

# SFSC students head to NASA for STEM teacher training



COURTESY PHOTO

Four South Florida State College Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education students, Sheri Cobb, Bonnie Cullifer, Dana Smallwood and Antonio Tirada, will participate in a five-day NASA Minority University Research and Education Project Educator Institute at the Kennedy Space Center to bolster teacher education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

**AVON PARK**— Four South Florida State College Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education students will participate in the five-day NASA Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP) Educator Institute at the Kennedy Space Center, June 18-22. The program was created to bolster teacher education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

The four students attending the institute are Sheri Cobb, Bonnie Cullifer, Dana Smallwood and Antonio Tirada. Joining them will be Maday Leon, lead instructor, SFSC Elementary Education program. SFSC is one of eight institutions from across the country participating the program this year.

"This is a lifetime opportunity for my students," Leon said. "They'll receive training from people who are the top of their fields in science."

The program is

comprised of student-centered classroom activities that use NASA resources and assist educators in developing instructional practices that enhance STEM instruction.

"We stay at the Kennedy Space Center for a week, and the students have a different activity to work on each day," Leon said. "The goal is that science and math classes will change from relying on textbooks to using hands-on activities, and the students will make use of "Five E" lesson plans. "Five E" stands for "Engaged, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate."

Working in groups, the student teachers will be given situations to explore, test, and evaluate, such as how engineers landed the Curiosity rover on Mars or the role of clouds in atmospheric temperature. In testing, they will be given a select set of everyday materials to use, such as cotton balls, thermometers, masking tape, rubber bands, and stop watches. They must then consider how these activities can

be implemented in their classrooms.

"We need to change the approach in our education right now," Leon said. "We need to use more hands-on activities in education and develop more of the engineering. Through the application process, students can become critical thinkers. That's what we need now in our society. We need our students to go into the workforce and be innovative."

"If we continue preparing students for only testing and memorization, we are still existing in the industrial revolution, the prior era," she added. "We are currently in the technology age where the student must go to the next level. They should be saying, 'This is a product. How can I improve it, fix it, or make it work?' or 'We have an environmental problem. Let me fix it or let me invent something to solve that problem.' We need to start students at an early age with this mindset. Then, when the students graduate, they become problem solvers."

# MOFAC offers different perspective on U.S. 27

By **KIM LEATHERMAN**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — “Little Slices of Heaven on U.S. 27” may sound like an oxymoron but it is a traveling art exhibit at Museum of Florida Art and Culture at the South Florida State College. Everyone loves to hate U.S. 27, however the exhibition is shedding new light on this often dark and dangerous roadway.

The museum is open to the public and the exhibit is free and runs from May 16 through June 15. An opening reception will be held at 1 p.m. on Thursday, May 17. Museum goers can visit MOFAC from 12:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays.

The exhibit is not solely focused on the asphalt and infrastructure that runs from Michigan to Miami but the tourist destinations that popped up after the highway was set in place. U.S. 27 has been called many things, but it is also called the “Back Bone of Florida,” according to Megan Stepe, MOFAC curator.

“This is an exhibit; it is basically a visual road trip down U.S. 27,” Stepe said. “It was built before I-4 and I-75. It enters Florida in a town named Havana near Tallahassee and runs almost to Little Havana in Miami. It was kinda the first way for travelers a way to come to Florida, besides the railroad.”

The exhibit will showcase the time period

between 1934-1970, preceding Disney World, Wakulla Spring State Park, Ichetucknee and Silver Springs, Bok Tower, Monkey Jungle, Sebring International Raceway, Highlands Hammock State Park and many other attractions. The “Tin Can Travelers,” Florida’s earliest tourists, will be featured.

Fine art on loan, photos, memorabilia, videos and artifacts have been compiled from many different sources. Some of the artists participating include Richard Peep, Johanna O’Donnell, Carl Knickerbocker and Cindy Rose Eaton.

“The exhibit’s focus is on the attractions that popped up after the highway went through Florida,” Stepe said.



Majestic oak trees provide shade at H.L. Bishop Park in Lake Placid.

# SFSC holding free STEM summer camp

## Special to Highlands Suns

South Florida State College (SFSC) will host a free half-day, two-week STEM Summer Camp for high school students. The camp will take place June 18 to 29, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

“The purpose of the STEM Camp is to provide high school students with the opportunity to enhance their math skills, especially if they aspire to study STEM after graduation and pursue a corresponding career,” said Elizabeth Andrews, Activity Coordinator and professor of English at SFSC. “Campers will receive direct instruction and

also have the unique ability to be hands on in SFSC’s new mecha-tronics lab which includes a variety of robotics equipment, 3D printers, and industry-spe-cific sys-tems.

And, this is all at no cost to the campers and their families.”

With the push for more science, technology,



engineering, and math study in schools across the nation, this camp will allow campers to practice the fundamentals of

math that lead to more advanced application essential to science, technology, and engineering careers. Campers

will also travel to the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) in Tampa to see the practical and real-world

applications of higher mathematics.

This summer camp is free and open to all high school students who are going into their sophomore, junior or senior year, especially Hispanic and low-in-come applicants. All campers are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from campus. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Students can register online at [southflorida.edu/stem-summer-camp](http://southflorida.edu/stem-summer-camp). For more information, contact Tasha Morales, director for Re-Engineering Our Future at SFSC, at 863-784-7401 or [moralest@southflorida.edu](mailto:moralest@southflorida.edu).

# State allocates funds for SFSC program

## \$500,000 will help create mobile welding lab

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — South Florida State College was awarded \$500,000 through a special funding allocation by the Florida Legislature to create a mobile welding lab that will provide low-cost, high-demand workforce training to the residents of Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee counties.

The announcement of the special funding came during the SFSC Foundation Inc. Spring Gala on Thursday evening at the Island View

Restaurant.

With little new funding from the state, SFSC President Thomas Leitzel said there was a bright spot to report and a first in recent history for South Florida State College — special initiative funding thanks to the efforts of J.D. Alexander and his daughter, Keaton Alexander of Silver Palm Consulting.

They secured a half million dollars in funding for the mobile welding lab, he said.

A press release from the college offers the significance of the award

and the need for the training.

Leitzel said, “Welding is a core skill for various jobs and industry sectors. We’re thrilled to be able to offer this specialized training in an innovative and convenient delivery method for the residents of our district.

“SFSC is extremely grateful to Senator Denise Grimsley and Representative Ben Albritton, who both sponsored the legislation that led this important funding initiative through their respective



MARC VALERO/STAFF

From left: Derek Whitis, legislative consultant; Cindy Alexander; J.D. Alexander, principal, Silver Palm Consulting, LLC; and Keaton Alexander, legislative consultant, at the announcement that South Florida State College was awarded \$500,000 to create a mobile welding lab.

# SFSC

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chambers.”

With no formal welding training programs available in Florida’s



**South Florida State College Foundation, Inc. Executive Director Jamie Bateman at the Foundation’s Spring Gala on Thursday evening at the Island View Restaurant.**

rural Heartland region, this mobile welding lab has the potential to train more than 150 students annually and offer short-term training options with significant income potential to the tri-county region.

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Services Sidney Valentine Jr. said the addition of the mobile lab will allow SFSC to not only reach students at its four campuses, but also area high schools and industry locations throughout the region.

The training will vary in length from degree, certificate and diploma programs to just-in-time workforce development training through

SFSC’s Corporate and Community Education Department, Valentine said.

Welding is one of the most in-demand workforce skills with 3.4 percent annual growth in the Heartland region and an estimated 800 welders are needed annually in central Florida.

The lab will be housed in a large trailer with both simulator and live-welding units. Trainers and equipment will be included to facilitate arc welding. The lab will continuously travel throughout the tri-county region, as needed.

For more information about the mobile welding lab, contact



MARC VALERO/STAFF

**South Florida State College President Thomas Leitzel at the SFSC Foundation, Inc. Spring Gala on Thursday evening at the Island View Restaurant.**

SFSC Dean of Applied Sciences and Technology Erik Christensen at 863-784-7424 or Erik.Christensen@southflorida.edu.

# Reveal Dinner unveils lineup for next season

JIM ERVIN/  
CORRESPONDENT

**Cindy Garren, director of Cultural Programs at South Florida State College, pumps up the crowd as she begins to share what artists will be performing during the 2018-19 season.**

they liked about the show. His favorite show this last year was "Mutts Gone Nuts," part of the Trending Now series.

"Most people assume I select the shows I want to see," Garren said, "but I don't. I rely on your opinion, the opinion of the audience and the members of the advisory board when I make the selections," she said.

The first performing arts program was held Dec. 18, 1984 under Dr. Cornelius' presidency. The cost for a six-show subscription in 1984 was \$25. In 2001, the artist fee for the Broadway tour of "Funny Girl" was \$15,000.

Today to get a national Broadway tour it would cost over \$35,000 and that doesn't include the lodging for performers, production costs, catering, advertising, or equipment rental. Ticket sales do not cover all of the costs of a show,

AVON PARK — The 2018-19 event schedule for The Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of South Florida State College was announced Tuesday, April 24. The "Reveal Dinner" took place at 5:30 p.m. at The Grogan Center.

Cindy Garren, director of Cultural Programs at SFSC, was the Master of Ceremonies. Following her opening comments, SFSC President Tom Leitzel stepped to the microphone. He spoke of how the Reveal Dinner used to be held on the stage in the college's auditorium, but has grown to the point of needing to be held at the Grogan Center.

A source of pride for Leitzel is the fact that Polk State College has contacted SFSC about its Performing Arts program.

"A college three times our size contacts us to see how they can do things better. That's a great testament and tribute to what was started here many, many years ago with Doug Andrews, and carried on by Cindy (Garren), and Dr. C (Catherine P. Cornelius), and carried on by Norm Stephens. Dr. Cornelius (retired SFSC president) started the Cultural Arts program and the legacy continues 35 years later," he said.

Leitzel went on to explain that the advisory board gets together after every show and talks about what was good, what was bad and what

Garren explained.

Some of the first sponsors that helped launch the cultural arts program and have helped keep it going were present at Tuesday's dinner. They were Bill and Lisa Jarrett, Alan Jay Wildstein, Florida Hospital and Dr. Placido and Nida Roquiz. Florida Hospital Heartland Division is the first sponsor to commit to the 2018-19 series as the title sponsor for the Trending Now series.

Garren went on to inform the audience about the legislative budget cuts, which slashed SFSC's cultural arts budget by more than 90 percent. They were recommended for \$90,000 but were only granted \$5,600. Because of those cuts, at this point, the Kaleidoscope Series is on hold pending funding. It has been free in the past and is culturally diverse for families. The Jazz Series will continue.

Derrick and the Motowners provided the entertainment for the evening. Also entertaining the crowd was a "Name that Motown Tune" game. The prize for the most correct answers was the table centerpiece. Traditional colors of navy and

coral were used in the centerpieces to help recognize the event's 35th anniversary.

The following is the 2018-19 event schedule:

Special events for the coming year are Sara Evans on Jan 26, 2019. Evans was the most nominated artist for the Country Music Association in 2001. On April 1, 2019, The Price is Right Live comes to town with an interactive stage version of the long running game show.

The Artist Series includes: John Tesh, Nov. 17. Tesh has won six Emmy's, two Grammy's, and has two golden records. He also has a public TV special and a popular syndicated radio show. Christmas Wonderland will be Dec. 9; national Broadway tour "Evita," Jan. 15; The Doo Wop Project, Jan. 23, 2019; and three-time Grammy winner Jon Secada on Feb. 2, 2019; The Florida Orchestra performs Feb. 14, 2019; Mr. Las Vegas himself, Wayne Newton, Feb. 28, 2019; national Broadway tour of "Legally Blonde," March 7, 2019; the Broadway tour of "The Sound of Music," March 20, 2019; and inspirational artist Sandi Patty,



March 23, 2019.

The Matinee Series includes: Let's Hang On, a Frankie Valli tribute, on Jan. 8, 2019; Simon & Garfunkel: Revisited, Jan. 22, 2019; Dueling the Ivories, Jan. 29, 2019; Phil Dirt and the Dozers perform Feb. 5, 2019; and on Feb. 12, 2019, Divas 3, four decades of awesome diva hits, comes to the stage. Alter Eagles, an Eagles tribute is Feb. 19, 2019; Nashville Legacy with Jason Coleman is Feb. 26, 2019. Coleman is the grandson of Floyd Cramer; "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish and I'm in Therapy" is March 5, 2019; Doug Cameron and Family, March 19, 2019; and the University of Florida Choir performs March 26, 2019.

The Trending Now Series includes: The Hunts, an indie folk band of seven siblings, on

Nov. 30; "Forever Young," the male version of "Menopause" about five Midwest guys who are re-living their lives from the 70s to the 90s through music, is Jan. 13, 2019; Wild World of Animals, which has sold out shows in Europe, is Feb. 16, 2019; Cirque Zuma Zuma on March 3, 2019; and Recycled Percussion on April 6, 2019.

The Jazz Series features Hotlanta Dixieland Jazz on Jan. 11, 2019; Eddie Metz Trio on Feb. 15, 2019; The Lew Del Gatto Quintet with Dan Miller on March 1, 2019; Terry Lower and Edye Evans Hyde: Great American Songbook on March 14, 2019; and Nicole Henry on March 28, 2019.

For more information about season tickets or sponsorships, call 863-784-7178 or email [culturalperformances@southflorida.edu](mailto:culturalperformances@southflorida.edu).

# **SFSC student commencement speaker has big plans for future**



COURTESY PHOTO

**Luis Rodriguez will graduate May 19 from Sebring High School, but before that, he will give the commencement speech Thursday at South Florida State College, where he will receive a credit certificate for cybersecurity and is only three courses shy of his Associate in Science degree in network security.**

AVON PARK — Luis Rodriguez will approach the podium as student speaker during South Florida State College's 7:45 p.m. Commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 3, at the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

He recently turned age 18 and will receive his vocational certificate in applied cybersecurity. This will be his second certificate from SFSC. In December 2016, he earned a college credit certificate in network security.

"Commencement is the beginning of a new life, a new you," he said. "You come to college as one person, and you walk out as a whole other person. You have a sense of accomplishment and pride. It gives you a sense of meaning and worth."

But Rodriguez's academic life is not over yet. On May 19, he graduates from Sebring High School. Further, he is only three courses shy of earning his Associate in Science degree in network security, which he plans to complete this summer.

College, for Rodriguez, began with the Highlands Career Institute (HCI) at SFSC. Through the HCI, high school students earn a high school diploma while working toward an occupational certificate or earn college credit.

Students spend half a day taking high school classes and the second half of the day in college classes alongside adult college students on the SFSC Highlands Campus. By the time they graduate from high school, most students have earned an occupational certificate and are ready to enter the workforce or continue on a career pathway at a college or university. Because HCI is considered dual enrollment, costs are waived for tuition and books.

"I knew that I wasn't going through college without financial assistance," Rodriguez said. "So, coming to HCI at SFSC gave me a head start with no out-of-pocket costs. My mother had earned a degree, and I saw how she had student loans. She just recently paid them off."

Even at a young age, Rodriguez has his future planned. "Right now, my goal is to become a penetration tester,

which is a hacker that companies hire to audit their networks," he said. "They purposely break their network systems to strengthen them and make them more secure. They use the same tools as an attacker."

Eventually, he would like to enlist in the U.S. Coast Guard. "They're starting a cybersecurity and intelligence division," he said. "You get training and your education is paid for. Besides, I find the idea of fighting pirates really cool."

Another possible route within the Coast Guard that Rodriguez has considered is to fly helicopters. "I want to go into Information Technology (IT) and then enlist in officer candidate school. Then, I want to be a helicopter pilot. I don't know if that's going to exactly work, but that's how I see it in my head. In the Coast Guard, you have to be an officer to be a pilot."

In the meantime, Rodriguez is working toward his pilot's license. A volunteer spot during the U.S. Sport Aviation Expo at the Sebring Airport nurtured his childhood dream of becoming a pilot. "I volunteered to help set up and take things down during the Expo. I became mesmerized by the atmosphere and got bitten by the aviation bug," he said.

Rodriguez eventually got a job at the airport and hopes to become a lineman shortly.

"They're in charge of the ramp. They take care of everything outside of the terminal, everything that has to do with the runway and planes. They take care of overall maintenance of the runway, so there's no damage to the planes."

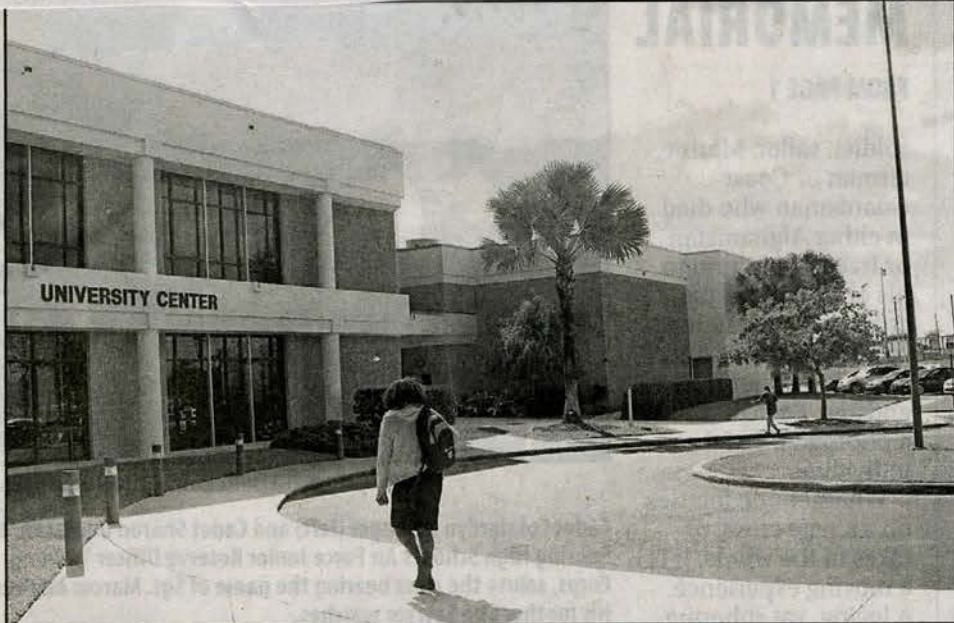
"Flying was a childhood dream of mine," Rodriguez said. "Becoming a pilot requires 40 hours of flight time. I now have 20 hours. To earn your pilot's license, you also have to take a three-part exam and I'm cramming for the written portion now. I anticipate being done in June or July. It's a great feeling to make your dream real. If I could talk to myself as a child right now, I'd high five myself."

"I didn't think I'd make it in college," Rodriguez said of his experience at SFSC. "The stigma that college is hard and you'll be staying up late hours of the night, only some of it's true. The reason

why some people don't succeed is because they don't have the self-discipline. If you go into it with the mindset that you won't do well, then you won't. After I told myself not to think that way, college became an easier experience. But college is not only about academics, it's about making new friends, connections, and getting in touch with professionals in their industries."

"I had the pleasure of having Luis in many of my courses over the past three years,"

said Brian Bohlman, professor of computer networking technology at SFSC. "From the first day of class, Luis impressed me with his willingness to tackle difficult concepts and curriculum with a true 'can-do' attitude. Luis is a talented individual and natural leader who has my highest respect and encouragement toward his future studies and his cybersecurity career. Luis is going to do great things, and I will surely be following his progress closely."



FILE PHOTO

Leadercast Live 2018 will be broadcast live Friday at the South Florida State College University Center at the Highlands Campus and in room 110 at the Hardee and DeSoto campuses.

# SFSC to host Leadercast on Friday

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — South Florida State College is prepped for its first-time participation as a host site for Leadercast Live 2018 on Friday, a one-day leadership event broadcast live from Atlanta, featuring nine nationally renowned speakers.

On the Highlands Campus the event will take place in the University Center, but it will also take place at the DeSoto and Hardee campuses.

“South Florida State College’s Corporate and Community Education Department is excited to offer Leadercast on May 4 and we are one of 700 locations to live stream the event,” said Tina Gottus, director of the Corporate and Community Education Department at SFSC.

“Attendees will have the opportunity to network with other community leaders

and hear from the pros, including Joe Torre who is a Hall of Famer and chief baseball officer for Major League Baseball. This event is perfect for leaders and their teams,” Gottus added.

In 2018, Leadercast will focus on the concept of “lead yourself.” How do you lead yourself effectively? How do you develop your core principles and values so that your leadership is an outpouring of your innermost self? And how much more will those who follow you benefit from your leadership when you lead yourself well?

Tickets are available for purchase at [sfscarts.org/show/leadercast-live-2018](http://sfscarts.org/show/leadercast-live-2018). A light breakfast and lunch are included in the \$50 ticket cost.

The Leadercast speaker lineup includes:

• Michael Hyatt – Author, Speaker, Leadership Development Expert

- Andy Stanley – Leadership Communicator and Best-selling Author
- Dr. Jim Loehr – Co-founder of the Human Performance Institute
- Jen Bricker – Acrobat, Aerialist, Author, Speaker
- Mae Jemison – NASA Astronaut
- Ian Morgan Cron – Enneagram Teacher, Author
- Carey Lohrenz – First Female Fighter Pilot in the U.S. Navy
- Joe Torre – Hall of Fame Baseball Manager
- Catherine Hoke – Founder & CEO, Defy Ventures, Author

A limited number of corporate sponsorships that include admission to the event are available. For more information about sponsorships, call Tina Gottus in Highlands County at 863-784-7033; Asena Mott in DeSoto County at 863-784-7040; or Teresa Crawford in Hardee County at 863-784-7061.

# Panthers roll past St. Petersburg



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

SFSC's Franco Camacho (13) steps on home plate as he is greeted by teammates after hitting a game ending grand slam home run.

# SFSC baseball squad in good shape after series sweep

BY JIM TAYLOR  
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The first rule about making the post season is not to talk about making the post season and for the South Florida State College Panther baseball team, they are sticking to the script even though there is an air of excitement about this year's team.

After completing the first half of games in the Suncoast Conference with a three game sweep of the St Petersburg Titans, the Panthers find themselves with a 21-18 overall record and one game out of second place in the conference with an 8-7 record.

The Panthers completed their sweep of the Titans on Saturday afternoon with a 12-1 win that ended in the bottom of the eighth off a grand slam by Franco Camacho.

"The guys did a good job, St Pete is a very good club, very talented," said SFSC coach Rick Hitt. "But we found a way to win three

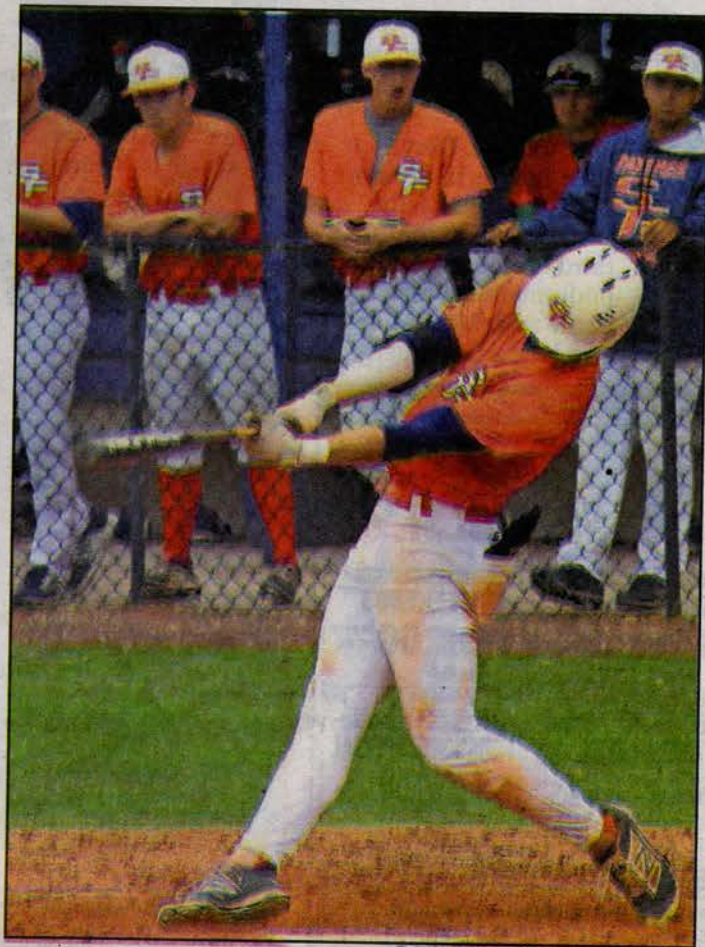
and that is really difficult to do in our conference, proud of our guys.

"Today we were a little up and down, in the pitching department, we just got to be more consistent. More consistent on defense and on the mound and not just once a week, we cannot expect to score 12 runs on a regular basis, it just does not happen in our league."

The Panthers took the lead in the bottom of the second after Pedro Castellano led off the inning with a single and stole second base. Castellano later scored on a sacrifice fly by Camacho to give the Panthers a 1-0 lead.

Hitt was referring to having to take starter Edwin Serrano out in the third inning after a pair of walks, a hit batter and a wild pitch culminated in a run for the Titans to tie the game at 1.

Kyle Choate came in relief to pitch three scoreless



SFSC's Brett Norwood hits a single into right field in the eighth inning against St Petersburg.

# PANTHERS

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and hitless innings.

Three base hits by the Panther in the bottom of the third, coupled with two errors by the Titans resulted in four runs crossing the plate. Brett Norwood drove in the first run with a triple and later scored on a single by P.J. Cimo to give the Panthers a 3-1 lead.

Camacho and A.J. Drisdorn each drove in a run with singles to expand the Panther lead to 5-1 after three innings.

The Panthers added another run in the seventh to take a 6-1 lead. Cestellano doubled

to lead off the inning and later scored on a sacrifice fly by Camacho, his third of the game at that point.

In the bottom of the eighth, Blaise Maris and Norwood led off the inning with singles. A hit batter loaded the bases and two walks brought in two run to make the score 8-1.

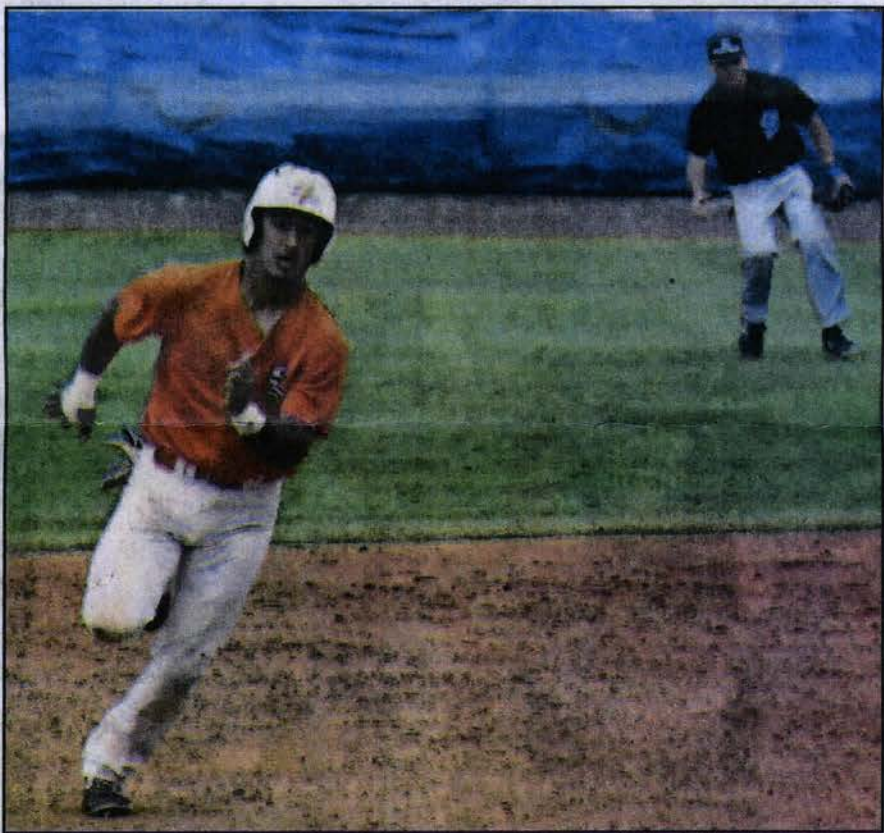
Camacho then hit a screaming shot over the left-field fence for a walk off grand slam home run to end the game with the Panthers winning 12-1 and Camacho driving in a game high seven runs.

"We are right in thick of things," said Hitt "but we told the guys in the beginning of the year that we are not even going to talk about the

post season, instead we are going to concentrate on the process of every game.

"Second half of the conference season starts next week and hopefully it will give us an opportunity to play well. When the last out of the last game is recorded, we will look up and see where that takes us."

The Panthers will play Southeastern University at home on Wednesday in a non-conference game before starting the second round of conference play on Saturday at home against Hillsborough Community College, which will be a battle for second place in the conference.



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

SFSC's Blaise Maris rounds second and heads to third base on a single hit into right field by Brett Norwood.