

13 East Main Street Avon Park, FL 33825 863-453-3133

# DONGRS SPRING 2021 Volume 6, Issue 1





Golfers have fun raising money for SFSC Athletics at the fourth annual Million Dollar Golf Shootout.



Through their estate,
Al and Liz Kane leave a
legacy for Take Stock in
Children.



Recent SFSC horticulture graduate is now experimenting with growing mangoes.



SFSC Dental Education students are recipients of Florida Blue Allied Health Scholarships.

# 24 Students Receive Florida Blue Scholarships

In December, 24 South Florida State College (SFSC) students studying for careers in nursing, dental education, and radiography received a total of \$24,324 in Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarships.

Recipients may use the scholarships for tuition, textbooks, lab fees, and child care.

The scholarships are the result of a partnership between the Florida College System (FCS) Foundation and Florida Blue. The Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship was created to sustain a source of funding for students studying to become nurses and allied health professionals. The SFSC Foundation provided a 50% match of the original award from the FCS Foundation and Florida Blue, as the funds must be matched dollar for dollar by private donors at the local level.

"Because of Florida Blue's commitment to education, SFSC students are provided with the resources to complete their programs of study. They can focus their time and energy on their coursework, as many of these programs require intensive study and clinical commitments," said Jamie Bateman, SFSC's executive director of institutional advancement. "Soon they will begin their careers in nursing, dental care, and radiography – all of which play a critical role in keeping our community safe and healthy."

The FCS Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports Florida's 28 community and state colleges. Florida Blue, previously known as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, provides individual and group health insurance to millions of Floridians.

Congratulations to our scholarship recipients:

### **Nursing**

Angelica Alicea of Highlands County, Teresa Baker of Highlands County, Elisar Cleto of Hardee County, Caitlin Cwalinski of Highlands County, Vanessa Davidson of Highlands County, Ray Nino Espidol of Highlands County, Abigail Fraga of Highlands County, Breanna Lee of Highlands County, Eduardo Magana of Highlands County, Erin McGlinchey of Highlands County, Jessica Morris of Hardee County, Ivone Nava of Highlands County, Stephanie Quezada of DeSoto County, and Diana Tello of Highlands County

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3** 

# SFSC Students Are Ready to Make Impact on Community

I BELIEVE IN SOUTH FLORIDA
STATE COLLEGE. I BELIEVE THAT
OUR FACULTY AND STAFF ARE
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE
WORLD, ONE STUDENT AT A
TIME.

Loslieve that South Florida State College plays a critical role in our community. Through the various programs we offer to our degree-seeking students, we are training and educating nurses, teachers, business representatives, law enforcement, dental assistants, and more – and they are all joining the local workforce. These students are graduating with hopes and dreams of going out into our community and making an impact. Their impact will surely help grow our economy and our community.

Graduation for our spring term is right around the corner, and to see the excitement in our students' eyes is intriguing. Their hopes and aspirations are contagious. Come visit our campus, attend a game, or if you enjoy lunch at the Jacaranda or Kelly's on the Highlands Campus, you'll run into one of our students. When you do, ask them what their major is and what they hope



to accomplish with their degree. You will see an instant smile come on their face and hear the excitement in their voice.

Recently, I had the privilege

of interviewing one of our students, and asked him about his experience at SFSC. He stated, "During my time at SFSC, I have felt a sense of community and commitment from the SFSC staff. Indeed, SFSC students are engaged in a curriculum in which they take responsibility for their own education and acquire the skills needed to become lifelong learners."

I believe in South Florida State College. I believe that our faculty and staff are making a difference in the world, one student at a time. SFSC is the community's choice for career-oriented education. We value access and are committed to the success of our students and the communities we serve.

We are South Florida State College.

### **Jamie Bateman**

Executive Director, Institutional Advancement

# **Holiday Fundraiser Nets \$890 for Jac's Restoration**

During the holidays, commemorative
Hotel Jacaranda Christmas ornaments were presented to every patron who gave \$10 or more to the Hotel Jacaranda's restoration fund. From that effort, the SFSC Foundation raised



\$890 toward restoring the historic hotel.

Donations came from patrons of the hotel, the restaurant, and friends of the Jacaranda. No doubt these ornaments were displayed beautifully in many homes throughout the season.



### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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is produced semiannually by the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc., to inspire charitable contributions in support of South Florida State College. The SFSC Foundation raises awareness of the value of an SFSC education and promotes student success through scholarships, facilities development, and program support. By supporting SFSC, the SFSC Foundation endeavors to enhance the ability of residents in our district to obtain a college education.

### **Dental Education**

Deborah Figueroa of Hardee County, Sebrina Gillilan of Highlands County, Jasmine Gutierrez-Montes of Hardee County, Noel Henry of Polk County, Jaylin Maynard of DeSoto County, and Monica Medrano of Hardee County

### Radiography

Abigail Doucet of Highlands County, Rebecca Nadaskay of Hardee County, Niki Rast of Hardee County, and Brittanie West of Highlands County

# Make an Investment in the Leaders of Tomorrow

Scholarships make an investment in SFSC students by enabling them to achieve their goals and become leaders in our community. The SFSC Foundation awards scholarships through the SFSC Office of Financial Aid, which help students pay for a certificate, a two-year degree, or an undergraduate degree. During the 2019-20 academic year, the Foundation awarded \$194,473 in over 100 program-designated scholarships to more than 300 SFSC students.

Scholarships are frequently created in memory of a family member, in honor of a family, or by a business or community organization that wants to give back to the community. The Foundation will work with a donor to establish criteria for awarding the scholarship, provide the initial funding, and set goals to continue the funding in the future. Donors may also contribute to existing scholarships if they do not wish to create one. Estate planning ensures that you can leave a legacy by donating to a scholarship or creating one posthumously.

Along with funding scholarships, donations to the SFSC Foundation are used to support instructional programs and





SFSC Nursing students, pictured in top and bottom photos, are recipients of Florida Blue Nursing Scholarships.



SFSC Radiography students are recipients of Florida Blue Allied Health Scholarships.

fund new technology and facilities, yielding life-changing returns.

Donations can be made with a check, by credit card over the phone, or online through the PayPal link at southflorida. edu/foundation. For more information or to make a donation, call the Foundation at 863-453-3133.

# SFSC Garners CARES Act, Rapid Credentialing Grant

Through Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' Emergency Education Relief (GEER) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Rapid Credentialing, SFSC has received \$292,096 to enhance short-term, in-demand workforce/ career and technical education (CTE) credentialing and certificate programs. Because the college is required to provide 25% in matching funds, the total investment is \$365,120. The matching dollars are coming from the CARES Act Institutional funding (\$23,472) and Perkins Career and Technical Education

Act of 2016 (Perkins V) funding (\$60,414).

Funds will provide unemployed, underemployed, or furloughed workers with training in an in-demand area of the regional workforce board. SFSC will use its funds to purchase equipment, personal protective equipment, and software, enhance recruiting, and supplement instructor salaries.

The funds will support students enrolled in these programs and courses: College Credit Certificates in Automation, CNC Machinist/Fabricator, Engineering Technology Support Specialist, Lean Manufacturing, and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT); a Career Certificate in Firefighter I or Firefighter II; Non-credit Continuing Workforce Education (CWE) Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in Carpentry and Roofing and Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in Electrical, the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A, and CDL Class B. For more information about these programs and scholarship opportunities through CareerSource Heartland, visit the webpage southflorida.edu/rapid-credentialing.

# Fourth Annual Million Dollar Golf Shootout Supports Panther Athletics

In January, the SFSC Foundation's fourth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout drew golfers to the Sun 'N Lake Golf Club for a chance to make a hole-in-one and walk away with a \$1 million prize.

During the three days of qualifying from Jan. 14 through Jan. 16, golfing buddies challenged each other in a fun and competitive spirit while raising money for SFSC's Athletics. Through men's baseball, women's softball, women's volleyball, and women's cross country, SFSC's student athletes acquire the skills to become tomorrow's leaders. Many of the athletes voluntered at the event.

"I am pleased that the student athletes are respectable and that they are representing our community in the way that they are,"



Pictured are (from left) Tom Kestler, third; Steve Sortore, first; event sponsor Ronnie Carter; and Jim Doty, second.

said event sponsor Ronnie Carter, Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc. "We appreciate them because they are the future; the way things are going in the world, we need all the help we can get."

Participants came from all over Central Florida and from as far away as Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. On Sunday, Jan. 17, the 12 finalists got one shot at winning the \$1 million prize by making a hole-in-one at the par-3 18th hole of Deer Run. Although no one walked away with the ultimate prize, first-place finalist Steve Sortore of Plainfield, Ind. won \$750 for landing his ball 14' from the hole, the closest ever in the history of the shootout. Jim Doty, of Sebring, Fla. claimed \$500 for second place when

his ball fell 29' from the hole, and third-place Tom Kestler of Indianapolis, Ind. received \$250 for getting within 44'.

"We appreciate our sponsors and the competitors who participated in this event," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement at SFSC. "The SFSC Foundation provides financial support to students, which enhances their access to the affordable. quality education, training, and experience they will need to excel as tomorrow's leaders. This is also a fun and exciting time getting to know the golfers as they 'battle' to get on the leaderboard."

The date of the Foundation's fifth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout has been set for Jan. 13-16, 2022, at the Sun 'N Lake Golf Club.

# Couple's Passion for Giving Lives on in Their Memory

Take Stock in Children has received a donation from the Estate of Al and Liz Kane through their family trust.

The Kanes had a passion for helping those who are less fortunate and for organizations that make a difference in the lives of others. The couple passed away in 2019, but their passion for education is living on through their financial support of Take Stock. The Kanes' donation will impact the lives of underserved children in our tri-county region by providing them with scholarships for college or vocational training.



Al and Liz Kane

"The Kanes' generosity means that local students enrolled in the program will be supported in their journey to attain a college education," said Danielle Ochoa, coordinator for Take Stock in Children at SFSC. "The support students receive is vital to ensuring their success beyond high

### DONOR SPOTLIGHT

school graduation and into their adult lives."

Estate planning helps loved ones know your wishes and ensures that you are leaving the legacy you desire. The SFSC Foundation and Take Stock in Children are grateful to Al and Liz Kane for including higher education in their trust, giving students a brighter future.

For information on how you can "Leave Your Legacy," contact Jamie Bateman, SFSC's executive director of institutional advancement, at 863-453-3133.

# SFSC FACTS FOR 2019-2020

Enrollment: 6,024

UNDUPLICATED HEAD COUNT

Students in College Credit Classes

Males: 42% Females: 58%

37% Hispanic Student Population as a Title V Hispanic Serving Institution

Student/Faculty Ratio 10:1



\$194,473 in scholarships was awarded to students in 2019-20.

More than 100 programdesignated scholarships are available to SFSC students.

# For Fourth Year, Indiana Golfers Make Showing at Shootout

TWO OF FIVE GOLFING
FRIENDS BECOME FINALISTS IN
THE MILLION DOLLAR HOLE-INONE-GOLF SHOOTOUT.

During the 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.

The first year that members of the group participated in the Golf Shootout, Burnett and Taylor were planning a trip to Orlando to golf over a long weekend. Kestler, who lives in Avon Park six months out of the year, posted on Facebook that the SFSC Foundation was holding the Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout and invited Burnett and Taylor to stay at his house.

"Now we look forward to it every year now — getting away from the cold, having fun playing golf, and having fun at the Shootout. Those of us from Indiana have a little competition between us, and everybody at the Shootout is so friendly. It makes it worth getting down here every year."

During his time in Highlands County, Kestler has become an avid fan of the SFSC Panther baseball team



Golfers Jeff Burnett (left), Jeff Polen, Jeff Taylor, Steve Sortore, and Tom Kestler come from Indiana each year to participate in the Foundation's Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout.

and frequently attends games on the College's Highlands Campus. In fact, he played baseball in his youth and had a tryout with the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. Last year, Jamie Bateman, SFSC's executive director of institutional advancement, accommodated Kestler's request for Panther apparel, and he responded with a donation to the SFSC Foundation.

The group of Indiana players intends to participate in future Golf Shootouts, and Taylor looks forward to winning the \$1 million at some point. "But the bigger thing is that we all love the Shootout. It's a good cause — it benefits SFSC's athletes and the College. Plus, it's warm weather. You get away, you get some sunshine and a break from the Indiana winter. You get to enjoy good people and have a good time."

Taylor and the other four golfers belong to the 200-member Crown's Golf Group in Indiana, where Taylor currently serves on the board of directors. The group hosts monthly scrambles so that members can play golf while raising money for charity. Through the proceeds and with additional help from sponsors, the group normally raises \$6,000 to \$8,000 by Christmastime, enabling them to fund shopping excursions for 12 to 15 families who are in need or have children with special needs. Participating in the Foundation's annual Shootout extends that tradition of charity.

"Our Indiana golf friends have participated in this event from year one," Bateman said. "It is becoming quite the tradition to have them with us as contestants on Shootout Sunday! We are blown away that they coordinate their Florida golf vacation around our event, and we are grateful for their continued support of the SFSC Foundation and our Panther Athletics program."

# 5 Ways You Can Support the Work of the SFSC Foundation

- 1. Make the SFSC Foundation your favorite charitable organization at Amazon Smile, and go to *smile.amazon. com* when making future purchases. Learn more at <a href="http://amzn.to/2g9Ku0P">http://amzn.to/2g9Ku0P</a>.
- 2. Become a Friend of SFSC by setting up an online recurring donation
- of \$25 or more per month: http://bit. ly/2Fi3fx2.
- 3. Sponsor an SFSC fundraising event, such as the Legacy Showcase, the Jacaranda Jubilee, the Christmas luncheon, or the the Million Dollar Holein-One Golf Shootout.
- 4. Give stock or securities. For information, call 863-453-3133 or email *foundation@southflorida.edu*.
- 5. Join the SFSC Heritage Society by including the SFSC Foundation in your will or trust, or name us as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy.

# Graduate J.C. Scott Pursues His Love of Agriculture

RETIRED COAST GUARDSMEN
WANTS TO BECOME COUNTY'S
MANGO KING.

When his 11-year career in the U.S. Coast Guard came to an end, J.C. Scott returned to Highlands County to devote himself to farming. In December, the Avon Park native received an Associate in Science in Landscape and Horticulture Technology, a College Credit Certificate in Landscape and Horticulture Technician, and a College Credit Certificate in Landscape and Horticulture Professional from South Florida State College.

Scott graduated from Avon Park High School in 2005 and joined the Coast Guard. In his first assignment, he served as a Boatswain's Mate on a 225-foot seagoing buoy tender that serviced navigational buoys along the Alaskan coast. From there, he was assigned to a search and rescue station in Destin, Fla., where he took part in 350 missions, working everything from plane crashes to flare sightings and boat collisions.

With an interest in law enforcement, Scott was accepted as a Maritime Enforcement Specialist (MES) and transferred to the Maritime Security Response Team (MSRT) in Chesapeake, Va. The MSRT specialized as a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives unit with the task of dismantling potential bombs and biological weapons on container ships coming into the United States. Two years into his training, Scott fell on an obstacle course, hitting his head and unknowingly breaking his back. Over time, cysts developed in the middle of his spinal cord, causing him to lose function in his right arm.

Due to his limited mobility, Scott was transferred to Ketchikan, Alaska, where he was placed in charge of the armory and headed the law enforcement training program. After taking medical retirement, he returned to Avon Park.

At first, Scott walked with a cane



J.C. Scott and his son, Jacob

and felt that his right side was shutting down because of the cysts. Because gardening had been his form of stress relief as a Coast Guard MSRT, Scott and his wife, Stephanie, began running a small vegetable farm. When it was wiped out by Hurricane Irma, his determination prevailed. "I knew I wanted to do something in agriculture," he said. With the assistance of the GI Bill, Scott began studying agriculture at SFSC. He also found a doctor who helped to restore the mobility in his legs and arms. In 2019, Scott's life came full circle when he and his wife purchased a house on 10 acres that is within a mile of his boyhood home.

Although Scott's health was improving, he still had trouble bending over to harvest vegetables and decided to focus on fruit trees. A friend's gift of locally grown mangoes inspired his next pursuit. He began researching mango cultivation, only to learn that the University of Florida didn't recommend growing mangoes in this area because it is prone to winter freezes. "But if you drive through Avon Park, I don't think I can count as high as the number of mango trees that grow here," he said. "My friend's mango tree is over 70 years

## **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

old, so it survived all the freezes we've had. I've taken a lot of citrus courses at the College. Because the nutritional requirements for mangoes are so similar to citrus, that information has been helpful."

Currently, Scott has an acre grove on which he's testing up to 27 varieties of mangoes. In the meantime, he and Stephanie have begun following her dream – selling coffee and expressobased drinks from their coffee trailer.

"A mango grove takes a few years to get going, so we started the coffee business to fund the farm. I sell locally grown, organic produce on the side. Many local produce stands get their vegetables from Plant City, and much of it comes from overseas."

Scott explained that mangoes are a higher value crop and although 500 varieties exist, only two are sold in the United States. Scott wants to expand the market and the flavor palate. "I never knew that there were mangoes that tasted like orange sherbet or piña colada or pineapple, or coconut."

Scott has educational advice for prospective students. "Just going blindly and wanting a bachelor's degree in a certain field that they don't know much about can cause problems," he said. "The Career Development Center at SFSC is really good about helping people learn about all aspects of a potential job and the degree they would need for it. People should spend time in the Career Development Center before they pick their major."

"J.C. and I met when I was advising him for our A.S. in Landscape and Horticulture Technology program," said Rob Hampton, director of the SFSC Career Development Center. "We figured out quickly that we, as two old veterans, had a passion for agriculture. And there have been many times where I reached out for some farming advice. Thanks to J.C., my green thumb has gotten a lot greener."

# In Midst of Pandemic, Take Stock Needs Mentors to Support Its Students

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON

MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES

EXIST FOR MENTORS

Ver the past year, the threat of COVID-19 forced DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands county students to attend school virtually, often without academic and social support. Immediately after spring break in 2020, Take Stock in Children began holding virtual meetings with the mentees in its tri-county service district. When the 2020-21 school year began, Take Stock continued supporting students through online college readiness workshops, virtual seminars called Mentor Moments, and one-on-one meetings.

Danielle Ochoa, Take Stock's student services coordinator, and Linda Roman, its college success coach, have been there for their students. Because the program continues to recruit new high school

students, volunteer mentors are vitally needed to cheer them on as they navigate the path to college and to vocational, technical, and military careers.

Volunteer mentors are the heartbeat of the Take Stock program. By meeting consistently with students over the course of the school year, mentors provide motivation and friendship to a child while helping them build solid values, establish goals, improve their academic and life skills, and develop self-esteem and confidence. In turn, students learn how to engage in meaningful conversations and develop a bond with an adult who may support and encourage them throughout life.

Students who are accepted into the Take Stock program pledge to meet regularly with their mentors, maintain academic standards, and remain crimeand drug-free. In return for fulfilling these commitments, students receive a scholarship to a Florida state college,



Take Stock student Richard Torres (left) with his mentor, Judge David Horton

university or technical college to continue their educational pursuits.

"I mentor because I feel I can make a positive impact in my mentee's life," said Take Stock mentor Mary E. Brown. "We need all of our future generations to be confident, successful, and kind."

For more information about mentoring opportunities, call Ochoa at 863-784-7343 or email danielle.ochoa@southflorida.edu.

# **Entrepreneurship Training Begins**



South Florida State College has received \$47,000 from the Florida Department of Education to establish the Entrepreneurship Education and Training (EET) program in partnership with the School Board of Highlands County, CareerSource Heartland, Alpha Umi, Inc., and the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of South Florida.

Starting in fall 2021, the EET will help high school and college students develop job-readiness skills, such as teamwork, communication, mental agility, flexibility, analytical and critical thinking, and innovation.

- High school students may earn Alpha Umi's 5G<sup>TM</sup> Edge industry certification and convert it into two college elective credits at SFSC.
- Alpha Umi's 5G<sup>TM</sup>
  Power Skills curriculum is being used to develop Soft Skills Essential Boot Camp for SFSC students.
- SFSC's new
  Introduction to
  Entrepreneurship course will
  prepare students to pass the
  Certiport Entrepreneurship
  and Small Business (ESB)
  Certification.

For information about EET training, email Erik Christensen, dean of applied sciences and technologies, at erik.christensen@southflorida. edu or call 863-784-7424.





South Florida State College 600 West College Drive Avon Park, FL 33825

# On the Calendar

### Foundation Events

# SFSC Foundation Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser Featuring Dueling Pianos

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2021 5:30 p.m. Social | 7 p.m. Performance Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts Tickets required: sfscarts.org/show/pianos Limited space available for social distancing.

# The Jacaranda Jubilee

MONDAY, NOV. 29, 2021 6:30 p.m., The Hotel Jacaranda Veranda RSVP required. Limited space available for social distancing.

# **#Giving Tuesday**

TUESDAY, NOV. 30, 2021 southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/givingtuesday All day

### **Christmas Luncheon**

THURSDAY, DEC. 9, 2021
11:30 a.m., The Hotel Jacaranda
RSVP required. Limited space available for social distancing.

# **5th Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout**

THURSDAY-SUNDAY, JAN. 13-16, 2022 Sun 'N Lake Golf Club No reservations needed. No tee times required.

# Board Meetings

# **Executive Committee Meeting**

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021 Noon, The Hotel Jacaranda

# **Board Meeting**

TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021 6 p.m., The Hotel Jacaranda

## SFSC Events

# **2021 Spring Commencement**

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021 Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts SFSC Highlands Campus

Annual and event sponsorships are available. Please contact the Foundation for more information.