

Indiana golfers excel in SFSC Shootout



COURTESY PHOTO

From left; Jeff Burnett, Jeff Polen, Jeff Taylor, Steve Sortore and Tom Kestler.

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

COURTESY SFSC

AVON PARK — During the South Florida State College (SFSC) Foundation's fourth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout in January, two of the three finalists were from Indiana — top scorer, Steve Sortore, and third ranked Tom Kestler. In fact, they are members of a group who golf together in southern Indiana and have participated in the Foundation's Golf Shootout every year since its inception

in 2018.

"In the first and second years of the Golf Shootout, Tom Kestler, Jeff Burnett, and I participated," Jeff Taylor said. This year, Kestler, Burnett and Taylor were joined by Sortore and Jeff Polen.

Kestler, Burnett, Taylor, Sortore, and Polen regularly golf with 20 to 30 others at a golf course close to their homes in Indiana. "We go on a golf trip to Orlando in March and we go to Tennessee in October," Taylor

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February 2, 2021

GAMES

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The people familiar with the plan spoke on condition of anonymity Sunday because no announcements were made. The sides have not discussed the proposal with each other since MLB made it.

A day before the plan was presented, Commissioner Rob Manfred said he would like to know by his regular Monday call with owners if the union had interest in delaying the start of spring training.

The reasoning behind the delay would be to gain time for more vaccinations and better assess the health situation.

Seven teams in each league would make the playoffs, and only the division winner with the best record would receive a bye in the best-of-three first round. There would

be a selection show in which the seeded teams would be able to, in order of percentage, select their first-round opponent.

The three advancing teams in each league and the one with a bye would advance to the best-of-five Division Series, starting the traditional rounds of the postseason.

While the plan says players would receive 100% of pay if all 154 scheduled games are played, Manfred would have an expanded right to stop spring training, the regular season or the postseason under certain conditions. Those would be if government restrictions prevent five or more teams from playing home games even without fans, if government rules restrict travel in the United States, if Manfred determines after consultation with medical experts and the union there is an unreasonable safety risk to players or staff or if the number of

regular major leaguers unavailable because of COVID-19 undermines competitive integrity.

Each team would start with 18 scheduled days off, and each team would be allowed to be scheduled up to 12 split doubleheaders.

Players usually are reluctant to agree to split doubleheaders because of the lengthy day at the ballpark each entails.

The regular season would be compressed to 154 games in 166 days from 162 games in 186 days.

The World Series would be scheduled to end in the Nov. 10 range, with the exact time depending on discussions with broadcast partners.

As part of the plan, owners would guarantee a postseason players' pool of 60% of the gate of the first two first-round games plus \$80 million for the remainder of the postseason, matching the 2019 pool.

Players previously rejected a proposal teams made Jan. 5 for expanded playoffs in exchange for extending the DH to the National League.

Last season was cut from 162 games per team to 60, and the postseason was expanded to 16 teams and ended Oct. 27 when the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Tampa Bay Rays in World Series Game 6. Players received 60/162nds of their salaries.

No fans were allowed during the regular season last year, which because of the pandemic started July 23 rather than March 26. About 11,000 fans per game attended the NL Championship Series and World Series, both played at the neutral site in Arlington, Texas. In a deal for expanded 16-team playoffs in 2020, MLB guaranteed a postseason players' pool of \$50 million.

The Perry Co. Boutique opens in LP

By TOM MEISENHEIMER
CORRESPONDENT

George Bernard Shaw is attributed as writing, "You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'"

That was the dream of Lake Placid native Kassie Perry who wanted to open her own business. A month ago her dream came true as she opened The Perry Co. Boutique at 217 N Main Ave. in Lake Placid.

The boutique features an array of beautiful, fashionable women's clothing along with handbags, gift cards and jewelry. Perry said, "I opened a month ago and am receiving new items daily."

She plans to offer local lines of jewelry, hats, beauty products, men's clothing and shoes as well.

Perry graduated from South Florida State College with a degree in Business Management. For nine years she worked in the insurance business but dreamed of the day she could open her own



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Kassie Perry and her husband purchased the building to open her new shop, The Perry Co. Boutique, at 217 N Main Ave. in Lake Placid.

shop. "I did not know what business to start."

For a year she prayed about it asking God to put her where He wanted her. She commented, "It seems God opened a door for me and my husband Brad when a former ladies store became

available in Lake Placid. It turned out that the previous owner wanted to change occupations."

Kassie wanted a change as well and she and Brad were passing by that former boutique on N. Main one afternoon. They loved the location and contacted the owner that

night. "By Monday we made an offer which was accepted." Then the work began.

The couple remodeled the inside making it a homey shop. She created two dressing rooms and added two comfortable lounge chairs where customers could sit with Kassie and discuss their clothing desires and dreams.

Kassie purchased her first products online from companies that only sell to retailers. She has been opened for one month. A friend told her about the Dallas Mart, a buyers paradise in Texas, where she could order the latest in women's clothing and accessories. So she flew down and purchased lines of high quality goods that appeal to folks between 20 and 60. She plans to visit the Atlanta Mart, popular for their latest fashions.

Perry said, "I also got on-line and visited BoutiqueHub. They are the boutique gurus."

She learned about the new fashions, how many



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

The Thomas girls; daughter Elle, mom Laverne and daughter Lexi were visiting Lake Placid. They live in Okeechobee and discovered The Perry Co. Boutique. They each found something they liked.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Susan Bury, left, stopped at The Perry Co. Boutique to choose a gift for a friend. Here Kassie Perry shows her one of her many fashionable dresses.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Kassie Perry had her new store logo developed to relay a warm and welcoming feeling.

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TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Kassie Perry has brought fashionable items for sale at her new boutique.

The Perry Co. Boutique offers an array of hats and even fashionable masks.

Kristine Fitch from Sebring learned about The Perry Co. Boutique on Instagram. On a trip to Lake Placid she stopped by to browse.

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of each item to purchase, various sizes, how to turn over inventory and plenty of information on how to run a successful business.

The Perry Co. Boutique is right next door to the Journal Plaza on N. Main in Lake Placid. Many customers visit the Saturday morning Farmers Market at the

plaza, stop for lunch at one of the four restaurants. And in the past month, to their surprise, discovered the warm, friendly, atmosphere of the new boutique.

Since opening Perry has welcomed snowbird shoppers from up north, and south from Dade and Broward counties. Lake Placid is a busier place than most realize. "Many people have moved here from Miami and Fort

Lauderdale. Now they are looking for shops that carry cutting edge fashionable items for the independent-minded woman that they usually only find in larger cities."

Customers like Laverne Thomas from Okeechobee agree. She was visiting Lake Placid with her two young daughters. "We were walking by and my daughter Lexi looked at the clothing on display in

the window and we just had to stop." They were not disappointed.

Kristine Fitch from Sebring found The Perry Co. on Instagram. "The former boutique here was one of my favorite places to shop so I decided to visit to see what new fashion jewelry the new boutique was offering." She too enjoyed her shopping experience.

Susan Bury was looking for a unique gift for a

friend and she thanked Kassie for showing her an array of goods.

Boutique owner Kassie summed things up saying, "I sense that the shoppers who have stopped by since I opened feel as if they are in a boutique like those they visit when on vacation."

North Main Street Lake Placid is a bustling place on Saturday mornings during the Farmers

Market. It would be a good day to visit and meet Kassie Perry and browse the many new items she is offering at The Perry Co. Boutique. Her shop is open Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. They are closed Sundays. If you have a question just call Kassie at 863-699-2670 or e-mail her at theperrycoboutique@gmail.com.

”Key Largo” singer Bertie Higgins to perform at SFSC

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — International recording artist Bertie Higgins, who wrote and sang the worldwide hit “Key Largo” will be performing at 1:30 p.m. Feb. 16, in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College.

Higgins a member of the prestigious Florida Artist Hall of Fame, followed “Key Largo” with other tropical-flavored hits like, “Just Another Day in Paradise,” “Casablanca,” “Son of a Beach,” “Pirates and Poets,” and “Jamaica Me Crazy.”

“Casablanca” was named Song of the Year in all of the Pacific Rim and the album was awarded multiple platinum status.

Higgins was born in Tarpon Springs where he recently returned after residing in Burbank, Calif. for 14 years where, with his two sons, he produced five feature films.

After performing in local bands at a young age, he started his professional musical journey as a drummer for Tommy Roe, who had the 1960’s hits “Sheila” and “Dizzy.”

In a phone interview recently, Higgins told Highlands Sun he was



COURTESY PHOTO

Bertie Higgins.

in a band called the “Romans” and backed Tommy for a show. He was getting ready to do a tour of England so they added an “e” to make it “Tommy Roe and the Roemans.”

After playing with Tommy for a couple of years, the band went out on its own and signed a record deal and did O.K. with a few single records, Higgins said. Berry Oakley played bass with the band for a time before he went on to be a founding member of the Allman Brothers.

Higgins’ bio states, tiring of the rigors of the road and yearning to

make his own musical statement, Bertie left The Roemans and returned home to Florida. During his six-year service in The Army Reserve, he put down his drumsticks, picked up a guitar and began crafting music and lyrics.

During this period, he also met and became a protégé of the actor/director, Burt Reynolds, who saw Bertie’s writing potential and tutored him in screenwriting.

Higgins became known internationally with “Key Largo” a song he wrote and then recorded in 1981 that became a huge hit.



COURTESY PHOTO

Florida-born singer/songwriter Bertie Higgins has traveled the country and the world with his hits such as “Key Largo,” “Casablanca,” and “Just Another Day in Paradise.”

Along with Higgins romantic style on the ballad, the song features lyrics referencing the 1940s/50s film-star romance of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, who made four films together including, “Key Largo,” from 1948.

After recently releasing his 25th album, Higgins said he still has many song ideas and is currently making his 26th album.

Also, Higgins is finishing a documentary on the history of Billy Haley and

the Comets that he filmed with his sons.

The documentary tells the story of Haley who is known as the father of rock ‘n roll, whose song “Rock Around the Clock” was originally the B side of a record, Higgins noted.

The Higgins song “Casablanca” was a major hit for him in China and the Pacific Rim countries.

Higgins said he was in China eight times in 2020 due to “Casablanca,” which became one of the

top 10 songs of all time in China.

It has been noted that Higgins described his music as “trop rock” in a 1986 interview coining a phrase that now describes the laid back, fun-in-the-sun tropical flavored music of artist such as Jimmy Buffett and Kenny Chesney.

His five-piece band will be with him for the show at South Florida State College, Higgins said.

For tickets, visit: sfscarts.org.

McLaughlin named director of SFSC Criminal Justice Programs

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SFSC

AVON PARK — South Florida State College (SFSC) welcomes Dr. John E. McLaughlin as the new director of Criminal Justice Programs. He joined SFSC on Monday, Jan. 11, 2021, following the retirement of Curtis Ivy in September 2020. Major Tim Lethbridge from the Highlands County Sheriff's Office served as interim director.

McLaughlin was awarded his doctoral degree in global leadership with a specialization in educational leadership from Lynn University. He earned his Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Florida International University, his Bachelor of Science in Criminology from Florida State University, and his Associate of Arts from the University of Florida.

Most recently, McLaughlin was an associate professor in criminal justice at Fairmont State University in West Virginia, while serving as chief of police in Rivesville, West Virginia. In 2013, he retired as lieutenant from the Miami-Dade County Police Department after serving the community for 26 years.

Although McLaughlin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, he and his family lived in various parts of the United States during his early years. "My father was in the Air Force," he said. "When I was one month old, we moved to Bartow, Florida. We lived in Bartow for about a year while my father was training, then we went to Texas for a year,



COURTESY/SFSC

Dr. John E. McLaughlin has been hired as South Florida State College's new director of Criminal Justice Programs.

then to Kansas for a year, then to New Hampshire for five years, and then to Maine for three years."

When he left the Air Force, McLaughlin's father took a job in Miami with National Airlines and, eventually, United Airlines. "I really grew up in Miami," he said. "When people ask me where I grew up, I consider Miami my home, because that's where I went to middle school and high school."

Throughout McLaughlin's career, law enforcement and education went hand in hand. "Coming from a military family, I knew I was either going into the military or policing," he said. "I was ready to go into the military right out of high school, but my father said, 'No, you need to go to college first, then you can do whatever you want.'"

After earning his bachelor's degree, he was offered a job with the Miami-Dade County Police Department. The department provided financial incentive for

officers who earned bachelor's and advanced degrees, along with tuition reimbursement. At the suggestion of a coworker, McLaughlin began taking master's level courses. "I didn't plan to get my master's degree, but I took a few classes that would help me to get promoted. So I took a few and just got into the habit of going to college. The next thing I knew, I graduated with my master's degree. I started taking some classes in the doctoral program and then I kept going and was awarded my doctorate in 2009."

During the years McLaughlin was working in West Virginia, he wanted to carry forward the educational opportunities he was given in Miami. "They don't have tuition reimbursement for police officers who want to continue their education, so I started a police scholarship up there for the police officers who were working. When I asked some of the officers why they didn't take college courses, they said it was all about the money, so I started the scholarship for them."

Another of McLaughlin's career accomplishments came when he was awarded a commendation in 2016, three years after his retirement from the Miami-Dade County Police Department. "When I retired from the Miami-Dade Police Department, I was a lieutenant in charge of the economic crime bureau. About two years before I retired, I started an investigation with two officers. I had read an article in the newspaper about a

homestead exemption fraud that was going on. The City of Hollywood, Florida had done an investigation and had been able to recover \$2 million."

So McLaughlin suggested the Miami-Dade County Police Department investigate home exemption fraud as well. "I said, 'If they got \$2 million, we can probably double that.' So that investigation started with two officers and myself and by the time I retired, we had recovered \$40 million. It continued even after I retired, and it went from two officers to an entire squad of officers, which was about six officers and a sergeant, and that continues to this day. I received the commendation after being retired. By that time, the department had gotten up to \$100 million. So that was probably the biggest thing that I did in policing."

McLaughlin, of course, is a strong advocate for those who are interested in pursuing law enforcement as a career. "As you know, and everybody in the country knows, these are difficult times for police officers," he said. "But we need good officers, and I believe that the best officers are the best educated ones. We should encourage officers to go into the field — it's an honorable profession. I think we need them more than ever now, but we need good ones. We need people who go into the career to help the community."

McLaughlin and his wife Marielena have a daughter named Katrina.

Panthers sharpen their claws

South Florida rout Central Florida, 7-5

By **JIM TAYLOR**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK – The South Florida State College Panther baseball team continues to make strides as they improve their record to 7-5 with a 6-3 win over College of Central Florida Patriots (10-3) Friday afternoon at Panther Field.

“I thought both teams swung the bat well,” said South Florida Head State College Coach Rick Hitt. “Every guy we brought in to pitch today did a really nice job managing his inning count. We are splitting up a lot of our innings early this year and they all did a good job.”

“That is the number one ranked team in Florida, they are really talented and they can hit and our guys rose to the occasion today in terms on how they pitched to them.”

“We hit every mistake they threw us and we left the bases loaded a couple of times,” added Hitt. “There is still some room for growth there. We did not play well on Wednesday in a 5-1 loss and this is a good response to that game in playing a super talented team that is very well coached by my great friend of 30 years, Marty Smith.”

After a scoreless first inning, the Patriots took an early lead in the top of the second off a leadoff single by Tre Hondras, who later reached second on a stolen base and scored on a one out single to put the Patriots up 1-0.

The Panthers answered in the bottom of the first with a pair of runs to take a 2-1 lead. Andrew Cox reached on a one out error and Nico Saladino hit a double with two outs to put two runners in scoring position. Jadel Martinez followed with a clutch two out double to drive in Cox and Saladino.

The Patriots came back in the top of the third, plating a run on a sacrifice fly by Hondras to tie the game at two.

The Panthers recaptured the lead in the bottom of the fourth, manufacturing a run after Cox reached base after being hit by a pitch to start the inning. The Panthers then executed a perfect hit and run with Cox taking off for second and Reid Lisle hitting



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's Zeddrick Burnham (5) launches a solo home run in the bottom of the fifth during Friday's game against Central Florida.

a single into right centerfield that allowed Cox to advance to third.

A sacrifice fly by Saladino into deep left field brought in Cox as the Panthers took a 3-2 lead.

The Panthers extended their lead in the bottom of the fifth, Zeddrick Burnham widen the lead to two runs with a one out solo home run over the centerfield fence to make the score 4-2.

In the same inning with two outs, Leeandro Alfonzo reached second base on an infield single up the middle then a throwing error on the Patriots shortstop. Edgar Castillo followed with a double into right field that drove in Alfonzo to widen the Panther lead to 3 at 5-2 after five



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's third baseman Jadel Martinez (20) throws to first for the out.

February 14, 2021



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's third baseman Jadel Martinez (20) climbs the fence for a foul ball out of reach.

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innings.

The Panthers scored their final run of the game in the sixth inning on a bases loaded single by Hunter Wilder into right field that drove in Martinez as the Panther lead swelled to 6-2.

The Patriots added a run in the top of the ninth

on back to back leadoff singles and an error before Wilder, who was on the mound pitching, got the next three batter out to preserve the 6-3 win for the Panthers.

The Panthers were scheduled to play a double header against Santa Fe College on Saturday with results unavailable at press time. South Florida will not play at home again until Feb 22 against Seminole State College.

SFSC Receives Military Friendly College Designation

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK — South Florida State College has again been designated as a Military Friendly School by VIQTORY, a service-disabled, veteran-owned business that issues the longest-running, most comprehensive review of college and university services provided to military and veteran students.

Each year, VIQTORY establishes the list of Military Friendly Schools from the results of public research and the data-driven survey that is submitted by each institution. This year, over 1,200 schools completed the survey and 747 were chosen for the designation.

“Military Friendly is committed to transparency and providing consistent data-driven standards in our designation process,” said Kayla Lopez, national director of Military Partnerships for Military Friendly. “This creates a competitive atmosphere that encourages colleges to consistently evolve and invest in their programs. Schools who achieve designation show true commitment and dedication in their efforts. Our standards assist schools by providing a benchmark that promotes

positive educational outcomes, resources, and support services that better the educational landscape and provide opportunity for the Military Community.”

SFSC provides veterans with academic advising and counseling for all programs and degrees. Veterans are able to sign up for courses the first day of registration regardless of how many hours they have earned. The Cashier’s Office offers veterans and/or their dependents who use VA benefits a 60-day deferment from the time classes start to pay their tuition and fees. This allows veterans to enroll in courses without the need to pay up front.

“Being prior military and now the director of the Career Development Center, I understand the importance of knowing a veteran or dependent using VA educational benefits will get a quality education,” said Robert Hampton, veteran school certifying official and director of the Career Development Center at SFSC. “By pursuing their education, it helps with their transition from military to civilian. Their benefits were earned through enduring sacrifice, so it is only right



for an institution to provide the best educational experience possible. The designation of Military Friendly® does just that.”

As part of the college’s outreach to veterans, SFSC accepts a variety of educational benefits provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs. Those benefits range from the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which provides financial support for education to individuals who have at least 90 days of aggregate service after Sept. 10, 2001, to Veteran Readiness and Employment Program, Chapter 31 for veterans who suffered a service-connected disability that limits their ability to work or prevents them from working.

The SFSC Testing Center is recognized as an “open” military friendly testing center by the United States Department of Defense which regulates most military educational assistance programs. The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) lets students earn college credit for what they already know by earning qualifying scores on any of 33 introductory-level college subject examinations.

The exams are funded

by the United States government through the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). Through this program, eligible DANTES-funded test takers attempting a test title for the first time will not only have their exam fee funded by DANTES, but the SFSC Testing Center will also waive their administrative fee for veterans and active military, with proper ID.

Along with providing educational opportunities, the college also offers interactive tools to assist them with career planning, counseling, and job placement efforts at the Career Development Center.

The college is committed to helping military-affiliated students feel welcome on campus by ensuring they have access to the educational benefits to which they are entitled. To assist with any deployment and training issues, any military student called to active service can interrupt education and return without penalty.

The 2021-2022 Military Friendly Schools list will be published in the May issue of G.I. Jobs magazine and can be found at militaryfriendly.com.

For more information about SFSC’s veteran services, contact Hampton at 863-784-7128 or email robert.hampton@south-florida.edu.

SFSC student selected as a Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship finalist

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK, Fla. — South Florida State College (SFSC) student, Gabriel Dezzio, has been selected as a semifinalist for the prestigious Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. He is one of 406 semifinalists chosen from over 1,500 applicants attending 398 community colleges in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Dezzio graduates from SFSC in May 2021 and has set his



DEZZIO

ally talented community college students seeking to complete their bachelor's degrees. Cooke Transfer scholars are selected based on their exceptional academic ability and achievement, financial need, persistence, service, and

sights on attending medical school.

Through this award, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation supports exceptional-

leadership. Students must be currently enrolled in community college and residing in the United States.

"It is extremely significant that an excellent student at a small community college has the chance to win an undergraduate transfer scholarship to aid in his studies toward his baccalaureate degree," said James Hawker, Ph.D., SFSC dean of arts and sciences. "They don't get as many opportunities. So, we do all we can to help deserving students with great potential realize their dream of

university transfer and a postgraduate degree (in medicine in this case) if that is their goal."

Research commissioned by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation found that community college students who transfer to selective institutions have equal to or higher graduation rates as students who enrolled directly from high school or transferred from four-year institutions. Yet, at the nation's top colleges, only 5% have transferred from a community college. The Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship seeks to

increase the number of community college students completing their education at top four-year institutions.

"We are excited to recognize this group of semifinalists for their academic achievements," said Seppy Basili, executive director of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. "We are especially impressed by the incredible perseverance and drive these students have exhibited during such an unprecedented year."

The Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship recipients will be

announced in April. In addition to financial support, selected Cooke Transfer Scholars will receive comprehensive educational advising from the Foundation to guide them through the process of transitioning to a four-year college or university and preparing for their careers. Undergraduate Transfer Scholars will also receive opportunities for internships, study abroad, and graduate school funding, as well as connection to a network of over 2,800 fellow Cooke scholars and alumni.

Randy Allwood's Last Wish Comes True

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER

Special To The Herald-Advocate

The South Florida State College (SFSC) Foundation, Inc. recently created The Randy Allwood Memorial Automotive Scholarship as a tribute to Randy Allwood, a lifelong auto mechanic who resided in Sebring.

Funds from the \$50,000 endowed scholarship will be used to provide tuition and fees for students currently enrolled in the SFSC Automotive Service Technology Program or the SFSC Auto Body Repair and Refinishing Program. The first scholarship of approximately \$500 will be available beginning spring 2021, with preference given to applicants demonstrating financial need and a strong commitment to completing their respective program. An applicant must be a resident of DeSoto, Hardee, or Highlands County.

Allwood worked for Annett Bus Lines as director of maintenance from October 1986 until his death from lung cancer last March. According to David Annett, vice president of Annett



COURTESY PHOTOS

Randy Allwood at Annett Bus Lines

Bus Lines, "Randy stood for the safe operation of more than 50 buses which traveled nearly 2.5 million miles per year during his 34 years with the company."

"My husband kept saying, 'I want to do something for kids,'" said Allwood's wife, Janet. After speaking with Brian Annett, president of Annett Bus Lines, about establishing a scholarship for future auto mechanics, Janet went to Randy's room in hospice and got his OK.

"At 1:40 the next morning, Randy passed away," she said. "So, it was literally the last thing he wanted to do." With the assistance of Brian and David Annett, Janet approached the SFSC Foundation to establish a scholarship.

"Randy always loved auto mechanics," Janet said. "He was a fabulous mechanic, and he wanted to help other people get established in that career. When he was able to work, he mentored mechanics working under him. That way, he helped to further their education and get them trained."

Originally from Wauseon, Ohio, Allwood's family purchased the A&M Union 76 gas station in Sebring in 1966.

"He was about 16 years old when he started working on motor vehicles," Janet said. "He loved learning what made them work and, if they didn't work, why not." Allwood graduated from Sebring High School in 1972 and was the mechanic at Union 76 for five years until his parents sold the business.

According to Janet, Allwood knew little about maintaining motor coaches when he went to work for Annett Bus Lines.

"He taught himself by reading their 8-inch thick manuals and dissecting things." Soon, he was teaching other mechanics. In fact, two of his mentees were Brian and David Annett.

Janet said that the Annetts were like adopted sons to Allwood. They worked with Allwood when they were teenagers, and they learned the bus business through him.

"When he was ill, David and Brian would come by every week and talk with Randy for



With check (from l): Jamie Bateman, SFSC executive director of institutional advancement, who oversees the SFSC Foundation; Erik Christensen, SFSC dean of applied sciences and technologies; Janet Allwood; David Annett, vice president of Annett Bus Lines; and Daniel Longenecker, SFSC instructor, Auto Collision Repair

several hours," she said. "Randy was not very responsive much of the time, but as soon as the boys came to visit him, he would perk up. He would talk all about the buses. He was still very much involved with the business up until two weeks before he passed. It gave him something to look forward to."

David Annett explained Allwood's passion for passing along his know-how to auto mechanics.

"Randy was most comfortable and most satisfied around young learners of the trade, particularly those he knew he could start off right,"

Annett said. "He spoke often about the young generation and seemed genuinely interested in passing along knowledge. Though it seems like a losing proposition to those who knew Randy, he had an incredible drive and desire to see others know what he knew—particularly, young mechanically inclined and curious future mechanics."

Deborah Bell Latter is the coordinator of internal communications at South Florida State College and can be reached at 863-784-7251 or Deborah.Latter@southflorida.edu.