

SFSC Foundation offering scholarship to 1st generation student

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

One resident of South Florida State College's (SFSC) service district of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties who is eligible as a first generation student will be selected to receive up to 60 credit hours of college tuition offered through a partnership between the SFSC Foundation, Inc. and the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

This First Generation Scholarship Program supports the efforts of higher education through scholarship funding for first generation students who aspire to attend a Florida college or university. A student is considered "first generation" if neither of the student's parents earned a college degree at the baccalaureate level or higher.

To apply for this

scholarship, the student must meet these criteria:

- Be a Florida high school senior accepted by a Florida college or state university
- Qualify by the institution to participate in its First Generation Scholarship Program

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen

Further, SFSC requires that scholarship applicants meet these criteria:

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

- Demonstrate financial need

- Enroll at least half-time in a certificate or degree-seeking program (preference will be given to students who enroll full time)

- The First Generation Scholarship Program uses Florida Prepaid College

Plans as the sole vehicle to provide scholarships to qualified recipients. The student selected to receive this scholarship will have his or her tuition paid directly from the Florida Prepaid College Plan.

To apply for the First

Generation Scholarship Program, complete the online application and enroll at SFSC by July 15 for the 2018-19 academic year.

For more information about this scholarship program, contact Jamie Bateman, executive

director, institutional advancement, at batemanj@southflorida.edu or Jerry

Donna, director, financial aid, at donnaj@southflorida.edu.

Father, son SFSC alumni credit community for strength

LAKE PLACID — Father and son, Kerry and Kyle Thompson, both South Florida State College alumni, have never lost the sense of home when they speak of Lake Placid or Highlands County and find it a source of great strength.

Kerry is the vice president and office manager of Heartland National Bank's Lake Placid Office. He received his Associate in Arts degree in business administration in 1977 from SFSC, then known as South Florida Community College, and went on to earn his Bachelor of Arts degree from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Kyle graduated from SFSC in 2011 with his Associate in Arts degree in business administration and earned his bachelor's degree in food and resource economics from the University of Florida in 2013. He earned his Juris Doctor and a Master of Laws in Taxation from the University of Alabama School of Law in 2016. He practices law with Rider & Thompson, in Lake Placid.

Kerry grew up in Miami. "Miami was a really nice place to live in the late 1950s. We didn't lock our doors or our cars," he said. "But my dad was a police officer and could see the landscape changing."

He was introduced to Highlands County early in life when his family camped at Fisheating Creek in Palmdale and shopped for supplies in Lake Placid. Eventually,

the family, discovered they had a distant relative who owned property in Venus. "He was getting older and wanted to sell some property, so we bought some land and ended up building a house," Kerry said. "Then, my mom, my brother, and I moved to Lake Placid in 1973 when I was a junior in high school. My dad continued to work as a police officer in Miami and would commute back and forth on the weekends until he retired from the police force."

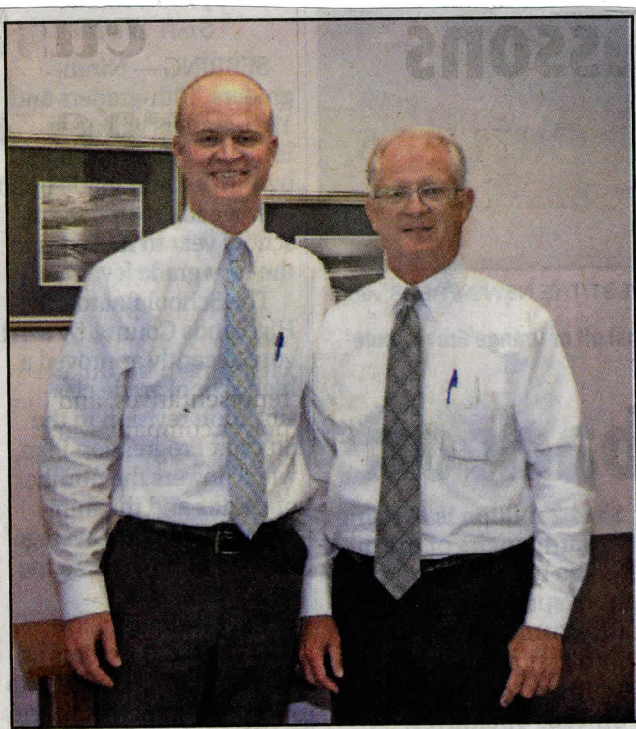
Kerry graduated from Lake Placid High School in 1975. Although he didn't plan to attend college, he went to Edison Community College in Fort Myers on the promise of a golf scholarship, but the scholarship didn't materialize. He attended the college for two semesters and played on the golf team, but had to work, go to class, and practice golf.

Disheartened, he returned to Highlands County and enrolled at SFSC.

While attending college, he worked at Sun 'n Lake Golf Course in Sebring, getting up at 4 a.m. to mow the greens. He'd then shower and change, head to class at SFSC, then return to the golf course to work until late in the afternoon.

Kerry's career in banking started in 1978 through an acquaintance, Don Dyer, who had designed and built the golf course at Sun 'n Lake in Sebring.

Kerry worked for Dyer at the Sun 'n Lake Golf Course in Lake Placid



COURTESY PHOTO

Kyle and Kerry Thompson.

while he was attending Lake Placid High School and then Sun 'n Lake Golf Course in Sebring after it was opened for business. "Don later went into banking at First Bank in Lake Placid," Kerry said. Kerry's mother ran into Dyer at the bank one day. Dyer told her about an opening at the bank and suggested Kerry come talk to him.

Kerry was hired to work in the bank's loan department. Later, he trained to run the newly opened trust department. He was sent to the University of Florida for a couple of summers and to the Florida Trust School in Gainesville. He worked in trust departments for the next 25 to 30 years, successfully riding the increasing wave of bank mergers and consolidations.

In 1999, after several

bank mergers, Kerry was working at Bank of America in Sebring as the senior trust officer.

He was told that they planned to close the bank's trust department in Sebring and was asked to transfer to their trust department in Vero Beach, but he chose to remain in Highlands County and was hired by SunTrust Bank as the vice president and manager of the Trust and Investments Services Group Office in Sebring.

In 2005, SunTrust closed its trust department in Sebring and asked Kerry to move to Lakeland. In late 2005, he was offered a position with Heartland National Bank where he now works.

"I chose not to transfer to Vero Beach or Lakeland because Kyle and his siblings were then of high

school age, and I thought a move would cause a disruption in their lives," he said. "Lake Placid was, and is today, a great place to raise a family. The community was such that we were well connected with our local church and the kids were involved in the youth program. My wife Lori and I taught a youth age Sunday school class. So, there was no second thought about moving to Vero Beach or Lakeland."

At Rider & Thompson, Kyle practices general civil law. "The areas of real estate, estate planning, and probate are really the foundation of our practice," he said.

Kyle works alongside long-time attorney Mike Rider. "My dad and Mr. Mike were friends before I was even born," he said. "So, that's where the relationship started. Mr. Mike and my dad both played golf and I would join them even as a young boy."

Kyle chose to attend SFSC right out of high school rather than go directly to a university. "It's a smart financial decision for kids to stay here," he said. "Having a dad in banking, the fiscal responsibility was instilled in us, but it wasn't something our parents pushed on us."

Kyle was awarded Top Ten and Bright Futures scholarships for college. "One of the big draws to SFSC was the cost of college," he said. "I worked while I was in school, so I was saving money. I mowed yards in Sebring with my brother-in-law who has a lawn company."

"A lot of kids, when they're in high school, can't wait to get out of Highlands County," he said. "I never had the desire to leave Lake Placid as soon as I could. I didn't have that need or that desire to leave. Certainly the community and the closeness of my family was a big part of it."

While attending SFSC, Kyle developed an interest in law school, so he went to Rider to ask him about the practice of law and what it entailed.

During the summer between his junior and senior year at the University of Florida, he interned in Rider's law office. After his first year in law school, he held internships during the summer and during winter breaks. "I came back to the law firm as much as I could," Kyle said. "I jumped at the opportunity."

Kyle's background in agriculture and his bachelor's degree in food and resource economics has served him well in his law practice. "Obviously, growing up in a rural community, with family property, I fell in love with agriculture and really enjoyed that," he said. "I could see myself doing something in agriculture. When I was going to major in it, I had the idea that I might want to go to law school. So for me, it was good either way because I'd either have a career in agriculture in Central Florida, or if I went to law school, I would return to Central Florida knowing that a lot of my clients would be in agriculture."

Tomova joins SFSC as new dean of arts and sciences

Special to Highlands News-Sun

AVON PARK — Sidney Valentine, vice president for academic and student services at South Florida State College welcomes Michaela Tomova as the new dean of arts and sciences. She joined the SFSC family on Monday, July 2, filling the interim position held by Lynn MacNeill, who retired in June after 46 years with the college.

“We look forward to working with Dr. Tomova as she joins the team at SFSC,” Valentine said. “She brings an array of

experience from Miami-Dade College as well as international positions which she’s held. Dr. Tomova will be a great asset to SFSC’s Division of Arts and Sciences as she continues to advance and move it forward.”

Tomova earned her doctoral degree in higher education leadership from the University of Miami. Her research focused on the community college and the impact of faculty on student learning and success. Tomova earned a master’s degree in English language and literature from the University of Sofia in

Bulgaria.

Over the past 15 years, she held progressively complex roles while at Miami-Dade College (MDC). Most recently, she was chairperson of the English and Communications Department at Miami-Dade’s North Campus. Previously, she was interim director with the Office of Academic Programs; chairperson of English, Communications, Arts & Philosophy; and director of the academic support center. She was first hired at MDC as grant director of a

U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) eWriting project.

Before coming to the United States, Tomova was a tenured senior lecturer in English at the University of Architecture and Civil Engineering in Sofia and also worked on curriculum alignment in English language teaching within the European Union higher education system.

“I am thrilled to join a remarkable team of faculty and staff at SFSC and to embrace both the challenges and the

opportunities of this leadership role,” Tomova said. “Our institution has established a reputation of excellence in service and impact on community growth through quality educational opportunities for all. But SFSC has much more to offer! The College employees have opened not only the doors to a diverse student population, but also their loving hearts and creative minds to innovations in teaching and learning, to responsive program growth, and mostly to improved learning experiences of students

set on their pathway to degree attainment and professional fulfillment in a changing global society.”

“I am inspired and committed to the values and mission of SFSC,” she said. “I hope to serve students, faculty, and the community well and to grow the division of arts and sciences through our mutual efforts in becoming a globally aware academic destination driving regional transformation through innovative collaboration—as powerfully stated in the college vision.”

SFSC earns gold status for second year

Special to Highlands News-Sun

AVON PARK — For the second year in a row, South Florida State College earned gold status for 2018-19 from the Florida College System. Of the 28 FCS institutions, SFSC was among only five to earn gold.

“It is thrilling to learn that SFSC received this prestigious recognition for two consecutive years,” said Thomas C. Leitzel, president of SFSC. “This year’s score is near perfect. The rating puts SFSC among a group of elite Florida colleges and affirms the commitment to excellence in student services combined with quality learning initiatives led by committed members of the faculty.”

The FCS uses a Performance Funding Model to issue points to each of the 28 institutions. Using a 40-point



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FLORIDA**
State College

scale, the model includes four measures that are worth 10 points each: Retention Rates; Completion Rates; Job Placement/Continuing Education Rates; and Entry-Level Wages. The institutions are then placed in categories based on their point totals: gold, silver, or bronze. This year, there were five gold, 18 silver, and five bronze colleges. The points are distributed based on Improvement and Excellence, with comparisons between last year’s and this year’s data. SFSC scored 39.64 out of 40 possible

points.

“At SFSC, we are honored to be a gold status college once again,” said Tami Cullens, chair of the board of trustees for SFSC. “This speaks well of our commitment to serve the students in our district and the dedication of our

administration, faculty, and staff in making a difference in the lives of all who attend this great institution. SFSC is a family of outstanding individuals whose focus is taking students to the next level while improving their lives. Our board is honored to

work with everyone at SFSC; a grand congratulations to all.”

For 2018-19, the Florida legislature and governor allocated \$60 million of general revenue to performance funding. The gold category colleges will receive both their proportional share of the state’s funding and a point-proportional share of the funds that would have been available to the colleges that scored 29.01 points and below placing them in the bronze category.

“I am very proud of the entire SFSC family,

especially our faculty and staff who have worked hard for this honor and our students whose efforts were integral to our success,” said Tim Backer, immediate past chair of the board of trustees for SFSC. “We continually improve and this achievement is evidence that we are performing at an optimal level. The board has always appreciated the employees’ dedication to excellence.”

For more information about SFSC, call 863-453-6661 or visit southflorida.edu.

Arcadian

The Sun / Thursday, July 26, 2018

\$40,000 grant to SFSC Foundation

A \$40,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has been awarded to the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc. to benefit part-time students attending SFSC in summer and fall 2018.

The grant comes from the Edward K. Roberts Community College Fund, established by Roberts to support Florida's community colleges and other charitable organizations. Managed by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the fund continues Roberts's vision of making higher education a priority, particularly for those motivated to seek a better life for themselves. The college has an Arcadia campus.



ARCADIAN PHOTO PROVIDED

Accepting the donation are SFSC's Jerry Donna (left), director of financial aid, and Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement.

'It has been quite a journey'

MacNeill reflects on 46 years at SFSC

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — It was August 1972 when Lynn MacNeill started working at then South Florida Junior College and after retiring recently from his full-time role at the college he is wrapping up one more class as an adjunct professor.

Most recently serving as the interim dean of arts and sciences and professor of oral communications, MacNeill filled many roles at the growing institution now known as South Florida State College, including humanities department chair and facilities use coordinator, and served as Phi Theta Kappa advisor for many years.

He has been teaching a summer B Term speech class as an adjunct professor, which concludes Tuesday.

MacNeill said Thursday he may teach another class if needed, but he is ready now for some rest and relaxation.

"I am going to take at least the fall off," he said. "After 46 years, I think I deserve a semester off."

He will be sleeping in on Wednesday morning and after that, MacNeill and his wife, Kara, plan to go fishing when the weather cools off in October.

"We will be spending a lot of time on the lake," he said. "We like to go up to the Kissimmee River and Camp Mack (near Lake Wales) and also down here on Lake Istokpoga and we will be doing a lot of fishing."

He likes to catch specks, which are known as crappies up north, MacNeill said, and largemouth bass.

"I won't turn a catfish away; I like catfish, but my favorite



COURTESY PHOTOS

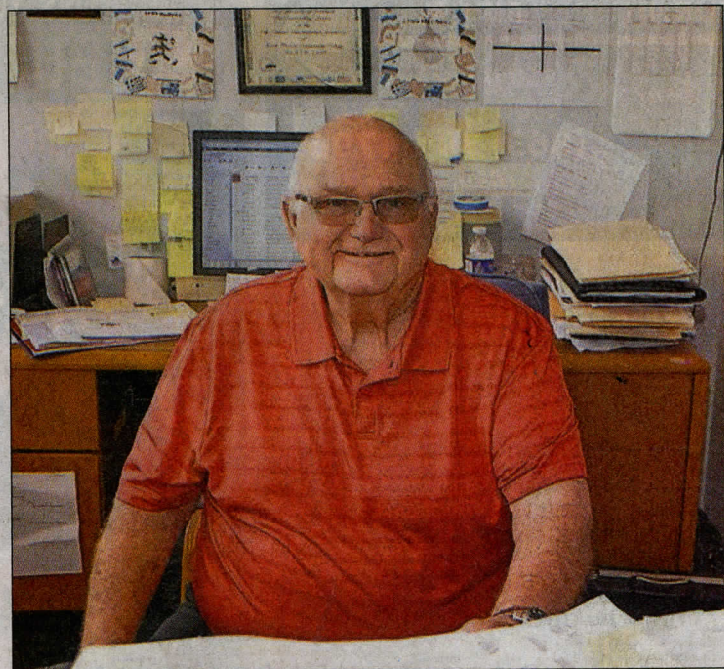
From left: South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel, Lynn MacNeill and District Board of Trustees Chair Tim Backer. Lynn receives a retirement resolution and is honored as Professor Emeritus at the June 2018 meeting of the SFSC District Board of Trustees.

is to fish for large mouth bass," he said.

Also, after the first of the year MacNeill said he and his wife hope to go on cruise or two, but not to the Caribbean. They would like to cruise New England, Nova Scotia and possibly the southern part of Alaska.

Speaking on the growth of the college, in 1972 when they had the welcome back gathering, after the summer, for all employees it was in Building G101, MacNeill said, and there would be plenty of empty seats. Now it is held in the University Center and they run out of seats.

Also, back in 1972-1973, "A lot of times there would be a college-wide party at someone's home and we would



Lynn MacNeill, who retired recently from his full-time role at South Florida State College, will have his last day at the college on Tuesday at the completion of a summer course he is teaching.

MACNEILL

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all fit in," he said with a laugh. One the favorite gathering places was at the home of music instructor Buford Jasper. It would be a potluck dinner and they would sit around the pool and the drafting instructor's wife would play the piano and they would sing along.

After initially being located in downtown Avon Park, the campus was established at its present location in 1970 two years before he arrived, MacNeill said.

"They started adding on buildings and in 1978 we built the auditorium and I started managing that ... it has been quite a journey for me."

MacNeill grew up on a cattle ranch near Tulare, a town of 250 souls in northeastern South Dakota.

He served two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in India from 1966 to 1968.

His experience in India taught him life lessons, according to the SFSC

report on his retirement.

"I learned that you don't need much to survive, to have a happy life. We don't need all the 'stuff,' the collecting of possessions. We didn't have them in India, and we didn't need them."

When his two years with the Peace Corps concluded, MacNeill attended Northern State College in South Dakota, completing his last three years in only two years and earning a bachelor's degree in secondary education. He was offered an assistantship at Illinois State University, where he was awarded his master's degree.

While still a graduate student studying speech communications at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, MacNeill decided he wanted to teach at a small college.

He was considering positions in a few states, but after being interviewed at then South Florida Junior College in May 1972 he accepted the offer.

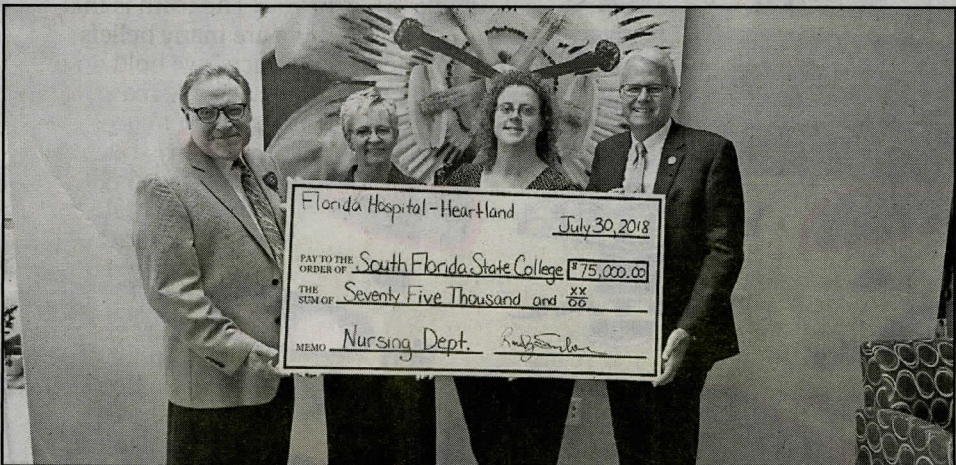
"I thought, 'I've never been to Florida before. Sounds cool to live in Florida,'" MacNeill said.



COURTESY PHOTO

At the May 2018 South Florida State College Commencement Ceremony, Lynn MacNeill reads students' names before they receive their diplomas and certificates.

SFSC receives donation from Florida Hospital to create nursing faculty position



MARC VALERO/STAFF

From left : Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center CEO Randy Suber and Vice President Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer Cathy Jaco and South Florida State College Director of Nursing Mary von Merveldt and President Thomas Leitzel at Florida Hospital Heartland Medical on Monday morning to announce that Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center has donated \$75,000 to South Florida State College to fund additional nursing faculty and expand the program.

AVON PARK — Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center donated \$75,000 to South Florida State College (SFSC) to fund additional nursing faculty and expand the program to meet a critical need for nurses in the region.

With the demand for nurses expected to rise by 20 percent over the next 10 years, those who obtain nursing degrees from SFSC have a 100 percent job placement rate. Many students obtain jobs before graduation day.

"We are extremely proud of the quality education delivered by our nursing faculty," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, president of SFSC. "The partnership that SFSC enjoys with Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center is outstanding for students and the community.

"The first-class clinical experience provided by Florida Hospital prepares our students with the practical education to complement the theoretical immersion they receive in their college courses."

Florida Hospital Heartland CEO and President Randy Surber said, "For many decades, SFSC and Florida Hospital have worked in tandem to improve the health and wellness of the Heartland community. SFSC's nursing curriculum provides

highly-knowledgeable nurses to care for our ever growing and aging population with compassion and kindness.

"Our partnership leads to improved patient safety and higher-quality care, which helps sustain and build our community. It also helps Florida Hospital to extend the healing ministry of Christ."

SFSC's associate degree program in nursing was ranked as tied for first among 1,247 programs in the nation by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, an independent, non-profit organization that is composed of boards of nursing who assure that safe and competent care is provided by licensed nurses.

For 2017, SFSC had a 100 percent passing rate for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for July through September, which directly influenced this ranking. The perfect score was significantly higher than the national average of 84.24 percent during this time period. The college also received the ranking of tied for first in its service area and among similar programs nationwide.

The NCLEX exam determines whether or not students are prepared for licensure in nursing.

"It is an honor to support SFSC with this donation. We have been repeatedly inspired by the outstanding nursing

programs overseen and led by Dr. Heston and the partnership between the College and Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center," said Cathy Jaco, chief nursing officer and vice president of Patient Care Services for Florida Hospital Heartland.

SFSC Dean of Health Sciences Michele Heston said, "The demand for nurses is extremely high in our service district and to support this demand, Florida Hospital has generously provided funding.

"With the hospital's support, we can expand the capacity of our nursing programs at SFSC and create a mutually beneficial academic-practice partnership where we maximize our resources, maintain cost-effective education and health care, and develop a clear career pathway for our graduates."

SFSC currently offers an online Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), an Associate of Science in Nursing to become a Registered Nurse (RN), an Associate of Science in Nursing to transition from Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to RN, and an occupational certificate in practical nursing.

For more information about SFSC's nursing program, contact Sara McGann, health services specialist at SFSC, at 863-784-7027 or sara.mcgann@southflorida.edu.