

SFSC To Offer Mobile Welding Lab

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 Hardee, Highlands and DeSoto counties.

"The governor's budget was titled 'Securing Florida's Future' and that's exactly what this special funding initiative does for our region," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, president of SFSC.

"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. Bringing the classroom to our students for short-term training makes sense," he continued.

Leitzel went on to say, "SFSC is extremely grateful to Sen. Denise Grimsley and Rep. Ben Albritton, who both sponsored the legislation that led this important funding initiative through their respective chambers."

With no formal welding training programs available in Florida's 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 and earning potential to the tri-county region.

"South Florida State College is excited to have the opportunity to expand technical training opportunities throughout our service area," said Dr. Sidney E. Valentine Jr., vice president for academic affairs and student services at SFSC.

"The addition of the mobile welding lab will allow SFSC to not only reach students at our four campuses, but also area high schools and industry locations throughout the region," he said. "This training will vary in length from degree, certificate and diploma programs to just-in-time workforce development train-

ing through SFSC's Corporate & Community Education Department."

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 needed annually in Central Florida.

According to CareerSource Florida, trained welders can earn a starting salary of \$17 per hour with a possible future salary of \$30 per hour, or \$60,000 annually, which is more than the average salary for someone who possesses a vocational certificate.

"We are eager to support the needs of businesses in our service district with a mobile welding lab," said Erik N. Christensen, dean of applied sciences and technology at SFSC. "The new welding program will greatly complement many of the programs currently offered and help satisfy a need with our local employers."

"Virtually every company has a need for welding; some businesses need full-time welders while others may just need one of their employees to be able to weld as the need arises. The mobile lab will enable us to provide the right training anywhere, anytime," he added.

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 (MIG, TIG, and Stick Welding). The lab will continuously travel throughout the tri-county region, as needed.

With a pool of trained welders available locally, Hardee, Highlands and DeSoto counties will be positioned to attract new employers and industry leaders to the region.

For more information about the mobile welding lab, contact Christensen at (863) 784-7424 or Erik.Christensen@south-florida.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

Announcing the new trailer designed to teach welding in the tri-county area are (from left) Derek Whittis, legislative consultant; Cindy Alexander; Sen. J.D. Alexander, principal for Silver Palm Consulting LLC; and Keaton Alexander, legislative consultant.

SFSC commencement speakers have varied backgrounds

Erika Weaver-Coleman graduates with an Associate in Arts degree from SFSC at the Spring Commencement on Thursday, May 3. Although she will tell you that she struggled through high school, this mother of four children will be the speaker at the 4:45 p.m. Commencement ceremony.

Originally from Opelika, Alabama, Weaver-Coleman's early life was unsettled. Her father was a manager in the furniture business and transferred to new work locations several times. "I went to nine different high schools between 1995 and 1999," Weaver-Coleman said. "The moving around was difficult." Between the constant movement and the death of her beloved grandfather, she became depressed.

"I had difficulty in high school," she said. "So, I started going on a search for myself. I traveled a lot — to Arizona, New Orleans, London, New York and Amsterdam." She took a job at Six Flags Over Georgia. "I was part of their Halloween event, Fright Fest, where I played the Bride of Frankenstein. Later, I played Raggedy Ann in a clown house and popped out of a jack-in-the-box."

While at Six Flags Over Georgia, she met members of a traveling performance art group and joined them on tour.

She performed as a fire breather and, occasionally, laid on a bed of nails while a mime did a handstand above her.

"Through that period of my life, I wanted to know, 'How do other people live? How do I fit into all of this?'" she said. "My mother always told me to get out of myself. I carried that with me. Looking back, that's what took me from this dark place to figuring out who I was."

But Weaver-Coleman's calling was inside her the whole time. Early on, she wanted to be a teacher. As a child, she'd played school with her dolls in her grandparents' basement. "My uncles on my mother's side of the family had all studied engineering at Auburn University," she said. "Even though I didn't understand what was in them, I used their textbooks to 'teach' my toys. And I spent my allowance money on teacher supplies and decorations for my classroom."

Weaver-Coleman eventually applied to SFSC with her eye to earning a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. Initially, she sought assistance through the Student Support Services/TRIO program. TRIO is a federally funded program for first-generation students, low-income students, or those with a documented disability. "I'm a first-generation college student," Weaver-Coleman said. "With the TRIO program, I can go

to any of the advisors and talk with them about personal or academic concerns. They helped me select classes and set goals."

In her first semester, Weaver-Coleman discovered the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honor society and decided she wanted to be a member. After speaking with Dr. Sonji Nicholas, the SFSC PTK advisor, Weaver-Coleman made sure she met the membership requirements. "I fell in love with it and the opportunities it offers. Through PTK, I learned how to be a successful student and successful person."

Although she has a long list of favorite professors at SFSC, Weaver-Coleman doesn't hesitate to say that Dr. Sonji Nicholas, sociology professor, is her mentor. "I took Dr. Nicholas' sociology class my first term in school, before she became my PTK advisor. I go to her office at least once a week. I can tell her how things are going and get advice from her. She's always encouraging even if she has a lot on her plate. She's like, 'Everything is going to be OK.'"

"I never imagined that I'd get into college, let alone participate in my first Commencement," Weaver-Coleman said. "It's a point of arriving, even though I'm not at the academic end of my destination. It fulfills a promise to myself and my family. I can, certainly, reflect on how far I've

come.”

Luis Rodriguez

Luis Rodriguez will approach the podium as student speaker during South Florida State College's (SFSC) 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.



COURTESY PHOTO

Luis Rodriguez.

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 Rodriguez has considered is to fly helicopters. “I want to go into Information Technology (IT) and 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,” he said. “I became mesmerized by the atmosphere and got bitten by the aviation bug.”

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 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.”

SFSC holds conference on patient caring



COURTESY PHOTO

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS
NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK —
Approximately 170 health care professionals, instructors and students attended a conference that focused on ways to advance

caring science from an inter-professional perspective, illustrate examples of patient care delivery based on caring science, and discuss the intentional practice of caring by clinical leaders.

The third annual

Conference on Caring: Expressions of Caring through Stories has been planned for Thursday, April 25, 2019 at South Florida State College and will feature Marcus Engel as keynote speaker.

Engel is a professional

speaker and bestselling author whose messages inspire and honor health care professionals with insight and strategies for excellent patient care.



Serving as panelists during the Thursday, April 26 Better Together Conference on Caring at the South Florida State College were (from left): Michele Heston, dean of Health Sciences at SFSC; Willa Fuller, Florida Nurses Association executive director; Cathy Jaco, Florida Hospital Heartland's director of quality services; Dr. Jorge Gonzalez, vice president and chief medical officer of Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center and Florida Hospital Wauchula; and Kwabena Kumi Pobi, board-certified urologist for Florida Hospital Heartland and Highlands Regional Medical Center.

Museum turns into a 'Slice of Heaven'

By JIM ERVIN
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — “Little Slices of Heaven on Hwy 27” is the current — and final — exhibit of the year at the Museum of Florida Arts and Culture on the campus of South Florida State College. It features destinations and attractions which existed from 1934 – 1970. It is a visual road-trip through bygone Florida via photos, videos, memorabilia, artifacts and fine art on loan by Florida artists as well as art and historical institutions.

Participating artists include: Shannon Cummings, Cindy Rose Eaton, Carl Knickerbocker, Curtis Nelson, Johanna O'Donnell and Richard Reep.

The exhibit is the brainchild of Megan Paquette Stepe, MOFAC curator. It took a year of her life, in between all her other duties, to produce this wonderfully historic ride down “the backbone of Florida,” as Hwy. 27 was once referred.

“I started researching everything first, like, ‘what was on Hwy 27?’” explained Stepe. “I just went really big, where it ran, what counties. I think I even said, ‘old tourist attractions in Florida.’ (Internet search). Then I took a map and said, ‘okay, where is this? And I just went through and was like, ‘how far away from (Hwy) 27 was this?’

“In the early days, in like the 1930s and 40s, I would have said, ‘well, how far off 27 would they go?’ So that helped me. And like in the 50s and the 60s, how far off 27 would people go? I tried to put myself in the mind of a traveler back then, and



An old sign for Cypress Gardens.

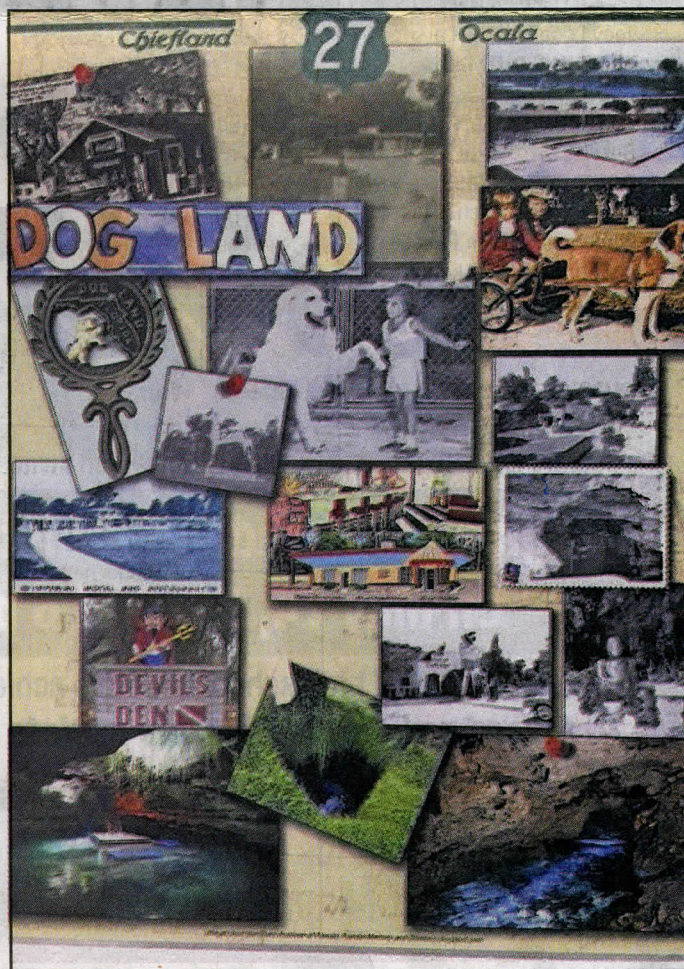
JIM ERVIN/CORRESPONDENT

Curator Megan Stepe has a laugh.

one thing led to another,” Stepe said.

“Then there was ‘research, research,’ and sometimes you’ll fall down these rabbit holes. Like I could not find anything on “Dogland” other than it existed. Then one day I happened upon a blog (by the family) and I was like ‘whoa!’ I found all these pictures, and then more information, and that was perfect. Those are always really gratifying moments when you find something and it’s like, ‘wow.’ It was a lot of fun. There’s just some really charming places.”

Stepe went on to say, “I love doing research, but it was a process. Little by little it came together. I enjoyed interviewing people too. I met with David Schmidt from the museum at Highlands Hammock, he sat with me for a long time and loaned a bunch of old photos of the creation of Highlands Hammock and how that happened. I



HEAVEN

FROM PAGE 1

had a meeting with Bob Gernert of The Museum of Winter Haven History. There was a bunch, just hearing people and hearing their stories."

Stepe poured through stacks of old photographs during her research. "Oh, hundreds," Stepe exclaimed. "I could show you piles. The U.S. 27 computer file is 'mega (huge).'"

"When picking photos I really wanted to pick ones that thought about the charm, or the character, the special character. Wakulla Springs is one of the deepest springs in America, and when you see that photo (in the exhibit), that's a fine example right there. It's like, you get it."

"People were really generous with their time, like Jamie Fogel over at Bok Tower. You know, everybody's busy and I was very grateful for their

DON'T MISS
LED ZEPPELIN
 IN CONCERT AT
PIRATES WORLD
 AMUSEMENT CENTER
 FRIDAY & SATURDAY, AUGUST 22nd & 23rd
 IN THE GREAT OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATRE
 8 P.M. "THE ECHO", "ROYAL ASCOTS", "BRIMSTONE"
 9:30 LED ZEPPELIN
 SPECTACULAR LIGHT SHOW
 ALL EXCITING RIDES FREE
 TICKETS AT GATE — \$5.00
 ADVANCE TICKETS \$4.00 AVAILABLE AT:
 HOUSE OF RHYTHM • HOLLYWOOD MALL • KEETIS, WESTCHESTER
 SHOPPING CENTER • SLAK SHACKS, 163rd STREET, 7th STREET IN
 MIAMI BEACH, LE JEUNE ROAD • IT'S A MAN'S WORLD, 79th
 STREET CAUSEWAY • NOAH'S ARK, 163rd STREET • RECORDS-
 VILLE, HIALEAH • KAMPUS KORNER, 1212 S. DIXIE HIGHWAY •
 CHAP'S EAST, MIRACLE MILE • AQUARIUS #1, N.E. 123rd STREET
 & BROAD CAUSEWAY • CLUB SHOPS, 163rd STREET, N.E. 2nd
 AVENUE AND 98th STREET IN MIAMI, MIRACLE MILE • PIRATES
 WORLD.
PIRATES WORLD
 AMUSEMENT CENTER
 SHERIDAN STREET, DANIA, FLORIDA
 BETWEEN A1A AND FEDERAL HIGHWAY

There was a time you could have seen Led Zepplin in concert for \$5 at the door.

generosity in helping to put this all together.

"I didn't grow up here, I grew up in Michigan. I have developed a real special fondness for all of these places."

The exhibit will remain

on display until June 15. Once leaving MOFAC, it goes on the road for a year so that others might enjoy this amazing collage of historical Florida.

It will be on exhibit at the following venues:

Lake Wales Museum and Cultural Center
 Daytona State College
 Seminole State College
 Winter Haven Museum
 Bok Tower Gardens

"Little Slices of Heaven on Hwy 27" was made possible with grants from The National Endowment for the Arts

(NEA) and The Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC)

Hours of operation are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Admission is free.

South Florida State College Museum of Florida Arts and Culture is located at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park.

For more information phone 863-784-7240 or 863-453-6661 or email stepem@southflorida.edu.



Artist Shannon Cummings next to some of her work at MOFAC.



A can of Moon Soup.



JIM ERVIN/CORRESPONDENT

Underwater Thanksgiving in 1953 at Rainbow Springs.

SFSC summer camps set to start



MARK PINSON/STAFF

South Florida State College baseball coach Rick Hitt, wearing visor, gives instructions to campers during last year's Panther Baseball Camp.



HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN FILE PHOTO

From left; Tori Wilkins, Sidney Porter (blue shirt) and Haley Waltman work on their serve techniques during one of last year's SFSC volleyball camps.

Baseball camps begin next week, volleyball set to follow suit

HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN
SPORTS STAFF

The South Florida State College baseball program is holding two summer camps this year, with the first camp taking place Tuesday, May 29, and running through Friday, June 1. The second camp begins Monday, June 4, and continues through Thursday, June 7.

The camp is for players ages 5 to 13 and is \$85 for the week. Camp runs from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with registration taking place

from 8 to 8:30 a.m. Walk-up registrations will be accepted.

Panther coach Rick Hitt said it's a fun time not only for the campers, but for his players who help out, as well for the coaches.

"It's enjoyable to watch the enthusiasm of wanting to play baseball," Hitt said during a previous camp. "That's one of the things that make this the most fun."

The camp includes all aspects of baseball

CAMP

FROM PAGE 1

fundamentals; technique, fielding, hitting and running for all ability levels. Game experience each day. Contact Hitt at hittr@southflorida.edu or 863-453-6661 or 863-465-5300 for more information.

SFSC volleyball coach Kim Crawford will be holding four camps during the summer; June 11 to June 14; June 25 to June 28; July 9 to July 12; and July 30 to Aug. 2. Volleyball camps are for ages 6 to 16 and the cost is \$80 per week.

Panther coach Kim Crawford said it's a bit

of a misconception that campers need to be good players in order to attend one of her camps.

"Some kids think that if they come here, they should already know how to play," Crawford said during one of last summer's camps. "That is just not the case. Yes, there are kids here that have played, but there are kids here that have never played."

Likewise, Crawford said it's important for the players to dress comfortably, which may not necessarily mean the traditional volleyball uniform.

"I always tell parents they can wear whatever they feel comfortable in," said Crawford. "I

have had kids here in sweatpants, long shorts, you want them to be comfortable in what they are playing in. I want this to be a fun safe environment where they are not going to be judged on how they look."

Crawford said fundamentals are a big part of what they work on at camp, as you can never go wrong with working on the basics.

Applications may be found online at www.southflorida.edu/athletics/volleyball or call Coach Crawford at 863-835-2377 (cell) or 863-784-7037 (office) or email kim.crawford@southflorida.edu for more information.



HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN FILE PHOTO

South Florida State College head volleyball coach Kimberly Crawford demonstrates an exercise during a Panther volleyball camp.

Air National Guard band at SFSC



SENIOR MASTER SGT. PAUL MANN/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO

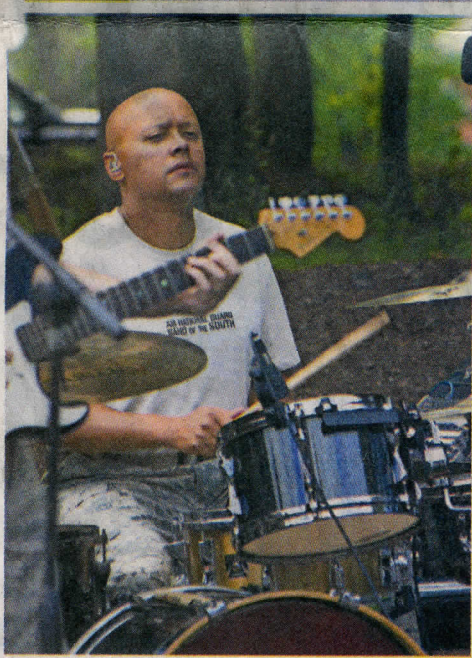
The Air National Guard Band of the South performs during the Air Force Special Operations Command change of command ceremony July 3, 2014, at Hurlburt Field Air Force Base in Florida.

Free concert will take place at Alan Jay Wildstein Center

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

The Air National Guard Band of the South will perform one free public concert at the 1,460-seat Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College (SFSC) located at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park on Wednesday, June 27 at 7 p.m. Tickets are required for the event and are available online now at sfscarts.org. There is limit of four tickets per household.

Supporting the total Air Force and Air National Guard mission in war and peace, the Air National Guard Band of the South inspires patriotism and fosters a deep appreciation of the rich history and legacy of the Air Force. This support is accomplished, mainly, through professional performances by some of the nation's best musicians. The band performs as a concert band, ceremonial band, "Space A" and "Sound Barrier" popular music



STAFF SGT. JOHN HILLIER/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO

The Air National Guard Band of the South rocks out at the ANG Command Chief's Barbecue during Focus on the Force Week on Joint Base Andrews.

BAND

FROM PAGE 1

ensembles, "Smooth Groove" jazz/big band ensemble, brass quintets, and as a small jazz combo.

The Band of the South's mission is two-fold: first, to enhance and lift the morale and esprit de corps of our fellow airmen stationed either in the United States or abroad; second, to increase the public's understanding of the importance of air power, the missions and programs of the Air Force and Air National Guard and the bravery, sacrifice and dedication of airmen across the globe. While performing these missions, members of the Band of the South have performed in almost every state in the union and have been deployed to Germany, Kandahar, Afghanistan, and more. The Air National Guard Band of the South is stationed at McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Tickets are also available by mailing a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Band of the South, South Florida State College Box Office, 600 West College Drive, Avon Park, FL 33825. Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.



MASTER SGT. KURT SKOGLUND/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO

The Air National Guard's foremost 572nd Air Force Band, or "Band of the South" - its 41 musicians - perform their final practice session at the I.G. Brown Training and Education Center's Wilson Hall.



STAFF SGT. JOHN HILLIER/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO

The Air National Guard Band of the South rocks out at the ANG Command Chief's Barbecue during Focus on the Force Week on Joint Base Andrews.