

SFSC Foundation Awards 'First Generation' Grant

Veronica Molina, a Hardee Senior High School graduate and first-generation student at South Florida State College, has been awarded a scholarship that will cover up to 60 credit hours of her tuition.

The 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.

This scholarship was made available through a partnership between the SFSC Foundation Inc. and the Florida Prepaid

College Foundation.

"It's with extreme excitement that we announce Veronica Molina as the recipient of our First Generation Scholarship," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement at SFSC.

"This is the first time the SFSC Foundation was able to award a full two-year tuition scholarship for a deserving student," she added. "We are grateful to our donors who support our college. It's because of them, we're able to match funds when they are offered by the state, and grant students like Veronica the chance to make her dreams come true."

Molina's ultimate goal is to become a physical therapist. She plans to attend SFSC to

complete pre-requisites and, eventually, transfer to Polk State College for the physical therapy program.

The child of migrant workers, Molina began working in the fields after school and on weekends at a young age.

"Working in labor motivated me to continue my educational goals toward a better life," she said. "I choose to follow this career goal because I am a compassionate person, and I enjoy helping others. In fact, becoming a physical therapist will allow me to assist those who are injured and help them recover."

For more information about scholarship opportunities at SFSC, call (863) 784-7134 or email finaid@southflorida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

Veronica Molina (center) with the college's Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement, and Jerry Donna, director of financial aid.

MOFAC opens first exhibit of season

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — The Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC) at South Florida State College (SFSC) opens the first exhibition of its 2018-19 season with works that capture the splendor of native Florida.

“Florida Native Trees” runs today, Wednesday, Oct. 3 to Wednesday, Nov. 28, at MOFAC’s gallery located in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

“This exhibition is the vision of Mollie Doctrow, curator emeritus of MOFAC, who coordinated it shortly following the ‘Florida Waterways’ show in 2016,” said Megan Stepe, curator for



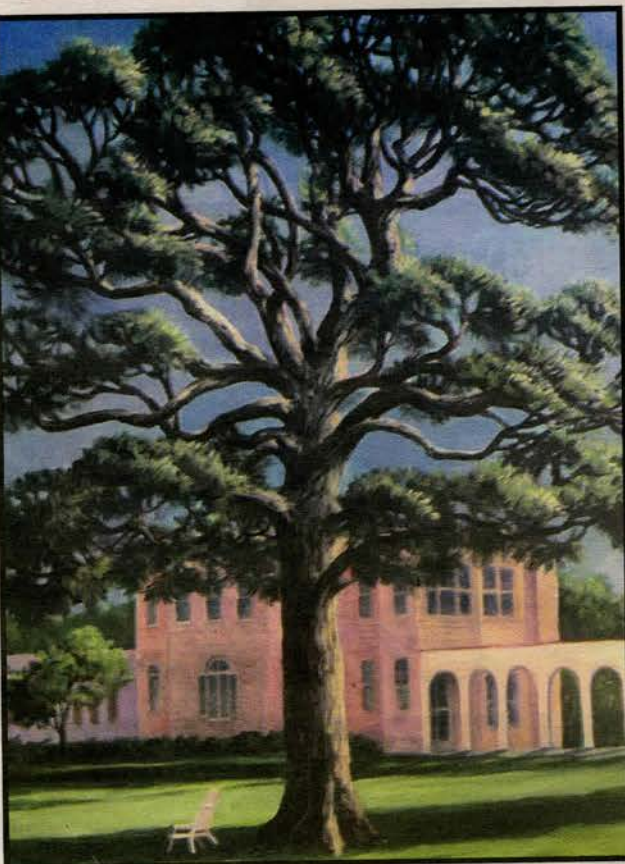
COURTESY PHOTO ‘Highlands Hammock’ by Max Gooding.

MOFAC. “Florida Native Trees’ showcases the abundance and diversity of the natural world via artwork which evokes each artist’s fondness for the subject matter. It is a multimedia exhibition celebrating the form, texture, color, and

overall presence of that which is ‘rooted’ in our daily lives.”

Coming together for their second group exhibition, friends, teachers, and students celebrate Florida’s trees in a variety of media, including

MOFAC | 15



COURTESY PHOTO/

‘Ringling Estate Tree’ BY Cathy Cranford Futral.

MOFAC FROM PAGE 14

painting, photography, printmaking, graphics, and ceramics. The exhibition will feature works by 13 artists who will be familiar to regular patrons of MOFAC: Dustin Angell, Rose Besch, Mollie Doctrow, Cathy Futral, Robley Futral, Max Gooding, Alice Hansen, Janet King, Allen McPherson, Karla Respress, Leighton Skipper, Megan Stepe and Barbara Wade.

An opening reception for the exhibition will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 11, at 1 p.m. at MOFAC. Many of the artists will

be in attendance and available to discuss their work with patrons.

MOFAC is located in the Wildstein Center at SFSC, 600 W. College Dr., Avon Park. The museum is open to the public on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 12:30 to 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, email stepem@south-florida.edu or visit mofac.org.



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Getting trained to serve

SFSC, Sheriff host First Responders Showcase

By **PHIL ATTINGER**
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Mellanie Williams said it took about a year to listen to two conversations without it bothering her. Now she can't shut it off.

At dinner two weeks ago, the supervisor with Highlands County Central Dispatch involuntarily started hearing a conversation from an adjacent table — comprehending every word — while in conversation at her table.

She said new 911 dispatcher recruits usually learn in a year, too.

"It depends on the person," Williams said.

She and other first responders told of their duties and the need to grow their ranks at Saturday's First Responder Showcase at the Criminal Justice Academy and Fire Sciences Department at South Florida State College. It was hosted by both the college and the Highlands County Sheriff's Office.

Melissa Kuehnle, director of Institutional Communications for SFSC, said scheduled demonstrations included the Avon Park Correctional Institution's Designated Armed Response Team (DART), the



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

Paul Shannon, Fire Services coordinator at South Florida State College explains on a bullhorn what's going on behind him as, from left, firefighter trainees Dustin Newman and Josh Eason put cold water on a simulation of a hot propane tank that has blown open its blow off valve and ignited. Such a tactic should prevent an explosion.

Sheriff's Office Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team, the "bomb squad" from the Florida Bureau of Fire, Arson & Explosives Investigations, Highlands County 911 Central Dispatch and the criminal justice, emergency medical and firefighting training programs.

Instructors hope to encourage potential candidates to sign up. SFSC offers associate degrees in fire science technology, emergency medical services and criminal justice technology, along with a new Occupational Certificate in Public Safety Communication.

911 Training Coordinator Shane Smith said along with 232 hours of training and a state test, candidates need to do well on a personality test, to see if they can



Firefighter trainee Dustin Newman gets a little help in knocking down a traffic cone with a fire hose on Saturday at the First Responder Showcase at South Florida State College.

SHOWCASE

FROM PAGE 1A

handle the job.

She also uses a “split-ear” device to help recruits train their brains to separate sounds from both ears. Dispatchers have to take information from a victim/caller and monitor radio traffic, while also typing notes.

Once they learn it, she said, “it’s difficult to shut off.”

Smith has six open positions in the 911 dispatch center’s two 12-hour shifts. Ideally, she’d like to have eight or nine people per shift.

Sgt. Vonnie Hoskins, over recruitment for APCI, said she’s always looking to fill team positions on four DART units, split between two 12-hour shifts.

John Brook, head of Security at APCI, said the response teams have lethal and “less-than-lethal” weapons and vary tactics depending on the situation at hand.

Curtis “Curt” Ivy, Criminal Justice Academy director, said he has 28 in the law enforcement program right now, with another eight in corrections.

Ivy said 911 training requires much the same as law enforcement: High school graduates age 19 or older with no felony convictions, domestic violence or dishonorable military discharges.

Steve Ashworth, director of Fire Sciences and EMS training, said he has 63 students, with 18 training as firefighters, 27 as emergency medical technicians and 18 as paramedics.

He expects to see another 20 paramedics join the program in January,

2019.

“Enrollment tripled with the advent of the fire program,” Ashworth said.

Along with 25 adjunct fire instructors and two full-time EMS instructors is Fire Services Coordinator Paul Shannon, a captain with Polk County Fire & Rescue.

Shannon said the fire program has two old fire engines — 12-22 years — both service compliant. They could roll to a fire.

Trainees are still learning. They demonstrated how to use a fire hose to cool a propane tank whose pressure relief valve has blown open and ignited.

Cooling it hopefully will prevent an explosion, Shannon said.

They also showed how quickly they can get into full bunker gear, and let children help them man hoses — to knock down traffic cones.

The SWAT Team demonstrated rappelling skills. The team was late, as was the bomb squad from Florida’s Bureau of Fire, Arson & Explosives Investigations, because of a report gunfire earlier that morning in Avon Park.

Sheriff Paul Blackman, who arrived with the SWAT Team, said they found subjects pretending to still be asleep behind closed doors of a house.

SWAT member Sgt. Mike Delaney demonstrated a “tie-off,” freeing up his hands and



Highlands County Sheriff’s Office Special Weapons and Tactics Team member Sgt. Wayne Gunn does an inverted drop, turning to descend head first, while rappelling down a building. SWAT Team Leader Capt. Kenny Johnson, who asked him to mimic having a gun drawn, said it’s a useful tactic to sneak up on high rise windows where an armed subject may be barricaded.



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

K9 Oregon and his handler, Detective Monty Taylor with the Florida Bureau of Fire, Arson & Explosives Investigations, demonstrate a search for explosives Saturday on the campus of South Florida State College, as part of the First Responder Showcase that day.

swinging mid-air. SWAT member Sgt. Wayne Gunn did an inverted drop, turning to descend head first.

It's useful to sneak up on windows, said SWAT Team Leader Capt. Kenny Johnson.

Kathy Fluharty, Human Resources administrator for the Sheriff's Office, said she, Crime Prevention Specialist Nell Hays and Sgt. Kimberly Gunn saw a lot of people asking about law enforcement certification.

Later that morning, Detective Monty Taylor and K9 Oregon demonstrated the dog's ability to locate explosives hidden in a backpack. It took just a few minutes.

Law Enforcement Major Brandon Ball also introduced the team's two robots: "Johnny 5" and "Boots."

"Boots has been shot seven times," Ball said, pointing to a Order of the Purple Heart sticker on its camera case.

The robots are excellent climbers and shooters, Ball said, and have aided in negotiation: Bringing pizza, cigarettes and beer to barricaded subjects.

Most often, they just end situations, he said.

"They're very intimidating in your bedroom at two in the morning," Ball said.

SFSC supports Amendment 7



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College hopes voters will cast “yes” votes for Amendment 7, which would include the Florida College System in the Florida Constitution. The amendment is on the Nov. 6 General Election ballot.

A ‘yes’ votes puts the state’s college system into the Florida Constitution

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Voters will see 12 constitutional amendment proposals on the Nov. 6 ballot, including Amendment 7, which the Association of Florida Colleges and South Florida State College hope will pass with the required minimum of 60 percent of the votes.

SFSC Administrative Services Vice President Glenn Little said some voters are concerned about bundled amendments and Amendment 7 has three provisions, but he believes all three items have merit.

One provision requires employers to provide death benefits to the surviving spouses of first responders while engaged in official duties and

requires the state to provide death benefits to the surviving spouses of active-duty U.S. Armed Forces members who are accidentally killed or unlawfully and intentionally killed.

Another provision requires a nine-member vote of the board of trustees and 12-member vote of the board of governors to increase a college fee. Little said this would only apply to universities at this time.

“Our focus of course is the other part, that we have frankly long lamented over, that we are not in the Constitution,” he said. “The K-12 System is specifically provided for in the Constitution and so is the University System.”

The Florida College System and its 28 institutions were established later and are not part of the Florida

Constitution, Little explained.

“We believe we are worthy of that [being in the Constitution] and would like to see Amendment 7 approved to provide that and ensure that the governance structure that we have in place is provided for and that is very, very important to us,” he said.

Each of the 28 institutions in the Florida College System has a board of trustees comprised of members of the local community, which has a lot of autonomy, Little said. These local boards are very important to the communities they serve, especially at South Florida State College, which is serving a rural population with needs that come up suddenly that require a timely response from the college, he

SFSC

FROM PAGE 1A

notes.

If a new industry emerges, the college has the opportunity to quickly respond with its district board of trustees without having to go through a legislative process to get a program approved, he said.

The primary issue for SFSC is to keep the same governance structure, because there were some threats to that in recent years from the Florida Senate, but fortunately those proposals didn't prevail, Little said.

The Association of Florida Colleges (AFC), which SFSC is a member, summarizes the importance of Amendment 7

to the Florida College System and the state/community colleges:

- The Florida College System is the only component of public education not included in Florida's Constitution. Passage of Amendment 7 will officially recognize its role as an important part of the pathway continuum of education in the state.
- Amendment 7's emphasis on preserving local authority is key to the success of the colleges.

District boards of trustees ensure that colleges can remain responsive to the academic and workforce needs of their communities and are important to the continued relevance of the system.

- The Florida College System is consistently recognized as the top college system in the nation and solidifying these principles into Florida's Constitution will promote the continued success and long-term vitality of the system.

Highland Sun

John Tesh in concert Nov. 17

Opens season at Alan Jay Wildstein Center

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — The Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College (SFSC) will welcome John Tesh, popular TV and radio broadcaster, at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 17. Tesh has won six Emmys, garnered two Grammy nominations, produced seven public television specials and sold 8 million records during his 25-year musical career. He can be heard Monday through Friday at 2 p.m. on Lite 105.7 with his popular radio program "Intelligence for your Life."

"John Tesh's show, 'Songs and Music from the Grand Piano,' is an intimate, authentic performance that audiences across the country

find inspiring," said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC. "John Tesh is a true entertainer and I promise everyone will leave the theater feeling uplifted."

Tesh's ability to create a unique journey for concert fans with music and storytelling has taken him from the Red Rocks Amphitheater and the Coliseum in Rome to Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center. His live television concerts, including the seminal "Live at Red Rocks," have raised more than \$20 million for Public Television.

The Nov. 17 performance at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is sponsored by Sebring Radio Group, Dr. David and Allison Willey, Dr. Michael Kirsch, Dr. Gayle Obermayr, Norma



COURTESY PHOTO

SFSC will welcome John Tesh, popular TV and radio broadcaster, on Saturday, Nov. 17 at 7 p.m.

Evans, Jack Richie and Ann Pollard. Funding is also provided in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.

A self-proclaimed school "band geek" playing trumpet in the marching and jazz bands in junior high and high school, Tesh was proficient on the trumpet and piano from the age of 6. He studied privately with teachers from The Julliard School and was named to the New York State Symphonic Orchestra in

high school while also playing a Hammond B3 organ in three Long Island rock bands.

His multi-faceted, ever-evolving musical and broadcast career includes a string of No. 1 radio hits, a Keyboard Magazine Performance award, 12 years as an investigative journalist for CBS TV, 10 years as an anchor on Entertainment Tonight, broadcast host and music composer for the Barcelona and Atlanta Olympic Games, and the unique distinction of composing what critics hailed as "The greatest sports theme song in

television history," the NBA on NBC Theme. His weekly television show has 2 million viewers, his radio show amasses 40 million impressions per week, and his Facebook page has a weekly reach of 20 million engagements on average.

Tickets are \$32, \$35 and \$40, and available online at sfscarts.org, by phone at 863-784-7178 or in person at the box office located on the Highlands Campus at 600 West College Avenue in Avon Park. Group, child and student discounts

TESH

FROM PAGE 1

are available by calling or visiting the box office. Ticket subscriptions are also available and include savings and perks.

About South Florida State College Performing Arts

South Florida State College (SFSC) presents more than 35 nationally and internationally

touring artists at the 1,460-seat Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and the 250-seat SFSC University Center located on the Highlands Campus at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. SFSC offers a Matinee Series for adults at leisure, Young People's Theater Series for school performances, a Jazz Series, a Trending Now Series of contemporary, family shows, and the popular Artist Series.

Group rates and subscriptions are available online and at the box office. Upcoming performances include: national touring artists The Hunts on Nov. 30; Celtic Angels Christmas on Dec. 4; Sara Evans on Jan. 26; Grammy Award winner Jon Secada on Feb. 2; Wild World of Animals on Feb. 16; Chita Rivera and Robert Klein on Feb. 20; Wayne Newton on Feb. 28 and The Price is Right Live on March 30.

South Florida State's voc-ed programs, learn while doing

By JIMMY PETERS

ARCADIAN HOMETOWN CORRESPONDENT

It's not always about a four-year degree.

The DeSoto campus of South Florida State College, for example, has career tracks that are in demand, pay good wages and require far less time than a university degree to master. According to Asena Mott, DeSoto campus director, "The college has had vocational training for students for the past 13 years. Auto mechanics is the oldest of the programs going back to June of 2005," adding that, "100 percent of our auto mechanics students who complete the program are offered employment here in DeSoto County."

The Electrical Lineworker course had also been part of the vocational program in the past. It returned in 2017. Both the automotive and lineworker courses are 1.5- to 2-year programs offering occupational certificates. SFSC also provides a Water and Wastewater Treatment program, which is a six-month class required by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for those in that field. Arcadia puts its staff through the program. In addition, students must pass the state water and wastewater certification exam, which means job readiness. The next class is in January and runs through the summer. Cost is \$1,250, including books.

The SFSC Linemen course covers ropes and rigging, pole-line equipment, safe work practices, underground distribution labs and CDL certification.

"Companies like Florida Power &



Light prefer to hire people that have gone through the lineworker program," Mott said.

Phil Rizzo is the Automotive Service Technology director at SFSC. I learned that Phil was a graduate of the automotive program at DeSoto High in 1985. He explained how things work at SFSC: "The college accepts adults as well as dual-enrollment students. This means that a high school student starting in 9th grade could graduate from South Florida State College a month before he or she graduates from high school."

And, yes, "There are girls in the program. In fact, I encourage them," Rizzo said. "They are some of our best students."

Nowadays, according to Rizzo, "The automotive service industry has become so complex that mechanics need to specialize."

He said SFSC tech students are taught auto repair basics, then specialize when they go to work for a local garage or dealership. It's like a doctor learning the anatomy in school and working in a hospital with patients or in surgery to get those advanced skills, I discovered. Only mechanics fix sick cars.

Ed Kelly, assistant to Phil Rizzo, pointed out that courses in the automotive program include: engine



ARCADIAN PHOTOS BY JIMMY PETERS

Mayki Jones, Austin Kortzendorf and Edward Bautista watch as Alex Montalvo works on a transmission.

repair, engine performance, manual and automatic transmission, air-conditioning, steering/suspension, brakes, electrical systems, and then co-op work experience. This course is an ASE, or Automotive Service Excellence, accredited curriculum.

“We prepare the students for the ASE Certification Exam,” he said. “When a student starts out in the workplace, they can expect to earn \$10 to \$12 per hour. As they gain experience, they can earn up to \$30 an hour, in some cases.”

SFSC's DeSoto campus also plans a community education welding course in February. It will not include a certificate, but will provide hands-on basic welding skills and techniques. The class will be held in the evenings to accommodate working students.

We are fortunate to have the South Florida State College in our community and the opportunities it offers. I had a chance to talk with a dedicated group of educators who truly enjoy their jobs. Plus, I really had a good time photographing students in the automotive class — a nice group of guys.



Austin Kortzendorf and Mayki Jones checking radiator pressure.



Alex Montalvo and Edward Bautista change spark plugs on this engine.

Take Stock in Children earns Gold Level award

AVON PARK — The local Take Stock in Children program has earned the Excellence Award, Gold Level Category for the sixth consecutive year from its statewide parent organization, and Irene Castanon, South Florida State College TSIC student services coordinator, was honored for 15 years of service to the organization.

The Excellence Award and service honor were announced at the annual TSIC's College and Career Readiness Summit held Sept. 27-28 in Tampa. Local TSIC programs that provide college readiness and mentoring supports to middle and high school students vie for the award each year.

"This is truly a blessing and a team effort to receive a Gold Level award for the sixth consecutive year," Castanon said. "Our serving communities, school districts, mentors, and SFSC Foundation and college have all contributed to this accolade."

The SFSC Foundation is the lead agency for TSIC in Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee counties. TSIC serves students who are at-risk for dropping out of school. Students are matched with a mentor, receive in-school support, and college readiness services provided by TSIC college success coaches. Upon high school graduation, students earn a college tuition scholarship.

TSIC mentors meet with their assigned students each week during the school year, offering



Irene Castanon (second from left) receives special recognition for 15 years of service to Take Stock in Children.

encouragement, advice and a sympathetic ear. A TSIC college success coach provides support and guidance to the mentor and the mentee.

To earn the Gold Level recognition, local TSIC programs must meet or exceed 10 key performance indicators on the Balanced Scorecard. The Balanced Scorecard is an internal measure of a TSIC program's performance and adherence to the requirements of the Florida Department of Education. TSIC must meet these rigorous criteria, which include a data reporting system that measures student readiness, the number of students recruited, mentor matching rates, and mentor contacts.

Castanon's service to the Take Stock in Children program began in August 2003, when she was a student majoring in finance at Webber International University. Fellow student, Juan Gomez, was SFSC's TSIC coordinator at that time and asked her to come on board as a student mentor. In December 2003, she took a job with TSIC as a college success

coach. In May 2008, she became the local program's coordinator.

After 15 years with TSIC, Castanon maintains her passion for the program. "Through Take Stock, we coach our students," she said. "We get them ready for college. You can provide students with information about college readiness but if you don't guide them, they may not know what to do with that information, such as how to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form or learn about available scholarships. When we give them this knowledge, it gets them closer to going to college, being successful, and then paying it forward to someone else.

"If you help one child, they come back and help someone else. In fact, we have several Take Stock alumni who come back to the program as mentors," she said.

In attendance at the College and Career Readiness Summit were representatives of 45 TSIC programs from 67 Florida counties. They heard from national leaders about

the latest trends and data on innovation in education, mentoring, college readiness, and career opportunities.

To become a TSIC mentor, contact Castanon at castanoni@southflorida.edu or call 863-784-7343.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Members of SFSC's Take Stock in Children receive the Excellence Award, Gold Level Category. From left: Jillian Hasner, president and CEO of TSIC, state office; Irene Castanon, SFSC TSIC student services coordinator; Linda Roman, SFSC TSIC college success coach; Jamie Bateman, SFSC executive director of institutional advancement; Danielle Ochoa, SFSC TSIC college success coach; and Ele Bautista-Bernard, TSIC director of programs and student standards, state office.