

# Love within a family survives a law enforcement cadet

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SFSC

AVON PARK — During the Dec. 9, 2020 South Florida State College (SFSC) Basic Law Enforcement Academy and Crossover Academy graduation, one cadet was honored in absentia. His name was Manuel (“Manny”) Gerardo Calderon and he had a lifelong dream to become a police officer.

“A young cadet, very promising in this profession, locally grown, had his life cut short far too soon,” said Michael Huften, coordinator, SFSC Criminal Justice Academy, at the ceremony. “During the presentation of these [Career] Certificates, you will hear his name called. I will ask his family to rise at that time so they can be recognized as we hold a moment of silence.” Later in the ceremony, a class flag was presented to Calderon’s family members who attended the ceremony.

Calderon had enrolled in the SFSC Law Enforcement career certificate program that started in July 2020. By the end of August, he had passed away after his



COURTESY PHOTO

Manuel Calderon (right) with his mother Maria Barragan.

2013 and her Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene in 2017. Maria and Lourdes now work for a dentist in Sebring, Fla. Sister Yesenia is a staff attorney working in the Children’s Department of the non-profit organization, Americans for Immigrant Justice, in its West Palm Beach office. Yesenia graduated from SFSC with her Associate in Arts in 2012, earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Legal Studies from the University of Central Florida in 2014, and

to home, having meals at home, and not having to spend money on an apartment in a city. My mom would cook for us and we’d take our lunch to college. Fortunately, both of my sisters were able to finish their academic programs at SFSC. At the time I was going to college, SFSC wasn’t offering a bachelor’s degree. If it had, I would have gotten it there.”

Calderon’s parents, Maria Barragan and Gerardo Calderon, immigrated to the United States from Mexico and



COURTESY PHOTO

The Calderon family attended SFSC’s Law Enforcement Academy graduation in December. From left: Maria Calderon, Gerardo Calderon, Lourdes Calderon, Yesenia Calderon, Mario Adair Arce (Manuel’s nephew), and Maria L. Barragan.

the girls were moving from school to school twice a year, which made it difficult to finish high school. “We would get held back,” she said. “In fact, I got held back in school twice.”

Eventually, their father obtained a permanent job in Lake Placid, where the family settled. “My siblings and I were excited that we were finally able to stay in one school and make friends.” At that time, their parents

protect you,” Yesenia said.

Yesenia indicated that Manny had a great love for Lake Placid. So he decided to enroll in the Law Enforcement program at SFSC and get a job after graduation. His goal was to stay in Highlands County and protect the community.

A week before Manny’s passing, the Calderon’s celebrated Yesenia’s 30th birthday in Orlando. “We did a toast,” Yesenia

for Federal Student Aid.”

“I really wanted to see him go into the Law Enforcement program,” she said. “I knew he always wanted to be a police officer. My family attended the graduation ceremony because I know he would have wanted us to. It was sad for us because he wasn’t there, but we got to see how much his entire class admired him, loved him, and missed him. Most importantly, we got to see

## Heartland Senior Games Postponed

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER

Special To The Herald-Advocate

South Florida State College (SFSC) has hosted the Heartland Senior Games in Highlands County every year since 2000. However, the games are being postponed in 2021.

"The decision to postpone the games was made due to the safety concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Tina Gottus, director, Corporate and Community Education. "Please let everyone know that we look forward to returning and seeing our typical 500 or more participants when it is safe to return. Nothing has been planned in place of the Heartland Senior Games because we do not want a large gathering of this vulnerable population while the virus is still a threat. We hope everyone stays safe and we look forward to seeing them when it is safe."

The Heartland Senior Games are open to men and women 50 years and older to compete against others of the same gender and age group.

Some of the activities available to competitors are bowling, pickle ball, tennis, swimming, golf, cycling, table tennis, shuffleboard, Mah Jong, Euchre, and Bridge.

Events in 2020 began in late January. The Games are sanctioned by The Florida Sports Foundation and serve as qualifying events for the Florida Senior Games for residents of DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and surrounding counties. The Heartland Senior Games promote physical fitness, good health, and a competitive spirit among those seniors who live active lifestyles and inspire those who may not.

For information about Heartland Senior Games, visit the SFSC website at [southflorida.edu](http://southflorida.edu) or call the SFSC Corporate and Community Education Department at 863-784-7032.

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COURTESY PHOTO

South Florida State College recently held a pinning ceremony for graduates of the nursing program. Graduates from Highlands County: Angelica Alicea, Vanessa Davidson, Johanny Gonzalez, Ngoc Le, and Carlos Vega. Graduates from Hardee County: Viridiana Correa-Mariano, Samantha Gilliard, Madison Marple, and Sara Smith

## 4 Hardee Residents Honored Among SFSC Nursing Graduates In Pinning Ceremony

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**

Special To The Herald-Advocate

South Florida State College (SFSC) honored 12 Associate in Science in Nursing (ADN) students from its evening and weekend program in a traditional pinning ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 7 in the Alan J. Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at SFSC on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park. During this year's ceremony, graduates, faculty, and members of the audience adhered to the COVID-19 safety protocols by donning masks and maintaining social distancing.

The graduates are Angelica Alicea, Viridiana Correa-Mariano, Vanessa Davidson, Samantha Gilliard, Johanny Gonzalez, Ashton Hunt, Ngoc Le, Madison Marple, Scott Milliken, Sara Smith, Nashley Terron, and Julia Van Fleet.

Wayne Estes, president and general manager of Sebring International Raceway was the guest speaker. When he addressed the graduates, he said: "Your time at SFSC has given you a foundation for real life situations. This is not the kind of job where you clock in and

accidentally make a difference in someone's life. This is a calling for someone who is passionate about serving patients, families, and friends of those patients and serving your medical teammates."

"Your passion and caring for patients will take you much further than ambition, knowledge, or office politics," Estes continued. "It will lead you to paychecks much greater than those you will deposit in the bank. Your paycheck will come when a patient says that if it had not been for you, he or she may have given up. Your paycheck will come when you help an injured patient walk for the first time after a near-fatal auto accident. Your paycheck will come when you take the wrapped up baby to its mother to hold for the first time. Your paycheck will come when you receive a smile or squeeze of the hand from a person who is about to pass into another life. Not just anyone can do what you do. I cannot do what you do, but I'm so grateful that you do it."

Each year, Nursing graduates award the Golden D.U.C.K. to someone who has served as a mentor to the students in the program. The

D.U.C.K. acronym represents the foundational elements of the mentoring arrangement: Developing, Understanding, Compassion, and Knowledge.

During the ceremony, graduate Carlos Vega presented the 2021 Golden D.U.C.K. Award to Evelyn Cruz, SFSC Nursing instructor.

"Her patience was shown every day in her soft-spoken voice as she provided positive feedback and encouragement to build our confidence as students and future nurses," he said. "Our time together with Ms. Cruz will always be treasured and remembered by all as one of the best parts of being a nursing student."

The practice of pinning new graduates has been a nursing school tradition in the United States since 1916 and, symbolically, welcomes each graduate into the nursing profession. The pin is worn prominently on a nurse's uniform throughout her or his career. One story of the ceremony's beginning goes back to 1883, when Queen Victoria awarded Florence Nightingale the Royal Red Cross on St. George's Day for her service to the sick and injured during the Crimean War. In turn,

Nightingale later extended the honor to her outstanding nursing students by presenting them with a medal of excellence.

Graduates of the two-year Associate in Science in Nursing (ADN) program become registered nurses by passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) exam. SFSC nursing graduates are usually fully employed in nursing within a few months of graduation.

SFSC offers an Associate in Science degree in Nursing (ADN) program for students interested in becoming registered nurses: a two-year Generic-RN program and a one-year Transition-LPN to RN program. The College also offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. For program entry requirements, consult the SFSC/College Catalog online at [southflorida.edu](http://southflorida.edu), call 863-784-7225, or email [healthsciences@southflorida.edu](mailto:healthsciences@southflorida.edu).

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# SFSC awarded Entrepreneurial Education and Training Grant

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PROVIDED BY SFSC

AVON PARK, Fla.

— Many of today's employers report having difficulty finding suitable candidates for positions within their companies or organizations because prospective employees' lack intra- and interpersonal skills. These needed soft skills include teamwork, communication, mental agility, flexibility, strong analytical and critical thinking, and innovation.

Through the Florida Department of Education, South Florida State College (SFSC) has been awarded a \$47,000 grant to address these concerns. With these grant funds, an Entrepreneurship Education and Training (EET) program will be developed through a partnership between SFSC, the School Board of Highlands County (SBHC), CareerSource Heartland, Alpha Umi, Inc., and the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of South Florida (USF).

The EET will take a

three-pronged approach to offering pathways for high school and college students that develop entrepreneurship and small business leadership skills and provide tools needed to excel in the workplace.

In one part of the EET program, foundational entrepreneurial skills will be embedded directly into Career Technical Education (CTE) curriculum starting fall 2021 to assist high school students in developing labor market-relevant employability skills and inspire them to continue their training in postsecondary programs of study. Upon successful completion, high school students will be awarded the 5G™ Edge industry certification and a corresponding digital badge through Alpha Umi, Inc. If they subsequently enroll in a program at SFSC, these students may convert the certification, via experiential learning credit, to two college elective credits for completing the requirements of SFSC's course, Five Generations at Work (SLS 1351).

"The SBHC is excited to partner with SFSC throughout different



CTE programs," said Rebekah Wills, career and technical education resource teacher, School Board of Highlands County. "Through the Entrepreneurship Education and Training Grant, students will begin to receive the foundational soft skills development and will have the opportunity to earn a nationally recognized certification. The foundational entrepreneurial skills will be embedded throughout different CTE courses in all three of our district's high schools in the 2021-2022 school year. These skills will assist students in obtaining and keeping high-skill and high-wage jobs in our community."

"We are super excited about the opportunity to partner with the School Board of Highlands

County to offer soft skills training and certification for high school CTE instructors who, in turn, will integrate this directly into their curriculum," said Erik Christensen, SFSC dean of applied science and technologies. "Employers consistently tell us that the number one issue they have in hiring new employees is a lack of soft skills. Our goal, after the grant ends, is to extend this initiative to the other school districts in our service district—DeSoto and Hardee counties."

A three-hour Soft Skills Essential Boot Camp will be developed for SFSC students from components of Alpha Umi's 5G™ Power Skills curriculum. CTE students will be required to complete this mini-course prior

to interviewing for, or participating in, an internship or co-operative learning experience program with a local business or industry as part of their program study. The boot camp focuses on demonstrating knowledge and understanding of essential soft skills. Equipped with these skills, students will be ready for their initial job interview and their internship experience, with an eye toward landing a full-time job in their chosen career path. Implementation of the Soft Skills Essential Boot Camp will begin in summer or fall 2021.

"We are confident that the soft skills boot camp will help our students make a better first impression when participating in internships in our various CTE programs," Christensen said. "This is so important because many students end up working for the companies that they intern for while at the College."

Suitable for any CTE student and business or non-business major, SFSC will offer a new course at SFSC, Introduction to Entrepreneurship (GEB 2112), in the fall 2021

term to build upon a solid foundation of soft skills and equip students with a thorough understanding of the general theories, principles, concepts, and practices of entrepreneurship. The course will require no prerequisites and provide hands-on skills to assist students in succeeding as entrepreneurs and help prepare them to pass the Certiport Entrepreneurship and Small Business (ESB) Certification, an industry-recognized certification.

"We hope that the new course, Introduction to Entrepreneurship, will be useful for students and people in our community, not just business majors, who are interested in starting their own business and becoming an entrepreneur," Christensen said.

"We are excited to be in this partnership and look forward to the positive outcomes it provides for our students," Wills said.

For more information about the EET program, contact Christensen at Erik.Christensen@southflorida.edu or call 863-784-7424.