



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

Yuniel del Campo, at right, owner of Sophie's Café, won the 2020 Rising Star Champion Award from Visit Sebring. The young, local, female entrepreneur effectively ran her business during the pandemic and came out on the other end stronger than ever, said Visit Sebring Lead Marketer Casey Hartt, at left.



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

Tonya Kahn, at right, and Stephanie Nelson, not shown, both of Organically Local won the Humanitarian Champion Award from Visit Sebring for 2020. Visit Sebring Lead Marketer Casey Hartt, left, said they created a contactless pop-up market that served local families and helped a local struggling business.

Visit Sebring honors eight locals

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — The COVID-19 pandemic chilled the 2020 tourist season, but gave new meaning to this year's third annual Tourism Awards.

Pandemic challenges made the 2020 awards and their recipients that much more exceptional, said Casey Hartt, lead marketer for Visit Sebring, marketing arm of the Tourist Development Council.

"Through their performance and actions, they are creating situations that result in happy, grateful, surprised and delighted visitors who can't wait to return to Highlands County," Hartt said at the awards presentation Wednesday.

Since much economic development starts with tourism, local tourism ambassadors may be the first, but hopefully not the last interaction tourists have with the community, Hartt said. This year saw eight categories of awards.

Attraction Service Champion

Lorrie Smith, Attraction Service Champion for 2020, handles all aspects of renting South Florida State College's Wildstein Center and University Center. Despite a difficult

year for live entertainment, she handled disgruntled customers, act cancellations and an ever-changing daily work routine with exceptional customer service, Hartt said.

Hotel Service Champion

David Bruns of The Hotel Jacaranda won Hotel Service Champion. A long-time employee at the Hotel Jacaranda and recent new general manager, Bruns has created a "hometown feel" for all patrons at the restaurant and/or hotel by being a "hands-on" manager with a strong relationship with his staff, Hartt said.

Restaurant Service Champion

Danielle Jackson from the Hotel Jacaranda's dining room won this year's Restaurant Champion Award for exemplary service to guests and use of her own imagination and immediate resources to enhance the guest experience. As a familiar, asked-for person at the restaurant since 2012, she has remained dedicated to patrons' dining experience throughout the pandemic, Hartt said.

Rising Star Champion

Yuniel del Campo, owner of Sophie's Café, won this year's Rising Star Champion Award. As a young, local, female entrepreneur with a reputation as a hard-worker in the local service

industry, Hartt said Campo, owner of her own café, effectively ran her business throughout the pandemic and came out on the other end stronger than ever.

Volunteer Champion

Ruth Fletcher won the Volunteer Champion Award thanks to her collaboration with the TDC to create the geocaching tours and trails. Hartt said Fletcher provided her with a binder containing all she would need to know, and since Sebring Area GeoTour: Florida's Hidden Gem, the first local geocaching attraction and the third in Florida, opened in 2020, it has attracted thousands of people to the area, many of them returning often.

Innovation Champion

Don Davies from Sugar Sand Distillery won this year's Innovation Award for converting his business to produce a moisturizing hand sanitizer during the pandemic. While his operation could not supply enough for the county's 100,000-plus residents, Hartt said, it could produce enough for drive-up customers, home health care agencies, doctors and some government offices.

Sports Tourism Champion

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PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

Danielle Jackson, at right, from the Hotel Jacaranda's dining room, won the 2020 Restaurant Champion Award for exemplary service to guests and use of her own imagination and immediate resources to enhance the guest experience.



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

Don Davies from Sugar Sand Distillery won this year's Innovation Champion Award for converting his business to produce hand sanitizer during the pandemic. His efforts helped supply some essential businesses during the height of the pandemic shutdown. With him is Casey Hartt, at left, lead marketer for Visit Sebring, which has bestowed the awards for now three years.

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Good morning To
Kathleen Harper
Thanks for reading!



AWARDS

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Lidia & Uli Fluhme from Gran Fondo, New York won the Sports Champion Award for bringing the cycling event to Highlands County during the midst of a pandemic, generating \$655,000 in total economic impact, \$49,188 in state and local sales tax and \$330,037 in total projected hotel impact. GFNY sees this as becoming an annual event attracting

more riders each year.

Humanitarian Champion

Tonya Kahn and Stephanie Nelson from Organically Local won the Humanitarian Champion Award, Hartt said, for creating a contactless pop-up market serving Highlands County and surrounding areas for nearly three months during the shutdown. Although Kahn and Nelson made very little profit, Hartt said they helped another suffering business and gave away a lot of food to struggling families.



'Tallahassee Doll Party' is one of the photos on display.

SFSC Museum Of Florida Art And Culture Opens Oct. 6

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**
Special To The Herald-Advocate

Journey back through time and recapture the wonderful way that children play with their toys at the "Florida Girls and Boys and Their Toys" exhibition from Oct. 6 – Dec. 13 at South Florida State College's (SFSC) Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC).

This traveling exhibit from the Museum of Florida History features 30 vintage photos of children and their toys from the 1890s to 1971. A collection of work by Sebring artist Mary Seigfreid titled, "Textured Constructions," includes children's vintage playthings.

The variety of toys highlighted in the exhibit include a rare Bing Pygmyphone, antique dolls, a 1940s handmade rocking horse, and an assortment of games. Photos include a Sebring boy with a pull dog toy from the 1920s, Jessie Ruth Stokes of Arcadia and her sailor boy doll, and Auburndale children in their Sears, Roebuck and Co. Western gear circa the 1930s.

"The oldest toy is a stuffed bear that dates back to 1871," said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC. "The exhibit will definitely bring back fond memories of our favorite toys."

MOFAC is open Wednesday through Friday from 12:30-4:30 p.m. Admission is free. Face masks are expected, but not required. The Museum is located on the Highlands Campus at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park.

Kelly's Bistro on the Bay, the campus cafeteria, serves breakfast and lunch.

"We invite kids at heart to visit the SFSC Highlands Campus for lunch and then tour MOFAC," Garren said.

Volunteers are also needed to serve as docents. No experience is necessary. To volunteer or for more information about the exhibition, contact Dale McDaniel, MOFAC manager, at 863-784-7240.

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.



COURTESY PHOTOS/SFSC
'Boy with Lion' is one of the photos on display.

Take one - It's free
**HIGHLANDS
 SUN**

CALIFORNIA TOE JAM ON TOP OF GAME



Thursday, October 14, 2021

A PUBLICATION OF THE **HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN**



**SFSC Performing Arts
 season set to open**

nizer.com

COURTESY PHOTO

Mark Nizer will be performing at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on Sunday, Nov. 14.

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK – The 2021-2022 performing arts season at the 1,460-seat Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College (SFSC) kicks off Saturday, Nov. 6 with a free concert by La Orquesta Caribeño Tropicale at 7 p.m. Funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the concert will feature the heritage rich sounds of the Caribbean and Latin America.

“This is a high energy show for the entire family,” said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC. “Seating

is general admission and free tickets are available online or at the door.”

Mark Nizer: 4D takes the stage on Sunday, Nov. 14 at 3 p.m. All tickets are \$10. Nizer combines world-class juggling, music, technology and comedy in a show that Performance Magazine has called “nothing less than brilliant.”

Since winning the International Juggling Championships, Nizer has taken his one man show to a variety of venues around the world, including The Improv, The Comedy Store, Walt Disney World, college campuses, and all major cruise lines. He has also performed at corporate

events, civic centers, festivals, and performing arts centers including the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (four times). Entertainment Magazine states, “Without a doubt, the hottest juggler on the entertainment market, Mark Nizer is simply incredible.”

Sponsored by Bill and Lisa Jarrett, the Mark Nizer show is a fundraiser for local nonprofits including the Children's Museum of Highlands County, Hardee County Players, AdventHealth Sebring Foundation, Heartland Cultural Alliance, Lake Placid

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Laugh it up at Dave's American Bar & Grill
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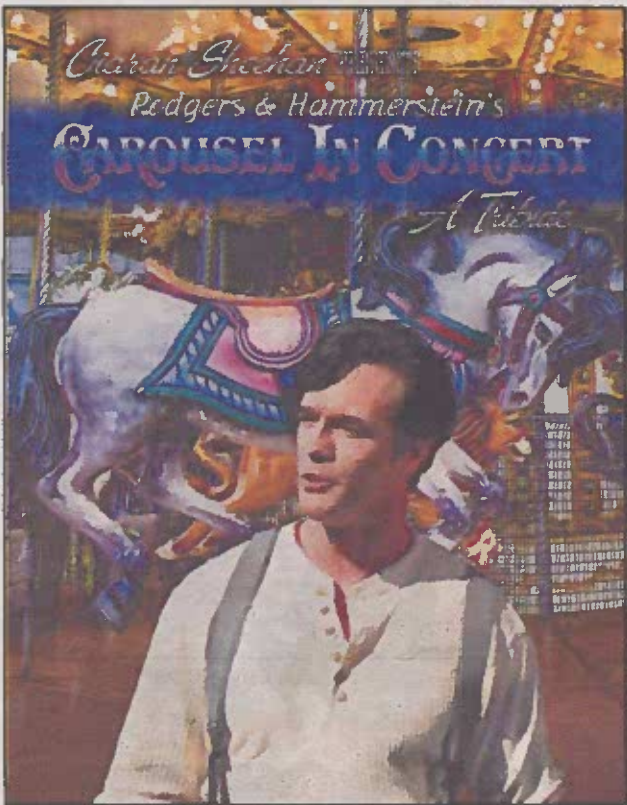
SFSC Arts gets grant to provide 2 free shows
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COURTESY PHOTO

Michael W. Smith will be performing a holiday concert on Monday, Dec. 13.

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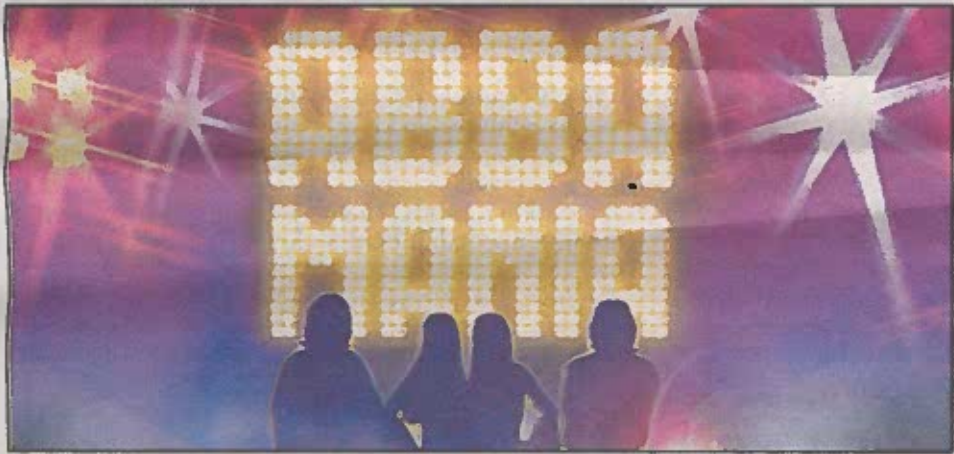
COURTESY PHOTO

Carousel in Concert, starring Ciarán Sheehan, will be at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, Nov. 20. Sheehan has appeared in some of the most coveted roles on Broadway including the Phantom in Phantom of the Opera and Marius in Les Miserables.



EBRU YILDIZ PHOTO

Lee Ann Womack will give an acoustic performance on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022.



COURTESY PHOTO

ABBA MANIA will be at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on Friday, Feb. 18.

ARTS

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Historical Society, Mason Smoak Foundation, Parkview Prep Academy, Ridge Area ARC, Sebring Band-Boosters, Sebring Historical Society, Walker Memorial Academy and the United Way of Central Florida.

Subscriptions are available for the Lampe & Kiefer Hearing Aid Center Matinee Series, Artist, Jazz, and the AdventHealth Trending Now Series. Save up to \$88 with an Artist Series package to all nine performances including: *Carousel in Concert* starring Ciarán Sheehan (Broadway's phantom); *Country Christmas with The Gatlins Brothers*; *Elvis Birthday Bash*; *World of Musicals*; *Lee Ann Womack*; *Tango Fire*; *The Simon & Garfunkel Story*; *Rhythm of the Dance*; and *Neil Berg's 50 Years of Rock & Roll*.

"One of the best deals with the subscription package is saving 15% on our special events, *Michael W. Smith Christmas* and *ABBA MANIA*," said Garren.

Three-time Grammy Award winner, Michael W. Smith, performs a holiday

concert on Monday, Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$44.

The international hit, *ABBA MANIA*, is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 18 at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$32.

Group sales are available for most performances. A group of 12 gets a free ticket plus a generous discount. "A group can be a girls' night out, a family celebration, an office party, or a social club outing," explained Garren. "We will announce your group from the stage and recognize your special occasion." For group information, go to sfscARTS.org/group.

Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases as a result of the delta variant, all people attending the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts are encouraged, but not required to wear masks. This decision is in light of new guidance from

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All areas of the venue will be sanitized and disinfected prior to each performance. Reduced seating capacity will not be implemented in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts. There are socially distanced seating areas in the venue.

The Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is located on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. Tickets, videos, and performance information can be found online at sfscARTS.org. The SFSC Box Office phone number is 863-784-7178.

The SFSC Box Office opens for in-person sales on Monday, Oct. 25 at 11:30 a.m. Single ticket online sales begin Monday, Oct. 18.

SFSC receives 2nd National Endowment Grant

By TOM MEISENHEIMER
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — From October until late spring, the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts offers a wide range of entertainment venues. The 1,460 seat theatre usually draws full houses for their evening Artist series, their Matinee Series, Jazz and Trending shows.

The Director of Cultural Programs is Cynthia Garren. Yearly she travels the country seeking entertainment shows that draw an audience of theater lovers from Highlands and surrounding counties. To view the entire exciting 2021-2022 line up and to order series or individual tickets, visit www.spscARTS.org.

For the second year in a row the college has received a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Performing Art to present free, culturally diverse performances named Kaleidoscope Shows.

Saturday, Nov. 6 at 7 p.m. La Orquesta Caribbean Tropicale will be highlighted. This lively Latin musical



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Cynthia Garren, director of Cultural Programs at SFSC, has sought and received, for the second year, a \$10,000 grant to offer two free shows at the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts.

group from Tampa with play the heritage rich sounds of the Caribbean

GRANT | 23



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

The Wildstein Center on the campus of South Florida State College is offering free tickets to two performances from a grant received from the Endowment of the Arts.

GRANT

FROM PAGE 22

from Latin America, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Panama, Columbia, Venezuela and Peru.

This Latin flavor is rich in vigor, flavor, passion and high energy. It will create a true welcome back south for the returning snowbirds as well as well create nostalgia to transplants from the many Caribbean Islands.

Sunday, Dec. 12 at 3 p.m. the holiday and Christmas season commences with Holiday Traditions Around the World.

The fast-paced, rollicking musical take a joyous tour of the dances, songs and stories from around the world. This jubilee creates a memorable and heart-warming experience that celebrates the true spirit of cultural diversity.

Terri and Rick D'Onofrio are the producers. They have been seen on stages from Disney World, Opryland to national tours and dinner theaters. They have created "Stages Productions" with the goal to stimulate the cultural, intellectual and ethical development of young people by making drama an integral part of education. This show will be a delight to young and old alike.

Visit www.spscARTS.org to receive your free tickets for these two performances.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

The 1,460-seat theatre at the Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of SFSC in Avon Park offers comfortable seating in an array of price points. There is not a bad viewing seat in the entire theater.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

The South Florida State College Foundation will be seeking an architect soon for a dormitory project to be built near the Criminal Justice Academy on the SFSC Avon Park Campus.

SFSC Foundation to seek architect for dormitory build

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College Foundation dormitory project is moving forward with negotiations with the developer and preparing to seek proposals from architects for the project.

Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional advancement at South Florida State College, explained, "Currently, the Foundation is drafting an architect solicitation for the project and is in the midst of final negotiations with the developer.

"We hope to complete negotiations soon which will then initiate the next phase of the project where plans can be discussed and approved. The survey on the property was also recently completed."

The SFSC Foundation received two proposals for the project with Heartland Development Group receiving the higher ranking, by a ranking committee, which was approved by the Foundation Board in July.

The request for proposal (RFP) stated the dormitory would serve a student population comprised of incoming and returning students, with an average age of 19-24 years. The Foundation currently provides off-campus housing for 80 student athletes.

The Foundation intends to lease approximately five acres of land from SFSC, located between College Drive and Lake Lelia and to the east of the Criminal Justice Academy.

The Foundation will sublease the land to a developer and the terms of the sublease will incorporate the obligations contained within the lease between SFSC and the Foundation.

The duration of the sublease may be long-term and is subject to negotiation, the RFP stated. Pursuant to Florida law, the completed project must be owned by the Foundation at the expiration or termination of any agreement between the Foundation and proposer/developer.

Once constructed, the developer shall maintain rental rates for the student housing at a rate reasonable to area, at an initial rate not to exceed \$550 per student, per month, not to exceed 2% increase per annum, the RFP noted.

The cost of construction of the project shall be paid solely by the developer, and shall not be an obligation of the Foundation or South Florida State College.

October 20, 2021

SFSC Alumnus Reflects On Journey To Medical Career

Where are you originally from? Did you grow up there?

I was born and raised in Wauchula.

A news clip on the wall in your examining room is about someone in your family who owned a business in New Britain, Conn. Why do you have the news clip on the wall?

My grandfather started a food processing business in Connecticut. They moved the operation to Zolfo Springs in the 1940s. Mancini Foods makes canned and jarred roasted peppers and is still in business to this day.

The news clip in the office writes about the business, my grandfather being an Italian immigrant, and the value of hard work to be successful. I keep that article up as inspiration.

How/why did your family come to Hardee County?

My grandfather, my father, and uncle came to Hardee County to start and run the business. My dad met my mom here and they had a family — me and my two brothers. I went to public school here and am a proud graduate of Hardee Senior High School, Class of 1971.

You were in a band once upon a time. Tell us about that. Are you still active as a musician?

I was in a rock band in high school called "Copperfield." And we were quite popular. I was the guitarist. We played high school dances and other venues. I don't play now, other than for my own enjoyment. I own several guitars in my collection.

Why did you decide to attend SFCC?

I attended SFCC because of convenience and to get my Associate in Arts (A.A.) before transferring to a four-year school. I got a great education and was able to work and save money. I graduated from SFCC in 1973 after completing some of the pre-med requisites. I went on to major in Biology at Florida Southern College in Lakeland and graduated in 1975.

Why did you choose to go to medical school at St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada?

I went to Grenada School of Medicine because it was difficult to get into med school in the United States and, rather than wait listing, I could start there immediately.

Why did you choose to go into medicine? Did anyone or an incident inspire you?

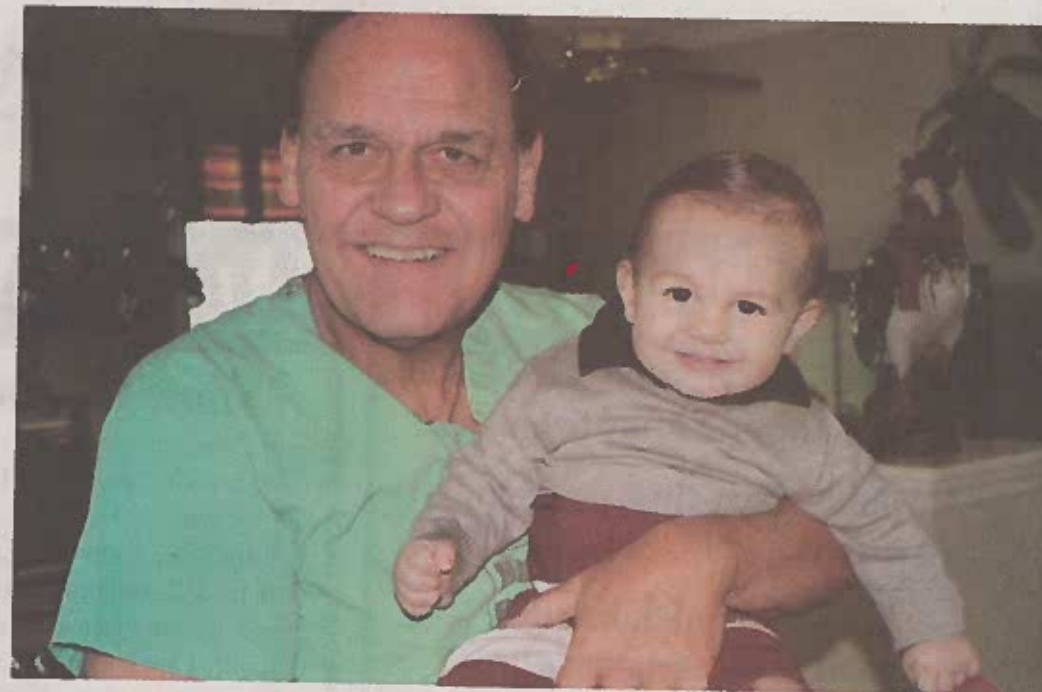
I was inspired to go into medicine, mainly, because we had a great group of doctors at Palmetto Medical Clinic in Wauchula — Drs. Palmer, Sayre, and Carmichael. I knew I wanted to be like them.

Why did you choose to go into obstetrics/gynecology?

I went into obstetrics/gynecology because it is mostly a happy specialty — delivering babies. I retired from obstetrics five years ago, now focusing on gynecology. I've delivered the children of many of my current patients. I have also practiced long enough to have patients whom I actually delivered.

How long have you had your practice at Gessler Clinic in Winter Haven?

What aspects of your career have brought you the most pride or joy?



COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Joseph Anthony ("Tony") Mancini, an alumnus of South Florida State College (previously South Florida Community College), practices gynecology at Gessler Clinic in Winter Haven, Fla. He spoke about his career in medicine. Above, Dr. Mancini is holding his grandson, Domenico.

I have been in practice since 1986 — four years in Lake Wales and going on 30 years at Gessler Clinic. I take pride in caring for my patients. I loved delivering babies. I'm thankful I'm able to continue practicing gynecology.

You have a brother who is also a physician.

My brother is an internist in Winter Park, Fla. He is three years younger than I.

Do you have any children who have followed in your footsteps and gone into medicine?

I have three children and two grandsons. My daughter, Katie, who lives just outside Rochester, N.Y., is married and has two sons ages 5 and 8. Meredith lives in Chicago and is a recruiter for Robert Half, a staffing firm. My son, Trey, is a Major League Baseball player, who is the first baseman for the Baltimore Orioles. None of them are in medicine, but that's fine as long as they are happy.

In what ways did SFSC assist you in preparing you for your career? What advice would you give to young

people (or people interested in changing careers) about going into medicine? About getting an education?

SFCC was a great place to begin my education. It had small classes, and it was easy to gain access to your instructors. Of course, I went there in the early days of the College and can only imagine how great a place it is to attend now.

Medicine as a whole is a very rewarding career no matter what specialty you choose, and SFSC is a great place to get the foundation you need.

South Florida shines at Blue Wave

| October 22, 2021



CHRISTI BOBO/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida's Kaitlynn Brandeberry races to the finish line during the Blue Wave Invitational.



CHRISTI BOBO/CORRESPONDENT

The South Florida Lady Panthers gather before the Blue Wave Invitational in Jacksonville.

Panthers place second in JAX

By **CHRISTI BOBO**
CORRESPONDENT

JACKSONVILLE — The Lady Panther cross country team traveled to Jacksonville Friday night, October 15, 2021, to compete in the Blue Wave Invitational hosted by Florida State College- Jacksonville. The course was double loop around campus under trees and open fields. The Panthers competed

against Florida Gateway College, Florida State College- Jacksonville, Edward Waters, and Thomas University.

Francesca Chillemi was the team leader placing third in a field of 34. Katie Brandeberry ran her best race yet this season placing fourth. In addition, Andrea Raya, Paxton Brooks, and Megan O'Sullivan with places of 11th, 13th, and 15th rounded out a second place team

finish for the Panthers.

Coach Christi Bobo stated, "While the times were not as great as we had planned, the ladies made a strong showing against their competition. Sometimes our greatest gains are made when things do not go as planned. In those moments we get the privilege to decide what we do next, how hard we decide to push. We will get a bit of recovery and be back at it on Monday."



COURTESY PHOTO/SFSC

La Orquesta Caribeño Tropicale will perform a free concert on Saturday, Nov. 6, at 7 p.m., at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College in Avon Park.

Free Concert: La Orquesta Caribeño Tropicale At SFSC

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**

Special To The Herald-Advocate

Grab your grandma, the kids, and your best dance partner for a high-energy, free concert with La Orquesta Caribeño Tropicale on Saturday, Nov. 6, at 7 p.m., at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College in Avon Park.

Caribeño Tropicale performs the rich heritage sounds of the Caribbean and Latin America. Expect to hear and dance to favorites like “Trucutu,” “Aquanile,” “El Ritmo de la Noche,” and “Fiesta I Fiesta.”

“This is a lively show that will keep you moving all night,” said Cindy Garren, director of Cultural Programs at SFSC. “Families will enjoy salsa, mambo, and cumbia

music played with today’s modern sound. It will definitely be an exuberant show.”

Salsa music borrows much from the Cuban music genre of son. Through the musicians’ use of percussion instruments such as the clave, maracas, conga, bongo, and cowbell—the instruments and the singers often mimic the call-and-response patterns of traditional African songs and then break into the chorus. Other salsa instruments include the vibraphone, marimba, bass, guitar, violin, piano, accordion, and flute, and a brass section of trombone, trumpet, and saxophone. Today’s modern sound includes electronics.

Salsa spices up music and dancing, but there is much debate about where salsa originated. One school of thought claims that salsa is a newer version of traditional Afro-

Cuban forms and rhythms, so the birthplace must be Cuba. The other school of thought about the genre’s history says that if salsa had a passport, the date of birth would be the 1960s and its birthplace would be New York, N.Y. where it developed from Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians.

The performance is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Seating is general admission and tickets will be available at the door. To get tickets in advance, visit sfscarts.org/show/orquesto-caribeno-tropicale. For a complete list of upcoming performances, to view videos, and for more information, visit sfscARTS.org or call 863-784-7178.

The Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is located on the campus of SFSC at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. The 1,460-seat venue features a Meyer sound system, an IMAG screens for onstage close-ups, and ADA seating. Face masks are encouraged, but not required. The venue is disinfected and sanitized prior to every performance. Seating is not socially distanced at this time.