

— HARDEE

3 Hardee Countians Graduate From SFSC Radiology Program

South Florida State College honored 12 graduates last Thursday in a traditional ceremony on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

Each had earned the degree of Associate in Science in Radiography.

Three of the dozen honorees are Hardee County residents: Catalina Hernandez, Christian Pena and Rosario Piedad-Camacho.

The guest speaker for the graduation ceremony, Amy Ferrante, a SFSC radiography instructor, offered words of advice to the graduates as they prepared to launch their careers as radiologic technologists.

Graduate Caleah Gammage, who had served as class president, also spoke to the assemblage. She thanked family and friends in

attendance for their support. She also reflected with fondness on the time she and her classmates spent together through the two-year program.

Upon completing SFSC's two-year Associate in Science in Radiography degree program, graduates can work as certified radiologic technologists by passing the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists national examination. Radiologic technologists work in hospitals and clinics performing diagnostic imaging examinations, such as X-rays.

For information about the college's radiography program, contact Junior Gray, director of radiography, at (863) 784-7347 or grayj@southflorida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

Honored at a commencement ceremony last Thursday were radiology graduates (front row, from left) Marcella Badillo Gomez, Marissa Baldwin, Caleah Gammage, Katherine Gammage, Catalina Hernandez of Hardee County and Jason O'Malley; (back) Christian Pena and Rosario Piedad-Camacho, both of Hardee County, Ana Ramirez, Tishonna Riley, Ardaje Toney and Amy Vilayphone.

SFSC supports completion program

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — As classes started back on Monday, Gov. Ron DeSantis, Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran, Tallahassee Community College President and Council of Presidents Chair Jim Murdaugh, and 18 other Florida College System presidents are showing their support for the Last Mile Completion Program.

South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel is among those supporting the

Last Mile Completion Program, which helps students who left college with 12 or fewer credit hours remaining, to complete their first degree.

According to a press release through the Florida Department of Education, these colleges agree to use existing resources to help these students before receiving funding from the Legislature.

“Sometimes our circumstances in life, whether they be family emergencies or finances, prohibit us from reaching



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College is among 19 institutions in the Florida College System that supports the Last Mile Completion program.

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milestones in the time we thought we would,” DeSantis said.

“The Last Mile Completion Program will provide support to those students who must put their degrees on hold, knowing there is a pathway and new re-entry point for them when they’re ready to return.

This program also benefits Florida when these students are entering the workforce prepared for their chosen profession.”

Leitzel said, “South Florida State College stands firmly behind the efforts that began with Gov. DeSantis. The Last Mile Completion Program stresses the importance of an academic credential, which will lead to successful employment for students following the conferring of a degree or college certificate.

“For example, a student may be missing a math or English credit to

graduate. Once graduated, an array of future opportunities emerge,” he said. “An earned credential supports Florida’s attainment goals, which also supports the governor’s workforce initiative.

“The entire SFSC family, including the District Board of Trustees, faculty and staff commit to serving students to enable them to achieve their goals,” Leitzel said.

Corcoran underscored the importance of the Last Mile Completion Program when he said, “I want to thank these college presidents for their belief in this program. They each agreed to use existing resources to help these students now and not wait for funding to be granted by the State Board of Education and the Florida Legislature.

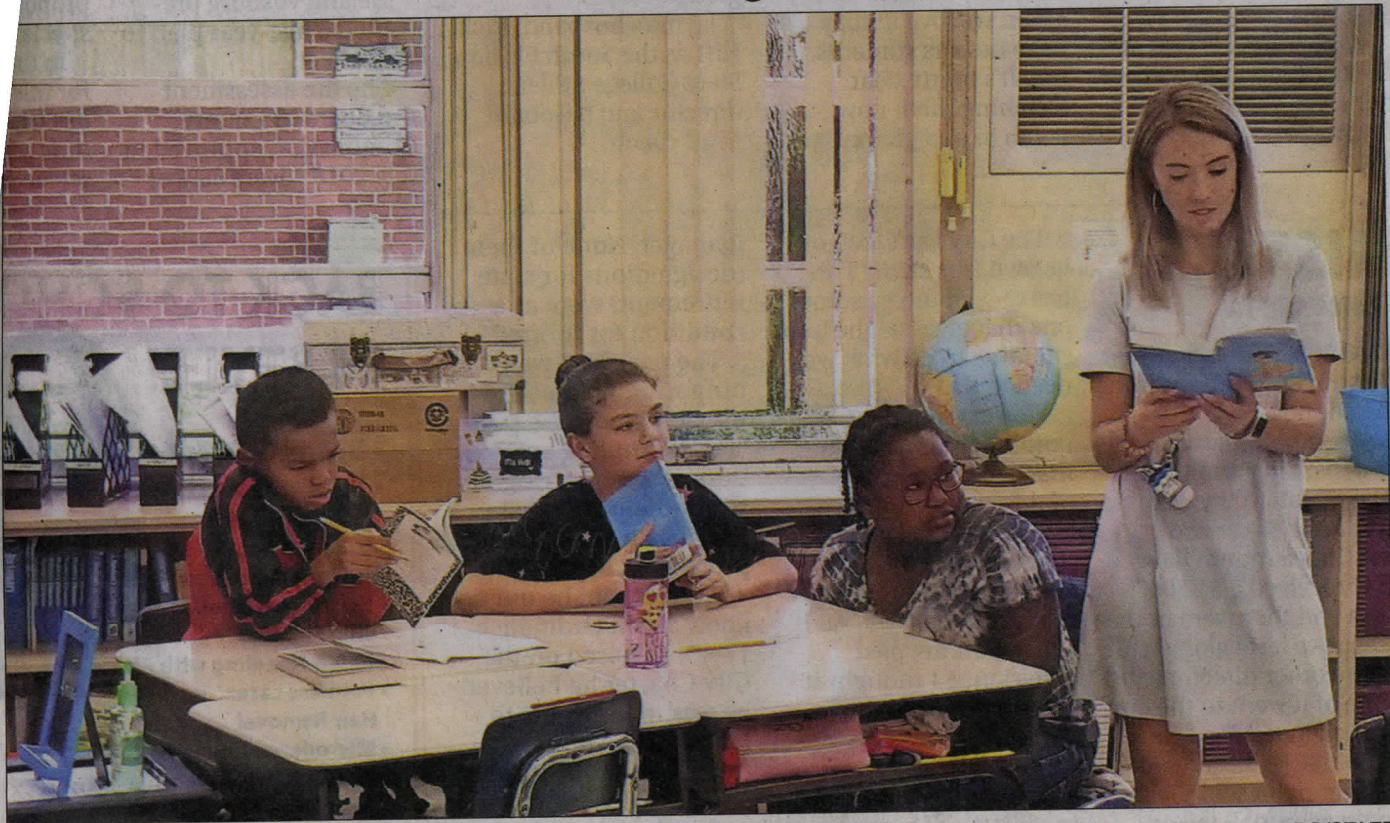
“It is proof of their commitment to their students and our state, showing us exactly how government should work — everyone coming together and putting our students’ success first.”

“It is a problem when our students are running out of money before graduating from college,” Murdaugh said. “Gov. DeSantis has challenged Florida to move from No. 24 to No. 1 in the nation for its workforce by 2030, and the Last Mile Completion Program is a step in the right direction to achieve that goal.”

Woman Maria
nd said city
Should have
City Council for approval

It's a Woodlawn Elementary family

3 Hitt teachers & grandma, too



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Woodlawn Elementary fifth-grade teacher Sydney Hitt with her class during a reading session.

SEBRING — Woodlawn Elementary School can now boast it has three “Hitts” in the classroom with a mother and her two daughters all serving as teachers at the school with the saying, painted on a front office wall — “We are a Family, It’s just the Woodlawn Way.”

The family within the Woodlawn family includes Jayma Hitt who has been a teacher at Woodlawn for 33 years and is now teaching second grade.

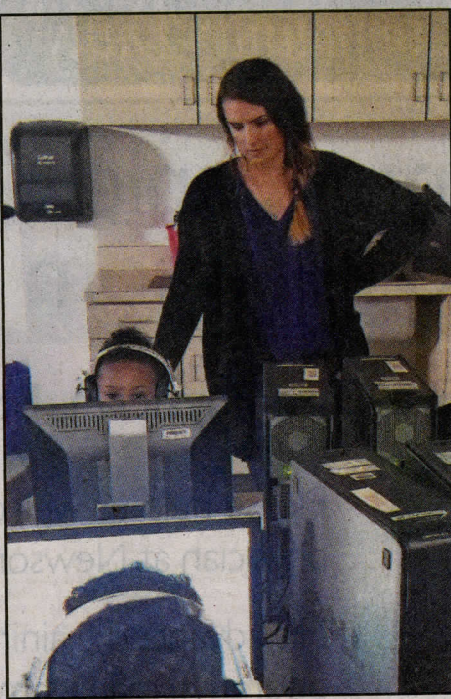
Her daughters, Sydney Hitt and Cassidy Hitt, who are both teachers at Woodlawn.

Sydney is in her second year at Woodlawn teaching fifth grade and Cassidy is a new teacher in her first year at Woodlawn.

Sydney and Cassidy’s grandmother and Jayma’s mother, Peg Stephenson volunteers at the school.

Stephenson is retired from Sebring High School where she was the bookkeeper for 31 years. She has been volunteering in Jayma’s classroom one day a week for the past 17 years.

Cassidy said she served her teaching internship, with a host teacher, at Woodlawn last year. This year she has a peer evaluator, but most people are her mentors and are gracious and willing to help her.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Woodlawn Elementary third grade teacher Cassidy Hitt in the computer lab with her class.

She had her class in a computer lab Thursday taking an on online assessment to evaluate their skill levels.

Some students raised their hands when they were having difficulties.

“That’s just trying to determine how much you know; it’s OK; just do your best,” she said. “They are going to give



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Woodlawn Elementary second-grade teacher Jayma Hitt with her class at the playground during recess.

you things you don’t know; that’s OK.”
In her second week of teaching,

FAMILY

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what has Cassady learned about being a teacher?

"Time management is a big thing," she said. "Trying to figure out how much you can get done in a certain amount of time and it never works out the way you planned for it to work out and you adjust and modify it and change what you need to change for your students.

"That is who you have to think about the whole time. You are here for them so you have to make sure that you are doing whatever you can for them to be successful."

Cassady received a bit of encouragement from one of her students whose mother graduated with Cassady.

"So he knew I was in the college program," Cassady explained.

"He came to me on the first day of school and said, 'It's O.K. if you are struggling; it's your first year.'"

While Cassady was at the computer lab with her class her mother, Jayma, had her class at



MARC VALERO/STAFF

the playground for recess.

Jayma said, "I think she will do a good job with the students: she loves children and she went SFSC [South Florida State College] to get her degree here; I think that she will do well."

Three of Jayma's second-graders from last year are now in Cassady's third-grade class.

"They went from Mrs. Hitt to Miss Hitt," Jayma noted.

Woodlawn Elementary Principal Jon Spencer said, "It's a whole family affair; we love it; they were here as students, too. It's pretty neat watching them now come in and giving back

as teachers; it's pretty awesome.

"When you see that tradition and walking in the same steps that they were as students and their mom walked as a teacher ... and their grandma is down there volunteering right now. It really is a family affair."

- Sydney and Cassady attended Woodlawn for their kindergarten through fifth grade schooling and Jayma attended Woodlawn from first grade through fifth grade.

Jayma's husband, Rick Hitt, is the South Florida State College athletic director and baseball head coach.