

Cybersecurity class offered at SFSC

AVON PARK — On Saturday, July 16, South Florida State College will conduct a one-day class on the cybersecurity practices that protect against common risks associated with using the internet.

“Introduction to Cybersecurity” covers the global implications of cyber threats, how computer networks become vulnerable to attack, and the impact of cyber-attacks on business.

It will explain Cisco Systems’ approach to detecting and defending computer systems against cyber-threats and explain opportunities for pursuing professional certifications in cybersecurity.

The class runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Building I, Room 210, on the SFSC Highlands Campus.

Cost is \$69 per person with a maximum class size of 24 students. To register, call 453-6661, 773-3081, 993-1757, or 465-3003 and request Course Registration Number (CRN) 30911.



SCHULT

COACH NEEDED

South Florida State College's women's cross country program is seeking an assistant coach for the 2016 season. The Panthers advanced to the national championships in their inaugural year last fall.

Interested persons should email SFSC coach **Krista Schult** at schultk@southflorida.edu for information.

"This is a part time and paid position," Schult said on the Central Florida Striders-Sebring's Facebook page. "I'm looking for someone that can be at one morning practice a week, travel to some, not all, of the meets, possibly help cover an afternoon practice very occasionally, and help out at supervising the concession stand."

Youth turn out to explore agriculture

SFSC on hand to tout its own ag program offerings

Special to Highlands Today

ONA— On a muggy day in late June, nearly 150 middle and high school students descended on Ona, a small town in eastern Hardee County.

Why Ona and not a theme park?

Because Ona, with a population of 314 people and 1,200 cattle, played host to the ninth annual Youth Field Day, a daylong series of classes and educational activities intended to spark an interest in agriculture among young people.

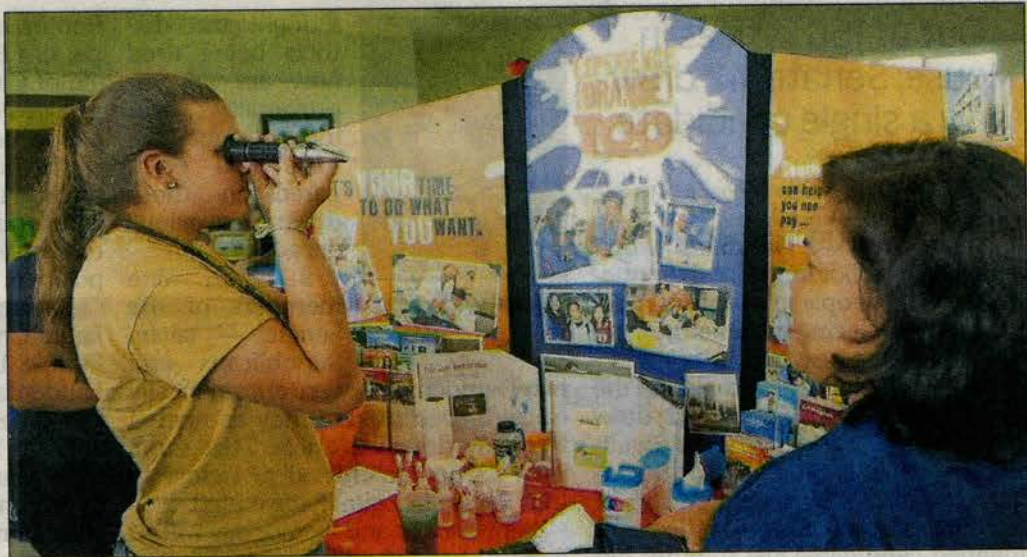
To aid in that effort, South Florida State College was on hand to offer an interactive educational activity and to drum up interest among the students in SFSC's agricultural program offerings.

The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences put on the educational event at its Range Cattle Research and Education Center, a 2,480-acre extension facility in Ona.

During the day, the students rotated through classes on pasture management, microscopic bugs, and photographing wildlife.

One of the instructors opening students' minds to the wonders of agriculture was Mary-Grace Dan-ao, SFSC's lead instructor in bioenergy education. She guided students on the use of a refractometer, showing them how to use the small, handheld device to gauge the sugar content of several juices.

In agricultural production, winemakers and brewers use refractometers



COURTESY PHOTO

A student at the youth field day measures the sugar content of juice using a refractometer.

two Associate in Science degree programs: Citrus Production Technology or Landscape Horticulture Technology. Students interested in shorter courses of study can opt for college credit certificate programs in either the Landscape Horticulture Professional or Technician tracks.

Agriculture is big business the region that is home to SFSC. Together the three counties that comprise the SFSC service area — DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands — produce about \$690 million worth of agricultural products annually, accord-

ing to the latest figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

People often think of citrus production as the main driver of the region's agricultural economy. While orange groves dominate the landscape astride many roads, cattle pastures account for a lot of unseen agricultural production. Two-thirds of Florida's cattle pasture can be found in the southern half of the state.

Another sector of the agricultural economy is bioenergy production — turning agricultural products,

like grasses, into fuels.

SFSC recruited Dan-ao earlier this year to head up the college's bioenergy program. The program offers associate degrees and college credit certificates in biofuel and biomass production and cultivation.

In the afternoon, students had time to discuss career opportunities with representatives from colleges who turned out for the event.

For more information, contact the SFSC Advising and Counseling Center at (863) 784-7131 or visit www.southflorida.edu.

FREE BUSINESS ADVICE



PHOTO BY MICHAEL KELLY

Members of the Hardee County Chamber of Commerce got some free business advice on June 23 from David Noel of America's SBDC Florida. The Small Business Development Center is funded through federal, state and local sources and offers it services free of charge to businesses and entrepreneurs. The program is run by the University of South Florida and South Florida State College and serves Hardee, Highlands and DeSoto counties. Noel assists with training, market research, business plans, confidential consulting and many other needs. He said his free services typically would cost \$200 per hour from private consultants. Noel can be reached at davidnoel@usf.edu or by calling (863) 784-7378.

SFSC offers medical coding, billing program

By **DEBORAH LATTER**

SFSC COMMUNITY RELATIONS

South Florida State College is offering a new occupational certificate program in medical coding and billing, beginning in August.

Students can complete the program as part of a student cohort within 24 months. Most of the classes in the program are offered on weekday evenings.

The outlook for jobs as medical records coder and billers is expected to grow 21 percent by 2020. With the implementation of the newest International Classification of Diseases, ICD-10, the demand for coders has increased. As the U.S. population grows,

the need for medical coders and billers will increase to meet the number of patient claims.

Medical coders and billers classify medical data from patient records and translate diagnoses and procedures, using the ICD-10 coding system. Medical facilities use this information to file insurance claim forms to obtain financial reimbursement.

Students in the program will learn the many codes that represent symptoms, medications and diagnoses. They will be prepared to specialize in areas of coding such as cancer tumor registry, interventional radiology, pediatrics and long-term health.

Students who successfully complete

the medical coding and billing certificate program will be prepared for employment in various health care settings, such as hospitals, physician's offices, clinics, ambulatory care facilities, nursing facilities, major health insurance companies, and billing and coding companies.

SFSC's medical coding and billing classes adhere to the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA) strict guidelines.

For more information about SFSC's Medical Coding and Billing certificate program, consult the SFSC College Catalog, an SFSC advisor at 863-784-7131, or the program director at 863-784-7325.

Young people explore agriculture

SPECIAL TO THE HIGHLANDS SUN

ONA — On a muggy day in late June, nearly 150 middle and high school students descended on Ona, a small town with a population of 314 people and 1,200 cattle in eastern Hardee County.

They were there for the ninth annual Youth Field Day, a day-long series of classes and educational activities intended to spark an interest in agriculture among young people. The event was hosted by The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at its Range Cattle Research and Education Center, a 2,480-acre extension facility.

To aid in that effort, South Florida State College was on hand to offer an interactive educational activity and to drum up interest among the students in SFSC's agricultural program offerings.

During the day, the students rotated through classes on pasture management, microscopic bugs, and photographing wildlife.

One of the instructors was Dr. Mary-Grace Danao, SFSC's lead instructor in bioenergy education. She guided students on the use of a refractometer, showing them how to use the small, handheld device to gauge the sugar content of several juices. Winemakers and brewers use refractometers to measure the sweetness of wine and beer.

"The event did an awesome job at exposing youth participants from across Florida to potential careers in agriculture," said Summer Miller, a SFSC college recruiter, who fielded questions from students on opportunities in agricultural programs at SFSC.

SFSC offers several programs in agriculture. Students can enroll in one of two Associate in Science degree programs:

Citrus Production Technology or Landscape Horticulture Technology. Those interested in shorter courses of study can opt for college credit certificate programs in either the Landscape Horticulture Professional or Technician tracks.

Agriculture is big business the region that is home to SFSC. Together the three counties that comprise the SFSC service area — DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands — produce about \$690 million worth of agricultural products annually, according to the latest figures from the United States Department of Agriculture. Another sector of the agricultural economy is bioenergy production — turning agricultural products, like grasses, into fuels.

In the afternoon, students had time to discuss career opportunities with representatives from colleges who turned out for the event.

"It gave us an opportunity as well to showcase



Courtesy photo/SFSC

Dr. Mary-Grace Danao of SFSC's Bioenergy program with visitors to her interactive teaching activity at the Youth Field Day.

SFSC's programs and degrees," said Miller, "while at the same time offering a fun and

educational agriculture activity."

For more information, contact the SFSC

Advising and Counseling Center at 863-784-7131 or visit www.southflorida.edu.

South Florida State College

Cutting student costs

School partners with OpenStax to promote free textbooks

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — With the fall academic term and its textbook buying ritual only weeks away, South Florida State College has entered into a strategic partnership with OpenStax to encourage use of free textbooks on college campuses.

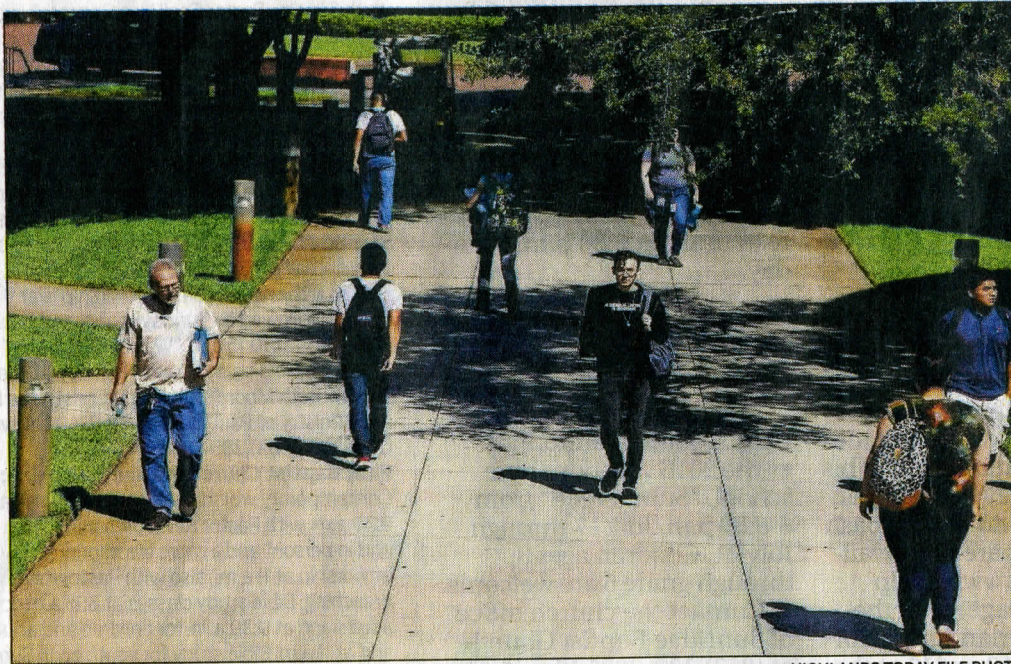
OpenStax, a nonprofit organization pioneering the adoption of open educational resources (OER), aims to improve access to college education by offering students its lineup of free textbooks for common first- and second-year college courses.

OER is an initiative to offer no-cost access to educational material—mainly textbooks — as a way to make higher education affordable for cash-strapped students and their families.

“Over the next year, my colleagues and I will partner with OpenStax, and the other colleges selected, to share ideas and implement an institutional program to promote the use of open educational resources at our college,” said Erik Christensen, SFSC’s new dean for Applied Sciences and Technologies. “This is good news for SFSC, and we look forward to seeing our students join us in developing our plan.”

SFSC and 11 other strategic partners will receive individualized consulting and support from OpenStax to implement widespread use of OER on their campuses.

According to the College Board, students spend about \$1,300 each year for textbooks and supplies. Data from the



HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

In this 2015 photo, students walk up the main path into South Florida State College's Avon Park campus. According to the College Board, students spend about \$1,300 each year for textbooks and supplies.

Consumer Price Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics show textbook prices have soared in the past decade, rising 82 percent between 2003 and 2013.

The mounting costs of textbooks not only drags on students' ability to pay college tuition but also hinders their completion of coursework. About 48 percent of college students said textbook costs affected how many or which classes they took each semester, according a study

by the United States Public Interest Research Group, a nonprofit research organization.

OpenStax said its textbooks and other OER materials meet standard scope and course sequence requirements and are peer-reviewed, meaning that subject experts reviewed the text for accuracy and soundness. Students can access OpenStax texts for most introductory courses, including algebra, biology, economics

and U.S. history.

Rice University, a major research institution with 11 residential colleges for undergraduates on its Houston campus, launched OpenStax in 2012. The initiative is supported by philanthropic foundations.

SFSC is the only college in the southeastern United States selected by OpenStax as a strategic partner for its OER initiative. OpenStax chose SFSC after a rigorous selection process, including demonstrating a willingness to drive adoption of OER on its campus.

Students in courses that adopt an OpenStax textbook download a complete copy of the book from the group's website with just a few clicks of a mouse. The students can read the textbook on a laptop, a tablet or even a smartphone. Students can also print one page or an entire chapter.

For Christensen, the ease of use was one reason SFSC partnered with OpenStax. The chief reason, though, is cost.

“My colleague Dr. Rodger Smith, who teaches introductory psychology courses, will join me in spearheading this campus-wide initiative,” Christensen said. “Dr. Smith estimates he saved his students \$50,000 last year by using OER materials.”

“My students have achieved a similar cost avoidance,” said Christensen, who teaches physics using OER material from OpenStax. “Just think what that number could be if more of our faculty adopted OER?”

SFSC Museum welcomes new curator

Woman comes from
Seminole State
College near Orlando

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College tapped Megan Paquette Stepe as the curator of South Florida State College's



Stepe

lege's Museum of Florida Art and Culture last month, and she is taking over the position held for 11 years by Mollie Dectrow, who re-

tired at the end of June.

Stepe just moved to Highlands County from Orlando. Stepe said she enjoys views not found in Orlando: cows in their fields and the open spaces free of development.

Stepe also enjoys MOFAC on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College. Her pleasure comes not only from its collection of Florida art and artifacts, but from her role as the museum's new curator.

"I think what makes MOFAC special is its varied collection," Stepe said, as she walked through the gallery during the quiet of the summer as she prepares for the first exhibition in the fall.

"From paintings to sculp-
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Curator

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tures to archeological artifacts, MOFAC covers the broad canvas of Florida art and history," Stepe said. "That's the chief reason I was drawn here; that's why I chose to apply for the job."

Stepe comes to SFSC MOFAC after six years as the curator of the Fine Arts Gallery at Seminole State College in Sanford, a 30-minute drive north of Orlando.

"MOFAC holds a more expansive collection and has larger galleries than I am accustomed to at Seminole State," Stepe said, as she surveyed the viewing space. "Previously, I worked with a collection with fewer than 150 works in a gallery with far less space."

But Stepe comes to MOFAC with a background as varied as its collection. The Mount Clemens, Michigan, native recounted that she moved to Florida after earning her associate's degree at Macomb Community College outside of Detroit.

"I know it sounds cheesy, but I wanted to be near the ocean," Stepe said.

She enrolled at the University of Central Florida, where she studied art and anthropology.

"My parents fostered a creative environment at home, so I suppose that explains my love for art," she said. "But I also kept taped to my desk a photo of an ancient man who had been discovered frozen in ice, so I suppose that explains the anthropology."

After earning her master's degree in art history and critique at Florida State University, Stepe returned to Orlando, taking up several posts with arts organizations and displaying her own work before joining Seminole State College.

"I work in several media," Stepe said. "I do pottery, I paint and draw, and I like to sew, too — I sew aprons."

Stepe explained she hunts for vintage fabrics, some of which she hand dyes, and stitches them together to create aprons with several layers. "I want to bring back the art of wearing aprons," Stepe said.

One of her tasks this summer is coming up to speed on the art scene in Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto counties. Later this month, she will host a luncheon with MOFAC's advisory committee and friends of the museum.

Stepe also is giving thought to MOFAC's first

exhibition, which opens on Oct. 5. The show, "Florida Waterworks: Friends, Teachers, Students," will feature the work of artists who have had a relationship with MOFAC, as exhibitors, teachers, or SFSC art education alumni.

How does Stepe approach laying out an exhibition's pieces?

"The works themselves speak. They speak to me," Stepe said. "They'll talk, telling me who wants to be near each other and who plays well together."

But there's still the minutiae and nuances of learning the workings of a new setting.

"I shadowed Mollie for a week taking note after note," Stepe said. "Here are eight pages of single-spaced notes I typed after my week with Mollie, and I used narrow margins."

Stepe and MOFAC are one half of SFSC's cultural programming. MOFAC's galleries are part of the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts, the

main venue for the college's live performances, on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

"We're all excited Megan chose SFSC and MOFAC as the place to start the next chapter in her career," said Cindy Garren, SFSC's director of Cultural Programs. "Megan exudes an enthusiasm that is sure to catch on with MOFAC's many friends, visitors and our students. With her creativity and artistic flair, she's going to energize the museum, the students and the art program."

In addition to her role as MOFAC's curator, Stepe will teach art appreciation to SFSC students during the fall academic term.

"I also taught art at Seminole State," she said. "My goal in the classroom is to get students comfort-

able with visiting a museum, appreciating the art and getting them to a level of comfort where they know their opinion of art is just as valued as an experienced art lover."

When Stepe is not on campus this summer prepping for the fall, she'll be house hunting. Her husband of seven years, Kyle, will join her, along with two cats and a dog. They

are all still in Orlando.

Returning to her office just off the gallery floor, Stepe stopped to take in the moment.

"It's a beautiful museum," Stepe said, looking about. "The collection is thoughtfully placed. It's placed so that it lends to a greater understanding of not only Florida art and history but its people, too."

SFSC may add full-time deputy to boost security

Board of trustees to
consider agreement
with HCSO tonight

BY MARC VALERO

Highlands Today

AVON PARK — When the fall semester starts next month, South Florida State College may have a new permanent law enforcement presence on campus.

The college's board of trustees will decide this evening on entering an agreement with Highlands County Sheriff Susan Benton for a full-time college resource deputy.

The deputy would be assigned to the college's Highlands campus in Avon Park, but also have a presence at other college locations such as the Lake Placid Center.

College board of trustees member Joe Wright said he is in favor of the agreement with the sheriff's office.

While attending education conferences, the trustees hear more and more about college campus safety issues.

"We want our people to be safe," he said. "I would think the board of trustees will be very

SFSC

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supportive of it. It is a contemporary issue."

SFSC President Thomas Leitzel said Tuesday there have been no incidents at the campus that have prompted the agreement for a resource deputy, only an overall concern to provide safety awareness for the college's faculty, staff, students and visitors.

While the college has a

"full security force," the individuals are not sworn officers, he noted.

"This is our change to have a relationship with a sworn officer that would reside on campus," Leitzel said. "We always want to be proactive in everything we do involving safety."

Leitzel commended Sheriff Susan Benton for cooperating with the college on the agreement.

If the board of trustees approves the agreement, a resource deputy could be

on campus when the fall semester starts next month, he said.

The college and sheriff's office will split the cost of the deputy's salary, benefits and associated costs.

Leitzel said the annual cost for the college will be about \$40,000.

He will seek similar agreements for the college's campuses in Hardee and DeSoto counties.

Benton said she has already signed the agreement and will post the opening for seven days upon approval by the board of trustees.

Currently, the sheriff's office, through an agreement with the School Board of Highlands County, has seven school resource deputies and a sergeant in the school

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resource unit.

The agreement with the college is similar to the agreement with the school board, Benton noted.

Along with patrolling the campus and assisting with traffic control and security, the college resource deputy will also work to educate faculty and students on crime prevention and safety issues, she said.

This cooperative agreement is in the best interest of the community, Benton said. Sharing the cost is one of the best ways to provide additional service with the least cost throughout the community, she added.

SFSC Hosts 'Express Days' To Assist You

Prospective students and parents can drop by South Florida State College's Highlands Campus beginning next week to get individualized assistance in applying for admission or financial aid.

College staff will be available this coming Monday; on Wednesday, Aug. 3; and on Tuesday, Aug. 9, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., to help new students complete their admission application and new or returning students with federal financial aid forms.

Dubbed College Assistance Express Days, SFSC set aside the three days to make it easier for students to get admitted and apply for financial aid. Summer Miller, SFSC recruiter, said, "We can offer them personalized assistance; no appointment is needed."

Applicants and students will find Miller and SFSC staff waiting to help them in the lobby of Building B on the Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Dr., Avon Park.

Most applicants will seek to

claim Florida residency for in-state tuition. Miller recommends they check the SFSC website to ensure they bring the right documentation with them. They can visit *southflorida.edu* and enter "Florida residency" in the search box. Miller noted that applicants can apply for admission with or without documentation.

Miller also recommends visiting the SFSC website to find the documentation requirements for financial aid. Look for the frequently asked questions web page, or "FAQs" on the financial aid section of SFSC's website.

In addition to its two-year Associate Degree, SFSC offers three Bachelor Degree programs: elementary education, nursing, and business with a concentration in supervision and management.

Residents who haven't earned a high-school diploma can learn about the college's adult education program leading to an equivalency diploma.

How Do Detectives Solve A Murder?

Kids Learn Science & More In Fun College Setting

Robert Worthington, a prominent and wealthy resident of the community, was murdered in his kitchen while cutting red cabbage.

Police found a knife with a strange green stain on the handle had been thrust in his chest.

When detectives arrive, they encounter a slew of suspects. Was it Worthington's cook, who was preparing a vinegar salad; his maid, who used ammonia to clean the tiles; or his nephew, who had just returned from swimming in the salt water of the ocean?

The detectives turn to chemists to help sort out a telling clue: the green stain on the knife's handle.

Those chemists were fourth and fifth graders from schools in South Florida State College's three-county service area of Hardee, Highlands and DeSoto. They were huddled in a laboratory on SFSC's Highlands Campus running a gamut of tests to determine which suspect left the mysterious green stain.

Worthington is a fictional character, of course, but the scenario and tests were real. The students were participating in SFSC's summer STEMQuest classes, a series of half- and full-day classes to introduce schoolchildren to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"Watching the students delve into the experiments and lab work demonstrates that kids love science and technol-

ogy," said Dr. Kimberly Batty-Herbert, dean of arts and sciences, who oversees the program that runs several times throughout the year.

Leslie Comeaux, a teacher from a Highlands elementary school, led the students through a series of chemical tests on the green stain.

Dipping pipettes into several different acid solutions, the students sought to identify what type of chemical might have turned the cabbage juice on the knife green and, in doing so, discover who murdered Worthington.

"Wow, that ammonia really smells awful," a goggle-clad student said as she tested red cabbage juice against the chemical the maid was using to clean.

Comeaux gave each student instruction on how to run the tests and ensure personal safety. All the time, she kept reminding them, "If you find out who killed Worthington, keep it to yourself. Don't blurt out the answer to the murder."

Across the hall, seventh through ninth graders were learning about experimental design. Cedric Bullard, a chemistry teacher in Avon Park, walked students through a sample experiment: How many drops of water can a penny hold?

Students bent over their work stations with droppers of various sizes. Each gingerly placing drops of water on pennies. Then the counting

started, with the students coming up with wildly varying totals.

"You see, it's important to design an experiment in a scientific manner to come up with valid results," Bullard told the students. "The size of the dropper, which side of the penny you use, and how far

away you hold the dropper will affect the outcome of the experiment."

Next, the students moved on to real chemistry. Bullard designed an experiment involving acids and bases intended to teach the students how to differentiate between the two chemicals while learning more

about the importance of experimental design.

While no murder was involved, Bullard's students took up the challenge, teaming up in threes to replicate his instructions and produce valid results.

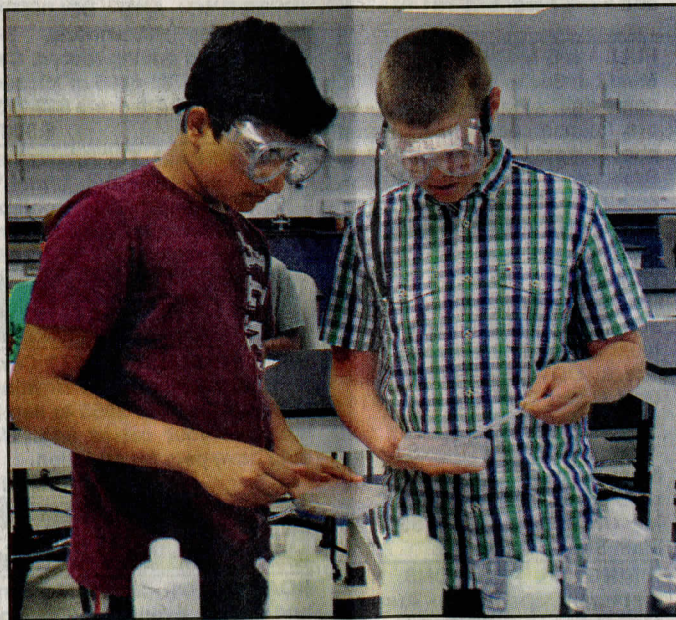
The students ran tests using a conductivity meter to see which bases and acids best served as a conductor of electricity. The students learned about ions and how their presence in the solutions affect the strength with which electricity

is conducted.

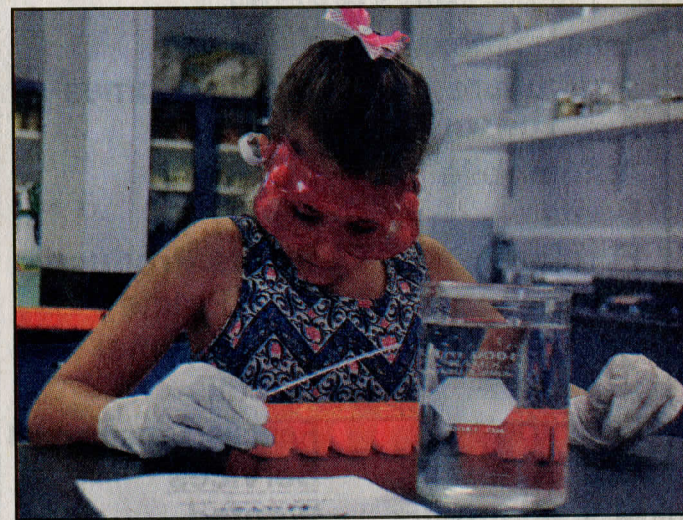
Back across the hall, at least one student's test solved Worthington's murder. "Quiet, now," Comeaux told the student. "We don't want anyone but the detectives to know."

Hearing that command, the other students scurried about from lab station to lab station trying to catch up and solve the murder as well.

For more information on SFSC's STEMQuest programs, contact (863) 784-7329.



Careful! Students collect acid solutions during a STEMQuest class.



COURTESY PHOTOS

A elementary-school student tests ammonia against red cabbage juice in an attempt to solve a murder during special classes offered by South Florida State College.

SFSC graduates 10 EMT program students

By **MANUEL CORTAZAL**
SFSC PUBLIC RELATIONS

South Florida State College graduated 10 emergency medical technicians during an evening ceremony on July 14 in the SFSC Public Safety Auditorium, Highlands Campus, in Avon Park.

Earning their EMT certificates after 16 weeks of training were: Maria Dolores Albarran, Trenton C. Carlisle, Coleton M. Choate, Beth Anne Fletcher, Nathan Heaton, Michael G. Isom, Joshua Caleb Mink, Vivia Dianne Nott, Amanda Gayle Tyson and Stephen Cody Wilson.

"You have proven to our faculty that you've been successful in the classroom, in the lab, and in the field," Erik Christensen, dean of Applied Sciences and Technology, told the graduates, with family and friends looking on from the auditorium's seats.

"Now you're ready to join the elite world of emergency medical technicians," Christensen said.

Nott, a DeSoto County resident, received special awards for "Highest GPA for Lecture" and "Highest GPA for Lab." Isom was presented an award for "Most Heart" for his passion and determination, Richard Shepard, EMT instructor, announced at the start of the ceremony.

Upon completion of the program, graduates are eligible to take the Florida EMT State Board examination.

For the 65-year-old Isom, the graduation kicks off a second career. Isom enrolled in SFSC's EMT program after retiring from a 30-year stint with the U.S. Postal Service.

"It's been an amazing 16 weeks learning emergency medical services alongside my peers and under SFSC



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

SFSC EMT graduates assemble before the ceremony on July 14. From left, Coleton M. Choate, Maria Dolores Albarran, Nathan Heaton, Beth Anne Fletcher, Joshua Caleb Mink, Vivia Dianne Nott, Michael G. Isom, Amanda Gayle Tyson, Trenton C. Carlisle and Stephen Cody Wilson.

faculty," said Isom, who will work for Positive Medical Transport in Highlands County.

Also receiving an honorary certificate was Barrett, a German Shepherd, who attended the course as Tyson's service dog. Tyson, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq, brought Barrett to the ceremony and accepted the certificate on his behalf.

EMTs function as part of an emergency rescue and transportation team by responding to emergency calls, assessing scenes of accidents, setting priorities for treating patients and providing prehospital emergency care.

Shepard noted the class of 10 graduates closes a chapter in EMT education at SFSC. They were the last class to graduate under the state rule requiring 250 hours of instruction, Shepard announced during the ceremony. He

said all new classes will complete 300 hours of instruction.

For more information about SFSC's Emergency Medical Technician program and other Emergency Medical Services programs, call 863-784-7272.



Barrett, right, thanks Richard Shepard for awarding him an honorary EMT certificate.

Highlands Sun

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Museum of Florida Art and Culture 600 W. College Drive

863-784-7240 www.mofac.org

Located at South Florida State College, this museum boasts several permanent and traveling exhibits that will delight those who are interested in the culture of our area. Permanent exhibits include displays on the Archeology of Florida and the History of Florida. Art exhibits include a Florida Masters Collection and paintings by the Florida Highwaymen.

SFSC business grad goes solo

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

SEBRING — What's a recent business degree graduate doing staining wood for a new desk, making oversized doors from reclaimed barn siding, and fashioning six-foot props for Lakeshore Mall?

Phil Fillie, a graduate of South Florida State College's of Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management (BAS-SM) program, opted to forgo managing someone else's firm. But Fillie hasn't shunted aside what he learned about start-ups, finance, and marketing, he's putting his business studies to use -- his own use.

Fillie is the proprietor of The Carpenter's Apprentice, a one-man woodworking shop that produces custom-made furniture, an assortment of woodworking for family homes, and a larger-than-life book for the children's play area of Lakeshore Mall.

"The slogan for my business is 'Creating Masterpieces,'" Fillie said. "I don't strive to make the most innovative piece but the right piece for my customers — one that will make them smile."

One of Fillie's recent projects called for the reclamation of wood from a century-old barn. Refinishing the wood to give it a new look, Fillie reassembled the pieces into a large sliding door that, he said, overjoyed the homeowner.

But the 40-year-old doesn't see his business as means to "just pay the bills," he said he hopes it will give him an opportunity to serve his neighbors.

Fillie launched his woodworking business last year, shortly after walking off

the stage with his business diploma at SFSC's 2015 spring Commencement ceremony. Before enrolling at SFSC, the Sebring native worked for 11 years as a detention deputy for the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

His redirection in life came as a lightning bolt -- literally. He was with his wife, Nichole, and two young daughters in the backyard of his Orange Blossom Estates home when a bolt of lightning struck him. "I woke up on the ground to look up at my family frantically calling out for help," Fillie remembered. "Once I had a go at death, I rededicated myself to what's important."

That brush with death awakened him to a deep devotion to the "three F's" of "faith, family, and finances." Fillie's life is now centered on his faith and church, his wife, and home schooling his two daughters.

Fillie had residual injuries that required surgery and time at home to recuperate. "I knew I would have to retire early from my detention job because of the stress and physical demands," Fillie explained. "But I also knew for my family's sake I couldn't stop working."

With an eye on his future, Fillie joined more than two dozen students at the SFSC Highlands Campus in fall 2013. They comprised the second class to start SFSC's bachelor-level business program with a concentration in supervision and management — the first bachelor's degree offered by the college.

The cohort approach appealed to Fillie. "Moving through the program together, we developed relationships among ourselves and made some good friends," he said. Now



A door Phil Fillie fashioned from reclaimed century-old barn siding.

one year post-graduation, Fillie said his classmates still keep up with each other.

One class would prove to be especially important for Fillie: project management. "What I learned from Jeff Roth in the project management course prepared me for starting my own business," said Fillie.

Knowing how to put out bids, navigating around potential legal pitfalls, and managing workflows were all subjects Fillie learned at SFSC and that had a part to play in the successful launch of his business. "I'm not making a lot of money, but that's not why I started my business," Fillie noted. "But I'm paying the bills, taking care of my family, and enjoying my work."

The first year involved a lot of growing pains. "It surely wasn't easy," he said. "Many weeks I put in 60 or 70 hours of work to keep it going, but it has paid off for me."

Fillie didn't take up woodworking on a fluke after his studies at SFSC. He said he grew up around tools and wood, fixing objects, and working in construction.

He plans to use The

Carpenter's Apprentice as a means to fulfill his drive to serve others. "I am working out the details on how to bring high school kids on board during the summers as a way to introduce them to carpentry and learn skills they can use in life," Fillie said.

"What struck me about the SFSC business program

was the feeling that the professors cared about us, that we succeeded," Fillie said. "I always had a sense that I was at a college that really cared."

SFSC graduates 10 students from EMT program

It's the last class for 250-hour requirement. New standard is 300.

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College graduated 10 emergency medical technicians during a ceremony July 14 in the SFSC Public Safety Auditorium, Highlands Campus, in Avon Park.

Earning their EMT certificates after 16 weeks of training were: Maria Dolores Albarran, Trenton C. Carlisle, Coleton M. Choate, Beth Anne Fletcher, Nathan Heaton, Michael G. Isom, Joshua Caleb Mink, Vivian Dianne Nott, Michael G. Isom, Amanda Gayle Tyson, Trenton C. Carlisle, and Stephen Cody Wilson.

"You have proven to our faculty that you've been successful in the classroom, in the lab and in the field," Erik Christensen, dean of Applied Sciences and Technology, told the graduates, with family and friends looking on from the auditorium's seats.

"Now you're ready to join the elite world of emergency medical technicians," Christensen said.

Nott, a DeSoto County resident, received special awards for "Highest GPA for Lecture" and "Highest GPA for Lab." Isom was presented an award for "Most Heart" for his passion and determination. Richard Shepard, EMT instructor, announced at the start of the ceremony.

Upon completion of the pro-



COURTESY PHOTO

ABOVE: SFSC EMT graduates assemble before the ceremony on July 14. From left; Coleton M. Choate, Maria Dolores Albarran, Nathan Heaton, Beth Anne Fletcher, Joshua Caleb Mink, Vivian Dianne Nott, Michael G. Isom, Amanda Gayle Tyson, Trenton C. Carlisle, and Stephen Cody Wilson. **LEFT:** Barrett shakes with Richard Shepard, who awarded him an honorary EMT certificate.

gram, graduates are eligible to take the Florida EMT State Board examination.

For the 65-year-old Isom, the graduation kicks off a second career.

Isom enrolled in SFSC's EMT program after retiring from a 30-year stint with the U.S. Postal Service.

Also receiving an honorary certificate was Barrett, a German shepherd that attended the course as Tyson's service dog. Tyson, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq, brought Barrett to the ceremony and accepted

the certificate on his behalf.

Shepard noted the class of 10 graduates closes a chapter in EMT education at SFSC. They were the last class to graduate under the state rule requiring 250 hours of instruction, Shepard announced during the ceremony.

He said all new classes will complete 300 hours of instruction.

For information about SFSC's Emergency Medical Technician program and other Emergency Medical Services programs, call (863) 784-7272.

SFSC Partners With OpenStax To Promote Free Textbooks

With the fall academic term and its textbook buying ritual only weeks away, South Florida State College has entered into a strategic partnership with OpenStax to encourage use of free textbooks on college campuses.

OpenStax, a nonprofit organization, aims to improve access to a college education by offering students its lineup of free textbooks for common first- and second-year college courses. It is an initiative to offer no-cost access to educational material, mainly textbooks, as a way to make higher education affordable for cash-strapped students and their families.

"Over the next year, my colleagues and I, will partner with OpenStax, and the other colleges selected, to share ideas and implement an insti-

tutional program to promote the use of open educational resources at our college," said Erik Christensen, SFSC's new dean for Applied Sciences & Technologies. "This is good news for SFSC, and we look forward to seeing our students join us in developing our plan."

SFSC and 11 other strategic partners will receive individualized consulting and support from OpenStax to implement widespread use on campuses.

According to the College Board, students spend about \$1,300 each year for textbooks and supplies. Data from the Consumer Price Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics show textbook prices have soared in the past decade, rising 82 percent between 2003 and 2013.

Mounting textbook costs

not only hurt student ability to pay college tuition but also hinder completion of coursework. About 48 percent of college students said textbook costs affected how many or which classes they took each semester, according to a study by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, a nonprofit research organization.

SFSC is the only college in the southeastern United States selected by OpenStax as a strategic partner for its initiative.

Students in courses that adopt an OpenStax textbook download a complete copy of the book from the group's website with just a few clicks of a mouse. The students can read the textbook on a laptop, a tablet, or even a smartphone. Students can also print one page or an entire chapter.

X Roger Maris grandson to play for SFSC

Panther catcher talks about iconic Yankee slugger

BY MARC VALERO
Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Blaise Maris never met his grandfather, baseball icon Roger Maris, but he has heard numerous stories about the talented right-fielder who played for the New York Yankees.

Blaise will soon be donning a Panthers uniform as a catcher for the South Florida State College baseball team.

Roger actually played for four teams during his 12-year major league career, which spanned from 1957 through 1966, but most notably for the Yankees, from 1960-'66.

He upheld the New York ball club's nickname, The Bronx Bombers, by slamming 39 home runs in 1960 and hitting



COURTESY PHOTO

Blaise Maris, grandson of baseball icon Roger Maris, will be playing for the South Florida State College baseball team.

Maris

From Page 1

a record-breaking 61 round-trippers in 1961, breaking the single-season record of 60 set by Babe Ruth in 1927.

Blaise, who was playing in a college baseball tournament on Friday, spoke to Highlands Today by phone about his grandfather and about coming to SFSC to play baseball and completing his studies for an associate's degree.

He frequently runs into people who share stories about his grandfather's feats as a ballplayer, Blaise said, noting he recently met someone who had lived in Brooklyn in the 1960s and spoke for nearly an hour about the senior Maris.

Blaise also realizes the accomplishments and perseverance of his grandfather from the 2001 movie "61*," which was directed by Billy Crystal and chronicled the 1961 home run race of Yankee teammates Maris and Mickey Mantle.

"We have it on DVD and I have seen it numerous times," Blaise said. "It shows all the stress and pressure he went through. His family were consultants for the movie."

Ruth was very popular in New York and many didn't want to see his home run record broken.

The Babe's record was set in a 154-game season, but the American League expanded by two teams in 1961 and stretched the season to 162 games. Maris had 59 home runs after 154 games and he hit his 61st home run on the last game of the season.

Then baseball commissioner Ford Frick declared there would be an asterisk in the record books if a new record was not accomplished within 154 games. Thus the asterisk in the record books and in the movie title.

♦ ♦ ♦

Maris' record was broken in 1998, and a total of three players have hit more than 61 home runs in a season, but many have noted this was in the era of performance-enhancing drugs. After player drug testing was instituted, no one has surpassed 61 home runs in a season.

Blaise said Maris was a great athlete who had an "unbelievable" throwing arm, but the stories he hears from his father, Randy, and other family members are about the good person and family man Roger was off the field.

Maris grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, but relocated to Gainesville after he retired from baseball. He died from lymphoma cancer in 1985 at the age of 51.

Blaise said he and other family members go to Fargo each June for the Roger Maris Charity Golf Tournament that supports cancer research and the Roger Maris Cancer Center located in Fargo.

"The Roger Maris Cancer Center is really important to me and shows what my last name represents," Blaise said.

♦ ♦ ♦

SFSC Panthers Men's Baseball Head Coach Rick Hitt said he played baseball with Blaise's uncle, Richard, at Sante Fe Community College in Gainesville in 1985.

He had heard Blaise was looking for an opportunity and invited him to a workout at South Florida State College in May. Blaise had an outstanding workout, said Hitt, who called him an outstanding student and a quality young man.

Blaise had other opportunities, Hitt said, so he is excited he chose to play for SFSC.

Blaise, who had been playing for High Point University in North Carolina, said he wanted to be closer to his parents and other relatives in Gainesville, who, in turn, will have a shorter travel time to see him play.

Hitt said the college's baseball team will have its spring-training type period from September through early November and start its regular season in January.

Blaise will be a catcher, a position that requires mental and physical toughness and is a leadership position on the ball field, Hitt said.

Hitt, who was born in 1965, is familiar with the accomplishments of Roger Maris from reading the historical accounts about him.

Maris was an outstanding player and family man and had several children (six) who grew up to be successful in life, Hitt said. He was a "baseball icon."

Roger Maris was the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1960 and 1961 and was awarded a Gold Glove in 1961 for his outstanding defensive play in right-field.

He played in seven World Series, five as a Yankee and two with the St. Louis Cardinals.

SFSC expands online class options

Students can pursue AA degree completely online

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Through an expanding array of online courses, South Florida State College is turning the computer into the classroom and making it possible for students to complete the first two years of college at their own pace and on their own terms.

In fact, SFSC students can earn an associate in arts degree entirely by taking online courses. "It's a way of expanding educational opportunities to people who need the convenience of making their college studies revolve around their work and family lives," the college said in a news release.

Online courses also appeal to students who have been away from the classroom and want to determine whether they are ready to commit to continuing their education.

"SFSC's online courses are ideal for students juggling the

demands of family life, busy work schedules, and other circumstances which may not allow them to attend college in the traditional setting," said Sidney Valentine, vice president for academic affairs and student services.

Students who enroll in SFSC's online courses use the same textbooks, receive the same educational content, and interact via email with SFSC instructors who teach campus courses.

Online classes start and end on the same dates as SFSC's regular fall, spring, and summer terms, and the tuition for online and regular classes is the same.

"Most importantly, students receive the same college credit that counts toward the completion of a degree or occupational certificate," the college said.

SFSC also offers online courses geared toward students studying for entry into an occupation. A few of those courses are Introduction to Criminal Justice for law enforcement and Introduction to Teaching Profession for prospective teachers.

Select online courses are

also available to students who have been accepted into SFSC's Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision and Management and Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing programs.

The complete list of online courses can be found at www.southflorida.edu under "Class Schedules."

Prospective students can get one-stop assistance by dropping by SFSC College Assistance Express Days, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday; Wednesday, Aug. 3; and Tuesday, Aug. 9.

Anyone can stop by the Building B Welcome Center on the Highlands Campus and get help filling out their college application and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid in time to start fall classes. For more information about College Assistance Express Days, call Summer Miller, recruiter, at 784-7447 or email her at summer.miller@southflorida.edu. The list of documentation students need to bring with them can be found at www.southflorida.edu/collegedays.

Get help with admission, financial aid

Special to Highlands Today



AVON PARK — South Florida State College invites prospective students and parents to drop by its Highlands Campus in Avon Park to get individualized assistance in applying for admission or financial aid.

SFSC's recruiter and staff will be available on Monday; Wednesday, Aug. 3; and Tuesday, Aug. 9, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., to help new students complete their admission application.

New or current students seeking financial aid for the fall academic term are invited to drop by on any of the three days to get help completing their Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Dubbed College Assistance Express Days, SFSC set aside the three days to make it easier for students

to get admitted and apply for financial aid.

"New and current students, and their parents, are welcome to visit with us for help in applying for both admission and financial aid," said Summer Miller, SFSC's recruiter. "We can offer them personalized assistance — no appointment is needed."

Applicants and students will find Miller and SFSC staff waiting to help them in the lobby of Building B on SFSC's Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park.

Most applicants will seek to claim Florida residency for in-state tuition. Miller

recommends they check the SFSC website to ensure they bring the right documentation with them. They can visit www.southflorida.edu and enter "Florida residency" in the search box. Miller noted that applicants can apply for admission with or without documentation.

SFSC's College Assistance Express Days also aims to help applicants and students get their financial aid applications started. On any of the three days, new students who have been admitted, or returning students, can get one-on-one help.

Miller recommends visiting the SFSC website to find the documentation requirements for financial aid. Look for the frequently asked questions Web page, or "FAQs" on the financial

aid section of SFSC's website.

In addition to its two-year associate degree, SFSC offers three bachelor's degree programs: elementary education, nursing and business with a concentration in supervision and management. Students who earn an associate degree at SFSC are guaranteed admission to one of Florida's 12 state universities or one of the college's own bachelor's degree programs.

Residents who haven't earned a high school degree can learn about SFSC's adult education program leading to a high school equivalency diploma.

For more information about the College Assistance Express Days, contact Miller at summer.miller@southflorida.edu or (863) 784-7447.

Library celebrates National Coloring Book Day

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — With the adult coloring craze in full swing, the South Florida State College Library joins the celebration of National Coloring Book Day with a color-In featuring a day-long coloring party, free coloring pages, and a drawing to win one of several coloring-themed prize packs.

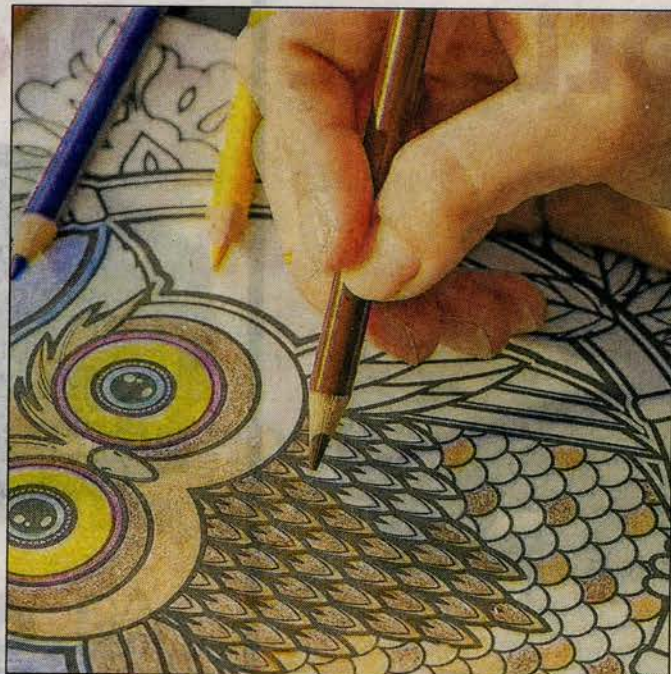
The SFSC Library Color-In will be held Aug. 2 at the South Florida State College library, second floor of building Y, Highlands campus, in Avon Park. Take entrance 3 or 4 from West College Drive. Participants are welcome to drop by the library between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

While the library has offered coloring opportunities for both the community and

college students during final examination weeks to help students de-stress, this will be the first event dedicated to coloring.

"I'm excited about this event," Claire A. Miller, SFSC librarian said. "The combination of coloring and libraries is a natural one. Coloring is a way to relax, focus your attention and be creative — all activities that libraries love to encourage."

Miller has designed a custom coloring page promoting the Aug. 2 celebration that can be downloaded from the SFSC library Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SFSCLibrary/>) or picked up at the library circulation desk. For more information, contact Miller at (863) 784-7305 or at millerc@southflorida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

The SFSC Library Color-In will be held Aug. 2 at the library

Community education department offers late summer enrichment classes

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Corporate and Community Education Department is offering classes in aquabics, yoga, meditation and personal computing this summer.

Aquabics helps students get in shape and stay cool in the summer. Components of the class include a warm-up, cardiovascular and strength training, flexibility, and cool-down exercises. Equipment will be used for conditioning. All fitness levels are welcome. The class meets 5:30-6:30 p.m., Mondays and Wednesdays, Wednesday through Aug. 24 at the pool on the SFSC Highlands Campus. The cost for the four-week class is \$50, and the course number is 30946.

New to Yoga offers novice yoga students lesson in poses. This class meets 5:30-7 p.m. on Tuesdays, Aug. 16-Sept. 6. The cost of this class is \$36. The course number is 11389.

Intermediate Yoga is intended for students who have been practicing yoga for at least six months at the beginning level. The class will focus on improving postures and alignments already learned and will move into more advanced poses. The class meets 5:30-7 p.m. on Thursdays, Aug. 18-Sept. 15. The cost is \$36, and the course number is 11394.

Guided Meditation: Breaking the bond of stress will help students understand and practice calming strategies for daily use. Students will learn how to use meditation to reduce stress with the aim of improving their emotional wellbeing. The one-evening class will meet 5:30-7 p.m. Aug. 9. The cost is \$18, and the course number is 11350.

Basic Home Computer I offers students hands-on instruction in personal computing by covering the basics and beyond. This class is for students who have little or no experience. The class will meet in a computer lab on the Highlands Campus 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Mondays, Aug. 8-Oct. 3. The cost for this eight-week class is \$80, and the course number is 11405.

Students may register for classes by visiting the Welcome Center in Building B on the Highlands Campus, 600 W. College Drive, Avon Park, or by registering on the Hardee Campus, the DeSoto Campus or the Lake Placid Center. Students can also register and pay over the phone by calling (863) 784-7405. For more information on SFSC Community Education classes, call (863) 784-7388 or email CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu.

SFSC outreach tries to tackle shortage of minority elementary school teachers

School touts financial incentives for choosing education as profession

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College graduated its first class of elementary school teachers in May. After two years of seeing 12 students through teacher preparation courses, internships, and examinations, the college said nearly all have found employment in area school districts.

But SFSC's efforts put only a dent in the long-running problem of recruiting teachers for the state's schools.

According to the latest report from the Florida Department of Education, the state faces a critical shortage of teachers in science, mathematics, English, reading, and English for speakers of other languages.

What makes the teacher shortage even more daunting for school administrators is that too few minorities choose to enter the profession.

As SFSC prepares to enroll a new class of students in its Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education program that starts in August, it aims to increase enrollment of minority students.

SFSC expanded outreach to minority candidates this spring and summer under the leadership of Dr. Maday Leon, the BSEE program's lead instructor.

Now the college wants prospective students to know that financial incentives exist for choosing education as a profession. The Florida Fund for Minority Teachers offers a \$4,000 scholarship to minority students who enter a teacher preparation course at participating Florida colleges, including SFSC.

Candidates for the fund's Minority Teacher Education Scholarship must be U.S. citizens, admitted to a teacher preparation program, and have completed at least 60 credit hours. The scholarship is available to students who are African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American.

Scholarship applications for the spring academic term of 2017 — the next available opportunity — open on Sept. 15. A screening committee at each participating college selects students for the scholarship.

Students receive the scholarship during their junior and senior years. The \$4,000 is enough to cover tuition for each year of study.

The shortage of minority teachers



Sara Arnold, lead teacher at Heartland Christian Academy, teaches a science lesson at the school in January.

HIGHLANDS TODAY FILE PHOTO

comes at a time of growing enrollment of African-Americans, Hispanics and other minorities in the state's schools.

In the three counties that comprise SFSC's service district — DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands — more than half the students are classified as minority.

Many Florida school districts have struggled to recruit teachers that reflect the composition of their classrooms. Figures from the state department of educa-

tion show that approximately 14 percent of the elementary school teachers in DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands are classified as minority.

Graduates of SFSC's BSEE program earn endorsements in reading and English for Speakers of other Languages, both of which are of interest to school principals aiming to hire qualified teachers.

To learn more, call Dr. Leon at (863) 784-7154 or email leonm@southflorida.edu.

Man accused of college thefts



Williams

Highlands Today staff report

SEBRING — A man is accused of stealing nearly \$3,000 in equipment from South Florida State College, according to warrant released Monday.

Wade Lamar Williams

Jr., 30, 3806 Barbarossa Ave., Sebring, was arrested by the Highlands County Sheriff's Office and charged with third-degree grand theft.

The warrant said Williams worked at the college from Feb. 6 to Feb. 23.

During that time, he's accused of stealing various items, including a circular saw, an air compressor spray gun, 12 rolls of electrical wire and an air compressor from a maintenance building at the college.

Leadership Highlands hosting school supply drive

By **KIM LEATHERMAN**
CORRESPONDENT

Highlands County students will soon be going back to school. After a summer filled with vacations, swimming and relaxation, the youth will return on Aug. 10.

Leadership Highlands' Class of 2016 aims to start

kids off on the right foot by collecting and distributing school supplies.

The leadership class decided to take action by collecting school supplies after a couple of presentations were made that illustrated the need.

The presentations focused on needy children and homeless students in the

Highlands County area.

"We wanted to do something that helps our future leaders be successful at school," said leadership class member Jessica Hart-Howard.

"After a presentation by the school board, we realized the need. We aim to fill it."

Items being collected are

No. 2 pencils, mechanical pencils, blue or black ink pens, three-ring binders in various sizes, three-pronged folders with pockets, colored pencils, crayons, highlighters, ruled 3-by-5 note cards, wide or college-ruled filler paper, pencil boxes, scissors and cap erasers.

Donations can be dropped off at any of

the following locations through the end of the month: Edward Jones, county commissioners' office, tax collector's office, Florida Hospital, Heacock Insurance, Harbor Community Bank, South Florida State College, and the Sebring, Avon Park and Lake Placid chambers of commerce.

SFSC's online classes mean college is always open

AVON PARK — Through an expanding array of online courses, South Florida State College is turning the computer into the classroom and making it possible for students to complete the first two years of college at their own pace and on their own terms.

SFSC students can earn an Associate in Arts degree entirely by taking online courses. It's a way of expanding educational opportunities to people who need the convenience of making their college studies revolve around their work and family lives.

Online courses also appeal to students who have been away from the classroom and want to determine whether they are ready to commit to continuing their education.

"SFSC's online courses are ideal for students juggling the demands of family life, busy work schedules, and other circumstances which may not allow them to attend college in

the traditional setting," said Dr. Sidney Valentine, vice president for Academic Affairs and Student Services.

Students who enroll in SFSC's online courses use the same textbooks, receive the same educational content, and interact via email with SFSC instructors who teach campus courses.

Online classes start and end on the same dates as SFSC's regular fall, spring, and summer terms, and the tuition for online and regular classes is the same. Most importantly, students receive the same college credit that counts toward the completion of a degree or occupational certificate.

SFSC also offers online courses geared toward students studying for entry into an occupation. A few of those courses are Introduction to Criminal Justice for law enforcement and Introduction to Teaching Profession for prospective teachers.

Select online courses are also available to students who have been accepted into SFSC's Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision and Management (BAS-SM) and Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN) programs.

The complete list of online courses can be found at www.southflorida.edu under "Class Schedules."

Prospective students can get one-stop assistance by dropping by SFSC College Assistance Express Days, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 3, and Tuesday, Aug. 9. Stop by the Building B Welcome Center on the Highlands Campus and get help filling out a college application and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in time to start fall classes.

For more information about College Assistance Express Days, call recruiter Summer Miller at 863-784-7447 or email

summer.miller@southflorida.edu. The list of documentation students need to bring with them can be found at www.southflorida.edu/collegedays.

Advisors are also available to assist students at all SFSC locations during their regular hours.

SFSC graduates new class of radiologic technologists

Five will soon sit for their national board examinations

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — On July 21, South Florida State College honored five radiography program graduates in a traditional pinning ceremony on the college's Highlands campus in Avon Park.

Those honored were Glenda Hernandez, Beverly Slaughter, Kiara Morales, Angela Salinas, and Heidi South.

The graduates had completed SFSC's Associate in Science degree in Radiography and will soon sit for their national board examinations, aiming to start their careers later this summer. Radiologic technologists work in hospitals and clinics per-

forming diagnostic imaging examinations, such as X-rays.

The guest speaker, Benjamin Carter, director, Outreach and Academic Support at SFSC, offered words of advice to the graduates as they prepared to launch their careers.

Citing the words of Marie Curie, the French-Polish scientist awarded several Nobel Prizes for her ground-breaking work, Carter urged the graduates to strive always to reach the top of their careers.

"Don't let obstacles stop you from achieving your goals," Carter told the graduates, noting that Curie — credited with coining the word "radioactivity" — had overcome many hurdles in her life to reach the pinnacle of her profession.

"Always have an appetite for learning and make a point of continuously inspiring others,"

Carter said.

Heidi South, the graduating class president, took to the lectern to thank families and friends in attendance for their support, encouragement and love that saw her and her classmates through the two-year program.

"One of the most important things we learned was the value of compassion," South said. "As radiologic technologists, we often meet people when they are at their worst. They're in pain and suffering, and that's when we need to show not just empathy but compassion."

Junior Gray, director of the radiography program, presented an award to Glenda Hernandez for academic excellence. South received an award for clinical excellence.

Upon completing SFSC's two-year AS Radiography pro-



COURTESY PHOTO

Graduates of SFSC's Associate in Science degree in radiography gather before the start of their pinning ceremony. Pictured, from left: Angela Salinas, Heidi South, Beverly Slaughter and Glenda Hernandez.

gram, graduates can work as certified radiologic technologists by passing the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists national examination. For more information, call Gray at (863) 784-7347 or email grayj@southflorida.edu.

Dental Assistant Graduates Feted At Pinning Ceremony

South Florida State College honored eight graduates of its Dental Assisting program in a traditional pinning ceremony in the University Center Auditorium on July 7.

Before pinning each graduate, Dr. Deborah Milliken, chair of the dental education program, congratulated them on their dedication to seeing themselves through to the completion of 11 months of intense training that included several weeks of in-office practice with a dentist.

"Follow your dreams and transform your lives," Milliken told the graduates, who sat together in the front row of the auditorium, with family, friends and college administrators looking on.

Milliken said those seven words had remained affixed to her refrigerator for decades. She noted they had served as an inspiration to get through dental school and achieve her own dream: working as a dentist.

Receiving their pins from Dr. Milliken were Beatriz Rodriguez of Hardee County along with Rachelle Benoit, Emily Flores, Taylor Hepler, Crystal Miranda, Ashley Rodriguez, San Juanita Rodriguez and Taylor Sofo.

Joining Milliken in pinning the graduates was Bobby Sconyers, professor of dental

assisting, who led them in reciting an oath in which they pledged to seek always the welfare of their patients to the honor of their profession.

Terra Tippie, served as the keynote speaker for the ceremony. Milliken noted that when she asked the graduates who ought to deliver the keynote speech, without hesitation and in unison they requested Tippie.

Tippie, an adjunct instructor in the SFSC dental education program with 30 years of experience in dental assisting, singled out each graduate by noting one quality she exhibited that had made an impression on her. One always had a smile, another was funny, and one kept Tippie on her toes, their instructor said to the laughter of the audience.

"But each of you cared for each other," Tippie said. "You all helped each other to succeed so that you could get to this night."

Tippie encouraged the graduates to listen to their patients, show compassion, and always to persevere in the face of obstacles.

Upon completing the Dental Assisting program, graduates can work as Certified Dental Assistants by passing the Dental Assisting National Board examination.



COURTESY PHOTO

Hardee County resident Beatriz Rodriguez receives congratulations during a pinning ceremony held at South Florida State College for new dental assistants.

SFSC nursing program earns national accreditation

Bachelor's degree program only one in Highlands, DeSoto, Hardee with this distinction

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — South Florida State College now boasts having the only nationally accredited bachelor's degree nursing program in its service district of DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands counties.

On July 25, SFSC received word that its Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing program earned initial accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing.

News of the accreditation came to Dr. Michele Heston, director of Nursing Education, in a call from ACEN chief executive officer Marsal P. Stoll congratulating SFSC on its achievement.

"The entire nursing department faculty and staff are extremely grateful for the collaborative work of the college and the region's health care community," Heston said.

SFSC launched its BSN program in 2014 in response to a call by the nursing profession for colleges to graduate more baccalaureate-level nurses. The health care system has increasingly demanded nurses with higher educational achievement.

SFSC graduated its first class of BSN students in May. The inaugural class comprised 27 registered nurses who had already earned an associate degree in nursing. They completed a program of study designed to permit them to continue working while studying.

"To achieve accreditation from nationally recognized standard-setting bodies has been the goal of SFSC health science programs," said Rebecca Sroda, dean of Health Sciences. "This achievement nearly rounds out the accreditation of SFSC's several health sciences programs."

ACEN is one of only two accrediting bodies in the country that are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The other is the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

A site evaluation team of peer experts from ACEN visited the SFSC Highlands Campus in January to review the BSN program. The visit came after an intense period of self-preparation by SFSC's Nursing Education faculty that began in 2013.

To attain accreditation, nursing programs must demonstrate that they meet ACEN's exacting standards of quality, a process that includes years of preparation and concludes with an on-site review.

"Many employers will only hire graduates of accredited schools," Heston said. "For example the U.S. military, the entire Veterans

Administration system, and many major academic medical centers will not consider nurses for employment unless they graduated from an accredited college."

Heston noted the majority of the May graduates plan to continue on to earn advanced degrees. Graduating from an accredited program is a requirement for applying to most graduate programs in Florida and beyond, she added.

In a nod to the quality of SFSC's BSN program, the site visitors observed in their final report "a remarkable amount of enthusiasm, collaboration, cooperation, and shared vision" among SFSC's trustees, college leadership, nursing faculty, and alumni with the diverse community of health care providers.

Heston noted that while site teams strive to ensure a measure of detached analysis in their reports, this team singled out SFSC for its innovative approach to shaping its BSN program to meet not only the needs of its nurse students but the needs of the residents they serve, with the college's particular emphasis on caring for the region's outsize population of older residents.

ACEN accreditation also opens up avenues for SFSC to apply for grants that might be used to fund resources, such as equipment for teaching labs. "When applying for a grant, most funders want to know if your nursing program is nationally accredited," Heston said.

SFSC started a traditional Associate Degree in Nursing program leading to licensure as a registered nurse in 1993. SFSC has had long-standing occupational certificate practical nursing program that students can complete in one year. SFSC also offers one-year transition licensed practical nurse to registered nurse program.

In addition to its nursing programs, SFSC offers health science programs of study in dental hygiene, dental assisting, radiography, paramedic, and emergency medical technician. Short-term programs offered through the Division of Health Sciences are Home Health Aide and Phlebotomy.

Heston noted SFSC is still accepting applications for the fall academic term that begins Aug. 23. BSN classes will meet only on Tuesdays, with the balance of the coursework completed online.

Applicants must have an associate degree in nursing or its equivalent with a 2.0 grade point average from an institution that is regionally and nationally accredited, hold a current unencumbered Florida RN license and maintain current certification in Basic Life Support or higher.

For more information, call the SFSC Advising and Counseling Center at (863) 784-7131 or visit www.southflorida.edu

SFSC Graduate

A new generation of teacher takes over

Graduate realizes goal, takes over kindergarten class from retiring teacher who taught her 16 years ago

Special to Highlands Today

AVON PARK — Ever since she was a schoolgirl, Shaina Todd wanted to teach.

She kept her mind fixed on that goal from elementary school to her enrollment at South Florida State College.

In May, Todd walked across the stage at the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts to pick up her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education diploma at SFSC's spring commencement.

Within weeks of earning her degree, the 21-year-old Hardee County native landed a teaching job at Bowling Green Elementary School. Todd will take over a kindergarten class from a retiring teacher. But not just any teacher.

With the start of the school year in August, Todd will step into Marilyn Best's classroom. It was Best who taught Todd in kindergarten at Bowling Green 16 years ago.

"I knew I wanted to teach, and my heart was always with the youngest children," Todd said. "So, when I learned that I would take over from my own kindergarten teacher, I thought this was too awesome."

Todd's connection with Best's kindergarten classroom goes back further. Todd's mother also had Best as a kindergarten teacher at Bowling Green, as did five of Todd's six sisters.

The oldest of seven girls, Todd said she always had a love for school and strove to earn high grades. In high school, she took classes as a dual enrollment student at



COURTESY PHOTOS



Left: Shaina Todd and Marilyn Best at Bowling Green Elementary School at the close of the 2015-16 school year. Above: Marilyn Best and Shaina Todd at Bowling Green Elementary School during Todd's kindergarten year.

the SFSC Hardee Campus, completing her secondary school courses while earning college credits.

"When I finished high school, I had already earned most of the college credits needed for my associate degree," Todd said. "SFSC's Hardee Campus offers a setting where you develop close bonds with the instructors and the advisors, so it was great place to study."

Todd said she had her sights set on getting her teaching credentials once she had completed her associate degree at SFSC, either at Florida Gulf Coast University or the University of Central Florida.

But just as she was weighing her options, SFSC launched its BSEE program in 2014, bringing a teacher education program to

residents of the Heartland. Todd said it was an easy decision to stay with SFSC. One of the pluses: She could complete her internships at schools near her home in Hardee County.

It was an internship arranged through the SFSC BSEE program that led to Todd's selection as a kindergarten teacher by Bowling Green.

"I was assigned to intern in a second-grade classroom at Bowling Green," Todd said. "The internship gave me an opportunity to work alongside the other teachers and to form ties with the school."

As last year's school term wound down, the staff at Bowling Green invited her to a party celebrating the retirement of several teachers, including Best, her former

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Teacher

From Page 10

mer kindergarten teacher. At the party, news of Todd's appointment to succeed Best spread. She said partygoers shed tears of joy.

"I cried, too, when I heard the news," said Maday Leon, lead instructor for the SFSC BSEE program. "Hearing the story of a teacher who made an impression on a young student then passing on the keys to the classroom to her years later is what education is all about."

Todd showers praise on the BSEE program at SFSC, singling out the instructors. "They were great mentors," she said. "They were friends when

you needed them to be friends, and they were professors when you needed help mastering the coursework."

"One of our professors, Ellen Thornton, was going to retire and we begged her to stay on until we graduated," Todd said. "She put off her retirement to see us through to the end of the program before moving to the Florida Keys, and that says a lot about SFSC's faculty."

Todd made the President's List each of the five semesters she took BSEE classes while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

Earlier this summer, Todd was in her new classroom putting up Dr. Seuss-themed placards when her former kindergarten teacher, Best, stopped in for a peek at her progress

and offered some advice.

"Count your children on the first day," she said with a chuckle. "Also, make sure you know how each one of them gets home—those are the biggies in kindergarten," Best said. Best's retirement comes after 32 years of teaching.

Todd harbors no illusions that the start of her career in public education will come without any hitches. "Some folks say to focus on money or bring up the negative side to a teaching career," Todd said. "But I think teaching is a wonderful choice."

"It's about the outcome not the income," Todd said. "A teacher puts in so much work and it's really rewarding to see how you can shape a student's life."

SFSC performance, museum sponsorships available

JAZZ series

AVON PARK — Business owners, professionals, and folks who just love a good musical can show their commitment to cultural programming by sponsoring a performance at the Wildstein Center at South Florida State College during its upcoming 2016-17 season.

Museum goers and art lovers shouldn't feel left out. They can sponsor upcoming exhibitions at the SFSC Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC).

Sponsoring an evening and matinee show or a museum exhibition not only draws attention to a business or a local patron of cultural programming, it benefits the hometown economy. "The arts are good for our local merchants," said Cindy Garren, SFSC's director of Cultural Programs. "Each attendee of a concert or performance spends about \$25 with area businesses on

performance day."

Garren noted small firms get good publicity and create valuable goodwill by sponsoring a performance — and it doesn't have to break the bank. She explained that, whether using advertising or corporate philanthropy funds, a sponsorship shows customers a business cares about the quality of life in the community, while promoting brand awareness and visibility for the business.

"Sponsors also receive the added benefit of a backstage meet-and-greet with the artists, often with a photo opportunity," Garren said. Another benefit of sponsoring a performance: getting more than six months

of recognition in the Wildstein Center's season brochure, the playbills, and lobby signage.

Performance sponsorships

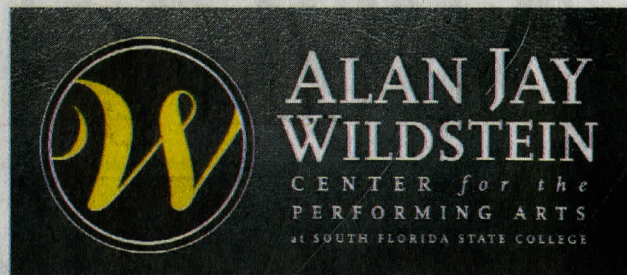
Jazz Series sponsorships are \$1,000 to underwrite five performances, with single show sponsorships from \$300 to \$500. Performances this year include: The Eddie Metz Trio, Bria Skonberg, Bill Allred's Classic Jazz Band, New Orleans Nighthawks, and the CanAmGer Band.

"This year we are providing free tickets to middle and high school music students, and sponsors to help underwrite this educational initiative," Garren said. "A civic

club, a small business, a bank, or even a social club can become a sponsor."

Trending Now Series performances include: Artrageous, an interactive art and music experience; Beginnings, a Chicago tribute band; the South Carolina Ballet's "Beauty and the Beast"; The Hillbenders, a bluegrass group; and magician Adam Trent. Show sponsorships are \$1,000 or all five performances for \$2,500.

Garren said the Goodtime Tuesdays Matinee Series is one of the most popular arts events in the region, bringing thousands to the Highlands Campus. Local businesses can sponsor one show for \$300 or sponsor all 10 for \$2,500. "The Lampe & Kiefer Hearing Center and Palms of Sebring are joining us again as sponsors of the Matinee Series," Garren said.



Sponsorships for the Artist Series performances range from \$1,500 to \$20,000. Dr. Andrew Kulick, a Highlands dentist, sponsors two performances each year. "Every year, I am thrilled to see what world-class acts will be gracing the stage at the Wildstein Center," he said. "Without the support of sponsors from the community, it wouldn't be possible to book such prestigious entertainment for us all to enjoy."

The complete SFSC Wildstein Center season, with access to online ticket sales, is available at sfscarts.org.

Museum opportunities

MOFAC, located on the SFSC Highlands Campus, seeks sponsors for the 2016-17

season of exhibitions, said Garren, who noted museum goers can view the lineup of exhibitions at www.mofac.org.

Upcoming MOFAC exhibitions include: Florida Waterworks"; "The Art of Life: Sean and Sharon Sexton"; "20th Century Seminole Experience"; and the annual SFSC Student Art Exhibition. Sponsorships range from \$375 to \$500 to \$1,000.

Contact MOFAC Curator Megan Stepe at 863-784-7240 or stepem@southflorida.edu for more information about sponsoring a museum exhibition.

To learn more about sponsoring Wildstein Center performances, contact Garren at 863-784-7178 or garrenc@southflorida.edu.

Performing Arts Center Selling Season Tickets

Season ticket subscriptions are now available for the upcoming performance season at the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College.

Subscriptions are available for the Matinee, Artist, and Jazz series performances.

"In addition to saving up to 20 percent, subscribers get the best seat for the entire season, pay less in processing fees, don't have to wait in line, get a 10 percent dining discount at the Hotel Jacaranda, and receive special subscriber discounts for select performances," said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC.

"Subscribers also receive invitations to Meet the Artist receptions," she added.

The Artist Series lineup includes the worldwide piano sensation Ethan Bortnick on Nov. 19; family holiday favorite "Miracle on 34th Street," Dec. 1; a nostalgic evening of doo wop with the Bronx Wanderers, Jan. 12; the Florida Orchestra, Jan. 19; a tribute to Motown titled "So Good for the Soul," Jan. 28; country stars Pam Tillis and Lorrie Morgan, Feb. 8; "Presley, Perkins, Cash & Lewis: A Night To Remember" on March 2; bestselling contemporary Christian artists Point of Grace, March 9; Women Of Ireland, March 23; and one of the world's top vocal groups, Human Nature, on April 1.

All Artist Series performances are held in the 1,460-seat Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at SFSC in Avon Park and begin at 7 p.m. Subscriptions range from \$258

to \$325.

The popular Goodtime Tuesdays Matinee Series includes the Flying Horse Big Band, Jan. 10; David Osborne Trio, Jan. 17; "You'll Never Walk Alone" with Brian Gurl, Jan. 24; the Agatha Christie who-done-it "Murder On The Nile," Jan. 31; "The Martin & Lewis Tribute Show," a tribute to Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, Feb. 7; Music of the 1960s "What's Up, Pussycat?," Feb. 14; the "Shake, Rattle & Laugh" variety show, Feb. 21; music from the '50s and '60s with Pauly and The Good Fellas, Feb. 28; and Neil Zirconia, a tribute to Neil Diamond, March 7.

All Matinee Series shows are held in the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and begin at 1:30 p.m. Subscriptions range from \$145 to \$190.

The Jazz Series lineup includes the Eddie Metz Trio

with Nicki Parrott and Rossano Sportiello, Jan. 18; one of today's hottest trumpeters, Bria Skonberg, on Jan. 26; Bill Allred's Classic Jazz Band, Feb. 9; swing band New Orleans Nighthawks, Feb. 18; and the Canamger Band, March 8.

All Jazz Series performances are held in the 250-seat SFSC University Center Auditorium and begin at 7 p.m. Subscription packages range from \$107 to \$116.

All areas of the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts and the SFSC University Center Auditorium are accessible to persons with disabilities. Free parking is available.

Subscriptions can be purchased online at sfscarts.org or call the Box Office at (863) 784-7177 for a mail order form. For further information, e-mail culturalperformances@southflorida.edu.

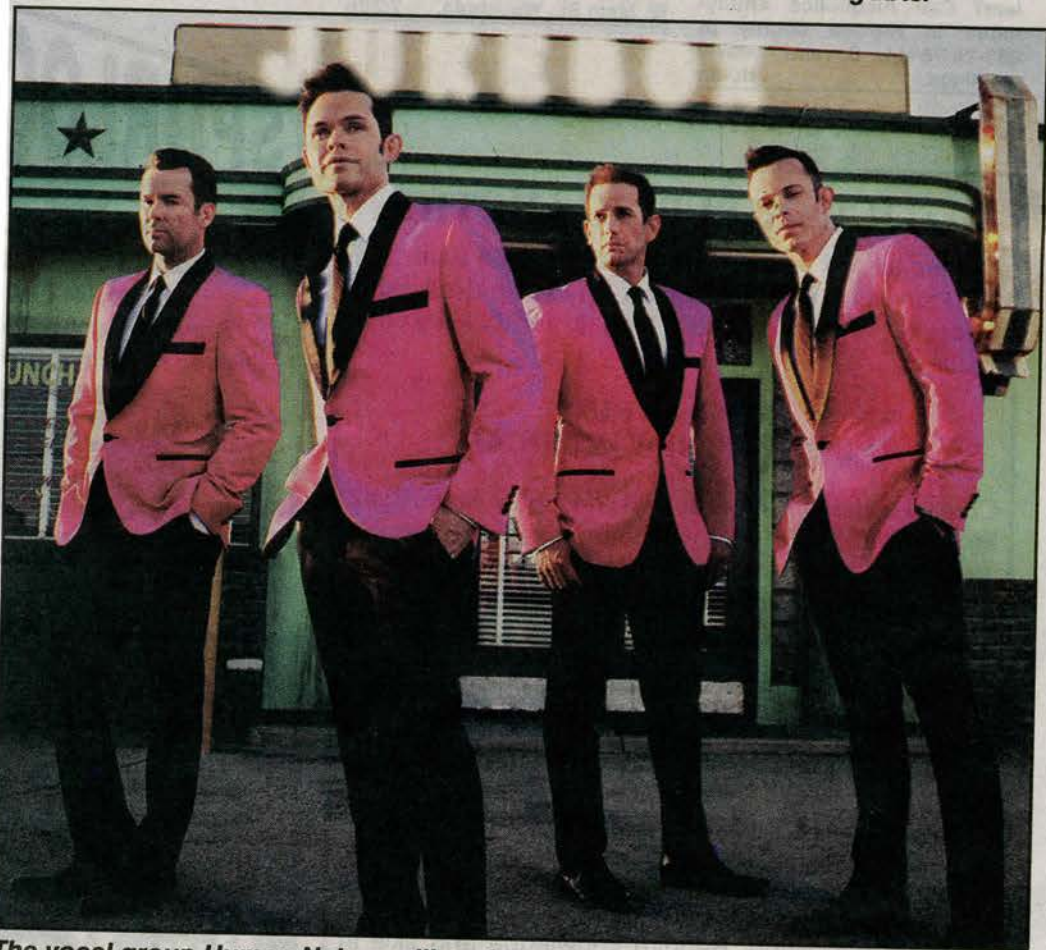


Bria Skonberg and her trumpet will heat up the Jazz Series.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Country music stars Lorrie Morgan and Pam Tillis are a part of the Artist Series lineup at South Florida State College's Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts.



The vocal group Human Nature will perform during the Artist Series.