, was buzzing Monday as students prepared for classes.

"We had at least 60 students come in," Jackson said. "Many of them came to print their syllabus. We have a printer purchased by the Student Government Association. It is one of the services we provide."

As music played from loud speakers, other volunteers handed out bottles of cold water, campus maps and SFSC day planners.

Dean of Students Dr. Timothy Wise initiated the back-to-school welcome program at the college as a way to alleviate some of the students first-day jitters.

"The idea is to make students feel as comfortable and welcome as possible," Wise said.



Tom Staik/News-Sun

Kyle Hunnewell, a transfer student from Tampa, chats with an orientation volunteer as he walks to class with his skateboard on Tuesday as classes resume at South Florida State College.

The three-day program kicked-off Friday with the volunteer brigade welcoming students to the start of vocational programs and continued Monday and Tuesday with the start of academic classes.

Ribbon cutting marks grand opening of new campus store

AVON PARK — South Florida State College celebrated the grand opening of its new bookstore recently, with a ribbon-cutting officiated by SFSC's trustees. Employees and a few confused students looked on from the store's crowded aisles.

The store still occupies the same space in the Cornelius P. Cornelius Student Services Building on the Highlands Campus but it underwent a major renovation and change in management.

"The students and employees are just loving it," said Christine Andrews, the store's manager. "They tell me they enjoy the completely revamped look and feel of the campus store."

Andrews added that patrons say they like the expanded variety of SFSC-branded apparel, the addition of a coffee bar, and an inviting layout

that includes seating.

As part of SFSC president Thomas C. Leitzel's institution-wide drive to enhance student experience and engagement, the college's district board of trustees approved a request for proposals last May seeking a new operator for the bookstore.

The Follett Corporation won the competition to operate what is now known as the "campus store." It immediately installed new management and embarked on a major renovation of the store's interiors.

Now, students, SFSC employees, and members of the community can shop while sipping Starbucks coffee in a brilliantly lighted store with walls emblazoned with large student-oriented photographs.

Visitors to the campus store will find mannequins modeling SFSC



Courtesy photo

South Florida State College Trustees (from left) Joe Wright, Lana C. Puckorius, and Derren J. Bryan at the ribbon cutting for the bookstore at SFSC.

hoodies. The campus store will hold a student-focused discount today (Thursday) when apparel will be reduced 20 percent.

As college employees joined the trustees and Follett employees for the ribbon cutting that included cake and coffee, a few students trickled in to buy their books before the start of classes on Monday.

The campus store will remain open for extended hours until Saturday, Aug. 29, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday.

Regular store hours will be posted soon.

Follett is higher education's largest bookseller and retailer of college apparel, with 1,200 campus stores and more than 1,600 virtual stores nationwide. Follett also offers an online service — accessible through

SFSC's website— that allows students and the public to purchase books and apparel online.



Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, South Florida State College president, and Helene Foster, Follett regional manager, at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the college's new bookstore.

SFSC's Fire Science program set to start

Longtime effort noted on college's project list since 2008

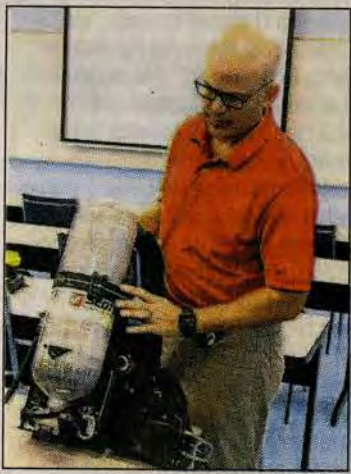
BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — A 44-foot-tall fire tower that simulates residential and commercial fires, including a stove fire with flashover, is just part of South Florida Community College's preparations for its new fire fighting training program.

The college's fire science facilities and equipment on the Avon Park campus includes two fully operational and equipped fire trucks, five props and four peripheral training stations.

PROGRAM, Page 11



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Steve Ashworth, South Florida State College chair of EMS and fire science programs, with a firefighter breathing apparatus in a classroom in Building P on the Avon Park Campus.

Program

From Page 2

The certificate program will give students the opportunity to learn techniques for fighting specialized fires, including flammable liquids, propane and automobiles.

"A lot of thought went into this," Steve Ashworth, chair of EMS and fire science programs, said Thursday.

This is like a fire department he said as he stood next to the program's two fire trucks and described the testing procedures and documentation for the essential gear such as the hoses and the firefighter breathing apparatus.

During a walkthrough tour of the fire tower, Ashworth said the training possibilities are endless.

The tower, which has metal stairways inside and outside, includes a burning bed simulator, a search and rescue room and anchoring bolts on the rooftop to secure ropes for rappelling down the side of the tower.

At Wednesday's meeting of the college's board of trustees, Kevin Brown, dean of Division of Applied Sciences and Technologies, said the fire tower is the college's first building to meet green standards as an environmentally friendly building/facility. The college has applied for an award.

Brown explained that the Fire Science program purchased two fire trucks for use in training exercises — a 1984 GMC fire truck valued at \$12,000 was purchased from the City of Frostproof for \$6,000 and the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners donated \$15,000 toward the \$30,000 cost for purchasing a retired Hardee County Fire and Rescue fire truck, a 2003 Pierce Contender.

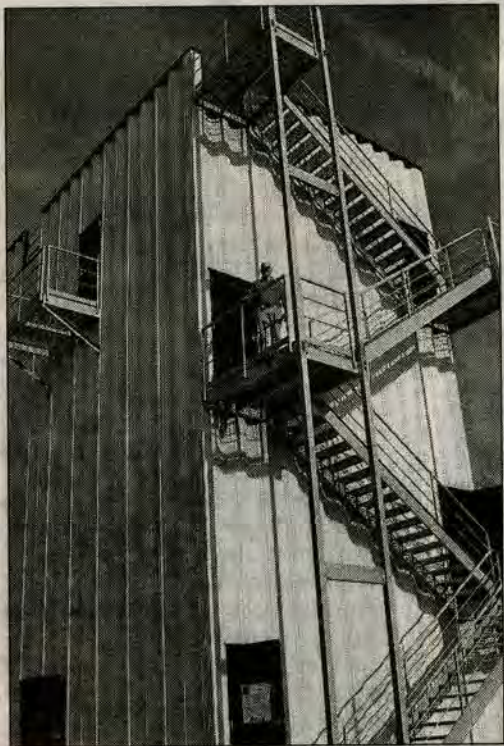
Thus far, 25 individuals have shown significant interest in the program, which will have a capacity of 18 students, he said.

The college will have an online application for the program available soon.

Brown noted that the effort to create a fire fighting certificate program has been a long-term process.

In June 2008, the project was listed in the SFSC Educational Plant Survey and approved by the college's district board of trustees.

The board of trustees requested funding for the program every year until it was funded in 2014, through the help of state Sen.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Steve Ashworth, South Florida State College chair of EMS and fire science programs, on the outside stairway of the 44-foot-tall fire tower, which was designed to simulate residential and commercial fires.

Denise Grimsley, with an allocation of \$2.6 million for 2014-15.

The college's new Fire Fighter Minimum Standards program will start in mid-September with two modules.

Firefighter I certification, which consists of 206 contact hours, is for students who need formal training to become volunteer firefighters.

Firefighter II certification, which consists of 192 contact hours, is for students who want to become professional firefighters.

The programs can be completed in two terms (about one year) at the SFSC Avon Park Campus.

The college's board of trustees was scheduled to tour the new Fire Science program's facilities prior to its meeting on Wednesday, but the tour was canceled due to safety concerns amid heavy rains and lightning.

SFSC offers workshop on unmanned aerial vehicles

Aim is to educate law enforcement about emerging technology

Staff Report

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will hold a one-day educational workshop on unmanned aerial vehicles (also known as UAVs) 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 25.

As the official and private use of UAVs spreads, SFSC aims to educate law enforcement and the public on how first responders can harness this emerging technology to save lives.

At the same time, UAVs, when used by criminals or terrorists, have the potential to cause great harm, a danger to which law enforcement agencies must be alert.

There is no charge to attend. The precise location will be announced as the event draws nearer and the college gauges the expected turnout.

"We plan to cover the good, the bad and the ugly of UAVs,"

said Curtis Ivy, director of criminal justice programs at SFSC's public service academy. "Rapidly growing UAV use by public agencies and by criminals, along with media attention, spurred us to put on this workshop."

UAVs, popularly but erroneously referred to as drones, are remotely-piloted aerial vehicles. A UAV can travel from its launch point and hover over a distant location, capturing video of a far-off crash site, delivering life-saving equipment to a stranded hiker or an explosive device to crowded stadium.

While the workshop will mainly educate law enforcement, the public is invited.

Ivy said law enforcement personnel and other first responders will learn about options for deploying UAVs in a broad array of situations.

From lifeguards using UAVs to get a life vest to a swimmer caught up in a rip tide, to searching for a missing child, to delivering a critical medical device to a remote location, Ivy said public agencies can put UAVs to use

in ways that don't involve direct enforcement of the law.

At the same time, Ivy said law enforcement agencies must be alert to the potential for criminals to adopt this technology. He cited a recent instance in which illegal drugs were smuggled into a prison by a UAV operated from a pickup truck parked near the facility. The UAV easily flew over the fence, dropped a load of drugs in the prison yard and returned to its operator.

Two experienced UAV operators will lead the workshop. Sgt. Joe Marble, of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, will focus on what first responders need to know about UAV technology and use.

John Byrd, professor of electronics at SFSC, will join Marble to showcase the potential deployment of UAVs with a live demonstration.

To reserve a seat or for more information, call SFSC's Criminal Justice Academy at 784-7280 or email publicservice@southflorida.edu.

South Florida State College Women's Cross-Country



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's first women's cross-country team is looking forward to the season. From left: Cali Gumpel, Alexis Armstead, Grace Miller, Julia Soto and Savannah Walter.

Ready to run

South Florida's first women's cross-country team set for season

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's first ever women's cross-country team is ready for the season.

The first cross-country team in school history was introduced Friday and consists of five young ladies who are very enthusiastic to be on the inaugural squad.

The team has been bonding and practicing in preparation for the upcoming season. South Florida coach Krista Schult was the cross-country coach for Sebring High and is adjusting to the new rules and regulations.

"It is really exciting being the first team in school history," Schult said. It was a selling point that I used to recruit some of the girls. This is a brand new program and these girls will be the ones that make the routines, the team cheers and what we do before meets. They get the first uniforms and first warmups and all that. It is just exciting to be the inaugural team here."

Schult had success at Sebring and brings the same enthusiastic demeanor

to her role as Panthers coach.

"So far we are coming together pretty good," Schult said. "We have only been together for a week of practices. I have seen from the first day the girls were bonding and coming together as a team. These girls will be running 3.1 miles in competition. Cross-country is an individual sport, but it's still a team sport because it's scored as a team. Every runner that they pass is one better placement for the team. You want to get the lowest score so every runner they get ahead of places us better as a team."

The cross-country events are scored using the top five runners from each team. One thing South Florida lacks is depth.

"I only have five runners," Schult said. "If one gets injured I don't have that sixth person so that will be the hardest part. Our goal is to make it to Nationals and we will have to place well as a team. We are focusing on that team-wise, and we have to rely on each other in order to make it to those meets. I have done some local recruiting but the closest we have is Winter Haven, two of the girls are from



South Florida State College cross-country coach Krista Schult.

there, but I hope as the program grows the local schools will see the opportunity they can have in college. To kind of entice them to keep working hard and to keep their times down so they can compete in college cause the college level is

CROSS-COUNTRY, Page 7

Cross-Country

From Page 1

a lot different then the high school level."

South Florida is approaching the season with lots of optimism.

"We are trying to pace ourselves," Schult said. "We want to start off slow and run faster towards the end. Grace Miller is the fastest recruit we have right now. She is at 19.01 minutes right now and our goal is to get her under that 19-minute mark. This is a fresh season and who knows how they will do at the college level. Nationals will be in Iowa this year and we want to be ranked in the top 25 in the coaches poll and I think we have a chance. I am still looking to add another girl to the team just in case we do have an injury and we are looking on campus for that person to join the team.

"The hardest part about switching from high school level to college level is when coaching high school you have a large range of variety. I had girls running anywhere from 32-minute 5K to 24-minute. With the college level the times are a lot closer so in that sense it is a lot easier to plan their training



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

The SFSC cross-country team, from left, assistant coach Cassandra Marentes, Julia Soto, Grace Miller, Cali Gumpel, Alexis Armstead, Savannah Walter and Panthers coach Krista Schult.

and things like that. Learning the rules and regulations has been a little bit challenging, but I learn something new every day."

Miller is excited to be part of Panthers history.

"We are all freshmen

and this will be a new experience." Miller said. "It's exciting being the first cross-country team at South Florida State College. It is a little nerve-racking because people don't know what to expect. We want to show ev-

eryone what we can do. This year I have a goal of going to Nationals with all of them and plan on breaking 18.50."

South Florida has team trials on Aug. 29. The Panthers will open the season on Sept. 5 in Jacksonville.

■ VOLLEYBALL: **SFSC**

Kentucky native Sanders set to assist SFSC volleyball

By **JAMES TAYLOR**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – Kelsey Sanders may be from the Bluegrass State, but she is beginning to feel quite at home in Florida. Most notably, South Florida State College.

Sanders has become quite attached to the Sunshine State, especially after becoming a starter for SFSC's volleyball team. In fact, she is one of only three starters returning to the Panthers this year, making her a valuable asset in more ways than one.

SFSC coach Kimberly Crawford said that Sanders is one of the team's key

setters and will play an essential part in the success of the program this year.

"She is smart and a natural leader," Crawford said.

Sanders proved as much on the court last year when she recorded 39 kills, 24 service aces, 237 digs, 39 block assists and 776 assists as recorded by the Florida College System Activities Associates 2014 Volleyball Review.

Her play helped SFSC finish 18-13 overall, 3-5 in the Suncoast Conference, and place third in the conference tournament, just missing a state tournament berth. The Panthers

are hoping to build on that with Sanders and two other returnees and nine newcomers.

"I think we are going to do good," Sanders said.

"Hopefully, we will win conference.

"We were just shy last year in the conference tournament," Sanders said. "We came in third and the top two teams advanced. It was kind of a downer, but hopefully this year we will come back stronger."

But this year is a different one, especially with nine



SANDERS

newcomers.

As for the adjustment to nine new players this year, Kelsey stated that all the players get along very well.

"I would not say losing nine players hurt us," Kelsey said. "We lost nine players we had chemistry with and now we have to build that chemistry with nine new players. But we will do fine.

"We are really working on middle chemistry to get our middle going," Sanders said. "Everything is looking good. We are coming together."

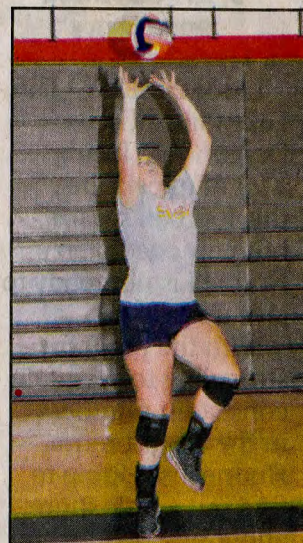
Sanders noted that her goals for this season are being a team player, bring

everything she has to every game and leaving it on the court and trying to break records.

A radiology major, Sanders is used to working hard on the volleyball court. Hailing from Wilmore, Ky., she was a four-year varsity starter in high school. She was recruited by several colleges, but chose SFSC because of the warm weather.

"It is cold in Kentucky," Sanders said with a laugh. "But I really like it here. I like Coach Crawford and how she runs her program."

Sanders said she plans to continue her education at a



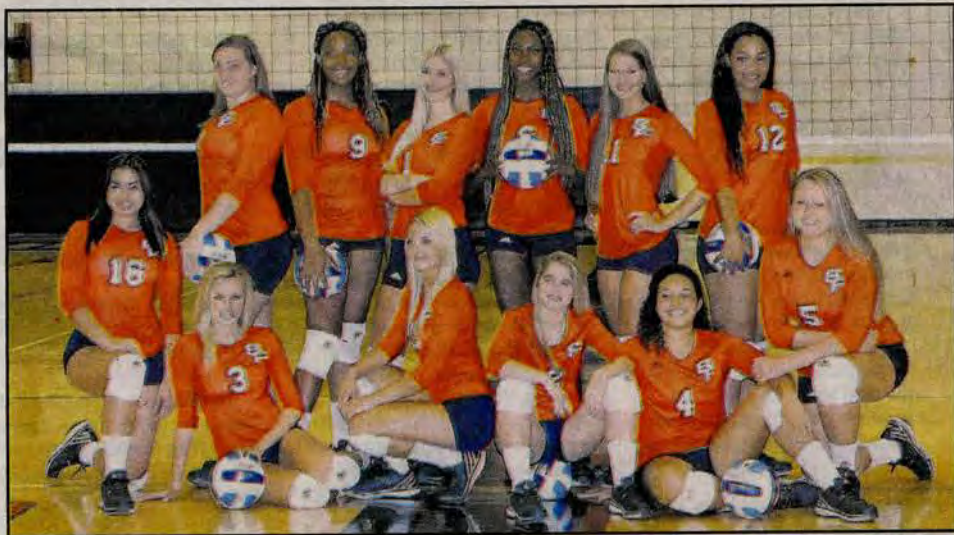
James Taylor/News-Sun photos

South Florida State College volleyball player Kelsey Sanders shows off her setting skills last week. Sanders, a Kentucky native, is one of three returning starters this season.

four-year college where she can continue to play volleyball.

■ COLLEGES: **South Florida State College Volleyball Preview**

Panthers dig in for volleyball



James Taylor/News-Sun photo

The South Florida State College volleyball team comes together for a team shot during Media Day last Friday. The Panthers are coming off an 18-13 season and feature nine newcomers.

SFSC features
9 newcomers

By **JAMES TAYLOR**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – If the South Florida State College Panthers are to make the state volleyball tournament this year, they will have to scratch and claw there with a host of newcomers.

Despite finishing

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last year with an overall record of 18-13, including a 3-5 record in the Suncoast Conference, SFSC will have to make a go of it this season with just three returnees: Kelsey Sanders and Baylee Gunter, sophomore setters, and Elle Barnett, sophomore outside hitter.

SFSC coach Kim Crawford has the task of melding nine new players with her returnees into a cohesive unit that she hopes will at least threaten to reach the state tournament. Last year, the Panthers finished third in the conference tournament.

"We have our height, we have our quickness," Crawford said. "I feel like we

have good depth on the team. They are gelling. We are in Day 5 (as of last Friday) and they are coming together.

"We are doing a lot of individual drills, 2-on-2s and 3-on-3s," Crawford said. "I am actually going to let them play 6-on-6 before they have a day off. I am going to videotape it so I can see how they are working together."

Crawford said SFSC has three good setters and four solid middle hitters. The key will be finding that one player that has that little bit of an edge when the Panthers are playing 6-on-6.

"That is where I am looking and then we will start team concepts (this) week," she said.

Crawford also explained that she usually has five to

six new players every year, but that this year is nine. Although SFSC has just three returnees, those returnees are huge when talking about a 12-player roster. SFSC also has a local player in Avon Park's Otisha Smith, a freshman middle hitter.

"The first thing I like to do when we get them in is get them to know each other," Crawford said. "They get their rooms, set up and they have a couple of days to bond at a personal level while staying at the Jacaranda."

"Then the first couple of days at the gym, we just learn the ropes," Crawford said. "Certain words you say back to the coach, where the volleyballs go, how to put the nets up and take them down, stuff like that. That takes a couple

of days. But they like structure, so if you do the same thing every day, then it all falls into place."

Crawford also noted that for the new players here, there is an adjustment period – not just to being in college and around different people, but also the climate, weather and atmosphere. Two of the newcomers are from Canada, and another from Indiana.

"I have kids that are not from Florida, so the first time we ran a mile, we ran it inside," Crawford said. "We have run outside a couple of times. They are learning how to breathe different air. There are little things that most people do not think about that you have to get the players accustomed to."

When SFSC players return this week,

Crawford said she will start pushing buttons to find out how they are going to react under different scenarios.

"We will see how they channel that emotional change," Crawford said. "Will they be effective on the court? That is where we have to know each other, where that team chemistry comes in. If one is having an off-day, how will it affect the other five on the court or can those five get her back on her game and turn it around?"

Crawford also said that practice is always interesting in what it reveals as they start playing more 6-on-6. "You will find out what they are really good at, then we will exploit that and get it better," she said.

SFSC opens its

PANTHERS VOLLEYBALL

* **What:** 2015 South Florida State College volleyball team.

* **Coach:** Kim Crawford.

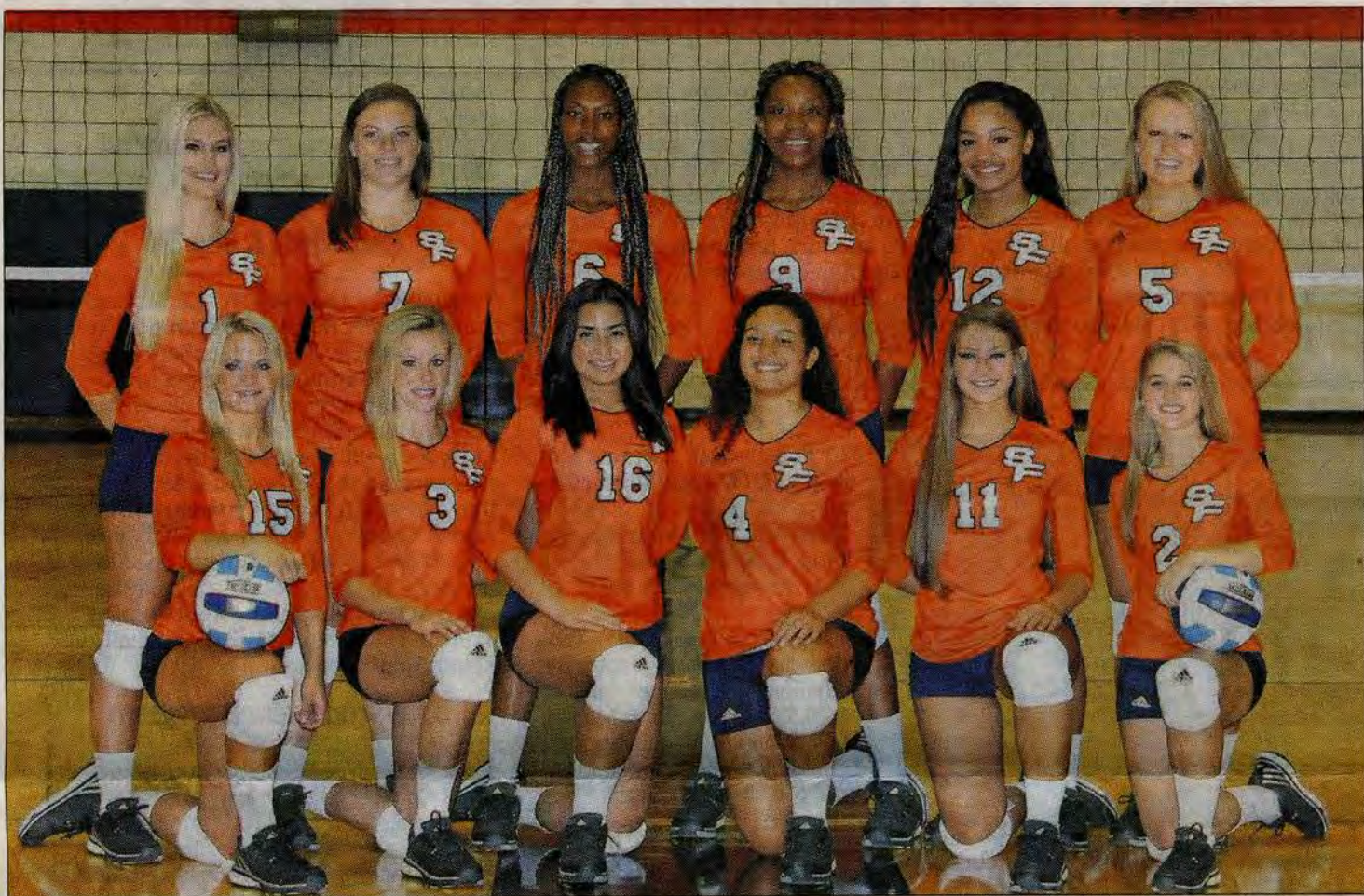
* **Last year:** 18-13 overall, 3-5 in the Suncoast Conference.

* **Returnees:** Kelsey Sanders, sophomore, setter; Elle Barnett, sophomore, outside hitter; Baylee Gunter, sophomore, setter.

* **Newcomers:** Kaelyn Mahoney, freshman, defensive specialist; Leah Sywanyk, sophomore, outside hitter; Emily Swenson, freshman, right-side hitter; Naomi Melville, freshman, middle hitter; Otisha Smith, freshman, middle hitter; Mary Beth Boudrias, freshman, outside hitter; Alexis Sands, freshman, middle hitter; Brooke Westphal, freshman, defensive specialist; Paola Castro, freshman, right-side hitter.

season on Aug. 25 at home against Florida College.

South Florida State College Volleyball



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

The 2015 South Florida State College Panthers volleyball team, back row, from left: Baylee Gunter, Kelsey Sanders, Naomi Melville, Oti-sha Smith, Alexis Sands and Emily Swenson. Front row: Brooke Westphal, Leah Sywanyk, Paola Castro, Elle Barnett, Mary Beth Boudrias and Kaelyn Mahoney.

Panthers look to take next step

South Florida State College
aims for conference tournament

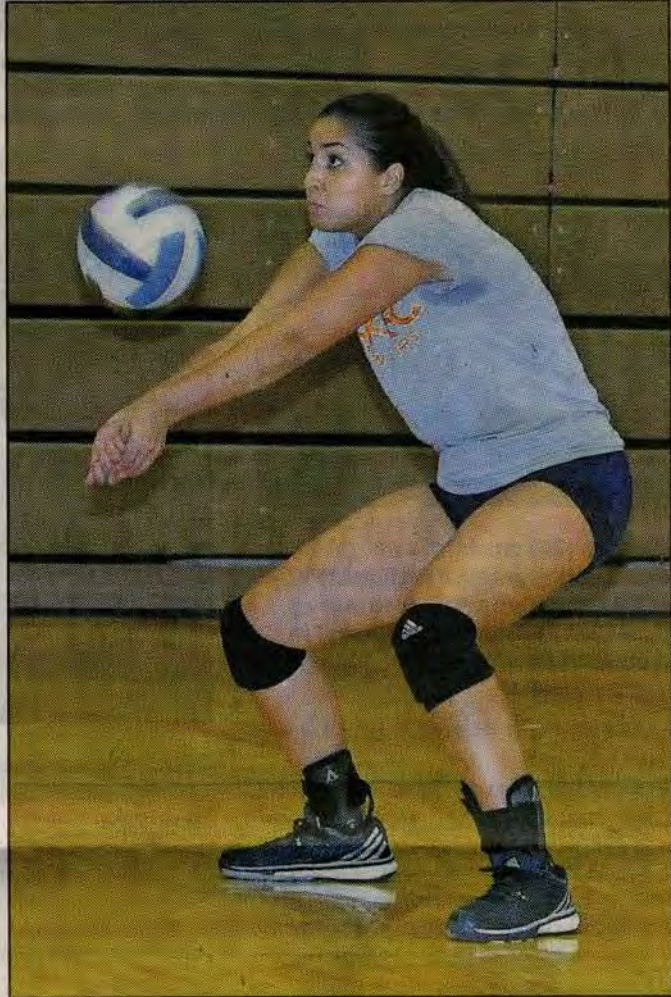
BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Lady Panthers took the court Friday in preparation for the upcoming season. The Panthers have been practicing twice a day, five days a week. With only three returning players and nine new players the team has been bonding and getting to know one another.

"We have nine new kids and three returning," said Panthers coach Kim Crawford. "We have our height and our quickness and I feel that we have good depth on the team. We have been doing individual drills, two on two and three on threes. I'm actually letting them play six on six today for the first time. I'm going to videotape it to see how they are doing and who works

VOLLEYBALL, Page 2



South Florida State College's Paola Castro makes a dig in Friday's practice.

Volleyball

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well with who."

The Panthers are a diverse team with players from all over. The Panthers have one local player, Otisha Smith, who recently graduated from Avon Park High School and three players from north of the border joining the team this season.

"This season I have three Canadians, which is an adjustment, too," Crawford said. "The girls that are not from Florida are not used to running in the Florida climate. The first time we ran a mile we had to do it inside. They are learning how to breathe in this weather. There are little things that you wouldn't think about that you have to get them accustomed to."

Returning for the Panthers are starters Kelsey Sanders, Baylee Gunter and Elle Barnett.

"I like the new players, we all get along really well," Sanders said. "We have been doing a few team bonding things, and I think we are closer than we were last year."

Sanders is hopeful of moving on to a four-year school after this year and would love to play professionally after graduation.

"This season I want to be a team player, I want to bring everything I've got onto the court and leave it all on the court," she said. "I want to break some records, hopefully."

"I think we are going to do good this season. We hope to win conference. We were just shy of making it to conference last year. Only the top two teams ad-



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Otisha Smith makes a dig in practice.

vance and we were in third, but hopefully this year we can change that. We lost nine players that we built chemistry with and now we have to start over again, but I think we are stronger this season."

Crawford said much of the first week of practice is getting acquainted with each other and how things work.

"The first thing I like to do when they first come in is get them to know each other," she said. "They get their rooms set up and they start bonding on a personal level while they live together. Then when they come into the gym for the first time we take it slow so they can

learn the ropes around the gym. They have to learn certain words to say back to the coach, learn where the volleyballs go, how to put up the nets, how to take them down, and stuff like that. They like structure, so if you do the same thing over and over again every day it begins to fall into place."

Even though it's early in the practice schedule, Crawford said several players have already made a good impression on her, including Naomi Melville and Leah Sywanyk.

"Both Naomi and Leah are from Canada and have really stood out to me because their skill set is so good," she said. "The only thing we are doing different this season is taking things slower. We are running the same offense and defense. We will find out what they are good at and exploit that and make it better."

The Panthers have two primary goals this season: finish in the top two of the Suncoast Conference, earning a spot in the conference tournament, as well as finish with at least a 3.0 grade-point average as a team.

Crawford said the Panthers will pick-up the pace a little bit in the upcoming week.

"Next week we are going to start pushing buttons to see how they do on an off day or how they react when I tell them to do something," she said. "How will they channel that emotional change? When one has an off day is it going to affect the other five on the court or can the other five get her to change and turn her around? That is always an interesting week."

The Panthers will have their first game Aug. 25.

■ COLLEGES: **SFSC Cross Country**

Panthers off and running

Women's cross country takes the course

By **JAMES TAYLOR**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – Last Friday, South Florida State College cross country head coach Krista Schult introduced five Florida native girls: Alexis Armstead, Cali Gumpel, Grace Miller, Julia Soto and Savannah Walter as the genesis of the college's newest athletic program.

"It is really exciting to be that inaugural team here," Schult said.

Schult stated that she used that as a selling point when recruiting the girls to SFCS.

"Something new, they will be making up the routines, the team cheers and what we do before meets," Schult said. "You will have the



SCHULT

SFSC CROSS COUNTRY

* **What:** Inaugural SFSC women's cross country team.

* **Head coach:** Krista Schult.

* **Assistant coach:** Cassandra Marentes.

* **Runners:** Julia Soto, Grace Miller, Alexis Armstead, Savannah Walter, Cali Gumpel.

* **First key event:** SFSC Time Trials, SFSC home course, Saturday, Aug. 29, 7:30 a.m.

first uniforms and the first warmups."

Though they have only been training together for a week, the girls are coming together extremely well, Schult said.

"It is amazing the differences I see from the first day we were together to now with them bonding as a team and the workouts are good also as they

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James Taylor/News-Sun photos

South Florida State College's inaugural women's cross country team consists of left to right, front row: Julia Soto, Grace Miller, Alexis Armstead, Savannah Walter; back row: assistant coach Cassandra Marentes, Cali Gumpel, head Coach Krista Schult.

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come together as one," Schult said.

Although cross country, which consists of running a distance of 5 kilometers or 3.1 miles, is seen as an individual sport, Schult stressed that it is team-oriented because scoring is based on the team as a whole.

Schult noted that

cross country's scoring format of counting the top five finishers for each team reinforces the team concept of the sport.

But it's that fact that has Schult a little concerned about the team's inaugural season. At the moment, she only has five runners, which means the Panthers have no backups if there is an injury. Consequently, she may try to find

those extra runners on the college campus.

"I have done some local recruiting," Schult said. "Two girls are from Winter Haven, so that is not too far up the road.

"I'm hoping as the program grows, the local schools will see the opportunity they can have in college to entice them to keep working hard and keep getting their times down to what they run

at college because the college level is a lot different than the high school level," Schult said.

Schult said the girls are still trying to figure each other out, but based on their times they ran in high school and from what she has seen already, all five girls are within 1 minute of each other. Because the runners are so close in times, they are able to push

each other in practice.

"The goal for runners is to have negative paces or negative splits," said Schult, "where they start off slower and gradually increase their pace as the race goes on. That would be the ideal perfect way to run a race, so we are trying to work on pacing."

Although pacing is a basic strategy in cross country, the first-year program still has high

goals. Schult said the team's newness does not lower the bar for SFSC, which still has the goal to make it to nationals.

"To make it to nationals, you have to place well as a team, so that is how we are focusing it, as a team," Schult said. "Nationals are in Iowa this year. To qualify, we have to be ranked in the top 25 in the coaches' polls."

■ COLLEGES: **SFSC**



James Taylor/News-Sun

Florida College's Madison Bitton (#17), a former SFSC player, goes up for a block on South Florida State College's Alexis Sands (#12) on Tuesday in the Lady Panthers' season-opener at the SFSC gym. SFSC lost in four sets.

Panther reunion

Former SFSC players
lead Fla. College

By JEFF GARDENOUR
SPORTS EDITOR

In a regular "Who's Who?" of South Florida State College volleyball players, both past and present, Florida College overpowered SFSC, 27-25, 25-20, 21-25, 25-19, on Tuesday in the SFSC gym.

Florida College, which won the United States Collegiate Athletics Association title last year with three former SFSC



players, got another to

CRAWFORD

a solid start this season with a four-set victory.

But the Falcons, who have won nine national titles in their illustrious history, had to earn their latest win.

SFSC coach Kimberly Crawford praised sophomore setter Baylee Gunter and freshman right-side hitter Emily Swenson for strong play against Florida College, which was pushed in every set but the last one.

"Last (Tuesday) night's match was what we needed," Crawford said. "We have been battling against each other since Aug. 1 and it was great to have an opponent like Florida College, which is a four-year college that won their Nationals last year.

"With three former Lady Panthers, Malea Kalina, Abbey Rouch and Kendall Baum, and two more Lady Panthers added to their roster this season in Madison Bitton and Jada Spano, it seemed to be an alumni match of sorts," Crawford said.

"But, from a coach's standpoint, a lot's surfaced that needs to be addressed in the next few practices before our conference begins Sept.

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17," Crawford said. One thing Crawford might be looking for is cohesion. The Panthers return only three players from last year's team that went

18-13 overall, 3-5 in the Suncoast Conference.

SFSC certainly will have plenty of opportunity to sort things out and improve before the conference opener against the State College of Florida in Bradenton.

The Panthers were

scheduled to play Broward College on Friday, and then travel to Melbourne on Sept. 5 to play in the Eastern Florida College Tournament.

FSC will take on Eastern Florida at 11 a.m., and Santa Fe College at 1 p.m.