

Educator of the Year

Educator of the Year

Rockwood is students' 'rock star'

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

LAKE PLACID — The Highlander Awards Educator of the Year honoree is Stacy Rockwood, a Lake Placid Middle School teacher whose impact in the community is big inside and outside the classroom.

Rockwood, an ESE support and facilitation, was nominated by Willie Hills, when he was assistant principal of Lake Placid Middle, and Crystal Baugh, when she was a guidance counselor at Lake Placid Middle. Hills is now the district transportation director and Baugh is a program staffing specialist at the district office.

Rockwood lights up any room she enters with her positive personality and outlook on life. She is amazing in all possible facets of the word and she embodies the term "rock star" teacher, Hills and Baugh stated in nominating Rockwood.

"Miss Rockwood is an asset to our students by always helping them find ways to connect to school or academics as well as helping students find their joy or passions in life. She is known for her ability to break out in spontaneous songs about math language/arts or any other subject that students need help remembering.

"Her dedication and commitment



RUTH ANNE LAWSON/STAFF

Stacy Rockwood (center) is the 2021 recipient of the Highlander Awards Educator of the Year. Presenting the award is Sid Valentine, vice president for academic affairs and student services at South Florida State College, and Highlands News-Sun Advertising Director Amanda Young. SFSC was the sponsor of the Educator of the Year award.

to our students allows her to engage many who struggle to be successful in a

typical academic setting."

She also continuously pushes herself

to improve her own practice so that she can meet the individual needs of every student with whom she comes in contact, her nomination read.

But, Miss Rockwood's enthusiasm for life and her new community extends beyond the classroom and the school day, they added.

"Shortly after arriving at Lake Placid Middle School, Hurricane Irma blew devastation across our community and without hesitation and despite her recent arrival and the fact that her kitchen roof was in her kitchen sink, she threw herself into delivering necessary yet of ring necessary items to local families, serving food and cleaning up our campus.

Rockwood has adopted the local city league football team and serves as "team mom," a title that has never been more appropriate because she "will get after those boys if they are not doing right.

"Stacy is always smiling, always a positive voice, always a proactive force for kids."

She is the epitome of everything a school would want as a teacher and everything a community needs from a truly invested member.

"Miss Rockwood deserves this award because we just love everything she presents and represent," Hills and Baugh stated.

September 1, 2021



COURTESY PHOTO/CHRISTI BOBO

South Florida's Jessalin Arreola (left) and Megan O'Sullivan (right) give it their all during the Tallahassee Cross Country Open.

Lady Panthers place high at TCC Open

By **CHRISTI BOBO**
CORRESPONDENT

TALLAHASSEE — The Lady Panthers traveled to Tallahassee for the women's cross country season opener hosted by Tallahassee Community College, at Apalachee Regional Park.

Apalachee is a true cross country course covering grass, gravel, clay, rolling hills and a runner favorite battle known as "The Wall". Apalachee Park will also serve as the host site for the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Cross Country (XC) and Half-Marathon National Championships in the fall of 2022.

For the Lady Panthers on Saturday, Sophomore Francesca Chillemi finished the 5k in a time of 22:39 earning her a fifth place finish. Freshman Kaitlynn Brandeberry also finished in the top ten finishing ninth in

23:31.

Chillemi and Brandeberry lead the way for the Lady Panthers third place overall team finish. Paxton Brooks and Andrea Raya rounded out the third and fourth team places, finishing in the top 20 of the 38 runner field. Jessalin Arreola finished not far behind in 21st to round out the order of finish for the Lady Panthers top five.

"These ladies have shown up and put in the work for a solid month, and their hard work paid off with a solid finish," said South Florida's Coach Christi Bobo. "This course is a true reflection of grit. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with them this season. I hope today's results give each of them confidence and inspire them to keep pushing."

The Lady Panthers are back in action on Saturday Sept. 4 as they run the Holloway short course in Lakeland. Starting time is 8:05 a.m.



COURTESY PHOTO/CHRISTI BOBO

South Florida's Francesca Chillemi races her way up hill during the Tallahassee Cross Country Open.

SFSC wins home debut in straight sets

By **JIM TAYLOR**
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Panther Volleyball team swept the Webber Warrior JV team in straight sets: 25-22, 25-23 and 25-20 at Panther Gymnasium on Wednesday night for their first home game of the season.

“Overall thoughts,” said South Florida State College Head Kim Crawford “we are young, I was really blessed with a good bunch of girls the last couple of years, it just seemed natural, these girls are going to

get there, but we are still learning each other and we have a long way to go.

“There is fire in them, so individually they are good, but we keep talking about making it a team thing. The individualities of each one coming together and being able to move smoothly as a team to accomplish our goals is what we are working on.”

Game 1 had the Panthers jumping to a 5-1 and later an 8-4 lead before Webber got going with a 9-4 run to take the lead over the Panthers 13-12.



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's Valentina Garcia (8) makes the diving dig on a Webber shot.

PANTHERS | 2C



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's Isabella Hurtado (10) attempts a cross-court shot.



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's Madelyn Krafka (9) fires a shot past the Webber front line.



JIM TAYLOR/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College's Jenna Capuano (5) and Cameron Davis (4) attempt to block the shot at the net.

PANTHERS

FROM PAGE 1C

Webber held that lead at 14-13 until Rosemary Rodriquez hit a kill shot off the defender's hands to tie the game at 14 and Madelyn Krafka hit a kill shot down the right side of the court to power the Panthers past the Warriors at 16-14.

The Warriors got back to one of the Panthers, at 16-15, before South Florida State College pulled ahead by five

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points 20-15. Krafka hit the game winner, a kill shot off the defender's hands as the Panther's won game one 25-22.

Game 2 had the Panthers taking an early 4-1 lead and with a couple by tap-over points by Isabella Hurtado and Cameron Davis, built that lead to six at 12-6. The Panthers expanded their lead to nine and poised to end the game quickly with the score being 24-15. The Warriors rallied with eight straight points to close the gap to one at 24-23 before being called for an infraction that gave the Panthers a 25-23 win.

Game 3 started out in the same scenario as the first two as the Panthers

jumped to a 7-3 lead, this time finding themselves trailing shortly afterward 10-8 and tied at 11 before a kill shot by Valentina Garcia, a block for point by Rodriquez and a kill shot by Krafka were part of an 8-1 run as the Panthers held a 19-12 lead. The Panthers

held on, with no drama of Webber getting close, for a 25-20 win.

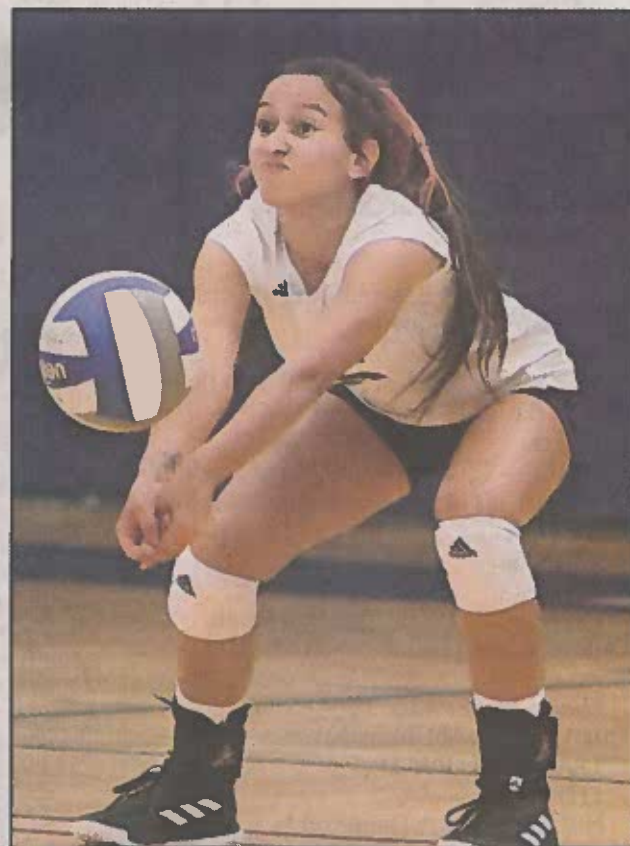
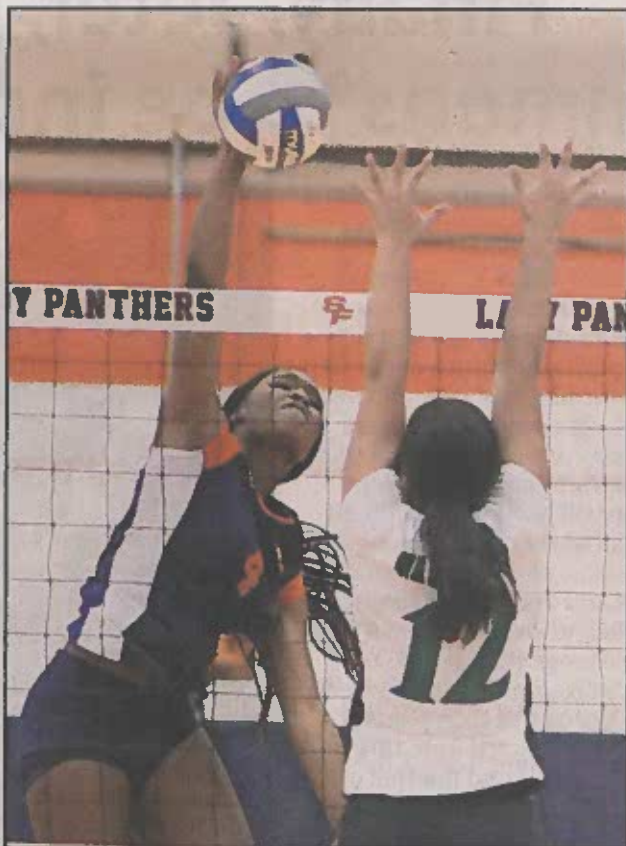
"The first set was flat," added Crawford "the second set was a little better, but it went flat. The third set, they were starting to have a little fun, but it had its moments. I think it took

too long for them to get fired up. There are just a lot of little things that have to get better."

"It is learning what the person beside you can get," continued Crawford "as we work together, we will learn each other's weaknesses and strengths in certain

situations, we are still trying to figure those things out.

After a couple of weeks on the road, the Panthers will be back at home on Sept. 15 at 6 p.m. to host St Petersburg in the first of five consecutive home matches.



SFSC Garners \$2.7 Million for Heartland Pathways 2 Success Project

By DEBORAH BELL LATTER

Special To The Herald-Advocate

South Florida State College (SFSC) has been awarded a \$2.7 million grant through the U.S. Department of Education Office of Post-secondary Education. The monies will fund the College's Heartland Pathways 2 Success Project (HP2SP) over a period of two years.

SFSC is one of 61 colleges and universities across the United States to receive such funding. In fact, SFSC is one of only three Florida educational institutions to receive this funding, along with Palm Beach State College and

North Florida State College in Madison.

HP2SP has been developed to increase educational access and opportunity for low-income, minority students through the creation of technology-enabled courses and targeted dual enrollment offered directly in five high schools in SFSC's rural service district of Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto counties. Dual enrollment is a program that allows high school students to take college courses and earn college credit while still attending high school. SFSC will partner with school districts to address critical educational gaps experienced by students.

"The COVID-19 pandemic presented SFSC and other educational institutions with challenges to educational access, delivery, and continuity of instruction," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC president. "As an institution that continuously seeks to expand and improve its services to meet the changing needs of prospective students, current students, and the community, this grant offers the College an opportunity to do just that. With the ability to provide students with a combination of degree pathways, expanded HyFlex and online courses, virtual SIM labs, and increased dual enrollment opportunities, SFSC can ensure instruction that promotes access and equity throughout its rural central Florida district."

Through HP2SP, the College will create an infrastructure for effective HyFlex course delivery. HyFlex (or hybrid-flexible) courses combine online and classroom-based instruction to maximize flexibility and course accessibility. Upgrades of classroom hardware, software, and interactive technologies will facilitate student engagement. Faculty and staff will be trained and supported in learning how to use the technology effectively. Through the use of HyFlex course delivery, SFSC will be able to expand the number and variety of dual enrollment courses offered at five high schools in its service district.

A virtual SIM lab will be created at SFSC. Health science degree programs require patient interaction hours and these hours can be partially completed by using high-fidelity simulators (SIMs). The virtual patient simulators assist in training students in clinical skills, such as making diagnoses. To maintain academic quality for critical health care training programs, such as registered nurse (RN), licensed practical nurse (LPN), paramedic and emergency medical technology (EMT), and health care certifications, SFSC will upgrade its SIM Lab to facilitate virtual simulation to support online, remote access.

For information on SFSC's Panther PATHways, visit southflorida.edu/current-students/pathways-home.

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South Florida State College

By **ELAINE LEVEY**
CORRESPONDENT

South Florida State College was established July 7, 1965. After World War II, the Florida State Legislature realized there was a need for community colleges to enable access to education beyond high school as most colleges were too far away. To solve this problem, the Florida legislature created 28 community colleges to make it possible for everyone pursuing a college education after high school to be able to attend a college within 40 miles.

In 1960, the City of Avon Park approved a resolution to establish a junior college. Four months later, the city offered 35 acres of land for the future Tri-County junior college site east of U.S. 27. The advisory board of the Florida Alcoholic Rehab program offered 24 acres of property contingent upon acquiring adjacent lands from the city to the south and Sachsenmaier land to the north on U.S. 27.

Because of its size, population and the availability of land, Avon Park in Highlands County was chosen as the site for the new college. Dr. Cornelius said, "A beautiful piece of state-owned (and thus free) land was available, and Wilbur (Bill) Sachsenmaier would donate a significant parcel of prime real estate so that the college could be located on the shores of beautiful Lake Glenada and Lake Lellia.

Classes opened on Aug. 22, 1966, in temporary loaned facilities in the Brickell and Todd buildings across from the Hotel Jacaranda in downtown Avon Park. The facilities were provided at no extra cost to the state by community-minded



FILE PHOTO

South Florida State College Student Services building, 2020.

Park. The buildings were renovated and partly furnished through voluntary contributions, individuals and organizations in Highlands, Hardee and municipalities of Avon Park, Bowling Green, Lake Placid and Sebring.

An empty supermarket became the college library. Classes were held in a former hotel and a movie theater parking lot was available to South Florida Junior College students, employees and visitors. The facilities were converted to form the temporary quarters of a new college. The permanent site planned for the college was one-and-a-half miles south of Avon Park.

Dec. 4, 1969, South Florida Junior College held a dedication of the first nine buildings at the permanent campus on College Drive. By August 1977, groundbreaking was held on the lakeside

Florida Community Auditorium, a 1,500 seat facility that would serve as the college's center for cultural programs. Nov. 4, 1978, the auditorium opened for its first program.

In 1984, SFJC became known as South Florida Community College and South Florida Community College Foundation, Inc. was established.

In 1988, the South Florida Community College Foundation bought the Hotel Jacaranda in Avon Park to house the college's baseball, volleyball and basketball athletes and other students. It was also used as a laboratory for Culinary and Hospitality Management programs.

In 1993, the Museum of Florida Art & Culture was established.

There have been four presidents of South Florida State College: Dr. William A. Stallard



FILE PHOTO

Outside University Center at South Florida State College.

Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius (1984—2002)
Dr. Norman L. Stephens, Jr. (2002-2012)
Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel

State College has four campuses: Avon Park, Highlands County; Lake Placid, Highlands County; Arcadia, DeSoto County;

South Florida Community College became South Florida State College on July 1, 2012.
Resource: South Florida