



**SOUTH  
FLORIDA**  
State College

# SFSC to offer Friday-only classes

Survey prompted new college credit option

By **MARC VALERO**

STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK— South Florida State College will be offering college credit classes that meet only on Fridays, starting in the 2017 spring academic term.

The college noted it has been years since college credit classes have been held on Friday, and calls the Friday-only classes a “twist” brought about by community interest.

With the Jan. 4 start of the spring academic term, students can take an introductory psychology class that meets on Friday morning only and an introductory speech communication class that meets only on Friday afternoon.

Many years ago, classes at SFSC met either Tuesdays and Thursdays, or Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Lynn MacNeill, interim dean for the Division of Arts and Sciences, stated in news release.

# CLASSES

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Students can take the psychology class from 9 -11:45 a.m., break for lunch and take the speech communication class 1-3:45 p.m., MacNeill noted.

"At the term's end, they'll earn six credit hours with just one day on campus each week," he said.

At present, all college credit classes at SFSC meet Monday through Thursday. Occupational certificate classes like automotive services technology and cosmetology meet Monday through Friday.

Survey data showed residents wanted class offerings they could attend on Fridays only, MacNeill said. "So, we're putting it to the test with the hope it will prove a success and lead to more classes offered on Friday."

Spring term registration for all students, new and returning, begins on Nov. 18. MacNeill said now is the time for new students with interest in the Friday classes to get started on their admission application. Current students with more than 20 credit hours can start

registering Friday.

"New students need to get admitted, registered, and complete the orientation process," MacNeill added. "These next several weeks are just the time to get that out of the way before classes start on Jan 4."

No prerequisite courses are required to enroll in the two Friday classes, making them

ideal offerings for new students who want to start earning college credit hours, he said. Also, both classes will count toward the degree requirements for an associate degree.

New students can start an admission application by visiting the SFSC website [www.southflorida.edu](http://www.southflorida.edu) and clicking the "Apply Now" link.

# SFSC administrator heads state colleges' group

## Robert Flores named president of the Association of Florida Colleges

SPECIAL TO  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — Robert Flores, South Florida State College's director of remodeling, renovation and maintenance, was sworn in as president of the Association of Florida Colleges (AFC) for 2017 Nov. 3 at the 67th AFC Annual Meeting and Conference in Lake Buena Vista.

Based in Tallahassee, AFC is a 7,100-member nonprofit organization that advocates for Florida's 28 community and state colleges who are members of the Florida College System (FCS).

"The goals for my AFC



Robert Flores

presidential term are to provide long-term financial stability and enhance our staff development offerings," Flores said. He wants to boost membership and increase the visibility of AFC among the public.

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## FLORES

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Before becoming AFC's president-elect, Flores was vice president for commissions, a role which required him to oversee the 16 individual AFC individual commissions that provide professional development, networking, and leadership opportunities for members and serve

as an information and advocacy resource.

In 2012, he headed AFC's Facilities Commission, which worked to improve classroom facilities, infrastructure, and the beauty of the 2,096 buildings on 68 campuses of FCS members. In 2015, Flores received AFC's Leadership Service Award.

Flores came to SFSC in 1998. He oversees the remodeling, renovation,

and maintenance of SFSC's DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands campuses and the Lake Placid Center.

He was awarded a Doctor of Public Administration degree from Nova Southeastern University, a Master of Business Administration degree from Palm Beach Atlantic College, a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Middle Tennessee State University, and an

Associate in Arts degree from Draughtons Junior College in Nashville, Tenn.

Flores is the third SFSC administrator to serve as AFC president, following Catherine P. Cornelius, SFSC president emerita, in 1986, and William A. Shaffer, former SFSC vice president of planning and institutional effectiveness and executive assistant to the president for governmental relations, in 2002.

# SFSC's gypsy biologist has passion for teaching

SPECIAL TO THE HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

Dr. Ellen Catherine Cover calls herself the gypsy biologist of U.S. 17.

Dr. Cover is now in her fifth year teaching biology at the DeSoto and Hardee county campuses of South Florida State College. Monday through Thursday, she shuttles up and down the road linking Arcadia and Bowling Green, taking students through the paces of introductory biology, microbiology, and anatomy courses.

For Dr. Cover, there have been two passions in her life: biology and

teaching it to students eager for careers in the life sciences — the first passion started early for her.

"I guess you can say I was born to be a biologist," Dr. Cover said. "My mom tells the story of me at 3 years old dragging home a dead bird and asking her to explain its parts to me."

Putting her childhood story into the language of a scientist, Dr. Cover said, "I was genetically programmed to be a biologist."

Dr. Cover plays a vital role in the lives of SFSC students living in the two

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COURTESY PHOTO

**Dr. Ellen Catherine Cover in the anatomy laboratory at South Florida State College.**

students in the Keys, at what is now State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, at a school of natural medicine, and her alma mater, Lamar. Through the years, Dr. Cover discovered her passion for biology also extended to opening young minds to its wonders.

Throughout those years, though, SFSC was on Dr. Cover's radar screen. "Everything I had heard about SFSC was good — that it was a student-oriented institution, which is something that appeals to me." She said she applied for teaching positions but that SFSC never bit.

In 2011, she sent in another resume and got the answer she had been waiting for. SFSC needed a biologist who was willing to work at its campuses in DeSoto and Hardee counties and was willing to drive the 30 miles back and forth between them.

"For me it's an absolute pleasure doing my gypsy biologist thing," Dr. Cover said. "The students I teach in DeSoto and Hardee stand out for their willingness to learn — they just try harder and seem to care more because they know it matters more to them, very much unlike students from more affluent areas."

For the past 30 years, Dr. Cover has focused on her zeal for teaching but she never lost her love for research.

"With a stream of funding for the sciences coming to SFSC from a newly awarded grant, I'm aiming to work with my students to show them biology in action, not just from a textbook," she said.

Dr. Cover sees opportunities to get students working on projects growing tissue cultures and genetics, all geared toward agricultural-oriented research.

The gypsy biologist calls Zolfo Springs, in Hardee County, home, where she lives with her beloved dog Biscuit. When not tending to her dog, Dr. Cover said she also enjoys reading, especially, naturally enough, science-related literature.

Dr. Cover said she's a big booster of the DeSoto County Relay for Life cancer walk and she sits on the board of directors for the ARC Desoto, a nonprofit that aids residents with developmental disabilities.

"As much I love science I do have a softer side," Dr. Cover said wryly. "I am also a big fan of horror films, especially movies about *Frankenstein*."

# SFSC President's Forum answers students' questions

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — From skateboards to textbooks, South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel answered various questions Tuesday during his annual President's Forum.

Before the forum, Leitzel said the questions come at random from the students. He always tries to address the needs of the students.

The forum, which was sponsored by the Student Government Association, had a small turnout of about a dozen students who were mostly SGA members.

The first question, which was from an SGA officer, concerned the school's ban on skateboards.

The student stated he had little time to travel from the Health Science Building to the cafeteria and would like to be able to use his skateboard.

He was informed by a campus security officer about the skateboard ban, the student said.

Leitzel said many other college's ban skateboards because student and faculty pedestrians don't feel safe and are concerned that a skateboarder may collide with someone who is walking.

Student safety is the major concern, he stressed.

The student suggested allowing skateboarders to sign a waiver that denies claims if they are injured, but Leitzel said there would continue to be the concern of a skateboarder colliding with a pedestrian.

The student asked about skateboarding on campus roadways and parking lots.

SFSC Vice President of Administrative Services Glenn Little said he would look into it.

Little said Wednesday. "We get complaints from people who are fearful that they would get hurt because some people are

responsible about skateboard use and some people are not, they treat it as a game rather than a mode of transportation.

"We've restricted it from all the campus walkways."

A student said there was no book for her chemistry class, which made it difficult to review the concepts her professor was teaching. The student said she tried, without success, to find a book that correlated with the class.

The student mentioned that the course has an online book.

Leitzel and Little both noted that due to the high cost of textbooks, many

courses use "open resources" that are at no cost to the student.

In some cases the textbook can cost more than the tuition for a course, they noted.

The student was directed to check with the lending resources at the college's library.

Another student asked if the college was looking at starting any new programs.

Leitzel responded that the college's decisions on adding new programs are driven by marketplace demands.

In conclusion, Leitzel invited the students to visit



MARC VALERO/STAFF

**South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel answers questions from students during Tuesday's President's Forum.**

him or another administrator at any time.

# SFSC to hold auditions for 'Beauty and the Beast' ballet

AVON PARK — Dance auditions for children wishing to perform in the Florida premiere of the ballet, "Beauty and the Beast," will be Sunday, Nov. 6 at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College.

"This is the same company that performed 'The Nutcracker' last December," said Cindy Garren, director of Cultural Programs at SFSC.

William Starrett, artistic director of Columbia City Ballet, will conduct the auditions.

Nancy McDuffee, with Dance Unlimited of Highlands County, will serve as the local dance director.

The "Beauty and the Beast" ballet is a new production that will be staged at the Wildstein

Center on Feb. 7, with one performance at 7 p.m.

Auditions for girls and boys ages 4-6 will be from 2-3:15 p.m.; ages 7-10 will audition from 3:15-4:30 p.m.; and ages 11 and older will dance from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Dancers who have been on pointe over two years should bring their pointe shoes.

Girls should wear a black leotard, pink tights, and ballet shoes. Hair should be taken back in a bun. Boys should wear a white leotard or plain white T-shirt, black tights, and black shoes. Or, boys can wear black tights with white socks, and white shoes. Dancers should not wear sneakers or flip-flops.

A \$10 audition fee is payable to the Columbia City Ballet. Children

should arrive at the Wildstein Center 30 minutes before the audition to complete registration forms and to warm up.

"This isn't a Disney version with dancing teapots and candlesticks," Garren said. "This sumptuous ballet tells the age-old fairy tale where the good-hearted Beauty overlooks the Beast's ugliness and grows to love him."

Sponsors of the performance are Dr. Andrew and Beth Kulick, Terry and Michele Heston, Carol Emery, Dr. Witford and Inga Reid, Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius, Joan Hartt,

Courtesy photo

Right: The "Beauty and the Beast" ballet is a new production that will be staged at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on Feb. 7, with one performance at 7 p.m.

All Around Septic and Sewer, and Dr. Donald, Ruth, and Kimberly Geldart.

SFSC presents more than 30 national and internationally touring artists at the 1460-seat Wildstein Center and the 250-seat SFSC University Center Auditorium located on the SFSC Highlands Campus at 600 W. College Drive.





# DOE awards SFSC \$5 million STEM grant

**SUBMITTED BY DEBORAH BELL LATTER**  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIRECTOR

South Florida State College has been awarded a nearly \$5 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to launch a postsecondary science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) project called "Re-Engineering Our Future." This project will create educational opportunities for Hispanic and low-income students in the college's service district of DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands counties.

"SFSC is thrilled and honored to have been awarded this grant," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC president. "It is imperative to the economic health of our service district that we prepare our students for an increasingly high-tech

world. A STEM education is critical as new and emerging jobs require expertise in these disciplines. This grant has given us the means to strengthen our efforts in providing workforce skills that are essential in attracting advanced manufacturing industries to locate in the tri-county region."

For this project, the college will focus on four major activities. They are to develop a high-tech degree pathway with transfer into the University of South Florida and Florida Polytechnic University, to improve pre-collegiate services to better prepare low-income Hispanic students for these programs, to improve college academic support and students services to better support low-income Hispanic college students, and to create a more culturally sensitive campus culture to increase student

engagement and success at the college.

Funds from the grant will allow SFSC to create new degree programs in engineering technology, mechatronics and biomedical science. Mechatronics is a combination of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, computer control and information technology that come together in the design of "smart" products, such as robots or sensor-driven windshield wipers. These high-tech degree pathways will make it easier for students to transfer directly into the biomedical science degree program at the University of South Florida and one of several engineering programs at Florida Polytechnic University. In fact, SFSC will be the first college to set up such an articulation agreement with Florida Polytechnic University.

SFSC's engineering technology,

mechatronics and biomedical science programs are scheduled to begin in August 2017.

Through the grant, \$1 million's worth of new, state-of-the-art technology will support these programs as well as enhance the lab sciences courses at the Hardee and DeSoto campuses. Included will be a series of mechatronics and engineering-specific lab equipment. The biomedical science program will make use of a negative 80 degrees freezer, phase contrast microscope, fluorescent microscope, illuminometer and nuclear magnetic resonant spectrometer.

The college will send two instructors to Berlin, Germany, for Level One and Level Two Siemens mechatronics

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training and certification. Siemens is known for offering the gold standard of training in the field of mechatronics.

"This grant will enhance academic and support services for students seeking STEM degrees," said Dr. Timothy Wise, dean of Student Services, and project director for the STEM grant. "It will provide resources to hire specialists who will provide support who can assist students, such as academic advisors, recruiters, tutors, coaches. Because SFSC is considered a Hispanic-serving institution, the grant will allow us to reach out to students and their families."

In fact, SFSC's student population is 30.6 percent Hispanic.

Resources will expand SFSC's campus-based services and support for Hispanic students. For instance, the college will produce Spanish language versions of key student services materials focused on graduation and transfer. The college will create a more culturally-sensitive institutional environment through employee professional development sessions.

Because mathematics serves as a firm foundation in preparing students for STEM majors, a summer program called MathSteps will be available to recent high school graduates, first-year-in-college students and dually enrolled students. It will prepare students for college-level mathematics and all the way through pre-calculus, if needed.

Other student support will be expanded tutoring opportunities for the college's Hardee and Highlands campuses.

Students will be able to participate in a residential program developed in conjunction with Florida Gulf Coast University so SFSC students can learn more about what engineering students do. So families of students can learn more about the first year of college, SFSC will create a Spanish language version of its new student orientation and develop an orientation specifically for parents of potential students.

SFSC will employ an early alert program so instructors, coaches or support personnel can better identify students who are running into academic or personal stumbling blocks. Through the program, they can give students encouragement and help them get back on track.

Students who have graduated from SFSC and encounter the challenges of transition to a university will be able

to rely upon Inside Track coaching for support. This nationally recognized, distance-based coaching service assists students in navigating through the academic experience. For example, Inside Track coaching can guide them through the financial aid process, course mapping, or tutoring.

To sustain the momentum of the "Re-Engineering Our Future" project, SFSC will kick start a \$250,000 endowment to go hand in hand with the SFSC Foundation's Partnership Project. Donations to the endowment would be matched one-to-one and used to support ongoing programs and student scholarships for Hispanic and low-income students.

"The 'Re-Engineering Our Future' project is a perfect example of how education and economic development can work together," Dr. Leitzel said.



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# SFSC earns award for free textbook use

SPECIAL TO  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — An initiative at South Florida State College to expand the use of free textbooks has earned SFSC the Best Practice Award from the chancellor of the Florida College System. SFSC, with campuses in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties, boasts an enrollment of 5,404 students.

On Nov. 4, Chancellor Madeline Pumariega, will recognize SFSC and three other FCS colleges for

innovation and excellence during the Association of Florida Colleges' 67th Annual Convention in Lake Buena Vista.

SFSC began to explore the use of no-cost textbooks in a limited number of classes two years ago. Twenty SFSC instructors now use no-cost textbooks in their classrooms.

"The Chancellor's Best Practice Awards is an opportunity for our colleges to showcase innovative program strategies that have proven successful at their colleges and in their

communities," Pumariega said. "This award program recognizes these colleges for creating successful programs and then shares those best practices with all institutions in the Florida College System."

Earlier this year, Erik Christensen, SFSC's dean of Applied Sciences and Technologies, spearheaded a strategic partnership with OpenStax to expand use of free textbooks at SFSC.

OpenStax improves access to college education by offering students its lineup of free textbooks for

common first- and second-year college courses. OpenStax, a nonprofit organization, has pioneered the adoption of open educational resources.

Dubbed SFSCopen by Christensen, the no-cost textbook initiative promotes the use of OER texts and study aides that reside in the public domain or permit free use and reuse by others.

SFSC faculty in psychology, first-year experience, and chemistry programs have already adopted OER textbooks in their courses,

resulting in an annual cost savings to students of \$125,480.

According to the College Board, students spend about \$1,300 each year for textbooks and supplies.

Studies have shown that students in courses using OER often show higher grades, increased number of courses taken and reduced drop rates than when in courses with traditional textbooks.

The FCS is comprised of 28 public two- and four-year state colleges supported by the people of the

State of Florida. The FCS enrolled 813,838 students in last full academic year.

In addition to SFSC, Pumariega recognized three other FCS member colleges: Broward College, Indian River State College, and Palm Beach State College.

"I applaud our colleges for their commitment to excellence and innovation in our system," Pumariega said. "It is this commitment that keeps the Florida College System in the forefront as a national leader in higher education."

# Heartland Games returns to 'The Muni'

## Golf competition will take place at Sebring Municipal

BY NEIL SIMPSON

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

For many years, the Heartland Games For Active Adults Golf Tournament was held at Sebring Golf Course. On March 4, 2017, the tournament will return to the course better known to locals as Sebring Municipal or simply 'The Muni.' Kim Darrow, Sebring Municipal's head pro for

nine years is looking forward to welcoming area golfers back. She has always enjoyed the competition and the great sportsmanship at the Heartland Games and says the course will be in excellent condition.

Darrow has been involved with the sport for almost 30 years. She started playing when her dad, an avid golfer, gave her clubs for her seventh birthday. Kim was a

member of the Avon Park High School golf team but, as the only female golfer, had to play on the boys' team and compete from the men's tees. That didn't discourage her. She went on to golf at the University of Florida where she was a member of a ladies' team for the first time. Unfortunately, a back injury in her junior year put an end to her competitive golfing.



NEIL SIMPSON PHOTO

Kim Darrow, head golf pro at Sebring Golf club, practices her putting.

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## GOLF

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After graduation, she was encouraged to move back to Highlands County when Tom McClurg, head pro at Sebring G.C., and her long time coach, advised her that there was an opening for an assistant pro. Little did Kim realize that she wouldn't last long in the job. About two months after Darrow arrived, McClurg took a job in Wisconsin and she was promoted to head pro,

a position she has held ever since.

As head pro at the municipally owned golf course, Darrow answers to the Sebring Town Council. She finds that she has very little time for teaching as she tends to be swamped with paper work, making certain that the shop is well managed and that each day's tee times are properly set up.

A mother of two young boys, Connor, 7, and Aiden, 4, Darrow has made certain to expose them to the game she loves. She admits that Connor

did have a club in his hands by the time he was 2, but has tried to ensure that the boys have fun golfing.

A fear of heights was not helped by the fact that the college team travelled to many tournaments in an eight seat plane. However, her playing days at the University of Florida did provide some of her most memorable golfing experiences.

Meeting a true golf legend was a real highlight. Her roommate's father had won the Pennsylvania State Amateur event in 1998 and earned the chance

to golf with the great Arnold Palmer. Darrow and her roommate filled out the foursome. After golfing, they were treated to lunch and visited Palmer's home which had specialty rooms for his memorabilia, club making and an office. Darrow said that "within five minutes of meeting him you were made to feel like he'd known you forever. He was a real character and a really good guy."

On Sept. 11, 2001, Kim and her teammates were to qualify for a tournament. Having heard the devastating news from New York, the ladies decided to make a

difference by heading straight out to donate blood. They then got American flag stickers to adorn their golf bags.

She looks forward to hosting men and women aged 50 and older from courses throughout the Heartland. She encourages golfers to come out for a great day and an opportunity to meet others who share a love of the game. Competition will be by gender and age with medals awarded to the top three finishers in each five year age grouping.

The Heartland Games are organized by the Corporate and Community Education

Department of South Florida State College and serve as one of twenty one qualifiers for the annual Florida State Games.

The Heartland Games' sponsors are: Gold: Edward Jones/ Alan Holmes, Newsom Eye, Silver: Turner Furniture, Drs. Thakkar & Patel, Florida Hospital Heartland Division, Bronze: Wauchula State Bank.

For complete details regarding the 13 events in the 2017 Heartland Games For Active Adults please visit [www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames](http://www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames) where you will be able to download a registration form.

# SFSC board trustee named 'Trustee of the Year'

## Tami Cullens receives honor by Association of Florida Colleges

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS  
NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — Tami Cullens, a trustee of South Florida State College, has been named Trustee of the Year by the Association of Florida Colleges or AFC.



CULLENS

"Cullens is a humble servant, one who does not seek recognition," said Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC's president. "For that reason, AFC's naming her Trustee of the Year is a testament to her character, her devotion to SFSC, and her desire to transform a community around educational advancement."

The association is a nonprofit organization that represents Florida's

28 public two- and four-year colleges, collectively known as the Florida College System. Its mission is to promote and represent the 28 colleges as they provide their students and the citizens of Florida with a world-class college system, the college said.

In recognition of the contribution made by the trustees of its member institutions in meeting the needs of their college and community, it recognizes one exemplary trustee every year.

Cullens has served on the SFSC District Board of Trustees representing Highlands County since 2006. The eight-member board, appointed by Florida's governor, serves as SFSC's governing body, appointing the college president, approving the institution's budget, and overseeing changes

to educational and administrative policies.

Cullens' commitment to SFSC doesn't end with her service as a trustee, Leitzel said. He noted for the last 15 years Cullens has been an active member of the SFSC foundation's board of directors, serving as secretary, vice president, and president. The SFSC Foundation acts as an auxiliary support organization for SFSC, raising money for scholarships, research, and educational programs.

Leitzel said Cullens' contribution to SFSC extends far beyond attendance at board meetings. "Cullens has been instrumental in making use of her personal contacts to advance educational programs at SFSC." He pointed to Cullens' active involvement in using her network of

connections to bring a biofuels research and production program funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to SFSC and Highlands County.

A native of Highlands County, Cullens graduated from Avon Park High School and earned her bachelor's degree from Webber International University.

Cullens has deep roots in the region's agricultural community. Through the years, Cullens has helped manage the family business, Saxon Groves. She is active supporter of the Highlands County Cattlewomen's Association, helping to raise funds for college scholarship for the region's youth and promoting the beef industry. Each year, Cullens lends her time

and support to running the Highlands County Ag-Venture, a three-day educational program introducing third grades to the importance agriculture plays in our community.

Cullens and her family also have deep ties to SFSC. Her grandfather, Bill Sachsenmaier, donated a tract of land that became much of what is now SFSC's Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

Cullens also finds time to focus her attention on children who are years away from starting college. She mentors at-risk schoolchildren through her association with Take Stock in Children, a nonprofit organization operated by SFSC. Take Stock has helped hundreds of middle and high school students stay on track to earn their diplomas and start college

with scholarships they earn by participating in the program.

Leitzel noted that Cullens' commitment to SFSC extends to every aspect of life on the college's three campuses and one center. "Cullens is one of SFSC's greatest cheerleaders," Leitzel said. "She attends nearly every event the college sponsors, including joining the employees at the college's holiday luncheon."

Cullens accepted her award at AFC's 67th annual convention in Lake Buena Vista.

"My grandfather thought a great deal about others, enough to make the land donation," Cullens said. "It was heartfelt. I want to follow in his footsteps, to help others get an education. I love this college."

# SFSC hosts Veterans Day Remembrance

SPECIAL TO THE HIGHLANDS  
NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will host a Veterans Day remembrance ceremony to honor the men and women who served their county in war and peace. The ceremony begins at 10:45 a.m. Friday, Nov. 11 at the flagpoles on the SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park. The public is invited to join SFSC students, staff, faculty, and administrators for this annual ceremony.

Dr. Cary Pigman, a member of the Florida House of Representatives, will deliver the keynote speech. Rep. Pigman, an emergency room physician at Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center, served in the U.S. Army and the Navy. Adam Martin, an SFSC business instructor and U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq, will deliver a musical tribute.

The Sebring Police Department color guard will present the

American flag. After the ceremony, the Knights of Columbus Color Corps will lead a Remembrance Walk through a portion of the SFSC Highlands Campus.

Visitors will find the flagpoles adjacent to the circular driveway on the west side of the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts, accessible through Entrance 3 on College Drive.

For information, contact Kris Juve at [juvek@southflorida.edu](mailto:juvek@southflorida.edu) or 863-784-7189.

# Hitt inducted into Hall of Fame

## Panthers AD, coach inducted into FCSAA Hall of Fame

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

Rick Hitt, athletic director and head baseball coach of South Florida State College, was inducted into the Florida College System Activities Association (FCSAA) Hall of Fame on Friday during the annual conference of the Association of Florida Colleges (AFC) in Lake Buena Vista.

Hitt was selected for the honor by athletic directors and coaches who represent the 28 colleges in

the Florida College System and make up the FCSAA's Athletics Division.

"Honestly, I've been working in this field a long time," Hitt said. "It was surprising and humbling to be nominated, but being selected by my peers and other athletic directors was incredibly special. When your peers think you are good at something, it is very rewarding."

The FCSAA is a statewide non-profit corporation that regulates, coordinates and promotes

intercollegiate activities in seven divisions: athletics, Brain Bowl, forensics, music, student government, student publications, and theater.

The FCSAA Hall of Fame is comprised of administrators, coaches, advisors, officials, students, and other nominees who have contributed a minimum of 10 years to FCSAA or one of its member institutions.



COURTESY PHOTO

SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach Rick Hitt is inducted into the 2016 Florida College System Activities Association Hall of Fame by FCSAA executive director Kelly Warren on Friday.

# HITT

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Hitt was nominated by the FCSAA's Athletic Division on the merits of his contributions, achievements, and significant accomplishments as SFSC's head baseball coach and athletic director for nearly two decades.

In 1998, Hitt joined SFSC's athletics department as the Panthers head baseball coach and became part of the FCSAA Athletics Division.

He was promoted to athletic director in 2001, and today he manages a department that fields teams in men's baseball, women's volleyball, women's softball, and women's cross country.

In August, Hitt began his 19th year of coaching Panther Baseball. He is in his second full term as president of the National Junior College Athletic

Association (NJCAA) and is serving his 12th year as a member of the FCSAA State Baseball Committee.

He recently completed his third year as a member of the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) Executive Committee and in January was appointed to ABCA's six-member Standing

Committee.

"When I look at the caliber of people who have been inducted into FCSAA's Hall of Fame, it is very special to be considered one of them," Hitt said.

Hitt joins Lena Phelps, lead librarian, in representing SFSC in the FCSAA Hall of Fame. She was inducted in 2013 for her service to Brain Bowl.

# SFSC network security program gains FBI acceptance

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Network Security Program has earned recognition from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as an approved provider of cybersecurity training.

The decision by Homeland Security's National Initiative for Cybersecurity Careers and Studies (NICCS) to place SFSC's Network Security Program in its Education and Training Catalog brings the college to the attention of students across the nation looking to enroll in approved cybersecurity training courses, the college said.

"Our inclusion in the NICCS's catalog puts SFSC's Network Security Program on the map, both literally and figuratively," said Brian Bohlman, instructor of networking technologies and digital forensics. "The catalog is online, so students looking for training can scan a map of the United States for an approved training center, one just like SFSC."

Bohlman said the NICCS catalog is a central location where cybersecurity professionals across the nation search for more than 2,800 cybersecurity-related courses. Anyone can use the interactive map and filters to search for courses offered in one's area.

Students taking these courses can add to their skill set, increase their level of expertise, earn a

certification, or even transition into a new career, according to Bohlman.

The NICCS connects government employees, students, educators, and industry with cybersecurity training providers at colleges and university across the nation.

SFSC launched its Network Security Program two years ago in response to the growing demand for information technology professionals skilled in protecting computer networks from hacking and other malicious intrusions.

"SFSC also just received word of its acceptance into the Orlando chapter of InfraGard, the cybersecurity initiative of the Federal Bureau of Investigation," Bohlman noted.

"InfraGard is a partnership among the FBI, businesses, academic institutions, state and local law enforcement agencies, dedicated to sharing information and intelligence to prevent hostile acts against the United States," Bohlman said.

SFSC's Network Security Program recently gained recognition from Cisco System's Networking Academy, the industry's leader in networking, for providing the best delivery of Cisco's Internet of Everything (IoE) curriculum.

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

# Open registration begins at SFSC

AVON PARK — Open registration for South Florida State College's spring term begins Friday, Nov. 18. Classes begin Jan. 4 for the 16-week spring term.

Returning students can register and pay for classes through the college portal, Panther Central. New students can apply for admission to the college by clicking the "Apply Now" button at the top of SFSC's home page at [www.southflorida.edu](http://www.southflorida.edu) or by visiting the SFSC Welcome Center on the Highlands campus or stopping by the Hardee or DeSoto campuses or Lake Placid Center.

SFSC recommends that those who have not yet submitted an application to the

college do so by Dec. 15. Applicants who wait beyond the Dec. 15 may encounter a delay if they need to submit additional documentation to support their application.

SFSC's Advising and Counseling Center accepts walk-in registrations 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Fridays.

Students can register in Building B on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park, at the Hardee Campus in Bowling Green, at the Lake Placid Center in Lake Placid, or at the DeSoto Campus in Arcadia.

Financial aid is available to those who are qualified. For more

information about financial assistance and scholarships, contact the SFSC Financial Aid Office at 863-784-7134.

For more information about registration, call 863-453-6661 (Highlands campus), 773-3081 (Hardee campus), 993-1757 (DeSoto campus), or 465-3003 (Lake Placid Center).

All SFSC campuses will close for the Thanksgiving holiday, Nov. 23-26. The campuses reopen on Monday, Nov. 28. During the holiday, current students can register online by following the Panther Central link at top of SFSC's home page.

For information about SFSC and its programs, go to [southflorida.edu](http://southflorida.edu).



# College Director Enjoys Academia

Late on a Friday afternoon, after quiet had taken hold of the South Florida State College Hardee Campus, Teresa Crawford's day ought to be winding down.

Not so for the SFSC Hardee Campus director. "Tonight, I'm slipping into my role as a member of the Hardee County School Board to attend a ribbon cutting, dedicating a new track for Hardee Senior High School," said Crawford.

Afterward, she stayed for the main event, the Friday night football game pitting Avon Park High School against the Hardee Wildcats. Crawford taught and counseled students at Hardee Senior High School for 16 years.

Crawford's Saturdays are dedicated to completing the doctoral program in educational leadership at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, where she travels to attend classes.

For all of the 31 years of her working life, Crawford has taught in the classroom, counseled students, directed college programs, or overseen public education as an elected official in Hardee County.

As the SFSC Hardee Campus director, Crawford supervises a handful of staff who help students run through the gamut of life on a rural college campus. From helping students apply for admission to settling on the right career path to helping a student through a tough class, Crawford and staff do it all.

"I even teach political science classes on our campus," said Crawford, who entered her 16th year heading up the SFSC Hardee Campus in October.

When Crawford graduated from Avon Park High School in 1981, she headed straight for what she remembered as "South Florida Junior College."

"I had an idea of becoming

an accountant after I graduated from SFSC and headed off for the University of South Florida to finish up my undergraduate degree," she said. "While at USF, I learned my heart was in education."

While earning her Bachelor's Degree in social science education, she interned at Hardee Senior High School. That's where she landed once she had her degree in hand.

"For eight years, I taught it all — psychology, sociology, and government — before deciding I would go back for my Master's Degree in counseling," Crawford said. "I saw I could forge good relationships with the students and decided to move into educational counseling."

Before she had earned her degree, Crawford had already made the transition to counseling students at Hardee's lone high school.

In 2001, SFSC was on the hunt for a director for its Hardee Campus. At that time, three classrooms and one office were housed in a former commercial space in downtown Wauchula.

"I had the counseling and the educational leadership background, so I said to myself 'I'm going to apply for the position,'" Crawford said.

She passed muster with the selection committee and found herself sitting across from then SFSC president Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius for the final interview.

Two years into her new position, Crawford and her colleagues left the storefront and moved into the newly constructed SFSC Hardee Campus, a two-story complex, six miles north of Wauchula, in Bowling Green.

"The new campus opened up so many possibilities for the students we serve in Hardee," Crawford said. "We could offer more classes to more students in the just the right set-



COURTESY PHOTO

**Teresa Crawford at her desk on the SFSC Hardee Campus.**

ting."

Six years into her tenure at the new campus, Crawford thought she could do more to boost education in Hardee County. She took on an incumbent School Board member and won.

"I always had an interest in politics, coupled with an in-depth knowledge of the county I live in and a passion for education," she said. "I think the voters know that because 80 percent of them gave me their support when I was up for election again in 2012."

Serving as the board's chairperson this year, Crawford didn't draw an opponent. She will start her third term after the November election.

Crawford's commitment to education doesn't end with her stewardship of the county's K-12 system. "Two of my colleagues and I discussed going for our doctoral degrees in educational leadership at Florida Southern College," Crawford recounted. They will wrap up their coursework in the spring.

After that, they'll hunker down to write their doctoral dissertations.

"I'll be writing my dissertation on school principals' leadership competencies," Crawford said. "My husband of 31 years, Vent, is a good sport and is supportive of my many interests." Crawford's other interests include serving as a director of the Hardee County Fair and the county's Chamber of Commerce.

Retired after a career as a lieutenant with the Florida Highway Patrol, Crawford's husband caught the education bug from his wife. He now teaches adult education at the SFSC Hardee Campus, helping adults prepare for their high school equivalency diploma.

Although she is now eligible for retirement, Crawford has no plans to shift into the slow lane. A new academic year is already underway, and next week she'll be sworn into her third term in elected office.

# SFSC Inducts 30 Students Into World Honor Society

South Florida State College has inducted 30 students into its Tau Epsilon chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

With families, fellow students and college administrators looking on during the Oct. 17 evening ceremony, the students took part in the rite of induction into the global honor society which recognizes distinguished academic achievement and service by students in two-year academic programs.

Students inducted into this international honor society were Laura Alderman, Ethan Anacay, Jacalyn Baldwin, Lisa Bartlet-Coker, Janesza Cardona, Leeanna Castanon, Tammy Chapman, Kristen Coogan, Tapasya Desai, Morgan Devane, Margaret Dunn, Sofia Garcia-Rossi and Zachary Geitner.

Also, Brittney Haralson, Jocelyn Jackson, Ryan Kenney, Jennifer Lane, Mishel Mandujano-Manriquez, Sarah Moretto, Luzedy Ocasio, An-

drew Protasio, Jordan Rademaker, Anastasia Reynolds, Krystal Rivera-Ayala, Emelly Rodriguez, Brandon Rosenbaum, Yesenia Sanchez, Sirena Skrzyniarz, Kaitlyn Smith, Nikki Summers and Morgan Walters.

Dr. Sonji Nicholas, SFSC professor of sociology and the chapter faculty adviser, served as the guest speaker. In her remarks, she encouraged the students to give thought to the value of a global education in the context of academic achievement, leadership and service.

"There are more than seven billion people on the planet today using myriad languages, belief systems, and practices," Nicholas told the students. "Individuals who are open to learning about cultures beyond their own, and who can develop and expand upon their base of knowledge of people groups found throughout the world, distinguish themselves as highly effective leaders to

whom others can and will look for guidance when faced with challenging problems calling for creative solutions."

Students who have earned at least 12 credits and a 3.25 grade-point average at the start of the fall academic term were eligible for induction.

As the ceremony drew to a close, the inductees stepped to a candlelit table upon which lay the honor society's membership book. One by one, they affixed their signatures in the book, recording their status as scholars of distinction at SFSC.

Then, with the auditorium lights dimmed, the scholars helped each other light a candle signifying their fellowship in the society.

"This is a great time to be a member of Phi Theta Kappa," Nicholas concluded. "I encourage you to challenge yourself this year by maximizing your participation in this new global network to which you are now connected."



COURTESY PHOTO

Inductees shown after the ceremony are (from front left) Andrew Protasio, Luzedy Ocasio, Ryan Kenney, Laura Alderman, Tammy Chapman and Janesza Cardona; (back) Nikki Summers, Jordan Rademaker, Kaitlyn Smith, Tapasya Desai, Brittney Haralson and Ethan Anacay.

# A room with a view



BILL ROGERS PHOTO

The Palm Room is one of the themed rooms in the Hotel Jacaranda. The South Florida State College Foundation is looking for more sponsors.

# Hotel Jacaranda seeking sponsors for themed rooms, suites

By **BILL ROGERS**  
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — There is the Cattle and Citrus Room, the Blue Beach Suite and, for feline lovers, the Kitty Cat Room.

Those are a few of the names of the newly renovated theme rooms at the Hotel Jacaranda. The public had an opportunity to view them Thursday night during an open house at the historic building in Avon Park.

There are 16 theme rooms and suites on the second floor. The suites have a bedroom, bathroom and a sitting room.

"The idea came to let's go ahead and change these rooms, let's renovate them and then let's offer them for sponsorships," said

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*"The idea came to let's go ahead and change these rooms, let's renovate them and then let's offer them for sponsorships. Then the money that we get from the sponsorships is going to go for the continued renovation of the Jacaranda."*

— **Jamie Bateman**,  
executive director of the SFSC Foundation Inc.

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Jamie Bateman, executive director of the SFSC Foundation Inc.

"Then the money that we get from the sponsorships is going to go for the continued renovation of the Jacaranda."

Bateman said the reaction from people has been "oohs and ahs."

"They walk in and they are like 'Wow!'" she said.

All of the rooms were decorated by Joan Hartt and her team that included Sheila Hartt and Shelly Parton. Bateman said Joan is "so

# ROOM

FROM PAGE 1

passionate" about the hotel and is willing to do anything to help with the restoration.

"It's been like an injection of energy for the Jacaranda," said Tami Cullens, who is a member of the Foundation board of directors.

The sponsors include: Anna Vilkaitis, Betty Carlisle, Joan Hartt, Don Appelquist and Jane Hancock. Catherine Cornelius, Phyllis Lovelace, Shelly Parton and Sheila Hartt. Joan Hartt has sponsored three rooms.

Bateman said there are rooms that are still available for sponsorship and the cost ranges between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

Hartt said the idea for the themes came up a few years ago after Thomas Leitzel was named president of the college. She said she happened to be in the Jacaranda the day Leitzel was touring the building.

Leitzel was aware of

her decorating talent, and asked her if she would be willing to get involved with sprucing

up the rooms, she said. She agreed and got to work.

Hartt said she has

heard many compliments from visitors.

"They just can't believe the transformation," she said. "We're trying to keep it looking like it might have looked in the 1920s when this was a beautiful, grand hotel."

She added that a lot of furniture that was stored away in the hotel is being used. She said her family donated some items, including a chandelier that was in her mother-in-law's house. Joan's daughter-in-law's family also donated things.

Themed rooms are also planned for the third floor of the hotel. Work will not begin on them until May of next year.

More sponsors are being sought. Information that was in the rooms during the open house said, "Through a partnership with the Foundation, you can have your name on a piece of history by sponsoring the renovation of one of our lovely hotel rooms."

For information, call 453-3133.



Barb Hall, seated, and Nancy Palmer take a look at the Hunt Suite at the Hotel Jacaranda.



BILL ROGERS PHOTO

Joan Hartt is shown in the Hotel Jacaranda themed room that is all about cats.

# Catherine P. Cornelius



COURTESY PHOTO

Three presidents from South Florida State College together at a recent event. Dr. Thomas Leitzel (left) is currently serving in the position. With him are Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius and Dr. Norm Stephens. Cornelius was president in the 1980s and 1990s.

# President of SFSC

By **CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY**  
CORRESPONDENT



**Cornelius**

roughly 50 years – that is until after WWII.

## Florida meets new challenges

The main cause of change came from the suddenly burgeoning population, able to live comfortably with the advent of affordable air-conditioning, and veterans' new access to higher education through the the GI Bill.

In 1947 the state turned UF and Florida State University into co-ed public universities. Recognizing that more schools were needed throughout the state to meet demand, a system of nine state universities was created – its goal to bring higher education within 90 miles of each population center. Among those schools, for example, were the University of South Florida, University of Central Florida and Florida Atlantic University.

Each of these schools were led exclusively by men.

As the population continued to outgrow higher

## Historical background

Although the state of Florida's first governor, William Dunn Moseley, proposed creating state-funded public education in 1845, citizens and politicians over the years neither supported it consistently, nor were willing to pay the costs in hard times. During recessions and depressions, public education was typically the first budget item to experience cuts in funding.

In fact, the first State Board of Education wasn't created until after the Civil War, and it wasn't until the early 1920s that school boards were sanctioned to tax up to 10 mils for school operations.

Public higher education was almost non-existent until Governor Napoleon Broward took office in 1905. It was with

his leadership that the state took over support of three institutions of higher learning, all of which had evolved from small private institutions – the University of Florida (all male), the Florida State College for Women (all female), and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (all black). While private colleges existed, these three colleges remained the only public institutions of public higher education in the state until the close of World War II.

Every administrator at all these schools were men. The idea of hiring female administrators never crossed anyone's mind.

Nothing changed for

AVON PARK — Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius served as the second president of South Florida Community College from 1984 to 2002. One of 150 applicants for the position, Cornelius gives the board of trustees the credit for being ready to break the glass ceiling that had held women back before. At the time, she was the only female public college president in the state.

"They gave me their full support," she said in a recent interview, referring to the board of trustees. She added that while many instructors and professors in Florida's higher education institutions were women – roughly half of most faculties – leadership roles were still almost exclusively reserved for men. She remains deeply grateful to the board for her unique opportunity.

To understand how revolutionary the board of trustees selection of Cornelius was, some historical context is needed.



# CORNELIUS

FROM PAGE 1

educational opportunities, a plan for 28 junior colleges was created. The goal was to locate each of these schools within 40 miles of 99 percent of the population.

The 28 junior colleges were designed as the freshman and sophomore years of a four-year liberal arts education. After completing those first two years, students would move on to the new public colleges and complete their bachelor of arts or science, or continue into graduate programs there.

This so called 2 + 2 format did not last long, however, as it proved to be impossible to field football teams without freshmen or sophomores.

## Higher education comes to Highlands County

South Florida Junior College was authorized in 1965 and took in its first 428 students in 1966. The local community supported the creation with enthusiasm and cooperation; contributing land, expertise and money.

Right from the beginning, the school maintained high academic standards that led to its nicknames: "Harvard on the Highway" and "Princeton on the Pond." SFSC students, from those early years and since, routinely performed better than the larger universities' own native students entering their junior year.

By the time Cornelius took office in 1984 the school served over 1,000 full-time equivalent students and had become a community college providing its original academic program as well as adding a range of vocational programs leading to certifications, and developing a thriving adult education program.

Cornelius is fierce in making it clear her success was built on that foundation, the irreplaceable resources provided by strong community support and the continuing dedication of the college's faculty and staff.

## Becoming a college president

Getting Cornelius to talk about her own contributions, however, and the background that prepared her, is not easy. She's generous, excited, even eager to talk about South Florida State College, but reluctant to talk about herself.

"So many people have played very vital roles in the development and success of our college," she said in a speech delivered on SFSC's 50th anniversary. "... I was just the spark plug making it possible for others to do their job well."

But how does a woman become a spark plug, especially in a male centered machine?

For Cornelius it began growing up with a father and grandfather working in the field of education. She grew up listening to discussions about universities and their policies at the dining room table.

"I just understood it," Cornelius said. So much so that while she had always wanted a career in foreign service — a field with its own prejudices regarding women — she ended up teaching in a junior college after earning a bachelor of arts and a master of arts from Rollins College.

While teaching was fine, she'd been influenced and energized by her father and grandfather and after three years in the classroom yearned for the greater challenges of administration and policy creation.

After teaching, Cornelius moved to Seminole Community College in 1967 where she was put in charge of introducing a new program of co-operation education. Her ability, work ethic and success with that challenge led to her appointment as the school's Dean of Arts and Science, which in time led to her appointment as vice president of Daytona Beach Community College — the first woman in Florida to fill a V.P. position, one she held for six years.

Oh. Along the way she earned a doctorate.

## Leading South Florida Community College

During Cornelius' 18-year tenure at South Florida Community College it grew from a small to mid-sized college recognized for its excellence and service to the community. It expanded its campus in Avon Park and created several satellite campuses, while expanding its offerings based on the county's needs and student demand, becoming an important cultural center to the area and a major economic driver for Highlands County.

Under Cornelius' leadership, the student body grew from 1,009 students to 3,000; the budget from \$3.2 million to \$32 million; financial aid from \$117,000 to \$4 million annually; and the faculty, staff and administration from 78 individuals to 280. Nineteen buildings were built or adapted over seven sites and the main campus grew from 78 acres to 228.

Even more important, Cornelius set an example of mentoring, encouraging and delegating.

Her philosophy of leadership was (is) based on four precepts: Define and articulate the vision; hire good people who are motivated to make a difference; provide the tools, equipment and facilities for them to do their jobs well; and then get out of the way.

In the past, she said, "Have you noticed that bottlenecks are located at the top?" Her policy was to drive responsibility and decision-making authority down into the organizational structure. She created academic departments and appointed faculty to chair them, recommend and manage their budgets.

Cornelius stressed communication college-wide, holding bi-annual meetings, which included everyone who worked on campus, in order "to share news of successes, problems and plans."

She expected every employee to be informed about the college and act as an ambassador,

welcoming the general public to the campus. For example, opening the library to county residents and instituting the cultural series, which has grown into a vital community resource providing access to the performing arts.

By the time Cornelius retired in 2002, the college was on the cusp of becoming South

Florida State College. It had collaborated with local four-year colleges to offer bachelor of arts degrees in business and the University Center had been opened setting the way for the future.

The two male presidents who have succeeded her — Dr. Norm Stephens and Dr. Tom Leitzel — have also done wonderful jobs Cornelius

says, not only continuing the school's excellence, but building on it.

Nevertheless, the fact that Cornelius accomplished as much as she did in a male-dominated field, at a time when women were still expected to raise families and keep homes, makes her career that much more impressive and worthy of respect.

# Sign up today for the Heartland Games

By NEIL SIMPSON

HEARTLAND GAMES AMBASSADOR



Golfers are encouraged to hit the links for the Heartland Games.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Go kart racing is one of many events available in the Heartland Games.



Pickleball tournaments are being organized for the Heartland Games.

The Heartland Games For Active Adults, organized by South Florida State College, is for men and women 50 and older who enjoy staying active and meeting new people. The Heartland Games is one of 21 qualifiers for the Florida Senior Games. The range of events offered is sure to interest a wide range of people.

Registration costs \$15 to play one day of the Heartland Games. To play in multiple events or multiple days in one event the cost is just \$25. Each participant will receive a dri-fit shirt.

**Events taking place in Avon Park:**

- Table Tennis: Feb. 8 - Crystal Lake,
- Shuffleboard: March 7 - Reflections

**The following will be held in Sebring:**

- Mah jongg: Feb. 17 - Tanglewood,
- Track and field: Feb. 18 - Sebring High School

- Bowling: Feb. 20 and 27 - Heartland Bowl,
- Go kart racing: Feb. 21 - Sebring Kart Racing,

- Euchre: Feb. 23 - Tanglewood,
- Cycling: Feb. 25 - Sun n Lake,
- Tennis: Feb. 28, March 1 and 2

- Country Club of Sebring,
  - Bridge: March 3 - Tanglewood,
  - Golf: March 4 - Sebring G.C.,
  - Pickleball: March 11 and 12 - Tanglewood,
  - Swimming: March 13 - YMCA
- Further information and registration forms are available at [www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames](http://www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames).

# SFSC Launches Classes That Meet Fridays Only

South Florida State College will do something next year that it hasn't done in years.

And this time around, the college will do it with a twist: offer college-credit classes on Fridays.

The twist is the classes will meet only on Fridays.

With the Jan. 4 start of the spring academic term students can take an introductory psychology class that meets only on Friday morning and an introductory speech communication class that meets only on Friday afternoon.

"Many years ago, a class at SFSC would meet either Tuesdays and Thursdays or Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays," said Lynn MacNeill, interim dean for the Division of Arts & Sciences. "In 2017, we're going to experiment with two classes that meet only on Fridays."

Students can take the psychology class at 9-11:45 a.m., break for lunch, and take the speech communication class at 1-3:45 p.m., MacNeill said. "At the term's end, they'll earn six credit hours with just one day on campus each week.

At present, all college-credit classes at SFSC meet Mondays through Thursdays. Occupational certificate classes like automotive services technology and cosmetology meet Mondays through Fridays.

MacNeill said the experiment came about as a result of a community survey that gauged the interest of residents in SFSC's service district.

"The survey data showed residents wanted class offerings they could attend on Fridays only," MacNeill noted. "So, we're putting it to the test with the hope it will prove a success and lead to more classes offered on Friday."

MacNeill observed the Friday-only classes are an opportunity for prospective students

who haven't taken a class to get on campus and get acclimated to a college setting.

Spring term registration for all students, new and returning, begins tomorrow (Friday). "New students need to get admitted, registered, and complete the orientation process," MacNeill said. "These next several weeks are just the time to get that out of the way before classes start on Jan 4."

No prerequisite courses are

required to enroll in the two Friday classes, making them ideal offerings for new students who want to start earning college-credit hours. MacNeill also noted both classes will count toward the degree requirements for an associate degree.

New students can start an admission application by visiting the SFSC website [southflorida.edu](http://southflorida.edu) and clicking the "Apply Now" link.

# *SFSC Hosts Community Yard Sale On Saturday*

A Hardee Fall Community Yard Sale will be hosted by South Florida State College Hardee Ambassadors this weekend.

It will be held on Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon on the college campus, 2948 U.S. 17

N., just south of Bowling Green.

Tables are one for \$15 or two for \$20. Tables and chair will be provided by the college.

Those wishing to participate are asked to call the college at (863) 784-7063.

# Heartland Games taking registrations

Games for 50-and-over athletes take place in February and March

BY NEIL SIMPSON

SPECIAL TO THE  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

Lorrie Key, Director of the Corporate and Community Education Department of South Florida State College is pleased to announce that registration for the 2017 Heartland Games For Active Adults is now open. Registration forms and more information can be found at [www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames](http://www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames).

Registration forms may also be picked up from any of the South Florida State College campuses located at 600 West College Dr. in Avon Park; 2251 NE Turner Ave. in Arcadia; 2968 US 17 N in Bowling Green; or 500 E Interlake Blvd. in Lake Placid.

It's never too early to register but it could

easily be too late. The registration deadline is two weeks before the first event in which a competitor is entering. Each participant will receive a Dri Fit shirt and a complimentary lunch is included at many events. Competition is by gender and age in five year increments from 50-54 up to 90+. Medals will be awarded to the top three finishers in each category. The fee is \$15 to compete in one event or \$25 to participate in multiple events or more than one day in a multi-day event.

The 2017 Heartland Games will be held in Avon Park and Sebring between Feb. 8 and March 13. New events this year are Mah Jongg and go-kart racing. Table tennis will return to the Games after a one-year absence. A

new twist is being added to the track and field events. The Heartland Games 5K run will be held in conjunction with the Sebring Sunrise Rotary 5K at Highlands Hammock State Park at 8 a.m. on Feb. 18. The remaining track and field events will take place at Sebring High School beginning at 10 that same morning.

Events taking place in Avon Park are table tennis at Crystal Lake on Feb. 8 and shuffleboard at Reflections on March 7.

The events taking place in Sebring are Mah Jongg, which will be held at Tanglewood on Feb. 17; the previously mentioned 5K and track and field events on Feb. 18; bowling at Heartland Bowl on Feb. 20 and 27; go-kart racing at Sebring Kart

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION



NEIL SIMPSON PHOTO

From left; Lauren Redick, Lorrie Key and Debbie Gutierrez, members of the South Florida State College Corporate and Community Education Department, display the 2017 Heartland Games For Active Adults registration forms.

Racing on Feb. 21; Euchre, which will be held at Tanglewood on Feb. 23; the cycling competition on Feb. 25 at Sun 'N Lake; tennis at the Country Club

of Sebring's Thakkar Tennis Center on Feb. 28 through March 2; bridge, which will be held March 3 at Tanglewood; golf on March 4 at Sebring

Golf Club; pickleball at Tanglewood on March 11 and 12; and swimming, which takes place at the Highlands County Family YMCA on March 13.

# SFSC earns awards at statewide conference

SPECIAL TO  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College and its employees garnered recognition and awards for their commitment to furthering the Florida College System and its students during the 67th Association of Florida Colleges Annual Meeting and Conference in Lake Buena Vista, held

Nov. 1-4.

AFC is a 7,100-member nonprofit organization that advocates for Florida's 28 community and state colleges who are members of the FCS.

During the conference, Robert Flores, SFSC director of remodeling, renovation and maintenance, was sworn in as president of AFC for 2017; Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and

head baseball coach, was inducted into the Florida College System Activities Association Hall of Fame; and Tami Cullens, SFSC trustee, was named Trustee of the Year.

SFSC won the 2016 Chancellor's Best Practices Award for Erik Christensen's submission on "Optimizing Textbook Affordability via Open Educational Resources."

Christensen, dean

of applied sciences and technologies, and Rodger Smith, professor of psychology, made a presentation on the topic during the conference.

Claire Miller, SFSC librarian, won a Learning Resources Exemplary Practice award for Library/Learning Resource Center Services for 2016. Her proposal was "Slaying the Monster: Implementing

Integrated and Stand-Alone Plagiarism Workshops," on which she made a presentation at the conference.

The college received two Communications and Marketing Commission Awards of Excellence: second place for the category Specialty Advertising/Promotion Items for a giveaway keychain designed for the

opening of the Alan J. Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and third place for the category Advertising - Print for the 50th anniversary Lake Placid Center Sock Hop advertisement.

SFSC was recognized with the 2016 Platinum Chapter award and the Membership Award for a chapter that has 50 percent or more employees as AFC members.

# SFSC community education offers new courses

## Safe Driving Accident Prevention Program on tap

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate and Community Education Department is offering a series of Safe Driving Accident Prevention Program (SDAPP) courses for drivers who have received a traffic citation, were court ordered to attend, or were involved in a traffic accident and were issued a ticket.

The four-hour courses will be held Wednesday, Dec. 7, 5:30 - 9:30 p.m., SFSC Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park; and Saturday, Dec. 10, 8:30 - 12:30 p.m., SFSC Hardee Campus, 2968 U.S. 17

N., Bowling Green.

Pre-registration is required. The cost is \$50 and may be paid by cash, check, or credit card. Register in Building B on the Highlands Campus or at any SFSC campus or center. For more information, contact the Community Education Department at 863-784-7388, or email [CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu](mailto:CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu).

## Register for Alcohol Drug Accident Prevention Training

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate and Community Education Department is offering a series of Alcohol Drug Accident Prevention

Training (ADAPT) courses for first-time driver's license applicants.

The four-hour courses will be held Saturday, Dec. 3, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., SFSC DeSoto Campus, 2252 N.E. Turner Ave., Arcadia; and Saturday, Dec. 10, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., SFSC Hardee Campus, 2968 U.S. 17 N., Bowling Green.

Pre-registration is required.

The cost is \$50 and may be paid by cash, check, or credit card. Register in Building B on the Highlands Campus or at any SFSC campus or center. For more information, contact the Community Education Department at 863-784-7388 or email [CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu](mailto:CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu).

# SFSC holds forum on logistics, supply chain management programs

SPECIAL TO THE  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — Area residents can learn more about South Florida State College's Logistics and Transportation Specialist and Supply Chain Management programs during an open forum at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8 in Building T, Room 20.

Highlands Campus, Avon Park.

As the marketplace goes global, businesses rely on supply chain managers to keep products flowing to their customers. Logistics specialists focus on transportation, packaging, routing, distributing, and warehousing.

"In the next decade, the need for supply

chain managers and logisticians is expected to grow, and SFSC can help you get in on the ground floor of this exciting new industry," the college said.

SFSC offers a 12-month college credit certificate program in logistics and transportation specialist and a 24-month associate in science degree

program in supply chain management.

During the open forum, attendees can learn how to launch their career as a supply chain manager or logistics and transportation specialist, find out how to enroll in SFSC's programs sponsored by Xcel-IT, and speak with experts working in these career fields.

To participate, call 863-784-7438 or email [xcel-it@southflorida.edu](mailto:xcel-it@southflorida.edu). Those who are interested in learning more about these programs but cannot attend the forum are asked to contact Tina Gottus, director for SFSC's Xcel-IT, at 863-784-7437 or email [gottust@southflorida.edu](mailto:gottust@southflorida.edu).

To learn more about

Xcel-IT programs, visit the SFSC website at [www.southflorida.edu](http://www.southflorida.edu).

The Florida Xcel-IT programs are made possible through a \$10 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCT) grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.



# SFSC MOFAC to exhibit quintessentially Florida art

AVON PARK — The Museum of Florida Art and Culture at South Florida State College will mount an exhibition featuring the work of a husband and wife who split their time between art and cattle ranching.

"The Art of Life: Works by Sean and Sharon Sexton" will be on display Dec. 7 through Feb. 9, 2017 in MOFAC's gallery on the SFSC Highlands campus.

The Sextons live and work on their 610-acre Treasure Hammock Ranch in Vero Beach. They're known equally for their environmentally sensitive cattle ranching and quintessentially Florida-inspired art.

"The Sextons integration of art-making into their daily lives is an inspiration," said MOFAC curator Megan Stepe. "I remember Sean Sexton giving a talk about carrying a sketchbook with him so that he could draw even while sitting in a saddle as he herded

cattle. That dedication has always stayed with me."

Stepe said some of Sexton's best-known paintings depicts Florida's rugged landscape and traditional ranching lifestyle. His work not only portrays the natural beauty of South Florida, and the human connection with nature, but also touches upon themes such as religion and mortality.

In addition to his painting, Sexton writes poetry. He also channels his creativity into ceramic sculptures.

The creativity in the Sexton household extends to Sean's wife, Sharon. She is a recognized artist for her work with paintings, ceramic sculptures, and tile murals. Sharon is one of six owner-operators of the Tiger Lily Art Studios and Gallery, now in its 25th year operating from a space in downtown Vero Beach. Her work will join that of her husband's on display in the exhibition.

Accompanying the

Sexton exhibition, MOFAC will also feature "Keeping Tradition Alive: Pinecone Quilts by Betty Ford Smith." This part of the show will showcase the quilting of Betty Ford Smith.

The pinecone quilt is also called the "pineburr" or "cuckleburr" quilt because of its pinecone design. An old, flat bed-sheet is used for the base. Hundreds of 5-inch squares are cut, then folded twice to create individual triangles. Each is then hand-sewn onto the sheet in a circular fashion. Pinecone quilts can weigh anywhere from 15 to 30 pounds — a welcome addition for cold nights in northern Florida.

"Quilts have traditionally played an important role in many peoples' lives, for both their functionality and beauty. Ford's quilts seamlessly embody the theme of the exhibition," Stepe said.

MOFAC is located in the Alan Jay

Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at 600 W. College Drive. The museum is open to the public on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 12:30–4:30 p.m. or by appointment for group tours. Patrons of the Wildstein Center may visit the museum one hour prior to matinee and evening performances.

For more information about MOFAC and its programs or to request a museum tour, contact Stepe at 863-784-7240, or email [stepem@southflorida.edu](mailto:stepem@southflorida.edu). Visit the MOFAC website at [mofac.org](http://mofac.org).



Courtesy photo

Sharon Sexton will display her work during the exhibition 'The Art of Life: Works by Sean and Sharon Sexton' at MOFAC.

# SFSC honors veterans under the Stars and Stipes

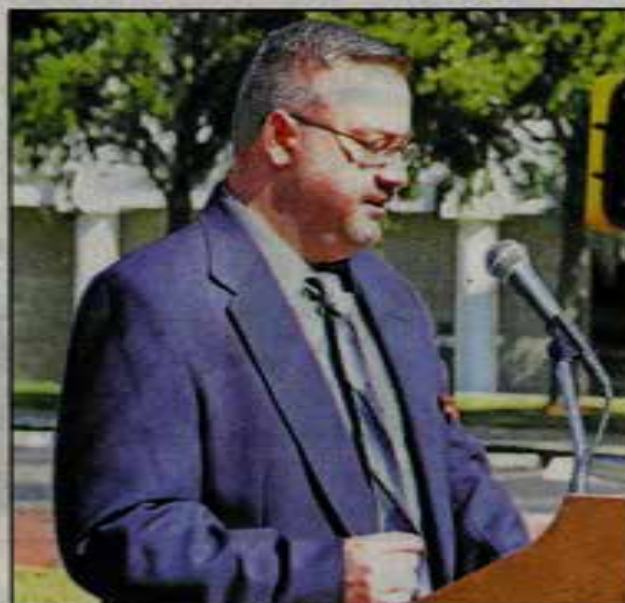
SPECIAL TO THE  
HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — The Highlands Campus of South Florida State College hosted its annual Veterans Day remembrance Friday, Nov. 12. The morning ceremony saw nearly 200 students, employees, and area residents come together to honor veterans.

The morning ceremony took on a dramatic air with the addition of an American flag, nearly measuring the length and breadth of a basketball court, suspended between two huge motorized fire ladders. The enormous flag, at times, flies at the Boca Grande estate of President George W. Bush's family.

As the enormous flag fluttered in the wind above the lectern, a parade of speakers recalled the service our veterans have given to the United States.

"On Sept. 10, 2001, I was fire chief in Long Boat Key where then President George W. Bush visited on a trip to Florida," said Julius Halas, director of the Division of State Fire Marshal, the state's chief firefighting officer. "Who



SFSC student and U.S. Navy veteran Patrick Carey delivers his remarks during a SFSC Highlands campus Veterans Day remembrance ceremony.

would have known then what would happen just a day later."

"Thanks goes to our military and our veterans for protecting our country so that firefighters and other first responders could protect our communities — thank God for the service of our veterans," Halas added.

Erik Christensen, SFSC's dean of Applied Sciences and Technologies and a former U.S. Navy commander, served as the master of ceremonies. He introduced Patrick Carey,

an SFSC student and fellow Navy veteran.

"When I was invited to speak today, they asked if I could squeeze into my old navy uniform. I had



Courtesy photos

The audience at the SFSC Highlands Campus hears 'God Bless America' as the Veterans Day remembrance ceremony comes to a close.

to tell them it shrunk in the closet," he quipped, adding a moment of levity to the solemnity that loomed over the morning. "When I tell someone

I'm a veteran, I often feel a bit awkward because I sometimes think a veteran is someone who has seen combat or came home injured."

"I just say I was doing my job. Something I've heard even injured veterans say, as well.

VETERANS | 25

# VETERANS

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So, I believe that being a veteran means being humble," Carey, wearing a poppy on his lapel that has come to symbolize remembrance ceremonies, told the audience.

Dr. Cary Pigman, a member of the Florida House of Representatives, followed Carey, delivering remarks that gave the audience pause to think about the national election. He spoke, at first in an oblique manner, about an election that nearly tore the nation apart, one that pitted American against American. But one in which the acrimony subsided with the peaceful transition from one president to the next.

Pigman surprised to



Firefighters complete the task of readying the flag before the start of the Veterans Day remembrance ceremony on the SFSC Highlands campus.

the audience when he said he wasn't talking about the 2016 general election, but the election of 1800 in which a bitterly divided young republic chose Thomas Jefferson over John Adams.

"When faced with the challenge of accepting the recent election, we realize we are all Americans first," Pigman said. "So, let us celebrate

our coming together and on becoming a great nation on this day that we celebrate our veterans."

The ceremony ended on a prayerful note. Ben Carter, SFSC's director of Outreach and Academic Support, read Psalm 91, known to many as the warrior's psalm.

With the conclusion of the psalm reading, members of the Knights



Dr. Cary Pigman (right), a member of the Florida House of Representatives, speaks to a member of the Knights of Columbus after the Veterans Day remembrance ceremony on the SFSC Highlands campus.

of Columbus, led by the Sebring Police Department guard,

began a procession of those assembled on a remembrance walk that

wound its way through the quiet pathways of the SFSC campus.

Courtesy photos

# Mah Jongg adds line-up for Heartland Games For Active Adults

By NEIL SIMPSON

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

SEBRING — Mah Jongg, a game invented by the Chinese in the 1800s or earlier, depending upon which story is to be believed, was brought to the West in the 1920s.

It is coming to the Heartland Games For Active Adults in 2017.

The Heartland Games, which have been organized by South Florida State College for more than 20 years, was expanded this year to include Mah Jongg, as well as Bridge and Euchre in order to appeal to Heartland residents 50 and older who keep active in ways other than sports.

Mah Jongg, a game of skill, strategy, calculation and luck, has often been likened to Rummy. It is usually played in groups of four players, each with a set of 152 tiles based on Chinese characters and symbols. A good set will cost close to \$100.

There are 63 active Mah Jongg players who



Marty Child (from left), Evie Fosella, Nona Raciti, Nancy White and Cora Kosky prepare to enjoy an evening of Mah Jongg.

meet at the Tanglewood community clubhouse or in one another's homes. A small group of these women has agreed to coordinate the Heartlands Games' Mah Jongg tournament at the Tanglewood clubhouse on Friday, Feb. 17.

Cora Kostky has been playing the game for 46 years, having learned from the niece of a

friend. Her first Mah Jongg set was purchased with green stamps.

Cora also plays at Sun 'N Lake on Tuesday mornings and once a month at the Woman's Club on Lakeview Drive.

Nancy White joins Cora at Sun 'N Lake where they play in the main clubhouse. She likes the challenge and companionship the game

provides. Evie Fosella enjoys the mental challenge which Mah Jongg provides, noting that you can't be thinking about anything else while playing.

Marty Child points out that in American Mah Jongg, unlike the Chinese version, a card is used which outlines hands that have to be made. Each year a new card is introduced nationwide. Just as you master the

hands on one card, a new set of challenges is thrown at players.

Nona Raciti many other games but finds that in time they become routine and don't provide enough of a mental challenge.

Nona enjoys teaching Mah Jongg and, over the years, has met and become friends with many wonderful people. She feels that the introduction of the new card each



Courtesy photos/Neil Simpson

**Nona Raciti prepares to roll the die.**

April makes it a little easier for newcomers as the more experienced players are learning new hands at the same time.

These women welcome Mah Jongg players to Tanglewood's tourney and encourage men to join as well. Players will compete in a round robin format and points accumulated will determine the medalists. Gold, silver and bronze medals will be awarded to both men and women in each age grouping: 50-54, 55-59, 60-64 on up to 90-plus.



Nancy White (left) and Evie Fosella playing Mah Jongg.



Nancy White opens her Mah Jongg set that cost close to \$100.

Thanks to the generous support of the Heartland Games sponsors, each participant will receive a Dri-fit T-shirt and a complimentary lunch will be served.

Sponsors are Alan Holmes of Edward Jones, Newsom Eye, Florida Hospital, Turner Furniture, Drs. Thakkar and Patel and Wauchula State Bank.

Complete details and a registration form can be found at [www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames](http://www.southflorida.edu/heartlandgames).

# Leadership Highlands flying high



**JOHN ROUSCH**  
Flightline

The Leadership Highlands Class of 2017 took to the air on Nov. 10. The program, organized by South Florida State College and coordinated by Kris Juve and Dr. Mike McLeod, is designed to take a group of present and future leaders of our community on a guided exploration of our county resources and programs. Once a month there is a theme that includes tours and guest speakers covering education, law enforcement, agriculture, health and social services, economic development, government, manufacturing and business. The participants gain an expanded view and understanding of all that goes on in our community and can develop a network of contacts.

As a graduate of the class of 2008, I was asked last year if I could help with a tour of the Sebring Regional Airport. "Of course," was my response and I suggested we might want to add an aerial tour of the county if I could find some additional pilots and planes to handle the group. We did, and John Barben, Scott Crutchfield, Charles Lanfier and I each flew a plane and gave the group an aerial tour of the county. It adds a whole different view to see the things from the air that you drive by every day. Frequent comments included the number of lakes we have in the county, the beauty of the caladium fields, and all the groves and pastures you see just a few miles east or west of Highway US 27. We still have a great deal of wide open space in our county.

As one half of the group toured the industries and other unique parts of the Sebring Regional Airport, the other half was in the air, then we switched. Each flight took about an hour.

As I came back from the first flight, I found that there were enough seats open in the other three aircraft for the second group, so I didn't need to pilot a second flight. I watched the second flight take off and walked back into the EAA hangar where we organized the flights. There was one person from the second group sitting in a chair watching the others leave to take off. I asked her if she had flown, and she responded she didn't want to fly. She didn't feel



COURTESY PHOTO

The Leadership Highlands Class of 2017 at Tecnam Aircraft North American Headquarters, Sebring Regional Airport.

## FLYING

### FROM PAGE 1

comfortable flying in a small plane.

I sat with her and started chatting about what she does and her Leadership Highlands experience so far. The Cessna 172 was sitting on the flightline right in front of us. I began to explain how we use the plane for youth education programs and how an aircraft is maintained on an annual basis and how we monitor the regular use to maintain it in top condition. I explained the annual inspection process and log books, and the benefit of having access to certified

airframe and power plant mechanics next door at Carter Aviation and how they have maintained this particular aircraft for over 20 years. It was just a casual informative discussion. I was just trying to give her some information about General Aviation that a person not involved in it might want to know. As we finished the conversation about the plane, I mentioned that if she ever wanted to go flying, to let me know and we would go.

Her response was, "How about now?" I said sure, and off we went. As I always do with a person taking a first flight in a small plane, I explained what everything was on the

control panel and what was going to happen.

The wind was picking up as the morning wore on, so I explained it was going to be a bit bumpy until we got up to 2,500 feet. This was caused by the air moving over the trees and such, much like water flowing over rocks in a stream. I told her the air is going to cause some currents but after we gain some altitude it will smooth out, which it did. It was a smooth flight and I had her fly the plane a bit so she could see and feel how the aircraft handled. She was relaxed and was smiling and I learned it was her first time in an airplane.

As we came back to land, I reminded her

of the bumps we were going to feel as we descended and not to worry. When we got back to the hangar with the other aircraft, there were smiles, lots of pictures and excited chatter. I made a point of sharing how my passenger got a private flight after feeling more confident to take her first flight. She received lots of "Atta-boys" and congratulations from the rest of the class. Flying others and introducing them to aviation is what I most enjoy as a pilot.

Congratulations to Leadership Highlands Class of 2017, you all did well! John, Scott and Charles and I will be waiting for next year's group.

# Two SFSC students in running for prestigious scholarship

Take Stock in Children Leaders 4 Life Fellowship grants \$40,0000 to winners



#### AVON PARK —

Recently, Maria Gloria and Diana Rivera, two high schools students who take classes at South Florida State College, were caught off guard, but in the most pleasant of ways.

On an otherwise typical school day, the two seniors: Gloria, of Lake Placid High School, and Rivera, of DeSoto County High School, were ushered unaware into classrooms. There they found teachers, family, friends, and mentors waiting to break the news they had been named finalists for the Leaders 4 Life fellowship.

The fellowship, which recognizes student leaders, is sponsored by the Asofsky Family Foundation and comes with a \$40,000 scholarship. The scholarship pays for college expenses not covered by any other award or financial aid. The two seniors join 12 other finalists vying for six Leaders 4 Life fellowships.

Gloria and Rivera are eligible for the Leaders 4 Life fellowship on account of their participation in Take Stock in

Children. The program matches at-risk students with mentors who guide them toward earning their high school diplomas, with college scholarships awaiting those who graduate and enroll in college. The SFSC Foundation functions as the lead agency for the Take Stock program in SFSC's service district of Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee counties.

The scholarship would come on top of the tuition-related scholarship Gloria and Rivera will receive from Take Stock when they finish high school.

"In everything these two ladies have accomplished so far in their young lives, they have demonstrated strong leadership skills, good character, and academic success," said Irene Castanon, the coordinator of the Take Stock program at SFSC. "Now Maria and Diana have to put together a portfolio, including a video, to show why they should be named finalists for the Leaders 4 Life fellowship."

"Mrs. Karlson has been such an amazing inspiration to me," Gloria said of her mentor Pamela Karlson. "She's a lawyer,

and I want to follow her example and practice law when I finish my studies."

Karlson, who practices law in Lake Placid and serves as the attorney for SFSC's District Board of Trustees, started mentoring Gloria when she was in the seventh-grade.

"This is a wonderful student who is going places in life," Karlson said. "She's energetic, takes advice well, and has the leadership skills this fellowship is intended to showcase."

TSIC mentors typically meet with their assigned students each week during the school year, offering encouragement, advice, and a sympathetic ear. A TSIC college success coach provides support and guidance to the mentor and the person being mentored.

Gloria is the vice president of the student government association and was elected her class president. While she has applied to both Florida State University and the University of Florida, she has her hopes set on going to Gainesville next fall.

In Arcadia, home to the Desoto County High School, Rivera was also surprised by



Todd Baldwin, principal, DeSoto County High School; Irene Castanon; Maria Rivera, Diana's mother; Diana Rivera; Adrian Cline, superintendent of schools, School District of DeSoto County; Francisco Rivera, Diana's father; Asena Mott, director, SFSC DeSoto Campus; Sheila Knoche; and Danielle Ochoa, Take Stock college success coach, DeSoto County.



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Irene Caston (left) joins Pamela Karlson (right) at Lake Placid High School after Maria Gloria was named a finalist in Leaders 4 Life.**

her mentor, family, and TSIC staff.

"I've always been motivated," said Rivera. "But through Take Stock in Children, I have people to give me words of encouragement and keep me on track."

"Diana is one of the hardest working, dedicated students I've known, she has perfect attendance, and she always finds a way to meet her goals," said Sheila Knoche, Rivera's Take Stock mentor. Those words are particularly meaningful coming from a long-time educator.

Before retiring seven years ago, Knoche was the assistant principal at DeSoto Middle School and Memorial Elementary School and had taught kindergarten through fifth grade, as well as students with learning disabilities.

Rivera has applied to St. Leo University, a church-affiliated university about 35 miles north of Tampa. She holds a leadership position in the DeSoto Future Business Leaders of America.

Gloria and Rivera attend high school classes along with their peers but also "dual enroll" in SFSC classes, earning college credits they can transfer to a university.

Some dually enrolled high school students have shaved as much as a year and a half off the time to complete a college degree by taking classes at SFSC.

The Leaders 4 Life scholarship is an initiative the Asofsky Family Foundation, which supports programs aimed at helping the state's youth. The foundation awards the scholarship in partnership with TSIC.

Even if the two don't make the final cut, they'll head off to college with a MacBook

Pro laptop computer, an award for the finalists that is sponsored by the Asofsky Family Foundation.

If Gloria and Rivera are named finalists, they will travel to Tallahassee in February for a formal ceremony arranged by the Asofsky Family Foundation that will include state legislators, educators, and the presentation of a \$40,000 scholarship.

For more information about Take Stock or to become a mentor, contact Castanon at 863-784-7343.

# Christmas at the Jacaranda Hotel

SPECIAL TO  
HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

**AVON PARK** — The historic Jacaranda Hotel is full of traditional and festive holiday décor through Jan. 25. The Grand Lobby showcases the 15-foot Christmas Tree, nutcrackers, fireplace and ornate holiday splendor.

Visit the hotel and halls where Babe Ruth, Clark Gable and Al Capone once

stayed. Built in the 1920s and listed on the National Historic Register, Avon Park's "gracious lady" boasts high ceilings and quiet hallways. The Hotel Jacaranda is one of the oldest continuously operating hotels in Highlands County. When the Jacaranda opened in 1926, it took its name from a 150-year-old jacaranda tree that had been removed to make way for the hotel. Among its first guests were

members of the St. Louis Cardinals, who came to Avon Park for spring training from 1927 to 1929. During World War II, the grand hotel played a hand in the war effort by housing hundreds of servicemen who had come to the area to train as military pilots.

In 1988, the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc., purchased the Jacaranda with

an eye toward preserving its historic character. As part of that ongoing effort, the Foundation has undertaken a major restorative project that is returning a street-level business mall to its original design. Through a partnership with South Florida State College, culinary students perfect their talents by training in the Jacaranda's modern kitchen.



COURTESY PHOTO

The historic Jacaranda Hotel is full of traditional and festive holiday décor through Jan. 25.

# Jacaranda event draws record turnout

BY JAY MEISEL  
STAFF WRITER

from the top story of the Hotel Jacaranda.

The South Florida State College Foundation, which hosted the Jacaranda Jubilee, said the turnout of 111 people was a record

for the event.

It featured music, food and an auction of a fully decorated Christmas trees.

Jamie Bateman, executive director of the foundation, said various

donors provided the trees for the auction.

The event raised \$5,500, which will benefit the college's capital campaign that is called the Partnership Project, Bateman said.

She said the money will go into an unrestricted endowment. The money could be spent on construction projects, expanding degree programs or many other purposes.

AVON PARK — As Avon Park's Christmas parade proceeded down Main Street Monday, many people watched the floats



Doug Andrews provides music during the Jacaranda Jubilee on Monday.



PHOTOS BY JAY MEISEL

Former Avon Park City Councilman Parke Sutherland talks with Sebring City Attorney Bob Swaine and his wife, Jody Swaine, at the Jacaranda Jubilee.

# Ticklin' the ivories

## SFSC Artist Series opens with Ethan Bortnick

AVON PARK— International touring musician Ethan Bortnick opens the 2016-17 Artist Series of performances at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College on Saturday, Nov. 19, at 7 p.m.

Recognized by Guinness World Records as "The World's Youngest Solo Musician to Headline His Own Concert Tour," 15-year-old Bortnick has been performing around the world.

"Every show is different," Bortnick said. "I never really know what's going to happen. I love making the audience happy. Typically, I have a lot of audience interaction and bring people up onstage."

The Lake Placid High School chorus, under the direction of Edward Hong, will perform with Bortnick.

Ticket prices range from \$24 to \$33. Children and student tickets are \$10. To view a performance video or buy tickets online, visit [www.sfscarts.org](http://www.sfscarts.org) or call the Wildstein Center box office at 863-784-7178.

When he was 3 years old, Bortnick, a Florida native, asked his parents for piano lessons and discovered an uncanny ability to hear a song once, then play it back note-for-note. He soaked up the music of artists and composers as varied as Beethoven, Mozart, jazz pianist Bill Evans, Little Richard, Billy Joel and Elton John. He began creating



# SFSC

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original compositions at age 5. A few years later, Bortnick started making television appearances and touring, connecting with audiences in Japan, Brazil, Canada, South Africa and Australia.

"This is a return engagement for Bortnick," said Cindy Garren, director of Cultural Programs at SFSC. "He wowed the audience when he was here a few years ago, and we've had many requests for his return. We're lucky to get a date with him because he travels around the world and sells out in major markets."

Bortnick's successful nationally televised TV show "The Power

of Music" has been the number one show during the Public Broadcasting Service's 2014 and 2015 pledge drives and is still running nationwide, winning multiple awards.

Bortnick has appeared on national television shows, including several episodes of "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "Good Morning America," and "The Oprah Show," when he was named one of "Oprah's All Time Smartest, Most Talented Kids."

Audience members can meet Bortnick prior to the performance when the Wildstein Center holds its popular Backstage Scoop, an informal 20-30 minute talk that gives audience members a glimpse behind the scenes. The Backstage Scoop is scheduled for 6 p.m.,

in the SFSC Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC). Seating is limited, so arrive early to get a seat.

The Wildstein Center Box Office is open Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Patrons can order tickets online 24 hours a day.

SFSC presents more than 30 national and international touring artists at the 1460-seat Alan Jay Wildstein Center and the 250-seat SFSC University Center Auditorium located on the SFSC Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Dr., Avon Park. Upcoming performances include "Miracle on 34th Street" on Dec. 1; the Beach Boys on Dec. 11; Flying Horse Big Band on Jan. 10; and The Bronx Wanderers on Jan. 12.