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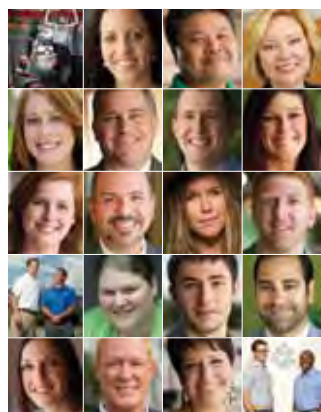
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FGCU launches \$100-million campaign for excellence

Three-year initiative will benefit university, region.

I'M DEPARTING FROM THE USUAL Q&A FORMAT OF THIS COLUMN TODAY TO ANNOUNCE an exciting new undertaking: the launch of Florida Gulf Coast University's three-year, \$100-million fundraising campaign. Over its 17-year history, FGCU has experienced unparalleled growth. But more than that, we have continued to develop into a comprehensive university serving the educational and cultural needs of Southwest Florida and beyond.

This campaign will serve to bolster the excellence of all that we do at FGCU. Each of the five initiatives included in this campaign has its own objectives, priorities and funding goals, but they are intricately connected and together will serve to benefit the university and region. Here is an overview of the five initiatives:

Student success

This fall, enrollment approached 15,000, necessitating that we continue to grow our support programs to provide students with the challenges and resources they need to reach their potential. Academic programs and co-curricular activities – which include Student Government and civic engagement opportunities – offer students the tools necessary to not only learn and earn a degree, but to succeed in life after college. This initiative will provide increasing opportunities for accelerated and interdisciplinary learning, mentoring, leadership training, wellness activities, research, internships, international study and career readiness services.



Academic excellence

Excellent teaching stands at the heart of FGCU's commitment to its students. In order to successfully educate the next generation of leaders, we must recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff and provide them with opportunities to enhance their skills. It is equally imperative that we continue to develop academic programs that are among the best in the state in order to prepare students for successful careers. FGCU must set the standard in its efforts to equip students for careers involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), fields projected to show strong job growth in coming years. And we must provide students

with opportunities to work side by side with senior faculty in conducting research designed to influence the many environmental and social challenges our society faces.

Scholarships

As the university's enrollment grows, so does the number of students who need help overcoming financial barriers. As someone who relied on scholarships myself, I know just how critical a role they play for many students. At FGCU, 84 percent of our students apply for financial aid but only 60 percent of full-time undergraduates receive assistance. Scholarships are crucial to opening the doors to opportunity for students who otherwise would be unable to afford an education. Scholarships change lives – those of the students who receive them and of their families as well.

Intercollegiate athletics

People sometimes ask me about the relevance of athletics. I believe that if you find ways to customize the educational experience, it makes it more meaningful to students. Athletics is one way we do that. At FGCU, our athletes are students first. They excel in the classroom, with a 3.3 overall GPA in the 2013-14 academic year, putting us at the top of the Atlantic Sun Conference. Our athletics program is a fully developed Division I program and it's important we provide the resources to ensure it is competitive with other D1 programs. In order to continue recruiting and retaining the most promising student-athletes and coaches, the university must invest in athletic scholarships and capital

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Q&A: PRESIDENT WILSON G. BRADSHAW

(continued from previous page)

projects to upgrade our facilities. Gifts to Athletics will provide upgrades to Alico Arena, our public aquatics center and other venues that attract thousands of students – as well as members of the community – to campus each year.

Community and regional impact

Our importance as an economic and workforce driver for the region has grown exponentially. In serving as the catalyst in developing the Southwest Florida Economic Development Alliance, we have been an integrator, a facilitator, a trusted and engaged partner and a powerful business recruiting tool, bringing together diverse entities from throughout the five-county region. In addition, we contribute significantly to the region's vitality in the arts, athletics, community engagement and environmental sustainability. FGCU is not just an intellectual hub within the community; it is a real economic force and cultural center as well. WGCU, for example, serves as the region's public radio and television stations, offering a broad selection of programming. FGCU is part of the fabric of the community, and as such, support for FGCU is an investment in the region itself.

The successful funding of the five initiatives described above will advance Florida Gulf Coast University to new heights. I encourage you to join us as we embark on this exciting \$100-million campaign. With your support we will soar together. GO EAGLES! ■

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The rich rewards of risk taking

EAP AND THE NET
WILL APPEAR.

Those six words of wisdom come from naturalist and essayist John Burroughs, who lived and in the 19th- and early 20th century. A friend of entrepreneurs Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, Burroughs understood that stepping out of your comfort zone was the route to success. Risk, even if it means failure, is necessary.

The first time I saw that quote was on a card sent by a friend as I prepared to start this job at FGCU after working for another company for more than 25 years. I had been hired to create a magazine for a young university that had never had one. I was about to create something from nothing. To say I was scared hardly describes it.

But I leaped. And, miraculously, the net did appear. It proved to be a strongly woven one, consisting of supportive colleagues, the necessary resources and a campus rich with stories waiting to be told.

In producing this issue of the now 7-year-old Pinnacle, it occurred to me that this adage could well be the theme of this issue.

Author Richard Russo, the keynote speaker for this year's Sanibel Island Writers Conference, readily admits his first novel was a disaster. Yet he was able to mine the gold nugget buried in the midst of the debris and from it produced his first novel, going on to a successful career and capturing a Pulitzer Prize.

Sauna Stoecker ('14, Forensic Studies) took a huge risk heading into the wilds of Peru to study the effects of oil drilling on the country's indigenous people. She needed to coordinate her visits with the CIA in order to protect herself. What she found resulted in a groundbreaking research paper detailing environmental devastation, human rights abuses and crime.

And then there are the 23 alumni entrepreneurs whose stories are featured, men and women who struck out on their own rather than taking jobs with already established companies where they would find a ready-made client base, defined company culture and experienced mentors, not to mention paid vacation time and other perks.

The entrepreneurial spirit is nurtured at FGCU and is clearly taking root, benefiting the graduates, the economy and those of us who live here. Those who embrace it come from a wealth of disciplines, including philosophy and English, as well as business and computer science.

In the coming weeks, you'll be able to watch yet another of our up-and-coming risk takers on national television. Starting Wednesday, Sept. 24, FGCU senior Alec Christy stars in the fall season of "Survivor," competing with his brother, Drew, in the wilds of San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua. The reward: \$1 million. Whatever the outcome, millions will know his name, which for someone about to graduate from college is a win in itself.

Russo, Stoecker, and the other industrious souls you will read about in this issue all took a leap and found their nets.

Burroughs could have been describing people like them when he said: "A somebody was once a nobody who wanted to and did."



Karen Feldman
KAREN FELDMAN
Editor
kfeldman@fgcu.edu

UPFRONT

[FACES]

Alex Olivares

Human trafficking center director aids victims, those who save them.

IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS FREE SOMEONE from human traffickers, they turn to Alex Olivares for assistance. Olivares is the coordinator of the new Southwest Florida Regional Center of Human Trafficking, located at Florida Gulf Coast University. His job is to connect law enforcement to the services newly liberated victims need to get their lives back.

Olivares was recruited by FGCU to open the center in February. With five years of experience as the director of Catholic Charities' human trafficking program and a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling, he was an ideal candidate.

The center's primary function is to serve as a liaison between law enforcement and victim services. When someone is rescued, law enforcement officers contact Olivares for anything that person might need, including clothing, food, medical assistance and temporary shelter. He refers people to the agencies and organizations that provide those services. He also coordinates forensic investigations that support the multi-agency Human Trafficking Task Force, led by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Olivares is the only employee but works with a graduate assistant. He reports to supervisors in FGCU's



Department of Social Work and Department of Justice Studies.

Florida has the third highest rate of human trafficking in the country behind California and Texas, Olivares says. An estimated 14,000 to 30,000 people are smuggled into the country each year for the purpose of human trafficking.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

To donate or for more information, contact Alex Olivares at aolivares@fgcu.edu or call (239) 745-4276.

"I want this to be something the United States fights actively," Olivares says, "something its citizens are concerned about and take an active role against."

The Women's Fund of Southwest Florida, which serves in an advisory capacity, pledged to raise money for two years to help the center get established, says President Brenda Tate.

"We are thrilled with what Alex has achieved in a short time," Tate says. "I can't think of anyone better suited for this job."

Olivares believes a university is the ideal site for the center because it's a neutral party that will be able to bring the many law enforcement agencies and social service groups together with no hidden agenda. On Jan. 15, the center will host a regional symposium on human trafficking that will feature a variety of expert speakers.

Olivares and Tate agree that eradicating this pervasive practice is unrealistic, but they hope to make a difference.

Despite the scope of the problem, Olivares considers each person rescued a victory.

"When you see a victim of human trafficking and they come to you ... and they have nothing and you can be the guy to help that person be restored as a human being and then as a member of society, it's very rewarding," Olivares says. "You know you didn't just change a person's life – you saved it."

— Kalhan Rosenblatt

“When you see a victim of human trafficking and they come to you ...and they have nothing and you can be the guy to help that person be restored as a human being and then as a member of society, it's very rewarding.”

– ALEX OLIVARES, COORDINATOR OF THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL CENTER OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, FGCU

[COLLECTIVE WE]

Attack of the B Movies

Club unites lovers of low-budget, high-camp cinema.

GIANT LOCUSTS ATTACK CHICAGO! ALIENS ATTEMPT TO TAKE OVER the world by disguising themselves as Young Republicans! A cross-dressing mad scientist from another planet holds an innocent young couple hostage while bringing to life a beefy Frankenstein boy toy!

It's just another semester of purposely appalling programming for FGCU's B Movie Club, a student organization dedicated to the enjoyment and mockery of cheesy special effects, logic-free plots and other aspects of cinematic stinkery.

“Sometimes, it's just because they didn't have enough money to make the film. Everything looks cheaply made and silly,” says club alumna Nicole Schwartz ('14, Philosophy and Communication). “Other times there's a storyline that makes no sense. All of a sudden there's a 30-minute puppet sequence in a story about space aliens (1966's “Thunderbirds Are Go!")? How can you not enjoy that?”

It helps to watch with friends who try to top each other with snarky commentary like the hosts of the old TV show “Mystery Science Theatre 3000,” she says. Afterwards, they discuss what makes these Tinseltown train wrecks so bad that they're good.

B Movie Club screenings on campus draw anywhere from a dozen to as many as 30 for the campy cult classic “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Members vote on Facebook to decide which movies they'll watch. Some come from the private

collection of club founder and “B Movie King” (according to Schwartz) James Beans, an FGCU senior majoring in software engineering. He received a box of '50s and '60s drive-in movies as a gift.

“I wanted to watch them with friends on campus, so we decided to make a club out of it,” he says.

On the bill for the club's first official meeting in 2013: “Super Mario Bros.” starring legit actors like Bob Hoskins and Dennis Hopper. Since then, members have snickered their way through mediocre movies relatively new (“Man with the Screaming Brain,” “Dragonball Evolution”) and moldie oldie (“I Wonder Who's Killing Her Now,” “Attack of the Killer Tomatoes”).

A club favorite is “Prisoners of the Lost Universe.” Three strangers are transported into a parallel universe that pretty much resembles Earth – aside from blue-skinned mutants and funky flora that sprouts giant orange peapods. When it came out in 1983, the low-budget sci-fi adventure didn't exactly challenge “Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi” at the box office.

“The cinematography was awful, the script was just as bad and the acting was terrible,” says Beans. “It was so campy, it was enjoyable.”

His favorite B-movie actor? Bruce Campbell, star of the “Evil Dead” series and the man with the aforementioned screaming brain. Campbell also played Elvis as a bitter old man in a nursing home where a mummy is feasting on residents in the marginally acclaimed 2003 indie “Bubba Ho-Tep.”

“Everything we've seen him in has been amazing,” Beans says.

– Staff writer Drew Sterwald is a founding host of *Bad Movie Good Food*, a rotating dinner party that has been gathering monthly to watch mediocre movies for 10 years. The group has not run out of films to screen.



[CUTTING EDGE]

Grad student documents human price of oil in Peru

TREES AND CREEK BANKS STAINED BLACK WITH PETROLEUM. LAKES TOO polluted to fish. Villagers suffering skin and organ ailments associated with contaminated water.

This was just part of the evidence Shauna Stoeger ('14, M.S., Forensic Studies) uncovered when she spent four months in remote Amazonian villages to investigate the effects of oil drilling on local people and their environment. Now she's hoping to publish the thesis she wrote as an FGCU grad student so she can spread the word and help the people whose lives and way of life may have been tainted by poorly maintained oil pipelines, she says.

"In the long run, I want to start a nonprofit to raise money to bring professionals down to the area for health testing, water and soil testing and healthcare services," says Stoeger. "I want to do more studies that the people (in Peru) can use to demand change."

Thomas Mackey, an adjunct instructor in Forensic Studies who advised Stoeger and helped her raise \$6,000 for the project, called her research "groundbreaking."

"A peer journal will jump on publishing this piece," he says. "Shauna discovered some things and answered some questions and at the same time raised a number of other questions. Good research does that. With increased awareness, our hopes are that the world will recognize the challenges the indigenous peoples of Peru face. Tragically, they lack a voice."

The issue is just beginning to make headlines outside South America. Last April, about 500 indigenous protesters occupied Peru's biggest oil field in the Amazon rainforest near Ecuador



Shauna Stoeger hopes to help Peruvian villagers affected by oil drilling.

to demand the clean-up of decades of contamination from spilled crude, according to news reports. Over the past year, the Peruvian government has declared three environmental emergencies in large areas of Amazonian rainforest after finding dangerous levels of pollution.

Peru is the seventh-largest crude oil reserve holder in Central and South America, and much of its oil lies deep in the Amazon region. Since 2003, nearly three-quarters of the Peruvian Amazon has been leased to international oil companies, according to the nonprofit Amazon Watch, which works to protect rainforests and human rights.

Stoeger first saw evidence of environmental damage and community health problems when she traveled to Peru to do research as an undergrad majoring in psychology and Spanish at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She returned a year later to work as an interpreter.

"Being there two years in a row, I saw

how many issues there are related to oil drilling – environmental issues, human rights abuses, crime," she says.

When she returned as a grad student last year, she collaborated with Project Amazonas, a nongovernmental organization working for the people of the Amazon and for preservation of its rainforests. She traveled four days into the interior to interview residents who lived near 40-year-old pipelines and to an unaffected area that would serve as a control group. Mackey, her adviser along with Justice Studies Professor Duane Dobbert, contacted the CIA in Peru to help ensure her safety.

"I went with environmental monitors to document the obvious contamination – it was undeniable," Stoeger recalls. "The pipelines were rusting and very poorly maintained. They were cleaning tanks and dumping liquids with heavy metals like lead into streams."

Local physicians reported liver and

An excerpt from Shauna Stoeger's master's degree thesis, "Impact on Rural and Indigenous Populations by Oil Corporations in Peruvian Amazon":

The Peruvian Amazon contains about 10 percent of the world's biodiversity, making it an important biological zone. It is also home to multitudes of indigenous groups that have traditionally lived harmoniously with the environment. Within the past several decades, oil corporations have started extracting oil in areas overlapping traditionally indigenous lands. Due to this overlap, there have been complaints of environmental and human rights abuses that have gone underreported and under researched.

This research examined the question 'Do oil companies in the Peruvian Amazon increase environmental and human rights abuses?' The research found that oil companies do correlate with higher instances of environmental contamination and a significantly changed lifestyle, although further studies would have to be done to determine the source of health issues to further analyze the question of human rights abuses related to oil.

kidney ailments in their patients and stunted physical and intellectual growth in local children – signs of heavy metal poisoning. Villagers also complained of bone pain and lesions that could stem from cadmium poisoning.

"Sometimes they were unable to do their traditional work in the fields because of the effects," Stoeger says. "The lakes were so contaminated the people couldn't fish there anymore. They had to change their diet to chicken. They've had to change their entire lifestyle."

– Drew Sterwald

[BY THE NUMBERS]

Here's to your health

With all the concerns on their minds – academics, jobs, finances, dating – most college students probably take their health for granted until they're sidelined by a lingering bug. Student Health Services, funded by a portion of the student health fee, encourages Eagles to take a proactive approach to their health and provides free or low-cost professional services that help ensure students stay well and stay on track academically. "A student's university experience and academic success is intimately associated with overall health and wellness," says SHS Director Dr. Kevin J. Collins. "Our staff is committed to providing care in a manner that not only allows them to focus on their academic goals but also enhances their medical knowledge and thereby encourages healthy behaviors and choices."

14,115

Student Health Services appointments completed in 2013. The most common reason for visits? Upper respiratory infection accounted for 25%. Routine physical exams, nutritional assessments and oral HIV tests are provided free to students.

72

Percentage of 2013 appointments that were for women. "Traditionally, throughout the country, females utilize health-care services more than males," Collins says. With 57% of enrollment, women also outnumber men on campus.



7,183

Lab tests conducted in 2013. The most common are for strep throat, urinalysis, complete blood count, pregnancy and immunization antibody tests.

Medications dispensed in 2013. Antibiotics account for only about 20 percent, but many students take advantage of free antibiotics at Publix Super Markets.

15,242

74

Percentage of students who utilize the SHS who indicate that it is their primary source of healthcare.

92

Percentage of students who expressed overall satisfaction with their visits to Student Health Services.



Vaccines administered in 2013. A small fee is charged for measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A& B, meningococcal, tetanus, HPV and flu immunizations.

1,283

[HOW TO...]

Grow Orchids

SHE COULDN'T FORESEE THAT A SIMPLE REQUEST TO CARE FOR A SEASONAL resident's orchid during an extended absence would bloom into a 15-year passion. Yet that's what happened to FGCU e-commerce coordinator Denise VanderLinde.

"I was petrified," she recalls. "I told her I couldn't make any promises. And she said, 'No worries. Here's fertilizer and a care sheet.' She was gone six or eight months. It stayed alive and I fell in love with it."

Love grew into an obsession. VanderLinde and her former husband built a sprawling greenhouse for their collection that grew into the thousands; earned prestigious American Orchid Society awards; hung out with hybridizers; and opened a nursery and shop in downtown Naples for a while. What's the most valuable lesson she's learned? "Really, orchids do better with less care than more care," she says.

Since moving to a new home in North Naples, VanderLinde has been re-establishing her collection. "Now, it's just a hobby," she says. "I probably only have 50 now."

Here are VanderLinde's tips on raising orchids at home:

1. Research the type of orchid you purchase or are considering purchasing at the American Orchid Society website (www.aos.org) for care instructions (culture sheets) on that type of orchid (Phalaenopsis, Dendrobium, Cattleya, Vanda, etc.) Each species or genera has slightly different needs.

2. Orchids thrive on air flow, so it's best to grow them outdoors hanging under a tree canopy or in a screen cage. You can bring them inside when they are in bloom.

3. Orchids in pots should be repotted



Denise VanderLinde advises that less is more when caring for orchids.

once a year or when their roots are starting to outgrow the pot.

4. Fertilize your orchids regularly so they bloom. (Follow the AOS care sheet guidelines.)

5. Don't buy plants from other states if you plan to grow them in Southwest Florida. Cymbidiums, for example, are showy and have many flowers, but they will not adjust to our climate, re-bloom or live long. Find varieties from areas with a

similar tropical/subtropical climate.

6. Tie an orchid to a rough-bark tree using a soft, coated wire, twine or panty hose, and it will attach itself to the bark. For best success, put a wad of moss between it and the tree to hold moisture so it doesn't dry out too fast.

7. An orchid likes to get completely soaked and then completely dry out. Overwatering causes the plant to rot.

— Cathy Chestnut

[WHERE ARE THEY NOW]

Mireille Lauture, Master's, '00

Educator-turned-author crafts Haitian tales that teach and preserve culture.

A SERENDIPITOUS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS LED TO MIREILLE LAUTURE'S passion: literacy for underprivileged children in her native country and around the world.

It began with the oral Haitian folktales handed down by her mother, Hermance (Mancy) Garçon, and was nourished by a lifelong love of learning and her current work with international students at Florida SouthWestern State College.

Since 2010, encouraged by her sister Florence, Lauture has written five illustrated children's books that retell her mother's narrated folktales in English alongside a translation in Creole – a language that, until 25 years ago, was spoken but never written.

JetBlue Airways, upon hearing about the books from Lauture's daughter, an in-flight crew member, invited Lauture to join a humanitarian effort to Haiti, providing the opportunity for the books to reach her target audience. The airline, which recently initiated flights to Haiti, purchased many of the books; friends and neighbors generously chipped in to provide more. "The pleasure of reading to the children in Haiti and handing them their own storybooks were priceless moments," says Lauture. "Such simple gestures put a smile on their faces."

Each of her books imparts a moral lesson, and it's appropriate that one of those precepts is that sacrifice breeds success.

The married mother of four adult children, Lauture earned her degrees while balancing home, work, marriage and child-rearing. She received her associate's from Borough of Manhattan Community College, and her bachelor's from the University of South Florida. She



Mireille Lauture writes books based on tales handed down by her mother, Hermance (Mancy) Garçon.

went on to receive her master's in mental health counseling from FGCU in 2000, while working as a recruiter for the then-fledgling university, and finally earned her doctorate in educational psychology from Walden University.

"My purpose in coming to the United States in the 1970s was to further my education," she says. "I ended up getting married and having kids first, so that got postponed. But I never gave up my longtime dream of earning my terminal degree."

She credits the leadership program she completed while an FGCU employee and student, saying, "those skills learned were very instrumental in everything I do."

Lauture's 94-year-old mother, who lives with her, continues to provide inspiration. "You should have seen the expression on her face when she held the first published book in her hands. I am glad to have paid homage to her," Lauture says.

She hopes one day to have the books translated into other languages and donated to orphanages around the world. Her books are available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble and AuthorHouse. Her email is: mancystorybooks@yahoo.com

Lauture's new life goal is to contribute to children's literacy, one book at a time.

— Sue Beard

LINK UP

For more on the JetBlue effort and videos of Lauture's trip: <http://vimeo.com/92977684>

[HOT TOPIC]



FGCU students dig their field experience at Mound Key

FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAD THE RARE EXPERIENCE THIS summer of working alongside archaeologists as they dug for clues about the lives of Calusa Indians, 16th century Spanish missionaries and others who lived on Mound Key at various times over the last 500 years or more.

The island, just 15 minutes from FGCU by car and boat, is steeped in centuries of history and widely considered a premier location for study.

"The archaeology here is as important as archaeology in Egypt – it's part of the

story of humanity," says Victor Thompson, an assistant professor and director of the Center for Archaeological Sciences at the University of Georgia, who was awarded several grants to conduct the excavation and research at Mound Key Archaeological State Park. "I've worked a lot of different sites all over the world, and Mound Key is among the best I've ever worked on."

Atop mounds of shell and soil that reach as high as 30 feet above Estero Bay, eight FGCU undergraduates helped scientists and graduate students from the University of Georgia and University of Florida as they carefully excavated a 2-meter-square

trench and a 4-meter-square trench mere centimeters at a time. Braving humidity, mosquitoes and sunburn, they sifted soil through screens as fine as 1/8th-of-an-inch, finding minute fragments of shell tools, pottery sherds and trading beads. They also hoped to unearth signs of architecture from the Calusa capital that reportedly occupied the island.

"None of us thought we would be able to do as much as we have – we thought we'd be lifting sandbags," says Jessica Snodgrass, a senior anthropology major from Fort Myers. "After a couple of days of training, they let us go into (the trenches). We're

getting valuable field experience usually not available to undergraduates.”

Indeed, Snodgrass and other students learned hands-on how to excavate a site and identify artifacts, how to differentiate between shell and bone remnants by color, shape, texture and strength. They also learned how modern technology such as ground-penetrating radar helps pinpoint promising excavation sites and complements the low-tech sifting and eyeballing of dirt.

The three-week field school at Mound Key was initiated by Professor Michael McDonald

and taught by Associate Professor Alison Elgart, both of FGCU’s Social & Behavioral Sciences department.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for us, working with experts like these,” Elgart says. “This is important history.”

McDonald calls it “a gold-standard experience” for students.

“Learning experiences like field schools create a place for the bulky kind of teaching and learning that don’t fit easily into the classroom format,” he says. “This type of learning engages students in a deliberate process of problem solving and critical thinking. Each semester, the FGCU Anthropology program provides opportunities for students to step out of the classroom and stretch their minds in unique and creative directions.”

Demand is growing for such opportunities. Half a dozen students were on a waiting



list to get into the short, intensive course and have the opportunity of finding answers to fundamental

questions about local history, how early dwellers interacted and how the fierce warriors known as Calusa lived, ruled and adapted to environmental changes.

Mound Key represents more than a pile of shell midden in a public park that has been trampled on by generations of island hoppers and amateur treasure hunters. Historical accounts say Spanish explorer and colonist Pedro Menendez, who established the first permanent settlement in the United States at St. Augustine, met the king of the Calusa at Mound Key in 1566. Spanish chronicles describe the building where they met as being large enough to hold 2,000 people.

Finding evidence to prove the structure was atop Mound Key excites experienced scientists as much as students getting their hands dirty for the first time. They found some deposits in the soil that suggested where building posts might have stood, but there is much more digging and researching to be done.

“This is an unbelievable experience. I feel privileged to work here,” Thompson said. “The questions you can answer at the site ... how the Calusa used their resources, how contact with the Europeans played out, social and environmental issues.”

Co-directing the project with Thompson, Florida Museum of Natural History Curator William Marquardt says modern-day Floridians might be surprised to learn they have things in common with 16th-century Mound Key dwellers.

“People move to Florida recognizing advantages like the fishing, the climate, the ambience,” he says. “Centuries ago, the Calusa also realized this environment nurtures and provides for them on a daily basis in some of the same ways. How they adapted to sea level and other environmental changes could help us think through how to adapt to climate change.”

— Drew Sterwald

Left, FGCU students help archaeologists excavate and flag findings in a trench at Mound Key Archaeological State Park. Below, students Lauren Sanchez, left, and Dakota Doyle help Assistant Professor Alison Elgart sift through excavated soil for evidence of past civilizations. Above, pottery fragments will be cleaned and studied to determine their origins.



[IN THE NEWS]

New deans take the reins at three colleges



ROBERT BEATTY
Lutgert College of Business

DEAN ROBERT BEATTY COMES to FGCU with experience in the military, corporate and academic worlds. He most recently served as both dean and professor at William G. Rohrer College of Business at Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J.

He was attracted to FGCU because, he says, "all the stakeholders are committed to moving forward. President Bradshaw and Provost Toll have a strong vision. The faculty who are teaching are scholars. And the support from the business community is nothing short of amazing."

In addition "we have remarkable students coming," he says. "Dunk City got them to take a look. Now the

achievements and colleges within the university are getting them interested."

He was previously dean and professor at the School of Global Commerce and Management at Whitworth University in Spokane, Wash. He also served on the faculty at Northern Illinois University, Texas Christian University, Miami University of Ohio and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. He worked at Kellogg Company and the Amerada Hess Corp. and served in the U.S. Air Force for 23 years, including 13 years as a special agent and commander for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. In 2005, he was deployed to Afghanistan.

Beatty earned his bachelor's degree in computer science from Texas Christian, a master of computer systems management from Creighton University and an MBA and doctorate of business administration from Mississippi State. ■

ROBERT GREGERSON
College of Arts and Sciences

HAVING BEEN IMMERSED IN the sciences throughout his professional career, Dean Robert Gregerson says he was "looking for a place that allowed me to interact with a wider variety of scholars."

He found that in his new job as dean of FGCU's College of Arts and Sciences.

"I liked the environmental focus and seeing that in place across the curriculum was a motivating factor for me," he says.

FGCU's unique – and short – history appealed to him, too. He likes the idea of coming to a place that has "gotten

through its infancy and is looking for the next stage of growth."

Gregerson was previously the dean of the College of Science and Technology at Armstrong State University in Savannah, Ga., where he also served as head of the biology department. Prior to that, he taught at Lyon College in Batesville, Ark., where he was chair of the science division and held an endowed professorship.

He received his bachelor's degree in biology from Wabash College and a doctorate in molecular genetics from the University of Georgia. His scholarly expertise is in plant molecular biology.

Gregerson plans to focus on increasing the amount of scholarly work undergraduates perform. ■



Dr. Beatty photo by Ed Clement; Dr. Gregerson photo by Brian Tietz

“It’s important that kids understand that science isn’t just a boring textbook. There’s a place for you in high-tech business.”

– PAUL WOODS, CEO, ALGENOL BIOFUELS



JANE MCHANEY
College of Education

ALTHOUGH SHE RETIRED as dean of the College of Education at Atlantic State University in 2007, Dean Jane McHaney allowed FGCU Provost Ron Toll to lure her back to work, this time as interim dean of FGCU’s College of Education.

That’s because the two worked well together at the University of Central Arkansas, she says, and the FGCU job intrigued her.

“It’s an exciting place to be,” she says. “I’m here to work. My goal is to help find the very best candidate we can to take this college to the next level. It should be someone who is energetic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable.”

Those adjectives do a good job describing McHaney as well. She has been busy settling in, working to help get the doctorate of education program up and running and getting to know her new faculty and community.

Besides Atlantic State and the University of Central Arkansas, she was dean of the College of Education at Kennesaw State. She obtained her bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Lipscomb University, a master’s of education in elementary education/reading and a doctorate of education in educational psychology from Mississippi State University. ■

Summer gives teens chance to taste college life

DOZENS OF JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DELVED into science, technology, engineering, mathematics and entrepreneurship at summer programs at FGCU.

Through the FGCU/NAACP STEM Summer Camp, 40 high school students spent two weeks living in FGCU residence halls, arising at 6 a.m. and spending full days immersed in activities such as applied math, solar go-kart racing, introductions to marine and ecological sciences, biotechnology and engineering plus social activities and discussions of career opportunities. They also took fields trips to NASA and Algenol Biofuels.

“It’s important that kids understand that science isn’t just a boring textbook,” says Paul Woods, Algenol CEO, who accompanied students on their tour of his Fort Myers facility, telling them, “There’s a place for you in high-tech business.”

Meanwhile, in a chemistry lab in Academic Building 7, five top students from Fort Myers and South high schools spent a month conducting research with Ju Chou, an FGCU assistant professor of chemistry. They were working to determine the antioxidant levels in various fruits.

Katy Thorp, a rising senior at Fort Myers High, says, “It’s really fun to work with real equipment – spectroscopy, oxidation – it’s completely new. It’s been awesome.” The pilot program provides students with research experience that will enhance their abilities and credentials in preparation for college.

Junior Achievement and the Lutgert



Fort Myers High School student Yoanna Gueorguiev works with an apple to determine its antioxidant level during a chemistry research project this summer.

College of Business teamed up to offer CEO Academy, a weeklong program that aims to inspire and prepare young people to become tomorrow’s business leaders. High school students learn the basics of business plans, ethics, finance, global economic and marketing then form teams to develop an idea and business plan that they present to a panel of business professionals who serve as judges.

The program can be life changing, says Cecilia St. Arnold, program director for Junior Achievement. “We have kids who weren’t planning to go to college but change their mind after their week here,” she says.

This year’s winning team devised a car dashboard with a solar panel in it that’s designed to cool the car’s interior.

– Karen Feldman

Going viral

An AB-7 lab offers a secure location for studying cells and viruses.

BEFORE THEY CAN GET THEIR (GLOVED) HANDS ON THE KEY CARD THAT opens the Biosafety Level Suite in Academic Building 7, students are screened by faculty, trained and certified in safe lab procedures and must first shadow a more experienced lab user. Then, they're ready to step through the air-locked anteroom that prevents contamination between the suite and the larger lab outside it.

"It's pretty rigorous," Professor Sharon Isern says of the screening process. "We have to have confidence in them."

The security might be tighter than the green room at a Beyonce concert, but it's for good reason: Viruses are grown and studied here, and contamination could botch someone else's research. Indeed, Isern and Professor Scott Michael, both of the Department of Biological Sciences, grow and study dengue virus in the suite as part of their effort to develop a treatment and vaccine.

"If you don't get cells to grow well, you can't do research on viruses," Isern says.

1 FORWARD PASS A wall-mounted pass-through autoclave sterilizes biohazard waste generated in the suite. Clean waste is removed through a second autoclave door on the outside that opens to the main lab.

2 BIG CHILL Vapor rises as a rack is pulled from the liquid nitrogen cryogenic unit, which is used for storage of cells from humans, other mammals and insects. The temperature of liquid nitrogen is about minus 200 degrees Celsius.



3 PIPE UP The biological safety cabinet is used for handling cells and viruses and infecting healthy cells with viruses to grow more virus. It prevents cells from being contaminated by researchers and vice versa. The student is moving cells into a growing medium using a pipette.

4 KEEP IT CLEAN Spray bottles contain a solution used to disinfect surfaces in the room before and after work is done.

5 TWIN SET Stacked carbon dioxide incubators grow healthy cells and virus-infected cells – one is dedicated to each. They are kept at normal human body temperature and humidify the cells so they don't dry out.

6 DEEP FREEZE A rack containing virus samples is removed from an ultra-low-temperature long-term storage freezer maintained at minus 80 degrees Celsius.



7 COLD STORAGE Perhaps the least high-tech feature of the room (unless you count the old boom box), a household-style refrigerator holds bottles of cell-growing media, frozen reagents (used to test for virus growth) and cleaning supplies.

8 SIT & SPIN A tabletop ultracentrifuge spins at 100,000 revolutions per minute to separate virus from other cell components and concentrate it into what's called a pellet.

9 CLOSER LOOK Students examine cells through an inverted fluorescent microscope. Infected cells "glow" green when exposed to ultraviolet light thanks to a fluorescent molecule used to tag virus components.

10 SPIN CYCLE A refrigerated clinical centrifuge operates at lower speed than the ultracentrifuge to make pellets of cells, which are heavier and bigger than viruses. It allows researchers to separate

cells from spent growth media and substitute fresh media.

11 GETTING WARMER A bath maintained at 37 degrees C heats cell-growing medium before it's added to cells – "sort of like a doctor warming a stethoscope before putting it on your chest," Isern says. ■



INTREPID ENTREPRENEURS

A special look at FGCU alumni venturing out on their own.

Financial control, flexible hours, creative power, pride in self-made success – myriad reasons inspire entrepreneurs to go into business for themselves despite all the obvious risks.

And where would the economy be without them? For the last two decades, startup businesses have been the engine powering the majority of new jobs in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Florida Gulf Coast University graduates are among those taking the driver's seat when it comes to accelerating economic growth – thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit and critical thinking nurtured at FGCU.

With or without a business-related degree, going solo or managing a staff, dealing high-priced real estate or forgoing wages for artistic satisfaction, FGCU alumni are boldly meeting the challenges and enjoying the rewards of blazing their own trails. Their stories may inspire the next generation of Eagle entrepreneurs.

Photos by BRIAN TIETZ

Wedding planner in love with her chosen career

Courtney Gabelbauer didn't expect

to be a wedding planner or business owner, and if not for an FGCU internship neither might have happened.

Gabelbauer's marketing-public relations internship at a nonprofit landed her in the fray of event planning and introduced her to a skill set she didn't realize she had and one she enjoyed immensely. It also paid off when her older sister got married not long after the internship ended. People told her to make it a career – a prospect that jibed with her desire to avoid a 9-to-5 desk job.

"Starting a business is scary, but watching your business grow is the best feeling in the world," says Gabelbauer, who estimated it would take five to seven years to work her way into exclusively doing high-end destination weddings. Now after only four years of owning Fabulously Chic Weddings, she's planned nuptial celebrations with quarter-million-dollar budgets.

The first year was the hardest. She recalls a time she was mid-tears and having a tiny breakdown about finances and yet-to-be-made decisions when her now-husband said, "You can only fail if you give up. If failure isn't an option, you're guaranteed to succeed." That was her tipping point. She vowed never to quit doing what she loved – working for herself and planning weddings.

Now handling weddings from Sarasota to Marco Island, her FGCU knowledge has been priceless. Her communication and public relations major taught her about marketing, advertising and decision-making. "I would have been lost creating an initial business plan had I not been exposed to the courses I took on the communications track of studies," she says.

She laughs when people comment that she didn't "use her degree" because she's a wedding planner. Not true, she tells them. "You can be excellent at your craft and still not have a successful business. Understanding the business side of what you do is as important as being good at what you do."

Being self-employed can be overwhelming because the weight of making the "right choices" rests solely on the owner. You have to balance advertising with overhead costs, for example. You have to key in on time-management, setting boundaries on business life and personal life, she says. "You have to manage your money better than you ever have and realize you'll never have a consistent paycheck again in your life."

Her advice to FGCU grads headed into the life of entrepreneurship? Remember the first couple years offer a lot to figure out and mistakes will be made. "But persistence is key."

– Betsy Clayton



Courtney Gabelbauer, '08

Bachelor's degree, Communication/Public Relations
Owner/head planner, Fabulously Chic Weddings
Est. 2010 | Cape Coral

Finance major finds natural niche gives rise to success



Jason Chang, '99

Bachelor's degree, Finance
Owner, Truly Organic Pizza
Est. 2012 | FGCU campus

Change is in store for Jason Chang.

The space for his Truly Organic Pizza has doubled at the Cohen Center food court, allowing him to close his commissary/pizzeria in Naples. After intensive testing, he's expanding his original concept with more organic items, including pasta dishes, soups, soft-serve ice cream and all-natural sodas and teas. And, when athletics season gets into full swing, he'll be selling pizza by the slice at a kiosk in Alico Arena.

"We're really adding to the product mix," Chang says while taking a brief break from the kitchen. "Everything had to be certified organic. It's definitely more work and lots more cost, but the reward is great when you can produce superior quality."

He points to the green-and-white sign posted next to the counter: USDA ORGANIC. It represents a lot of hard work and documentation. Inspectors check records to make sure each slice of pepperoni was organically sourced. It represents higher costs. With his organic ice cream mix costing five times what a non-organic mix does, his commitment to quality doesn't come cheaply.

"The fact that I can carry that logo is a big deal," Chang says. "It took me six months and a 300-page document to get certified."

Within the next year, he hopes to hang up another USDA shingle at another university campus; he's talking with several prospects.

Chances are, Chang could make more money operating a corporate franchise restaurant – or putting his MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management to use as an investment banker, as he did for several years in Asian markets and in Denver and Seattle.

Finding nutritious food for his children eventually became more important than making millions and inspired him to develop his product. Truly Organic Pizza debuted in Naples in 2012 and arrived on campus in 2013.

"If you work solely to enjoy work and do the best job you can, success will follow," Chang reasons. "Success historically is measured by profitability, but with this business it's not so simple. It's different from a standard restaurant or retail. The complications and investment of capital upfront is intense. But if you get through the first couple of years and find a niche, that's success. We are a success if we can maintain the quality of the product and uphold organic certification in a public environment."

Of course, this Brooklyn native wouldn't be completely satisfied if his product didn't also pass the authenticity test.

"It's darn good pizza," he says, beaming with pride. "It has to have that flavor profile – the chewiness, the crunch. The kicker is it's certified organic."

– Drew Sterwald

Software guru develops business, love of American lifestyle

Onur Haytac planned to return to his native Turkey after earning his degree at FGCU, but his experiences at the school changed his life.

“Not only did the education I obtained give me the solid foundation from which my business emerged, but the campus and environs, faculty and students helped me acculturate to living in America, including my learning English,” says the 35-year-old from Istanbul, who learned of FGCU from visiting his uncle in Cape Coral. “They supported my work as an IT consultant, helping me learn about the business culture. I had the pleasure of meeting amazing mentors who supported me...and the rest is history.”

In this case, history was the creation of Haytac’s Benserón Information Technologies, a cutting-edge firm based in Naples and Chennai, India, that specializes in point-of-sale software for restaurants and other retail operations. His latest innovation is what he calls a “hybrid” application compatible with any tablet device that streamlines service to a one-stop process – a server can do everything from take the customer’s order to process payment at the table.

Haytac says envisioning what’s next has never been a problem for him. “The challenge is turning that part off so I can focus on what’s in front of me.”

He describes himself as a “serial entrepreneur,” an intuitive software designer who’s “shrewd, creative, driven and gifted at recognizing opportunity.” A typical workday begins at 7 a.m. with phone calls to the India office, continues with client and team meetings and data analysis through a working lunch, and a 6:30 p.m. dinner, often with potential business partners.

After that, “the sales team continues to work, and our tech support is up 24/7, so from 6:30 to midnight, emails and calls are still processed,” he says. His personal workday ends at 11:30 p.m. much like it begins – with a call to the India office, which is now reopening, to plan the day ahead.

It’s little surprise Haytac hasn’t found time to start a family. He says he doesn’t even watch television, although he admits to a fondness for Chinese war movies, a taste he developed during the course of his international business travels.

Haytac also is inspired by the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a former army officer who became Turkey’s first president in 1923, after six centuries of rule by the Ottoman dynasty. “He reformed political, cultural, economic, educational, legal and social dynamics, including holding the first election that allowed women to vote, putting Turkey on the world stage as a modern and progressive country,” Haytac says. “He said, ‘Everything we see in the world is the creative work of women,’ and I believe that. Seventy percent of my employees are powerful, independent women, and they make a huge difference every day.”

– Keith Gibson



Onur Haytac, '04

Master's degree, Information Systems
 Founder/CEO, Benserón Information Technologies
 Est. 2004 | Naples and Chennai, India

Spa owner focuses on purely healthy results



Jennifer Alvarez Linguidi worked as a resort

concierge and a massage and fitness supervisor before launching her own business, Purely You Spa in Naples. Five years later, she's gone from a staff of just herself and a few clients to a bustling business and nearly two dozen employees as well as spa members that are like an extended family.

"I want to work daily and after 5 p.m. because I love it," says Alvarez Linguidi, who used her psychology studies at FGCU to help her understand the connections between behavior and health. "I like to make a difference in the lives of others from inside and out."

Purely You Spa offers organic facials, massages, body treatments, manicures, pedicures, yoga and meditation. The first one – facials – is what led Alvarez Linguidi down the path of business ownership. She was a 21-year-old student when she learned she had a type of cancer that required surgery and chemotherapy to defeat a benign tumor in her leg. "After seven months of chemotherapy, I developed acne. The acne is what triggered me to get my skin specialist license."

And although she only took one business class in college – business ethics – she has come to realize that FGCU professors who taught her to think along nontraditional lines also were inspirations that spurred her to successful business ownership.

Another helpful class: public speaking, which gave her tools for effective communication that she still uses today.

What she loves about her work is helping others find solutions. She focuses on results-oriented healthy treatments, including stress reduction and pain relief. Her willingness to craft personal plans for clients led to development of a flexible annual membership program. It inspires self-care and overall balance, she says.

It's ambitious to be a small-business owner, she acknowledges, recalling how people told her she was crazy to open a business during one of America's worst economic downturns. She ignored them.

She says today she gives this advice to anyone who has a similar dream: "Develop a plan of what you want. Think big and map it out. Consistently evaluate and measure the plan. Make adjustments when needed. Ensure flexibility, and always stay focused and positive on your goals."

– Betsy Clayton

Jennifer Alvarez Linguidi, '04

Bachelor's degree, Psychology
Owner, Purely You Spa
Est. 2009 | Naples



Diamond finds opportunity with launch of co-work space

Nearly two years after Brett Diamond, his father, David Diamond, and his father's business partner, John DeAngelis, started Venture X, it's a raging success.

Venture X – a new-age office space designed in the co-working concept for today's professionals of all industries – just passed the century mark, with 100 members who rent their space on a monthly basis at the 7,100-square-foot facility in Mercato in North Naples.

FGCU's fingerprints are all over it.

First, there's Sandra King Kauanui, department chair of management and director of the Institute for Entrepreneurship. Diamond never had a class with her, but says she has been a key mentor in his post-FGCU life.

In the classroom, Julia East, director of the Center for Leadership and Innovation in the Lutgert College of Business, pushed Diamond hard, but he loved the pressure and learned how to work efficiently in teams.

"In business classes at FGCU, everything is group-oriented," says Diamond, 25. "That's something FGCU does very well. In almost every single business class, there is a group project or assignment or paper. People work better that way nowadays.

"That's something at Venture X that works very well. You could be a one-person company or be sitting next to somebody who's going through the same thing as you. 'How do I do this legal document? How do I file my taxes this year? How do I code this website?' It allows you to collaborate in groups."

Venture X feeds off of that. It offers 13 fully furnished private office suites, two conference rooms and 3,000 square feet of open space, where members can have a reserved work space or work at any of the 48 desks.

"The whole idea of this style of work is you see other people working and getting business and being successful," he says. "That motivates you: 'He's doing this. She's working. I need to work, too. I need to focus and get my work done.'

"This is what the new generation drives off of. When you're in the library, you're surrounded by people studying, heads down and working. That's exactly what we do here. On a professional level, we're all heads down and working."

Naples has no comparable co-working space. Neither does Fort Myers. You'd have to go to Sarasota to find anything like it.

Diamond said it was still a challenge initially because people needed to be educated, to learn not only what Venture X does, but why.

"We're at the point now where we don't have to explain what we do," he says. "People come in and see what others are doing and naturally adapt to that."

— Rick Weber



Brett Diamond, '12

Bachelor's degree, Business Management

Co-founder, Venture X

Est. 2012 | Naples

Community development involves more than real estate



Brad Phelps, '03

Bachelor's degree, Business Administration
President/owner, Phelps Realty Services
and Anchor Associates Inc.
Est. 2007 | Bonita Springs and Naples

Brad Phelps believes in unbridled community investment, and that passion for giving back starts with his alma mater.

The 33-year-old business administration graduate, whose Phelps Realty Services and Anchor Associates specialize in comprehensive real-estate and property and community-association management services, is on the FGCU Alumni Association board of directors. He has recruited FGCU students as interns and employees, most notably his vice president, Audrey Schafer, who earned bachelor's ('04) and master's ('05) degrees in business administration at FGCU.

Beyond the university, Phelps and his partner of 12 years, Ryan Frost ('05, Resort and Hospitality Management), who coordinates development for the businesses, contribute as much as they can to local charities. "We enjoy giving back to organizations that we are passionate about," Phelps says.

"Much of our time is spent growing our profession, but we give what we can and in different ways."

His adopted home is far removed from the 1,200-resident town of Chebanse, Ill., where he grew up fantasizing about one day being a highway patrolman. It's where he got his first work experience at age 13 busing tables in a restaurant.

Phelps stays closely tied to the university he first discovered while visiting his grandparents in Cape Coral. Learning from the trials and tribulations of others is the fuel that powers his management style, and it started in the classrooms at FGCU, where he was inspired by professors who taught beyond the curriculum and shared what he called their "worldly experiences."

"This ranges from professors who either owned and operated small business ventures, worked abroad or succeeded in higher education," Phelps says.

The result is the continuing evolution of what Phelps describes as a "boutique-style real estate and community association management service provider delivering innovative and personalized services." The set way of doing business is ... well ... no set way, with the emphasis on working intimately with clients to customize the process.

"We're in a very competitive market," he says. "Professionally, I am consistently innovating to create value."

When he isn't sharpening that competitive edge, Phelps spends time boating and traveling. He also takes pleasure in collecting wine and hopes one day to play the piano.

Phelps might not yet have mastered the piano keys, but he has the keys to business success and community involvement figured out fairly well.

— Keith Gibson

There's no business like show business for Brady

Launching a theater company in Fort Myers

wasn't part of Brittney Brady's immediate plans after graduating. The TheatreLab veteran thought she'd direct a few local productions to build up her resume while applying to graduate schools. Eventually, she and her boyfriend, Philip Heubeck ('10, Art), wanted to move to Berlin.

But after she directed a play in 2012 at the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, the center's executive director, Jim Griffith, suggested she stage another production. Things started falling into place. Friends and former classmates pitched in as unpaid actors, scenic and sound designers, makeup artists, stage technicians and musicians. FGCU faculty offered guidance.

"After two more shows, I realized I had a good situation right here," Brady recalls. "I have a great support system, and I can do work that I want to do with people I want to work with. You're not going to find such an open opportunity in a large city."

With a flock of more than 30 volunteers contributing their talents, her fledgling troupe, Ghostbird Theatre Company, will lift the curtain on its third season this month. Most members have full-time jobs elsewhere; Brady works 30 hours a week as a dental assistant.

"We're all doing it for the love of it," she says. "Managing it all and working at the same time is the most difficult part. The people around me keep me going. I'm getting into my groove."

Brady calls her role – producer, director, operations manager, maintenance technician – "the ultimate internship." Unlike, say, a biology major who goes on to medical school and then residency before establishing a practice, her career path was less certain.

"Sometimes I would have liked to know where I was going," she admits. "But the benefit of not knowing is having more flexibility, allowing life to take you where it takes you."

Focusing on new plays, classics and in-between obscurities, Ghostbird may not sell as many tickets as theaters presenting more mainstream entertainment. But the company raised \$3,000 through a Kickstarter campaign to stage Strindberg's "Miss Julie" last spring, has twice been awarded arts grants by the City of Fort Myers and holds an annual holiday fundraiser called Frosty Swamp Stomp. Ghostbird has managed to keep ticket prices at \$10 – cheaper than a movie – and attract audiences of 80 to 100 people.

Thought-provoking programming and creative bravado like installing 4 tons of sand for a set inspired by a Japanese rock garden are getting Ghostbird noticed.

"Theater is not just about ticket sales," Brady says. "I measure our success by whether we're happy with the work we've done and whether I'm getting good feedback from theatergoers and the company."

– Drew Sterwald



Brittney Brady, '11

Bachelor's degree, English, Theater minor

Founding producing artistic director,
Ghostbird Theatre Company

Est. 2013 | Fort Myers

Attorney learns to lead, love through experience at FGCU



Carmen Dellutri, '99

Master's degree, Business Administration
President, Dellutri Law Group
Est. 1998 | Fort Myers, Port Charlotte and Naples

Carmen Dellutri found his wife and his

freedom through the courses he took at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Sitting at his desk one Saturday morning, the lawyer took a break from his 70-hour work week to read a newspaper when he happened upon an ad for the university's executive MBA program. "I was thinking to myself that if I'm going to work this hard, I might as well do it for myself," he says.

FGCU provided Dellutri the business "book knowledge" to supplement his law degree and get him started in his own firm. "And coincidentally I met my wonderful wife while in the executive MBA program." A certified public accountant, Marjorie became his business partner as well as his life partner. "She handles many things I do not want to deal with at our business."

Together they enjoy the flexibility that being business owners brings.

"I have the ability to maneuver my own schedule so that I do not miss the things that are important to me like family events and children's sporting events," says Dellutri, whose practice specializes in personal injury and bankruptcy law. "If I want to get away for a long weekend, I can do that, too."

It wasn't a stretch to become a business owner. He grew up watching his parents own and run a gas station in New Jersey. That's where he learned the best advice he's ever gotten for being an entrepreneur: Always be nice. It's "the No. 1 key to success as a lawyer," he says. "There are so many lawyers out there who feel the need to beat their chests and scream and yell."

Other advice that resonates in business: "Under promise and over deliver. It's always better to get a spectacular result when the client is only expecting a normal response or result."

Dellutri says the challenges of owning his own business are ever-present and always changing.

"Any business owner knows each and every day will bring problems, issues and things you never thought were possible," he says. But in 20 years of practicing law, he's learned the problems make him a better person and the issues make him a better thinker.

"The challenges make you a better leader," he says.

— Betsy Clayton

Planning fantasy weddings becomes her reality

Kehrin Hassan gets to choose with whom she works and spends her time — “and only an entrepreneur gets that luxury,” says Hassan, whose company Jet Set Wed takes her around the world for the culturally influenced weddings she plans.

She doesn’t abide by the colloquial advice frequently offered young business people to keep personal life and business life separate, to avoid being friends with clients and vendors, to never turn down a business opportunity. “The whole reason I wanted to start my own business is because I wanted to live my work,” Hassan wrote while in Bali for a wedding. “By staying true to myself, I naturally book clients who have interests and style similar to mine, making them easily lifelong friends.”

A classic overachiever, Hassan used her communication and philosophy classes to catapult her toward her wedding-planning interest. She set a five-year timeline post-graduation to work in every type of event company, such as concert scheduling, corporate planning and nonprofit work. She wanted an array of experiences so she could take a fresh approach to the wedding industry. Since childhood, she’d wanted to plan and be at weddings, which she always considered joyful, in-the-moment events.

After a few years of wedding planning, though, she realized she could rebrand her business and incorporate her other love — travel. It’s what she wanted and what she does well, but some days she still has to pinch herself to make sure it’s real. “The biggest surprise is that I’m able to be paid to travel doing what I love.”

But life isn’t all travel and glamour. The accounting side of her business challenges Hassan, as she considers herself more of a creative type than math guru. Another challenge: “knowing when to limit what I do for my clients.” She loves her job so much, she knows she spends more time on an individual client than the amount for which she is contracted.

That said, she is blissful about being a business owner. She recalls guest speakers that her FGCU professors slated for classes and remembers hearing stories of people not much older than she was who created their own path and started their own businesses.

If she were a speaker in an FGCU classroom today, she knows what she’d say.

“The best advice I could give is fake it till you make it.” Sure, we’ve all heard that, she acknowledges, but it’s empowering. “Choose your dream position in life and then start acting like you’re in it. You wouldn’t believe how quickly it becomes your reality.”

— Betsy Clayton



Kehrin Hassan, '07

Bachelor's degree, Communication
with Philosophy minor

Owner/CEO, Jet Set Wed

Est. 2011 | Fort Myers

Invitation designer thinks outside of the envelope



Megan MacDonald Miller, '06

Bachelor's degree, Resort and Hospitality Management
Owner/designer, Luster Designs
Est. 2011 | Naples

Megan MacDonald Miller didn't have

to look far to find role models who helped inspire her custom invitations and announcements business.

Her mother, Mariann MacDonald, was a successful businesswoman on the big corporate stage as founder of Endo Pharmaceuticals. "I remember when I was in high school and my teacher spoke about the 'glass ceiling' for women," Miller says. "I never understood the concept because my mom always made it look so easy and effortless.

"I get the creative side from my dad (Robert) and the business side from my mom. It's a good blend, and it's always nice to bounce ideas off them."

Miller, 29, who's married to fellow FGCU alum Andrew Miller, ('04, Marketing), and the mother of 5-year-old Madelyn, is a native of Long Island who spent several childhood years living just outside Philadelphia. There she became a competitive gymnast and coach. She's still active in the sport with a performance scheduled last summer at a meet in Disney's ESPN Wide World of Sports complex.

"I competed in team gymnastics with my club from Philadelphia," Miller says. "They sent me my part of the routine, and I just showed up and performed."

It was a mass migration south by her father's side of the family that led Miller to Naples (her dad is the eldest of 11 siblings, all of whom live in Naples) and FGCU.

"I planned to go to the University of Florida, but when we drove up to Gainesville to see the campus, it felt too big and impersonal," Miller says. "On the drive home, my dad noticed a sign for Florida Gulf Coast, so we turned in and took a look around. I absolutely loved it."

The resort and hospitality management grad originally worked with a Naples-based event-planning company. When the firm moved away from customized invitations as part of its services, Miller started Luster Designs, which she describes as an "invitation studio that thinks outside the envelope," creating one-of-a-kind products that promote weddings and other special events.

"I try to look at the entire event instead of just one element," she says. "I gather all the info the client can provide. Most people don't think about bringing fabric swatches, linens or flower concepts to a stationery meeting, but it really helps in the process of coming up with something truly unique. Anything can spark imagination."

That imagination is manifesting itself in an upcoming project Miller is very excited about. "We will be tying in beach glass as the invite itself using frosted acrylic and other natural elements," she says. "I think it's going to have a major 'wow' factor."

— Keith Gibson

Seeing granddad ditch tobacco inspired business plan

Kody Yates became a believer in electronic cigarettes when he saw his grandfather switch from traditional tobacco to the vapor variety without a single issue. He became a believer in being a self-employed entrepreneur when he realized he could have a flexible work schedule while pursuing academics.

Yates received his AA from FGCU last summer and plans to attend the University of Central Florida next. He moved in August from his hometown of Fort Myers. He'll continue in Orlando to sell e-cigs, which have gone from being trendy to mainstream.

The slender battery-powered vaporizers simulate tobacco smoking. Venus Vapor touts "elegant, high-quality" products. They're products Yates enjoys selling. His grandfather, Sam Banks of Fort Myers, smoked traditional tobacco cigarettes for more than 50 years, until making the switch to vapor about three years ago. "He loves e-cigs," Yates says. "Actually he likes the product so much that he opened a Venus Vapor store on State Road 80."

As an entrepreneur, Yates enjoys the challenges that working in the United States and overseas bring.

"Many people underestimate the challenges of owning and running a company," says Yates, whose Venus Vapor company is based in Fort Myers with a factory in China, a place he lived from 2010 through 2011 – in Shenzhen, Guangdong. "I knew I had the resources and personal relationships to make it work."

That's a key to successful business, he says. "Plus making educated decisions."

Coordination between here and the Shenzhen factory is difficult, he says, because it requires adapting a strange working schedule.

"I'm usually always working on something," he says, explaining that normally customers place orders with the Fort Myers office, and he relays the order to the production team overseas. "International business is very interesting because it requires a certain degree of tolerance. You must learn about other cultures and about local customs to gain respect."

Life experience and institutionalized learning both contribute to the foundation that helps him succeed in this business. "FGCU has been an invaluable asset to my life."

Investor Warren Buffett is Yates' role model because – among other things – he never loses sight of reality. He's also a maverick businessman.

The rewards of being a business owner make Yates happy, he says. Tough times and stress are counterbalanced by the flexibility to pursue a career and schooling simultaneously.

"I'm not sure where I read or heard this but it definitely stuck in my mind: Life is like a game of blackjack. Life has the edge, and in order to get ahead you just have to train yourself to count."

– Betsy Clayton



Kody Yates, '14

Associate's degree, General Studies

Managing member/owner, Venus Vapor

Est. 2012 | Fort Myers

The Prices are right, enjoying successful careers in real estate



Fred Price, '99

Bachelor's degree, Marketing

Tony Price, '03

Bachelor's degree, Business

Owners, Priceless Realty (Fred also owns Lauren Homes Fairview Lending and Omega Title Florida)

Est. 2003-2013 | Cape Coral and Fort Myers

The Price brothers landed in real estate

after growing up in a household that appears to have sprung from a classic American family television show.

Fred, 37, and Tony, 35, along with fellow FGCU alum, Kevin, '04, grew up as three sons of a father named Fred who really does know best.

"My father taught us that the most important thing is to be ethical and honest in all our dealings," says Fred Price, about his father who retired as a Sears store manager in Erie, Pa., and moved the family to Southwest Florida so the boys could attend FGCU.

Tony also credits their mom, Lourdes, for an upbringing similar to that depicted in "The Wonder Years," his favorite TV show as a youngster. "As kids, our parents had us make our beds every morning, help clean the house, finish our homework, get good grades, be respectful to adults, compete in sports, get jobs, go to church and be all-around good people," he says. "I know they are the reason we are successful today."

While baby brother Kevin, 33, took a different career path as an executive with information-technology research firm Gartner, Fred and Tony are all about local real estate. Their Priceless Realty business has offices in Cape Coral, where Fred's the boss, and Fort Myers, which is Tony's domain.

Fred Price credits his experiences at FGCU for inspiring him to "think outside the box for customers and their needs." The result: a one-stop shop for real-estate, building and financial services.

The fact that still-growing FGCU was much smaller when Tony was a student was a huge advantage, he says. "It allowed me to get a lot of one-on-one time with the faculty and staff."

All three Price brothers got involved in extracurricular activities as young Eagles, from Student Government positions to Greek life, which Tony says he and Kevin were instrumental in starting at FGCU. "The ability to attend a university that allowed the students to help shape it as it grew was a major contributor to my success in business," Tony says. "All the challenges gave me the strength, knowledge and confidence to be successful."

Of course, the natural competitiveness that occurs among brothers doesn't hurt one's business skills, either. Today, they spend time with their young children and pastimes like Cross Fit training and fishing for Fred, water sports, investing and flying for Tony.

There's one word that perfectly describes this successful life in the sunshine where your brother is friend, business partner and devoted family man – a word that gives value to the pleasures money can't buy. In fact, it's a word these brothers literally own: Priceless.

– Keith Gibson

Sustainable fish and produce farm is a family affair

Commitment to ecological balance is firmly rooted in Megan Andresen's family. Oldest brother Michael works as an architect specializing in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) buildings. Outdoorsy brother Matthew earned a bachelor's degree in marine biology and environmental studies at Alaska Pacific University.

As for Megan, she earned a bachelor's degree in biology and environmental science with a minor in geology from Cornell College in Iowa before completing her master's at FGCU.

Maybe it was inevitable that the trio reunited to launch Tri-M Aquaponics in 2012 in their hometown of Maquoketa (muh-KO-ketta), Iowa. Matthew Andresen had already been working with an aquaponic growing system in Alaska.

"Matt and I started talking about maybe moving back home and started researching to see if we could do aquaponics on a commercial level," Megan Andresen says. "FGCU and Cornell prepared me to be able to research and utilize information that's already out there and put it into a usable design. At FGCU I learned how you can be sustainable on a daily basis.

Tri-M, a moniker inspired by the siblings' first initials, integrates an aquaculture system for raising tilapia and a hydroponic system for growing produce. No fertilizers, pesticides or fungicides are needed and they can grow all year. Through a closed-loop system, fish waste is pumped out and filtered to separate nutrients for the leafy greens and herbs grown in plant beds. The clean water is then routed back to the tanks. The arrangement requires 1/10th of the water that would be needed for field plant production, the Andresens say.

And nothing goes to waste. Even residual plant material is composted to create fertilizer sold as "compost tea."

So far, the company's tilapia and fresh herbs mainly feed another business the Andresens started with a few friends: The Brick Tap, a restaurant and bar that serves locally sourced food and beverages. But they've already moved Tri-M from its original location to a former quail farm where they have twice as much space and climate-controlled growing rooms.

"Right now, we're not big enough to produce extra to sell to people," Andresen says.

Tucked away in a town of 6,000 deep in America's agriculture heartland, the eco-friendly operation already has reaped the publicity benefits of regional media coverage.

"Our community has been very interested," Andresen says. "We had 70 people on a tour when we thought there'd be 10. Spreading the word about sustainable agriculture in this area is the biggest reward – getting people to look at things differently than they have for the last hundreds of years."

– Drew Sterwald



Megan Andresen, '11

Master's degree, Environmental Science

Co-owner, Tri-M Aquaponics

Est. 2012 | Maquoketa, Iowa

Organizer happiest when helping others find their space



Tracy Colleran, '05
Bachelor's degree, Marketing
Owner, Straighten Up, Inc.
Est. 2007 | Naples

You can't go to Italy and not feel something.

For Tracy Colleran, it came on the Isle of Capri in 2007 during the first real vacation she had ever taken – the first time she had ever been outside the United States. Some barefoot fishermen took her in a boat to the Blue Grotto, a sea cave that is flooded with a brilliant emerald light created by sunlight passing through an underwater cavity. As they sang vibrantly and passionately, she had an epiphany.

"It was the first time I could really sit back and think, 'What am I really good at? What can I help people with? What can I make a living off of?' " she says. "It wasn't so much, 'How much money can I make and how can I get there the fastest?' It was genuinely, 'What is my passion?' And that word – passion – is a huge thing in Italy. Everyone's passionate."

Colleran, 31, hadn't really figured out what she wanted to do after graduating from FGCU in 2005 with a marketing degree, so she was doing sales and marketing for a home-based electronics company. Her boss's disorganization had started to affect her commissions, so she redid his office, including a new filing and bill-paying system.

The Italy epiphany gave her the belief that she could do that for others as well. She had already researched the National Association of Professional Organizers. When she got back from Italy, she gave her employer two-weeks' notice and used an inheritance from her grandfather to start Straighten Up, Inc., a home and office organizing business.

The biggest challenge, ironically for a marketing major, was advertising, because she found that networking was much more important in establishing her name in this field. The next challenge was educating people so they understood that she was not a housekeeper. The final challenge was to foster a relationship whereby people trusted her in their homes and offices.

She has a passion to help circumstantially and chronically disorganized individuals feel more in control of their surroundings.

"I love helping people," she says. "I work very specifically in the mental aspect of it. I want to work with people who had really traumatic things happen to them and their life is completely overwhelmed. I found a niche with mental addiction and health. I work with people who had life changes, whether they've moved or had a death in the family and their life is in chaos. It gives me a lot of personal satisfaction."

Now that's amore.

— Rick Weber

Atilus rolls with the changes in marketing technology

When Zach Katkin and Harry Casimir

launched a website development and online marketing firm called Atilus as undergrads in 2005, desktop computers were still the vehicle of choice for online navigation.

In retrospect, that might seem like the horse-and-buggy era. Smart phones and tablets were still round the corner.

“Mobile was happening, but nobody was sure it was going to take off,” recalls Katkin. “The rate at which things changed when we started ... it’s been insane. But change is exhilarating. Now, responsive design is thinking about any screen size a site could be displayed on. It’s a different way of thinking. We used to test sites on different browsers. Now we test on different devices.”

The proliferation of operating systems tweaked for myriad devices and mobile carriers adds more twists and turns to the development process of web content. That has been just one of the challenges Katkin and Casimir have faced in steering Atilus. After accelerated early growth, the recession shifted staff size into reverse; it’s back up to eight full-time employees – most of them FGCU alumni. Another roadblock: Clients don’t always understand the amount of time and money required to create all the online bells and whistles they want.

“Education has been a big challenge,” Casimir says. “We respect people’s time and money. We want to create a return on investment for them.”

One of their proudest accomplishments was partnering with the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida, a nonprofit that works to overcome hunger in Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. The organization wanted to increase donations and its volunteer base, but its website wasn’t clearly communicating its mission and successes. Atilus produced a new site with a simpler, cleaner layout that clearly conveys what donations accomplish and encourages giving.

“It’s something they’re very happy with and we’re very happy with,” Katkin says. “To me our mission is better organizations through technology.”

Toward that end, Atilus has developed Boardma.com, a secure online service available by subscription to the boards of directors of nonprofits. Used by about 50 clients, the site channels communications, stores meeting information and bylaws and enables better management.

Reflecting on 10 years in business, Katkin and Casimir encourage others to find a niche and work hard.

“Be different and don’t be afraid to fail. It’s cliché, but it’s true,” Casimir says.

“Real entrepreneurs keep moving,” adds Katkin. “You’re going to fail constantly, but you have to keep going.”

– Drew Sterwald



Zach Katkin, '07

Bachelor's degree, Liberal Studies
President/CEO, Atilus

Harry Casimir, '05

Bachelor's degree, Computer Information Services
Director of Operations, Atilus
Est. 2005 | Bonita Springs

Couple attuned to delivering the care patients deserve



Jamin Duran, '07

Bachelor's degree, Computer Information Systems
Owner/general manager, Gulf Coast Audiology
Est. 2007 | Fort Myers

Pressure? Yeah, Jamin Duran and his wife, Drianis, know exactly what vice-grip, are-we-doing-the-right-thing pressure is all about.

"When you convince somebody to hand over a \$100,000 check to you based on a promise that you're going to somehow deliver and pay that money back, with only our name ... " Jamin says, "and if it didn't work, what would it do to my wife's credibility in the industry, being that she was a recent graduate with a doctorate? If we didn't succeed, would she not be able to continue to use her skills we had invested so much time and money in? That was a lot of anxiety."

The Durans took that \$100,000 loan, added \$20,000 of their life savings and created Gulf Coast Audiology in 2007. Jamin, who had just graduated from FGCU with a degree in computer information systems, did some of the construction himself, painting, installing cabinets and blinds, and running telephone and network cabling (which he learned how to do through his studies at FGCU).

The Durans didn't take a single paycheck for themselves until December 2008 – 15 months after they formed the Fort Myers company.

But the outcome was everything they dreamed of. They paid off the loan in 2013. These days, their loyal patients are willing to wait up to three weeks – even in the offseason – for an appointment with Drianis.

"The industry we're in is very competitive, especially in Southwest Florida, given the demographics," says Jamin, who handles the business side. "We mostly serve an older population. We're competing against companies like Miracle Ear, which has been around for 60 years. We had to figure out a way to differentiate ourselves. We approached it with a patient-centered focus where we're going to deliver the best experience, the best customer service and the best products we could find, and not worry so much about the bottom line."

"We thought that if we treated people right and represented the community well, word of mouth would take care of the bottom line. Over the course of years, we built that referral network."

Drianis, a Puerto Rico native with a doctorate in audiology, was working for a hearing aid corporation, but was discouraged by sales quotas and restrictions that prevented her from delivering the kind of care she felt her patients deserved. She wanted freedom to do what she felt was in their best interests.

"She came from very humble beginnings, and I also didn't have much growing up," Jamin says. "I never thought I would own or run a business – and here we are. This is all a dream come true for us. We are the epitome of the American dream."

– Rick Weber

Marketing maven believes in one-hat strategy for success

Samantha Scott didn't grow up to be the archaeologist or marine biologist she aspired to be as a youngster, but she makes a science of sorts out of her chosen field: marketing and communications.

While the promotional solutions she offers business clients through her Pushing the Envelope firm – marketing communications and branding, public relations, social media strategy and management, Internet marketing and Web design and development – are the tools with which she and her team operate, the theory behind those tools, and the key to her success, is simple: Let the experts do their job.

“Take the example of a doctor who’s highly trained and skilled in his field of medicine,” Scott says. “He might be a great doctor, but he doesn’t know how to manage his office or do the accounting. He needs to hire the right people to make his practice successful.”

That’s where Scott and Co. come in. “PTE is where creativity and strategy meet. We exist to help businesses prosper through innovative communications and marketing.”

A 29-year-old woman who says she draws much strength and inspiration from her faith, Scott always has been an envelope pusher of sorts: an Anchorage, Alaska, girl who ended up in the subtropics of Southwest Florida and met her future husband and business partner, Derek Scott, online, “back in the days of AOL chat rooms. We met shortly after connecting online and dated in person, for the record.”

Describing herself as a “perpetual student,” Scott got more than her money’s worth at FGCU preparing for her profession.

“Dubbed a glutton for punishment at the time, most of my electives were additional marketing courses, and my free time was spent participating in the student chapter on campus of the American Advertising Federation. My time at FGCU shaped my outlook on my career choice and gave me the groundwork to become who I am today.”

She also heeds the advice of another envelope pusher, Howard Behar, who helped turn a cup of coffee into an international social and cultural experience as former president of Starbucks. It was Behar’s book, “It’s Not About the Coffee,” that convinced Scott to commit Pushing the Envelope to “wear our one hat.”

“I’m not satisfied with being good – I want our company to be remarkable,” Scott says. “The only way we can do that is if we focus on what we’re called to do and further sharpen our skills. We could add app development, advertising and a host of other services, but it would be outside of our one hat and only take away from our core. We’ve been tempted as we’ve grown, but we always go back to the same question – does this fit?”

– Betsy Clayton



Samantha Scott, '05

Bachelor's degree, Marketing
President, Pushing the Envelope Inc.
Est. 2006 | Fort Myers

Permaculture a blossoming business for Klopf



Erica Lynn Klopf, '12

**Bachelor's degree, Environmental Studies and Art
Owner, Florida Edible Landscaping
Est. 2013 | Naples**

Starting a business was the only solution

for Erica Lynn Klopf. She couldn't go to work for an established edible landscaping design company in Southwest Florida.

There wasn't one.

So Florida Edible Landscaping sprouted out of her home in Estero. With little overhead cost involved, because plants are purchased from nurseries at time of installation, she was able to start her business without borrowing money. Under the helpful wing of FGCU's Small Business Development Center, she and her partner at the time learned where to register the business, which licenses to apply for and what type of insurance was needed. Klopf learned QuickBooks software so she could do the accounting, invoicing and taxes. She designed the company website and sought clients via flyers and magazine articles she submitted.

"Definitely, grassroots was the only option," she dreadlocked, diehard do-it-yourselfer says. "We were just coming out of the recession, and I have a lot of student loans. I was still working part time at the Naples Botanical Garden. I wanted to keep costs low and learn the ins and outs so I could intelligently manage the money flow."

For every hour she spent in a garden, Klopf says, she spent another hour on a computer organizing her business, which is designing and installing sustainable gardens for commercial and residential clients.

As an FGCU undergrad, Klopf discovered a passion for permaculture that she harnessed in designing the now-flourishing campus Food Forest. Permaculture is an ecological system that maximizes sustainability and productivity while minimizing maintenance. Some were skeptical she could make a living doing this, but she persevered and pursued certification to practice and teach permaculture.

"What I'm doing is edgy and it's risky – which makes it interesting," Klopf says. "It's really important for people who have something they're passionate about, that's maybe a little unconventional but can benefit society, to reach out for what they want even if they think it may not be economically viable. Don't be afraid. The economy and social dynamics are shifting toward a green economy."

Klopf recently designed the food production groves at the Shangri-La Springs in Bonita, where organic food will be grown to supply the restaurants. In addition to serving design clients in Southwest Florida, she works as a project consultant and teaches permaculture design at Keys Cable Adventure Park, a watersports attraction on Grassy Key.

"The business model is a watersports-park-eco-farm," Klopf says. "Setting up this new project is a sign of accomplishment. These people recognize my ability."

– Drew Sterwald

College athletes find a good fit in the business of fitness

An elite athletic background is no guarantee of electrifying business success in athletics.

But Justin Miller and Marcus Watts are making it happen with CrossFit Lawless in Estero.

Long before they launched their gym in June 2013, they were preparing for the grand opening without even knowing it. Watts was designing detailed business plans in classes at FGCU, and both studied business here.

“We had a business plan, an investor and a location, all within four weeks,” Watts says. “We looked at it like, ‘This is what we want to do the rest of our lives, so let’s just give it a go.’ It’s been great. People have responded really well. It’s been a blast.”

Miller was a right-handed pitcher at FGCU who had a career earned-run average of 4.64 in two seasons (2003, 2007) and then played two years in the minor leagues for the Detroit Tigers. Watts averaged 7.4 points and 5.1 rebounds while starting 23 games for FGCU’s basketball team in the 2004-05 season, then played professionally in South America, Europe and New Zealand.

Both developed a passion for CrossFit, a strength and conditioning regimen developed by Greg Glassman.

“After baseball, I had this desire to stay competitive and to be in that team-like atmosphere,” Miller says. “When I found CrossFit, that kind of replaced baseball for me. I could continue doing things I loved and staying healthy and active with people who had the same mindset.”

They had texted each other periodically and they finally teamed up when Watts helped Miller with his nonprofit organization, Forever Sports. In February 2013, Miller texted Watts with his vision for a CrossFit in Lee County, and they quickly got to work starting one of the 4,500 affiliate gyms worldwide that share the CrossFit philosophies and legally license the name.

“We felt that if we built a gym where people were the focus and it wasn’t about how tough the coaches were or how cool the gym looked or who lifted the most, we could create something the area hadn’t seen,” Watts says. “We knew Fort Myers and Estero would start to become saturated with CrossFit gyms, but our gym was built on core values and we felt if we stayed true to them we could have a grasp on the community.”

It’s working. They have more than 140 members sweating in 3,500 square feet of air-conditioned space.

“It’s a great community with great people,” Miller says, “and it’s really changing lives. We have a lot of success stories.”

— Rick Weber



Marcus Watts

Majored in Business

Founder, CrossFit Lawless

Justin Miller, '07

Bachelor's degree, Business

Owner, CrossFit Lawless

Est. 2013 | Estero

James stays motivated to follow his dream



Adam James, '12

Bachelor's degree, Elementary Education
Founder, Sights, Sounds & Success
Est. 2013 | Naples

Adam James holds a bachelor's degree

in elementary education, but it's the experience he gained from officiating at intramural games for four years at FGCU that has proven most valuable of late.

"That job taught me so much about life, about having patience and being able to effectively resolve conflict," he says. "When I contact people now, I face a lot of denials or people who want to be rude or want to lash out and tell me it's not going to work. I go back to the basic principles I learned officiating at FGCU. Just understand that people have so many different things going on, that it's important to remain patient and not allow discouragements or potential failure to pull you away from what you want to do."

He encountered a lot of negativity when he decided to give up his teaching career just one year into it.

He liked Harns Marsh Elementary School in Lehigh Acres and got along with the principal during the 2012-13 school year, but says he quickly realized the educational system didn't fit his personality.

"Your creativity, passion and personality are ultimately limited and denied," he says. "I was too passionate about helping others, but had restrictions in the classroom on how I could do that."

So after a brief foray into commercial real estate, he decided to become a motivational speaker and started his own company, Sights, Sounds & Success.

In the early stages, when he encountered skepticism – even from friends and family – about the amount of wisdom a then-23-year-old could impart, he turned to Sarasota business coach/mentor Ron Klein, the inventor of the Magnetic Strip Credit Card Validity Checking System (now used on some 609 million credit cards in the United States), who calls himself "The Grandfather of Possibilities."

Klein told him his age was actually his biggest asset. He had no family to support. Even if he failed miserably, this was best time to experiment and learn from mistakes.

James, now 24, stayed true to his vision and has landed a number of speaking engagements with high-school and college-age crowds, including Duke University, the University of North Carolina and FGCU.

He says his vision is simple: He wants to positively impact and empower others to discover their self-worth. He plans to augment that message through the release of a book later this year.

"Everything from my past has been leading up to this," he says. "I've always had a sense of wanting to help and inspire others."

– Rick Weber



Soaring with the Angels

STEM professor learns
some high-altitude
science lessons on the fly

By LAURA FROST

Strapped into the cockpit seat so securely I could move nothing but my arms, I stared at the back of the pilot's helmet as he fired up the powerful engines of the F/A-18 Hornet. As I listened to the engines come to life, I saw the temperature climb to 500°C (932° F) on the panel display. The jet moved forward, lifted just a few feet above the ground, and the pilot called out, "Ready, hit it!"

Suddenly, the jet shot straight up at 500 feet per second, 5.5 gs of force flattening me against the seat, forcing my head straight down.

And so my flight with the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels began.

Since my appointment as Director of the Whitaker Center for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education at FGCU in 2012, I have experienced many exciting firsts. I've built a solar go-kart, gone swamp mucking in the Fakahatchee Strand and learned to identify a burial site for a dead chicken. However, none of these experiences came close to preparing me for the phone call I received last spring.

"You have been selected to fly with the Blue Angels," the woman said.

"Who are the Blue Angels?" I asked.

After a moment of stunned silence, she proceeded to tell me about the renowned U.S. Navy flight demo squadron that performs aerobatics in supersonic jets and that this simply wasn't an opportunity one declines. When I protested that I had a chemistry class to teach that day, she told me it would be a more than legitimate reason for a science professor to find a substitute teacher. I finally agreed.

While I have an extensive background in the sciences, my interest in flight had previously been limited to things like "The Bernoulli effect is really interesting," "The Wright Brothers did an amazing thing at Kitty Hawk," and "Isn't it marvelous that modern flight can get us across the country on a commercial aircraft in a matter of hours?"

My remarkable opportunity came about through a nomination by Joe Chada, a Miami-based Navy education specialist,

flight. Surely a formality, I thought.

On the appointed April day, I headed to Lakeland, where the sprawling 40th annual Sun 'n Fun International Fly-in and Expo was under way. My family and I were escorted to the air hangar where the Blue Angels' sleek Boeing F/A-18 Hornet awaited. A Lakeland newspaper reporter and I would be the two civilian passengers that day on separate flights. Chada, among others, assured us we likely would pass out and possibly vomit.



Petty Officer First Class Eli Lang provided a pre-flight briefing. He explained that the aircraft traveled as rapidly as 1,400 mph (twice the speed of sound) and can climb at a rate of 500 feet per second (150 meters/sec). Climbing at these speeds there is more force pulling or pushing on you than the force of gravity (known as g-force). At such strong g-forces, the blood would rush from our brains and we would pass out unless we were able to squeeze every muscle in our torso and thighs very firmly. If we were lucky, he told us, that would keep some blood in our brains and allow us to remain conscious. Considering that I do a lot of sit-ups and squats, I figured I had a chance.

He also explained that the pilots would execute an aileron roll (a lightning fast 360-degree turn), a more extended barrel roll and sustained inverted flight (that would be upside down). We would know when a maneuver was about to happen because the pilot would preface it with a, "Ready, hit it!"

And there might possibly be a "bonus flight," he cautioned. This occurs if we have to be ejected from the jet. Lang then carefully described how I would open the chute and maneuver myself to a safe landing area.

with whom I'd worked on innovative STEM programming for K-12 students. (The Navy supports the FGCU High School Solar Go-Kart Challenge and FGCU assists the Navy in finding local public schools interested in organizing robotics teams for their underwater robotics program called SeaPerch.)

My first clue that this would be no walk in the park was the medical form I received that required my doctor's signature assuring the Navy that I was physically sound enough to endure the



Blue Angels 101

► The mission of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron is to showcase the pride and professionalism of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps by inspiring a culture of excellence and service to country through flight demonstrations and community outreach.

► Sixteen officers serve with the Blue Angels, with three tactical (fighter or fighter/attack) jet pilots, two support officers and one Marine Corps C-130 pilot selected annually to relieve departing members.

► The Chief of Naval Air Training selects the “Boss,” the Blue Angels Commanding Officer, who must have at least 3,000 tactical jet flight-hours and have commanded a tactical jet squadron. The Boss flies the No.1 jet.

► Career-oriented Navy and Marine Corps jet pilots with an aircraft carrier qualification and a minimum of 1,250 tactical jet flight-hours are eligible for positions flying jets Nos. 2 through 7.

► The Marine Corps pilots flying the C-130T Hercules aircraft, affectionately known as “Fat Albert,” must be aircraft commander qualified with at least 1,200 flight hours.

► The name was picked by the original team when they were planning a show in New York in 1946. One of them came across the name of the city’s famous Blue Angel nightclub in The New Yorker magazine.

► The Blue Angels give three backseat flights at each show site for selected personnel. All three riders fly with the No. 7 pilot in the two-seat jet. Two riders are selected from the Key Influencer (KI) program and one is a credentialed media representative. The KI program selects individuals who shape attitudes and opinions of youth in their communities. Flying these candidates is intended to promote the Navy and Marine Corps as professional and exciting organizations in which to serve. To be selected as a Key Influencer, you must first be nominated by a commanding officer of a Navy or a Marine Corps recruiting district.

► An estimated 11 million spectators view the squadron during air shows each year. ■

Next we met Lt. Ryan Chamberlain, a seasoned pilot who has flown during deployments in the Western Pacific and the Middle East, including Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. He would be our pilot. He again reviewed our flight maneuvers, no doubt sizing up his passengers to see whether he was going to get in some serious flying – or not.

We pulled on blue cotton flight suits and Lang escorted me to the F/A-18, put a blue helmet on me and fastened me securely to the seat behind the pilot with a five-point harness that allowed virtually no movement except for my arms. That turns out to be important once you are in flight. The helmet has a built-in headset and microphone so I could communicate with Chamberlain during the flight. Lang also pointed out a stack of plastic bags in the cockpit and instructed me to use one – or more – if I felt nauseated during the flight.

“What should I do with the bag after?” I asked.

“Knot it and zip it in the left leg pocket of the flight suit,” he answered.

Of course!

I am proud to report that I didn’t need to use them. Nor did I pass out, thanks to my firm core, which I tensed as hard as I could when my vision began to dim as

the g-forces bore down on me. The result was that I was able to fully experience the 45-minute flight during which the pilot executed aileron rolls – 360-degree flips that last a mere 2 seconds -- a 720 (a double 360-degree flip), during which it feels as if the earth is rotating around the jet, and some inverted flight, where the ground replaces the sky in your line of sight.

The barrel rolls, the most challenging of the maneuvers, are longer, corkscrew-like maneuvers with prolonged and intense g-forces once again pressing me to the seat and then, on the way down, pushing me away from the seat, making clear why the five-point harness was so tight.

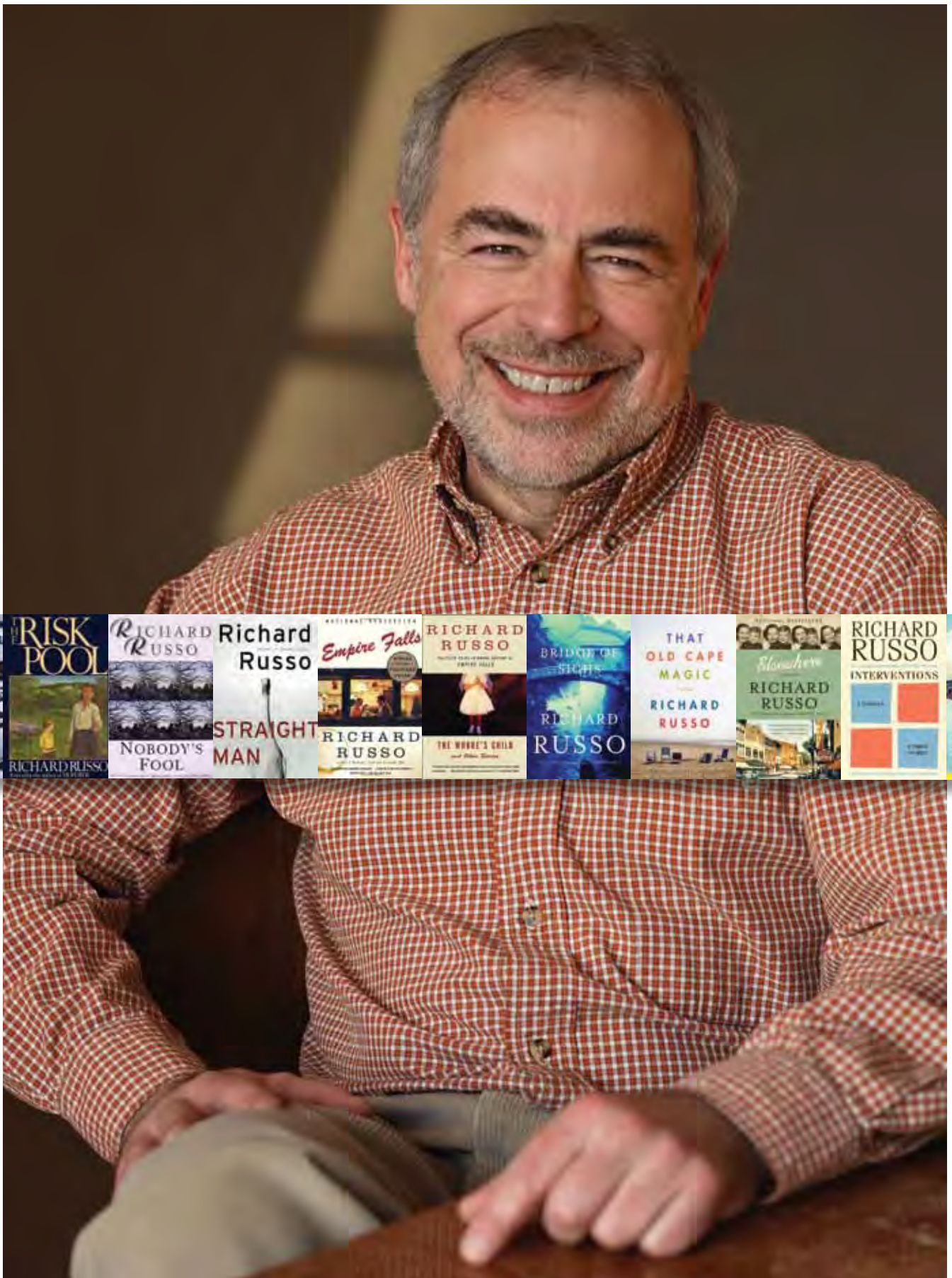
After 40 minutes of racing about the skies at every extreme angle possible, it was time to head back to the hangar. Chamberlain offered to execute a drop landing – which is exactly what it sounds like. I declined because by this time I was giving serious thought to using those plastic bags. He took mercy on me and opted for a nice, steady landing. I felt a little shaky getting out of the cockpit, but rallied for a few photos, which I will forever cherish.

Thanks for the memories. Who are the Blue Angels? Now I know.

– *Laura Frost is professor of chemistry and the director of the Whitaker Center for STEM Education at Florida Gulf Coast University.*

FGCU Professor Laura Frost prepares for her flight with the U.S. Navy’s Blue Angels.





Write & wrong

Pulitzer-Prize author Richard Russo ponders the creative process, changing nature of publishing.

If ever there was an author who exemplifies the “write-what-you-know” school of fiction, it’s Richard Russo. His books bring to life the small towns of New York and New England – places he’s spent most of his life – so masterfully, he’s won a Pulitzer Prize, not to mention a loyal following.

“Empire Falls,” the story of a struggling diner owner in Empire Falls, Maine, was the book that won the Pulitzer in 2002. Others may know him from his earlier work, “Nobody’s Fool,” which was made into a movie starring Paul Newman as Sully, a man of low ambition and high alcohol consumption.

He’s also written a compelling collection of short stories, “The Whore’s Child;” a funny-yet-sad memoir about his relationship with his mother called “Elsewhere,” and several novels set in small Northeastern towns, including “Mohawk,” “Straight Man” and “Bridge of Sighs.”

Russo describes himself as a comic writer and, while it’s true that each book contains lyrically funny moments, witty exchanges and amusing narrative, at its heart Russo’s work is like life – both humorous and heartbreaking. His semi-autobiographical stories deal with love and infidelity; the haves and have nots; wanting what you don’t have; rejecting what you do have; parents who care too much or too little; friendship; alcoholism, success, failure and virtually every other aspect of life as it unfolds in a small town where there are few distractions

beyond the people who live there.

He will be the keynote speaker for this year’s Sanibel Island Writers Conference, which takes place Nov. 6-9. Conference founder/organizer Tom DeMarchi, an English instructor at FGCU, invested some serious shoe leather and time to persuade Russo to appear.

“Russo is one of those guys who has always been at the top of my wish list,” DeMarchi says. “I’ve read everything he’s written and been a fan for years. When I started the conference he was always one of my dream presenters, always in the top five.”

In the summer of 2013, when Russo gave a reading in Montpelier, Vt., DeMarchi attended.

“As I’m approaching the building, he opened the door for me. I said ‘I’m here to see you.’ He said ‘I’m an all-service author. I even hold doors for people.’”

After the reading, DeMarchi told Russo about the conference. Russo gave him his email address. Later that year, they met by chance again, this time on an escalator at the Miami Book Fair. DeMarchi asked him again and Russo said he’d just heard from another author that it was a great event and he’d like to come.

Russo recently took time out from working on his next novel and advocating for writers in his capacity as a vice president of the Authors Guild to talk about writing as a profession and the changing nature of publishing. Here are some excerpts:

Q: Your books don’t contain any murder, mayhem, magical realism, guts or glory. What made you think books about real people going about their lives would succeed?

A: I call it artistic destiny. When I had finished my MFA in creative writing, I had developed a skill set. I knew how to construct a good story. I’d written this novel but didn’t really have much of a sense of who I was as a writer. I’d write practically anything for anybody if they told me what they wanted. I’d lived for about a decade in Tucson, Ariz., trying to become a man of letters. I wanted to be thought of as an urban sophisticate and wanted to write about those kind of people. That was what my first novel was about. I gave that novel to someone I could trust to tell me the truth and he told me what I knew: that the book was completely inert except for one small part that took place in a small town in New York. It’s a part I would have cut from the book if I could have but as soon as my friend and mentor told me this was the only part of the book that was alive, it made me really angry because it was the part I was trying to bury in the back story.

When I finally got over being angry, it dawned on me that these (New York) characters were my people and this was my home and the time had come to stop running away from that and start dealing with it head on. Once I made that decision and took that 30 or 40 pages of back story and wrote about that, the result was “Mohawk” (his first novel). It was just me figuring out at long last, after trying to write detective stories, all manner of things, that maybe this is who I am. It doesn’t matter so much what others wanted as much as what I wanted.

When I did it, I felt like I was nailing my own coffin shut. This is who I am. These are the people I care about, but no one else is going to, I thought. (But) when you feel something strongly, there’s a

By **KAREN FELDMAN**

decent chance you can make someone else feel something strongly as well.

Q: Are you working on a new novel?

A: I'm writing a book and am on the home stretch of my self-imposed deadline, which is the first of the year. It's a sequel to my earlier novel, 'Nobody's Fool.' It's called 'Everybody's Fool.' It takes place 10 years later. Sully is still alive and kicking. Conceivably, it could be a fall (2015) book."

Q. Do you believe there is a future for aspiring writers? And, if so, will they have to do it differently from the way you did it?

A: The landscape is different. Books have gone digital. There's been a devaluing of the physical book and publishers give lower advances, especially to young writers. The failure of so many newspapers makes it less likely young writers can make a living that way and they don't go on book tours the way they did when I was younger. There's a lessening across the spectrum of traditional publishing. Young literary writers especially are wondering how they are going to make it. They know that the traditional publisher seems to be looking for blockbusters. Literary fiction has a smaller market every year and the jobs that young writers use to have – teaching, publishing related, grant writing, things they did to keep body and soul together – are evaporating, too.

One of the missions of the Authors Guild is to keep the hopes of young writers alive. Those writing in genres are doing better in general, they are doing well on self-publishing platforms, especially in series, sci fi, romance and thrillers. There are opportunities that exist now that didn't exist when I was coming up. I suppose that's good news if you want to write books in a series.

I'm cautiously optimistic about the writing life. That's what we in the Guild are about. We're trying to make sure the writing life continues to exist.

Q. Where do you stand on self-publishing?

A. I had an interesting conversation

BOOKS BY RICHARD RUSSO

Mohawk (1986)
The Risk Pool (1988)
Nobody's Fool (1993)
Straight Man (1997)
Empire Falls (2001)
The Whore's Child (2002)
Bridge of Sighs (2007)
That Old Cape Magic (2009)
Elsewhere (2012)
Interventions (2012)
Nate in Venice (2013)

IF YOU GO

WHAT: The ninth annual Sanibel Island Writers Conference, a four-day series of workshops, panels, readings, talks and concerts that celebrate the creative process

WHEN: Nov. 6-9

WHERE: BIG ARTS, 900 Dunlop Road, and the Sanibel Island Public Library, 770 Dunlop Road, Sanibel

COST: \$400 for standard registration, \$300 for BIG ARTS members, \$250 for full-time students with current IDS

PRESENTERS: Among the many presenters will be author/screenwriter John Dufresne; journalist/memoirist (and former Fort Myers Beach resident) Artis Henderson; author/filmmaker MK Asante; literary agent Christopher Schilling; New York magazine contributing editor Jennifer Senior; author Darin Strauss; and editor/publisher Johnny Temple.

INFO: For details on workshops, more presenters and reservations, visit www.fgcu.edu/SIWC

with (author) Jess Walter recently. He said when he was working at a newspaper and working on his first books he wasn't very good and didn't get published. I asked if he could have self-published would he and he said 'Yeah, in a heartbeat. But I'd still be rewriting Kurt Vonnegut knockoffs.'

I think that during the years when people were saying no to me, when my

fiction wasn't good enough, if the stigma of self-publishing had been gone, I might have done that. For some writers it serves as the minor league instead of learning at writers' conferences or grad school. But sometimes what a writer needs to hear is no. Not hearing no and the reasons behind the no can slow a writer's development in some ways.

Q. Read any good books lately?

A. Smith Henderson's 'Fourth of July Creek' is the best book I have read in a long time. It's astonishing. I'm also making my way through (Leslie) Jamison's 'The Empathy Exams.' It's dense and smart.

Q. What can readers do to help support authors?

A. I think the online model of selling books – whether it's Amazon or iBooks – is tremendously enticing – that one click, guaranteed at the lowest price, getting the book delivered immediately. That's come to stay. But there is a growing sense that has something to do with the localism movement that independent bookstores are at the heart of. It's important to be in the real world, in our neighbors' businesses, bookstores, restaurants. We can't ask readers not to buy online, but if they would buy every third book at an independent bookstore, the stores would be fine. An independent bookstore is where you'll find young authors when they come out with their breakout books, where you'll learn who the good young writers are. You won't find them online.

What readers can do for themselves is not use independent bookstores as showrooms. Buy books like you buy food from local farms and restaurants with locally sourced ingredients. These physical businesses employ our neighbors. They generate taxes that are used to fill the potholes in our roads. It's the social fabric we're talking about here. Be as mindful as possible of these local farmers, these local bookstores – you're going to miss us when we're gone. And I think in the end, it's in everyone's self interest to do this. ■

Teams start year with high hopes

Whether they excelled or fell short of their goals last season, FGCU's athletics teams are uniformly optimistic about their chances for success in the 2014-15 year. Here's a look at what's ahead:

[BASEBALL]

Major League Baseball's loss will be FGCU's gain this season.

The Eagles baseball program had just four players selected in June's MLB draft, a development that could boost FGCU's win total this season.

That means the Eagles will return their entire starting pitching rotation for the first time in the program's 12-year history. Atlantic Sun Conference Pitcher of the Year Mike Murray and Brady Anderson will be back for a program that won 39 games last year and clinched the 2014 A-Sun Conference championship. Clean-up hitter Nick Rivera and center fielder Colton Bottomley and Louisville Slugger Freshman of the Year Jake Noll will also be back.

"The future looks good, and I'm really excited," FGCU coach Dave Tollett said, "but (incoming freshman) Dash Winningham signing in the eighth round with the Mets is tough. You can't replace that. You can't find that type of bat in July because those players have already signed with Florida and Miami. We'll have to eat that scholarship and find a replacement for Dash."

Tollett feared he could have lost up to 10 players in this year's draft. Corner outfielder Michael Suchy (Pittsburgh Pirates), Barron Collier High School graduate Zack Tillery (Minnesota Twins) and left-handed pitcher Ryan Atwood (San Diego Padres) were also drafted. Nevertheless, Tollett has high expectations.

"We expect to win the conference," Tollett said. "We'd love to repeat for the third time. We'd like to win three more."



Mike Murray was named A-Sun Pitcher of the Year.

[SOFTBALL]

The return of several elite players and one of the largest recruiting classes in program history could make this year spectacular for FGCU softball.

FGCU, which finished with a 33-26-1 record and lost in the consolation bracket

of the A-Sun Conference championship last season, should have more depth and youth. Senior left fielder Kelsey Carpenter and senior pitcher Shelby Morgan are again expected to lead FGCU.

Carpenter led the A-Sun in batting average, hits and on-base percentage.

Morgan went 13-9 with a 2.36 earned-run average last season. Both are excited about the talented recruiting class.

FGCU will add 14 new players this year. It's the largest recruiting class for FGCU softball since the inaugural 2002-03 season. It's led by Naples High graduate Ashley Swiderski. The shortstop hit .444 during her (high school) senior year with eight doubles, 10 triples, five homeruns and 37 RBI.

"We are very fortunate to have such a talented and accomplished player as Ashley on our team," FGCU coach Dave Deiros said. "First and foremost, she can hit for power and average and runs extremely well – she will be an impact player on the field."

[WOMEN'S BASKETBALL]

After coming two points shy of winning an NCAA Tournament game last season, the FGCU women's basketball team is poised to make another significant postseason run.

The Eagles lost just one player, standout forward Sarah Hansen, to graduation. While Hansen graduated as the program's all-time leader in points, rebounds, steals and field goals, coach Karl Smesko believes the team has more than enough depth to reach the Big Dance this year.

"I don't know if anybody in particular can fill Sarah's shoes, but I think we have some players that are capable of developing and taking their games to the next level," Smesko said. "(Junior) Katie Meador and (redshirt freshman) Taylor Gradinjan are two players for whom we have very high expectations. Gradinjan is a great shooter and Katie is high-energy, good rebounder."

Hansen won the A-Sun Conference Player of the Year honors the last two years and spearheaded FGCU's memorable run. The Eagles won the conference title, then lost 61-60 in overtime to Oklahoma State in the 2014 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament first round.

"Hopefully, we will learn from that

experience and continue to improve," Smesko said. "I was proud of everything the team accomplished."

In the wake of the historic postseason run, Smesko said he scheduled one of the program's toughest nonconference schedules. FGCU will play Ohio State, Clemson, St. Joseph's, George Washington and Auburn, all of which made the NCAA Tournament or NIT last year.

[MEN'S BASKETBALL]

With senior point guard Brett Comer returning and four transfers eligible, the FGCU men's basketball team hopes to rediscover its Dunk City magic.

The Eagles will have six seniors and a total of 11 returning players in 2014-15, although 6-9 senior Filip Cvjeticanin will miss the season because of back surgery. Nonetheless, the experience and depth the team returns this year led ESPN's Joe Lunardi to predict FGCU will be a No. 15 seed in the 2015 NCAA Tournament. FGCU will be a strong favorite to win the A-Sun Conference because of the recent departures of Mercer and East Tennessee State to the Southern Conference.

Comer, who spearheaded FGCU's historic run to the Sweet 16 in 2013, will be asked to lead the team after the graduation of Chase Fieler. Coach Joe Dooley said he was proud of his players' development. The Eagles lost to host and No. 1-seeded Florida State 58-53 in the NIT last year.

"I'm looking forward to the future as I think we have some high-character guys," Dooley said.

UNLV transfer Demetris Morant is one of those players. The 6-foot-9 forward transferred to FGCU in May will be eligible this year after the NCAA granted a hardship waiver based on family reasons.

Redshirt freshman and 6-7 forward Logan Hovey is eligible after sitting out last year to repair a stress fracture. Guard Christian Terrell and 6-foot-11 sophomore

center Eric Moeller will also see their first action with FGCU. Guard Zach Johnson will sit out the year due to a medical problem.

[VOLLEYBALL]

Led by a new head coach and the return of eight players, FGCU's indoor volleyball team is expecting a top-notch season.

The school's sand volleyball team is also hungry for success after narrowly losing in the Atlantic Sun Conference Championship playoffs last season.

Matthew Botsford is coaching both teams after being hired by the school in February



Matthew Botsford

to replace former coach Dave Nichols. Botsford comes to Fort Myers after serving as an assistant coach at Colorado State, Notre Dame and Miami. Botsford hopes his indoor team improves

from last year when it went 14-19 overall and finished fourth in the A-Sun.

Along with academic all-conference honoree and senior setter Gigi Meyer, FGCU returns second-team all-conference middle blocker Olivia Mesner and former preseason libero of the year Whitney Masters, both also seniors. Mesner and Masters also play on the school's sand team.

"I'm happy about the direction we're going but it takes time, especially when you have so many indoor players that are doing (sand volleyball) for the first time," Botsford said. "But we have enough talent that if we keep working we can see the type of improvements that we expect."

[CROSS COUNTRY]

Having lost two of the most decorated runners in the program's history to graduation, the FGCU men's and

women's cross country teams will need new stars to step up.

Kelly Perzanowski and Argeo Cruz finished their collegiate careers as the fastest runners in school history. They led FGCU to the best results in program history at last year's NCAA South Region Championships. Perzanowski and Cruz finished in 14th and 25th place, respectively, while the men's team grabbed 17th place overall.

Now, the cross country teams will turn to other players on the roster. On the men's side, senior Austin Boetje and junior Nathan Kandie will be asked to take the lead. On the women's side, senior Alicen Wilbur and junior Courtney Corradetti will need to raise their games.

[SOCCER]

The FGCU men's and women's soccer teams will use last year's results for fuel this fall.

The men lost to North Florida 2-1 in the A-Sun Conference semifinals last season. The women fell to Jacksonville 5-3 in penalty kicks in the A-Sun Championship game. Both teams return a smorgasbord of talent.

The men, who have won four consecutive A-Sun regular season titles, will return all 24 players. Junior Felipe DeSousa, who had six goals last year, is expected to be one of the team's leaders.

"For us right now, we need to go back and start working on some things," FGCU men's coach Bob Butehorn said. "(Last year) was experience, we have a lot of young guys and it's a tough experience but it's experience."

The women, who have won four consecutive A-Sun regular season championships and captured two of the last three A-Sun postseason titles, will return 23 of 24 players. They are led by junior Ally Kasun, who was picked for the National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-Southeast Region Third Team last year.



Candela Munoz went 18-2 to lead the women's tennis team.

[SWIMMING AND DIVING]

After watching its five-year win streak of the Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association Championships come to an end last year, the FGCU swimming and diving team is inspired to bring back the championship hardware.

Sophomore Kira Toussaint is a major reason why the Eagles are a favorite to win the 2015 CCSA title. Toussaint was named FGCU's Swimmer of the Year in 2014 after she set eight FGCU program records, four individually and four as a member of a relay, and four CCSA records.

Toussaint also won the CCSA Swimmer of the Year and a spot on the Collegiate Swimming Coaches Association of America All-American Team after she placed seventh in the 100-yard backstroke at 2014 NCAA Championships.

[TENNIS]

After posting a historic season that saw him win 35 of 40 matches, FGCU senior Jordi Vives will try to take his program to new heights.

The Barcelona native ended his second campaign for the Eagles with an overall record of 35-5 after going 21-3 last spring. The 2014 A-Sun Conference Player of the Year was the first from FGCU to qualify

for the NCAA Championship and the first to receive an Intercollegiate Tennis Association national ranking. Vives ended last year ranked No. 55 in the nation.

On the women's side, another Spaniard is leading the program. Senior Candela Munoz, who is from Alicante, Spain, went 18-2 last year. Munoz's play helped FGCU register a program-high seven wins over A-Sun opponents and a Division-I best 14-8 overall record.

"(Munoz) has matured greatly since the fall and has worked extremely hard to become an unbelievable competitor," coach Courtney Vernon said.

[GOLF]

A year after posting a fourth-place finish at the A-Sun Conference Championships, FGCU senior golfer Georgia Price wants more.

Price led the Eagles with a seventh-place finish at last year's championship tournament. Price finished with a final score of 225, just one stroke out of the top five and four strokes behind the tournament's runner-up.

On the men's side, senior golfer Blake Biggs will be asked to lead. Biggs finished 22nd overall at the A-Sun Conference Championships.

— Chris Duncan

THE ARTS

► "Expressing the inexpressible"

[PHOTOGRAPHY]



Pictures with a purpose

Conservation photographer focuses on saving wild Florida.

SERENDIPITOUS SNAPSHOTS OF ROSEATE SPOONBILLS TAKING FLIGHT OR GIANT swallowtail butterflies landing on firebush shrubs are guaranteed to elicit oohs and ahhs from viewers. But for Carlton Ward Jr., pretty pictures just don't cut it. He wants his images of the great outdoors to express a viewpoint, trigger deeper thinking,

influence public opinion, inspire change.

Ward is a founding fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers.

"It's photography that empowers or enables conservation," he explains. "It's usually done in partnership with conservation organizations and in support of a specific conservation objective, such as protecting a landscape or native culture, or

inspiring the public to support legislation on behalf of the environment."

An eighth-generation Floridian, the Clearwater-based photographer has lately turned his lens on the fragmentation of the Sunshine State's natural habitat by development. That's part of what inspired him to go on a 100-day, 1,000-mile trek in 2012 through a patchwork of protected or private lands starting in Everglades



It's photography that empowers or enables conservation."

- CARLTON WARD JR., FOUNDING FELLOW OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHERS

National Park and ending at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on the Florida-Georgia border. This Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition spawned an award-winning book, a national PBS documentary and a nonprofit organization aiming to protect and restore connected landscapes to create a viable corridor through the length of the peninsula.

Six of Ward's images from the tour will be displayed Jan. 21 - April 15 in FGCU's Margaret S. Sugden Welcome Center. In the meantime, he plans to complete another expedition Oct. 11-Dec. 20, covering about 850 miles in 70 days from central Florida to the Panhandle.

As before, Ward and a team of biologists, conservationists and National Geographic explorers will hike, ride, paddle and wade their way through swamps, forests and ranches while documenting their experiences through photography, video streams, radio reports, live social media and digital networks. Along the way, they



"Everglades Egret" and
at left, "Ogeechee Tupelo"
by Carlton Ward Jr.

will promote the cause of preservation to the public, politicians and private landowners.

"I'm trying to advocate for keeping existing natural and agricultural areas connected as a continuous corridor as we develop the state," Ward says. "How we develop has great implications on nature. If we chop up the natural infrastructure into 1,000 different pieces separate from one another, nature loses its ability to function on its own."

Having lived along the developed Gulf coast and in the interior ranch country, Ward has a personal, wide-angle view of the bigger picture. Graduate studies in ecology and anthropology combined with a love of photography gave him the framework for expressing his viewpoint visually on issues such as preservation and groundwater depletion.

Chronicling endangered natural environments and cultural legacies has taken Ward to Africa, where he spent eight months documenting 400 species of animals and plants in the rain forests of Gabon. The result was his 2003 book, "The Edge of Africa." His work on endangered desert elephants in Mali graced the cover of Smithsonian magazine, and his 2009 book, "Florida Cowboys: Keepers of the Last Frontier," won a silver medal in the Florida Book Awards.

"Conservation organizations in the early 2000s maybe didn't appreciate the role and value of photography in advancing causes," Ward says. "I think photography has helped, along with the immediacy and reach of social media and image-based communications. If you can't show it, it's not real in some people's minds."

- Drew Sterwald

WARD ON WILDLIFE

► Photos from Carlton Ward's Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition will be on display Jan. 21 - April 15 at the Margaret S. Sugden Welcome Center at FGCU.

► Follow the Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition Oct. 11-Dec. 20 at www.floridawildlifecorridor.org; you can also donate to the nonprofit.

► Watch a YouTube video from the 2012 expedition at FLWildlifeCorridor.com.

► See more Carlton Ward photography at www.carltonward.com

ARTS CALENDAR

10/2 THURSDAY "Godspell"

8 p.m., TheatreZone partners with Bower School of Music & the Arts to present the popular Gospel-inspired musical. Continues at 8 p.m. 10/3-4, 2 p.m. 10/4 and 7:30 p.m. 10/5, TheatreLab, Arts Complex. Tickets \$45 at (888) 966-3352.

10/9 THURSDAY

"Yevgeniya Kaganovich: Possibility of Function"

5-8 p.m., Gallery talk and opening reception. Yevgeniya Kaganovich's first exhibition in Florida is a survey spanning 15 years of work exploring sculptural extensions of the body. Also includes a new installation using reclaimed plastic bags to create a landscape. Runs through 11/13, Main Gallery, Arts Complex.

"Self-Published: Artists Making Books, Editions and Zines"

5-8 p.m., Gallery talk and opening reception, Main Gallery. Artists with ties to South Florida are represented with a variety of media and installations highlighting artists' books as portable, intimate, democratic and self-contained works of art. Runs through 11/7 in ArtLab, with closing reception 5-8 p.m.

10/19 SUNDAY

"Vienna - 1784-1827"

3 p.m., Michael Baron and three guest musicians perform Mozart, Beethoven and Hummel. U.Tobe Recital Hall, Music Building. Tickets \$10 general admission, \$7 for students.

11/7 FRIDAY

"The Romancers"

7:30 p.m., A play about two youngsters whose parents wish them to marry. Continues at 7:30 p.m. 11/8 and 11/14-15, 2 p.m. 11/9 and 11/15-16, TheatreLab, Arts Complex. Tickets \$10 general admission, \$7 students.

12/2 TUESDAY

University & Chamber Choirs Holiday Concert

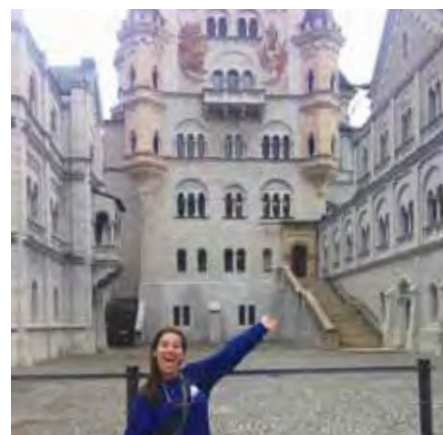
7:30 p.m., U. Tobe Recital Hall, Music Building.

12/4 THURSDAY

"Fall Senior Projects"

5-8 p.m., Opening reception with graduating artists. Runs through 12/12, Main Gallery, Arts Complex.

[MUSIC]



Choir makes musical journey of a lifetime

Visit to concentration camp, snow, historic churches among firsts for students.

IN SOMETHING OF THE FASHION OF THE FAMED von Trapp family singers of Austria, members of the Florida Gulf Coast University Choir sang their way through parts of Europe this spring.

Part travel adventure, part concert tour, the 11-day trip took the group to Innsbruck, Salzburg and Vienna, Austria, as well as Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.

It's the kind of experience Assistant Professor Trent Brown, who oversees choral activities at the Bower School of Music and the Arts, enjoys sharing with his students. He previously led a group of 300 high school band, choir and orchestra members to Beijing, so the logistics of getting 32 college students to Europe wasn't particularly daunting.

The trip cost \$3,900 per student. The group raised enough to cover 30 percent of



Top, left to right; Whitney Johnson enjoys the view of Salzburg from above at the 11th-century Fortress Hohensalzburg. Joey Giangreco in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and Kaitlynn Orlandi is in front of Neuschwanstein Castle in Schwangau, Germany.

Above: The choir members take a break while sightseeing.

At right: The FGCU Choir performs in Prague's St. Nicholas Church.

each student's expenses plus additional money for those who couldn't pay the rest on their own. They earned money from concerts they performed throughout the year at venues such as the Naples United Methodist Church and Moorings Presbyterian in Naples and First Baptist in downtown Fort Myers. Often those who enjoyed the concert would add personal contributions.

They even did something college students are known to abhor — arise before the sun.

In this case, it was to take part in an Easter sunrise service for the city of Fort Myers that began at 5:30 a.m.

"They were excited to sing for 2,000 people, and the honorarium helped us get to our goal," said Brown.

The multiple concerts were worth it, he says, because they made it possible to take everyone, instead of just those who could afford to pay.

"It was important to us and to our chair, Dr. Cathy Albergo (director, Center for the Arts, Bower School of Music)," he said.

In May, they set off for 11 days in Europe.

It wasn't simply a matter of showing up and performing, however. They had to submit audition tapes to be accepted to sing at each venue. Despite all the front-end work required, the results were worth it, Brown said.

Joey Giangreco, a senior music education major from Albany, N.Y., said, "We sang in some of the most prestigious venues in Austria and the Czech Republic. It's hard to even describe the feeling you get in those places. The acoustics, the sound gives you goose bumps. Our concert in St. Stephen's in Vienna, you felt the history behind it. It's the same church Mozart got married in and where his funeral was held. You felt his presence and that of a lot of other major composers."

Brown echoed that sentiment.

"To share the art we worked so hard to perfect over the course of the year was special," he said. "When the sound would echo off the church walls, it created chills. To be in places where some of this music was premiered and share with people who have so much access to music was special. The students were complimented for their musicianship and artistry. From a population that has such broad access to culture, it was very reassuring."

The program cut a broad swath through musical history and styles. The choir performed American folk songs, African-American spirituals, works by new American composers and even classics by Viennese composers like Johannes Brahms and Anton Bruckner.

There were a lot of firsts on this trip. For many, it was their first trip abroad. Some students had their first snow experience

when they took a cable car up a mountain in Innsbruck. They visited Mozart's birthplace and Neuschwanstein Castle (the one that Cinderella's digs are modelled after at Disney World), Hellbrunn Palace and the Trick Fountains in Salzburg, Vienna's Imperial Palace, the State Opera and Schonbrunn Palace. They shopped in 1,000-year-old buildings, ate Viennese pastries and soaked up the sights.



"If a tour guide said 'try this coffee, this cake, hot chocolate' – I tried it all," said senior music education major Whitney Johnson, of Sarasota.

Although she'd been on cruises and flown to a couple of places within the United States, it was her first trip abroad.

"I took so many pictures on my phone I couldn't even get voicemail," she said. "But it was worth being able to share. My mother has never done anything like that. Every night I'd share, and she'd live vicariously through me. It was worth every penny, every concert we sang before we got there."

The group spent part of a rainy day at Mauthausen Concentration Camp, where some 119,000 people perished, many of

them the educated people and members of the higher classes from countries occupied by Germany during World War II.

"The visit was very powerful," Brown said. "No student complained about the weather knowing they had jackets and umbrellas and were not forced into labor like the prisoners who had been there years before. To see the place where the Nazis would have prisoners play soccer

in propaganda displays and see the cliff where so many were pushed off by soldiers and forced to carry rocks up from the quarry to the crematoriums where the prisoners were executed, it was haunting and powerful. It made us all appreciate the freedoms that we have that much more and the opportunity to perform together and celebrate life.

"That night we sang at St. Stephen's (Cathedral) in Vienna. That was a meaningful performance, not just because of the location, but because of what we'd seen earlier that afternoon."

The trip served another purpose as well: It brought the group closer together.

"I learned a little German, but I also learned about compassion and friendship and relationships," said Kaitlynn Orlandi, a junior from Stuart majoring in elementary education who sings first soprano in the choir. "You get to know people at another level, and that was worth the trip alone. And it helps us to perform even better."

For Giangreco, the tour marked the end of his time in choir since he'll have to do his student teaching this year.

"It was a great way to end my chamber choir experience," he said. "Dr. Brown is an inspiration. We call ourselves a choir family and we really felt that way on the trip. Hopefully, we can all be friends forever, remembering the fun that we had."

– Karen Feldman

Private Equity Group donates 40 acres north of campus originally pledged by Alico

FORT MYERS-BASED PRIVATE EQUITY GROUP (PEG) HAS DONATED 40 ACRES to the Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation. Located north of the main campus, the land is intended for the university's expansion needs.

"Private Equity Group's gift provides a measure of flexibility for FGCU as we explore priorities and paths for future growth," said FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw. "Looking ahead, we will explore ways to maximize the potential of this valuable property."

The donated land lies in the southeastern corner of CenterPlace, a mixed-used development proposed by PEG on a 919-acre parcel purchased from Alico, Inc. in 2012. The 40-acre gift to FGCU, valued at \$7.7 million, was initiated by Alico and fulfilled by PEG.

"FGCU is an important asset to all of Southwest Florida, and we're pleased to support the university's future growth," said Donald Schrottenboer, president of real estate for PEG. "We look forward to creating synergy on many levels between CenterPlace and FGCU."

The group's plans call for the development south of Alico Road and east of Ben Hill Griffin Parkway to include a maximum of 1,950 multi-family residences, some of which would be targeted to support FGCU students, as well as a hotel and conference center, an office and research park, retail and entertainment outlets and 170 acres of parks and open spaces. CenterPlace would be connected to the FGCU campus by paths and a road, and classroom and event facilities would be made available to the university.

"While we have no immediate plans



Donald Schrottenboer, PEG president of real estate, Chris Simoneau, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation, and FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw.

for the land, it affords us options as we continue to grow," said Chris Simoneau, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation.

The company has submitted its development plans to Lee County and other permitting agencies for review. Pending approvals, land development would begin in 2015.

PEG is a private equity fund created nearly 30 years ago to manage a legacy of investments. The group works to grow its net worth through long-term capital appreciation of acquired assets. ■



\$2 million gift funds healthcare scholarships for Lehigh residents

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSOCIATION INC. (CHA), A PRIVATE NONPROFIT foundation based in Lehigh Acres, has been promoting health education and improving the quality of care in Southwest Florida for more than 45 years. In its final year, CHA has built on its legacy of scholarship funding at Florida Gulf Coast University with a \$2 million gift that will benefit its community as well as the healthcare field.

In 1998, the foundation established a tuition assistance endowment with the FGCU Foundation to support Lehigh Acres residents pursuing degrees in health-related fields. More than \$26,000 has been awarded to qualifying students from the earnings of that invested fund.

With the latest gift, CHA board members asked that the scholarships generated be meaningful to each student's individual circumstances. At a minimum, the need-based awards will help cover the costs of tuition, fees and books for students from Lehigh Acres who are in good academic standing. Priority will be given to students accepted into the School of Nursing or enrolled in other health-related degree programs within the College of Health Professions and Social Work or the College of Education.

"We are deeply grateful for CHA's long tradition of support as well as the board's foresight in anticipating the long-term needs of the community," FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw

said. "These scholarships will make a significant impact on the personal and professional lives of our students while producing skilled graduates to meet regional workforce demands."

By providing students with financial assistance and meaningful encouragement, CHA plays a vital role in ensuring their success at FGCU and in the professional world, according to Mitchell L. Cordova, professor and dean of the College of Health Professions and Social Work.

"For many students, the cost of education is a difficult hurdle to overcome. With scholarships, dedicated students are better able to focus on learning and becoming the best healthcare professionals they can be," Cordova said. "It's not only the students and college that benefit, but also the healthcare industry and all of the community members it serves."

Belinda Celestin, a recipient of the Community Health Association Scholarship for three years, sent CHA a letter expressing sincere appreciation and sharing the excitement she felt upon being accepted in the School of Nursing in 2013.

"That day will be forever ingrained in my memory due to all the emotions I was feeling: happy, ecstatic, disbelief, dreamlike and just an all-encompassing reality that I would finally get to start the process of becoming what I want to be for the rest of my life," she wrote. "In my wildest dreams I never really thought I would get to become an actual nurse." ■



University veterans get a room of their own

THE CORTESE-ST. ANGELO VETERANS' ROOM OFFICIALLY OPENED IN March in Room 333 of the FGCU Library, giving

students, faculty and staff who have previously served in the military a place to study, chat, rest and relax.

The room bears a plaque that reads, "Presented in memory of all heroes in the Armed Forces."

FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw said the room adds a new dimension to campus life for veterans here but does even more than that.

"Our effort to facilitate and enrich the education of our military veterans here at FGCU contributes to a statewide goal to be the most veteran-friendly state in the country," Bradshaw said.

"The Cortese-St. Angelo family was humbled to name a room in the family's honor," according to a family spokesperson. "Many of the family members have served in the armed forces and were proud to serve their country. It's just a small gesture to say thank you and show support to our veterans."

The family's generous donation establishes the Veterans' Endowment Fund. Each year, the university's provost will designate proceeds from the fund to be used for projects that support veterans at FGCU. ■

Knupps add gift annuity to their legacy at FGCU

LIKE MANY DONORS WHO FUND SCHOLARSHIPS, JIM AND LYNN KNUPP of Naples have found great satisfaction in getting to know some of the recipients and watching them grow into successful graduates.

"We have had some outstanding scholars we still stay in touch with and have a relationship with. We want the best for them in life," says Jim Knupp, an emeritus member of the FGCU Foundation Board of Directors. "There was one who was working two part-time jobs and managed to do 200 hours of service-learning while going to school. She was bound to be a leader."

Indeed, some years later Knupp discovered this alumna was a local rising star at BB&T Corp., the financial services company.

"This past year, we had a student who was elected to the FGCU Hall of Fame, the highest recognition given to students at FGCU who demonstrate leadership, service and academic excellence," he adds.

To ensure that the James F. and Lynn E. Knupp Scholarship Endowed Fund continues to produce such success stories, the Knupps recently added a charitable gift annuity to their legacy at FGCU. It's just the latest contribution from a couple who have supported programs such as First Generation Matching Grants, the President's Celebration and



Jim and Lynn Knupp

other events. A retired investment consultant, Jim Knupp also serves on the Lutgert College of Business Advisory Council.

Although they both attended private colleges and support their alma maters, the Knupps have made FGCU a priority in their giving.

"A lot of kids here would not even be in college, the First Generation students in particular, if not for scholarships," Jim Knupp says. "We find giving tremendously fulfilling. We want to be part of something that helps kids get ahead." ■

Rumble scholarship fund to support student-athletes

SPORTS HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN GAIL RUMBLE'S life, so naturally she chose to help FGCU's student-athletes when she made a deferred gift that will establish the Gail Brinker Rumble Scholarship Fund.

"When I was growing up in northern New Jersey, the Yankees, Dodgers and Giants were all still in New York City," she says. "Each family rooted for one of these teams. Mine rooted for the Yankees, and I still do. I also root for the Chicago White Sox when Chris Sale is pitching."

In addition to following the former FGCU ace, Rumble attends Eagles

baseball games and has been cheering on the men's basketball team since before it achieved "Dunk City" fame.

"It's nice to have a home team to cheer for," says Rumble.

Knowing that FGCU's alumni base is smaller and younger compared to more established universities, the Fort Myers resident decided she could do more than serve as a cheerleader. She could make a difference in student-athletes' lives by creating a scholarship fund.

"Many graduates are developing their own careers and not yet in a position to make major gifts or planned gifts," she says. "It made sense to leave part of my estate to the university."

FGCU's teams would hardly be thriving

without enthusiastic support from people like Rumble. Scholarships help FGCU attract and assist accomplished student-athletes and allow them to concentrate on academics and athletics. In 2013-14, Eagle athletes posted an impressive 3.32 cumulative GPA while winning five Atlantic Sun Conference regular season championships.

Still, many of FGCU's teams haven't even reached their NCAA-allowed scholarship levels.

"I know how important scholarships are to a growing university," says Rumble, a retired high school teacher and active board member of FGCU's Town and Gown. "I'm impressed with the GPAs of our student-athletes and want to encourage them and offer financial assistance. No student should be unable to try out for a team because he or she can't afford a pair of athletic shoes." ■



Gail Rumble

“The annual President’s Scholarship Luncheon is one of the most positive experiences you can have. The university shows off its best assets – its students.”
- JIM KNUPP, EMERITUS FGCU FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

College of Education welcomes Hunter Institute on Young Children

AN INSTITUTE DEDICATED TO IMPROVING early childhood education and researching how children learn relocated this fall to Florida Gulf Coast University.

The Hunter Institute on Young Children was established in 2007 at The College at Brockport, a campus of the State University of New York system. Its mission is to enhance the growth and development of children through quality pre-school and elementary education and to promote professional development among teachers and care providers.

The Hunter Institute will be administered by FGCU’s College of Education and will sponsor an annual conference, as well as an annual symposium of experts, both focusing on issues surrounding young children. Jill Sherman has been named director.

The institute also will sponsor the keynote speakers at the fourth annual Children’s Mental Health Conference presented Saturday, Nov. 1, by FGCU’s Institute of Government: Patricia Konjoian and Gina Gallagher, authors of “Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid! A Survival Guide for Ordinary Parents of Special Kids.”

The conference aims to raise awareness of the consequences of untreated mental health disorders in children and adolescents. Half of all lifetime cases of mental disorders begin by age 14, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, and only 20 percent of children with mental disorders are identified and receive health services,



Judy and Willard Hunter

as reported by the U.S. Public Health Services.

Willard and Judy Hunter of Bonita Springs, longtime benefactors of The College at Brockport, funded the Hunter Institute’s creation through a charitable remainder trust (CRT) and a charitable gift annuity (CGA) and continue to support its mission at FGCU.

“We purposely funded this institute with a CRT and a CGA so we can be involved in its growth while guaranteeing

its long-term future and success,” said Wil Hunter. He is the retired president and CEO of Optem, a Rochester-based custom optical instrument design and manufacturing company he co-founded in 1984 following a 19-year career with Bausch and Lomb Inc. He was a member of The Brockport Foundation Board for 17 years, serving as its chairman from 2001 to 2003.

Judy Hunter, a pre-school teacher for 20 years until her retirement in 1999, knows firsthand the issues that educators face and the value of engaging children in learning early in life.

“We hope the work of the institute will result in a better understanding of how young children learn and how to help them in the classroom,” she said. “Pre-school education is critically important to a child’s future. If we can teach young children to be comfortable in the classroom, they will gain significant self-esteem and will be able to accomplish virtually any goal they set for themselves academically, physically and socially.”

The institute represents a significant asset for FGCU and the community, according to Jane McHaney, interim dean of the College of Education.

“The Hunter Institute and the College of Education will work together to provide professional development opportunities to early childhood professionals and parents,” she said. “We want to help caregivers, teachers and parents understand the key components of a quality care and learning environment based on best practices and the latest available research on early learning.” ■

LEARN MORE

The Children’s Mental Health Conference is 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 1, in the Cohen Center Ballroom. For registration information, call the FGCU Institute of Government at (239) 425-3279.



Braxton and Jill Rhone

Alumni couple establish endowed scholarship for high achievers

BRAXTON AND JILL RHONE ARE BIG BELIEVERS IN A COLLEGE EDUCATION. And, as proud and successful FGCU alumni, they also are keenly aware of the importance of supporting their alma mater.

The couple recently created the Rhone Family Foundation Scholarship Endowed Fund, which will provide scholarships to juniors or seniors with GPAs of at least 3.75 and who demonstrate leadership in school activities.

"We thought it was only right to do something for the university that's done so much for us," says Braxton Rhone ('06, Business Management).

He enjoys a career as a financial advisor, currently working for Fidelity Investments. Although he struggled academically in high school, Braxton Rhone gained admission to FGCU, promising to work hard. He fulfilled that pledge, earning a 3.46 GPA and serving as Student Government treasurer and vice president. He currently serves on

the Florida SouthWestern State College Board of Trustees as well.

Jill earned a bachelor's in 2007 and a master's in 2008, both in social work. She recently was named director of admissions at Bishop Verot Catholic High School.

"We believe in giving back to the community," she says. "We are hoping more alumni will see this and feel motivated to give back to the university as well in some way, whether it's through a donation or by volunteering or sharing their experiences with students."

Lindsey Touchette ('05, Communication), FGCU director of major gifts, says remaining engaged with the university after graduation benefits both alumni and future students.

"The Rhones have exemplified this through both personal and financial involvement," she says. "Their generosity will leave a lasting legacy that will enable future Eagles to excel as students and go on to fulfilling careers just as the Rhones did." ■

Scholarship honors attorney who loved to learn

CARL J SUEDHOFF JR. WAS A WORLD WAR II VETERAN, ATTORNEY, AND BUSINESSMAN who was ardent in the pursuit of learning throughout his life.

He attended West Point after serving in Europe during the war. He was a graduate of the Wharton School of Finance and the University of Michigan Law School.

Carl and Carol Suedhoff raised their three sons in Fort Wayne, Ind., where Carl specialized in corporate law and medical malpractice litigation. He and his father co-founded Inland Chemical Corporation, a pioneer in the industrial chemical recycling industry. He took an active part in his community, including the YMCA, the local veteran post, and served several terms as president of the Allen County Council.

The Suedhoffs began visiting Naples in the 1960s, eventually becoming winter residents. Carl Suedhoff died in 2005 at age 80, but his wife continues to winter in Naples.

Ilona Box, a member of the FGCU Foundation's Planned Giving Council and vice president of investments at Raymond James in Naples, serves as an investment advisor for The Suedhoff Memorial Trust. When the family asked her for suggestions for beneficiaries of the fund, she told them about the state's First Generation Scholarship program for students who are the first in their families to attend college. The trust managers thought it was an excellent program, especially since the state provides matching funds.

The trustees subsequently decided to create the Carl J Suedhoff Scholarship Endowed Fund, which will be awarded to first generation FGCU students. The gift honors a man who loved to learn, and would be proud of helping others who might not have the opportunity of attending college without financial assistance. ■

Alumni-owned Atilus donates bitcoin to create scholarship fund

ATILUS, THE BONITA SPRINGS-BASED WEB DESIGN AND INTERNET marketing company owned and operated by two FGCU alumni, has created an endowed scholarship fund with the first donation of bitcoin to the university.

Atilus President and CEO Zachary “Zach” Katkin and Director of Operations Harry Casimir created the Atilus Bitcoin Scholarship Fund with a pledge to donate \$25,000, half in the form of bitcoin. While the digital currency is increasingly being used to purchase goods and services, the donation to a university is among the first of its kind.

The scholarship will be awarded to rising juniors or seniors with grade point averages of at least 2.75; who demonstrate leadership; have completed, or are enrolled in, a university sanctioned internship; and

who demonstrate financial need.

“Harry and I started our company at FGCU and we both received an education centered on technology,” said Katkin (’07, Liberal Studies). “Atilus owes a lot to the university and we thought the idea of giving back using the future of money – bitcoin – would be the perfect union of philanthropy, technology and our alma mater. Giving back is one thing, but giving back in a meaningful way that furthers the discipline in which one was educated – and helps advance the institution of which many of us at Atilus are the products – is even better!”

Casimir (’05, Computer Information Services) added that he feels fortunate to be able to establish a scholarship at his alma mater at such a young age.



“We have found there are many ways to give back and stay connected to the university,” he said. “One way is to make a multi-year gift, which is what we did, and which quickly adds up.”

Bitcoin is a global decentralized form of digital currency widely used on the Internet for secure monetary exchanges. It can be exchanged and converted into cash.

“We are proud to accept this generous and innovative donation that will enable future generations of students to gain educations,” says Christopher Simoneau, vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation. “It is especially rewarding that the gift comes from successful alumni who launched their business while they were still students at FGCU.”

In addition to leading Atilus, Katkin is involved in a variety of community organizations and was named the 2012 Alumnus of Distinction by the FGCU Alumni Association. He is on the board for Voices for Kids and is also active in the FGCU Alumni Association, Literacy Council Gulf Coast and Possible Dreams International, among others.

Casimir, a decorated veteran of both the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars, is also CEO and founder of Dixivox, SA, a company he co-founded after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to provide voice and short message service solutions to the country in which he was born and raised. He serves as chairman-elect of the FGCU Alumni Association and is on the board for the Literacy Council Gulf Coast. ■

Atilus President and CEO Zachary Katkin and Director of Operations Harry Casimir.



SOCIAL CIRCLE

Stay in touch with FGCU via all of our online networks

FACEBOOK

Like **Florida Gulf Coast University** and **FGCU Alumni Association** to connect with FGCU and share in the accomplishments of the university community.

TWITTER

Follow **@FGCU** and **@FGCUAlumni** to keep up with the latest buzz around “Dunk City” and spread the word to your followers.

YOUTUBE

Subscribe to the **Florida Gulf Coast University** channel to watch what’s happening on campus.

INSTAGRAM

Follow **FGCU** and **FGCUAlumni** and (♥) your favorite Eagle pix.

LINKED IN

Connect with **FGCU Alumni Association** to network with grads and discover professional opportunities.

FGCU ON THE WEB

- ▶ Click to the Pinnacle website at **www.fgcupinnacle.com** to find news updates, photo galleries, video extras and a calendar of upcoming events.
- ▶ Get involved with the FGCU Alumni Association at **www.fgcu.edu/alumni**
- ▶ Learn more about supporting scholarships and other gift giving through the FGCU Foundation at **www.fgcu.edu/foundation**



CLASS NOTES

► This world is but canvas
to our imaginations

► '01

Matthew Johnson

History major makes mark on city.

HIS INNATE INTEREST IN THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURES DREW MATTHEW JOHNSON ('01) to major in history, and to his initial employment with the City of Fort Myers 13 years ago. Considering the visionary influence he's had on all of the city's cultural attractions, Johnson is playing his own part in the history and future of the city itself.

Upon graduation, Johnson was enlisted by a former professor to become educator and historian for the Southwest Florida Museum of History. Johnson took the job but had his sights set on Stetson University College of Law. He was soon asked to step in as interim general manager. "I decided I would try it. I thought, 'You can always go to law school,' right?" he says.

Alas, it was an ideal fit. "It combined several of my passions and there was something new every day," he says.

A year later, the mayor called. The Imaginarium Science Center was on the brink of closure due to financial insolvency. Johnson analyzed the operations and merged the staffs of both facilities, becoming GM of both.

The 1901 Burroughs Home & Gardens and 1919 Langford-Kingston Home also fell into his purview within the Department of Cultural and Historical Affairs, and he negotiated leases for their daily operations with two nonprofits with strong ties to local heritage.

Despite what may seem like multiple full-time jobs, the 6-foot-4 Johnson finds time to be a doting single father to 7-year-old Halston, who was crowned this year as Junior King of the Edison Festival,



Matt Johnson finds satisfaction in managing multiple Fort Myers attractions.

a tradition dating to 1938, and also a devoted mentor to his 14-year-old former stepson, Christian.

Leigh Scrabis, deputy director of the Fort Myers Redevelopment Agency, who's worked with Johnson on multiple projects, appreciates his unflappable demeanor. "He has a calm presence that instills confidence in people, and he has a reassuring way of educating people," she says. The city's amenities "work together to round out the downtown experience," and she says he understands the synergy needed to pull together disparate stakeholders, and to meld marketing and social media to wrap up the destination cohesively.

Johnson's biggest challenge came

when he was asked to become interim general manager of the 42,000-square-foot Harborside Event Center – the city's crown jewel for hosting more than 285 annual events. He now oversees 33 employees among the three facilities. He also is a point man with staff and officials as the city plans \$10 million in extensive renovations to the 23-year-old center and negotiates a \$60 million hotel project.

When his tenure at Harborside is completed, Johnson, 39, will turn to developing the Imaginarium campus into a cultural resources and educational hub, and transforming the museums into self-sustaining nonprofits. "It's been a fun ride," says Johnson. "They've thrown enough challenges at me to keep it interesting."

– Cathy Chestnut

► '05

Lindsey Touchette

Alumna's love for university blossoms into career.

LINDSEY TOUCHETTE HAS COME FULL CIRCLE AT FGCU.

First, she was a student, graduating in 2005 with a major in communication and a minor in art. After a short stint as art director for a Naples firm, she took a job at FGCU with Career Services, then became director of alumni, helping other graduates connect with the university.

Last spring, she became director of major gifts, and now raises money so that others can gain a college education at the institution she's come to love.

Where her previous job focused on growing alumni involvement with the university, her current one continues that effort and aims to grow the larger community's involvement and support so that more people have the chance to attend college.

"Money shouldn't be a barrier to someone pursuing his or her dreams," she says.

Having been a student in FGCU's early days afforded her the opportunity to help shape student life. In the process, she developed tools she needed to be successful in her professional life.

"I was able to test and put into practice what I was learning in the classroom as a communication major," she says. "I was involved with Delta Delta Delta sorority and took on leadership positions, focusing on recruiting, memberships and engagement of prospective and currently involved members, putting into practice concepts I was learning."

She also learned more life skills as a student worker in Auxiliary Services,



Lifelong Naples resident Lindsey Touchette found a rewarding career at FGCU.

which handled a broad range of tasks, giving her a chance to see the many aspects of what it takes to keep a university running.

"I got a taste of what higher education was all about," she says. "And I got a taste of the entrepreneurial side of the

university. I'd get a new project, do the research, figure out how to do it and then make it happen."

She calls upon all of those skills and experiences today as she tackles the task of raising money for FGCU.

Touchette says one of her favorite parts of the job is working with students and making it possible for them achieve their goals.

"Seeing the amazing things the students are doing, having the opportunity to work with them and having a hand in what's going to make them successful in the future is very satisfying," she says. "Many are so talented. Sometimes the one thing standing between them and their aspirations is \$1,000

and I have the opportunity to help them.

"Down the road that person might end up being the president of the United States," she says. "To know I played a part in that is so rewarding."

The Naples native and her husband, Nate ('05, Marketing), live in Naples and are raising young twins that they hope will someday be Eagles, too.

[WEDDINGS, ENGAGEMENTS AND BIRTHS]

'05

Melissa Cunningham, (Master's, Social Work), married Jon Phillips, owner of CaterMasters, on May 15.

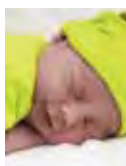
'06

Ashley Harris (English), and **Dan Harris**, '06 (Master's, Accounting & Taxation), welcomed their first child, Christopher Daniel, on May 23. He weighed 7 pounds, 4 ounces and was 20.5 inches long.



'07

Victoria Ellison, (Master's, Accounting & Taxation) and Jonathan Ellison welcomed the birth of their second son, Austin William, on May 12. He weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces and was 19.5 inches long.



'08

Tiffany Hovanec, (Human Performance) and **Andrew Hovanec**, '12 (Physical Therapy), welcomed their first child, Jase, in April.

Nicole Schmitt, (Marketing), married Sean Russ on May 17 at Pelican Nest Golf Club. She is the director of events and special projects at FGCU.



'13

Janet Tamayo, (Civil Engineering), and **Steven Michael Jones**, '10 (Management), were married April 26 in Miami Beach. Janet works at David Plummer & Associates; and Steven works at TEN: The Enthusiast Network.

[NEWSMAKERS]

'98

Crystal Drake, (Secondary Education), was appointed by Gov. Rick Scott to the Glades County Commission Board. She is also a teacher with the Glades County School District.



'02

Jamie B. Schwinghamer, (Social Sciences), has been appointed to the board of directors for Voices for Kids of Southwest Florida, Inc., which supports programs representing abused, neglected and abandoned children in court, school, the child welfare system and the community. She is employed as a litigation attorney with Hahn Loeser & Parks, LLP.



'03

Stephen Daugherty, (Master's, Business Administration), is the new chief executive officer at Coliseum Northside Hospital in Macon, Ga.

Heidi Hoyt, (Communication), was interviewed by the Alzheimer's Network for her thesis, "The Use of Social Support by Spouses of Alzheimer's Patients to Improve Communication," and the poem she wrote for her father, "In a World Called Perfect."



Jan-Erik Hustrulid, (Computer Information Systems), has been selected to serve on the board of directors for The Heights Foundation and The Heights Center, nonprofit organizations that work to build strong, self-sufficient families in the Harlem Heights neighborhood.

'05

Catherine Mummert, (Master's, Business Administration), received a diploma in June from the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University, receiving the certificate for academic excellence. She was recently promoted to assistant vice president and credit department manager at Encore Bank in Naples.

New Alumni Relations director launching regional clubs

As the new director of Alumni Relations, Kimberly (Williams) Wallace ('06, B.A., Communication; '09, M.A., School Counseling) has a head start on expanding efforts to keep graduates connected to FGCU and one another.

She was instrumental in developing the new online community for alumni that launched this summer; she is firming up plans to establish Alumni Association clubs and chapters in cities and regions outside Southwest Florida; and she is spearheading University Advancement efforts to cultivate philanthropy among FGCU's 20,000-plus graduates.



Kim Wallace

"Our alumni are reaching the point where they understand the value of staying connected and giving back to the university," Wallace says.

Formerly coordinator of alumni programming and interim director of Alumni Relations, Wallace has been an integral part of the department since she served as a graduate assistant in 2006. She received her latest appointment in June.

"Being an alum myself, it's exciting to be able to help my association grow," she says.

A one-stop, comprehensive platform for social and professional engagement, the new online community enables alumni to network with other grads in their geographic area or in their profession, locate friends and classmates, search for career opportunities, renew membership in the Alumni Association, make a financial contribution to FGCU and stay up to date on the latest alumni activities and campus news. To register, go to alumni.fgcu.edu.

"It's a valuable asset for making and maintaining connections among people with common history and shared interests," Wallace says.

With FGCU awarding its 20,000th degree last spring, Eagle alums are a growing presence outside Southwest Florida. To help unite them, Wallace plans to launch clubs or chapters in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Tampa, Sarasota and Fort Lauderdale. If you're interested in organizing a new group or joining an established one, contact Wallace at (239) 590-1087 or kwallace@fgcu.edu. ■

CLASS NOTES

(continued from previous page)

'06

Ivy Brewer, (Master's, Educational Leadership), was recently elected to the board of directors of the Southern Association for College Admission Counseling.

Brittany Carson, (Nursing), became chief nursing officer at Lake Wales Medical Center.

Nicole Luicci, (Spanish), was named principal of Renaissance Charter School of St. Lucie. She recently served as assistant principal for the Duval Charter School at Arlington in Jacksonville.



Allison Wickman, (Elementary Education), graduated with her master's in Reading and Literacy from the University of South Florida in May 2013. She teaches at the American School of Madrid.



'10

Kayla Lynn Dacosta-Avery, (Management, Entrepreneurship), was named director of sales for the Courtyard and Residence Inn Denver South Park Meadows in Englewood, Colo.



Andrea Fortin, (English), was named chair of the digital-media baccalaureate program at Hodges University. She also teaches at Hodges University.

'11

Natalie Ashby, (Master's, Criminal Forensic Studies), was appointed a deputy trainee by the Collier County Sheriff's Office, and sworn in on May 6.

Brittani Earl, (Criminal Forensic Studies), recently graduated from Bellevue University with a master's degree in public administration. She lives in Arkansas, where she is the family and community partnership manager at Arkansas Early Learning, Inc.



'07

John Gully, (History), is the new athletic director at Bishop Verot Catholic High School in Fort Myers.

'08

Bennet Hammer, (Master's, Business Administration), recently graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a Ph.D. in Information Systems with a concentration in Information Security. His work has been presented at various conferences in the United States and published in the conference proceedings.



Victoria Loyola, (Master's, Accounting & Taxation), passed the examination to become a certified healthcare business consultant and is working at Markham Norton Mosteller Wright & Company.

'09

Jason Becker, (Professional Golf Management), is the president and co-founder of Golf Membership Consultants. His company consists of golf professionals, real estate agents, financial planners, tax attorneys and industry experts who guide their clients through the club selection process.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CALENDAR

10/25 SATURDAY

Make a Difference Day

Join current students, faculty, staff, alumni and Wells Fargo employees by volunteering in Southwest Florida. Service projects include gardening, painting, packing groceries, walking shelter dogs, clearing nature trails and more at organizations in Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Naples.

Want to make a difference in your community? Email alumnirelations@fgcu.edu to register your service project.

'12

Ana Abella, (Music Performance), is the new teacher for the 3-year-old classroom at Sanibel Christian Preschool.



John Colagiovanni, (Criminal Justice Studies), also known as "Deputy Cola," was honored by the Lee County Sheriff's Office as officer of the month, after apprehending a robber on Jan. 13.

Meredith Dyer, (Psychology), recently joined Royal Shell Real Estate in Fort Myers.

Tiffany Esposito-Kittinger,

(Master's, Business Administration), graduated from the Institute of Organization Management, a four-year nonprofit leadership training program. She was recently promoted to vice president of the Bonita Springs Area Chamber of Commerce.



Veronica Larriva, (Master's, Accounting and Taxation), is a certified public accountant at McHale, Caruso, Scullion & Knox in Fort Myers.



'13

Peter Cuderman, (Master's, Business Administration), started a watch company called Washington Mount Vernon.

Brandon Dignam, (Management), earned his Florida General Lines Insurance license. He is a principle owner and agent with Key Agency, Inc. insurance in Englewood.



Levi Dill, (Management), earned his Florida General Lines Insurance license and Florida Life, Health & Variable Annuities license. He is an agent with Key Agency, Inc. insurance in North Port.

'14

David Estrada, (Finance), recently joined the Ted Todd Insurance Agency in Fort Myers/Lehigh Acres as a customer service representative.

Robert J. McGinnis, (Civil & Environmental Engineering), is employed at Forge Engineering.

SEND US YOUR NEWS

Email to alumnirelations@fgcu.edu or mail to: Florida Gulf Coast University,
Attention: Alumni Relations, 10501 FGCU Blvd. S., Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565

►'11

Falia Justima

Faith in her vision spurred alumna to take work from book to film.

FALIA JUSTIMA WAS 12 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE TOLD HER PARENTS THAT SHE HAD met her future husband. The young Haitian girl had talked to 19-year-old Jean Bernard Justima for the first time while he performed at a local concert in Antoine-Ville, Haiti. Despite their age difference, the two became great friends, staying in touch even when Jean moved to the New York.

At 18, Falia moved to Florida and enrolled at Florida Gulf Coast University. Jean flew south to take her on a date. They married a year later and she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Legal Studies in 2011.

For six years, the couple socialized with a group of married friends that gathered weekly. But then things changed. Infidelity and anger tore the group apart. Although the Justimas made it through, the friends parted ways and Justima felt inspired to share her experience.

While studying for her master's degree in Public Administration and working as a full-time educator for the Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board, she wrote in her spare time. The result was her novel, "Mea Culpa," Latin for "My Fault." Friends urged her to make it into a movie. When she could find no backers, she decided to create and fund the project herself with her savings.

"I looked for locations for each scene, gathered costumes and set designs," Justima says. "Every time we got something I had to wait for more funds to come in from my next paycheck. All the cost was on me. We could only do one weekend at a time because I have a young



Falia Justima wrote and stars in the movie "Mea Culpa."

daughter, I was in school full-time and I worked full time. Plus I acted, produced and co-directed."

It took five years to make the film. Co-stars include her husband and friends, and all scenes were filmed in the greater Southwest Florida area, including the FGCU campus. President Wilson G. Bradshaw allowed for a premiere of the movie to be shown on university grounds, which Justima credits for her early success.

Some 1,500 people have seen the movie so far at private showings. Although Justima has not gathered the funds to

distribute the movie nationwide, it has been nominated by The Motion Picture Association of Haiti as one of the best films of 2013. In June, she was voted Best Actress for the Nollywood and African Film Critics' Awards, which will be announced in Hollywood this September.

"It just feels surreal right now," Justima says. "When I started I didn't think it would go any further than here. People told me it couldn't be done. They made it seem impossible. I knew it would take a lot of work. My main focus was not to be recognized but to start and finish something. But to actually see it becoming more fruitful, well, there are no words to describe that."

— Tiara Brown

Feathering the nest



FRESHMAN BRANDON CUNNINGHAM WAS AMONG the 2,291 first-year students to move into the five residence halls in South Village at the start of the fall semester. Cunningham is one of the first students to occupy the brand-new six-story Eagle Hall. Photographer Brian Tietz took this photo as Cunningham and other freshmen toted clothing, computers and wide-screen TVs from cars to rooms just three days before the start of classes. ■

PARTING SHOT is a forum for essays, photos and art that present a unique, personal perspective. Submit material for consideration to Pinnacle Editor Karen Feldman at kfeldman@fgcu.edu or call (239) 590-7093.

The benefits of a **CHARITABLE BEQUEST**

A charitable bequest is an easy way to help Florida Gulf Coast University and enjoy personal benefits at the same time. Here are some of the benefits of bequest giving:

- ▶ It costs you nothing today to make a bequest.
- ▶ A bequest is free of federal estate tax.
- ▶ Your bequest can be changed down the road.
- ▶ You can still benefit your heirs with specific gifts.
- ▶ A bequest may produce estate tax savings.
- ▶ You can leave a legacy through a bequest.

To learn more
about bequest giving,
contact **Bill Rice**,
director of gift planning,
at (239) 590-1077
or brice@fgcu.edu



ARE YOU CONNECTED ?

The FGCU Alumni Association is excited to announce our new website and online community designed just for you and fellow graduates. When you log in, you will be able to access new job postings, use the alumni directory, view and submit photos, share class notes and much more. Visit alumni.fgcu.edu and start exploring today.



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