SFSC Foundation Awards Innovation Grants

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER
Special To The Herald-Advocate

The South Florida State College (SFSC) Foundation recently awarded four Innovation Grants to college employees. The recipients are Amy Bohan, Dr. Mintoo Patel, Bobby Sconyers, and Richard Shepard.

The SFSC Foundation offers the grants to support self-contained projects that make an innovative contribution to SFSC by improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. All SFSC employees are eligible to apply for an Innovation Grant. The maximum level of funding per project through this grant program is $1,500.

"We are grateful to our faculty and staff for recognizing the needs of our students and exploring creative ways to enhance the student experience at SFSC," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement. "The SFSC Foundation is eager to get behind faculty and staff and support them in these growth initiatives."

Gene Study On Canine Blood

Amy Bohan will use the award to look at the microRNA levels in circulating canine plasma and determine their role as biomarkers for congestive heart failure. Students will learn how to isolate microRNA from canine plasma and then perform a series of lab tests to examine the gene expression levels between dogs in heart failure and dogs that are not.

The monies will allow students to expand their knowledge outside the classroom. They will learn how to read and understand scientific articles from well-established research journals.

Students will learn how to collect scientific data by performing a variety of lab techniques and tests. The students will then be able to represent SFSC at scientific conferences, presenting a talk or poster of their work done in the SFSC labs under Bohan’s guidance.

Additional Lab Supplies

Dr. Mintoo Patel, adjunct instructor of biology, will use her award to acquire reagents and labware to conduct a research project for students enrolling in the courses under "Selected Topics in Biology and Biology Honors."

The research project enhances student learning by teaching scientific methodology and presentation, and students gain a deeper understanding of biology through STEM activities.

New Dental Cameras

Bobby Sconyers, professor of dental assisting, would like to upgrade the Dental Education Department’s oral cameras by purchasing a second Eye Special C-III digital Dental camera for $2,795.

The grant money will be included with other money from the Department toward the purchase. By training the students with a state-of-the-art camera, students will be prepared when they go into the workforce.

EMS Students Get Prep Course

Richard Shepard, EMS instructor, plans to better prepare students for the National Registry Paramedic Examination, which is required for Florida Paramedic Certification.

He requested the purchase of a two-day test preparatory course for current paramedic students. The course would be hosted at SFSC and has a success level of greater than a 95% pass rate for first-time test takers.

He requested 10 enrollments at $125 each. The preparatory class will better prepare students to take and pass the exam on the first attempt, allowing them to enter the workforce more quickly and give them the opportunity to become successful in their agency.

For information about the SFSC Foundation Innovation Grants, contact Bateman at 863-784-7181 or Jamie.bateman@southflorida.edu.
SFSC Foundation Executive Director Jamie Bateman (left) with grant winners Amy Bohan, Richard Shepard, and Bobby Sconyers.
Pete’s Panther Pantry Aims To Aid Students, Staff

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER

South Florida State College (SFSC) recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening of its new Pete’s Panther Pantry on the college’s Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

In attendance were staff, College administrators, and employees.

Tami Cullens, chair of the SFSC District Board of Trustees, cut the ribbon to officially open the Pantry.

Pete’s Panther Pantry, a partnership between SFSC and the SFSC Foundation, was established to assist students and employees in need of food and personal items. The Pantry offers a variety of non-perishable food items as well as dry goods, feminine hygiene items, baby food, diapers, and soap.

The Pantry was developed in response to the national epidemic of “food insecurity” — the lack of access to adequate amounts of healthy foods among college students.

“I have had students cry that they missed class or an assignment because they work two jobs to put food on the table for their families,” said Cindy Kinser, professor in the Medical Administrative Specialist program at SFSC and one of the organizers of Pete’s Panther Pantry.

Yet, they come to college to get off food stamps and make a better life for their children.

When we have a homeless student who lives in the car and has little to eat, we need to help. To see the relief on the face of a student who has received food and can get more as needed, words simply cannot describe the satisfaction of being able to help them.”

According to the 2019 edition of the Varying Degrees study by New America, the report found that 46 percent of current college students indicated that “often, or at least sometimes,” in the last 12 months, the food they bought just did not last and they did not have the money to buy more.

Students have to make difficult choices between buying food, paying for school fees, or buying diapers for their children.

In a December 2017 report by Katharine M. Broton and Sara Goldrick-Rab through the University of Iowa and Temple University, the authors wrote, “Efforts to increase college completion rates must be broadened to include attention to material hardship and shed light on this all-too-often hidden cost of college attendance.”

College and universities across the country have or are establishing food pantries for students. SFSC and the SFSC Foundation began its appeal to employees for non-perishable food and toiletries in December 2018 before launching Pete’s Panther Pantry.

Students and employees at SFSC can pick up food and personal items in Pete’s Panther Pantry, located in the Panther Activity Center (PAC) in Building D, on the second floor above the Panther Gym, in Room 233.

Hours are Monday and Thursday, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

If students or employees cannot get to the Pantry during these hours, they may contact Andy Polk, student life coordinator, at 863-784-7435 or Kinser at 863-784-7325.

Students at the Hardee or DeSoto campuses or Lake Placid Center may also request items from Pete’s Panther Pantry by contacting Polk or Kinser.

“We’ll send food over,” Kinser said.

Members of SFSC’s Student Government Association are on hand to watch expiration dates on products in the Pantry to make sure all food is fresh.

To donate food or other essential personal items to Pete’s Panther Pantry, drop items off at the PAC, Monday through Thursday, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or in Building I, second floor, Room 202, Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.

To offer financial assistance, checks can be made out to South Florida State College. Please put “Panther Pantry” in the memo on the check and send to the Cashier’s Office, South Florida State College, 600 West College Drive, Avon Park, FL 33825.
SFSC Volleyball Player Spends Labor Day Weekend Protecting Floridians From ‘Dorian’

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER
For The Herald-Advocate

Americans, typically, celebrate Labor Day weekend by holding backyard barbecues, heading to the beach, participating in parades, and attending music festivals.

But this year’s celebration took Florida by storm, quite literally.

And while Hurricane Dorian continually swirled over the Bahamas, weather watchers seemed unsure about its impact on Florida.

In spite of the uncertainty, Kelsey Herring, a South Florida State College (SFSC) student-athlete, was called to duty on Aug. 30 with her unit of the National Guard to prepare for the impending hurricane. Her unit, the 856 Quartermaster, is based in Arcadia.

Herring has managed to balance college, work, and military service.

She plays defensive specialist with SFSC’s Lady Panther volleyball team, is working toward her Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management with an emphasis in accounting, works part time for Lisa Sherman, CPA, and serves in the National Guard.

Herring was at volleyball practice when she received the text to report to her National Guard unit.

That day, her unit reported to Orlando where cases of water and meals ready to eat (MREs) were loaded onto trucks, just in case Floridians found themselves without supplies following Hurricane Dorian.

Herring’s initial mission was to go to Groveland in Lake County and set up a safe place, much like a warehouse, from which to send trucks with food and water to other parts of Florida.

Because the hurricane movement was so uncertain, Herring then was given a similar mission in Hernando County to provide another warehouse of food and water on Florida’s west coast to be ready in case the hurricane moved toward Central Florida.

The National Guard has been a part of Herring’s life since she joined in 2014 while in high school. The Kingsville, Missouri, native, graduated in May 2015 and left Missouri for basic training in June.

Although Herring’s older sister joined the U.S. Air Force and her grandfather was a Marine, Herring said that she doesn’t really come from a military family.

“A lot of people ask me why I joined the National Guard,” Herring said. “It just felt like something I wanted and needed to do, so I joined.”

After attending basic training in North Carolina, Herring was sent to her Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in Virginia. “AIT is where you learn your skill,” she said. “My technical military occupational specialty (MOS) was 92 Alpha, which is an automated logistical specialist, but I’ve never actually done that job.” An automated logistical specialist is responsible for supervising and performing management or warehouse functions to maintain equipment record and parts.

Rather, Herring became a gunner.

“The entire time I was in North Carolina, I was in gunnery. So, pretty much how long I was there I spread M240s, M249s, and .50 caliber machine guns,” she said.

“Since I moved to Florida, I started to learn a little more of my actual military occupational specialty,” Herring said. “During the hurricane, I was the non-commissioned officer (NCO) in charge. Not only in charge of the site and getting it set up but also in charge of the troops there. Sometimes, part of the job is to make sure there are lodging and contractors to provide meals for the troops.”

Unlike other people who were battening down for the hurricane, Herring spent her time making sure that Floridians would be safe and cared for if the hurricane came their way.

“Some people may say, ‘Wow, what a waste of time and money,’ but it wasn’t,” Herring said. “That kind of real training is the best thing you can hope for. We got real life training of what it would be like during a hurricane but without any of the devastation. We were looking out for everyone and everyone was so grateful for us to be there. Even passing us on the road, they felt safer. It’s peace of mind.”

Herring is enthusiastic about the National Guard and recommends that young people look into it.

“I would recommend it, especially for people who are younger and don’t know exactly what they want to do with their lives,” she said. “They may want to go to school but don’t have the finances to go to school. That’s why the Guard is so good, because you have the opportunity to go to college. You have state funding and you have federal tuition funding. You also learn discipline which helps with college.”

However, Herring doesn’t think the National Guard is for everyone.

“Being in the military takes certain mentality,” she said. “You can’t just say I don’t want to go. You don’t get to call in sick. There are times that you have to set personal things aside. You have to look at the bigger picture and some people just have a hard time looking past that. Or they don’t realize what they signed up for. It’s not a normal job where you can quit and you’re out of the contract. Six years is six years—that’s the time you signed up for and you have to understand that. If you feel like it’s not for you, then in six years, you can take that time and move past it.”

“The opportunities that the Guard has to offer can really benefit people,” she said. “People know the Army, Navy, and other branches of the military but don’t often think about the National Guard. If you don’t want to go full time, there are the National Guard and the Reserves.”

One of the benefits Herring discovered while at basic training in North Carolina was meeting her fiancé, Jacob, who was stationed at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

Herring has her future planned—she’d like to complete her bachelor’s degree in May 2021 and, eventually, become a partner in the offices of Lisa Sherman, CPA. As for the National Guard, her six years are up in November 2020.

“I would definitely like the chance to stay in,” she said. “But I’m a full-time student and I work. So, I have a lot more to think about than me. But I would definitely like to be able to continue with the Guard.”
Kelsey Herring (in center holding a volleyball) with her SFSC Lady Panthers volleyball teammates.
SFSC celebrates Latin heritage

A free Mexican food lunch was served Thursday at South Florida State College for students, faculty and staff.

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Students, faculty and staff at South Florida State College were treated to lunch, Mexican style, on Thursday for the midday Latin Heritage Celebration.

Student Life Coordinator Andy Polk said for the Latin Heritage Month Celebration the college has had many events for students throughout the month.

“We wanted to have a nice day to celebrate the culture through food,” he said. “We’ve had a really good turnout thus far and expect more students to come.

“We have food for 500 and I assume all of it will get eaten.”

The free lunch included: quesadillas, enchiladas, chimichangas, rice, shredded lettuce and tomato, hot and mild salsa, nacho dip and bottled water.

HSI (Hispanic Serving Institutions) STEM Project Director Tasha Morales organized the event with similar events having been held at the DeSoto Campus and Lake

South Florida State College freshman Briana Molina dines on a plate of Mexican food on Thursday at the SFSC Latin Heritage Celebration.

Placid Center and coming up on Monday at the Hardee Campus.

The event is funded through the STEM grant and the Student Life department.

Highlands News-Sun asked freshman Briana Molina if the meal is like what her mother cooks?

“Yes, it is,” Molina replied. “I am Mexican so I eat like this every single day.”

The 2019 Lake Placid High graduate is currently taking prerequisite courses to enter the Dental Hygienist Program.

The food was prepared by Senior Jalapeno Mexican Restaurant, Avon Park.
All 28 Florida colleges support Last Mile Completion program

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Department of Education and the Florida College System announced recently that all 28 Florida Colleges, including South Florida State College, support the Last Mile College Completion Program.

The colleges are voluntarily providing scholarships to eligible students using existing resources before receiving funding from the Legislature.

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

"Last legislative session we created the Last Mile Completion Program, which puts Florida on the path to becoming number one in the nation for its workforce by 2030," DeSantis said in a prepared statement. "Thank you to all the college presidents who have signed on and supported the Last Mile College Completion Program.

"I will continue to prioritize education and do everything in my power to help students complete their higher education goals and be prepared to enter the workforce."

South Florida State College stated, "We join our fellow Florida College System institutions in support of the Last Mile College Completion Program and will do what is necessary to assist those students who are at the finish line but have not yet crossed it.

"We want all students to feel that sense of accomplishment that graduating brings and we would be delighted if they chose South Florida State College to achieve this goal."

The Last Mile Completion Program creates a pathway for many returning students to earn their degree. As Florida's workforce engine, the Florida College System knows that continuing to develop Florida's talent pipeline for workforce needs is a top priority for business owners in Florida, and the Last Mile College Completion Program is part of the solution.

While each college provides the returning students with a transcript analysis of the courses they have left to complete the specific degree, the minimum criteria for the Last Mile College Completion Program include that the student must:

- Be a Florida resident.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Be within 12 credit hours of completing their first associate or baccalaureate degree.
- Have attended a regionally accredited post-secondary institution within the past eight years.
SFSC Performance Series Announces Lineup

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER
Special To The Herald-Advocate

South Florida State College's 36th season of performances includes national Broadway tours, family entertainment, dance, country, pop and classical music, and comedy.

"Patrons tell us that they love the variety of the performances, reasonably priced tickets, free parking, and beautiful theater," said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC.

Subscription packages for the Artist, Matinee, Trending Now, and Jazz series offer the best prices. "Our subscribers tell us their reasons to purchase the package and they include the convenience, price, and getting seats before the general public," added Garren.

Subscriptions are available online or by phone at the SFSC Box Office now. Single tickets go on sale Monday, Oct. 14.

The season opens on Sunday, Nov. 10 with the family friendly performance of Lightwire Theater's Dino Light at 3 p.m. As featured on "America's Got Talent," the production has toured throughout the world and received excellent reviews on the use of technology, dance, and imagination. All seats are $10 and pre-show activities will be offered for young people, including gifts for the first 250 children. Seating for Dino Light is general admission.

"We're encouraging children to make a dinosaur mask at home and bring it to the show to receive a raffle ticket. The raffle winner gets a fun dinosaur themed gift basket," explained Garren.

Blue collar comedian Bill Engvall is a Grammy-nominated, multiplatinum recording artist and one of the top comedians in the country. Tickets are $75-$125 for the Feb. 21 performance at 8 p.m.

Six-time Country Music Association award recipient and Grammy Award winner Lee Ann Womack will deliver a breathtaking hybrid performance of country, soul, gospel, and blues on April 4. Tickets are $35-$65 and a special VIP Meet and Greet is an additional $50.

The Artist Series launches on Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. with the holiday themed, Merry Country Christmas direct from Nashville. The Series also includes How Great Thou Art, an Elvis-inspired gospel concert on Jan. 7 featuring Mike Albert and the Big "E" Band. Pianist Jim Brickman celebrates his 25th anniversary on Jan. 18.

The Greatest Love of All, featuring Australian performer Belinda Davids, is scheduled for Jan. 25. It has wowed audiences across the UK, Europe, North America, South Africa, Asia, UAE, Australia, and New Zealand and continues to gather glowing reviews worldwide.

The national Broadway tours of Bandstand: The Musical on Feb. 6 and An American in Paris on March 12 are highlights of the season. Neil Berg's 50 Years of Rock & Roll, on Feb. 20, takes audiences on a tour of the beginning of rock and roll from the early 1900s to the glory years of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, featuring the music of Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Ray Charles, The Beatles, Beach Boys, Led Zeppelin, Stevie Wonder, Aerosmith, Eagles and more.

Motown with a Twist features dance celebrities from "Dancing with the Stars"
and "So You Think You Can Dance," and American Idol vocalists in an electrifying night of Motor City's most famous hits at the Detroit Theatre on March 25.

The family friendly AdventHealth Trending Now Series includes fun, contemporary, nationally touring productions. Celebrate the New Year with The Hit Men on Jan. 4 with the musicians and singers who toured and recorded with some of the biggest names in the music business, like Jim Croce, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Frankie Vallie, Carly Simon, Blood Sweat & Tears, and Cheap Trick. This is not a tribute act and the show has been selling out throughout the country! Recycled Percussion, a smash hit on America's Got Talent and six-time winner of the National Act of the Year Award, performs on Jan. 31.

Back by popular demand on Feb. 9 in an all-new show is Artrageous II. As seen on the Lifetime TV show "Pitch Slapped," Blue Jupiter, cutting edge a cappella recording artists, will deliver an energetic pop and Broadway performance on Feb. 29. The sumptuous, full-length ballet Cinderella, produced and performed by South Carolina Ballet, will delight young and old on March 7.

The popular Matinee Series, scheduled for Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m., includes: Jim Witter's Piano Men; Golden Girls: A Puppet Parody; Fabulous Equinox Orchestra; Broadway Tonite!, Spinal Tap; and the Dozers.

Jazz fans love the traditional Jazz Series in the intimate 250-seat SFSC University Center where audiences are up close to the music. The Eddie Metz Trio with Nikki Parrot and Rossano Sportiello will deliver a fun performance on Jan. 15. Michigan jazz artists, Terry Lower and Ely Evans Hyde, make a return engagement due to audience demand on Jan. 12.

Celebrate the music of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald on Feb. 22 with Lisa Kelly and J.B. Scott Sextet. The New Victrola Dixieland Band, featuring Mark and Kathy Zauss, brings together terrific vocals with dynamite trumpet solos and toe-tapping style on March 4. Any student with a valid student ID receives a free ticket to any jazz performance. Free student tickets are available the night of show at the box office.

Show information, videos, and ticketing are available online at sfscARTS.org. Online sales for single tickets begin Monday, Oct. 14 at 9 a.m. The box office opens on Monday, Oct. 20 at 11:30 a.m. and is located at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. Phone orders are available at 863-784-7178 for an $8 fee.

Season tickets are now on sale for the 36th annual performance season at South Florida State College.
SFSC Grad Now Leads Cornerstone Hospice

Special To The Herald-Advocate

James Rogers Jr., an alumna of South Florida State College's (SFSC) Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program, became area executive director at Cornerstone Hospice in Lake and Sumter counties in April 2019. Previously, he was the director of admissions for the seven-county Central Florida region that Cornerstone serves. He spoke about his desire to begin a career in nursing and the importance of care in a hospice setting.

SFSC: Where are you from?
JR: I was born in Clarion, Penn. Our family moved to Sebring in 1981 and then relocated to Polk County in 2002.

SFSC: Why did you go into nursing?
JR: I worked with my dad as a mechanic while growing up and through high school. He always encouraged me to choose a field where the work was not as hard on my body as auto mechanics. I enjoyed being around people and helping them in any way I could.

SFSC: Did someone in particular inspire you to go into nursing?
JR: My wife’s stepmother, Joanne Foote, planted the seed in 1998 that I should explore nursing. She was a nurse as well, and I took her advice.

SFSC: Foote was a professor in SFSC’s Nursing Education Department for nearly 13 years and retired from the College in January 2018.

SFSC: How did you begin your nursing career?
JR: In 1998, I took a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) class at Lake Placid Health and Rehabilitation Center in Lake Placid, Fla. I started out working as a CNA in a long-term care facility. Once I completed my Practical Nursing (PN) certificate to become a licensed practical nurse (LPN), I worked in a hospital setting, doctor’s office, home health agency, home respiratory, and then landed in hospice.

SFSC: What nursing degrees have you attained?
JR: I earned my PN certificate from SFSC in 2001 and my ADN from SFSC in 2011. In the future, I plan to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) through SFSC.

SFSC: What is hospice and why is it important?
JR: Hospice is a special kind of holistic care that focuses on the quality of life for the patient and family that are facing a life-limiting disease. Hospice care does not focus on treating the disease but rather focuses on treating the person and the symptoms of the disease. It’s meeting the patient where they are and supporting them on their journey.

SFSC: How and why did you get into hospice care?
JR: I wanted to get back to the original reason nursing won me over and to feel like I was making more of an impact on the patients and families that I cared for. As I was nearing the end of nursing school, I considered changing to a different area. I had worked in hospice for five years prior to getting my ADN. While I was doing my practicum on the ambulatory surgical floor, I quickly fell in love with the high-paced flow of the unit. However, that plan changed when my dad became ill, was admitted to hospice care, and passed away. It was that moment that re-motivated me to stay in hospice and challenge myself to make a difference in my community.

SFSC: Was it difficult transitioning from nursing into administration?
JR: Transitioning into leadership was one of the most difficult transitions for me. Having a strong group of mentors who were willing to support me made the transition smoother. I am a “fixer” and had to learn to empower my team, rather than enabling them. In my current role, I can do that.

In my current position, I am responsible for the day-to-day operations of the region. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to, maintaining positive patient satisfaction scores, growth of the regional census, the satisfaction of my internal clients (employees), and the financial performance of my teams. We are firm believers that if our staff and patients are happy, that word of mouth will spread, ultimately increasing our census and allowing our financials to fall in line.

SFSC: What nursing professors at SFSC inspired you and why?
JR: Dr. Maryann Fritz, retired director of nursing at SFSC: In 1999, when I was considering the nursing program at SFSC, I spoke to her multiple times and she was always encouraging. I had her for my Nutrition class and then as a professor in the program. She ran a strict program and, to this day, I live by many of the values she instilled in me. Being honest, on time (early), and if corrective action was needed, once it was completed there was no further discussion about it.

Helen Shoemaker, professor of nursing at SFSC: Mrs. Shoemaker took on a “mother-like” role in my life. Not only did she want me to succeed as a nurse, but she also cared in a way that only a parent could. She went above and beyond to help me personally with the struggles that came my way while in the program and even after.

Dr. Michelle Heston, dean of health sciences at SFSC: She was one of my professors during the PN program. She always demanded the best from us and had high standards that we had to live up to. Many of those still hold true for me to this day. She was always available to assist with any college-related or personal hurdles we were facing. SFSC: What advice would you give to someone who’s considering nursing in a hospice setting?

I participated in the mock nursing interviews and always recommend working a minimum of one year in Med-Surg (Medical-Surgical) to build that strong foundation of working as a nurse. Following that year, I recommend shadowing a hospice nurse to really understand what that job encompasses. Hospice nursing is hard, but also the most rewarding area of nursing, in my opinion.