

Restaurant Service Champion

It's like family for Danielle Jackson at Hotel Jacaranda



Danielle Jackson

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — The Hotel Jacaranda has many wonderful features as a historic structure, but what makes a visit to the hotel especially delightful are the dedicated employees ... like Danielle Jackson.

Jackson was recognized as the Restaurant Service Champion from the Highlands County Tourist Development Council's 2021 Winner's Circle Awards.

The awards recognize individuals, teams, businesses and organizations that exceed expectations

and serve as tourism ambassadors by going above and beyond their typical, everyday duties.

Jackson is in her 11th year as a waitress at the Hotel Jacaranda and in that time she has become a familiar and friendly face for the hotel restaurant's regulars and seasonal customers and a welcoming face for newcomers.

She knows their drink preferences and about their families, Jackson said.

"I have a bunch of regulars that I have since I have been here," she said. "I have my small little groups that come

in and ask for me — they become family."

Along with the scheduled restaurant service, Jackson gets to know and assist customers for special events, parties and weddings at the Hotel Jacaranda.

She is always ready to answer questions about the Jacaranda, such as when it was built and when it opened.

"Ms. [Joan] Hartt has done a lot of work here with pictures and stuff like that, so we try to point them to the pictures so they can see what it looked like before," Jackson said.

Jackson arrives at the

hotel around 9:45 a.m. to start preparing for the lunch service.

"We get our [iced] tea started and everything ready as far as the buffet and what we need," she said. "I am usually here until 2 or 3 o'clock after we close."

What is more popular — sweetened or unsweetened tea?

"Sweetened," Jackson replied. "It is a hot commodity here, I guess you could say."

Jackson works year-round at the Jacaranda.

"We are open during the summer, but after

JACKSON | 4D

3/13/22

JACKSON

FROM PAGE 1D

Mother's Day we go to a sandwich menu, which has a Cuban [sandwich] and grilled chicken and then we have different specials during the week."

Jackson was working at the Avon Park Publix

supermarket, but when it moved to the north Sebring location, she went to work at the Jacaranda in October 2012.

"It is fun to get to know your customers and see them and hear about their stories and what they have done," she said. "It is just a good place to work."

In working with her fellow employees, Jackson said, "Everybody here, we are all just one big family. Everybody looks out for each other. Everybody loves each other."

Nominations for the 2022 Winner's Circle Tourism Awards are being accepted through March 31. Visit visitsebring.com/tourism-awards/.

Rumours live onstage: Fleetwood Mac tribute band

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — Formed in 2014, Rumours (also known as Rumours ATL) has taken the United States by storm with its stage-scorching renditions of Fleetwood Mac songs. In less than five years, Rumours has earned the reputation of being the best Fleetwood Mac tribute band and has made fans internationally. South Florida State College (SFSC) Performing Arts presents Rumours in concert on Saturday, March 26 at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$20 for adults and \$10 for children.

This is the final AdventHealth Trending Now Series performance of the 2021-22 season. This performance is sponsored by Dawn Dell of Paradise Realty and Karlson Law Group in Lake Placid.

“Rumours consistently sells out at venues like Austin City Limits, Coca Cola Roxy in Atlanta, and House of Blues,” said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs. “The band loves Fleetwood Mac and it’s amazing the way they capture its sound.”

In summer 2019, Rumours was invited to play a week in The Netherlands at some of the top venues and festivals in the country. The success of that tour brought it attention from new fans and promoters internationally.

Featuring lead singer Mekenzie Jackson as Stevie Nicks, the band members include Alex Thrift, Doug Easterly, Adrienne Cottrell, Daniel Morrison, and Nick Whitson. Audiences can expect to hear songs like “Rhiannon,” “Stop Dragging



EMILY BUTLER PHOTOGRAPHY

The Rumours band will be at South Florida State College on Saturday, March 26.

my Heart Around” and “Gypsy.”
“SFSC Performing Arts offers a teacher’s discount,”

Garren said. “Teachers with a valid ID get a 50% discount on select shows throughout our season. Tickets can only be

purchased day of show at the box office.”

Reserved seats can be purchased online at sfscARTS.org, by calling the SFSC Box Office at 863-784-7178, or by visiting the box office located at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park on SFSC’s Highlands Campus.

Two free performances are scheduled in April and June at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts. The Melton Mustafa Quartet performs A Musical Journey: A Trip through America’s Jazz on Saturday, April 23 at 7 p.m. The McCain Duo, from Mobile, Alabama, perform a special Juneteenth concert on Thursday, June 16 at 7 p.m. These performances are underwritten in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Wilder, offense play hero in walk-off victory



JAKE HITT/CORRESPONDENT

South Florida's Hunter Wilder (left) is chased by his teammates in the outfield after hitting a walk-off single.

By JAKE HITT
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The Panthers will look to keep it going as they once again rebounded in a big way with an emotional win.

The South Florida State College Panthers scraped past Eastern Florida State College 13-12 for its first series win of the conference schedule. A five-run ninth inning capped off by a single from Hunter Wilder to score Deven Tedders propelled the Panthers over the Titans. The win comes after a 10-0 road loss at the hands of the Titans on Friday.

"Regardless of what we did pitching-wise on the

mound or what we did on defense early, we just kept finding ways for guys to have good at-bats which gave us a way to maintain some momentum throughout the game," South Florida Coach Rick Hitt said.

South Florida trailed 12-8 entering the bottom of the ninth. Reid Lisle got it started with a walk on pitches from newly installed reliever Eric Garcia.

Jakoby Stanley took an aggressive early count approach and smoked a double into right-center field. The Panthers had runners on second and third with no outs. Jadel Martinez brought home Lisle when he smacked

a pitch up the middle off Garcia's body.

Catcher Tate Hansen then singled through the left and scored Stanley. His lone run batted in of the day cut the deficit and put the tying run on first base. Tedders was hit by a pitch the ensuing at-bat and moved the winning run from the plate to first.

Now the top of the Panther was back around. A wild pitch on the first offering to Nico Saladino skipped to the backstop. Martinez sprinted down the first base line. It was 12-11 with the tying run 90 feet away. With first base open, the Titans opted to

WALK-OFF | 4B

B4 | HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN | March 30, 2022

WALK-OFF

FROM PAGE 1B

intentionally put on Saladino.

Pedro Moreno, battered by two offerings earlier, was then hit in the head by a pitch. The sacrifice of his body wasn't in vain though as it scored Hansen from third. The game was all tied up and the stage set for Hunter Wilder.

After spitting on ball one, Wilder pounded a ball into the infield and it slipped by into right for a single and the walk-off hit. His teammates poured out of the dugout to maraud him in celebration.

In his first start back since a broken hand in late January sidelined him, Wilder helped secure the win in an incredibly back-and-forth affair that saw five lead changes across nine innings.

"Really, really happy for that guy," Hitt said. "He's a really tough kid. And we've missed his mental toughness in the middle of the lineup since the first game of the season."

Hitt told Wilder "ready or not" when he penciled the outfielder in at the three hole, his usual spot in the lineup. His swing was a little slower due to his wrist feeling a little weak but other than that he seemed right at

home.

"I also saw the ball really well," Wilder said postgame. "It's kinda like I never left. I never felt out of place or fell behind."

At first, Wilder didn't think he'd see the field again after breaking his hand. But by the second appointment it looked like Wilder had a shot to come back for conference play. Lo and behold, he ended up playing hero for the walk-off win for his team's first conference series win of the season.

Tate Hansen said that was the most excited he'd been all season watching his teammate who battled back from an injury come through for the victory. A bounce back from a 10-0 loss to the Titans the day before.

"We came in (Saturday) really wanting to win at home. Didn't really like losing. Obviously, losing in our ballpark is not fun and I know we needed that series win," Hansen said. "And as a team we talked a couple times in the dugout just as (the) game's going just (to) stay locked in."

A victory where Hansen and the pitching staff worked through a poor showing on the mound.

The Panthers allowed 12 runs (eight earned) on 13 hits while striking out just seven. Logan Wynne was the only pitcher to

not allow a run or hit but also walked two batters in his one inning pitched. Blayne Huter didn't have the best fastball location but the command of his off-speed helped keep the Panthers in it over his 4.1 innings according to Hansen.

Alex Burden gave up the lead on a two-run homer on his first pitch in relief. And Brady Markham didn't record an out as he gave up a two-run dinger himself.

"Since we started conference (play) our pitching has unfortunately gone the other direction that we would not like to see it go," Hitt said. "But we'll be back. We'll start pitching better. We can't pitch well once a week in college baseball and expect to have success. (There's) too many good teams."

Hansen said the main thing he says to his pitcher, especially in games like Saturday's, is to stay consistent and throw strikes. He does his best to instill confidence in them to go out and execute the pitch and he'll do the rest.

Now, the Panthers get another opponent in Indian River State College. South Florida State College is tied with Indian River and Eastern Florida State College at second place behind 6-0 Miami Dade as all three teams sit at 2-4.



COURTESY/SFSC/MOFAC

During the 2021 Student Art Show, Aleah Walker won Best in Show for her digital media presentation titled "Metamorphosis."

The Museum of Florida Art and Culture at SFSC presents student art show

Special to Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SFSC MUSEUM OF FLORIDA ART AND CULTURE

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College (SFSC) Museum of Florida Art and Culture (MOFAC) will present the 2022 Annual Juried Student Art Show, Wednesday, April 6 through Friday, May 13, in the museum's gallery on the SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park. The monthlong show will feature painting, drawing, ceramics, digital media, mixed media, and photography created by SFSC art students.

"It's always fascinating to visit juried art shows of college students, especially, when they're in an art museum," said Anthony Record, MOFAC curator. "I love to see the different ways that students put their personal touch on class assignments. Even when the emphasis of the assignment is on developing technical skills, you can see so many creative approaches and choices that give voice to each student's unique character and personality."

An awards ceremony and reception will be held on Friday, April 21, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., in the MOFAC gallery. This year's show is sponsored by Max Gooding, Cathy Futral, Tanglewood Artist Group, the MOFAC Docents, and the SFSC Art Club. The Max Gooding Award for Best of Show will be announced and used to purchase an exceptional student art piece for the SFSC Student Art Collection. This award is made possible by SFSC alumnus Max Gooding. The Tanglewood Artist Group will present two awards for continuing art majors. SFSC President Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel will choose one piece of artwork that will become part of the President's Art Collection at SFSC.

MOFAC is open to the public Wednesday through Friday, 12:30-4 p.m. For more information about the museum and its exhibitions, contact Record at Anthony.Record@southflorida.edu or call 863-784-7240.

Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts
at South Florida State College

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