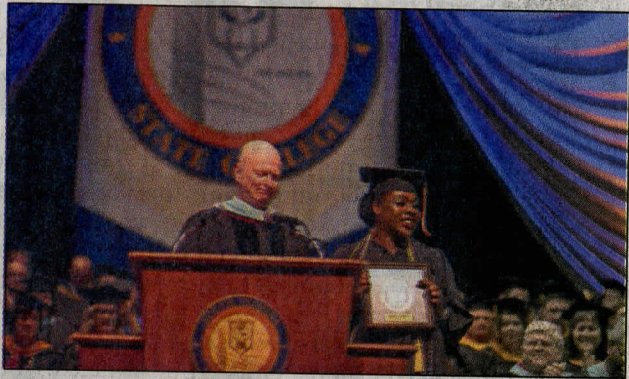


# SFSC graduates celebrate a milestone



COURTESY PHOTO

**Dr. Tim Wise (left), dean of students services, presents student Commencement speaker Theodosia Shannon with a recognition plaque.**

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS  
NEWS-SUN

**AVON PARK** — For the South Florida State College (SFSC) graduates who gathered in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on Thursday, Dec. 13, the 2018 Commencement ceremony was a time to celebrate.

Student Commencement speaker Theodosia Shannon, who

received her Correctional Officer Occupational Certificate through SFSC's Criminal Justice Academy, addressed her fellow classmates. She offered three words that helped her in her own personal journey: focus, fight, and finish. She explained that "successful individuals maintain a positive focus in life no matter what is going on around them." In reference to "fight," she said that each of us face

tough times, but that "the difficulties which you face will make you more determined to achieve your objectives and to win against all the odds." She, then, urged them to finish, to never give up, and in spite of setbacks, always get up and get back in the fight.

In conclusion, she congratulated her fellow classmates on rising up to the challenges of academic life and urged

them "to always push boundaries to make this world a better place even in the small ways."

Early in the program, Tami Cullens, chair of the SFSC Board of Trustees addressed the graduates and quoted novelist Haruki Murakami: "When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in." She compared the

# GRADS

## FROM PAGE 1A

essence of the quote to the graduates' academic experience at the College. "I can guarantee that South Florida State College has positively changed who you are, even in the slightest of ways. Your college experience, no matter the length in years, has helped define you."

The graduates received congratulations and further words of wisdom from Dr. Thomas Leitzel, SFSC president. "My charge to you is to go forth, find your corner of the sky, and do amazing things," he said.

During the ceremony, Dr. Leitzel gave special recognition to Joanne Foote, professor of nursing, who retires from SFSC on Jan. 3 after having served the College for 12 years.



COURTESY PHOTO

### **Graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Supervision and Management (BAS SM) program.**

More than 252 students met SFSC December graduation requirements by Commencement. Of these, 14 received their Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision and Management, 75 received their Associate in Arts degree, 18 received their Associate in Science degree, 30 received their State of Florida High School Diploma, and 115 received occupational certificates, college

credit certificates, or advanced technical diplomas. Participating in Commencement were 161 students.

Mace bearer and chief marshal for this year's ceremony was Michelle Macbeth. Faculty and staff selected to serve as marshals were Elizabeth Andrews, Davida Austin, Courtney Green, Robert Hampton, Dr. Theresa James, Lorraine Jaques, Cynthia Kinser, Claire Miller, Tasha Morales, Asena Mott and Ricardo Pantoja.



# Winter wonderland

## Hotel Jacaranda decked out for Christmas

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — It's Christmas time on a grand scale at The Hotel Jacaranda with delightful holiday decor throughout the Joan Hartt Grand Lobby and the Arcade.

"If you haven't been to The Hotel Jacaranda this season, then you are missing out," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement at the South Florida State College Foundation. "Our wonderful team of interior decorators have outdone themselves once again and transformed the hotel into a magical holiday scene that will take your breath away when you first walk in the door."

SFSC Foundation Board member Joan Hartt leads a team that goes to work around Halloween with transforming the Jacaranda into this incredible venue, Bateman said.

From the 15-foot Christmas tree to the massive fireplace waiting for St. Nick to come down, every corner has a magical detail, she said. "My personal favorite is the reindeer and sleigh filled with presents that lands just outside of my office each year."

While the Grand Lobby



MARC VALERO/STAFF

**An old-time Christmas scene in the Arcade of The Hotel Jacaranda.**

features the 15-foot traditional Christmas tree, the Arcade will delight the young and old alike with Mickey and Minnie Mouse sitting, with other plush friends, under a tree

adorned with plush animals.

On a smaller scale, check out the various mini Christmas/



**St. Nick at The Hotel Jacaranda in Avon Park.**



**The 15-foot Christmas tree at The Hotel Jacaranda.**



# DECORATE

## FROM PAGE 1A

winter villages in the Grand Lobby.

Don't forget to bring your camera or cell phone for some great photo opportunities.

Hotel Jacaranda General Manager Sharon Schuler said, "The staff here at The Hotel Jacaranda have the opportunity to work in a Christmas wonderland, decorated by Hartt and her special elves, Shelia, Shelly, Rose, etc.; this list could go on and on."

Some elves don't identify themselves; they just volunteer their time to decorate, she said.

Each year there is a new idea about how this grand old hotel is brought to life and guests love the decorations, Schuler said. Many come to take their family Christmas picture or take a picture after they have lunch or dinner.

"It is such a privilege and honor for us to say, 'Welcome to The Hotel Jacaranda, please enjoy the decorations,'" she said.

Bateman noted The Hotel Jacaranda has been described as a mini version of the Biltmore Estates in Asheville, North Carolina at Christmas.

"We invite you to come and stroll through the lobby and the Arcade to see for yourself," she said. "Then, treat



MARC VALERO/STAFF

**Mickey and Minnie Mouse and the Christmas tree featuring plush animals in the Arcade at The Hotel Jacaranda.**

yourself to a delicious meal from our Southern Buffet. We're now serving lunch and supper."



# Patrons come together to support SFSC Foundation

## STAFF REPORT

**AVON PARK** — The lobby of The Hotel Jacaranda was beautifully decorated and offered a warm welcome to luncheon guests Thursday. The venue played host for the South Florida State College Foundation's Annual Christmas Luncheon.

Rebecca Rivera, a registered nurse, was the guest speaker for the

event. She was a Take Stock in Children scholar, a Bright Futures recipient and graduated from Avon Park High School. Rivera currently works at Dr. Audwin Nelson's office as an ARNP.

Rivera recently received her master's degree; she was able to use some of her scholarship money from her Take Stock in Children funds as some was remaining.

She credits Take Stock for giving her the opportunity to succeed in the career path she chose. Rivera thanks several people present at the luncheon who had a positive impact in her life as mentors.

Guests attending the luncheon were also asked to bring non-perishable items to help support the SFSC Panthers.



Guests were treated to a delicious lunch in a beautifully decorated dining room at The Hotel Jacaranda.



KIM BROWNING/STAFF

A group of supporters of the South Florida State College Foundation enjoy lunch Thursday at The Hotel Jacaranda.



From left: Julia Mercer with The Palms of Sebring, Reyna Olazo-Ramirez with Vitas and Schuler Scott with The Palms of Sebring take advantage of the networking opportunity at the SFSC Foundation annual lunch.





**Rebecca Rivera, a South Florida State College Foundation Take Stock in Children scholar and now a registered nurse, was the guest speaker at Thursday's luncheon.**



**These special ladies — from left: Ruth Handley, Doris Gentry Hawthorne and Martha Albritton — enjoy catching up on their longtime friendship.**



COURTESY PHOTO

**South Florida State College will start evening/weekend scheduling next month for its Associate in Science degree in Nursing.**

# **SFSC offers alternative schedule for nursing**

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

**AVON PARK —** South Florida State College will introduce alternative evening/weekend scheduling for its Associate in Science degree in Nursing beginning Jan. 28, 2019, the first day of the third flex session of spring term.

Classes will meet two or three week-day evenings and one weekend day for four terms.

"SFSC is committed to providing high-quality, innovative, and flexible teaching and learning opportunities," said Michele Heston, dean of health sciences at SFSC. "We are grateful for our partners who support us in this commitment by providing clinical education opportunities and funding for nursing faculty positions.

"The academic-practice partnerships, like the one we currently have with Florida Hospital, assist SFSC in its efforts to strengthen the nursing workforce," Heston said.

The curriculum for the evening/



# NURSING

## FROM PAGE 1A

weekend program is the same as the traditional schedule Associate in Science degree in Nursing (ADN) program.

Students will graduate with Associate in Science in Nursing and become eligible to take the NCLEX test for Registered Nurse (RN) licensure.

"Our new alternative schedule Associate

in Science degree in Nursing option will allow students to access our nursing program that had not been able to in the past due to occupational or personal constraints," said Mary von Merveldt, director

of nursing at SFSC.

"It will allow the college to offer quality nursing education to a greater number of students with more flexibility," von Merveldt said.

"It is our hope and our intention that this new

option will better meet the needs of the community and students we serve."

Applications are available on [southflorida.edu](http://southflorida.edu).

For more information about the Evening/

Weekend ADN program, contact 863-784-7027 or [healthsciences@southflorida.edu](mailto:healthsciences@southflorida.edu).



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on Facebook!**



# Dual enrollment, head start for students

By JIMMY PETERS

ARCADIAN HOMETOWN EDITOR

When I was in high school, I had no idea what I wanted to do when I graduated into the real world. And that's probably true of many young people.

Those who are fortunate enough to realize a direction for their lives are truly blessed, at any age. The partnership between DeSoto County High School and South Florida State College has made it possible for students who have the direction and the ability to begin a head start on their career through the Dual Enrollment Program.

Kattie Ellsworth is one of those fortunate young people who knows what she wants and has the ability and the self-discipline to attain her dreams. She is presently attending DeSoto High while working on her associate's degree in psychology from South Florida State College, the DeSoto campus. Kattie will graduate from high school next June, and will receive her two-year degree from SFSC a few months later. Her immediate goal is to go on to get her



bachelor's degree in psychology and to be a guidance counselor on either the high school or college level. Down the road as things work out, Kattie would like to go back to school and get a bachelor and master's degree in Classical Civilizations, and a Doctorate in Classical Studies, which would qualify her to instruct Classical Studies on the college level.

The dual enrollment program allows qualified high-schoolers such as Kattie to combine high school and college courses. She explains: "I usually take the morning to work on my 'online' classes, which are Liberal Arts, Math, Introduction to Diversity for Educators and Speech. The only time I physically go to school is on Thursday, when I pick up my friend

and we attend American History class at South Florida State College.

"I want to thank Ms. Henry at the high school and Ms. Mott here at the college for their help and guidance."

Kattie away from studies works part-time as a tour guide at Dakin Dairy, is an avid reader and loves going to the movies. She is one of the many talented students who are in the Dual Enrollment Program here in Arcadia.

My hat goes off to all of them, for their perseverance and hard work. After attaining your scholastic goals, we hope you will consider bringing your talents back to your hometown.

For information on the SFSC DeSoto/ DCHS Dual Enrollment program, contact SFSC campus Director Asena Mott, 863-784-7040.

PHOTO BY JIMMY PETERS

**Kattie Ellsworth is one of those fortunate young people who knows what she wants and has the ability and the self-discipline to attain her dreams.**







MARC VALERO/STAFF

The circle around the tower on the South Florida State College Avon Park Campus has been dubbed "Enlightenment Circle."

# SFSC circle and tower have enlightening names

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — The tower and circle in the heart of the South Florida State College campus now have formal names.

At a meeting of the District Board of Trustees, SFSC President Thomas Leitzel shared with the board the naming of the tower as the "Tower of Enlightenment."

He requested the board consider naming the circle surrounding the Tower of Enlightenment as "The Tower of Enlightenment Circle" or

"Enlightenment Circle."

Board member Kris Rider made a motion, seconded by Timothy Backer, to informally name the traffic circle surrounding the Tower of Enlightenment "Enlightenment Circle."

The board approved the naming by a unanimous vote.

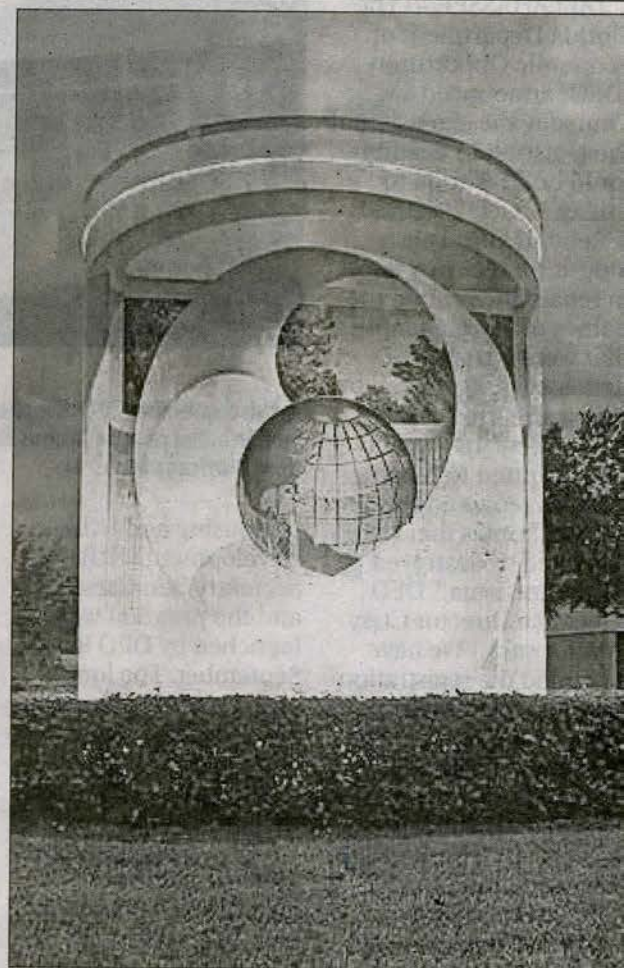
SFSC Director of Institutional Communications Melissa Kuehnle said that some have been informally referring to the tower as "The Tower of Enlightenment."

Other people didn't know what it was called

so now it is firmed up so there is no question about the location. For instance, for the college's Veteran's Day Ceremony, which is held there, instead of saying "the circle at entrance three," it would be "The Enlightenment Circle" and everybody would know where to go.

Air-conditioning equipment is housed inside the tower.

The tower and circle are southeast of the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and northeast of Building B.



"The Tower of Enlightenment" on the Avon Park Campus of South Florida State College.



# *Health Sciences Students Win SFSC Scholarships*



Students studying at South Florida State College for careers in the health sciences received nearly \$22,000 in scholarships during the December meeting of the college's District Board of Trustees.

Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarships were awarded to students in nursing, dental education and radiography programs. They may use the scholarships for tuition, textbooks, lab fees and childcare.

Scholarships winners were:

- Nursing – Evelia Cabrera, Candace Dean, Esmerelda DeLoera, Jose Gamez, Danielle Minnick, Laura Moros, Brenda Ramirez, Leonel Rodriguez Jr., Katherine Yeager and Edena Walton

- Dental Education – Kimberly Albritton, Taylor Con-

nell, Ashley De Santiago, Sebrina Gillilan, Janet Lopez, Patricia Pacheco-Trahan, Francesca Pemble, Jacqueline Perez, Nancy Rodriguez, Raquel Rodriguez and Janet Sanchez

- Radiography – Jessie Cuellar, Katherine Gammage and Tonya Hamilton

The scholarships are the result of a partnership between the Florida College System Foundation and Florida Blue.

The Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship was created to sustain a source of funding for student scholarships at Florida's colleges to meet the growing need for skilled nurses and allied health professionals to serve the state's diverse population.

The SFSC Foundation Inc. provided a 50 percent match of the original \$10,871 provided

by the FCS Foundation and Florida Blue, as the funds must be matched dollar for dollar by private donors at the local level.

"Because of the FCS Foundation and Florida Blue, SFSC students can complete their studies with a long-term goal of providing the high quality health care that our communities deserve," said Jamie Bateman, SFSC's executive director of Institutional Advancement.

The FCS Foundation, based in Tallahassee, is a non-profit organization that solicits gifts and donations from corporations and individuals for distribution to Florida's 28 community and state colleges.

SFSC has received scholarships for health sciences students since 2006.



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Nursing students and administrators celebrating the scholarships are (front row, from left) Brenda Ramirez, Esmerelda DeLoera, Danielle Minnick, Evelia Cabrera and Edena Walton; (back row) SFSC District Board of Trustees Chairwoman Tami Cullens, Director of Nursing Mary von Merveldt, Leonel Rodriguez Jr., Laura Moros, Jose Gamez, Candace Dean, Katherine Yeager, health sciences dean Dr. Michele Heston and institutional advancement director Jamie Bateman.**



**Dr. Deborah Milliken, dental education chair, with Dental Assisting students (from left) Janet Sanchez, Raquel Rodriguez, Sebrina Gillilan, Janet Lopez and Ashley De-Santiago.**



**Dental Hygiene students are (from left) Taylor Connell, Nancy Rodriguez, Francesca Pemble, Jacqueline Perez, Kimberly Albritton and Patricia Pacheco-Trahan.**





**Administrators (from left) Junior Gray, director of radiography, and Dr. Michele Heston, dean of health sciences, with radiography students Katherine Gammage, Tonya Hamilton, Mario Lozano and Jessie Cuellar.**