## SFSC FOUNDATION, INC.

13 East Main Street Avon Park, FL 33825 863-453-3133

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# ...inside DONORS AND hakers



The Florida College
System Foundation and
Florida Blue give \$26,594
in scholarships to SFSC's
health science students.



Liectrical Lineworker program gets boost from Duke Energy's \$30,000 donation.



Alumnus Edward Lohrer credits SFSC with starting him on path to military service and a law career.



Governor Ron DeSantis touted the importance of workforce development when he visited the SFSC Hardee Campus on Jan. 20.

## **Governor DeSantis Presents \$415,000 in Funding for Truck Driving Program**

SFSC'S TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING
PROGRAM PROVIDES IN-DEPTH,
HANDS-ON TRAINING TO FUTURE
TRUCK DRIVERS.

overnor Ron DeSantis visited South Florida State College's Hardee Campus on Jan. 20 to present Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC president, with a check for \$415,000. The money is earmarked for two state-ofthe-art driving simulators for the College's Commercial Vehicle Driver Program.

Gov. DeSantis said he plans to make Florida the nation's No. 1 state for workforce education by 2030. This includes responding to the national shortage of truck drivers.

"The American Trucking Association

estimates that we're going to need, nationwide, 1.1 million new truck drivers over the next 10 years," Gov. DeSantis said. "Right now, there's a national shortage. Florida has been helping alleviate that. Companies are offering \$15,000 signing bonuses to encourage people to sign up and drive trucks. This is a moment when we can give people more opportunity and see them do well with little or no debt while also filling a need."

"We were thrilled to have Gov. DeSantis and Senior Chancellor Henry Mack from the Florida College System here," said Dr. Leitzel. "It is great that workforce matters in this state and we have a governor who rewards those efforts. The Florida College System can quickly respond to economic

■ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Spring Blooms with Possibilities

Spring is the season that blooms with endless possibilities.

New beginnings for our students are around every corner with opportunities waiting to be discovered.

It is thrilling to know that a new chapter is just about to begin and that there is endless potential for achievement.

Our students are experiencing that. With Commencement coming up, SFSC students are looking forward to that moment when they walk across the stage to receive what they have worked so hard to accomplish. Some may forge ahead with fiery steps while others may proceed with assurance and stability.

Whatever direction they choose, just knowing where they came from is priceless. At the alumni office, we are able to stay connected with our graduates as they move on. We see their accomplishments and congratulate them on the growth they've experienced in their careers. To know that their success is due in part to the education they received here at SFSC should make you stand proud in knowing that you are supporting an organization that is truly making a difference in the lives of so many.

If you are an alum of SFSC, we encourage you to get connected with our alumni office. With monthly newsletters and quarterly networking



events, there are many ways for you to stay informed and reconnect with other alumni.

The impact SFSC has on our students and in

our community can only be achieved when we partner together for a common goal—and that goal is higher education.

Imagine where your life would be if you did not have a teacher who helped you when you were in school, if your contractor could not fulfill your needs in a home repair project, or if your automotive technician couldn't fix your car. What would you do if we did not have competent electrical lineworkers who could turn our power on after a storm, or a skilled, compassionate nurse who cared for you when you were sick?

Higher education isn't just a degree; it is a way of life. It influences us every day without even realizing it. Will you make the decision today to support SFSC? You can change the lives of so many and support our community at the same time. Throughout this edition, you will see numerous ways you can give back. Take a moment to review which is best for you and then take that step to ensure our students achieve the success they've worked so hard for.

## sfsc foundation

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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## 5 Ways to Support the SFSC Foundation

- 1. Make the SFSC Foundation your favorite charitable organization at Amazon Smile, and go to *smile.amazon. com* when making future purchases. Learn more at *amzn.to*/2*g*9*Ku0P*.
- 2. Become a Friend of SFSC by setting up an online recurring donation of \$25 or more per month using the QR code.
- 3. Sponsor a fundraising event, such as the Legacy Showcase, the

Jacaranda Jubilee, the Christmas luncheon, or the the Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout.

- 4. Give stock or securities. For information, call 863-453-3133 or email *foundation@southflorida.edu*.
- 5. Join the SFSC Heritage Society by including the SFSC Foundation in your will or trust, or name the SFSC Foundation as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy.



is produced semiannually by the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc., to inspire charitable contributions in support of South Florida State College. The SFSC Foundation raises awareness of the value of an SFSC education and promotes student success through scholarships, facilities development, and program support. By supporting SFSC, the SFSC Foundation endeavors to enhance the ability of residents in our district to obtain a college education.

## Health Science Students Receive \$26,594 in Scholarships

uring the December meeting of SFSC's District Board of Trustees, 18 students studying for careers in the health sciences received approximately \$26,594 in scholarships through a partnership between the Florida College System (FCS) Foundation and Florida Blue.

Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarships were awarded to students in SFSC's nursing, dental education, and radiography programs. The scholarships may be used for for tuition, textbooks, lab fees, and childcare. Awards were made as follows:

Nursing: Ebony Gammage, Michaelyn Grantham, Heather Hardisty, Christen Pyles, Marisela Ramos, Brenna Wells, Lyndsee Williams, Maria Gonzalez, Lillian Salazar, and Marilyn Ceballos

**Dental Education:** Kaycee Cooper, Alejandra Sandoval-Ibarra, Havla Krayem, and Jennifer Lopez

Radiography: Jeremy Ray, Hailea Seyer, Leroy Small, and Ashlvn Smeal

Scholarships were presented by Tami Cullens, chair, SFSC District

Board of Trustees, and Jamie Bateman, SFSC executive director of institutional advancement.

The Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship was created to assist Florida college students who are pursuing careers that meet the state's growing need for skilled health care professionals. The SFSC Foundation provides a 50% match of the original award, as Nursing scholarship recipients the funds must be matched dollar for dollar by private donors at the local level.

"Students participating in intensive healthcare programs are often unable to take on work outside of their studies," said Bateman. "Because of its commitment to education and statewide healthcare needs, Florida Blue has provided scholarships to aid these students in completing their programs and alleviating financial stress. These students will soon begin careers in fields that are critical in keeping our community safe and healthy."

SFSC's health sciences students have received Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health scholarships since 2006.





Radiography scholarship recipients



Dental education scholarship recipients

**NEWS & NOTES** 

## **GivingTuesday Raises** \$6,478 in Donations

Generous donors contributed \$6,478 to the SFSC Foundation on GivingTuesday last November. This amount includes \$1,941 in matching funds from the Rotary Club of Highlands County, the Avon Park Noon Rotary Club, and the Lake Placid Noon Rotary Club.

GivingTuesday is held on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving to encourage charitable giving at the start of the holiday season. The Foundation accepts donations year-round at southflorida.edu/ support-sfsc.

### **Hotel Jacaranda Menu Showcases SFSC Students**

The Hotel Jacaranda is hosting an Italian "feast" day on Thursday, April 28, to showcase the talents of SFSC's culinary arts students.

The menu for "A Taste of Italy" will feature Italian wedding soup, Lasagna al Forno, Chicken Française, homemade Italian sausauge and peppers, Eggplant Parmigiana, and other Italian delights. For this special day, cannolis, tiramisu, and ricotta cheesecake will be added to the dessert table.

Enjoy "A Taste of Italy" and support SFSC's chefs-in-training during lunch hours from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## **MOFAC Show Features Student Artists**

From April 6 through May 13, the artwork of SFSC students will fill the gallery of the SFSC Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC) as part of the 2022 Annual Juried Student Art Show.

The community is invited to an awards ceremony and reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 21, when the Max Gooding Award for Best of Show will be presented. Admission is free to the show and reception.

The show is known for dazzling contributions from budding student artists in diverse mediums such as painting, drawing, ceramics, digital media, mixed media, and photography.



Nancy Dodd, Duke Energy Florida community relations manager, presents a \$30,000 check to SFSC President Dr. Tom Leitzel and Jamie Bateman.

## SFSC Receives \$30,000 Donation from Duke Energy Foundation

L ast September, SFSC received another \$30,000 donation from Duke Energy Foundation to enhance the College's Electrical Lineworker Program through an initiative called "Increasing Training Opportunities for Electrical Lineworker Students by Expanding Training Capacity and Improving Safety."

"Supporting South Florida State College's electrical lineworkers is vital to developing a diverse workforce to help support the needs of the energy industry," said Nancy Dodd, Duke Energy Florida community relations manager. "Our continued collaboration with SFSC helps strengthen the vitality of the communities we serve, today and in the future."

The donation will be used to purchase climbing equipment and hardware, such as poles, transformers, and conductors, and to upgrade current vehicles, said Christopher Yeomans, electrical distribution professor. Some of the money will also purchase gym equipment to assist students in building the upper body strength required for this rigorous type of work.

Graduates of SFSC's Electrical Lineworker Program earn career certificates and become electric line technicians. For information about the program, email Yeomans at *yeomansc@southflorida.edu* or call 863-784-7045.

## Fifth Golf Shootout Supports Athletics

The fifth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout raised approximately \$17,700 for SFSC's women's volleyball, women's cross country, men's baseball, and women's softball teams.

Qualifying rounds were held Jan. 13-15 at the Sun 'N Lake Golf Club in Sebring. At the end of the day on Jan. 15, 12 finalists had one chance to hit a hole-in-one on the par-3 18th hole of the Deer Run course and claim the \$1 million prize.

"I am pleased that the student-athletes are respectable and that they are representing our community in a professional and courteous way," said event sponsor Ronnie Carter, Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc.

Although no one scored a hole-in-one, three finalists won prizes for landing balls

closest to the pin. First-place finalist Steve Sortore of Plainfield, Ind., won \$750 for landing his ball 20' 11" from the hole. Second-place Donald Bressette of Sebring claimed \$500 when his ball fell 40' 7" from the hole. Third-place Brad Crone of Estero received \$250 for getting within 50' 7".



Finalists Donald Bressete, Brad Crone, and Steve Sortore appear with event sponsor Ronnie Carter of Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc., Dr. Tom Leitzel, and Jamie Bateman.

"We appreciate our sponsors and the competitors who participated in this event," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement at SFSC. "This was a fun time getting to know the golfers as they battled to get on the leaderboard."

The award sponsor was AdventHealth of Sebring. Media sponsors were the Herald Advocate and Sebring Radio. Hitting zone sponsors were Dr. Deborah Fuschetti, Marmer Construction, Sun 'N Lake Improvement District, Albritton Insurance Services, LLC, Bowen and Son Roofing, Inc., W2 Holdings, LLC, and Quality Tees & Sporting Goods. Qualifying sponsors were the Estrada Family; Havery Services, LLC; Tom and Nancy Leitzel; Lena Phelps; Creative Printing; Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc.; Cullen, Mackenzie, and Emmarie Fells; Dr. David Boersma; Turner Furniture; Indy Boys; Robbins Nursery; Twilight Glass and Mirror, LLC; and Sunny South Exterminators.

The 2023 Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout will be Jan. 12-15 at the Sun 'N Lake Golf Club.



## **Alum Balances Law Career With Military Service**

FOR EDWARD LOHRER, SFSC
WAS THE BRIDGE TO AN ARMY
CAREER AND LAW SCHOOL.

As a young man growing up in Lake Placid, Edward Lohrer was curious to see what life held for him beyond the borders of Highlands County. He didn't have a plan at the time, but through self-determination he created the life he wanted. He is now a construction law attorney with the law firm Becker & Poliakoff in Fort Lauderdale.

As a 17-year-old high school junior, Lohrer made a commitment to join the U.S. Army because the \$30,000 bonus it was offering to new recruits would help him pay for college. Because he still needed to complete his senior year of high school, his Army recruiter steered him to SFSC's Adult High School program at the Lake Placid Center. By working at his own pace, he earned his diploma in four months and entered the Army a year earlier than he otherwise would have.

Lohrer was stationed at Fort Knox, Ky. His Military Occupational Specialty was 19K, a U.S. Army M1 Abrams

armor crewman. During combat, soldiers with this specialty operate M1 Abrams tanks When his term of service ended in 1997, Lohrer left the Army to attend college with the hopes of



Lohrer as a young Army soldier

eventually studying law at the University of Florida (UF).

In the process of applying to colleges, Lohrer visited SFSC's Admissions Office and learned that anyone who earned an associate in arts degree at a Florida community college would be accepted by a state university without taking the SAT or ACT exams. Lohrer received his associate in arts from SFSC in 1998 and his bachelor's degree

#### **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**



Edward Lohrer is a construction law attorney with Becker & Poliakoff in Fort Lauderdale.

with a double major in criminology and political science from UF in 2000. While waiting to be accepted into law school, he enrolled in a master's degree program that focused on political campaigns.

In 2000 while attending the University of Florida Levin College of Law, Lohrer joined an Army Reserve unit in Gainesville to experience the order and camaraderie of Army life that he had come to miss. While in his third semester, Lohrer's Army Reserve Unit was deployed to Iraq in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. He had three days to put his affairs in order before reporting to duty. "I was the first person at the law school that this happened to," Lohrer explained.

After 14 months in Iraq, Lohrer returned to law school at the University of Florida. Because he had been in Iraq, He was hired as a summer associate with a two-attorney firm in Gainesville that introduced him to construction law. When he went back to law school for his final year, the firm asked him to stay on part time. He continued to work for them through the following summer.

After passing the Florida Bar Exam, Lohrer began applying to larger law firms. "Construction law is a niche area, so I emphasized my experience on my resume. That's when I sent my resume to a firm in Fort Myers that concentrated on construction law. I was there for three years. Although I learned a lot while I was there and I was very close with a lot of the people there, it was a smaller firm handling smaller cases. I wanted to move onward and upward."

At the time, Becker & Poliakoff had an opening in their Fort Lauderdale office's construction law department. "They were looking for a younger attorney with some experience, and I fit that bill," Lohrer said. "Fort Myers has a small legal community. Becker had a Fort Myers office, so I'd gotten to know a couple of their lawyers. I got the interview with Becker and I've been with the firm since 2008." Lohrer remains active in the Army Reserve. He is the first sergeant of a drill sergeant unit in West Palm Beach and was recently selected to the E9 sergeant major list. To date, he has accumulated 23 years of military service.

Lohrer has advice for young people who are looking to the future. "At various points in my life, I didn't always have a plan," he said. "But I knew that I needed to do something, not just sit around. Time passes quickly and if you're unsure about what to do with your future, a lot of options exist. For me, I got experience in the military and got help with college. I was unsure what the college process was like or what I wanted to do, but I went to SFSC's Admissions Office and talked to people there. They gave me valuable information.

"Just go talk to people, get different perspectives, and learn about different options. When I see people who are adrift, there's always some reason not to move forward — -like COVID-19. If you put in the effort, plenty of opportunities are available out there to explore. Life is a lot better if you're trying to improve yourself and you're staying busy and active."

## Braden Beaney Becomes Take Stock's Leaders for Life Finalist

THE HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR IS NOW IN THE COMPETITION FOR A \$40,000 SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE ASOFSKY FAMILY FOUNDATION.

PeSoto County High School senior Braden Beaney is one of 12 finalists who are competing for six Take Stock in Children Leaders for Life Fellowships. Winners of a Fellowship receive a \$40,000 scholarship that covers nontuition college expenses.

The Leaders for Life Fellowship is an initiative of the Asofsky Family Foundation, which awards the scholarship in partnership with Take Stock in Children. The SFSC Foundation is the lead agency for Take Stock within the College's service district of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties.

Beaney is eligible for the Fellowship due to his participation in Take Stock in Children. Because he is a dual enrollment student, he expects to graduate from DeSoto County High School and also receive his associate in arts degree from SFSC in spring 2022. He plans to study biology at the University of Florida with the goal of becoming a medical doctor in psychiatry.

In his young life, Beaney has learned to take charge in a cricis. He has assisted in caring for his stepfather, who has multiple sclerosis, and was his mother's caretaker as she recovered from a broken foot. In the workplace, he was a cashier at Winn-Dixie who trained new employees. He has participated in the National Honor Society, Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), and the Green/Environmental club.

Dale Wolgast, a retired school principal from the DeSoto County School District, has been Beaney's Take Stock menor for three years.

"One of the things foundations,



Braden Beaney, third from left, is congratulated by Take Stock student success coaches Latasia Polk and Dolores Breedlove, Dr. Amy Bennett, Anastasia Saunders, and Jamie Bateman.

and those accepting students into universities, look for are completers," Wolgast said. "Braden checks all those boxes when it comes to finishing and completing what he starts. This scholarship would help him afford to go to a major university and go into the field of medicine he desires. He's one of the greatest kids I've ever met."

The local Take Stock in Children program has produced 14 finalists and eight winners. For information, call 863-784-7343 or email *tsic@southflorida.edu*.

#### ■ TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Funding will help SFSC's Truck Driving Academy alleviate the shortage of truck drivers

matters, and Gov. DeSantis recognized this. He boldly went after funds in the midst of the pandemic and said, 'We need to put people to work in the state of Florida.' Therefore, the Rapid Credentialing program was established. At SFSC, we say jobs is our favorite fourletter word. We enable our learners to get a job, keep a job, or be promoted in a current job. On behalf of all current students and all future students at SFSC, we are so grateful for the governor's support."

In 2020, SFSC was among the state institutions to be awarded funding through Gov. DeSantis' Emergency Education Relief (GEER) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. SFSC received \$292,096 plus an additional 25% through matching funds for a total of \$365,120. The money bolstered Rapid Credentialing, which assists in

educating and training residents who are unemployed, underemployed, or furloughed. Funds were used to enroll and complete students in short-term, indemand workforce/career and technical education (CTE) credentialing and certificate programs.

Because SFSC's Commercial Vehicle Driver Program led the way with strong performance on its grant evaluation, Henry Mack, senior chancellor of the Florida Department of Education overseeing the Division of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, suggested the College move forward with purchasing truck driver simulators as teaching tools.

"We're seeing evidence that CTE graduates are earning the same median lifetime earning as baccalaureate degree earners," Mack said. "A case in point are the truck driver graduates of SFSC."

"We're excited about these

simulators because they will give our students an enhanced training experience," said Tina Gottus, SFSC's director of corporate and community education. "Students will learn how to drive in conditions such as darkness and high winds, as well as those we don't experience in Florida – the mountains and snow. They learn how to recover from incidents such as a tire blow out. Ultimately, they will become better drivers. When they make our roads safer, we all benefit."

SFSC's Commercial Vehicle Driver Program is a four-week course that offers in-depth training and provides connections with future employers. Joe Burke, a truck driver for 36 years, is the program's coordinator and instructor. The College accepts approximately 260 students into the program each year. For more information, call 863-784-7033 or email corporatetraining@southflorida.edu.

## New Members Join Foundation's Board

The SFSC Foundation's Board of Directors welcomes four new members.

Originally from St. Louis, Mo.,



Timothy D. Backer

Timothy D.
Backer moved to
Arcadia in 1972. In
1975, he earned his
Associate in Arts
degree from SFSC
and became a real
state appraiser.
He earned his
Bachelor of

Arts degree in Accounting from the University of South Florida in 1983. Backer became an SFSC adjunct faculty member in real estate in 1985, and in 2009 he was appointed to represent DeSoto County on SFSC's District Board of Trustees. He was a member of the Arcadia Volunteer Fire Department for 27 years, serving 24 years as chief. Currently, he is the commander of the DeSoto County Sheriff's Auxiliary, chairman of the DeSoto High School Advisory Committee, and president of the DeSoto County Board of Realtors, an office in which he has served 12 terms.

Sandee Braxton became employed



Sandee Braxton

by the City of Wauchula in 2014. She was promoted to finance director in 2017 and also took on the responsibilities of assistant city manager in 2021. In managing a \$20

million budget, Braxton oversees the City's financial operations, including auditing, account reconciliation, accounts payable and receivable, tax compliance, payroll, and investments.

Braxton holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Florida State University and a master's degree in accounting from Florida Southern College. She is the immediate past president of the Rotary Club of Hardee County and is a member of the Florida Government Financial Officers Association. She is a lifelong resident of Hardee County, where she resides with her husband, Kyle, and children Rocco and Rory.

Cheyenne Pohl is a native of



**Cheyenne Pohl** 

Wauchula with a bachelor's degree in marketing and a master's degree in agriculture business from the University of Florida. In March 2021, she became the

communications coordinator for the City of Wauchula. She creates positive public relations between the City and its residents; produces press releases, website and social media posts, employee newsletters, and other marketing materials; and assists departments with developing strategic plans that serve as living documents.

Pohl places education on the forefront of her values and wants to help promote SFSC to donors, students, and the community. Through her experience as a former SFSC dual enrollment student, she brings a wealth of wisdom to the Foundation Board.

**Corey Allain** is the controller



Corey Allain

with Nucor Steel Florida. He has held various roles at five locations over his 12 years with Nucor. Allain and his three children reside in Bradenton and enjoy fishing,

playing and watching football, and raising daughter Raegan's Future Farmer's of America (FFA) hog.

## Foundation Introduces New Executive Assistant

Taylor Massey is the SFSC Foundation's new executive assistant for institutional advancement.

Massey graduated from Avon

Park High School in 2017 and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Warner University, where she was a



**Taylor Massey** 

cheerleader and student ambassador. She won the Junior Miss Avon Park competition at age 14 and the Miss Avon Park Chamber of Commerce competition at age 16.

"I represented Avon Park in whatever capacity they needed me. I would attend luncheons, meet people, help out, and serve others. The Miss Avon Park Chamber of Commerce competition was the Chamber's biggest fundraiser." Since then, she has continued to help the Avon Park Chamber with its pageants and other events. She is also involved with Beauty Fit for a Queen, a local non-profit organization that provides free hair styling and makeup to girls attending proms and homecoming events.

Massey looks forward to working with the Foundation as it helps students acquire the finances they need to get through college.

"At the SFSC Foundation, we're raising money for students. The donors and scholarships that we offer make it possible for many students to attend SFSC. I believe that everyone should have the chance to attend college whether they can afford it or not. The Foundation helps students do that."

THE HOTEL JACARANDA IS OPEN FOR LUNCH Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. | 19 E. Main St., Avon Park



South Florida State College 600 West College Drive Avon Park, FL 33825

## On the Calendar

#### Foundation Events .....

#### Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos Performing at the Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2022 5:30 P.M. SOCIAL | 7 P.M. PERFORMANCE Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts Tickets are available at sfscarts.org/show/pianos.

#### The Jacaranda Jubilee

MONDAY, NOV. 28, 2022 | 6:30 P.M. The Hotel Jacaranda Veranda RSVP required

### GivingTuesday

TUESDAY, NOV. 29, 2022 southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/ givingtuesday

#### **Christmas Luncheon**

THURSDAY, DEC. 8, 2022 | 11:30 A.M. The Hotel Jacaranda RSVP required

## **Sixth Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout**

Thursday-Sunday, Jan. 13-15, 2023 Sun 'N Lake Golf Club, Sebring Reservations and tee times are not required.

#### Meetings .....

#### **Board Meeting**

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022 | 6 P.M. The Hotel Jacaranda

#### **Executive Committee Meeting**

TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022 | NOON The Hotel Jacaranda

#### SFSC Events

#### **2022 Spring Commencement**

TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2022 Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts Highlands Campus