

AVID Is For Individual Students

By JOAN SEAMAN

Of The Herald-Advocate

They call it by a variety of names, but say it's just a way to commit to student success.

Officially called AVID, it is the Advancement Via Individual Determination in teaching and learning.

The program is active now in the junior high, high school, and for the first time at South Florida State College, the only college in the state to have the program.

Coordinator Mike Wilkinson presented a power point on the subject to the School Board at last Thursday's meeting. AVID is an elective one-period class each day, now with 175 students. Supervision and support will continue for them through their beginning college years as well.

Thursday's presentation followed on the heels of the Tuesday night dinner and awards presentation for AVID students, where 13 seniors were presented with a certificate, lapel pin and their AVID graduation cord. For juniors, there was the certificate and lapel pin. Underclassmen received certificates.

Each of the AVID teachers chose one "AVID student of the year," who received a certificate and \$20 gift card. Receiving them were 12th grader Alex Lopez from teacher Daphne Hays; 11th grader Anahi Velasco from teacher Micah Myers; 10 grader Ashja Camel from teacher Nicole Aubry; 10 grader James Vue from teacher Mandy Stock; and ninth grader Ana Guevara

from teacher Rod Smith.

Last year, there were 26 AVID students in eighth grade with 100 percent of them enrolled in honors classes. Sixty-two percent enrolled in Algebra to receive high school credit, or common core math or higher level math course, and all of them completed an honors course other than math. As a result they were recommended for enrollment in the college prep sequence at the high school. They also took a pre-collegiate exam such as PSAT or ACT Aspire.

HJHS Vice Principal Meredith Durastanti brought students seventh grader Marilu Antonia-Rivera and sixth-grader Shanteye Frederick to tell how the program helps. They both said they were appreciative of the field trips to see college options, the twice-weekly tutorials which helps them figure out problems with which they are having difficulty, and how to organize their planners and highlight work when it is accomplished.

Four of the five high school AVID teachers, Stock, Aubry, Myers and Hays, were on hand. Smith, who is a track coach, could not attend.

To date, 2016 AVID grade-point averages have been higher than the average student. In unweighted GPAs, ninth graders were at 3.18, compared to 2.61 for classmates; 10th grades at 3.20 vs. 2.57; 11th graders 3.19 compared to 2.55; and 12 graders 3.26 compared to 2.81.

High School Principal Dr. Michele Polk presented Alex

Lopez and Felice Ehrenkauffer. Lopez said one of the things he learned was time management, a skill he hopes will carry him on to be the first college graduate in his family. "I am prepared and ready for college," he said.

Ehrenkauffer said she had gone to UCF, UF, SFSC and others to learn the admission process and help her make plans for her future in teaching or some medical field. She said scholarships help target available schools or colleges. She is now in her third year in the AVID program, which has helped her learn how to overcome obstacles and not take short cuts to achievement. She has also learned organization.

Wilkinson said one problem for students is losing homework in their book bags. The binder system allows them to be organized and ready when any work is requested.

Wilkinson said the mission of AVID is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. It includes a school-wide college readiness system, a structured approach to a rigorous curriculum, and direct support for students, especially those who will be first-generation college students.

The program also includes a facet that engages the teachers in teaching them how to help under-achieving students with potential into more rigorous courses. They coordinate staff in the junior high with their high school counterparts in each subject to provide continuity for those who have started the program.

Students are selected because of their high test scores,

college potential, and desire and determination to progress in their education. It includes students who have been historically underserved in 4-year colleges, are of low to medium income, have special circumstance and probably are the first in their family to attend college.

The programs has extra curricula in writing, college and careers, strategies for success and critical reading. There are also tutorials, using college students to help small groups

of six or seven study problem areas, achieve writing skills and have discussions on the whys and wherefores of their situation.

The AVID program has been under a grant for three to four years but the five-year grant is gradually phasing out. By 2016-17 it will be completely under district funding as the grant ends in December 2017. Begun in January, 2012, it initially was heavily funded to get it started.

Already it has been proven to

increase enrollment in advanced academic courses such as Advanced Placement and dual enrollment or honors classes. It has also implemented best practices for all students and created a college- or advanced education perspective throughout the schools.

It raises student achievement, ensures college access and success, closes opportunity and education gaps and improves instruction for lasting professional development, conclude Wilkinson.



Thirteen seniors received their AVID graduation cord, a certificate and lapel pin for their final year in the program.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Several students spoke about how the AVID program affected them.



Photos show some of the parents and students attending the AVID dinner and awards last week.



SFSC athletic department honors student athletes

Coaches hand out awards at a ceremony on April 26

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College celebrated the academic and athletic achievements of its Panther student-athletes at an afternoon ceremony and reception on April 26.

The athletes, their families, and well-wishers gathered in the SFSC University Center Auditorium on the Highlands campus to watch the baseball and women's softball, volleyball, and cross country coaches hand out awards.

"This afternoon is a great opportunity to recognize the student athletes for their efforts throughout the year," Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach, said. "Most important, we do this with their families and their entire support network joining them here."

Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC's president, followed Hitt to the lectern to welcome everyone

who had come out to support the players and coaches.

"I don't recognize any of you out there in the seats," Dr. Leitzel said to the laughs from the audience. "None of you are in uniform and wearing your numbers."

Starting out the recognitions, Krista Schult, women's cross country coach, spoke of her five-member team coming together during the inaugural season of the sport at SFSC.

"The ladies arrived on campus already a team," Schult said. "I saw them slowly come together also as friends, and ending the season as a family."

Schult handed awards to Alexis Armstead, Most Improved Runner; Grace Miller, Most Valuable Runner; Savannah Walter, Cross Country Academic Excellence.

The Lady Panther Volleyball team members crowded in front of the auditorium stage to watch coach Kim Crawford honor the achievements of her players.

"Every year as a coach, I look for ways to improve on something with the ladies," Crawford said. "But this year, I had a really



From left are Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach, Panther baseball player John Tatum and SFSC President Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel. Tatum was named Male Scholastic Athlete of the Year. At right, from left are Hitt, Panther softball player Cassidy Stawicki and Leitzel. Stawicki was named Female Scholastic Athlete of the Year.



COURTESY PHOTO

good team that kept me on my toes the entire season."

Volleyball players earning recognition were Baylee Guntter, Leah Sywanyk, and Brooke Westphal for the Academic and Athletic Excellence Award. The Lady Panthers' coach made note that Westphal, and sophomores Kelsey Sanders and Elle Barnett, were named as Suncoast Conference Players of the Year.

Carlos Falla, the women's softball coach, next presented

his team their awards: Amanda Ross, Best Offensive Player; Rachael Reinbott, Shelby Press, Cristina Colli, Best Defensive Players; Haley Pinterich, Most Valuable Player; and Cassidy Stawicki and Rachel White both received the Coach's Award.

Hitt, stepping out of the role as SFSC's athletic director, put on his figurative baseball cap to recognize the play of the squad he coaches, the Panther baseball team.

Hitt honored two players for their achievements throughout the season: John Tatum, Most Improved Player; and J.D. Teron, 2016 Top Gun Award for his pitching.

Dr. Leitzel returned to the lectern to present two final awards: Female and Male Scholastic Athlete of the Year. He called up baseball player John Tatum and softball player Cassidy Stawicki to the stage to accept their awards.

Take Stock in Children celebrates scholarship signing in Highlands

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Take Stock in Children program recently awarded 15 new scholarships to middle school and high school students in Highlands County at a contract signing on April 26 at the Hotel Jacaranda, Avon Park.

Students who received scholarships were: Genesis Shannon, Rorie Bean, Dalila Eugenio-Badillo, Nyla Wrightsman, Jocelyn Hernandez, Sole Knorr-Lavatte, Colby Whit, Anthony Adhin, Donald Wylie, Aiden Beasley, Kevin Lopez, Brittany Castillo, Makenzie Thomas, Adrienne Silva and Gianna Saccente.

Take Stock in Children



COURTESY PHOTO

Fifteen Highlands County middle and high school students received two-year tuition scholarships through Take Stock in Children, a nonprofit organization that helps low-income children with mentoring and scholarships to a college or a vocational school, on April 26. Students who received scholarships were: Genesis Shannon, Rorie Bean, Dalila Eugenio-Badillo, Nyla Wrightsman, Jocelyn Hernandez, Sole Knorr-Lavatte, Colby Whitt, Anthony Adhin, Donald Wylie, Aiden Beasley, Kevin Lopez, Brittany Castillo, Makenzie Thomas, Adrienne Silva and Gianna Saccente.

is a statewide program that provides at-risk children with a mentor and a college scholarship. In return, TSIC scholar's sign contracts in which they

promise to remain drug-free, to avoid behavior that would get them into trouble with law enforcement, to attend school regularly, and to earn satisfacto-

ry grades. The students' parents also sign the contracts and agree to provide home environments conducive to education and to participate in.

"When we awarded these 15 scholarships throughout DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands school districts, it was phenomenal," Irene Castanon, TSIC

program coordinator, said. "There were so many students, who were really nervous and excited at this year's contract signings.

"More importantly, their hope of going to college has now become a reality"

The SFSC Foundation Inc. is the lead agency for TSIC within the college's service district of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties. The program has been in place for 20 years and has awarded scholarships to more than 500 local students.

For information about Take Stock in Children, call Irene Castanon, program coordinator, at (863) 453-3133 or visit www.southflorida.edu/giving/take-stock-children.

Conservation district makes donation to SFSC Agriculture Scholarship

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District has given a financial boost to students seeking degrees in agriculture-related programs at South Florida State College.

On Wednesday, representatives of the conservation district presented the SFSC Foundation, Inc., with two \$1,000 awards, which will be available to students this fall. The district also pledged a donation of \$2,000 a year for the next five years for the purpose of helping the college's agriculture students complete their education.

Jackie Bailey, vice-chair of the district's five-member board of supervisors, said the scholarship donations were placed in the district's five-year plan because supporting education is part of its mission. "We want people to



COURTESY PHOTO

On behalf of the SFSC Foundation, Jamie Bateman, third from right, accepts the Highlands County Soil and Water District's scholarship donations from HSWCD supervisor Jackie Bailey. Also present are, from left, Highlands County Commissioner Jim Brooks, HSWCD executive director Susie Bishop, supervisors Doug Deen, Scott Kirouac, and Pam Fentress, and chairman Dr. John Causey.

become better stewards of our natural resources," Bailey said. "We hope this scholarship will encourage students to go into fields like natural resources or agriculture. When you think about it, the first conservationist was an agriculture person. They live off the land, so they have to treat the land right."

"We are grateful to receive this donation from the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District," said Jamie Bateman,

SFSC's executive director for institutional advancement. "This contribution is valuable to our students who are seeking a degree in agriculture, the citrus industry, or natural resources. The district's partnership with us is a perfect example as to how we can work together to ensure that the future generations of students are able to earn degrees and get the higher level of education here in their hometown."

Generous patrons pro-

vide funding for nearly 100 scholarships through the SFSC Foundation, furthering SFSC's mission of putting a college education within reach of residents of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties. To learn how you can support the foundation, call 453-3133 or visit www.southflorida.edu.

For more information about SFSC programs and finding financial assistance for college, call 453-6661, 494-7500, 773-2252 or 465-5300.

SFSC Holds 2 Commencements Today

South Florida State College will celebrate its Spring Commencement in two ceremonies this year.

Both are today (Thursday), one at 4:45 p.m. and the other at 7:45 p.m.

The ceremonies will be held in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

"We had a large number of graduates this year, so we decided to have two commencement ceremonies to provide students with the maximum number of seats for their guests in the performing arts center," explained Dr. Timothy Wise, dean of Student Services.

The day will mark the inaugural commencement for students in the Bachelor of

Science degree in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing programs, which were launched in the fall of 2014.

During the 4:45 p.m. ceremony, students earning their Associate in Arts and Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degrees will march across the stage for their diplomas. The graduation speaker will be Audrey May, who earns her AA degree.

The 7:45 p.m. ceremony features students who are earning their Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision & Management, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and Associate in Science degrees; and occupational and college credit certificates.

Also graduating will be those who will receive their

State of Florida High School diplomas.

The commencement speaker will be Sharmin Jones, who earns her BSN degree.

A total of 459 students will have met the SFSC graduation requirements for the spring commencement. Of these, 210 receive their AA, 55 receive their AS, 119 receive occupational certificates or college credit certificates, 14 receive high school diplomas, and 22 will receive a BAS.

The inaugural BSN program will graduate 27 students, and the BSEE program will graduate 12 students.

Participating in the two ceremonies will be 285 students.

Receptions will be held in the Catherine P. Cornelius

Student Services & Classroom Complex (Building B) immediately following each of the ceremonies.

Live online streaming, accessed by clicking a website banner at southflorida.edu, will allow friends and relatives to see everything from the processional to the last graduate crossing the stage.

The streams begin today (Thursday) at 4:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Mace bearer and chief marshal for this year's ceremony is Elizabeth Andrews, and marshals are Davida Austin, Thomas Bush; Kathleen Cappel, Dr. Cate Cover, Robert Hampton, Dr. Theresa James, Melanie Jackson, Michelle MacBeth, Claire Miller, Ricardo Pantoja and Lena Phelps.

DeSoto alum named to academic team

By **MANUEL CORTAZAL**

SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

Celina Nuevo, a 2015 DeSoto County High School graduate, was one of five South Florida State College students chosen by The Florida College System for the 2016 All-Florida Academic Team.



NUEVO

Each year, the FCS names an academic team to honor the most outstanding students for their academic achievement, leadership and service to the community.

The five students were recognized at an awards ceremony April 21 in Tampa. In addition to Nuevo, SFSC students earning the recognition were Mathew Estima, Roxanne Guerndt, Christian Reitnauer and Erica Roberts. They joined 122 of their peers from 26 colleges in the state's 28-member FCS

named to the academic team.

"I am proud of these students for their academic achievements that led to being named to the All-Florida Academic Team," Florida Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart said. "Florida colleges are known throughout the nation for their educational excellence, and I am pleased they have prepared these students for success now and in the future."

The students attended a luncheon where they were presented with a medallion recognizing their achievements. SFSC President Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, and Kimberly Hemler, the college's Honors Program advisor, were on hand to watch the students receive their awards.

Students named to the All-Florida Academic Team were drawn from SFSC's Honors Program and the college's Tau Epsilon chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society.

First SFSC Firefighters Graduate

Four women and seven men have made history at South Florida State College.

They are the members of the first class to graduate from the college's new fire science program.

The graduates are now eligible to join the ranks of career firefighters serving in county and municipal fire departments, and one already is putting in full-time shifts.

Family members, college officials and fire officers from across the state watched the graduates mount the stage in the SFSC University Center Auditorium to collect their diplomas.

"We are so proud of what you have accomplished, and it's fitting to say 'congratulations' to you all," Kevin Brown, dean of applied sciences and technologies, told the graduates.

Brown, one of the college's

administrators who led the drive to bring a firefighting training program to SFSC, praised the work the instructors put into moving the inaugural class of recruits through the nine months of training.

"We are also proud to announce that as of today 90 percent of the class have passed their practical examination," Brown said.

The 11 recruits represent a range of backgrounds. Some are career paramedics looking to move into firefighting. One, only a few years out of high school, wants to fulfill his dream of fighting fires. Two recruits are married to each other.

One of the state's most experienced fire officers was on hand to address the graduates and share what he has learned in his 42 years as a paramedic, firefighter, department chief, and now state fire marshal.

"You can't just stop with having learned the basics of firefighting and life-saving skills," said Julius Halas, the director of the Division of State Fire Marshal. "You need to go on and get your associate degree in fire science, and then move on to higher degree levels to improve yourself."

Halas recounted how he started his firefighting career after passing the GED. He told the graduates he learned in the field that leadership required higher education. So, he said, he went back to college for his associate degree, following that up with bachelor's and master's degrees.

"You got to match your life skills with the knowledge you'll get in the classroom," Halas said.

SFSC's fire science program was a project 10 years in the making. The program went from dream to reality after the

Florida Legislature, at the urging of state Sen. Denise Grimsley, appropriated \$2.6 million in 2014 for the college to refit existing classroom space build water and fire towers and acquire the equipment to open the program on the college's Highlands Campus.

The state requires career firefighters to complete a two-part training program. The initial 206-hour phase, known as Firefighter I, gives recruits the credential needed to serve in a volunteer fire department.

A second 192-hour course, Firefighter II, teaches recruits the additional skills to work as a career firefighter in a county or city fire department.

Entry into the SFSC fire science program requires candidates to have a high school diploma or its equivalent, undergo a background check, and pass a physical examination.



COURTESY PHOTO

The first fire science graduates include (from left) Trenton Carlisle, Brianna Blosser, Coleton Choate, George Bailey, Cheryl Bailey, Michael Darrow, Lawrence Dunn, Robin Gillileo, James Schall, Rachel Smit and Stephen Wilson.



SFSC prepped for summer sessions

Flex sessions run six weeks each; some courses start Friday

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — As South Florida State College prepares for two commencement exercises this evening, many students are readying for summer classes, which start Friday for some courses.

College Registrar Deborah Fushetti said summer enrollment is significant at about 55 percent compared to fall and spring semesters. Enrollment for the summer of 2015 was 2,156 students — not counting the college's community education programs.

The summer session includes two flex sessions with six-week courses in each flex session, but Fushetti noted some courses run the full 12 weeks.



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

Student planners sit out on a table while staff from South Florida State College welcome students back for the fall semester in August 2015.

Anthony Ramirez, a 2015 Lake Placid High graduate, registered Wednesday for an auto service technology class that starts Friday.

He attended classes in the spring semester, but decided to switch programs.

Yvonne Rosario purchased her book Wednesday for her summer class — fundamentals of speech communication.

which starts Monday.

Why is she taking a summer class?

"I want to get my classes done faster," Rosario said.

She is studying for an associate's degree in biology and wants to earn it within two years, she said, noting that she didn't take a full load of classes in the spring semester.

Students may register for any class that has not started, Fushetti noted, so for classes that meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Monday will be the last day to register.

Today is the final day to register for the technical classes that start Friday.

The final day of class in the first summer flex session is June 17. The second summer flex session starts June 20 and ends on Aug. 1.

The fall semester at South Florida State College starts Aug. 19.

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SFSC

Dental hygiene graduates honored at pinning ceremony

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College honored eight graduates of its Dental Hygiene program in a traditional pinning ceremony in the SFSC University Center Auditorium on April 29.

The graduates had just completed their Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene degree program.

Receiving their pins were Nikki Atterberry, Allison Brooke Bivens, Blanca R. Cendejas, Sofia G. Chong, Nancy Jaramillo, Shelby Lynn Lambert, Maria Guadalupe Ruiz, and Janet Velasco.

Keynote speaker Norine Dowd, a dental hygienist with 28 years of experience and an adjunct instructor at SFSC, congratulated the graduates for their commitment to academic success and offered them words of wisdom.

Dowd said that the dental hygiene pinning symbolizes the readiness to care for the community in a professional manner. She asked graduates to remember the three components of their dental hygiene oath when wearing the pins: to care, to advocate and to lead.

"In other words, you are now a care provider to your patients, an advocate for your clients and a leader in any setting you might find yourself," Dowd explained. "You're armed with one of the most important tools needed to forge your path ahead. It's not the diploma or the pin itself



COURTESY PHOTO

South Florida State College honored graduates of its Dental Hygiene program at the SFSC University Center Auditorium on April 29. From left are Shelby Lynn Lambert, Maria Guadalupe Ruiz, Janet Velasco, Nikki Atterberry, Nancy Jaramillo, Sofia G. Chong, Blanca R. Cendejas and Allison Brooke Bivens.

that counts, it's about what you've learned along the way and what you do with the education you've gotten in your journey to graduation today. Seize this opportunity to go forward and accept your mission of caring, advocating and leading."

During the ceremony, graduates were presented their dental hygiene pins by Dr. Deborah Milliken, chair of SFSC's Dental Education program.

Atterberry received an award for highest grade point average of the class. Nancy Jaramillo was presented the Community Service Award. "The Community Service Award goes to a student who has an admirable enthusiasm for patient care,"

Milliken said. "The student seizes every opportunity to help others. She is professional in her approach to each patient, and exhibits the qualities of kindness and understanding of each patient's situation. She exemplifies each aspect of the dental hygiene oath in every way."

"Dental hygiene pinning is a time-honored tradition that reflects the study and skills required to earn the pin. The Class of 2016 is an excellent example of success in both technical skill and knowledge in the field. We are so pleased to award the pins to these great clinicians."

For information on SFSC's Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene program, call (863) 784-7131.

SFSC Foundation hosts spring masquerade gala



Courtesy photos

Dr. Catherine Cornelius (from left), Dot Bates and Dee Dee Stidham.



GALA | 21 John Barben (left) with Toni and Jim Brooks



David Willey and Dr. Tom Leitzel



Suzette Rhoades (from left), Christen Johnson and Allison Willey

in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties."

Before the guests started their meal of filet mignon, lobster, and cannelloni prepared by the college's culinary arts students, SFSC president Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel thanked everyone for the support they offer the college's students. "Our students are incredibly important

for us," he said. "They give us the inspiration that makes our work at SFSC so special for us."

The masquerade theme was conceived a year ago. "We had given thought to a masquerade-themed ball as we celebrated SFSC's 50th anniversary at last

year's gala," said Christy Crews, president of the SFSC Foundation board. "But we changed plans last year, so we decided to run with that idea in 2016."

AVON PARK — South Florida State College Foundation's hosted its 32nd annual Spring Gala on Saturday evening at the historic Hotel Jacaranda with 150 guests attending.

Auction, donations, and ticket sales raised \$33,000 for SFSC's Partnership Project, a major capital campaign to bolster the endowment.

The gala was sponsored by Century Link, Florida Hospital Heartland, State Senator Denise Grimsley, State Rep. Cary Pigman, Cowpoke's Watering Hole, Don and Ruth Geldart, and Terry and Filomena Atchley.

"This is my first gala and I am so excited to be here with all of you tonight," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of the SFSC Foundation, who is nearing the end of her first year heading up the organization. "With your support throughout this past year, you have made a world of difference in the lives of our students



Jamie and Billy Bateman



Andrew and Julie Fells



Amanda and Reilly Hartt



Mary and Ted Puckorius

Law Enforcement Classes at SFSC

SFSC offers certificate in basic law enforcement

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

Basic Law Enforcement classes will be held Monday through Friday, plus some Saturdays and Sundays, 8-5 p.m., beginning July 20, for those who wish to become a certified law enforcement officer in Florida. By successfully completing 770 contact hours of training, students earn occupational certificates and are eligible to take the state certification examination for correctional officers.

The CJA is located on SFSC's Highlands Campus, Avon Park. For more information, contact program coordinator Michael Huften at (863) 784-7285 or email michael.huften@southflorida.edu, or Facebook at South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy. Financial aid is available to those who qualify. Applications can be mailed upon request.

SFSC teaches volleyball at Ridge Arc

By CINDY MARSHALL

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK —

Members of the South Florida State College Lady Panthers volleyball team spent three weeks teaching volleyball to consumers at Ridge Area Arc during April.

Consumers enjoyed playing volleyball with the Lady Panthers for three Fridays.

The team taught basic skills and played some games on the outdoor net.

Players also worked indoors with those who had limited abilities to move by doing chair volleyball.

Ridge Area Arc honored the team on April 22 with an appreciation party complete with cake and photo gifts. Arc consumers wished the players who are graduating good luck in their future. Some players are returning next season so everyone was excited to hear that they will see them again.

Coach Kim Crawford coordinated this effort.



Right: Ridge Area Arc consumer Mac Smith focuses on the ball as he prepares to serve while an SFSC Volleyball player watches.

Back-to-back commencement ceremonies mark SFSC graduation

Class is one of the largest in school's 51-year history

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College held its first back-to-back commencement ceremonies Thursday evening, recognizing the achievements of its graduates and the efforts of its faculty and staff.

SFSC District Board of Trustees Chairwoman Kris Rid-

er, speaking at what she called commencement "first edition," told the graduates they now have a start on their education.

"Oh yes, just a start. The truth is your education should never end," she said. "Above all, strive to serve others."

The college held two commencement services in a single night to accommodate one of the largest graduating classes in its 51-year history.

Both ceremonies took place Thursday evening in the Wildstein Center for the Performing

GRADUATION, Page 3



MARC VALERO/STAFF

SFSC students of the 2016 graduating class enter the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts prior to the first commencement ceremony on Thursday.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

The SFSC Class of 2016 prepares to graduate in the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts.

Graduation

From Page 1

Arts.

The first honored students who earned associate in arts degrees and Bachelor of Science degrees in Elementary Education.

The second recognized students who earned Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management degrees, Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing, Associate in Science degrees, occupational certi-

cates, college credit certificates and State of Florida high school diplomas.

Altogether, 459 graduates crossed the stage.

The student commencement speakers were Audrey May and Sharmin Jones.

May said she never lost hope and her faith remained strong after she related her story of being a teenager trapped in abuse and squalor in a foreign country to being a mother of 10 children with a loving husband.

"I am finally living my Amer-

ican dream, which I prayed for years ago," she said.

At the second commencement ceremony, new Bachelor Science in Nursing graduate Jones lauded the excellence of SFSC's nursing program as she prepared to accept her third nursing degree from SFSC, according to a SFSC news release.

Even though entering the BSN program meant leaving a job of 12 years and taking a significant cut in pay, the working mom finished her rigorous studies with the support of her

husband, who vowed to take on three jobs so she could continue her education.

"There will come a time that you may have to make a difficult decision in life," Jones told her peers.

Dean of Academic Support Michael McLeod and Dean of Division of Applied Sciences and Technologies Kevin Brown were each named dean emeritus as they prepare for retirement.

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SFSC network security program gains industry recognition

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Network Security Program was recognized by the networking industry leader for providing the best delivery of its Internet of Everything curriculum.

Cisco System's Networking Academy singled out SFSC for recognition from among colleges throughout the United States and Canada with computer networking programs.

Internet of Everything, more often referred to as the "Internet of Things," describes the networking of objects — home appliances, cars, buildings, animals or humans — embedded with computer processors, software, and sensors that enables them to collect and exchange data over the Internet.

A homeowner might use it to remotely control the operation of home appliances, keep tabs on grandparent's heart monitor or exchange data with the pool service company on the water's condition.

With "if it can be connected, it will be connected" increasingly becoming the norm, analysts expect Internet of Everything to reshape global commerce.

"In an economy where the Internet of Everything will play a greater role, IT skills will matter in more job functions," said Brian Bohlman, instructor of networking technologies and digital forensics. "The Cisco certification serves as a stamp of approval that students coming to SFSC will leave with the skills they need to succeed in our evolving economy."

Cisco estimates Internet of Everything, or IoE, will account for \$19 trillion in global economic activity over the next decade.

The annual Cisco Academy Curriculum Excellence award is presented to one institution in each region for achieving excellence in teaching a curriculum. The Cisco Networking Academy program said it uses a rigorous process to select academies for this award.

Bohlman said SFSC added the Cisco curriculum to its network security program so that students can learn cutting-edge technology and identify changing trends.

The Cisco Networking Academy, a program of Cisco Systems, is an IT skills and career-building initiative that partners with learning institutions worldwide to enhance computer networking education.

Cisco Systems is a Silicon Valley-based multinational technology company that designs, manufactures and sells networking equipment. The company reported nearly \$50 billion in revenue last year.

"Students studying IoE technologies can move on to careers as a network engineer, network security specialist, data center technician or software engineer," Bohlman said.

For information about SFSC's Network Security Program at SFSC, contact Bohlman at bohlmanb@southflorida.edu or call the SFSC Advising and Counseling Center at (863) 784-7131.

SFSC spring Commencement closes out 2016 academic year



Commencement students turning their tassels, a tradition of graduation ceremonies.

Courtesy photo

AVON PARK — South Florida State College marked the end of the 2016 academic year with a spring term Commencement on Thursday, May 5 in the SFSC Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands campus.

This year, due to the large number of graduates, SFSC honored recipients of Associate in Arts (AA) and Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSEE) degrees with an afternoon ceremony. Those earning Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management (BAS-SM) degrees, Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees, Associate in Science degrees, occupational and college credit certificates, and Florida high school diplomas were honored during an evening ceremony.

Pageantry was the same for both ceremonies. In all, 459 graduates crossed the stage wearing academic regalia adorned with variously colored cords and sashes signifying their individual achievements.

"Today we celebrate the culmination of your achievements," said Kris Rider, chair of the SFSC District Board of Trustees. "We honor you with pomp and recognize your hard work and dedication to finish the course."

Audrey May delivered the student commencement speech during the afternoon ceremony. May, who earned her AA degree, plans to enroll in the biomedical sciences program at Adventist University of Health Sciences this fall.

May's path to the commencement stage was one fraught with hurdles she surmounted, she said, because of her faith and the love she had for her children. May recounted a frightful journey that took her from her home in Florida to a life in the hinterland of Central America, a journey marked with abuse and harrowing ordeals.

May eventually found a home in Highlands County, married her dream husband, and worked her way through SFSC's two-year associate degree program. "Today, I stand here a happily married woman with 10 amazing kids, awesome in-laws, living in a beautiful home with a white fence," May said. "I am also a 2106 graduate of SFSC, and I declare that I am living the American Dream which I prayed for long ago."

The evening Commencement ceremony featured Sharmin Jones as student speaker. A registered nurse and graduate of SFSC's Practical Nursing and Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs, Jones earned her BSN degree. When SFSC launched the BSN degree in 2014, she was one of the first to apply. Earning a BSN will open doors for Jones to advancements in nursing beyond those available with an associate

degree. Jones showered the faculty with praise, thanking them for their dedication to seeing their students succeed. "We depend on the faculty like you," said Jones, turning to the professors and instructors on stage. "We depend on you to keep us motivated and encouraged."

But Jones's path to her BSN took more than encouragement—it took making a difficult choice. After she gained acceptance into the program, her employer forced her to step down from her managerial position rather than allow her the flexibility to attend class one day each week. Jones had to take a \$20,000 pay cut.

"There will come a time that you may have to make a difficult decision," Jones said. "A decision like a \$20,000 cut in pay I had to make." Jones credited the support of her family and a new, more

accommodating employer, Florida Hospital Heartland, with helping her earn her degree.

Before handing students their diplomas, SFSC president Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel encouraged them to "keep moving" on their academic journey. "In the rehearsal for tonight, as you crossed the stage, you heard me say 'congratulations' and 'keep moving,'" Leitzel said.

"Keep moving," Dr. Leitzel repeated. "That's my admonition to you."

Dr. Charlotte Pressler, director of SFSC's Honors Program, recognized 15 Honors Program graduates for academic excellence, outstanding leadership, and strong citizenship. They were Annsley Bohlman, Hannah Cribbs, Nicole Darder, Alexis Drzewucki, Mathew Estima, Katie LaDue, Carlos Negron, Heather Oyola, Katherine Oyola, James

Pinkney, Christian Reitnauer, William Sager, and Tyler Whalen, Dylan Whiteman, and Rachel Wolf.

Dr. Michael McLeod and Kevin Brown, both deans and long-serving SFSC faculty members, were each named Dean Emeritus in recognition of their service to the college. The college conferred the BASM on 22 graduates. This Commencement featured the inaugural graduating classes of two bachelors' degree programs: The BSN program graduated 27 students and the BSEE program 12 students.

The college awarded associate degrees to 265 students. Occupational certificates or college credit certificates went to 119 students, with another 14 graduating from the Adult Education program with a high school diploma.

Family and friends who could not attend



Courtesy photos

Graduates waiting for the SFSC Commencement ceremony to begin.

the ceremony were able to go online to watch a live stream of the speakers and the students crossing the stage.

Elizabeth Andrews, professor of English, served as the mace bearer and chief marshal for this year's ceremony. Marshals were Davida Austin, Thomas Bush, Kathleen Cappel, Dr. Ellen Cover, Robert Hampton, Dr. Theresa

James, Melanie Jackson, Michelle MacBeth, Claire Miller, Ricardo Pantoja, and Lena Phelps.

In addition to Rider, the SFSC District Board of Trustees includes vice chair Derren J. Bryan, Kenneth A. Lambert, Timothy D. Backer, Tami C. Cullens, Dr. Louis H. Kirschner, Lana C. Puckorius, and Patrick "Joe" Wright.



Courtesy photo

Graduates making their way to the Wildstein Center for SFSC's spring 2016 Commencement.



Courtesy photo

Audrey May, student Commencement speaker, with Dr. Timothy Wise after giving her speech.



Courtesy photo

Honors Program graduate Mathew Estima with Pete the Panther after the ceremony.



Courtesy photo

Dental Assisting graduate Beatriz Rodriguez is congratulated by Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel.



COURTESY PHOTO

Recent graduates of the Emergency Medical Technician program at South Florida State College were (from left) Noel Reynoso, Corey Amundsen, Mike Lightsey, Brandy Landers, Felipe Soto Jr., Rachel Lee, Seth Todd, Tia Hodges, Hunter Allen, Arin Johnson and Joe Walker; not pictured are Briana Greene, Blaine Parketon and Daniel Torres; Walker and Johnson are from Hardee County.

EMT Graduates 15

Fifteen graduates of South Florida State College received technical diplomas recently.

Joe Walker and Arin Johnson, both of Hardee County, were among the 15 who completed 16 weeks of training in the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program and accepted advanced technical diplomas in a May 4 ceremony in the Public Safety Auditorium on the Avon Park campus.

Others who received the degrees were Hunter Allen, Corey Amundsen, Shane Evans, Briana Greene, Tia Hodges, Brandy Landers, Rachel Lee and Mike Lightsey.

Also, Blaine Parketon, Noel Reynoso, Felipe Soto Jr., Seth Todd and Daniel Torres.

Landers and Lightsey received special awards. Lightsey for "Most Heart" for his passion and determination, and Lander for "Highest GPA for

Lecture" and "Highest GPA for Lab."

"It has been a pleasure working with these students, and I'm proud to call them colleagues," Instructor Richard S. Shepard said.

After completing the program, the graduates are eligible to apply to take the Florida EMT state board exam.

EMTs function as part of an emergency rescue and transportation team by responding to dispatch calls, operating emergency vehicles safely and assessing the scenes of accidents and injury.

Based on the degree of illness or injury, they set priorities for treating patients, providing prehospital emergency care to treat trauma, shock, wounds and other medical issues.

For more information on the EMT program or other Emergency Medical Services programs, call 863-784-7272.

SFSC BSN students present capstone projects

South Florida State College's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program students could don their caps for a May 5 Commencement ceremony, they had to wrap up their capstone projects.

Students who comprise the inaugural graduating class of the SFSC BSN program presented their capstone projects at lunchtime on April 28 to fellow students, faculty, and most important, a team of graders.

SFSC BSN students must complete a project-based learning assignment in their final semester — or capstone — that draws on nursing research to demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum.

"We were absolutely amazed and so proud of what our first class of BSN students have accomplished, especially here with their capstone projects," said Dr. Michele Heston, director, Nursing Education.

The nursing students are in the last week of a two-year program that awards BSN degrees to registered nurses who have completed an associate degree nursing program.

As the noon-hour start of the presentations drew near, the students were getting into their white

posters boards holding their presentations were set just right. Heston led a three-member team of graders that approached students standing by their posters to pepper them with questions.

Also, grading the students were instructor Dr. Lisa McConnell and Kathleen Cappel, professor of nursing respectively.

The first student coming under the microscope was Angelis Buck, whose project centered on improving the quality of care for dialysis patients through better training of hospital staff.

Buck was at the ready, reeling off details of how she conceived the project, placed it through a test run, and measured the outcomes she had achieved.

Over the course of the next three hours, Heston and her team made their way through 27 presentations. From preventing falls among the elderly to medication compliance to improving vascular access among dialysis patients, the presentations cut across the broad scope of patient care.

"Our students, through these presentations, demonstrated that nursing is all about taking care of patients and their families," Heston said. "We are thrilled over the impact

nurses are going to have on our community, and the patients and families they will serve."

SFSC launched its BSN program in the fall of 2014. The two-year program gives registered nurses who have already earned an associate degree the opportunity to earn a BSN.

Heston said SFSC designed the curriculum so that students would have on-campus classes only one each week, giving them time to work at their profession.

After her turn at presenting her capstone to the graders came to end, Jessica Current breathed a sigh of relief. "We have only one week to go before walking across the stage with our caps and gowns," she said, "so we are both excited and ready for a break."

Associate in Science (AS) degree in nursing from SFSC in 2008. She has worked as a registered nurse in Highlands County since graduating and seized the chance to earn her BSN when the inaugural class opened for enrollment.

"Of course, I've been a working RN for nearly eight years now," Current said. "But having a bachelor's degree now opens the door for me to advance my career by earning a master's degree, something I couldn't do with just an associate degree."

The capstone project is the students' final hurdle on the path to attaining their BSN degrees.

Current, whose project dealt with a procedure to better diagnose urinary incontinence, is already eyeing a master's degree program that starts this fall. First, though, she



Courtesy photo

Brooke Cassady (left) answers questions from Dr. Michele Heston and Kathleen Cappel about her capstone project on providing safer obstetric care.

plans to relax once she has her degree in hand. "I think I am going to take a week off and watch TV," she said. "It's been a busy two years."

To learn more about the BSN, occupational certificate practical nursing, and nursing associate degree, including a transition program from practical

nursing to registered nursing, contact the SFSC Advising and Counseling Center at 863-784-7131 or visit the SFSC website at www.southflorida.edu.



Joseph Forest explains his capstone project on improving intubation procedures to students just starting their practical nursing studies.

SFSC encourages young men to continue on to college

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — It seems that too many young men in Florida's Heartland are not enrolling in college after they leave high school. South Florida State College aims to do something about that disturbing trend.

School buses from the five high schools in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties were rolling into the parking lot outside the SFSC University Center Auditorium on the Highlands Campus by 9 a.m. April 29 for the college's Male Initiative Conference.

Out poured male after male, with not a female among them. The 150 male high schoolers jammed into the auditorium to hear from currently enrolled SFSC students and Panther alumni what college life is like and how they can make a success of studying at one of SFSC's five campuses.

"College is definitely not like high school," Joshua Cuencas told the high school students from the auditorium's stage. "While there are similarities, if you get a handle on what's different, then you'll have a better chance at succeeding once you're here."

Five of Cuencas's peers joined him on the stage for the student panel, each taking turns answering a range of questions, revealing tips and hints at how to navigate college, and telling their war stories on adjusting to campus life.

The students also heard from Rashaud Thomas, Hernando Sierra, Richard Sherrill, Wesley Baggett, and Sevens Pierre. The theme was the same but the stories from each student were different: You can get into SFSC, you can succeed, and there is a future awaiting you.

But the young men heard not to get carried away socializing, least they divert their attention from the classroom and the books, according to one student panelist who let the freedom of campus life nearly get the better of him. Watch that GPA. If it falls too low, your financial aid eligibility might get suspended, warned another panelist.

Most important, they heard again and again that engaging with the faculty, hitting the books, and asking for help will



get them through the inevitable rough patches.

SFSC has taken up the challenge of closing the gap between males who graduate from high school and fail to enroll in college. "Our panel of current students did an outstanding job talking about how to make a success of college," said Dr. Timothy Wise, dean of student services,

SFSC students Hernando Sierra (from left), Joshua Cuencas and Richard Sherrill, panelists of currently enrolled students, on stage to answer questions from the high school students.

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Courtesy photos

Juan Guerrero (left) and Greg Rawlings, both SFSC alumni, talk to the high school students about college life at SFSC.



Courtesy photos

Zep Augustine (left) on stage with a high school student who answered his call to get closer.

SFSC

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who organized the conference with the help of a campus-based task force. "What is also important is the buy-in and support we had from the high schools in our three-county area."

The high school students next heard from a panel of SFSC alumni who have gone on to higher education or successful careers. From a digital marketing consultant to a pair of SFSC employees, to a junior at the University of Central Florida, the story was the same: staying focused on your goal of graduating will get you places.

Across the board, male college enrollment lags that of females. The disparity is especially pronounced among

minority males. While the college enrollment rate of African-American and Hispanic males has increased in the past decade, they still enroll in fewer numbers than their non-minority peers. Also, fewer minority males go on to graduation.

When the panelists wrapped up their portion of the conference, the tone in the auditorium went from uplifting and staid to uplifting and high energy.

Zep Augustine, an entrepreneur and motivational speaker, bounced up to the stage and let loose with a holler that grabbed the high school students' attention. Pacing across the stage, jumping down into the audience, and leaping back up, Augustine pounded the students with life lesson after life lesson.

"Dream it, position it,

get it," said Augustine, repeating his formula for success. "You need to be in motion," he yelled. "Who's going get into motion right now, get out of their seats, and move closer to me?"

At first only two students took the cue. But within the span of one minute, young men who had taken seats toward the rear of the auditorium scampered up front to take in the "coach's" talk.

"Coach Augustine did an amazing job of connecting with the students' minds and getting them engaged in the conference," Wise said.

Augustine knows the Heartland well. He played football for the Lake Placid Green Dragons and University of Florida Gators, and now owns his own fitness company, Next Level

Sports and Fitness.

"This was a great way for us to learn more about college life, and in particular, how to do well here at SFSC," said Phillip Pham, and 18-year-old senior at Sebring High School.

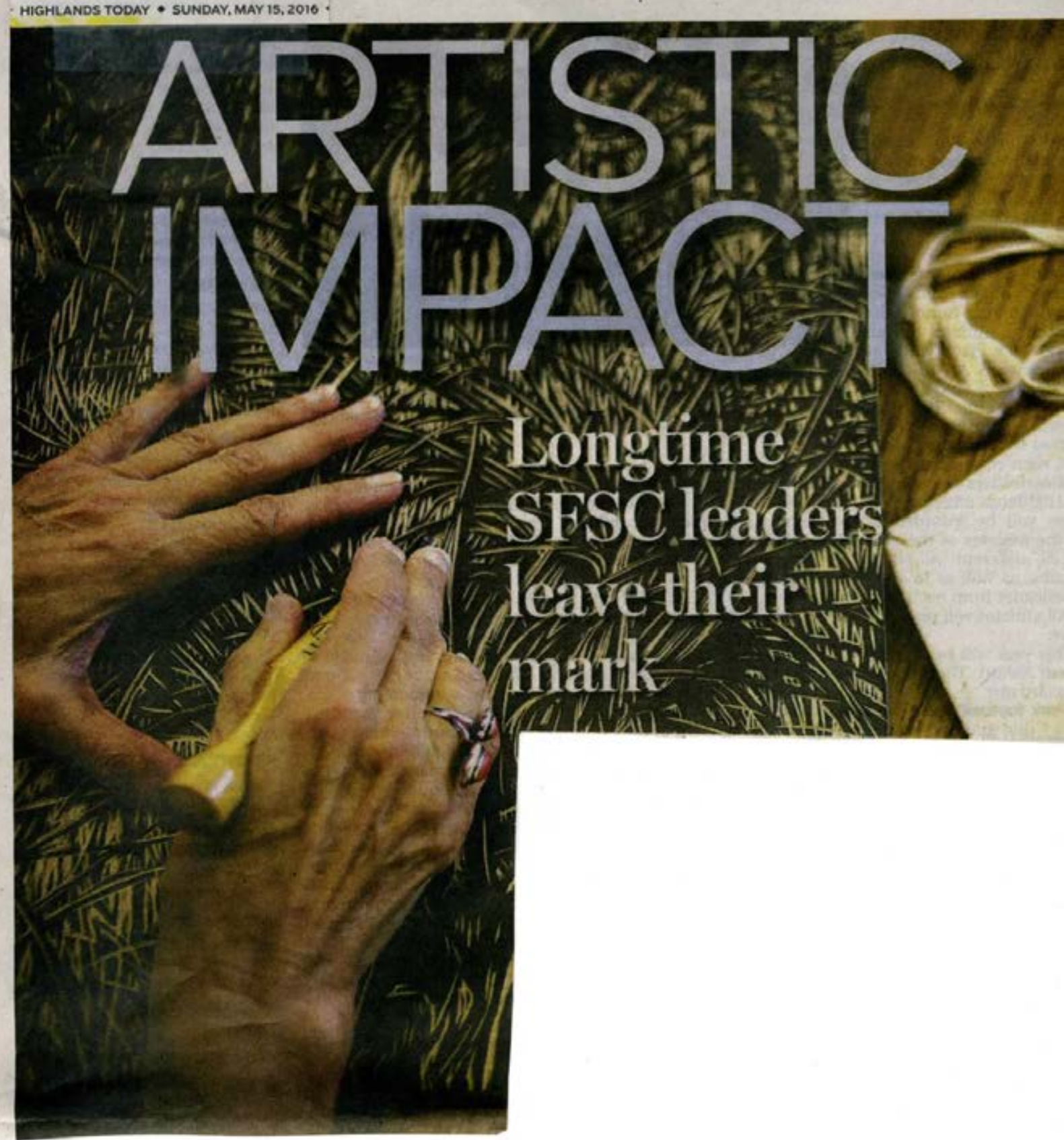
Before leaving for home, the students had an opportunity to meet one-on-one with admissions officers, financial aid advisors, and student support counselors.

"You could see that the panelists and coach Augustine had made an impact on these young men, and I think, their view of college," Wise said. "It also sure made them hungry," he said. "Those young men went through 75 boxes of pizza."

For more information on SFSC's male initiative, contact Dr. Wise at 863-784-7104 or wiset@southflorida.edu.

ARTISTIC IMPACT

Longtime
SFSC leaders
leave their
mark



BY TONY JUDNICH
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — After working for more than 30 years combined at South Florida State College, art professor Cathy Futral and museum curator Mollie Doctrow are ready to blaze new art-filled trails.

Futral retired May 5 after serving 20 years as the art instructor at the college's Highlands Campus. June 30 is Doctrow's last day at the college after serving as the curator of its Museum of Florida Art and Culture since 2005.

"The reality will probably hit me in August, when I don't have to go back to classes," Futral, 65, said recently while relaxing with her husband, Jim, at their creek-side cabin near Boone, North Carolina. "It was the best career of my whole existence."

Doctrow, 67, recently said she has mixed emotions about her own retirement.

"On one hand, I could keep doing this job, which is a wonderful position," she said. "But it's time to pursue my art full-time."

Both women said the students they taught and the colleagues they worked with provide many great memories of their time at SFSC. And both expressed their passion for the arts, which continues to inspire them on their respective journeys.



Everybody has a path to follow, Futral said.

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HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

TOP: Mollie Doctrow works on a woodcut in one of the studios at South Florida State College.

ABOVE: Cathy Futral works on a watercolor landscape in her home in Frostproof. While watercolor is her favorite medium, she also works in oil, acrylic, pottery, stained glass and pencil last October. **RIGHT:** Doctrow stands among the SFSC Museum of Florida Art and Culture main exhibit, Large Florida Birds by John Costin.





HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

Cathy Futral stands in front of her reproduction of Picasso's "Girl Before A Mirror" last October.

Artists

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"I always wanted to be a painter of some sort," she said. "I love to travel, and I went to Europe a couple of times in my 20s."

A native of Asheboro, North Carolina, Futral has a bachelor's degree in painting and a bachelor's in art education from Appalachian State University in Boone. She also has a master's in art education from Florida State University and a master's in studio art from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.

Primarily a watercolor artist, Futral also paints in oil and acrylic. She has painted landscapes throughout her life, and her and her husband's longtime residence in Frostproof includes 14 stained glass windows that she designed.

Futral has taught art since 1974 to people of all ages, including elementary and high school students. And she has sold many of her hundreds of paintings at various art shows and to an array of art galleries.

"My teachers at ASU were very inspirational to me," she said. "I still see some of the art professors, and they still have that spark. You have to keep reinventing yourself as an artist."

Futral first met her future husband, a Frostproof native, when they attended FSU together. But she recalled how she didn't appreciate Florida's landscape when she first came to the Sunshine State.

"I missed my pine trees" of North Carolina, she said. "I saw palm trees and I didn't love them."

Fortunately, she and her husband later met Tom Freeman, a Lake Wales artist who captures Florida's natural allure in his paintings.

"Jim and I would go out on his boat, and he would show us the beauty of the Florida landscape," Futral said.

She said she and Doctrow have presented a couple of art shows on Florida nature scenes together, and that the surroundings at places such as the Big Cypress National Preserve, Arbuckle Creek and Peace River have inspired her for about the past 20 years.

"I want to create more paintings of them," Futral said.

While she explores new paths in retirement, Futral said she will often think about her students at SFSC.

"I'll miss the students, and all the ones who went on to excel," she said. "And we've been blessed with three great presidents: Catherine Cornelius, Dr. (Norman) Stephens and now Dr. (Thomas) Leitzel."

Futral said the school's administrators "are committed to a strong art department and the college. I have a lot of friends to stay in touch with and so many good memories, from loading a kiln to teaching a class. That's the thing about

SFSC: it's small enough that you get to know every student you work with, even in the larger classes. You hope to inspire them to go on to greater things."

She said she and her husband plan to sell their Frostproof home and move to Sarasota in the fall. The couple intends on keeping their cabin in Boone, and Futral said she looks forward to conducting private art lessons this summer and painting parties in the fall.

"I hope my new direction will be as fun as my time at SFSC," she said.

To learn more about Futral's art, visit cathyfutral.com.



Doctrow, who hails from southern California, recently recalled how, as a little girl, she would dabble in art with the brushes and other art supplies that belonged to her father, who was an aircraft engineer.

Doctrow has a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a master's in printmaking, both from California State University, Northridge. She also took art classes at a community college, where she realized she wanted to be an art educator.

"I naturally liked to make things, but I didn't think I was an artist until I was halfway through college," Doctrow said. "I just kept at it and just got better."

Over the years, she has shared that determination with numerous student artists, including those at SFSC and the ones she previously taught while serving as an art professor at Brevard College in

North Carolina.

"Abilities can be developed with passion and perseverance," Doctrow said. "Practice will take you as far as someone who is actually born brilliant."

She said she has relished working at SFSC because of its small size, friendly people and supportive administrators.

"I was able to initiate the ideas I had," Doctrow said. "We brought in major exhibits," such as the one titled, "Cracker: Florida's Enduring Cowboys" that includes 109 photos.

"I ran the program with the support of the administration, the community and the students," she said. "Little by little, we built a program of regular exhibits, workshops and speakers."

The 16-year-old museum's permanent collection now has more than 400 works of art, Doctrow said.

Besides relishing the art of curating, Doctrow specializes in woodcut art. Her art has been featured in a number of solo and group exhibitions, and she is currently represented by a gallery in New Smyrna Beach. In addition, Doctrow has held art residencies at Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park, Archbold Biological Station in Venus and the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona.

Her Sebring home is near Highlands Hammock State Park, which, along with the Archbold site, afforded her the opportunity to become familiar with Florida's scrub habitat and many of its wild creatures.

In 2011, Doctrow was the creative

force behind the Wildflower Wayside Shrine Trail, which winds through scrub habitat across West College Drive from her SFSC office.

The trail has a series of six cypress wood shrine boxes that contain botanic information and artist renderings of some of the rare and endangered plant life along the Lake Wales Ridge. The shrine covers are polyurethane reproductions of some of Doctrow's original carved wood blocks. Three similar shrine boxes stand along the continuation of the trail at the Archbold Biological Station.

The property that contains the trail by the college once had been on the school's land-development plan, Doctrow said.

"I feel personal satisfaction that it's become a part of the community," she said of the trail.

To learn more about Doctrow's art, visit doctrow.com.



Cindy Garren, SFSC's director of cultural programs, said Doctrow and Futral have each made invaluable contributions to the college.

"Both Mollie and Cathy have had a tremendous impact on the students," Garren said, "and they have impacted artists not just locally, but artists throughout the state who have exhibited in a professional environment."

One of those artists is Max Gooding, of Naples. Gooding, who earned an associate of arts degree from SFSC in 2009, said having the opportunity to learn from Futral and Doctrow was like winning the lottery.

"I would not be the artist I am today without them," he said.

Gooding, who went on to earn a bachelor's in landscape architecture at the University of Florida, works with watercolors and creates black-and-white drawings in ink.

He said SFSC owns several of his pieces, including the first watercolor painting he produced in 2008. It's based on an Architectural Digest image of the front view of Linda Ronstadt's house in Tucson, Arizona.

Garren said SFSC's new museum curator will be Megan Stepe, who currently is an arts department adjunct instructor and the fine art gallery curator at Seminole State College of Florida in Sanford. And Futral said Avon Park High School art teacher Karla Respress will take over her position at SFSC in the fall.

Futral said Respress is one of her former students at the college and taught the pottery night class at SFSC.

"She's very friendly and encouraging, and I think she'll bring a lot of students to the college," Futral said.

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Law Day honors Miranda Rights

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Jorge Labarga recalled two funny stories about Miranda rights for Law Day on Thursday: One from a movie, one from his career.

In "Bad Boys," with Will Smith and Martin Lawrence as police officers chasing suspects in sports cars, Lawrence starts reciting the Miranda warning mid-chase. "Just getting it out of the way," Lawrence says.

As an intake prosecutor in the early 1980s in West Palm Beach, Labarga had two officers file drug charges on two men in a Cadillac. The trunk was dragging

the ground, Labarga said, and when officers stopped the car, a K-9 officer almost got an overdose from the several bales of marijuana in the trunk.

To gather more evidence, officers hid a tape recorder under the front seat of a patrol car while the two were in the back.

Officers didn't play the tape before visiting Labarga. On it, the men were angry they'd borrowed a car to visit one's dying mother, only to have the car's owner not tell them about drugs in the trunk.

Even then, Labarga said, one officer asked to suppress the tape, because under the Miranda law, the men hadn't been read Miranda rights before



Phil Attinger/News-Sun

From left, Jane Price and Michelle Candeletta speak with South Florida State College President Dr. David Leitzel about Candeletta's upcoming enrollment. A Lake Placid High School senior with a 3.54 grad point average, as well as swimmer and cheerleader, Candeletta received this year's Highlands County Bar Association Jani Branham Memorial Scholarship, giving her full tuition to the college for two years.

being taped.

That got a laugh from attorneys at the 2016 Law Day lunch, and Labarga's story garnered an echo from Robert Gray — this year's Highlands County Bar Association Law Day Award recipient.

Since the 1966 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Gray said a recent decision by the current U.S. Supreme

Court has "chipped at the bedrock" of those protections, allowing prosecutors to portray a person's lack of comment as an admission of guilt.

However, Gray said, the Florida Supreme court recently upheld the premise that silence may not be used against someone.

"In Florida, Miranda is more than words," Gray said.

Departing dean eyes new challenge



KILE BREWER/STAFF

South Florida State College Dean of Arts and Sciences Kimberly Batty-Herbert sits next to a collection of Florida Highwaymen paintings. She is leaving the school for a job at Cecil College after serving as dean for almost a decade.

Kimberly Batty-Herbert is heading to Maryland for a vice president job

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — After serving nearly 10 years as a dean at South Florida State College, Kimberly Batty-Herbert will depart soon for her next academic endeavour in Maryland.

Batty-Herbert has been the college's Division of Arts and Sciences dean since 2007 and will be starting her new position as vice president of academic programs at Cecil College in North East, Maryland.

Her responsibilities at South Florida State College included supervising the three-county dual enrollment programming.

From her office on the second floor of Building B, Batty-Herbert reflected



South Florida State College Dean of Arts and Sciences Kimberly Batty-Herbert will be moving to Maryland to take a position as a vice president at Cecil College.

on developing the STEM Quest Series, which is an enrichment program for elementary and middle students. STEM refers to science, technology, engineer and math areas of study.

"That has been an exciting project, working with those young kids and getting them interested in college,"

she said. "Getting them here on a college campus is important."

Many of the students in the area will be first-generation college-goers so they don't have the "support mechanisms" at home with whom they can share their college experi-

Dean

From Page 1

ence, Batty-Herbert said. College may seem like a strange environment and unattainable for some, but if they are brought on the campus early they may start to think "college is for me," she reasoned.

Batty-Herbert also designed and initiated a mandatory dual enrollment orientation program.

"I saw a lot of the dual enrollment high school students coming here and taking classes, but they didn't know how to use what we call D2L (Desire to Learn), our online platform," she said.

They were unfamiliar with the college environment and the things they needed to be successful.

On her move to Cecil College, Batty-Herbert said she was ready for a new challenge as a vice president, which was one of her goals when she got her doctorate degree.

Cecil College is similar in size to South Florida State College, she said. It has more full-time students, but SFSC has a larger head-count.

Batty-Herbert said she was raised in Pennsylvania so she is aware of the cold weather in that area of the country. Over the past few years, she has visited relatives in Maryland during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Cecil County is very rural, but it is less than a two-hour drive to Baltimore and Washington D.C. and less than an hour to Philadelphia, Batty-Herbert said.

She could live in Mary-

land, Delaware or Pennsylvania because it is a short commute to Cecil College in northern Maryland, Batty-Herbert said.

In her spare time, she usually has her nose in a good book, Batty-Herbert said. Lots of fiction and suspense, she added.

"I like my orchids," she said. "That is one of the things I am going to miss going to Maryland because I just can't hang orchids in the trees in Maryland."

Also, she will miss her "little sister" Taylor from Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

"I am going to miss her terribly," Batty-Herbert

said. "She was probably the hardest person to break the news to."

Batty-Herbert has known Taylor for three years, from first grade to fourth grade.

"She has become family," Batty-Herbert said.

But Taylor will be matched up with another big sister.

As a member of the Avon Park Rotary Club, Batty-Herbert was involved with the recent Bluegrass Blueberry Festival as the vendor coordinator.

"I like to be involved in civic things and I like to be involved in our communi-

ty and helping," she said. "Particularly, I like Rotary because Rotary is all about service. Our motto is 'service above self.'"

Batty-Herbert said she will miss family and friends in Highlands County and the beautiful SFSC campus and her friendships at the college.

Starting July 1, Lynn MacNeill will serve a one-year term as interim dean of the Division of Arts and Sciences while South Florida State College searches for Batty-Herbert's replacement during the 2016-17 academic year.

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Firefighter union donates to Take Stock in Children

More children will receive college scholarships because of local firefighters. The Florida Professional Firefighters Local Union 3132, recently, presented a check for \$1,000 to the local Take Stock in Children (TSIC) program.

"Education is a key to a child's success and we, the Florida Professional Firefighters Local Union 3132 in Avon Park, wanted to invest or 'take stock' in a child's future by donating a check in the amount of \$1,000 to South Florida State College's Take Stock in Children program," said firefighter

Anthony Gaines.

TSIC is a statewide program that provides college scholarships to at-risk students who agree to remain drug-free, stay out of trouble with the law, and maintain satisfactory grades throughout high school. Students are matched with mentors who meet with them regularly and help them prepare for college.

The South Florida State College Foundation is the lead agency for TSIC in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties.

Since 2000, over 400 students have graduated from the

local TSIC program.

Currently, 155 students, grades 7 through 12, are active in the program.

"We are grateful for the Florida Professional Firefighters Local Union 3132 for its professional service to the community and for its generous donation toward a child's college education," said Irene Castanon, TSIC program coordinator.

For information about making a donation to TSIC scholarships or becoming a student mentor, visit the SFSC website and look under "Giving," or call Castanon at 784-7343.



Courtesy photo

Firefighters Clint Culverhouse (from left) and Warren West, SFSC executive director of Institutional Advancement Jamie Bateman, TSIC program coordinator Irene Castanon, and firefighters Anthony Gaines and Mike Turek

Community pitches in for United Way



KILE BREWER/STAFF

From left, volunteers Jeff Beard, Michael Langston and David Plank from The Andersons Inc. work Wednesday morning to add mulch to the playground in front of the RCMA building in Lake Placid as part of the United Way's Day of Caring.

Annual Day of Caring draws dozens of volunteers

BY JAY MEISEL
Highlands Today

SEBRING — At Heartland Horses and the Handicapped, the horses Wednesday enjoyed their exceptionally clean homes.

Volunteers from South Florida State College cleaned the stables. Thanks to the effort, a job that would have otherwise taken considerably longer to finish because of limited volunteers and staff was completed in one day, said Bobbie Jo Dorio, a staff member.

Heartland Horses and the Handicapped enables those with disabilities to share time with horses, believing it's a therapeutic experience.

All over Highlands County



Volunteers from South Florida State College work Wednesday to clean out stables at Heartland Horses and Handicapped Inc. for United Way's Day of Caring.

Wednesday morning, dozens of people volunteered to do improvement projects at various nonprofit organizations as part of United Way's Day of Caring.

While many of the projects involved volunteers doing landscaping work, at Ridge Area Arc the project

was a bit different.

Staff members from Florida Heartland Hospital participated in Day of Caring where those with developmental disabilities competed in teams at different events, such as a watermelon eating contest.



KILE BREWER/STAFF

Volunteers from Alan Jay Automotive Network pull weeds along the entrance to the Highlands County Humane Society on Wednesday morning as part of the United Way's Day of Caring, during which volunteers provide a variety of help and services for nonprofit organizations.

Caring

From Page 1

"Actually getting to play games is fun," said Madison Harris, a development coordinator with the hospital's foundation.

She said the hospital participates every year in the annual event. In the past, she has spent the morning laying mulch, she said.

In Lake Placid at the Redlands Christian Migrant Association center, employees of The Andersons Inc. replaced about 30 yards of mulch, moved the sandbox and provided a yard of sand for the box. They started working at 7:30 a.m. and continued for hours on the project.

"They're doing a fantastic job," said Margarita Ojeda, the center director.

She said they need to replace the mulch each year, but don't have the staff to do it. So the help from the The Andersons, a national company that owns a fertilizer plant south of Lake Placid, went a long way.

David Plank, the business manager, said the company has a lot of involvement with United



Volunteer Jeff Beard from The Andersons Inc. works Wednesday morning to add mulch to the playground in front of the RCMA building in Lake Placid as part of the United Way's Day of Caring, during which volunteers provide help for nonprofits.

Way and enjoys supporting the community. He said they've worked on various projects during the Day of Caring over the years.

At the Humane Society of Highlands County, at least 22 employees of Alan Jay Automotive Network and some high school students did a variety of projects, including working

on Terror Trail, the site of the organization's major fundraiser, landscaping and cleaning out the supply room.

"I'm pretty excited," said Judy Spiegel, president of the Humane Society.

Ansley Woods, Highlands County area director for United Way, said 300 volunteers and 26 busi-

nesses participated.

Sponsors were Florida Heartland Hospital, The Andersons Inc. and Lykes Brothers. Buttonwood Bay provided a place for the luncheon and The Palms of Sebring and Chef Mac Gentleman provided the food.

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(863) 386-5834

Duke Energy Foundation funds entire season of SFSC's Young People's Theater

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — For the second year in a row, an "Energizing the Arts" grant from the Duke Energy Foundation has funded the entire 2015-16 season of South Florida State College's Young People's Theatre.

Cindy Garren, director, SFSC Cultural Programs, accepted an \$8,000 check from Jerry Miller, the government and community relations manager for South Central Region External Relations of Duke Energy Florida on Tuesday, May 10.

The donation pays the entire cost of bringing

three Young People's Theatre Shows for Highlands County's school-aged children to the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts. The 2015-16 season performances were the "The Lightning Thief," "Henry and Mudge," and "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea."

"Arts and culture are one of the areas we support through the Duke Energy Foundation," Miller said. "We fund programs that allow children to have experiences they might not otherwise have. Although we heavily support sciences, technology,

engineering and math programs, we believe an introduction to art and culture is important to the development of a well-rounded student. We recognize that great communities have great culture."

"The Duke Energy Foundation partners with South Florida State College in bringing professional live theater to schoolchildren," Garren said. "Young People's Theater performances are often the first time our local students have the opportunity to see a live performance geared toward children. With its donation, the Duke

Energy Foundation brings smiles and joy to the students while launching their appreciation for the performing arts."

SFSC provides cultural experiences to the community through its Artist, Jazz, Matinee, and Florida Hospital Trending Now series, Young People's Theatre, the SFSC Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC), and special performances throughout the year.

For more information, visit <http://performances.southflorida.edu> or call the SFSC Box Office at 784-7178.



Courtesy photo

On behalf of the Duke Energy Foundation, Jerry Miller (center) presented an \$8,000 check to the South Florida State College, which funds the 2015-16 season of Young People's Theatre. Pictured with Miller are Dr. Lindsay Lynch (from left), SFSC's director of grants development, Miltz Farmer, SFSC cultural programs specialist, and Cindy Garren, director, SFSC Cultural Programs.

SFSC to launch AgDiscovery summer program June 6

South Florida State College will soon launch its AgDiscovery summer program, a weeklong tuition-free class that aims to help high school students explore educational and career opportunities available in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics.

SFSC will offer the half-day class at each of its three campuses and the college's Lake Placid Center. The class includes a day-long field trip to the University of Florida in Gainesville, at no cost to the students.

The AgDiscovery summer program will guide students through hands-on agricultural research projects, leadership development tasks, and personal enrichment

activities that will bolster students' appreciation of STEM-related subjects.

The first session runs Monday - Thursday, June 6 - 9 from 9 a.m. to noon at SFSC's Hardee campus in Bowling Green; and from 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the college's DeSoto campus in Arcadia. The field trip to Gainesville departs each campus at 7 a.m. Friday, June 10, with students returning at 7 p.m.

The second session runs Monday - Thursday, June 13 - 16 from 9 a.m. to noon at SFSC's Highlands campus in Avon Park; and 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the college's Lake Placid Center. The field trip to Gainesville departs the Highlands Campus and the Lake Placid Center at 7 a.m. on Friday, June 17, with students returning at 7 p.m.

Students may register

to attend any one-week session of their choice.

The AgDiscovery summer program is open to students who will enter grades 11 and 12 this fall. Students whose parents do not have a college degree—first generation college students—are encouraged to apply.

Parents should help students apply by Saturday, April 30 to ensure a place is available. The AgDiscovery summer program will accept applications after the deadline if space is available.

For more information and to register online for the program, visit SFSC's AgDiscovery summer program web page at goo.gl/2QDIY2 or call Leah Sauls at 863-784-7054 or Dr. Grace Danao at 863-784-7230.

Eaton's 'Hammock to the Beach' on display

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Cindy Rose Eaton's exhibit "Hammock to the Beach" will be on display at South Florida State College's Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts through June 29. Visitors can view the exhibit from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The exhibit features 19 prints on aluminum. It was previously on display at the Highlands Art League's Yellow House Gallery last September.

Eaton has showcased work throughout the state in many galleries and art expos. Her "River of Grass" exhibit, featuring 33 prints on aluminum, was displayed at the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center in Everglades National Park in January 2015.

Eaton, a native of Montana, is now a Florida-based artist and professional wildlife and nature photographer. "Hammock to the Beach" depicts Highlands Hammock and local tropical wetlands as well as beach habitat and scenery.

Eaton's award-winning art reflects her passion for this ecosystem and the world that surrounds her. Quoting one of Eaton's friends, she "shoots with her heart" to capture and help preserve this fragile ecosystem as lifelike as possible, bringing the most intricate details up close and personal. Her desire to present each photograph as lifelike as possible for the viewer's pleasure and enjoyment motivates and inspires her to expand her own artistic



COURTESY PHOTO

Cindy Rose Eaton, whose artwork "Magic Moment" is pictured here, will host her exhibit "Hammock to the Beach" at South Florida State College's Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts through June 29.

passions.

"My love for nature — especially living here in Florida with the abun-

dance of birds, wildlife

and water habitats — has had a great impact on how I endeavor to shoot

and capture unique photographs," Eaton said. "Highlands Hammock State Park has become a favorite hangout to shoot photos, along with Florida beaches, on both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic."

Thursday, May 19, 2016

Concealed weapons permit course at SFSC

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Criminal Justice Academy (CJA) will host a Concealed Weapons Permit course Saturday, May 21 from 8 a.m. to noon. 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 cost is \$55, and the course number (CRN) is 30849.

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

SFSC Hosts Open House On Its Areas Of Study

Prospective students and their parents can discover all South Florida State College has to offer at an open house next week.

It will be held on Thursday, April 28, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in the lobby of Building B on the Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Dr., Avon Park.

Faculty and staff will be available to answer questions and help new students apply for admission. Guided tours of the campus will embark at 4:45 and 5:15 p.m.

"Participants will have the chance to learn about SFSC's programs of study, financial aid and scholarships, advising and counseling, student life, and support services for students," said Summer Miller, recruiter. "They can drop in any time during the open house's hours."

Miller added, "Our open house is attended by all the key college staff, which makes it easy for prospective students to learn about the college and get their questions answered in a single afternoon."

SFSC offers a two-year associate degree and bachelor's degree programs in elementary education, nursing, and business with a concentration in supervision and management. In addition, SFSC offers numerous occupational training programs that can be completed in a year or less and lead to employment in specific fields.

To attend the open house, take Entrance 1 from College Drive and follow the signs to Building B.

Another open house will be held June 9.

SFSC recognizes students for academic excellence

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College recognizes those students who have pursued and achieved academic excellence.

Students are named to the President's List for receiving a semester grade point average between 3.8 and 4.0:

Avon Park

Ashley Acosta, Stephanie A. Albright, Argelis M. Buck, Jeffrey A. Burch, Nicolette Callen, Genesis C. Castillo, Anai Cervera, Sofia G. Chong, Jessica D. Cook, Carmen Corona Zavala, Briana A. Cox, Paola Cruz, Garcia Jesus, Christopher L. Gibbs, Glenda M. Hernandez, Tina M. Hill, Barry A. Hinich, Kendra J. Howard, Tara L. Huften, Casey Jackson, Leighton B. Jahna, Bryce E. Langston, Evelyn R. Marley, Areli Mendiola, Madison L. New, Thereasa A. Nixon, Luzedy Ocasio, Matthew D. Palsgrove, Dylan C. Pantaline, Jordan a. Phillips, Andrew S. Protasio, Patricia D. Quinn, Gus Ramirez Jr., Lourvina Grace R. Ramos, Christian Reitnauer, Traci-Lynn H. Reschke, Krystal M. Rivera Ayala, Angelo J. Russo, Krystal Santos, Jennie L. Spencer, Daniel Tello, Lizette Torres, Rodine V. Walker, Dona Y. Wall Vanatta, and Charly L. Wilber.

Yuneisy del Cueto, Joy E. Derrick, Alyssa A. Diaz, Haley A. Dixon, Janelle T. Donglasan, Alexis E. Drzewucki, Margaret Dunn, Shawn D. Englehard, Sebastian Eriksen, Rebekah J. Eshelman, Elizabeth M. Etherton, Amanda M. Evett, Timothy D. Finch, Valerie M. Fleeger, Joseph R. Forest, Roger D. Frazier III, Asia G. Gilroy, Donna L. Goins, Melissa S. Gonzalez, Christina M. Gourley, Heidi M. Graves, Kendall L. Griffin, Shantay E. Grimes, Brittney M. Haralson, Taylor N. Hedrick, Astrid J. Herrera, Megan A. Hughes, Nicole M. Losue, Enelie N. Jimenez, Sharmin D. Jones, Lorna J. Kellar, Jordan K. Kinsey, Tim N. Koning, Kate E. LaDue, Jessica M. Landers, Justin G. Latter, Cheryl L. Lewis, Veronica Librado-Galindo, Emily N. Little, Walter B. Long, Thu T. Luong, Elizabeth A. Maggard, Kimberly A. McLeod, Ethan M. Mitchell, Donnie W. Mullins, Melisa R. Mullins, Carlos N. Negron, Luis D. Orregon, Katiana M. Ortiz, Joel Pacheco, Mary E. Patterson, Hannah L. Pepper, Francis M. Perez, Amanda V. Pham, Denise L. Porter, Michael W. Reed, Anastasia G. Reynolds, Nora M. Rivera, Joshua P. Roe, Cassia E. Rosser, Liliana Sanchez, Steven A. Sanchez, Iris K. Santiago, Jonathan H.

Sassatelli, David G. Schuknecht, Ansley E. Selander, Richard L. Sherrill, Steven S. Shievdalay, Marissa A. Simpson, Aaron D. Smith, Alayna M. Smith, Mary M. Stacy, Tina A. Stetson, Thomas C. Straily, Tatiana Sullivan, Tiffany A. Tolentino, Monica M. Tookes, Heriberto Torres Jr., Billie Jo Wagner, Lacy Watson, Amanda J. Webb, Kevin C. Webb, Tyler E. Whalen, Bertha Whitehouse, Faith L. Wilson, and Rachel M. Wolf.

Sebring

Melissa R. Acosta, Danielle N. Albrecht, Desiree L. Andujar, Marissa A. Andujar, Joshua S. Austin, Natalie L. Ayala, Israel Ayala-Rivera, Gabrielle E. Baker, John J. Baratta, Sarah M. Bonenberger, Brandon A. Bowyer, Michael J. Butler, Eliany M. Cabrera, Ashley B. Castelli, Shannon M. Cleveland, Kiana M. Crain, Rebecca A. Crews, Andrew P. Cribbs, Hanna E. Cribbs, Courtney L. Crosby, Steven R. Cullipher, Closere Damis II, Kimberly M. Davis, Nicholas J. Davis, Sean K. Davis, Anatoliy Daynega,

Lake Placid

Jeanette L. Antunez, Danielle R. Arnesen, Nicole N. Atterberry, Jesula Bellegarde, Robert J. Brown, Jacob D. Campbell, Shae E. Cole, Naomi L. Cook, Mayra Espinosa, Burke E. Even, Antonio A. Garcia, Maria D. Gonzalez, Erika Hernandez, Theresa A. Hovis, Stephen G. Jackson, Brandy A. Landers, Samantha N. Lusby, Brandon P. Lykes, Alexis M. Merlo, Emily J. Miller, Ana K. Ramirez, Hector Ramirez, Raquel Ramirez, Taylor J. Ritacco, Zanteria D. Shuler, Stephanie N. Skipper, Shelley J. Villamor, Tiffany C. Wiggins, and Abigail Zevallos.

Lorida

William J. Hamilton and Rachel E. Todd.

Students are named to the Vice President's List for receiving a GPA between 3.5 and 3.79:

Avon Park

Rigenst Alfred, Eric
T. Andrews, Dolores
E. Breedlove, Valeria V.
Clark, Lacy T. Coleman,
Christopher L. Davies,
Marcgide Edmond,
Anna G. Flores, Jennifer
R. Frenot, Jose A.
Gamez, Teresa Gonzalez
Duran, Tiffanie L.
Green, Courtney L.
Hamilton, Francis R.
Hendry, Adriana D.
Hernandez, Brittany S.
Jahna, Ivan S. Jimenez,
Manoj L. Kothari, Rosela
L. La Pointe, Lance M.
Leonard, Milna Lucien,
JaQwesha S. Massaline,
Chance T. McCall,
Shelby C. McWhorter,
Jeanette Meza, Kristin
N. Miners, Elizabeth
N. Monroe, Lissette
R. Moran-Kenner,
Emmanuel J. Nevers,
Heather A. Oyola,
Katherine S. Oyola,
Francesca E. Pemble,
Kelsey Pena, Maribel
Perez-Badillo, Tiffany
M. Phillips, Racine L.
Reynolds, Ashlee E.
Robitaille, Samantha
A. Rock, Madalaine
E. Russell, Coren M.
Russo, Victoria M.
Sanchez, Jana K. Selle,
Jazmine M. Sharick,
Rocky G. Shoffner,
Deborah T. Simons,
Erik Torres-Cruz, Edna
Viljean, Caylie A. Wall,
StephenD. Wynn, Nancy
L. Zeeuw, and Madison
N. Zengotita.

Sebring

Marcela Badillo
Gomez, Vickash P.
Baichan, Sharon L.
Barabas, Vanessa
C. Barrett, Erin m.
Broderick, Jenna
M. Brown, Tevin A.
Bullard, Charles M.
Bullock, Lauren M.
Burnside, Charlotte
Busch, Ginarys V.
Cabrera-Aponte, Bini
S. Chazhikattu, Caitlin
B. Conrad, Clayton
S. Cooper, Rugenna
Copeland, Cheryl L.
Cox, Nicole M. Darder,
Ryan A. Davidson,
Paul F. Dawes, Robert
J. De Lara, Samantha
E. Denton, Morgan
E. DeVane, Kaylee n.
Diefendorf, Jessey r.
Dombroski, Amanda
M. Dorsey, Amy N.
Dow, Mathew A.
Estima, Alexandria K.
Feichtinger, Brandi
E. Filppula, Sofia I.
Garcia Rossi, Jamicia
S. Gilmore, Asriel
A. Gonzalez, Tinna
J. Hewitt-Milligan,
ToiaNetsha S. Hicks,
Cassady J. Hitt, Brittany
E. Hobart, Eunice
Howard, Crystal
D. Jacobs, Jazan A.
Jimenez, Omer A. Khan,
Anslee T. Kinslow, Tarryn
D. Knight, Theresa A.
Lefkowitz, Logan D.
Lovett, Clay P. Lucero,
Ian C. Mack, Ariel M.
Madden, Bayani O.
Marasigan Jr., Nashley
I Martinez, Caitlyn
A. Moulds, Casey J.
Mullins, Christopher M.
Ortiz, James L. Pinkney,
Angelise K. Reyes,
Michelle B. Rivera, Ana
D. Rodriguez, Emelly
I. Rodriguez, Luis F.
Rodriguez, Brandon
J. Rosenbaum, Sara J.
Saenz, William S. Sager,
Yanet Sanchez, Elaine
M. Schmidt, Esgar S.
Serapio, Jose A. Soto,
Leonardo F. Soto Toro,
Samantha Steinlight,
Cyarra D. Tylor, Jill B.
Tiger, Thi N. Tran, Paul
M. Tubbs, Lisa H. Vo,
Bradford Walker, Brian
A. Ward, Brain E. Weed,
and Courtney D. Crook.

Lake Placid

Yerandy Acosta,
Michael D. Asbury,
Jacalyn R. Baldwin,
Marrissa N. Baumann,
Christine Boone,
Shana M. Brown,
Abigail G. Campbell,
Bianca T. Cannon,
Liliana Cardenas,
Laine A. Daum, Gary
B. Davidson, Sabrina
M. Decker, Amanda
G. Edwards, Zachary
M. Geitner, Cheryl L.
Gonzales, Jeremiah D.
Greenbaum, Daniel
C. Grimaldo, Anallely
Guzman, Hanna
C. Haney, Nancy A.
Hardman, Danielle N.
Hart, Ernesto Jimenez,
Kiara m. Lopez, Brandy
L. McMahan, Kayla M.
McMahon, Brenda V.
Ramirez Canchola, Kelly
Roberts, Kenneth W.
Sides Jr., and Megan E.
Smith,

Arc recognizes volunteers, supporters and clients

South Florida State College, FDOT among honorees

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Ridge Area Arc recently recognized all those who contribute to the nonprofit group that serves those with disabilities.

South Florida State College has involved and encouraged its faculty, students and administration in helping those with disabilities, according to Arc. The college was awarded the Community Partner Award.

The SFSC volleyball team recently developed a volleyball program for Special Stars. The college's baseball team has been very involved in Special Stars for the past four years.

"They treat our consumers to a baseball game every year, meet-and-greet of the players, autographs, run bases with the players, meet the mascot and honorary first pitch of the game," Arc said. The SFSC Nursing Program also has received hands-on sensitivity training for the past six years.

Melody Taylor was named the recipient of Arc's People First! Advocate Award. Taylor has been an advocate for and worked for those with developmental disabilities since 1974, the group said.

She works for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and helps with licensing and monitoring Arc's five group homes, does technical assistance, follows up on incident reports, maintains disaster plans, attends quality assurance meetings and background screening checks for group home staff.

"Melody questions issues, not willing to accept the first, easy explanation," the group said.

The Florida Department of Transportation was named the recipient of Arc Hero of the Year Award.

It is the goal of the Federal Transit Administration of the Section 5310 program to provide assistance to meet the needs of seniors and those with disabilities where public transit services are unavailable, insufficient or inappropriate.

FDOT staff provides "unlimited support and technical assistance, which enables Arc employees' success when applying for grants. We are proud to announce Florida Department of Transportation as recipient of Arc Hero of the Year Award," Arc said.

The Volunteer of the Year award went to Julia Brock. Brock has worked at Ridge Area Arc in several capacities, was a personal companion and then resale assistant. After she retired, she returned as a volunteer at Ridge Area Arc Resale store in Avon Park.

"Julia took the initiative to find outside sources to purchase overabundance of donated flower vases and items the store cannot sell. She boxes up medical supplies and takes them to Samaritan's Touch and Doctors Without Borders."

The following clients of Ridge Area Arc were also recognized:

♦ Mark Anderson succeeded at his personal goals of developing and staying within a budget and learning to be safe in his community.

"Anderson lives independently and loves to walk at night, so now he incorporates safe walking, wearing appropriate clothing and not accept-

ing rides from strangers." He received the Supported Living Consumer of the Year.

♦ Bill Wheeler works on the janitorial crew and lawn maintenance but also makes an overall contribution to the group's adult training program. "Wheeler is first to volunteer, always has a smile on his face and is willing to strike up conversation with anyone who has the time to chat. He has worked very hard on his personal goal of improving his social skills," Arc said. He was named the Life Skill Training-ADT Training Center Consumer of the Year.

♦ Christa Martin joined The Arc's Adult Day Training program in 2013 and currently lives in a group home.

Martin was "very withdrawn and anxious" before she attended the program. She would sit quietly and not interact with anyone.

"Through the use of sensory stimulation, especially manipulation of beads, she has flourished with her ability to participate and focus," Arc said. "Martin loves trying new things, enjoys music and magazines and her smile is literally contagious." Martin is Arc's Life Skill Training-ADT Intensive Consumer of the Year.

♦ Sam Clegg is a "valuable member" of the Arc Resale Store team, Arc said. Clegg spends a lot of time on the sales floor, greeting customers, asking if they need assistance in finding items or take their purchases to their car.

Clegg helps donors unload, gathers and returns carts, helps cashier bag when they are extremely busy, empties the clothes hanger bin and takes out the trash without being asked.

Clegg was named Life Skill Training-ADT Resale Consumer of the Year.

SFSC combines lessons in staying healthy, English

Grant helps school add health literacy to ESOL curriculum

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Hundreds of adults whose native tongue is not English are enrolled in South Florida State College literacy classes learning basic communication skills.

From how to read signs on buildings to signing one's name in the correct space on a form, the daytime and evening English for Speakers of other Languages classes at SFSC offer non-native speakers an opportunity to learn English.

Now, with help from a grant, SFSC has broadened its literacy curriculum to teach ESOL students the basics of navigating the complexities of the health care system.

"Not only do the non-English speakers who come to SFSC ESOL classes need help with the basics of reading and writing," said Carol Pinzon, who coordinates the ESOL program at SFSC. "They often stumble when it comes to visiting a doctor or reading the labels on their medicines."

Pinzon seized an opportunity last year from the Florida Literacy Coalition to apply for a \$4,500 grant to help SFSC add health literacy to its standard ESOL curriculum.

In working with the coalition on writing the grant, Pinzon learned that half of non-native English speaking adults also lack basic health literacy, the college said. "One fact stood out for me," Pinzon said. "These people are also more likely to suffer from chronic medical conditions and be unaware of how to manage their illness."

Even though the grant amount was relatively modest, Pinzon said the most important feature of the project was the no-cost teaching materials and technical assistance SFSC received from the Orlando-based coalition that spearheads literacy initiatives across Florida.

SFSC received access to the



COURTESY PHOTO

A group of SFSC English for Speakers of other Languages students who studied the "Staying Healthy" curriculum get together after one of the daytime classes.

"Staying Healthy" curriculum, a set of instructional materials used in ESOL programs in other states. It is written at a fifth-grade reading level and is intended for newcomers to ESOL classes.

Pinzon said SFSC also benefited from training and access to technical support from the coalition.

After getting up to speed on the "Staying Healthy" curriculum, Pinzon selected five ESOL classes to pilot the project.

SFSC instructors didn't need to alter their instructional methods to bring the curriculum into the classroom, according to Pinzon. She said the printed materials and topics were a "natural fit" for what they were already doing with their students.

Students learned the essential elements of health care in the community. What makes an emergency room different from a doctor's office. The names of body parts a doctor might point to during an examination. How to ask questions of a pharmacist about a label on a bottle of pills.

Pinzon said another component of the curriculum was a hit with the adult learners: project-based instruction.

"The students worked together to craft healthy recipes as part of the nutritional element of the curriculum," Pinzon said. "The students really enjoyed collaborating with each other and, in the end, came up with recipes for many traditional dishes with a healthier angle."

The students posted their recipes to a website so that future ESOL classes can follow their example.

Pinzon added to the standard curriculum. She brought in instructors to demonstrate CPR, organized a trip to a Publix supermarket to test students' label-reading skills and had local nurses present diabetes prevention workshops to the classes.

"On the whole, the health literacy instruction helped our students become more proficient in English at a rate that was higher than with the use of a more traditional curriculum," Pinzon said. She pointed out that Florida Blue, the state largest insurer, provided major funding to the literacy coalition's statewide efforts.

A few students also reported securing health insurance after learning how to access the online marketplace, according to Pinzon.

Pinzon said there were benefits for the college's ESOL program as whole, in addition to what the students learned.

"By bringing in health experts and working with local businesses, we created partnerships that will help the ESOL program in the future," she said.

SFSC offers ESOL classes in Hardee and Highlands counties. ESOL classes in DeSoto County are available at the school district.

For information, call Pinzon at (863) 784-7380 or pinzons@southflorida.edu.

Backer announces run for school board

By **TIM BACKER**

I am excited to announce my candidacy for the office of District 4 DeSoto County School Board. Past Board member Bill Stanko advised last July that he would be resigning in the fall and thought I would be interested in running for his seat. I immediately started attending the school board meetings. I felt it is important to have first-hand knowledge of what goes on in these meetings if I was going to run for office.

I think we have a great deal of opportunity to make things better for our school system. The number one item of importance is our students; they should be at the top of every decision. The second item of importance is the faculty, staff and all employees. These people work

hard and are extremely dedicated to the students. All the employees are important to the success of our school system. The third item of importance is the community. We must all work together for the success of the students and a bright future for DeSoto County.



BACKER

I have been busy supporting the education field. I am a mentor for students at DeSoto County High School through the Take Stock in Children program with South Florida State College. I am in my seventh year serving on the District Board of Trustees for South Florida State College. I served as Chairman in 2011-2012. I am currently Chairman (and have been for 12 years) of the DeSoto

High School Community Advisory Committee. I am a past Chairman of DeSoto Middle School and West Elementary SAC committees as well. I have always enjoyed serving the school district in any way I can.

I have been a real estate appraiser for 41 years and hold a Senior Residential Appraiser designation from the Appraisal Institute. I have an associate of Arts degree from South Florida State College and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of South Florida. I served 15 years as President of the DeSoto County Board of Realtors. I am Chief of the DeSoto County Volunteer Fire and Rescue and have spent 33 years with the Arcadia Volunteer Fire Department and DeSoto County Volunteer Fire and Rescue. I am Commander of the DeSoto County Sheriff's Posse and Past Commander

of the Arcadia Police Auxiliary (a total of 39 years serving). I am currently treasurer of Habitat for Humanity.

I am married to my high school sweetheart and best friend, Pat Backer. We will celebrate 40 years of marriage this fall. We have three children: Tim, Jim (Jennifer) and Bryan (Danielle). Danielle is a proud teacher at Nocatee Elementary. We also have four grandchildren: Blaine, Ellie, Lexie and Aubrey.

I pledge to work hard to move our school system through the difficult times ahead. I look forward to your input for improvements and am ready to get to work to make our schools great. Always feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Remember, these are our schools, our community and our future. I ask for your support and vote Aug. 30.

SFSC dental hygiene graduates honored



Courtesy photo

New graduates of SFSC's Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene (AS) degree program are Shelby Lynn Lambert (from left), Maria Guadalupe Ruiz, Janet Velasco, Nikki Atterberry, Nancy Jaramillo, Sofia G. Chong, Blanca R. Cendejas, and Allison Brooke Bivens.

AVON PARK — South Florida State College honored eight graduates of its dental hygiene program in a traditional pinning ceremony in the SFSC University Center Auditorium recently. The graduates had just completed the Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene (AS) degree program.

Receiving pins were Nikki Atterberry, Allison Brooke Bivens, Blanca R. Cendejas, Sofia G. Chong, Nancy Jaramillo, Shelby Lynn Lambert, Maria Guadalupe Ruiz, and Janet Velasco.

Keynote speaker Norine Dowd, a dental hygienist with 28 years of experience and an adjunct instructor at SFSC, congratulated the graduates for their commitment to academic success and offered his wisdom.

Dowd said that the dental hygiene pinning symbolizes the readiness to care for the community in a professional manner. She asked that when the graduates wear their pins, to remember the three components of their dental hygiene oath: To care, to advocate, and to lead.

"In other words," he said, "you are now a care provider to your patients, an advocate for your clients, and a leader in any setting you might find yourself."

"You're armed with one of the most important tools needed to forge your path ahead," Dowd explained. "It's not the diploma or the pin itself that counts, it's about what you've learned along the way

and what you do with the education you've gotten in your journey to graduation today. Seize this opportunity to go forward and accept your mission of caring, advocating, and leading."

During the ceremony, graduates were presented dental hygiene pins by Dr. Deborah Milliken, chair of SFSC's Dental Education program.

Atterberry received an award for highest grade point average of the class. Nancy Jaramillo was presented the Community Service Award. "The Community Service Award goes to a student who has an admirable enthusiasm for patient care," Milliken said. "The student seizes every opportunity to help others. She is professional in her approach to each patient, and exhibits the qualities of kindness and understanding of each

patient's situation. She exemplifies each aspect of the dental hygiene oath in every way."

"Dental hygiene pinning is a time-honored tradition that reflects the study and skills required to earn the pin," Milliken said. "The Class of 2016 is an excellent example of success in both — technical skill and knowledge in the field. We are so pleased to award the pins to these great clinicians."

Upon completing the dental hygiene program, graduates become dental hygienists by passing the National Dental Hygiene Board Examination and the Florida State Clinical Licensure Examination. They can then work alongside a dentist as a member of a dental health care team.

For more information on SFSC's Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene program call 863-784-7131.

SFSC offers teacher certification exam prep courses

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate and Community Education Department is offering two preparatory courses — in math and English — for the General Knowledge Test portion of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination.

The GKT is one of three tests that compose the FTCE. Florida law requires that teachers demonstrate mastery of basic skills, professional knowledge and a content area of specialization. Testing requirements for teacher candidates seeking certification are described in 6A-4.0021 Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

SFSC offers a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degree that prepares students to work with children in kindergarten through grade six. Graduates are eligible for Florida certification in K-6 with ESOL and Reading endorsements. One of the prerequisites for entering the program is a mastery of general knowledge, including the ability to read, write and compute, by passing the GKT of the FTCE.

The two GKT preparatory courses offered through SFSC are:

FTCE: General Knowledge, Math (CRN30899), six-hour course. Students review the mathematics skills and problem solving techniques for the GKT portion of the Florida Teacher Certification Exam and learn techniques to maximize test results. The cost of the course is \$65. The course is held on June 6 and June 8, 4-7 p.m., in Room 204, SFSC University Center, Highlands Campus, Avon Park. The required textbook is: CliffsNotes FTCE General Knowledge Test Prep 3rd Edition, ISBN-13: 978-0544309883.

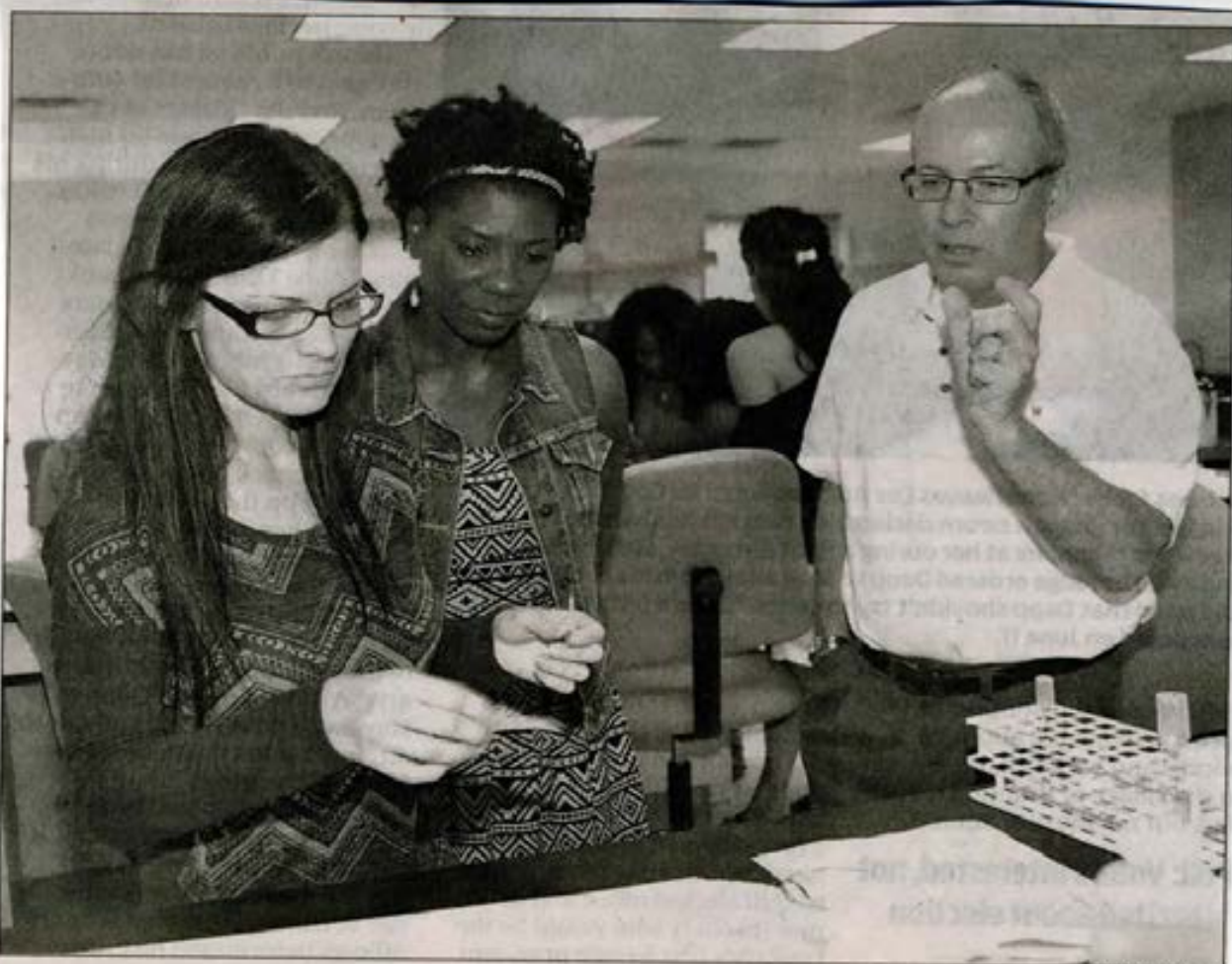
FTCE: General Knowledge, English (CRN 30900), six-hour course. Students will review the grammar rules that will help them pass the English Language Skills portion of the GKT. The cost of the course is \$65. The course is held June 13 and June 15, 4-7 p.m., in Room 204, SFSC University Center, Highlands Campus, Avon Park. The required textbook is: CliffsNotes FTCE General Knowledge Test Prep 3rd Edition, ISBN-13: 978-0544309883.

Register for these classes in Building B, at the Highlands Campus or any SFSC campus or center.

Registration fees can also be paid over the phone by calling (863) 784-7405.

For information, call Michele DeVane at (863) 784-7174 or Maday Leon at (863) 784-7154.

New science chair eyes expanded student research



James Hawker instructs students on SFSC's Highlands Campus.

COURTESY PHOTO

James Hawker will head SFSC's Natural Sciences Department

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — James Hawker, a biology professor at South Florida State College, may spend less time in the classroom for the next few years.

Since 2011, Hawker has carried a full load of courses, teaching SFSC students the fundamentals of microbiology and anatomy and physiology, or "A&P" in the lingo of undergraduates.

Why the change? On July 1, Erik Christensen will step down as chair of the college's Natural Sciences Department, making way for Hawker to replace him. Christensen will take over as dean for SFSC's applied science and technologies programs after the departure of Kevin Brown, who held that post for 18 years.

Now, as SFSC prepares for the start of a new academic year in August, Hawker will likely lighten his teaching load to free up time to manage the department.

"I am told it's a challenge becoming department chair," he said from his office in SFSC's Norman L. Stephens Jr. Health and Science Education Center. "I'll run the day-to-day operations of the department, which is very much unlike classroom teaching."

But Hawker sees his role as much more than administrator.

"I look forward to using the office as a venue to promote undergraduate research in the classroom," he said.

Increasingly, colleges with two-year programs are working scholarly research — once the domain of large universities — into the curriculum. "Research is also learning," said Georgi Boggs, president of American Association of Community Colleges. "It may be one of the most effective ways to engage students in learning a discipline."

When Hawker came to SFSC, he brought with him a wealth of experience not just in teaching, but research at major academic health sciences centers. The experience gleaned from years of growing cells in a laboratory will benefit SFSC students as part of a drive to enhance classroom learning.

Hawker, a native of Biloxi, Miss., attended high school in Texas, where his father, an Air Force officer, was stationed. In 1977, he enrolled in the University of Texas at Austin. Hawker says he "bleeds Longhorn,"

showing his love for the Lone Star State and its powerhouse football team.

"When I got to college, I really took to biology and chemistry," he said. "Many of my peers had medical school on their minds, but even though I tested as having an affinity for going in that direction, I went toward research."

After earning his undergraduate degree, Hawker's interest in biological research led him to the University of Houston, where earned his master's degree while doing research in astrobiology, the study of life in space and earth.

"I found it a fascinating subject, but I learned there were scant career prospects in that field because NASA had cut back on funding research in astrobiology," he said.

In 1989, eager to continue biological research, Hawker, with his first wife and young daughter, moved 100 miles from Houston's enormous metropolitan region to the relatively small town of College Station to work toward a doctoral degree at Texas A&M University.

"After my stint researching astrobiology, I found an interest in human health, particularly cell biology," he said of his arrival at Texas A&M's health sciences center. "I did my dissertation on angiogenesis, or 'growing new

blood vessels in plain speak."

While doing research at Texas A&M, Hawker also had an opportunity to get behind the lectern, teaching cell biology to medical students.

Hawker's career path came to abrupt turn in the road at College Station — his wife died of cancer.

Late in 2002, he decided to move with his 13-year-old daughter to Tampa to take up a research position at the Moffitt Cancer Center.

"With the death of my wife from cancer, doing research at an academic cancer center meant something to me," he said. "I had to move on and do something different."

Most research positions come about through grant funding, and Hawker's Moffitt job came to an end in 2005. So, looking for work, he accepted a full-time teaching position at nearby Hillsborough Community College.

"Several friends in the profession told me I had knack for teaching," he said. He put aside the lab coat and took on a regular teaching load, introducing students to microbiology and A&P.

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Like many academic scientists, Hawker had been immersed in research, with classroom teaching often grafted on to one's laboratory work. "I found at Hills-

borough that what some friends saw as a knack became for me a passion," he said.

While in Tampa, he met his second wife, who moved to Tallahassee to start a new job. Hawker followed and taught introductory biology to students at Florida State University and Tallahassee Community College.

"I was working as an adjunct instructor but I really wanted full-time employment," he said of this time in Tallahassee. "After a statewide job search, SFSC offered me a position and I took it."

Hawker taught his first class at SFSC in fall 2011. He already had six years of teaching students in associate degree programs the basics of biology. He noted the move to the region unfolded smoothly, with Hawker and his wife, Pat, readily appreciating the draw the community has for many newcomers.

He and his wife, who is an adjunct psychology instructor at SFSC, bought a home in Frostproof with a large yard, one that would accommodate Charlie, their great Pyrenees.

"My wife and I went to an animal shelter and saw this beautiful dog in a cage with a sign that read 'Help me! I don't know why I'm here,'" Hawker said with a trace of endearment. "I told my wife we had to take him home, and we did."

A guard dog by breeding, Hawker said the 125-pound

Charlie barks at the hint of any intrusion — human or not — into his family's space. "But, as it happens, he's the gentlest of creatures," he said.



Hawker found a passion for running when he moved to the area. "I've become an avid runner," he said. "I guess I just got sucked into it unknowingly." He came in first place among his age group at this year's Panther 5K run.

As he delighted in his knack for making cell biology and the skeletal system accessible to undergraduates at the SFSC Highlands Campus, his love of research started tugging at him. In 2014, Hawker teamed up with Christensen, his predecessor as chair and a professor of physics, to offer a research-oriented astrobiology course to students in the college's Honors Program.

"Students were assigned projects that required them to conduct scholarly, scientific research dealing with life in space," Hawker said, recalling his first foray into research as a student in Houston. The students' research covered the effects of space travel on humans, the contribution of comets to life on earth, and terraforming the planet Mars.

"An amazing moment came at the end of the semester when the students stood at their desks and applauded Christensen and me," he said. "That was a tremendously heartening experience."

Now that he has taken the reins of the Natural Sciences Department, he is looking for opportunities to expand undergraduate research, and not just in science.

"I believe undergraduate research in any subject or field is a way to increase student involvement with their subject, learn it at a deeper level, and promote their analysis and critical thinking skills," he said.

Hawker said these are all attributes that can benefit any student, whether transferring to a four-year institution or completing a terminal degree at SFSC.

Nancy Hensel, who heads up the Council on Undergraduate Research, observed that industry looks to associate degree-granting colleges to develop an "educated and technologically up-to-date workforce." She sees undergraduate research playing an important role in meeting industry demands.

A sentiment echoed by Hawker as he prepares to assume his new role at SFSC.

"Employers value students who can analyze and problem solve," he said. "Undergraduate research promotes just that."