

# SFSC DeSoto, Hardee campuses serving as shelters

By MARC VALERO Staff Writer

Oct 6, 2022

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Hardee and DeSoto campuses are serving as shelters while all classes at all SFSC locations have been canceled through Sunday, Oct. 9.

Debris clean-up and minor repairs are ongoing, the college reports.

The Point of Distribution (POD) on the Highlands Campus is operating on a day-to-day schedule determined by Highlands County Emergency Management.

The Hotel Jacaranda has electricity and is open for hotel guests and restaurant patrons.

Also, the Florida Department of Education announced Tuesday that 68 school districts are open for in-person instruction less than one week after Hurricane Ian made landfall on Sept. 28. Two additional school districts are expected to reopen this week as recovery efforts continue in hardest-hit areas of Southwest Florida.

Florida Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz Jr. has been in constant communication with district superintendents, assessing needs and facilitating support for the safe return of all students as quickly as possible. Diaz also visited affected school districts in Southwest Florida over the weekend to assess damage to schools, elevate district needs and coordinate recovery efforts with state and local officials.

School buildings also represent 98% of all hurricane shelters in the state, with 247 schools serving in this vital capacity during and after Hurricane Ian.

Collier and Volusia district schools are scheduled to reopen this week, bringing the total number of open districts to 70, as power-related issues are prioritized by the Florida Emergency Operations Center and utility companies.

The following K-12 school districts are closed until further notice:

- Charlotte County schools
- DeSoto County schools
- Hardee County schools
- Lee County schools
- Sarasota County schools

The department is actively engaged in assisting these districts through coordinated activities with state emergency management officials and providing support for temporary staffing, educational staging facilities, infrastructure and operational needs, as well as logistical support for transportation and basic resources like generators and fuel.

# Premiere Cirque production raises funds for local non-profits

## Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK, Fla. — Spooktacular, a family-friendly cirque performance, is a high-flying circus of hilarity and scare scheduled to perform at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College (SFSC) on Sunday, Nov. 6 at 3 p.m.

Lobby activities for young people include free popcorn and apple juice, games, a photo booth, and giveaways. A costume contest for youth will be also held. All youth wearing a costume will receive a raffle ticket. Costumed youth will be invited on stage at the end of the show. The winner will be selected by a raffle drawing and the winner receives \$100.

Sponsored by Bill and Lisa Jarrett and Get Fish Slapped, the performance will raise funds for 12 Highlands and Hardee county nonprofit organizations.

Cirque-Tacular Productions, a New York City-based production company, is considered one of the premiere acrobatic companies in

the world. “Millions of people in 70 countries have seen one of their cirque shows,” said Cindy Garren, SFSC director of Cultural Programs. “Cirque-tacular’s artists include



*Spooktacular, a family-friendly cirque performance, is a high-flying circus of hilarity and scare scheduled to perform at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the Highlands Campus of South Florida State College (SFSC) on Sunday, Nov. 6 at 3 p.m.*

world-record holders, grand champions, Olympians, circus legends, and veterans of Broadway and Las Vegas.”

Spooktacular features soaring vampires, skeletons, and ghosts in a performance of acrobatics and aerialists. The performance runs 60



COURTESY/DONATELLA BRAGHIERI VIA SFSC

Spooktacular features soaring vampires, skeletons, and ghosts in a performance of acrobatics and aerialists. The Nov. 6 performance will raise funds for 12 Highlands and Hardee county nonprofit organizations.

minutes without an intermission. General admission tickets

are \$15.

To get a \$5 discount on tickets, contact one of the following nonprofits to get a special code: AdventHealth Foundation, Children’s Museum of the Highlands, Highlands Art League, Habitat for Humanity, Hope Haven Transitional Housing, Lake Placid Historical

Society, Mason Smoak Foundation, Ridge Area ARC, Rotary Club of Hardee, Sebring Band Boosters, Sebring Historical Society, and the United Way of Central Florida. Each nonprofit has a unique code that provides a \$5-per-ticket discount while earning \$10 for the organization. Tickets can be ordered online at sfscARTS.org.

“This is something different and fun for families in our area,” Garren said. “Enjoy an amusing show with your kids and raise money for a good cause. And use that discount

code so a nonprofit can earn the funds.” SFSC presents a cultural arts program of 36 performances. Upcoming performances include: Tapestry: A Tribute to Carole King on Nov. 12; The Nutcracker Ballet on Dec. 4; and Darlene Love in “Love for the Holidays” on Dec. 13. For

a complete schedule and to view videos of upcoming performances, visit sfscARTS.org.

Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is located at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. For more information, call the SFSC Box Office at 863-784-7178.



Go like us on

facebook

# SFSC awarded grant to develop Critical Workforce Academies

**Special to Highlands News-Sun**  
COURTESY OF SOUTH FLORIDA  
STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK — Florida Governor Ron DeSantis visited South Florida State College's (SFSC) Highlands Campus in Avon Park today to present Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC president, with a check in the amount of \$2.8 million toward the development of critical workforce academies in the College's service district of Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto counties. Jackie Skryd, vice president for workforce development and corporate relations, from St. Petersburg College was presented with a check for \$3.4 million and Colin Chesley, Ed.D., associate vice president for the School of Health and Public Services, and Evan Doyle, assistant chair for the Law Enforcement Academy, from Daytona State College were given a check for \$2.8 million.

This initiative is funded by the Future Florida Critical Workforce Needs Grant through the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) and administered by St. Petersburg College. Subgrants were awarded to SFSC and Daytona State College.

"We want to make sure that we're meeting the needs of critical areas of our workforce," said Gov. DeSantis. "We are awarding \$9 million to three state colleges to

strengthen K-12 and college workforce education programs.

"What this funding is going to do is help these colleges establish regional partnerships with area school districts to develop career academies for in-demand occupations," the governor said.

"So, these academies will support workforce education programs for careers in emergency management, law enforcement, education, and more. These are important parts of our economy and our society. And we suspect that more than 2,000 students will graduate with credentials in these high demand fields as a result of this effort."

The Florida Department of Education identified particular critical workforce needs within Florida's Heartland. Through SFSC's portion of this initiative, critical workforce academies will be established at all high schools in SFSC's service district and focus on specific career pathways to address critical needs in the region. Those pathways are Automotive and Supply Chain Management in DeSoto County, Education and Healthcare in Highlands and Hardee counties, and Emergency/911 Telecommunications in Hardee County.

The Critical Workforce Academies will focus on providing dual-enrolled high school students



COURTESY PHOTO

From left: Henry Mack, senior chancellor, Florida Department of Education; Jackie Skryd, vice president for workforce development and corporate relations, St. Petersburg College; Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, SFSC president; Gov. Ron DeSantis; Colin Chesley, Ed.D., associate vice president for the School of Health and Public Services, Daytona State College; and Evan Doyle, assistant chair for the Law Enforcement Academy, Daytona State College.

with individual support, including academic and career advising, tutoring, and specialized high school-to-college transition support. All funds for this initiative will be allocated equally among the three school districts, providing each with approximately \$667,000. The funds will provide classroom technology, equipment, instructional resources, tutoring services, and transportation.

"This project starts in the high schools and builds pathways," Leitzel said. "My friend, Dr. Brenda Longshore, superintendent of Highlands County Public Schools, is here today to share in this great announcement, because they will benefit in this as we get students in the pipeline that will graduate and fulfill the important jobs that the governor described."

It is anticipated that the Critical Workforce Academies in Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee counties will be in operation by January 2023.

"Workforce matters," Leitzel said. "I'm glad I live and work in a state where the governor supports workforce education. The governor has an ambitious goal in mind: he wants Florida to be the No. 1 workforce state by 2030. The Florida College System is going to help get us there.

We are supportive of that through projects like Accelerate Florida, which brings all of our colleges in the Florida College System together to get behind the efforts in workforce education. By 2030, our state will be the No. 10 economy in the world. Not in the nation, but in the world."