

BUCKING A TREND

SFSC sees
enrollment rise
as national, state
numbers shrink



AVON PARK — Taylor Webb, who is originally from DeLand and now lives in Lake Wales, had a choice of two colleges for her higher education.

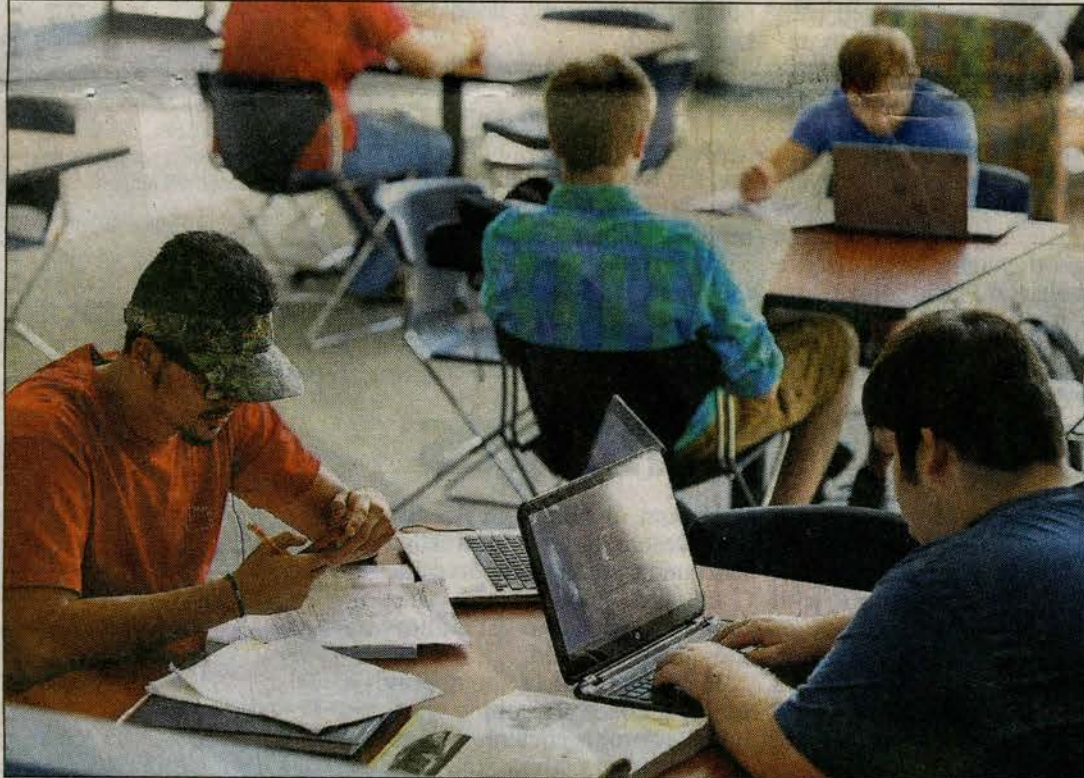
She could go to her home county's Daytona State College or come to South Florida State College.

It was a toss-up, but before making a choice she took a tour of the SFSC campus. "It's a very lovely campus," she said Tuesday, seated in the rotunda of Building B.

What clinched it for Webb, however, was the small classroom size at SFSC and the one-on-one interactions she can have with her teachers, which have helped her grade point average.

Students such as Webb, who is a freshman, have helped SFSC post the second-largest increase in enrollment in the Florida College System, even as fewer students head off to Florida's colleges for the fourth straight year.

SFSC reported a 2.21 percent increase in full-time enrollment, while comparing the 2014 report-



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Top inset: Students walk up the main path into South Florida State College's Avon Park campus on Tuesday. The college had a 2.21 percent increase in enrollment of full-time students this year. Above: Students work in a study area between classes on South Florida State College's Avon Park campus on Tuesday. Top: Elias Salgado studies for a class under a beam of sunlight shining through a bank of windows in building B of the South Florida State College Avon Park campus on Tuesday.

ing year to the 2015 year (summer 2013, fall 2014 and spring 2014 to summer 2014, fall 2015 and spring 2015.)

The college enrollment leader was Pasco-Hernando State College, which saw an 8.6 percent jump, after opening a fifth campus to serve rapidly growing Pasco County, SFSC said in a news release.

Only six state colleges in the 28-member system showed enrollment increases, all reporting modest gains from the previous year, the news release added. The remaining 20 state and community colleges registered declines in full-time enrollment.

“Our uptick in enrollment conveys that our vibrant approach to fulfilling our mission is working,” said Thomas Leitzel, SFSC’s president. “We are offering high-quality academic programs leading to employment and accompanying high levels of compensation for our graduates.”

A college’s enrollment number could change from day to day, explained Debra Latter, the college’s director of marketing. Some programs start in the middle of fall; others in spring; adult education, for instance, has staggered enrollment. The current fall unduplicated student head count for all SFSC campuses was 3,100 students. But that number is a moving target and could change later in the year.



While a 2.21 percent increase over the entire student count may be slight, it comes during a time when college enrollment has been dropping since the uptick in the economy.

Higher education experts have long observed a trend in college enrollment, SFSC said: “When a recession hits the economy, the unemployed flock to the safe harbor of America’s colleges.”

After the Great Recession pushed the labor market into a tailspin in 2008, enrollment in Florida’s college system hit a peak of 372,050 in 2011. With the unemployment rate sloping downward since



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Gennifer Raulerson holds up a model of the solar system as part of a mock lesson plan she created with her group in a class for the elementary education bachelor’s degree program at South Florida State College on April 27. The college’s bachelor’s degree programs have helped boost their enrollment numbers.

2010, enrollment dropped to 334,178 in 2015, a 10.1 percent decline.

SFSC has seen its enrollment follow a similar trend, with fewer students filling its classrooms each year.

This year’s rise in SFSC’s enrollment comes on the heels of Leitzel’s ongoing effort to boost enrollment, SFSC said.

Contributing to the increase in the student count at the college are two new bachelor’s degree programs, in nursing and elementary education, and SFSC’s apprenticeship programs, including the Electrical Apprenticeship Program and commercial air-conditioning and appliance repair, Latter said.

SFSC transitioned from a two-year community college to a state college offering four-year degrees in 2012.

The addition of a bachelor’s degree program in supervision and management has also boosted enrollment, according to Christopher van der Kaay, who tracks performance data for the college.

Enrollment data for the last academic year show that nearly 100 students were taking classes leading to a four-year degree, the college said.

“We are razor-focused on boosting enrollment,” said van der Kaay, who is SFSC’s executive director of institutional effectiveness, planning and technology. “Enrollment management is something every administrator here talks about, thinks about, and plans for as we nav-

igate the challenges affecting colleges, here in Florida and across the country.”



Another “visible project” the college feels is driving enrollment is the Experience Orange marketing drive, launched last fall.

The college targeted its key demographic of 18- to 24-year-olds with a media campaign that played off SFSC’s colors with a blend of “humor and irreverence.”

“But the campaign’s purpose was serious: It prodded young people into taking a fresh look at the range of career and educational opportunities available to them at SFSC,” SFSC said.

“The student experience in SFSC’s learning environment is the key element in the campaign,” Leitzel said. “The experience leads to engagement for our learners, which is essential for completing their programs and securing a job leading to a productive career.”

Freshman Leobardo Palacios is one of those students who noticed the Experience Orange campaign. “Before Experience Orange, there wasn’t much outreach (by the college),” he said.

Palacios is one of those students who has had a pleasant experience on campus, adding, like Webb, that what he likes are the small classes and that the teachers know students on a first-name basis.

SFSC’s current academic term started Aug. 24, and van der Kaay said final enrollment figures won’t be available until all programs complete registration.

Going forward, new programs and marketing drives will boost enrollment as long as there are prospective students available to fill the seats, the college said.

“Enrollments fluctuate in predictable and unpredictable ways,” Leitzel said.

Administrators at SFSC have their eyes on one prediction. The U.S. Department of Education projects the number of Florida’s graduating high school seniors will start a modest decline in 2018.

“What we know is that enrollment increased last year,” Leitzel added. “Future enrollment is uncertain.”

SFSC enrollment up 2.21 percent

Second largest increase in system

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — With fewer students heading off to Florida's colleges for the fourth straight year, South Florida State College posted the second largest increase in enrollment in the Florida College System.

SFSC reported a 2.21 percent increase in full-time enrollment, falling behind

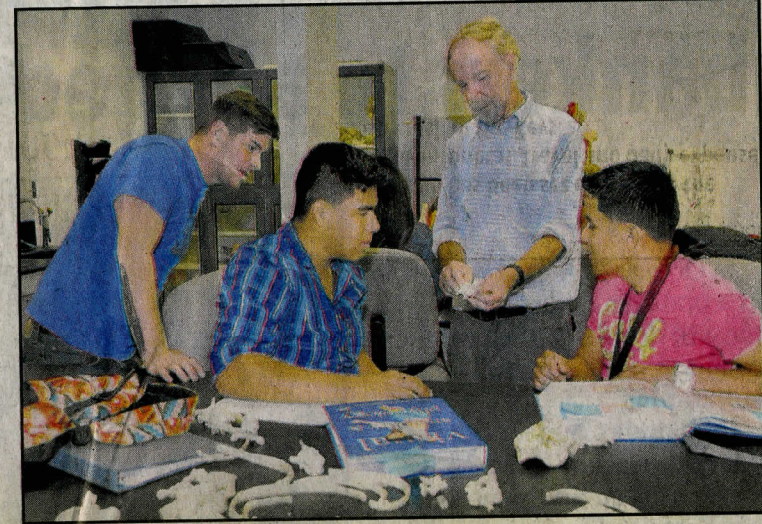
the state's top performer, Pasco-Hernando State College, which saw an 8.6 percent jump in enrollment after opening a fifth campus to serve rapidly growing Pasco County.

Only six state colleges in the 28-member system showed enrollment increases, all reporting modest gains from the previous year. The remaining 20 state

and community colleges registered declines in full-time enrollment.

"Our uptick in enrollment conveys that our vibrant approach to fulfilling our mission is working," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC's president. "We are offering high-quality academic programs leading to employment and accompanying high levels of compensation for our graduates."

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Courtesy photo

Dr. William Gregory discusses a piece of bone with students in his anatomy and physiology class at South Florida State College. The college boosted its enrollment by more than 2 percent this year.

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Higher education experts have long observed a trend in college enrollment. When a recession hits the economy, the unemployed flock to the safe harbor of America's colleges. After the Great Recession pushed the labor market into a tailspin in 2008,

enrollment in Florida's college system hit a peak of 372,050 in 2011. With the unemployment rate sloping downward since 2010, enrollment dropped to 334,178 in 2015, a 10.1 percent decline. SFSC has seen its enrollment follow a similar trend.

This year's rise in SFSC's enrollment comes on the heels of Dr. Leitzel's ongoing effort to boost enrollment.

It follows other

enrollment increases seen in prior years.

"We are razor focused on boosting enrollment," said Dr. Christopher van der Kaay, SFSC's executive director of institutional effectiveness, planning and technology.

"Enrollment management is something every administrator here talks about, thinks about, and plans for as we navigate the challenges affecting colleges."



SFSC Briefs

Corporate Education offers public classes

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate Education Department is offering a variety of classes for the 2015 fall term.

Florida Real Estate Principles, Practices and Law, an eight-week course that teaches how to become a professional real estate agent. 6-10 p.m. Tuesdays, Sept. 15 through Nov. 3, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, 17 and 31. \$299; course number 11381. Coursebook "Florida Real Estate Principles, Practices and Law, 38th Edition" required.

Introduction to QuickBooks 2015, learn how to create a new company file, work with lists, set up items, track customers and sales, track vendors and expenses and track

sales tax. 7-9 p.m. Thursday and Sept. 17. \$149; course number 10441.

Intermediate QuickBooks 2015, learn how to customize QuickBooks, track time, set up and use payroll, pay liabilities and taxes, purchase and manage inventory, build inventory assessment, and track sales orders and back orders. 7-9 p.m. Sept. 24 and Oct. 1. \$149; course number 10442.

Introduction to Microsoft Excel 2013, learn how to create, format, save and print basic spreadsheets, formulas and charts. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Oct. 20 and 27. \$95; course number 11415.

Intermediate Microsoft Excel 2013, learn to sort and filter data, create cross-sheet formulas. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Nov. 3 and 10. Cost is \$95; course number is 11416.

Introduction to PIXLR,

free online photo and graphics application, learn the basics of photo correction and enhancement, merging images, creating PowerPoint presentation backgrounds, manipulating text, and enhancing old documents and photographs. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Nov. 17. \$60; course number 21353.

Apply now for corrections academy

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy is accepting applications for its next Basic Corrections Academy course. The course is required to become a state of Florida certified corrections officer.

Classes will be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, beginning Sept. 21. By successfully complet-

ing 420 contact hours of training, students earn occupational certificates and are eligible to take the state certification examination for correctional officers.

For information, call the academy at 784-7285. Applications must be picked up in person by appointment only.

Stained glass workshop

AVON PARK — Learn how to create a beautiful stained glass window with local artist Coye Brenner-Mann, an expert in mosaic media, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 4 and 11 in Building A, Room 16.

Each person will design and create an 11-by-14-inch stained glass window.

Participants are encouraged to bring simple designs and ideas to the first

session, although pre-made patterns will be available.

Cost is \$75 per person which includes all materials. Bring a packed lunch.

Download a registration form at mofac.org/education and email it

to submissionsMOFAC@southflorida.edu or mail it to: SFSC MOFAC, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park, FL 33825.

For information, call the SFSC Art Department at 784-7195 or 784-7240.

Memorial ceremonies Friday

By **KIM LEATHERMAN**
CORRESPONDENT

Sept. 11, 2001, was a day that shocked our country. Terrorists hijacked four passenger jetliners; two were crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third was aimed at the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., and a fourth crashed in a Pennsylvania field after passengers prevented terrorists from crashing that airplane into a populated area.

When the day of horror was over, everyone aboard all four airplanes was dead.

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Combined, more than 3,000 civilians had been killed. First responders were trapped in the Twin Towers when those buildings collapsed, too. The New York City Fire Department lost 343 firefighters that day and 72 law enforcement officers died.

That dreadful day will be recalled Friday morning in two remembrance ceremonies in Highlands County.

The first will be on the Avon Park campus

of South Florida State College at 8:40 a.m.

Highlands Today, Wednesday, September 12, 2015
which begins with the time the first jetliner crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers. That remembrance will be at the flagpole at Tower of Enlightenment Circle.

The second will be at 9 a.m. at Placid Post 25, The American Legion in Lake Placid.

Post Commander Robert Moore said the purpose of the memorial ceremony was to honor those who gave their lives on 9/11/01. The event will open with a heart-wrenching video of the planes

slamming into the Twin Towers. The video sets the tone of remembrance of the lives of first responders and civilians killed on that fateful day.

"We cannot ever forget the events of 9/11," said Moore. "Many people gave their lives while saving others. We need to honor them."

Coffee and doughnuts will be served and the ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. Area first responders will be in attendance and honored for their faithful service to our communities.

Guest speakers will

briefly share their thoughts regarding 9/11. Patriotic music will be a part of the ceremony, too.

Following the video screening and brief comments from dignitaries, guests will be ushered

outside by a sheriff's office Honor Guard for a full flag ceremony that will include the lowering and raising of Old Glory. An Honor Guard from VFW Post 4300 in Sebring will perform a 21-gun salute in memory of all

who lost their lives on 9/11.

The ceremony will conclude with the closing of the southbound lanes of U.S. 27 while the first responders are escorted away from the American Legion.

SFSC ranks 30th nationwide

SFSC ranks in top 5 percent nationally

BY GARY PINNELL

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — No one is thrusting 30 fingers in the air, but South Florida State College is proud its designation last week: it was ranked 30th among 670 state, technical and community colleges. North Florida Community College in Madison was first, Dine' College in Tsaile, Ariz. was second.

Glenn Little, vice president of administrative services, brought up the item at the President's Council meeting, said Deborah Bell Latter, a college spokes-

woman.

Being on a list with 17 model criteria helps people understand what the college does. "It's meaningful for us," Latter said.

WalletHub.com, an online financial services company, ranked every community college in the nation. Although SFSC dropped "community" from its name in 2012 when it became a four-year college, Christopher van der Kaay, executive director of institutional effectiveness, planning, and technology, said the ranking is still appropriate because other four-year colleges and universities appear on the list.

Also, he said, the college primarily still graduates people



RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Registered nursing student Ross Gunn takes the temperature of classmate Darby Jones in a lab class at South Florida State College on Wednesday. The college ranked 30th on a list of the top community colleges in the country, in part because of the job placement success of nursing and dental programs, among other criteria.

with two-year associate's degrees. "We have three baccalaureate programs, in nursing, elementary education, and a bachelor's degree in supervision and management."

One of the 17 criteria is graduation rate.

"First, the college's overall course completion rate is approximately 94 percent, which places SFSC in the 86th percentile for the measure. We've always known we have a high completion rate," van der Kaay said.

Forty-nine percent of students complete their two-year degree within three years. "The median is 36 percent." The College Affordability and Transparency Center College Scorecard pegged the number at 46.6 percent.

More than 52 percent completed a two-year degree in four years; the median state rate is 42.2 percent.

"Interestingly," van der Kaay said, the national three-year completion rate for a two-year degree is 20 percent."

Two criteria focus on

College Rankings

Rank	College	Location
1	North Florida Community College	Madison
2	Dine' College	Tsaile, AZ
3	Chipola College	Marianna
4	Northwest College	Powell, WY
5	Taft College	Taft, CA
13	Broward College	Fort Lauderdale
17	Florida Gateway College	Lake City
30	South Florida State College	Avon Park
34	Valencia College	Orlando
66	Daytona State College	Daytona
84	Florida State College	Jacksonville
138	Hillsborough Community College	4 campuses
148	Florida Community College of the Keys	
190	Polk State College	Lakeland
201	Indian River State College	Fort Pierce
276	Pasco-Hernando State College	5 campuses
283	Santa Fe College	Gainesville
445	Florida SouthWestern State College	Fort Myers
446	State College of Florida	Manatee, Sarasota
544	Seminole State College	Sanford
670	Terra State Community College	Fremont, Ohio

More info: wallethub.com/edu/best-worst-community-colleges/15076/

career outcomes: Van der Kaay said 16.3 student loans were defaulted within three years. The national rate was 13.7 percent.

Most students — about 83 percent — attend on a variety of scholarships, grants and loans. The College Scorecard said the typical SFSC student borrowed \$32.63 per month.

The second is return on educational investment, a

ratio of a graduate's starting salary to cost of education.

"We're low," van der Kaay said. Two semesters of books and tuition total \$5,536 per year, according to the College Scorecard, an apples-to-apples comparison that allows students and parents to shop colleges.

Tuition and fees are

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\$104.52 per hour. Van der Kaay said. Florida is generally less expensive than other states. The University of Florida charges about twice as much.

On the starting wage equation, van der Kaay said it helps that SFSC offers 66 occupational programs, including 22 certificate programs — phlebotomy and dental assistant are two — 15 college credit certificate programs (e.g., paramedic), 21 associate of science degree programs (dental hygiene

and nursing), four apprenticeship programs and one advanced technical diploma program.

“Most will find employment,” van der Kaay said. “The percent of students who continue their education or are employed is 89 percent.”

The four-year college also has a 60 percent retention rate. That’s students who were enrolled in the fall semester last year and enrolled again this fall. “We’re in the 90th percentile nationally,” van der Kaay said.

None of these student engagement efforts happen by acci-

dent, van der Kaay said. Students are challenged academically and are active in collaborative learning. SFSC has a low student-to-faculty ratio, 17-1, and van der Kaay said 75 percent of classes are taught by full-time faculty, which places the college in the 89th percentile compared to other state and national community colleges.

One criteria is “faculty staff salary.” Does that mean higher-paid faculty are presumed to function better?

“I think that’s the assumption,” van der Kaay said.

Luncheon explores volunteer opportunities at SFSC museum

AVON PARK — The Museum of Florida Art and Culture at South Florida State College is looking for volunteer docents.

Area residents interested in Florida history, art, or archeology are invited to a luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18 at MOFAC. The luncheon will be in the lobby of the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts on the college's Highlands Campus.

Docents serve as guides to visitors, helping them understand and better appreciate the art and items on exhibit. Docents typically volunteer one hour or more a week during regular museum hours.

"Our docents provide an interesting,

entertaining, and educational aspect to the viewing experience," said Mollie Doctrow, MOFAC's curator. "They are an integral part of MOFAC and we rely on them to enrich our visitors' interaction with the collection."

Docents need not have in-depth knowledge of MOFAC's collection. The museum will orient docents on the collection and provide training workshops.

MOFAC is a cultural program of South Florida State College. Those who have volunteered as MOFAC docents in prior years are also invited to the luncheon.

Those planning to attend should contact Doctrow at doctrowm@southflorida.edu or at 863-784-7240.



Courtesy photo

Visitors to the The Museum of Florida Art and Culture at SFSC listen as a docent explains exhibits.

Archaeologist to open speaker series at SFSC

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The Kissimmee Valley Archaeological and Historical Conservancy begins its Speaker Series at 7 p.m. Sept. 17 in Building G, Room 101, at South Florida State College. The public is invited at no cost.

Kassie Kemp's presentation will be "Tales from a Museum Basement: New Insights on Crystal River Pottery." The Crystal River site is a Woodland-period mound complex in west-central Florida. By revisiting a collection of over 16,000 sherds previously excavated at the site by Ripley Bullen and others, Kemp's re-

search seeks to provide new insights into a collection that has yet to be thoroughly analyzed.

This presentation will focus on a few aspects of the research project such as the differences in vessel type, form and function, and their distribution across the site. This

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Speaker

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new information adds to a broader understanding of pottery and its role in social interactions at the Crystal River site.

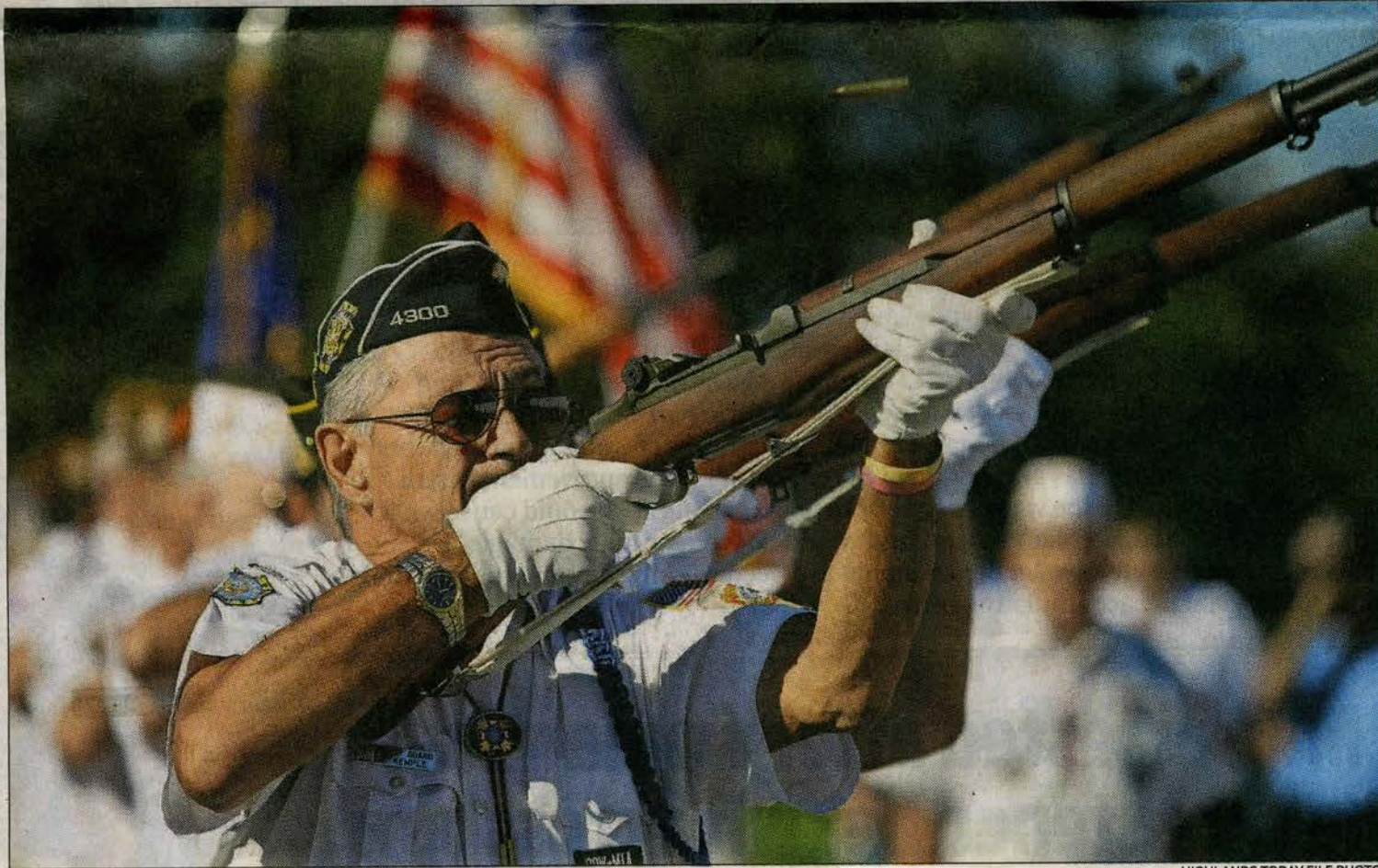
Kemp earned her Bachelor's degree in Archaeology and Anthropology at Baylor University in Texas and is now an M.A. candidate in Applied Anthropology with a concentration in Cultural Resource Management from the University of South Florida. She also enjoys using Geographic Information Systems for which she received a graduate certificate. She is currently a public archaeology coordinator at the Florida Public Archaeology Network's West Central Regional Center.

For information, call Anne Reynolds at 465-3637.

REMEMBERING

9/11

Memories from day of
terrorist attacks still fresh
for local residents



BY JAY MEISEL

Highlands Today

SEBRING — As a fifth grader in an Okeechobee school at the time, Olivia Goolsby didn't really understand what was happening when terrorists hijacked airplanes and used them as weapons against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

"I didn't really understand what was going on," Goolsby said. "All my teachers had the televisions on."

At the end of the day, she said, everyone said a short prayer.

Fourteen years later, today, Highlands County residents will remember the horrific event.

American Legion Post 25 in Lake Placid will commemorate

the event at 9 a.m. Speakers will include Highlands County Sheriff Susan Benton and the Sheriff's Office Honor Guard will participate.

At the end, there will be a 21-gun salute.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4300 in Sebring will raise the flag at 11 a.m. in memory of Sept. 11.

South Florida State College will begin observing the event at 8:40 a.m. in front of the flag poles on the Tower of Enlightenment. The time coincides with the first of the four terrorist attacks.

At Cracker Trail Elementary School, a sapling from what is known as the Survivor Tree will be planted at 9 a.m. on the southwest part of the school property. The Survivor Tree, located in the World Trade Center



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

Highlands County Sheriff's Deputy Brian Giguere holds the American flag before presenting the colors with the sheriff's office honor guard during a Sept. 11 memorial event last year at the American Legion Post 25.

9/11

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area, survived the attacks.

Tim Brinling said that when the family vacationed in New York City, his daughter, Ellie, a student at Cracker Trail, got a seed from the tree.

When Ellie presented the sapling last year to the school, it was about 3 inches tall, he said. Now it's approaching 5 feet, he said.

"It's neat to have something of that significance to that date in Sebring," he said.

But at the time of Sept. 11, Goolsby was too young to fully understand the significance of what had happened.

After the terrorist attacks, Goolsby said that when she went home from school, she asked her mother to explain what happened.

"She couldn't really explain it to me," she said.

While Goolsby was in school at the time of Sept. 11, Arthur and Cora Kosky were bowling in Hollywood.

"It was awful, just awful," Arthur Kosky said. He said they learned of it from a television at the bowling alley.

Don Arnett said he was at his Michigan home at the time, while his wife was working at a bank.

"I went down there to see if she would come home," Arnett said, adding that he feared attacks on banks. He said his wife stayed at her job.

"We just kind of held our breaths," he said. "We didn't know if there would be other attacks."

Andrea Mills was in Egypt at a military

base at the time. She said her husband was a contractor stationed in Germany and he had been sent to the Egyptian base to assist the Egyptian military with items purchased from the United States. She had later gone to Egypt to join him for a vacation.

After the attacks, she said, she was advised to leave Egypt, and the Egyptian military provided an escort to an airport where she got a flight to Germany.

But, considering that airplanes were used to commit the terrorist attacks, it was a scary flight back to Germany, she said.

Donna Miller Blanshan recalled on Facebook that she was in Florida caring for her family, while her husband, a police officer, and her son were in New York City.

"I called my house; my son said dad left a note that his job called him into work," she said. "He was on his way into Manhattan. I didn't hear anything for a whole day. I had no idea where or what. Worried to death. He spent the next few days in city. Thank goodness only directing traffic."

Rick "Webster" Strzelewicz, owner of Heartland Band Supply, said he was in Sebring watching television and was shocked.

"It felt like the end of the world," he said. "I think America was frozen for a little bit of time."

Years later, Kosky said, he still doesn't understand the terrorist attack.

"What did they gain by doing it?" he said.

SFSC hosting workshop for 'dreamers'

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will hold a workshop highlighting college opportunities for young people who are awaiting decisions on their immigration status, individuals popularly known as "dreamers."

The informational event is scheduled for 6-8 p.m. Sept. 24 at the SFSC University Center.

SFSC staff and immigration officials will discuss how dreamers can attend college by making use of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Students, family members, teachers and guidance counselors who would like to learn more about DACA are encouraged to attend.

DACA, an initiative of the U.S. government, allows certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country before their 16th birthday to receive a renewable two-year permission to remain in the country as they complete their studies.

An official with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, along with counselors from SFSC' farmworker career development program, will be

on hand to answer questions.

For more information, contact Minerva Ortiz at ortizm@southflorida.edu or 784-7043.

SFSC arts museum announces new exhibitions, programs

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Museum of Florida Art and Culture announces its 2015-16 season of exhibitions and programs.

In addition to its permanent collection of contemporary Florida regional art, MOFAC provides an exhibition venue for established and emerging regional artists and preserves Florida's history and heritage through art. The museum also serves as a repository for the historical artifacts unearthed by members of the Kissimmee Valley Archaeological and Historical Conservancy.

"MOFAC features an exciting and varied group of artists this season, from local and emerging artists to internationally recognized Clyde Butcher," said Mollie Doctrow, curator. "Visitors will be inspired by the vibrant creativity of these Florida artists."

MOFAC is located adjacent to the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts and is open to the public Oct. 9–May 4. Visitors can view the exhibitions between 12:30 and 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, or by appointment for group tours. Patrons of the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts may visit the museum one hour prior to matinee and evening performances.

"Coming Home 2015: SFSC Alumni Exhibition" will be on display Oct. 7–Dec. 2 as MOFAC celebrates the college's 50th anniversary with its annual exhibition featuring the work of distinguished alumni, including Max Gooding and Cody Coltharp.

The exhibit will also feature the work of SFSC alumni Katie Jane Altwater, Whitney Broadaway, Joe Colangelo, Caroline Colby, Gabe Clogston, Kiri Crommet, Hope Flowers, James Futral, Allen McPherson, Quinn Miller, Emmie Pereira, Jayma Sacco, Holly Scherlacher, Chase Smith and Laura Wolfe.

An alumni artist program and reception is scheduled for Oct. 15. The artists will assemble for a program at 5:30 p.m. in SFSC's University Auditorium, which is short walk from the MOFAC gallery. At 6:45, the artists will be available for a meet-and-greet in the lobby of the Theatre for the Performing Arts.

"Leaf and Branch and Log and Stump: Landscapes of Jerry Cutler" will be on display Dec. 9–Feb. 4. Cutler achieved notice for his decades-long study of Florida's landscapes with a unique focus on the Everglades. His paintings have been exhibited at more than 200 group and solo shows. Cutler, a retired professor of art at the University of Florida, will lead a talk, "What a Landscape Painting Should Be," 1-2 p.m. Jan. 21 in MOFAC's main gallery.

"Emerging Voices of Artistic Expression" will be on display Dec. 9–Feb. 4.

"The need to create is inherent in everyone, young and old," said Doctrow. "The artists' works in this exhibit will

speak to visitors through metaphor, communicating visually through the personal forms and style of each artist."

The exhibit includes local artist Ronnie Fuertes and regional artists Kendal Hanson, Dawn Marie Lee and Jake Noland.

"Visions of Florida: The Photographic Art of Clyde Butcher" will be on display Feb. 10–April 28. Discover an undisturbed paradise that is rapidly disappearing through the eyes of one of America's finest landscape photographers. This exhibition is on loan from the Museum of Florida History.

"Celebrating Florida Archaeology," on display Feb. 10–March 31, celebrates Florida's archaeological history by showcasing images of the state's archaeological resources and the people who have explored, preserved and interpreted the archaeological record to better understand the millennia of human occupation of the Florida peninsula.

"SFSC's Juried Student Art Exhibition" will be on display April 6–28 and features outstanding artistic achievements from the academic year. A student art awards and reception will be held 12:30–2:30 p.m. April 21.

MOFAC invites the public to a series of special programs throughout the year.

"The Artists' Group at SFSC" exhibition will be held Oct. 9–Jan. 9 in the lower lobby gallery of MOFAC. It will feature the work of resident artists at SFSC who make up The Artists' Group.

A selection of paintings by Peter Powell Roberts will be on display Jan. 15–April 30. Roberts was an acclaimed Florida artist who taught at the Ringling College of Art for 23 years, where he founded the design and computer graphics departments.

Catherine Parker, with the Archaeology Institute at the University of West Florida, will lead a talk titled "Spanish Colonial Foodways," 1-2 p.m. Feb. 18 in Building G, Room 102. Parker will demonstrate how information from the written historical record, together with evidence from archaeological findings, opens a window on the place of food in the early life of "La Florida."

Mollie Doctrow will lead a talk titled "Lunch 'n Learn: Arts in the Parks," noon-1 p.m. Nov. 5 in Building G, Room 101. Doctrow, an award-winning artist, will share her experience as an artist-in-residence at the Petrified Forest National Park, an ancient landscape more than 200 million years old.

The Pygmy Fringe Tree Wildflower Festival will be held 11 a.m. to noon March 10 at MOFAC. It celebrates native wildflowers of the Lake Wales Ridge with guided walks on the Wayside Shrine Trail. Visit www.waysideshrinetrail.com.

For more information about MOFAC, call 784-7240 or email mofac@southflorida.edu.

Mixed results on LPN, RN student exams

One-third of state programs fell below 2014 national average

BY GARY PINNELL

Highlands Today

SEBRING — LPN students from two local nursing programs scored well on their graduate exam, but both schools fell below the 2014 national average on the RN exam.

However, administrators noted, South Florida State College and Azure students did better in 2015.

“The national average during that same quarter was 66 percent, due to an increase in the passing standard and a change in the test plan,” said Michele Heston, SFSC director of nursing education. “Since that time, we have made the necessary adjustments to our curriculum, and this year for the same quarter we are at 97 percent.”

That all 19 SFSC students passed the 2104 LPN test was no surprise to Heston. “We do have a limited program. They have an entrance exam, they have prerequisite courses, we rank order our students, and we take the top 24. The entire curriculum prepares them for the test. LPN students study for 11 months.

“The faculty-student ratio is small. We can track their learning needs.” Heston also cited an out-

Exams

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standing faculty.

Most applicants are from Highlands, Hardee or DeSoto counties, which are SFSC's service region, Heston said. "It's good that we're able to see our graduates taking care of patients in our community."

The Sebring campus of Azure College opened in 2012.

"From day one, we use the NCSBN test plan to train our students," said Jhonson Napoleon, president of the Azure Group. "Our instructors did a fabulous job to help our students become NCLEX ready. At the end of the program, we have a six-week readiness class to help our students prepare for and pass."

Twenty-one of 26 LPN students passed. That's 80.77 percent; 8 percent above the national average. Ten of 16 passed at Azure Boca Raton, and the Miami Gardens campus ranked in the bottom 12 percent with three of eight passing.

"Azure College's Sebring campus had 18 students complete the Nursing ASN program and take the NCLEX RN between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015," Napoleon said, "14 have passed, and four have not passed the exam at this time. Eight students passed the examination the first time; six students passed the examination the second time."

In 2009 and 2014, the Legislature revised Florida law to graduate more nursing students in anticipation of a shortage as baby boomers aged. More nursing schools opened and the number of graduates increased each year, the Tampa Tribune reported last week, but a majority of nursing programs have yet to earn accreditation. A new law will require all programs to be accredited by July 1, 2019. Yet as of June 2015, 45 of those 105 programs that failed to meet the national exam average were placed on probation by the state and 13 closed.

Grads from more than one-third of Florida's nursing programs struggled to pass the standard licensing exam last school year. That keeps growing with the number of nursing schools in the state.

Both SFSC and Azure RN students fell below the national average on the 2014 test. Twenty-one of 35 SFSC students passed, and six of 12 Azure College passed at the Sebring campus. Fifteen of 26 passed at Azure Miami Gardens, and six of 15 Azure Boca Raton RNs passed.

The 60 percent pass rate for SFSC's RN 2014 students is incorrect, said Becky Sroda, dean of Health Sciences. "Our pass rates for 2015 were 92 percent; 11 out of 12 for our Transition LPN to RN bridge, and 97 percent (32 out of 33) for our generic RN program. This is for first attempt at taking the NCLEX exam. Of the two students who were not successful on first attempt, one retested and passed on second attempt, and the other has not yet retested as there is a 45-day wait period between attempts. To our knowledge, all have found employment.

"With our LPN program, to date, 17 of 20 graduates have attempted the NCLEX exam and passed and three have not yet taken it," she said.

RN and LPN students taking the 2014 national exam failed to meet the U.S. average at 105 of Florida's 366 nursing programs, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability reported.

If a school's passing rate falls more than 10 percent below the national average for two consecutive years, within a year the program must close or submit a plan to increase its passing rate. If the school meets a majority of goals in its improvement plan, it gets an extra year to increase the passing rate. Twenty-two LPN and 21 RN programs were placed on probation, the July 2015 OPPAGA report said.

Of the 366 nursing programs in Florida, 251 were approved within the last six years, according to the report from the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. The number of students who graduate from nursing programs each year has grown from about 11,600 in 2009 to about 16,000 in the last school year.

The University of Tampa had the highest results of any bachelors of nursing program in the state. For the third year in a row, all 46 nursing graduates from

the University of Tampa passed the exam on their first try, said Cathy Kessenich, director of the department of nursing. The University of Florida's passing rate was 90 percent and the University of Central Florida's passing rate was 98 percent.

Their success is partially due to the university's ability to retain dedicated faculty, who are willing to work for less than they'd make in nursing, and picking high-quality students for admission, Kessenich said. "You can certainly make way more money as a nurse practitioner, so our faculty really love teaching and are dedicated to helping our students succeed."

More than 15,000 nursing jobs went unfilled in Florida during 2012, according to the Florida Center for Nursing at the University of Central Florida. By 2025, the center anticipates a 20 percent growth in the nursing industry, creating a need for about a half-million registered nurses in Florida as the current workforce ages out.

"We set the bar high for students entering our allied health program," Sroda said. "As health care consumers, patients can be confident that our graduates are well-prepared."

SFSC offers three nursing programs. The 2015 pass rate for U.S. nursing graduates taking the NCLEX-RN was 84 percent. Among associate degree graduates, 97 percent passed the license exam. This year's graduating class of LPNs posted a 100 percent pass rate.

Employed LPNs can enroll in the Transition to RN program. The one-year program builds on a practical nurse's fundamentals of nursing knowledge, with graduates earning an associate degree in nursing. The 2015 graduating class of LPNs completed the transition with 92 percent passing the NCLEX-RN, 8 percent above the national rate.

"While passing the national board examination qualifies a graduate to work, landing a job is another matter," Sroda said. "All three of SFSC's nursing programs can boast of a 100 percent placement in 2015 — every graduate got a job in their field."

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Cindy Garren's fun personality shines through at her desk in SFSC's Theatre for the Performing Arts.

CHRISTY SWIFT

The show goes on

Cindy Garren organizes SFSC's performing arts theater's entertainment schedule

BY CHRISTY SWIFT

Highlands Today Correspondent

AVON PARK — Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs for the South Florida State College Theatre for the Performing Arts, has always been a “theater person.”

When she saw her first performance, “Carousel,” in fourth-grade, she was hooked.

“I remember saying, ‘I’m going to do that when I grow up,’ and I did,” the friendly mother of two said.

As director of cultural programs, Garren is responsible for choosing and booking all of the theater’s performances — reading the pulse of the public’s interest, seeking out the acts that will satisfy it, then juggling all the details that go into getting those bands, singers, comedians and other performers on the season’s calendar.

But just because her job is full of seriousness doesn’t mean she has to be. She jokingly attributed her success to being “pretty” and burst into song a couple of times, singing a few lines of Bobby Vinton’s “Blue Velvet” (he’s on the schedule for March).

She is also full of juicy stories about celebrities from her previous jobs. “I can’t name names,” she said of one well-known TV star/singer who



Children’s theater has always held a special place in Cindy Garren’s heart. She worked many years performing for children in schools and is thrilled to be carrying on SFSC’s Young People’s Theatre, which bring school-age children into the facility to learn from and experience the performing arts.

drank too much before coming out on stage in “8-inch heels,” tripping, then blaming her blunder on “holes in the stage.”

During her time at Bailey Concert Hall at Broward College in Davie, she was onstage waiting for Tony Bennett to come in and do a sound check.

“He walked in by himself, no entourage. He said, ‘I’m Tony, nice to meet you,’ then he proceeded to sing ‘I Left My Heart in San Francisco.’”

“That was a really special moment,” she added.

From time to time, you hear about

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CHRISTY SWIFT

Show

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what seem like ridiculous requests made by celebrities. Garren was the one who had to deal with those requests.

While booking Billy Joel at another venue, Garren discovered that they wanted a dozen black towels. Garren tried to negotiate away the black towels, because all they had were white towels.

"The black towels were a deal-breaker," she said. Later, she discovered why: Billy Joel always wears black suits, and he doesn't like to have white lint show up on them when he's onstage.

Another artist had it written into his contract that the venue would provide him with a rubber sink stopper. Baffled, Garren finally asked why.

"It turns out his beard grows fast and he always shaves before a show. There was not always a sink stopper in his dressing room," she explained.

In theater early

Theater has always been a part of Garren's life, although she was the only member of her family with that particular gift.

At 16, she started a youth theater group in her hometown of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, because there was no community theater there.

"Somebody gave us free office space above their lumber store. I used to do costume drives. People would call us up, and we'd go pick up old clothes and stuff. Our first major gift was \$100 from Senator Dan Flood," she grinned.

Between that time and when she joined the SFSC family last April, Garren has lived a star-filled life.

After studying theater at Penn State, she earned

a master's in theater from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

She worked at the Opera Company of Boston doing technical theater, co-created and performed for three years at Penn State's Children's Theatre Ensemble, and before earning her master's, worked in a federal "drama in the schools" program that provided theater experiences to 17 school districts before its funding was eventually cut.

In fact, children's theater is very close to Garren's heart. SFSC currently runs a Young People's Theatre program where schoolchildren are bused to the theater to learn from and experience a real theater performance. The shows are also incorporated into a curriculum, so teachers can use elements of the production to teach science, literature, history and more.

"Young people get fully engaged (in the show)," said Garren, adding, "Through theater, they learn about the world and understand emotion and empathy."

Garren has worked in Boston, New Orleans,

North Carolina and upstate New York, mostly directing and producing, which Garren said she prefers to performing. "When you direct and produce, it's the big picture. It's having the vision. I'm more of that type of person," she said.

Garren directed a nationally-touring multi-media theatrical production called "Voices of Native America" starring Grammy Award winner Douglas Spotted Eagle.

She did all of the programming and marketing for the Scranton Cultural Center for a stint and ran Bailey Concert Hall for 12 years before moving to Highlands County for her current position.

One of her most prized possessions is a photo of herself with Hal Prince (top Tony-award-winning producer/director) and George Abbott (known as "Mr. Broadway").

"The photo was taken at a dinner after a week-long residency that Hal Prince conducted at Broward College for theater students. As a theater person, it was amazing to dine with them and chat," Gar-

ren remembered.

Diverse schedule

The 2015-2016 SFSC season includes a diverse schedule including "Turnstiles: The Music of Billy Joel," "The Willis Clan" (12 young siblings performing pop-country-bluegrass who were featured on "America's Got Talent"), "The Nutcracker," "The Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra" (their first U.S. tour), a jazz series and "Saturday Night Fever."

Garren said her goal was to include a mix of entertainment and to keep shows affordable for seniors as well as families (the Turnstiles show only costs \$10 and tickets are 50 percent off for children and students for "The Nutcracker" and "The Willis Clan").

She also said that on Nov. 19 "something big" would be announced.

Overall, her hope and dream for the theater is simple.

"This place should be a center of fun, a center of engagement, a center of amazing and 'wow' moments and a center that people can afford to come to."



COURTESY PHOTO

Cindy Garren shown backstage at the SFSC Theatre for the Performing Arts with Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell and Fabian.

Concealed Weapons Permit course set

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Criminal Justice Academy (CJA) is offering a Concealed Weapons Permit course. This course is required to carry a concealed weapon in Florida. Topics to be covered include Florida Statutes, use of deadly force, carry restrictions, and live fire exercises.

The course will be held on Saturday, Oct. 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The cost is \$55, and the course number (CRN) is 11411.

For information, equipment list, and maps to the range, contact Richard Morey, coordinator, at 863-784-7285 or visit www.southflorida.edu/publicservice.

Register at any SFSC Campus or center. Pre-registration is required.

SFSC offers class in clay, ceramics

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will offer a class in Acrylic Painting from 12:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Oct. 21-Nov. 18 at TAG Art Studio and Gallery..

Instructor Louise Weis will teach the principles of acrylic painting. This class is for beginning and intermediate students. Students will paint subjects of their choice or work on a project with the instructor. Two paintings will be completed during the session.

Registration is \$120. To register, call 863-784-7405.

SFSC PROGRAM AT ROTARY



PHOTO BY JIM KELLY

Jamie Bateman, executive director of the South Florida State College Foundation, spoke to the Hardee Rotary Club on Wednesday, Sept. 9, at the Java Cafe. This is the 50th anniversary of SFSC, which began as South Florida Junior College in 1965. SFSC Foundation owns the Jacaranda Hotel in Avon Park where the college has a culinary program, rents rooms to the public and has a dormitory for athletes. SFSC campuses were started in Lake Placid in 1984, Wauchula in 1990 and Arcadia in 2003. SFSC has a faculty and staff of over 400 people. A Barn Bash will be held Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Wauchula campus from 5 to 8 p.m. The SFSC mission is "a globally aware academic destination driving regional transformation through innovative collaboration." From left are SFSC resource development specialist Deanne Brummett Shanklin, Jamie Bateman and SFSC Foundation member Terry Atchley.

SFSC grads shine on board exams

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's 2015 Health Sciences graduates taking their licensure examinations came out on top, with as many as 100 percent of some graduating classes passing their national board examinations.

This year nearly all of the graduates of the two-year program leading to employment as a registered nurse passed the NCLEX-RN, the national board examination required to work as a registered nurse.

At this juncture in the year, 100 percent of the dental assisting and dental hygiene students have passed their respective board examinations. Same, too, for the radiography students — 100 percent of the students who have taken the board examination have passed.

"We set the bar high for students entering our Health Sciences programs," said Rebecca A. Sroda, SFSC's dean of health sciences. "As health care consumers, patients can be confident that our graduates are well-prepared."

Health science professionals include nurses, dental assistants, dental hygienists, radiologic technologists, physical therapists and related fields.

SFSC offers three nursing programs. An associate degree program prepares students to pass the NCLEX-RN and work as a registered nurse.

The pass rate for U.S. nursing graduates taking the NCLEX-RN is 84 percent. Among SFSC's 2015 associate degree nursing graduates, 97 percent passed the licensure examination.

This year's graduating class of practical nurses posted a 100 percent pass rate on their examination. Practical nurses, who complete an 11-month program, provide basic nursing care under the direction of registered nurses and physicians.

Employed practical nurses looking to work as registered nurses can enroll in SFSC's Transition LPN to RN program. The one-year program builds on a practical nurse's current fund of nursing knowledge, with graduates earning an associate degree in nursing and the right to sit for the NCLEX-RN.

The 2015 graduating class of practical nurses who completed the transition program achieved a pass rate of 92 percent on the NCLEX-RN, eight percentage points above the national pass rate.

"While passing the national board examination qualifies a graduate to work, landing a job is another matter," Sroda said. "All three of SFSC's nursing programs can boast of a 100 percent placement in 2015 — every graduate got a job in their field."

Sroda said admission to SFSC's Health Sciences programs is competitive, with students required to earn a grade of B, or higher, in college algebra, microbiology, and anatomy before their applications for entry into the programs are reviewed.

Graduates of SFSC's dental assisting and dental hygiene programs also scored well on their national examinations. In 2015, every graduate who completed the three-part licensure examination had passed.

Graduates of SFSC's dental assistant program complete a 16-month occupational certificate course. After passing the Dental Assisting National Board examination, graduates work alongside a dentist providing basic care to patients.

Dental hygienists complete a two-year associate degree program. Once they pass an examination administered by the Florida Board of Dentistry, graduates find jobs in dental offices performing direct patient care, taking X-rays, and educating patients about oral hygiene.

Sroda said all the graduates who passed their examination have found employment with a dental practice.

In July, SFSC graduated a class of radiologic technologists. By the end of August, all the graduates who had completed their national board examination had passed.

The examination, administered by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, has a national pass rate of 88.9 percent. SFSC's graduates have posted a 94 percent average pass rate for the past five years.

Sroda, who also oversees SFSC's emergency medical services program, attributes the high pass rates not only to the quality of classroom and clinical instruction that she said prepares graduates for the examinations, but also to a mind-set the competitive programs foster.

"In the classroom and clinical training sites, we endeavor to turn students into professionals by holding them to high standards," Sroda said. "In turn, they begin to hold themselves to the same standards and in doing so become high-performing professionals."



COURTESY PHOTO

Agreeing that the best way to get ahead is to get an education are (from left) South Florida State College's GED instructor Vent Crawford, Hardee Campus Director Teresa Crawford and student Timothy Hall with Suncoast Credit Union's Branch Manager Tasha Coates, Gloria Garcia and Olivia Smith.

Small Grant For GED Fees Yields Big Results At SFSC

Timothy Hall knew getting ahead in an increasingly competitive economy required a college education.

He hadn't finished high school, and his academic skills needed brushing up. How could he go to college?

Hall turned to South Florida State College for the answer.

The 21-year-old Hardee County resident signed up for the college's GED — General Educational Development — class at the Hardee Campus in Bowling Green.

But there was one problem.

The cash-strapped Hall could not cover the state-mandated \$28.50 tuition required to enroll in the class, an amount not covered by traditional financial aid programs.

Now, because of grant fund-

ing from Suncoast Credit Union, Hall has enrolled in class this fall and is on track to start college credit work at SFSC in the spring.

"One of our adult education instructors, Vent Crawford, saw that too many prospective students were not signing up for GED classes because they couldn't afford the nominal tuition and testing fees," said Teresa Crawford, the director of SFSC's Hardee Campus.

Crawford said the instructor went out and sought grant aid from Suncoast to fund the GED tuition and testing fees for students who had no other assistance open to them. So, she said, the Tampa-based credit union awarded the Hardee Campus \$1,000 last year to assist these students.

"With that seemingly modest award, we were able to help more than a dozen students enroll in adult education classes," Crawford said.

Now, with a follow-up award of \$500 this summer, Hall and other students at SFSC's Hardee Campus are working toward their GEDs, making a college degree or occupational certificate possible for them.

To receive assistance, students simply complete an application to determine whether they are eligible.

"Suncoast recognized that investing a small sum per student could yield impressive results," Crawford said.

"Because they stepped in, \$28.50 won't stop Timothy Hall from getting an education."

SFSC seminar drones on

Attendees learn about Unmanned Aerial Vehicle types, uses

BY PAUL CATALA
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — They can find a location or mark with almost pinpoint accuracy and when it comes to the rules, laws, regulations and details on models and types, no one in attendance wanted to be left up in the air.

That's why 20 people signed up and attended an inaugu-

ral "Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Seminar" Friday.

Held 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at South Florida State College's Criminal Justice Academy, 600 W. College Drive, the nine-hour, free workshop covered at least 10 separate topics regarding UAVs.

More commonly known as "drones," UAVs — also referred

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PAUL CATALA/STAFF

Geovantae Swett, left, a senior at Avon Park High School; Steve Harber, a second-year South Florida State College student; SFSC electronics instructor Tim Byrd; and Glenn Seeman, a Sebring High School senior, work on the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle that SFSC students in the electronics program began building in 2014. Called the "UAV Byrd," it took about a year to complete.

Drones

From Page 1

to as a "remotely piloted aircraft (RPA)" — are any aircraft without a human pilot aboard. UAVs are controlled either by onboard computers or by the remote control of a pilot on the ground or in another vehicle.

The main difference in a "drone" and "UAV" is drones are semi-autonomous and attached to another vehicle, but the terms are used interchangeably, according to information provided by Sgt. Joseph Marble of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, Wauchula.

Sponsored by SFSC, the event was led by Marble, a drone "hobbyist" who owns his own UAVs, including one he brought to the event, a DJI Phantom 3, which retails for about \$1,500.

Among those who attended were law enforcement officials, military personnel, farmers and a grocery store manager.

During the seminar, topics Marble addressed included the history of UAVs, the "pros and cons" of drones, law enforcement use, types of UAV operations, state laws regarding drones, Federal Aviation Administration regulations, drone authorization and the future of UAVs.

But the underlying message presented by Marble and bantered about by guests was that affordable, unmanned, flying technology for individuals in the public realm is so new that clarifying laws and regulations are still being established. Marble spoke about a Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) permitting public agencies to operate a "particular aircraft, for a particular purpose, in a particular area."

During a break, Marble said individuals not adhering to a COA could endanger law enforcement use of drones. He also stressed under a COA, individuals are not supposed to make a commercial gain using a drone.

"This (seminar) is geared to help the hobbyist and law enforcement understand the use and benefits of drones," he said during a break. "I hope it better guides law enforcement into using them (drones) more and helps the hobbyist understand what law enforcement is going to use them for. I want them to learn about safety and regulations."

Representing SFSC at the workshop



COURTESY PHOTO

A DJI Phantom 3 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle hovers over a road in front of South Florida State College's Criminal Justice Academy. The drone was used as a model during Friday's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Seminar.

were Curt Ivy, director of criminal justice programs at SFSC's public service academy and Kevin Brown, dean of SFSC's applied sciences and technologies division.

Ivy said he had noticed seeing drone issues relative to criminal issues and wanted to put a program together that showed that the "possibilities are limitless for their 'good' use."

"We sometimes find hobbyists not using them correctly and causing problems; people object to them flying over their property," he said. "This was kind of an experiment for us to see the interest. I think you're seeing a lot of information going back and forth. With them (drones), you're really only limited by your imagination and technological capabilities for their uses."

During the class' 11:30 a.m. lunch break, outside Marble spent time registering and activating his new drone via an iPad. With him, attendees Charles Steele of Venus and Bryan Belcher of Sebring looked on.

Steele, 80, a retired building construction manager, said he has been involved

in model aircraft since was 20 and recently got into flying drones as a hobby. He said he attended mostly to learn about safety and hoped others there would pick up pointers on flying properly.

"I wanted to get the information, how to fly safely, the rules and regulations that need to be followed," he said. "I hope everyone learns what to do and not to do."

Brown, who attended some of the seminar, said in 2014 that students in the school's electronics college began building their own drone and it was recently completed. He said the school also applied for a grant for a UAV and is looking to purchase one to use in agricultural research.

The FAA expects the number of drones licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration to fly over U.S. soil to increase to 30,000 by 2020, fueling what could become a \$90 billion industry, according to the website "The Drone Project."

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19 SFSC honor students receive scholarships

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College awarded 19 students in its Honors Program the Edward K. Roberts Book Scholarship, an award that helps students cover the cost of textbooks.

Students awarded the merit-based scholarship receive \$250 in the fall and spring terms in the form of a credit they can use toward the purchase of textbooks at the Campus Store, the bookstore on SFSC's Highlands Campus.

Students receiving the scholarship must enroll in

one honors course during the academic term in which they receive the scholarship.

Returning students must achieve a 3.30 cumulative college grade point average and continue to make satisfactory progress toward the Honors Program Associate in Arts degree.

SFSC's Honors Program offers students intellectual development, cultural enrichment, smaller classes, scholarship opportunities, and special recognition at the graduation ceremony as well as an Honors endorsement on their Associate in Arts degree

and transcript.

Students receiving the Edward K. Roberts Book Scholarship this fall are: Mariana Becker, Annsley Bohlman, Nicole Darder, Alexis Drzewucki, Matt Estima, Ricky Jefferies, Carlos Negron, Devan Ortega, Heather Oyola, Katherine Oyola, Keysha Pecor, James Pinkney, Christian Reitnauer, William Sager, Patrick Swafford, Tyler Whalen, Dylan Whiteman, Rachel Wolf and Summer Xiong.

For more information, contact Charlotte Pressler, director of the SFSC honors program, at 863-784-7247.



Courtesy photo

First row, from left: Katherine Oyola, Alexis Drzewucki, Mariana Becker, Summer Xiong, Dr. Charlotte Pressler. Second row: James Pinkney, Heather Oyola, Christian Reitnauer, Annsley Bohlman. Not pictured: Nicole Darder, Matt Estima, Ricky Jefferies, Carlos Negron, Devan Ortega, Keysha Pecor, William Sager, Patrick Swafford, Tyler Whalen, Dylan Whiteman, and Rachel Wolf.

Free oral cancer screenings

AVON PARK — This year alone, oral cancer will be diagnosed in over 45,000 Americans and cause 8,650 deaths – or one every hour of the day – according to the Oral Cancer Foundation. Because patient survival rates improve when oral cancer is detected early, the South Florida State College Dental Education Clinic is offering free oral cancer screenings from 3:30-6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15.

The signs and symptoms of oral cancer are often missed by the naked eye and not detected until the cancer has advanced to the point that patients only have a 50 percent chance of survival. Oral cancer screenings are painless and take only a few minutes, but they can catch the disease early when it is in its most treatable stage.

The screenings help SFSC's Dental Hygiene students as well by giving them real-world experience detecting oral cancer under the supervision of a licensed dentist and dental hygienists.

Appointments are required by calling 784-7020. SFSC's Dental Education Clinic is located in Building T-1 on the Highlands Campus, 600 West College Drive, Avon Park.

Registration open for SFSC's Fall B Flex Session

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — Heartland residents who missed out on signing up for classes at South Florida State College in August now have a second chance to jump-start their education.

Registration for SFSC's Fall B Flex Session is now open.

Classes scheduled for Fall B Flex Session run eight weeks, from Oct. 19 – Dec. 16. Registration for the

session closes Oct. 18, and fees are due at the time students register. New students may apply for admission to the college by clicking the "Apply Now" button at the top of SFSC's home page at www.southflorida.edu. Returning students may register and pay for classes through the college portal, Panther Central.

The Fall B Flex schedule of classes is available online at www.southflorida.edu.

www.southflorida.edu/current-students/class-schedules.

SFSC's Advising and Counseling Center accepts walk-in registrations 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays. Students can register in Building B of the Highlands Campus in Avon Park, at the Hardee Campus in Bowling Green, at the Lake Placid Center in Lake Placid, or at the DeSoto Campus in Arcadia.

SFSC offers two-year

associate degree programs and numerous occupational training programs for people who wish to enhance their employability skills through shorter courses of study.

The college offers a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision and Management (BAS-SM), a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program.

Financial aid is available

to those who are qualified.

For more information about financial assistance and scholarships, contact the SFSC Financial Aid Office at 863-784-7134. For further information about registration, call 863-453-6661 (Highlands Campus), 773-3081 (Hardee Campus), 993-1757 (DeSoto Campus), or 465-3003 (Lake Placid Center).

For information about SFSC and its programs, visit www.southflorida.edu.

■ VOLLEYBALL: South Florida State College

Lady Panthers fall to Broward in five-set thriller

By **JEFF GARDENOUR**
SPORTS EDITOR

South Florida State College's volleyball team has served up notice that it will fight to the end this season.

Now, the Panthers need to learn how to finish.

SFSC fell to 0-2 on the young season with a five-set loss to Broward College 25-18, 15-25, 20-25, 27-25, 7-15. The loss came on

the heels of a four-set setback to national power Florida College, which beat the Panthers, 27-25, 25-20, 21-25, 25-19, earlier.

"We lost a hard-fought match against Broward," SFSC coach Kimberly Crawford said.

Leading SFSC in its latest outing were sophomore outside hitter Elle Barnett, who had 16 kills, 11 digs and four blocks;

freshman right-side hitter Emily Swenson, 11 kills; and freshman defensive specialist Brooke Westphal, 45 digs.

The Panthers hope to regroup this Saturday when it heads to Eastern Florida College in Melbourne for a

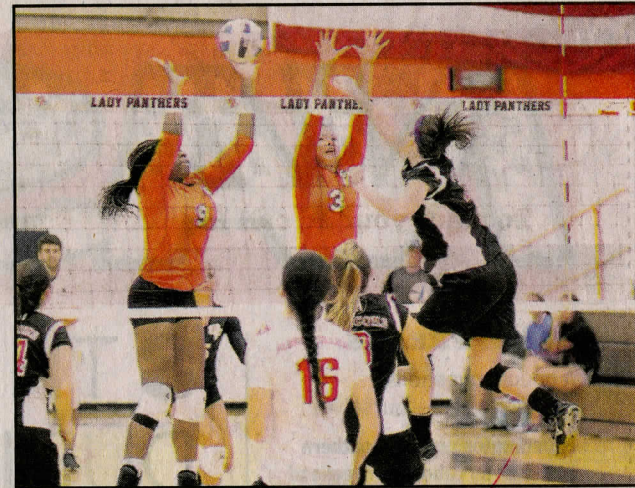


CRAWFORD

match. SFSC will play Eastern Florida College at 11 a.m., and Santa Fe College out of Gainesville at 1 p.m.

"We have all week to practice," Crawford said.

Also on Saturday, South Florida State College's cross country team will compete in the University of North Florida Invitational in Jacksonville. The meet starts at 8:15 a.m.



James Taylor/News-Sun photo

South Florida State College's Otisha Smith (#9), a former Avon Park High player, and Leah Sywanyk (#3) go up for a block attempt against Florida College in the season opener. SFSC recently lost to Broward College to drop to 0-2 on the year.



ALLEN MOODY/STAFF

Members of the Sebring cross-country teams take off at the start of Saturday's time trial at South Florida State College.

Streaks, Panthers have trial run

South Florida State College team makes unofficial debut

BY ALLEN MOODY
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — It was a day of firsts at South Florida State College on Saturday. It was the season debut of the two Sebring cross-country teams, but it also marked the debut of the South Florida State College women's cross-country team, and fellow Panthers athletes were on hand to cheer them on.

"The softball players and the baseball players were all out this morning," said South Florida coach Krista Schult, "For a lot of them it was their first cross-country meet experience. It was neat having them out here, and having the support of the other teams was awesome."

Schult was the former girls coach at Sebring and her husband, Matthew, was the former boys coach. When Krista moved to South Florida State College, Matthew stepped down at Sebring to devote more time to the family business, as well as to help take care of the latest addition to the family.

Blaine Parketon is the new Sebring boys coach and Rebekah Wills has taken over the Sebring girls team.

"The former coaches have been extremely awesome about handing over the baton per se and helping us ease into it," Parketon said. "They allowed us to come out here today and we definitely appreciate Matt and Krista for helping us through this process."

Expectations weren't high for Saturday's run, as it was merely to get back in the swing of things and see where everybody was at.

"It was good to see them run a 5K, we've been practicing three weeks," Krista Schult said. "It was a baseline run today. We just wanted to see what we could do in a 5K."

"They wore their uniforms for the first time to see how that feels, they got their racing shoes on for the first time. That's their first 5K that they've raced since last cross-country season, so it was nice."

While the Panthers are a brand-new program, the Blue Streaks are



Sebring's Malcolm Holdman races to the finish line at South Florida State College on Saturday.

Cross Country

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dealing with some returning faces, along with replacing some departed faces.

"We have some new runners, some freshmen," Wills said. "They're excited and committed to keep working at it. It's definitely a challenging and trying sport."

The Sebring girls lost Brooke Sanders and Katie Stoll but return some talented runners, such as Kristen Pyles, who led the team Saturday, Sophia Tauchen and Diana Salinas.

"I was very pleased with the girls," Wills said. "We had some faster times than we've been recording in our loops. I think it's going to be a great season. They all work well together and encourage each other."

The Sebring boys lost Eric Foster and Damian Foster, along with several others, but return a couple of key runners in Malcolm Holdman and Chandler Gowan.

"I see Malcom and Chan-



ALLEN MOODY/STAFF

Members of the South Florida State College cross country team take off at the start of Saturday's time trials held at the SFSC campus.

dlar as having great shots at getting to state, and we have some sleepers in our group too," Parketon said. "I think they can both get to 17-and-change."

Parketon said that it can be a bit of a change to start working with new coaches, but both the Sebring boys and girls teams have a great collection of athletes.

"We have a great group of parents supporting us and some hard-working kids with excellent GPAs," he said. "We're excited that we're here."

■ COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL: **South Florida State College**

Panthers drop 2 in Eastern Florida State tournament

By **JEFF GARDENOUR**
SPORTS EDITOR

South Florida State College volleyball coach Kim Crawford is hoping some tough competition will help the Panthers toughen up for conference play, which tips off in a week.

Two weeks after

facing and losing to national champion power Florida College, SFSC last Saturday traveled to Melbourne to compete in the Eastern Florida State College tournament. There, the Panthers lost to national power Santa Fe College of Gainesville in straight

sets, 19-25, 20-25, 17-25, and then fell to Eastern Florida State 23-25, 26-24, 18-25, 11-25.

The two latest losses dropped SFSC to 0-4 on the season, with five more matches to play before Suncoast Conference play begins.

"The team played

well," Crawford said. "I saw great things. We have a week to iron out our wrinkles before conference starts."

In the Santa Fe match, Elle Barnett and Leah Sywanyk each had nine kills; Kelsey Sanders, 27 assists; and Brooke Westphal, 18 digs, for

the Panthers.

Against Eastern Florida State, Barnett had 13 kills; Naomi Melville, nine kills; Sanders, 39 assists, and Westphal, 26 digs.

SFSC today travels to Webber International University in Babson Park for a 6 p.m.

match. The Panthers then visit Warner University in Lake Wales on Thursday at 7 p.m.

This Saturday, SFSC travels to play in a Santa Fe match. The Panthers will play Palm Beach State College at noon, and Santa Fe College at 2 p.m.

Panther volleyball to host tournament Friday, Saturday

By **JEFF GARDENOUR**
SPORTS EDITOR

South Florida State College is still trying to find some offensive rhythm one-third of the way through the 2015 volleyball season, but the Panthers finally were able to scratch out a victory.

SFSC went on the road three times last week, including twice

to Lake Wales, and it was the latter where the Panthers won their first match of the year.

South Florida State beat Webber International University 25-18, 25-15, 25-21, to snap a five-match losing streak to start the season. The Panthers then fell to Warner University of Lake

Wales, 21-25, 19-25, 20-25.

Elle Barnett and Leah Sywanyk had 12 kills each to lead a gutsy SFSC attack. Naomi Melville added six blocks and eight kills for the Panthers.

“Against Warner we played our best volleyball yet,” SFSC coach Kim Crawford said. “Things are really coming together.”

UP NEXT

* **What:** South Florida State College Annual Tournament.

* **When:** Friday and Saturday.

* **Where:** SFSC main campus, Avon Park

SFSC then traveled to Santa Fe College in Gainesville for a tournament last weekend and went 0-2, dropping the Panthers to 1-8 on the season.

* **Schedule:** Friday – South Florida State College vs. Broward College, 2 p.m.; South Florida State College vs. Webber International University, 6 p.m. Saturday – SFSC vs. Pasco-Hernandez State College, 10 a.m.; SFSC vs. Eastern Florida State College, 2 p.m.

SFSC lost to Palm Beach State College, 19-25, 18-25, 25-23, 13-15, and Santa Fe College, 16-25, 17-25,

25-20, 17-25.

“We have had some misfortunes with our personnel, but the team played hard and we will adjust,” Crawford said. “We have to stay mentally tough throughout the whole match.”

SFSC will host its annual tournament on Sept. 18-19 at the main campus in Avon Park.

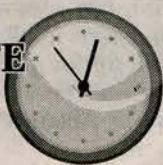


MARK PINSON/STAFF

Road trip

The Avon Park cross country team will make the trip to Frostproof on Thursday.

2 MINUTE DRILL



SFSC Skins Game benefit

The Skins Game — a two-person skins game to benefit South Florida State College athletics, will take place at Sun 'n Lake Golf Club on Nov. 21, beginning at 8:30 a.m. The tournament is flighted by two-person handicaps and each flight will have its own skins pot. Entry fee is \$75 per player and includes range balls, lunch and SFSC hat or visor. For more information, contact Andy Kesling at 385-4830 or Rick Hitt at 784-7036.

Wednesday, Sept. 21, Highlands Today

College Cross Country



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

The South Florida State College Panthers — from left, Cali Gumpel, Alexis Armstead, Grace Miller, Julia Soto and Savannah Walter — had a solid showing in Saturday's Mountain Dew Invitational at the University of Florida.

Panthers make strides

South Florida State College is ranked No. 25 in U.S. coaches poll and could move up

BY ALLEN MOODY
Highlands Today

The South Florida State College Panthers cross-country team competed in its second meet of the season on Saturday, when it raced in the Mountain Dew Invitational at the University of Florida. The Panthers finished 10th out of 21 non-division schools in the meet.

"It was great," said South Florida coach Krista Schult. "All the runners had season PRs and one had a lifetime PR. They enjoyed the competition and they got to compete with schools their own size."

All of the women raced together, but scoring was split into two groups, Division I schools and non-Division I schools.

The University of Florida cruised to the team title and former Sebring standout Taylor Tubbs finished second among Division I runners and third overall with a time of 17:30.29. Tubbs' teammate with the Gators, Rebakah Greene, finished first among



COURTESY PHOTO

The South Florida State College cross-country team poses for a photo with Albert at the University of Florida on Saturday.

Division I runners, and second overall. The race was won by Central Florida University's Anne-Marie Blaney, who competed as an unattached athlete, as opposed to a member of the Knights.

"We got to see Taylor run,"

said Schult, who was Tubbs' high school cross-county coach. "It was great to see her and she ran really well."

For the Panthers, Grace Miller led the way with a 16th-place finish in 19:27.74, while Cali Gumpel was 56th in

20:37.62. Julia Soto was 85th in 21:11.08 and Savannah Walter was right behind in 21:11.12. Alexis Armstead finished in 21:52.74.

Schult said her athletes ran much better than they did in their opening meet, which was held at the University of North Florida.

"The race at UNF was a tough one, it was mentally challenging since it was their first-ever college cross-country race," Schult said. "Afterwards they were a little bit deflated."

One thing that helped boost morale was finding out they were ranked No. 25 in the first edition of the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association poll.

"They were extremely surprised and very happy," Schult said.

The next poll will be released Sept. 30, but it's hard not to see the Panthers improving on the No. 25 spot. One of the teams they beat in Saturday's meet was No. 24 Pasco-Hernando and the Pan-

Panthers

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thers beat them by a comfortable margin.

Things will pick up a little bit for the Panthers now, who will compete on Friday in Titusville and then have their lone home meet of the season on Saturday, Oct. 3. Chipola, Pasco-Hernando and Warner will make the trip to Avon Park for the meet.

"We're excited and we're looking forward to our next three meets," Schult said.



COURTESY PHOTO

The South Florida State College cross-country team at the team's first meet at the University of North Florida.

SFSC Softball



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College's Shelby Press slides into third base ahead of the tag of Amber Butler during Saturday's doubleheader.

Panthers split in fall ball

Team hopes to progress by emphasizing hitting, quick hands in the zone

BY RUTH ANNE LAWSON

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Panthers split Saturday's fall softball doubleheader. The Panthers were shutout by the Polk State College Eagles their first game of the day by a score of 6-0. The Panthers then rallied to defeat the Ave Maria Gyrenes 3-2 in the late game.

"We are still working," said SFSC assistant coach Amanda Byers. "We are working on our hitting and working on having quick hands in the zone. Our main focus going into today was to have a strong defense to keep us in the game. We know we still have a lot of work to do on the offensive side. We are trying to progress and hopefully we will show a little more pride."

The Eagles took an early lead when they scored two runs in the first inning. Polk added to its lead in the top of the second. The Eagle's Sairah Shirah drew a walk and stole second. Ashlyn Curtis hit a shot to third baseman Megan Custode, who dove for the ball and threw to first, but the throw sailed a bit high and allowed Shirah to score for the Eagles, increasing their lead to 3-0.

South Florida's left fielder, Cristina Colli, made two incredible catches. Colli's quickness allowed her to make a catch that was in foul territory and then she



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College pitcher Amanda Ross delivers a pitch during Saturday's doubleheader.

made a second catch that was deep into left field where she had to lunge for the ball.

"I thought our outfielders did a lot better today," Byers said. "They have really progressed and did a great job tracking down balls. Our infielders are doing better

with their reaction time and knowing the time they have when they are fielding the ball. They are noticing how fast the runner is and being able to make a quick transfer to get an out. I think we did really well as far as that goes. We have a really young team and we are just trying to see what we have."

In the bottom of the second, South Florida's Nicole Caruso hit a liner up the middle and beat the throw to first. Caruso was left stranded on first.

Polk State extended its lead in the top of the fourth. Meghan Lindell was hit in the leg and took first base. Dakota Bozeman came into run for her and stole second. Cassidy Kennard hit a shot off Custode's glove and rolled into center field. Bozeman scored and Kennard landed on second for an RBI double.

Elizabeth Gauthier came into run for Kennard. Gauthier stole third and Ally Baert hit a grounder to Panther's shortstop, Caruso, who threw home to catcher, Alexandra Lawden, who made an outstanding play at the plate when she tagged out Gauthier.

Polk State tacked on another run in the top of the fifth. Former Lake Placid Green Dragon Raveen Gobourne made a huge play for the Panthers. Gobourne dove and caught a line drive to third and then threw to second, while still on her knees, for a double play.



RUTH ANNE LAWSON

South Florida State College catcher Alexandra Lawden tags out Elizabeth Gauthier at home during Saturday's doubleheader.

Softball

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Polk State added another run to its lead in the top of the sixth and the Panthers were unable to score, falling 6-0.

The Panthers were victorious later in the day as they faced Ave Maria Gyrenes. Ave Maria got out to a 2-0 lead on South Florida.

The Panthers rallied to take the lead. Katlyn Vega, Cristina Colli and Rachel White scored for the Panthers pushing them into the lead of 3-2. The Panthers had outstanding pitching all day with

Stephanie Norris and Amanda Ross pitching against the Eagles and Haley Pinterich and Vangie Futch going against the Gyrenes.

"The difference in the second game was that some found holes more than others," Byers said. "We came back and started putting the ball in play and got people on base. We did a lot better on offense. We were an entirely different team in the second game."

South Florida will face the Polk State Eagles again Saturday in the Polk State College Tournament that will be held at Panther Field. The time has yet to be determined.