

FGCU 360

FGCU360.COM

Basketball teams rev up
for another red-hot season

Celebrating two decades
of learning, service

Club searches for
cancer cures



THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

President Mike Martin
leads university in
new direction

FALL 2017

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Photo by James Greco





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FIRST

HURRICANE IRMA

University rises to meet challenge of storm's fury

Campus serves as haven for students, area residents

FLORIDA GULF COAST University administrators, faculty and staff worked feverishly to prepare for what looked like a monster Category 5 storm the week after Labor Day.

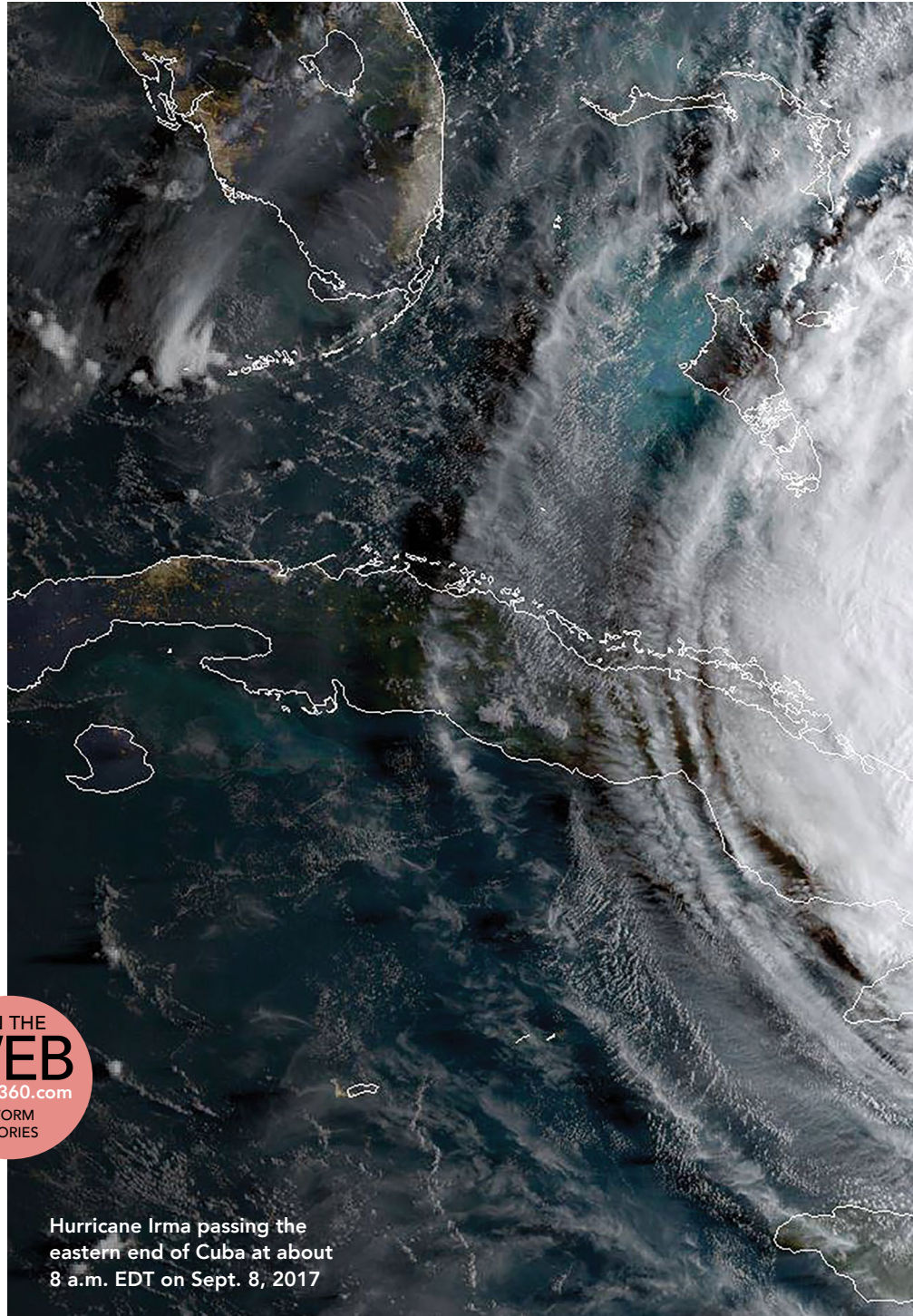
By Sept. 10, the university had transitioned to a safe haven, housing 200 students who couldn't leave, along with 1,500 area residents and their 200 pets.

With the National Guard, Red Cross and other emergency personnel on duty and prepared for the worst, the worst didn't happen. The storm lost steam over Cuba and came through with less force and without the catastrophic storm surge that had been predicted.

The campus escaped with minor damage to Lutgert Hall and a host of downed trees. FGCU was back in business within 10 days, a palpable sense of relief replacing the chaos and anxiety brought on by the storm.

MORE STORIES ONLINE

- ▶ Staff, volunteers care for evacuees plus pets
- ▶ WGCU Public Media provides 24/7 storm coverage
- ▶ Emergency operation manager assists in lifesaving effort



Hurricane Irma passing the eastern end of Cuba at about 8 a.m. EDT on Sept. 8, 2017

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
STORM
STORIES

“

**The FGCU spirit of service surfaced everywhere.
It was an impromptu community where people
pitched in where needed.**

”

RUTH RODRIGUES, DIRECTOR,
FGCU CAMPUS RESERVATIONS AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

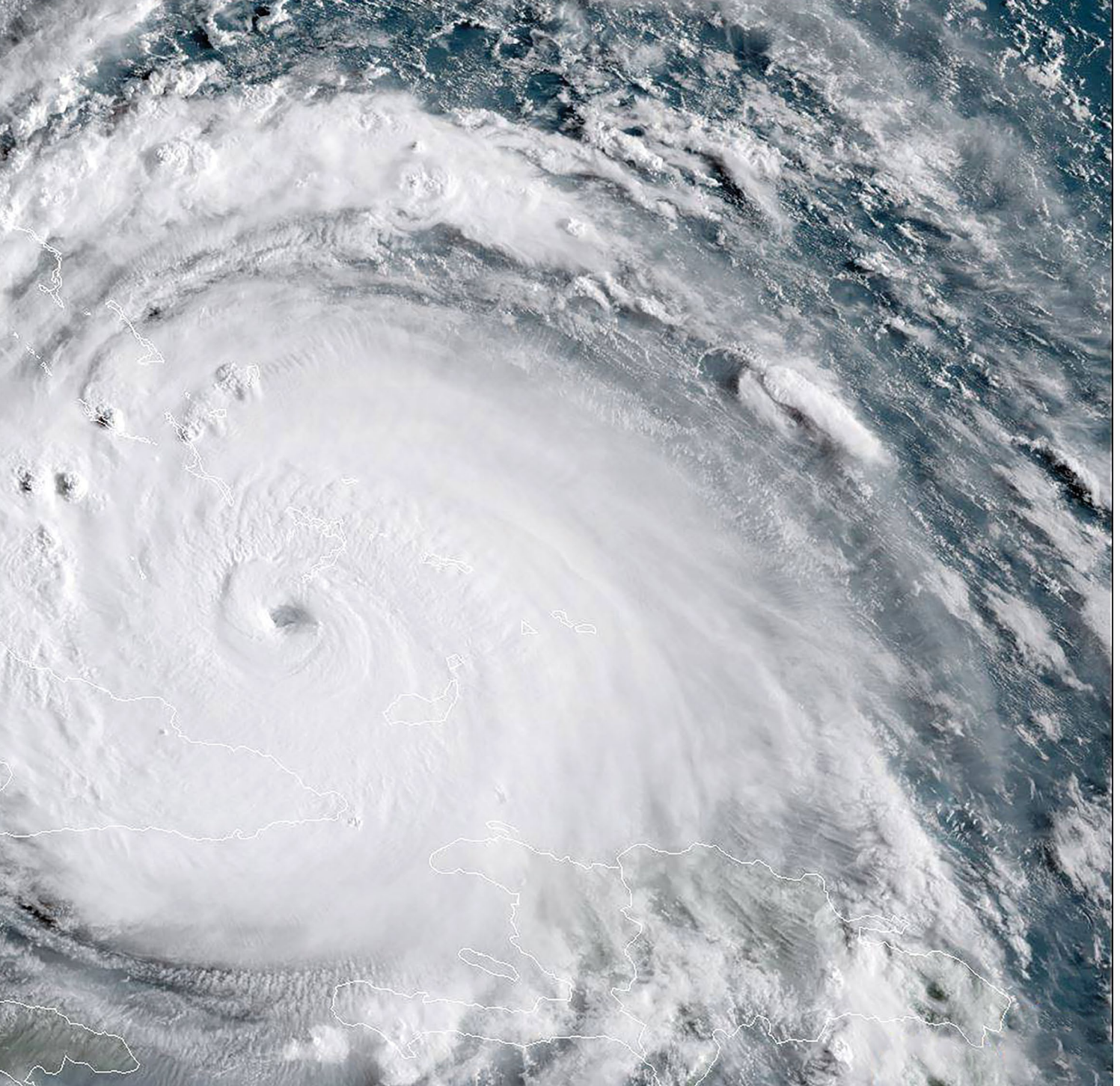


PHOTO BY NOAA/CIRA

COMMUNITY

Putting the bite on Zika

Students' education campaign targets at-risk women / **BY KAREN FELDMAN**

KNOWLEDGE IS THE most potent weapon in the fight against viruses like Zika, which can cause life-threatening birth defects in the babies of pregnant women who are bitten by infected mosquitoes.

That's why four Florida Gulf Coast University students teamed up with Planned Parenthood to find ways to educate women who have little education and limited reading skills about the dangers of Zika and what they can do to protect themselves.

The four Community Health students – Cayla Ehekircher, '16; Mirel Marquez Jimenez, '16; Cris Labra, '17; and Julia Poynter, '16 – chose this as their senior capstone project.

Ehekircher wanted to do an internship with Planned Parenthood so Charles Daramola, assistant professor and program director of Community Health at the Marieb College of Health & Human Services, contacted Planned Parenthood.

Kathleen Wiggs-Stayner, vice president of clinical business operations for Planned Parenthood, told him the organization needed research done involving Zika awareness and that she would need four students, including two who were bilingual.

Planned Parenthood knew the Immokalee and Naples communities



At left: The poster FGCU students created to educate women about Zika.

The Zika Virus

Transmitted by

- Mosquitos
- Sexual contact
- Mother to fetus
- Blood transfusions

Causes

Microcephaly is a condition in which a baby is born with a very small head and brain. Zika may cause developmental problems with vision, hearing, or growth, as well as brain development issues.

Average head size

Baby with microcephaly

Prevention

Wear condoms during sex
 Get rid of standing water
 Wear long clothing
 Mosquito spray

Symptoms

Most common symptoms include:

Fever
 Rash
 Joint pain
 Red eyes

Most people who get Zika have no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

Planned Parenthood

941-567-3800 | myplannedparenthood.org

Created by: Students from Florida Gulf Coast University, Marieb College of Health & Human Services, Community Health Program

were not as well served as they could be when it came to Zika education and the organization wanted to determine what their clients knew and how they learned.

“The overall goal of the Zika Health Awareness program is to educate local communities – especially women of

reproductive age in medically underserved areas – about the Zika virus, mosquito transmission, sexual transmission, travel-associated risks, and prevention of Zika,” says Nan Morgan, education director for Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida.

And so the students set out to get answers in hopes of helping to ward off new cases of mosquito-transmitted Zika in women of reproductive age and in families in medically underserved regions of Collier County.

“None of us realized how big it would get,” says Ehekircher. “We started with a survey but it grew from there.”

The students went to the clinic in Immokalee and took a look around the town to get a feel for the area. The idea was to determine how at-risk populations use information about Zika protection.

They crafted a survey in English and Spanish that aimed to determine the

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FGCU/PLANNED PARENTHOOD SURVEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **70%** knew about Zika
- ▶ **63%** knew it could be spread through sexual intercourse
- ▶ **50%** had knowledge of one or more prevention methods
- ▶ **25%** planned to use condoms in next 3 months
- ▶ **48%** planned to use mosquito spray
- ▶ **96%** owned a TV but got news from day-time radio
- ▶ **40%** felt store in their location did not sell mosquito spray
- ▶ **58%** of those surveyed had less than high school education and limited reading ability

(continued from page 8)

women's knowledge of Zika and its prevention as well as physical, financial and social barriers toward the use of mosquito spray and condoms.

"Our job is to prevent disease, to educate the community," says Daramola. "Any time we can do something to improve the quality of life for the community we are happy to do that. It was also a great joy for me to see the students pull together and take what they learned in the classroom and apply it to real-life experience. This is the type of work they are going to do when they graduate."

After crafting the survey, the students visited the Immokalee and Naples clinics several times over the course of a couple of months to interview clients as they waited for medical appointments.

"They were usually very receptive," says Ehekircher.

It was critical that the surveys be conducted verbally, says Wiggs-Stayner. "We needed to be able to speak with patients and give it to them verbally in their language of choice. Many patients that are illiterate sign their names with an X. A questionnaire they

would be asked to fill out wouldn't work."

From the survey, the students determined that Immokalee farmworkers are less likely to get news from television. They were more likely to listen to Spanish-speaking radio as they went back and forth to work so information broadcast on those stations would be most effective.

Another key finding was that cost was a barrier to accessing mosquito repellent. Coupled with healthcare disparities, lack of air conditioning and, in many cases, window screens, Latinas in Immokalee are at greater risk of contracting Zika and not receiving adequate care.

Working in conjunction with Planned Parenthood, the FGCU students created posters using images with a minimum of print so that those with low reading skills would still be able to understand them.

The result is a simple-to-understand poster, available in English and Spanish – and soon to be offered in Creole as well – that offers the basics of protection against this disease carried by some mosquitoes.

Planned Parenthood health centers in Immokalee and Naples provide Zika prevention kits to patients who are pregnant, plan to continue a pregnancy or who are undecided, as well as to women who are planning to become pregnant. The kits include mosquito repellent, standing water treatment tablets, condoms and educational materials. In addition, public service announcements are airing on a local Spanish radio station and locally produced flyers with pictographs are posted in high-traffic areas.

"What began with a phone call about an internship magnified into a project that could save people from birth defects and microcephaly," says Daramola. "It benefits the community."

The CDC says that family planning is the primary strategy for reducing Zika-related pregnancy complications. More than a third of Florida counties don't have an ob-gyn provider. Florida is tied for last when it comes to women's health and well-being, and reports some of the highest cervical cancer rates in the nation. Florida also has the third highest number of gonorrhea infections and the highest number of annual HIV diagnoses in the nation. ■

SPOTLIGHT

Cleaning up mess some bunny owners leave behind

Instructor devoted to saving sweet, high-maintenance pets / **BY KEITH GIBSON**

JEN MACBETH HATES what happens every summer, and it has nothing to do with heat and thunderstorms.

As co-founder of the Southwest Florida House Rabbit Rescue, the instructor in Florida Gulf Coast University's Department of Marine and Ecological Sciences and her bunny-loving brigade have to clean up the mess – figuratively and, in many cases, literally – left by irresponsible adults who use rabbits as impulse-buy Easter gifts that become yesterday's novelty in a few weeks.

"About four months after Easter, we get an influx," said Macbeth, who has taught University Colloquium continuously longer than any full-time faculty member at FGCU. "That's when rabbits reach sexual maturity, and they're not cute babies anymore. They get bigger, they can get aggressive and kids lose interest."

According to the rescue, eight out of 10 rabbits bought for Easter are looking for new homes by midsummer. In a best-case scenario for the unwanted pets, either the owner or advocates such as Macbeth's rescue group find Thumper loving foster care. Worst

case, Bugs is sent free along the bunny trail, doomed to live in fear before he's eventually killed and eaten by a predator. Or perhaps Peter ends up in the belly of a big snake after the reptile's owner responds to a free-rabbit-to-good-home Craigslist ad.

The moral of the story?

Unless you are willing to take care of a high-maintenance pet that can live 10 years; never stops chewing because its teeth never stop growing; can get aggressive without specialized spaying or neutering that costs about \$300; should be socialized and live indoors

in cages that can cost up to \$100; are willing to provide rabbit diet, hay, fresh veggies and fruits, toys and other supplies that add up to even greater expense – and, of course, embrace cleaning dirty cages and a seemingly endless stream of tiny, round poop pellets – well ... you better just keep walking past that pet-shop display with the huggable litter of cute baby bunnies, and don't look back.

"People get them as pets for children, but they really aren't good pets for kids," Macbeth said. "Suddenly, a pet they bought for 20 bucks becomes an expensive animal to keep."

Growing up on a farm in Hamburg, Pa., surrounded by animals, Macbeth used to think rabbits were simply livestock that belonged in outdoor hutches. It was only after she took in a wayward rabbit running loose on the campus of Loyola University during her own schooling that she realized bunnies are actually highly social animals that, when domesticated, need to live indoors, preferably with a bonded mate.

Macbeth co-founded the rescue in 2015 with Naples resident Lisa Walkup, a recruiter for Physicians Regional Healthcare System, after the two met by circumstance in the waiting room of a Fort Myers veterinary office as they sought treatment for their respective pet rabbits: Macbeth's beloved Basil and Walkup's Bumble Bee. They went their separate ways

(continued on page 10)

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
VIDEO OF PHOTO
SHOOT

Jen Macbeth
co-founded
Southwest Florida
House Rabbit Rescue



BY THE NUMBERS

The FGCU Library

The FGCU Library staff celebrated a milestone in June when, for the first time, the **1 millionth visitor of the academic year** walked through the door. That was big – even for a team that routinely deals with voluminous numbers. Here are some other Library facts and figures for the record: / **BY KEITH GIBSON**

4,000

VISITORS PER DAY
ON AVERAGE



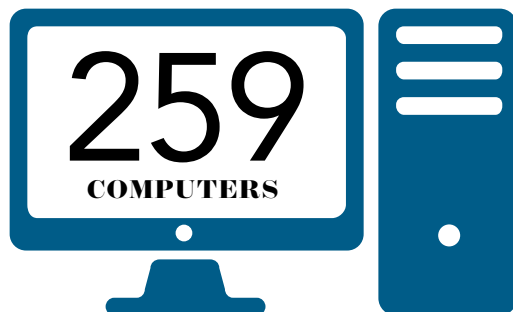
869

SEATS in the building



1504

PUBLISHING YEAR
of Library's oldest book



259

COMPUTERS



197,430

LOGINS
DURING 2016-17

31

STUDY ROOMS



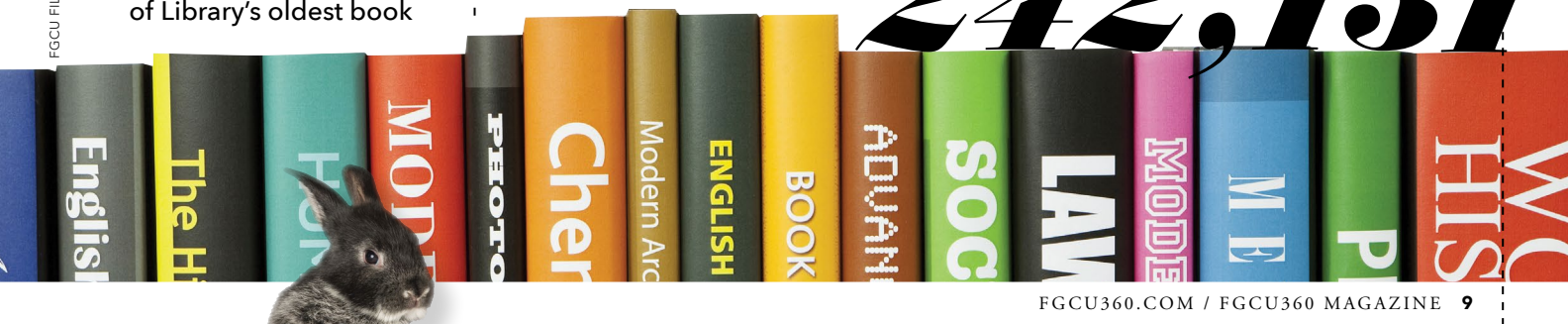
128

CRAYONS USED by
students dealing with
final-exam stress



PHYSICAL
VOLUMES

242,131



(continued from page 8)

that day, but after a Naples woman took in two wayward bunnies roaming her neighborhood that quickly turned into a pack of six – “Rabbits can reproduce every 31 days,” Macbeth said – the Good Samaritan desperately contacted the Fort Myers vet for help. The vet referred her to Macbeth and Walkup, and Southwest Florida House Rabbit Rescue was born.

The rescue’s reputation and popularity really took off about a year ago when Macbeth and Walkup drove all the way to Jacksonville to save Fuzzy Pants, a young rabbit that had been seized from three teenage girls who posted a video of themselves on Snapchat throwing the bunny against a wall and kicking the frightened animal. The girls were arrested and charged with felony animal cruelty after some parents saw the video and alerted law enforcement. Fuzzy Pants ended up in a loving foster home cuddling with a new bonded mate after the story got national attention and a gofundme.com page Macbeth set up raised almost \$8,000 for the rabbit’s medical treatment and care.

“Rabbits are the third-largest pet population in the United States, so there’s a big need for rescues,” said Macbeth, who “tries to keep my limit at 10 bunnies” in her own foster home, which she and the rabbits share with her husband, their 2-year-old child and a turtle.

“We get calls every day. We can’t take them all, but we try to work with people, and sometimes we can resolve socialization issues without them having to surrender the rabbit. We also deal with abuse and hoarding cases, and work with other rabbit rescues as needed. There was one in Georgia we helped out that had 150 rabbits.”

SWFL House Rabbit Rescue is now working with six local foster homes, where the long-eared clients get socialized, litter-box trained, spayed or neutered, bonded with other rabbits and, hopefully, adopted out



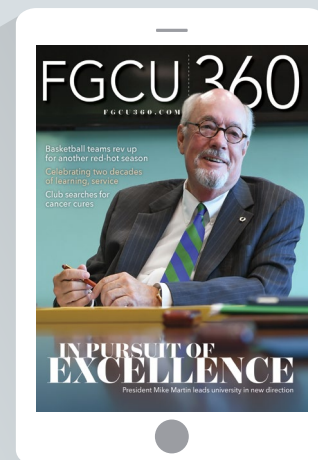
Florida Gulf Coast University Instructor Jen Macbeth greets a resident of The Terraces at Bonita Springs with a foster rabbit during a pet-therapy visit.

with a take-home bundle of rabbit-care education. As part of its outreach, the rescue even sends pet-therapy bunnies to cheer elderly residents of The Terraces at Bonita Springs.

Helping the cause are FGCU students who work with the rescue, which is a registered 501 (c)(3) organization sanctioned by the university’s Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement for service-learning hours. Some students end up fostering and adopting the rabbits they help save, such as Lauren Raponi, a junior marketing major and Honors student from Toronto who calls herself “mother to five rabbits – three fosters and two of my own.”

Besides giving and helping to get bunnies good homes, Raponi says working with Macbeth and the rescue has made her a better student. “Through all this responsibility outside school, I actually became more organized, even with my studies, because I have such a passion for the rescue and the people I’ve met through Jen,” Raponi said. “I have no doubt that my positive attitude and successes in school correlate directly to the rescue ... This mindset, I believe, is responsible for the mental growth I’ve achieved since moving to Florida.” ■

For information and how you can help, go to their Facebook page, facebook.com/respectforrabbits



Like our magazine?
You’ll love our website!

Check out the videos, slide shows and extra content on our robust site – fgcu360.com – that gives you even more information about what’s happening here.

A FEW MINUTES WITH PRESIDENT MARTIN

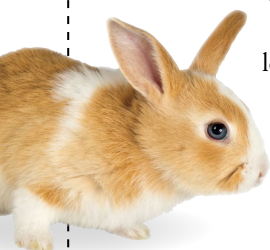
Mike Martin, the university’s fourth president, talks about the future of FGCU and what he hopes to accomplish here.

CLEAN AND COOK YOUR CATCH

Lionfish are beautiful but invasive – and they have nasty venomous spines that need to be removed before cooking them. Watch FGCU chef and instructor James Fraser show you how to safely clean them then make some great-tasting fish tacos.

CLASS NOTES

Reconnect with your classmates online, right now, with Class Notes on FGCU360.com.



OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

Backpacks hang around for the long haul

FROM THE NEW paverwalk along North Lake Village on the northern tip of campus to SoVi dining hall to the south – and all buildings, sidewalks and boardwalks between – young Eagles take off on their daily educational flights hauling an enthusiasm for knowledge and piles of books, writing utensils, notebooks, laptops, tablets, snacks, drinks, toiletries, and heaven-knows-what-else stashed inside canvas, leather, fabric or plastic carriers strapped across shoulders.

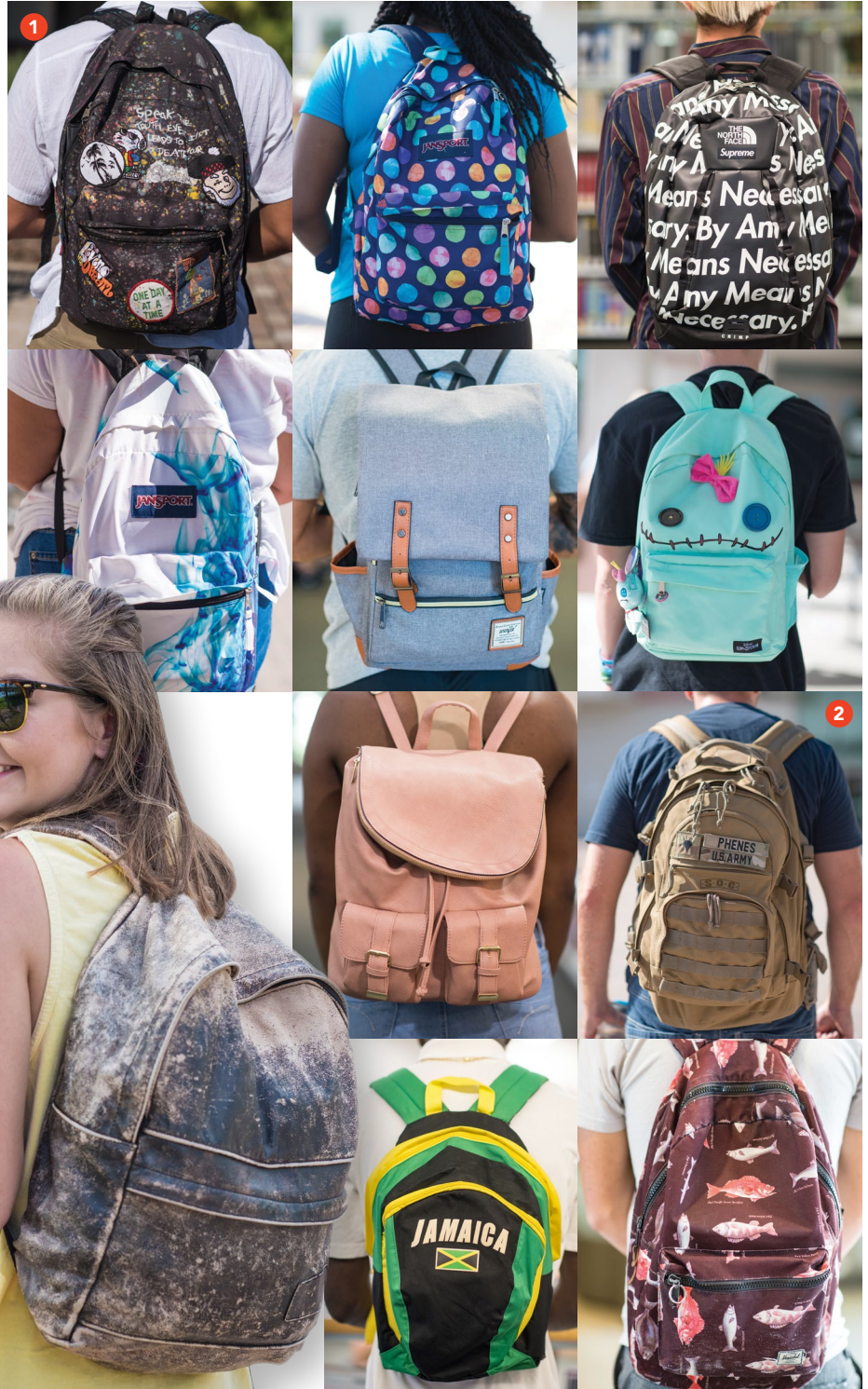
For some students, the bag must have swag.

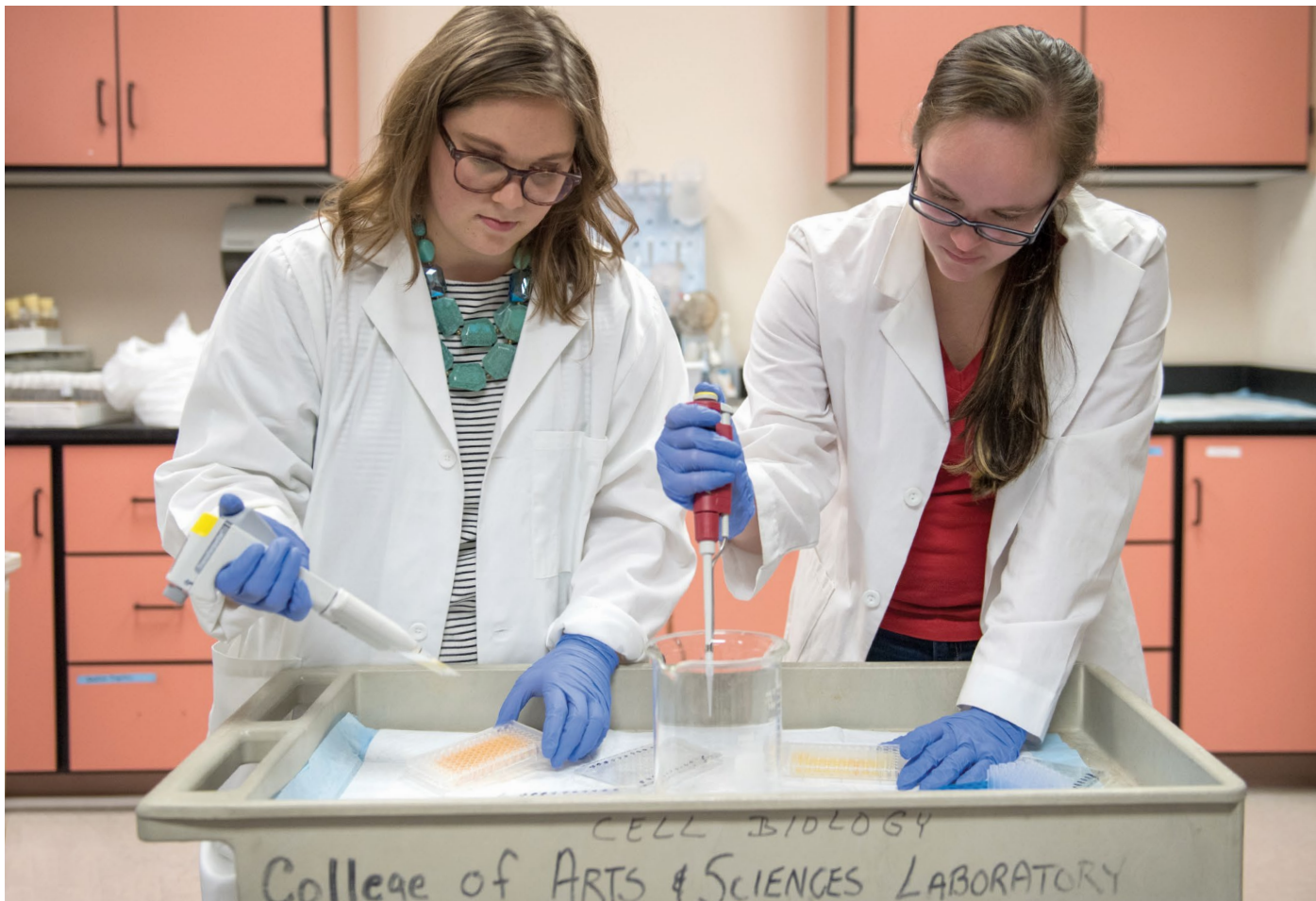
Taylor Pearce (right), a junior art major from Homestead, goes with the weathered leather look in a pack first broken in by her mom at Florida International University in the late 1980s. “My mom inspires me, so I love having a piece of her with me when I’m in class as a token of encouragement,” she said.

Sophomore special education major Nick Colli from Pompano Beach hand-stitched his artistic bag (1) slathered with patches, and says the adornments are “all stuff that are keys to happiness.”

But for Nathaniel Phenes, a Fort Myers junior majoring in marine science, his backpack (2) has a deeper meaning. He spent four years of active duty in the U.S. Army and is finishing his eighth year as a reservist. “The bag reminds me of everything sacrificed by my brothers, sisters and myself,” he said, “and helps me stay focused on moving forward in my life while I continue to honor the siblings we Americans have lost.” ■

– Keith Gibson





A club in search of a cure

Cancer Research Program aims to find new treatments / **BY KAREN BOOTH**

THE NEW KID ON the block means business. The FGCU Cancer Research Program, established as an official student organization in January, might be in its infancy age-wise, but in terms of skill and commitment, its members are wise beyond their years.

It began when Jordan Shedrow ('17, biology) approached Lyndsay Rhodes, assistant professor of biology, with the idea of creating a cancer research program to unite all cancer research

going on at FGCU. Working with Sara Lohbauer, ('17, biology) their proposal was incorporated into a civic engagement course as well as a senior capstone class. Students from multiple disciplines showed interest. Shedrow became the club's first president; Lohbauer, vice president. Club members who elect to conduct research work under the supervision of a faculty mentor and earn credits based on the number of lab hours logged.

The university offered lab space in the Emergent Technologies Institute (ETI) with the stipulation that the club furnish

the space. A group of dedicated students organized a fundraiser in April to help purchase incubators, culture hoods, glassware and more. As a result of money raised and additional contributions, the Cancer Research Program planned to move into its new, fully furnished lab space in the ETI this fall.

Rhodes, whose breast cancer research is well under way at the university, welcomed the opportunity to be the club's advisor and mentor. "I sit back when I can and help when I can. This truly is a student-led organization," she said. "The club has

grown way beyond my expectations in such a short amount of time.”

Nicole Mamprejew, a senior majoring in biology and psychology, is the club's current president. She reports that more than 50 FGCU students participate. “I'm responsible for overseeing educational outreach and advocacy, and ensuring we have plenty of opportunities for our diverse membership, which includes not only biology and chemistry majors, but also engineering, communication, marketing and exercise science majors.”

And that's the magic of the club. Of course, cancer research is key, but cancer research does not survive on lab work alone. That's where the multidisciplinary feature of club membership comes in.

“Cancer research has many aspects,” said Mamprejew. “There's outreach to the community – the educational aspect. Each of these disciplines, each member, has something to offer.”

Club vice president, Xylia Horgan, a senior biology major, and her lab partner Hannah Tatum, also a senior biology major,

LEFT: Undergraduate research students Xylia Horgan, left, and Hannah Tatum fix and stain breast cancer cells treated with stilbene compounds.

BELOW: Lyndsay Rhodes, assistant professor of biology, reviews images of adult human stem cells that have been differentiated into bone with undergraduate researcher Nicole Mamprejew.

For more information, visit FGCUcancerresearch.com or on Facebook at [fgcucancerresearch](https://www.facebook.com/fgcucancerresearch) and Instagram (@fgcu_cancer).

conduct breast cancer research under the supervision of faculty mentor Rhodes.

Horgan and Tatum are testing stilbenes, natural compounds found in many plants. Resveratrol is a stilbene found in wine, and is thought to improve heart health. Perhaps they could be beneficial in treating cancer, too.

“Stilbenes are natural compounds found in many plants,” Horgan said. “We are using stilbenes in our research to test our theory that they may be used as future cancer treatments.”

“Basically, we're testing 30 natural compounds on cancer cells we've grown in the lab. We're looking for anti-cancerous effects. When we treat the cancer cells with each compound, we hypothesize that the cancer cells will die. This inhibition would suggest the compound's potential use as a breast cancer treatment, kind of like chemotherapy.”

All 30 stilbene compounds have been screened in the FGCU lab. “Results in initial screenings have shown some significant inhibition of cellular growth,” said Horgan. “We are now testing those stilbenes in various dosages to determine the extent of the compounds' inhibition on the cancer cells.”

Rhodes added, “We're also working on establishing collaborations with community partners in oncology and

cancer research fields. Such partnerships would build on the research being conducted at FGCU and allow students advanced experience in the field.”

It is not within the scope of this article to detail the diverse research projects conducted by students in the Cancer Research Program. However, a glimpse into the breadth of work undertaken is worth noting.

Mamprejew, for example, is focused on “how preservatives, like parabens in our food, affect our endocrine system, which produces hormones. Ultimately,” she said, “we will find out in which aspect preservatives disrupt the endocrine system in a way that promotes cancer.”

Rhodes' research primarily focuses on breast cancer, attempting to pinpoint the underlying mechanisms driving cancer growth and progression to ultimately identifying targets for new drug development. Her research projects include evaluating natural and synthetic stilbene compounds for anticancer effects. Horgan and Tatum assist her in her research.

Kerry Lee, assistant professor of biological sciences, and Ju Chou, associate professor of chemistry and physics, collaborate with Rhodes. They conduct research utilizing noble metal nanoparticles; students are now testing their application in cancer. Referencing her breast cancer research, Rhodes said, “We're also working with Daniel Paull, assistant professor of chemistry. He and his students take the compounds we find to be active and make stilbene derivatives with the hopes of making the compounds more effective.”

As part of FGCU's Foundation of Civic Engagement course, Horgan and Mamprejew are developing a cancer awareness curriculum for an after-school program for middle and high school students.

“The way I see it,” said Mamprejew, “the job of a scientist is to demystify science, and the FGCU Cancer Research Program is approaching that in a multifaceted way. Our upcoming education project with a planned lecture series open to the public plus our efforts to educate our own members about cancer will go a long way to doing this.”

“We want to empower people with knowledge about cancer,” said Horgan. ■



PHOTOS BY JAMES GRECO

ARTS



AN AMERICAN POTTER IN CREOLE CLAY



PATRICIA FAY HAS SPENT
A QUARTER-CENTURY
MOLDING A HISTORY OF
CARIBBEAN POTTERY

• • •

BY NINA BARBERO '16

PHOTOS BY JAMES GRECO

ONE DAY, PATRICIA Fay was making high-end pottery to sell in Boston. The next, she was living in Saint Lucia, an island nation in the Caribbean. She was at the beginning of a 25-year research project that has culminated in a book to be published in December – “Creole Clay: Heritage Ceramics in the Contemporary Caribbean” (University of Florida Press).

“Your life can change that fast,” said Fay, who has taught art at Florida Gulf Coast University since 2000 and now serves as assistant director of the Bower School of Music & the Arts and art program leader.

The potter had spent her life moving from town to town with her two sisters, mother and father. It was a family trip to Saint Lucia, celebrating her father’s retirement, that served as Fay’s introduction to the Caribbean.

Fay vividly remembers the trip that pulled her from snowy Massachusetts in March to the place that changed her life. “The whole thing was a shock to the senses,” Fay said. “It was the plants, it was the palm trees, it was the temperature of the water, it was the tone and the food and the people and the juxtapositions.”

As a potter, Fay felt compelled to find local pottery on the trip. She took a taxi to a marketplace in the center of Castries, the island’s capital.

“I saw these pots,” Fay said. “The most honest pots I’ve ever seen. They were entirely and completely about their function, and about their purpose: to cook food, store food, cool water.”

Fay, who had long been creating pots with clean forms and a lot of surface decoration, was fascinated by these locally made, unglazed, unadorned pots.

She went back to Boston and searched the library at the University of Massachusetts, where she was a graduate student, for academic writing on the pots of Saint Lucia. Finding only a short article and one line in a memoir, Fay knew she had to go back and conduct her own research.

On the suggestion that she write an article on the area, Saint Lucia’s ministry of tourism provided Fay with a taxi and driver



FGCU students help unload first Saint Lucia kiln firing.

to help her navigate the island and find local potters during her second trip.

One local potter was Catty Osman, a woman who would become a close friend and source for Fay’s research. Fay watched Osman make a complicated coal pot in just 16 minutes. More interested in Caribbean potters and techniques than ever, Fay looked for ways to get back to Saint Lucia and stay longer. She found a short paragraph at the bottom of a Fulbright Scholarship brochure about a program she thought would help her do the research she wanted to do. Fay applied and eventually received funding for her trip.

During her two years in Saint Lucia, Fay researched, interviewed, photographed and bonded with the potters she met. The project interested Fay on more than just an academic level. As a potter herself, she felt connected to her interviewees, who were often women making pottery to use or sell.

“I was making a living making pots, these women were paying the bills making pots,” Fay said. “I understood that, and we could have conversations about accounts that don’t pay, and people trying to get your prices down, and it was fascinating.”

Fay returned to the United States and began teaching. Along with her desire to work with ceramics, Fay realized during her

graduate school teaching assistantship that she also enjoyed teaching.

“I found a sense of purpose in teaching that was really satisfying,” Fay said.

She spent time making pottery, teaching at a private high school and then a college, returning to Saint Lucia and other Caribbean islands every summer for research on potters, some of whom she now calls family.

She applied for a job at FGCU in 2000, excited for the opportunity to help build its arts program. At the time, only one other art faculty member had been hired – Morgan Paine, as associate professor.

“When I applied for the job here, I gave it everything I had,” Fay said. “I wanted this job, I wanted this place, I wanted this idea.”

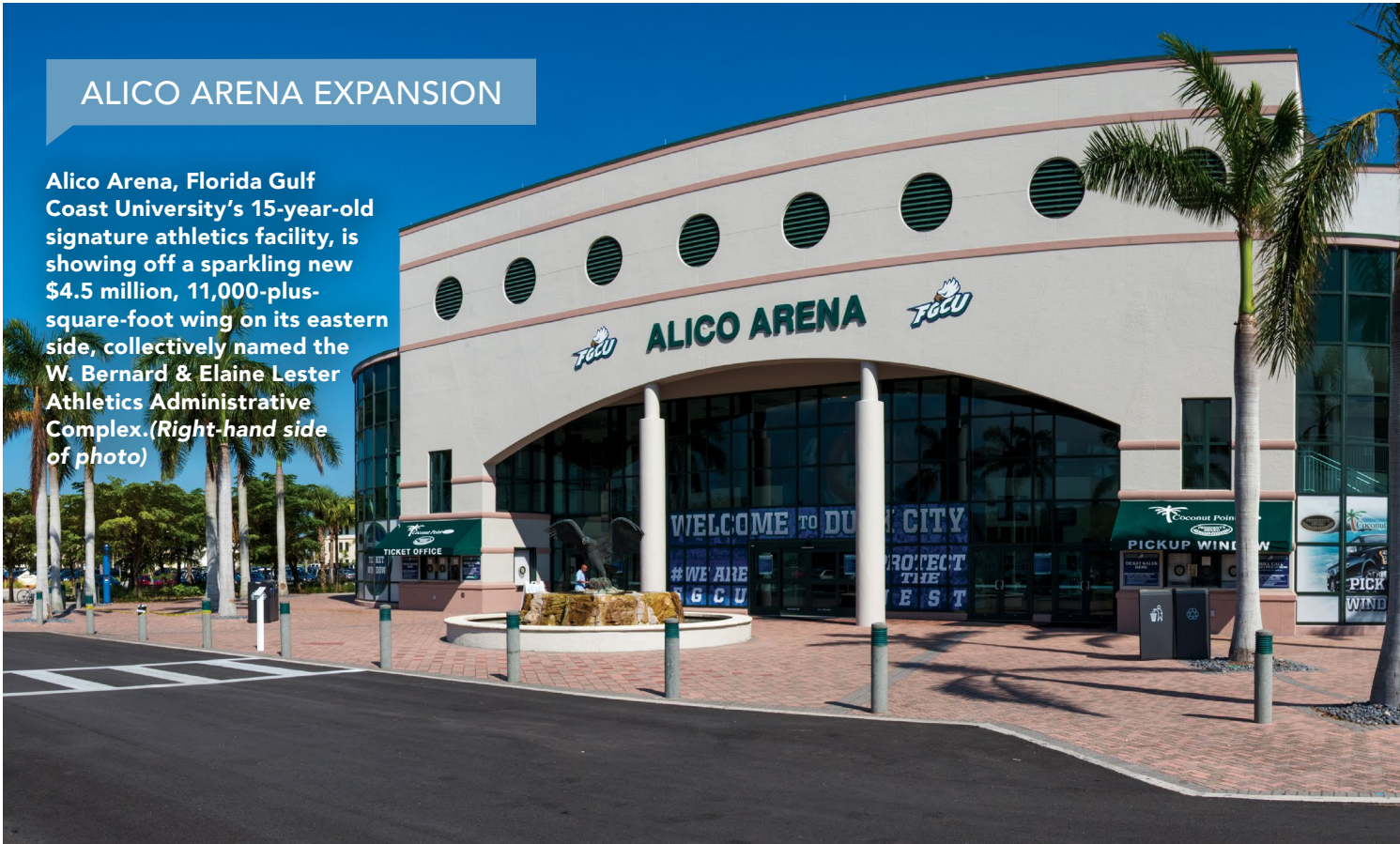
PHOTO EXHIBITION TO LAUNCH BOOK

Because of the image-heavy nature of Fay’s book, she said “it seemed to make sense to do the book launch with photographs and be able to talk about it that way.” **Fay’s book launch, set for 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25 in the FGCU Library Reference Area, will feature a photo exhibition and lecture. The exhibition will be open through Feb. 8.**

MARIA ROCA, FGCU INTEGRATED STUDIES PROFESSOR

ALICO ARENA EXPANSION

Alico Arena, Florida Gulf Coast University's 15-year-old signature athletics facility, is showing off a sparkling new \$4.5 million, 11,000-plus-square-foot wing on its eastern side, collectively named the W. Bernard & Elaine Lester Athletics Administrative Complex. (Right-hand side of photo)



RECEPTION AREA

Visitors — most importantly, student-athlete recruits and their families — are greeted by an impressive reception area with décor that highlights Eagle athletic milestones and accomplishments. The area leads to 4,000 square feet of expanded office space for athletics staffers — most notably the basketball coaching staffs, which now have digs twice as big as their old offices.



SCHREINER FAMILY SPORTS MEDICINE CENTER

Replacing the old area where FGCU athletes got medical treatment is a 3,700-square-foot center almost five times the size. Exam and treatment areas, rehab space, meeting and storage areas, offices, and hot and cold 8-person hydrotherapy pools enable the training team to serve many more student-athletes comfortably.



TEAM THEATER

Video scouting of opponents and visual reviews and breakdowns of FGCU's own athletic performances get a huge upgrade in the new 25-seat team theater featuring a 184-inch retractable screen. Comfortable reclining seating and plush carpeting make this study hall of sorts a feature attraction. The facility will also serve as a team lounge for both basketball programs and occasionally be used by other sports.



HARTLEY ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER

Speaking of study halls, the new academic center for athletes is 3,600 square feet of tutoring rooms, offices, computer stations and a central study area. The center's curvature makes it an inviting place for FGCU student-athletes to stay on top of the "student" part of their game.

THE MIKE MARTIN EFFECT

New president takes on his final professional challenge: transforming FGCU

BY KAREN FELDMAN

PHOTOS BY JAMES GRECO

PASSIONATE EDUCATOR

“He’s so devoted to education and to diversity. He’s belonged to the NAACP for 40 years.”

Jan Martin, wife

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

“He doesn’t come in as a know-it-all even though it turns out he probably knows it all times two. He will never say that. You will learn that he is a very seasoned person. I’ve had 24 bosses in my time. He’s in the top 3.”

Rich Schweigert, director of government affairs and former CFO for Colorado State University System

AN AUTHENTIC LIFE
“He’s genuine and lives his values. On numerous occasions I asked him for advice. He never said no. That level of caring, it is not so common.”

Alexandra Bernasek, economics professor, senior associate dean, College of Liberal Arts, Colorado State University

ONE OF A KIND
“He’s a leader, one-of-a-kind in higher education. I wish we could clone him.”

Christina Chavez Kelley, former assistant vice president for the Office of Student Diversity and Outreach, New Mexico State University

LOYAL MENTOR

“Some of the students he became endeared to at NMSU, he’s still helping them get jobs and keeping up on their careers.”

Christina Chavez Kelley



SEAL OF APPROVAL

"Mike Martin has enormous strengths in many areas. First, he has a very strong academic background. He's very charismatic. Everybody likes the guy. You asked what his weaknesses are. He doesn't have any."

Former New Mexico Gov.
Bill Richardson

ACTIVE PARENTING

"My parents were both involved in what we did. Not sure how my mom did it all. Dad got it all done because my mom made it all possible. They are a really good team."

Amanda Martin,
daughter

LIFELONG LEARNING

"You're a product of the experience you can sort out. I can sort out the experiences that changed my life."

Mike Martin,
FGCU president

FAMILY MAN

"He's a very loving father. He always wanted to be part of our lives as much as he could be. He was always present."

Sam Martin, son



A

fter 46 years in education – the last 13 presiding over three major state universities across the country – you might think Mike Martin would be ready to kick back and enjoy the leisurely retirement he has earned.

Instead, the 70-year-old is relishing his “latest adventure,” as he terms it, as president of Florida Gulf Coast University. It is the smallest institution for which he has served in the top office and yet he is no less enthusiastic about it than he was serving as president of New Mexico State or chancellor of Louisiana State or the Colorado State University System.

He, his wife, Jan, and their 18-year-old schipperke mix, Agnes, have settled into a spacious rental in Miromar Lakes just a mile from campus as they acclimate to their new subtropical lifestyle.

It’s not what they’d planned as his time as chancellor of the Colorado State University System drew to a close. In fact,

when he accepted that job in 2012, he intended it to be his last.

“Until February or March, Colorado was going to be my last job,” he says. “I was all teed up. We bought a place in Minnesota. We have a place in Gainesville. We were going to start splitting our time being grandpa and grandma and brother and sister and sister-in-law (in Minnesota), spending some winters in Gainesville. But another chance to make a lap around the track came along and here I am.”

That he chose to take on a demanding new job surprised absolutely no one who knows him.

His son, Sam, says, “I was telling my sister and mother, ‘If you really think he’s

going to retire, you’re nuts.’ He’s not a guy who likes to sit at home.”

Jan Martin says, “I’m glad he didn’t retire. He’s just juiced about this job. He works 12-, 13-hour days, comes home, sits in his chair with his iPad and goes back to work. That’s the speed he’s always gone.”

That pace intensified in September when Hurricane Irma bore down on Fort Myers and FGCU became an evacuation site, filling Alico Arena and two academic buildings with members of the community and one residence hall with students who could not return to their families.

Along with members of his leadership team and staff volunteers, Martin slept on the floor of the Campus Support Complex

“A series of things happened in my life for which I had no responsibility and can take no credit but I decided somewhere along that spectrum that if I could be a transformer – even one half as good as the ones who had touched my life – I was going to do that.”

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
PRESIDENT
LOOKS AHEAD

to ensure he was available for any situation that required his input.

It was illustrative of the way he operates. He's not an ivory tower kind of leader, something he learned about himself when he became a chancellor and found himself ensconced in a high-rise office building more than 50 miles from the nearest Colorado State campus.

“I always complained about the system guys,” he says. “So I got the chance and thought I'd try it. But I discovered it was a mistake. I wasn't on campus anymore. I was in downtown Denver in a big tall building. It's a great place to work if you want to be in Denver, but it wasn't where my passion was. I wanted to be back on campus.”

After exploring a couple of other possibilities, which also turned out to be more system than campus, the FGCU job came along.

“I knew of the place, had been here in '99 when (Interim President) Gene Hemp was here. We were friends,” he says. “From a long distance I observed it. It was far enough out of range of where I've been to make it interesting for me and still in public higher education about which I think I know something.”

And so, in the final hour, he applied, adding his name to a field of dozens. He made the short list and was the unanimous choice of the FGCU Board

of Trustees. He became the university's fourth president July 1, replacing Wilson G. Bradshaw, who retired.

Martin believes his role, and that of all educators, is one of transformation. It is something he has devoted his entire working life to and it's what he discussed with new faculty when the semester started.

He told them: “You are profoundly important. This is a transformational institution. You should be proud that you're here. We have a job that's just too important not to take seriously. The only people more powerful and transformational are middle-school teachers.”

He has never forgotten those who helped transform his life.

FROM MINES TO MIND

Martin was born and raised in Minnesota, in a family of Serbian immigrants. His mother was first generation while his father's family was longer established. They lived in Crosby, on the Cuyuna Iron Range in northern Minnesota when the mines were thriving.

“Almost everyone I was related to worked in the mines,” he says.

In the late 1950s, as the mines began to give out, Martin's father moved the family to Hibbing, where there were more mines. But recognizing that there wasn't much future in mining, he

moved the family again, this time to the Minneapolis suburbs where he went to work for a company that made mining equipment.

It was a move that “fundamentally changed my trajectory,” Martin says. “Where I'd grown up before, the assumption was you grew up and went to work in the mines. Now in a suburban high school, the assumption was you'd go to college.”

No one in his family ever had. It took his teachers to convince him that he could and he would.

He went to Mankato State College – now known as Minnesota State University.

“It was an almost open-access, public, regional university and it transformed my life,” he says.

While there, he had the good fortune to meet a faculty member who took a special interest in him.

“He took me aside and said ‘I think you have more potential than you're living up to and if you decide to live up to it, I'll help you,’ and he did,” Martin says. “He became my master's advisor and helped me get into a doctoral program (in applied economics at the University of Minnesota).”

His mentor is now in his 80s and they remain good friends.

In 1969, not long after he graduated and took a job as an insurance adjuster, he had another lucky break: He went

on a date with a Mankato State College student who was finishing her teaching degree.

"I had a crush on Jim Mahoney," Jan Martin recalls. "I thought he was calling to ask me out but he wanted to set me up with Mike."

Their first date was on Halloween.

She graduated the following spring and was going to start teaching. Martin was heading to graduate school.

"He proposed by saying 'We'd better do this now or not at all,'" she recalls. They married in August.

Not the most romantic proposal perhaps, but the marriage has lasted 47 years and through his rise from faculty posts to top administrative ones and moves to Corvallis, Ore.; Manoa, Hawaii; Las Cruces, N.M.; Minneapolis; Gainesville; Baton Rouge; Denver; and now Fort Myers.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

"A series of things happened in my life for which I had no responsibility and can take no credit but I decided somewhere along that spectrum that if I could be a transformer – even one half as good as the ones who had touched my life – I was going to do that," Martin says. "I've had the opportunity to do that for 46 years."

Although he took a path that diverged from that of his parents, he learned a lot from them. His father was a mechanic so he learned to fix his own cars. Father and son would go hunting, fishing and snowmobiling together.

"I was never very good at any of them," he says. "I killed virtually nothing. When we fished, I tried to listen to the (Minnesota) Twins on the radio. And an hour of snowmobiling at minus 5 degrees gets old. But I did those things because of the company."

His mother didn't finish high school but became mayor of Emily, Minn. She was successful at it, making friends and enemies along the way as she did what she believed was right rather than what was expedient, a lesson he applies to his own life.

Martin's academic life began as an instructor, then a visiting professor at

the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute and Agricultural and Applied Economics Department, followed by a year at Oregon State in the Office of International Agriculture and two years at the University of Hawaii. From there, he moved up the ranks to full professor at Oregon State, then higher still at the University of Minnesota, rising to vice president for agricultural policy.

That led to a six-year stint as vice president for agriculture and natural resources at the University of Florida, then his first presidency at New Mexico State University.

KOREAN SOJOURN

It was there that he met Gov. Bill Richardson. The two hit it off well.

Richardson describes Martin as "extremely effective with the New Mexico legislature because of his very strong bipartisan manner. He persuaded me to start a Native American academic program at New Mexico State that I believe is one of the strongest educational legacies for Native Americans. He asked me for \$10 million. I did it because of my belief in Mike Martin."

When President George W. Bush asked Richardson to go to North Korea on a diplomatic mission to make inroads in areas such as healthcare, energy,

technology and education, he took experts in each field with him. Martin was his education expert.

"Mike Martin has enormous strengths in many areas," Richardson says. "He has a very strong academic background particularly in education and foreign affairs. We wanted to start an exchange of positions between North Korea and the U.S. Mike arranged for three North

"He has this great charisma and ability to unite people."

Koreans to spend a semester here. It's the one exchange that did happen and it was because of Mike and New Mexico State."

Christina Chavez Kelley was the assistant vice president for the office of Student Diversity

and Outreach at New Mexico State University. An alumna of the university, she worked there starting in 1989 and was in the president's office when Martin was president from 2004 to 2008.

"President Martin was a great leader. He has this great charisma and ability to unite people," she says. "He's a great





President Mike Martin hands out cold water and welcomes new students on a sweltering move-in day.

communicator and the first thing you need to be is a good listener. It's one of the things he can do so very well. He knows how to unite faculty, staff, students, alumni and donors.

"Mike was the first in his family to obtain a degree. He understands that the underprivileged need access to higher education and that is what endeared him to me."

One of their accomplishments while he was there was the building of the American Indian Student Center, which helped in the recruitment of American Indian students. Enrollment rose dramatically and the university's struggling athletics program got new life under

Martin, she says.

"He wouldn't stay in the skybox. He'd get his hot dog and walk through the stands. He's a people person. He's a walkabout person," she says.

That's certainly been evident at FGCU, where you are as likely to run into him at Einstein Bros. Bagels or chatting with students on the Great Lawn as you are to find him in his office.

Chavez Kelley says when she runs into New Mexico state legislators they always ask about him, his wife and kids.

"He's a leader, one-of-a-kind in higher education," she says. "I wish we could clone him."

From New Mexico State, he went on to become chancellor of Louisiana State, a position he held for four years and that involved overcoming state budget cuts, storm damage and a football recruitment

scandal. He accepted the chancellorship of the Colorado State University System in 2012.

Alexandra Bernasek, an economics professor and senior associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts at Colorado State University, was the faculty representative on the Board of Governors for the university system when Martin became chancellor. The two economists felt an immediate camaraderie. "We understood one another," she says.

His knowledge of economics contributes to what makes him a great administrator – "he has a set of skills that are useful in decision making, like cost-benefit analysis and how do you take scarce dollars and what do you do with them?" Bernasek says. "He's got really good values, too. I think he makes good choices."

She believes that a job as president, as opposed to chancellor, is ideal for him. “It keeps him close to the people he is really there for and he cares about. What he will be able to do because of his experience is articulate a vision and mobilize people to get behind that vision.”

She says he has a “knack for empowering people.

“He’s genuine and he lives his values. It’s a really wonderful trait. On numerous occasions I asked him for advice. He never said no. That level of caring, it is not so common.”

Rich Schweigert, Colorado State University’s director of government affairs and, at the time of Martin’s hiring, also the chief financial officer, found something else about his new boss that impressed him.

“He has a faith and belief as he comes into an organization that everyone is competent in doing their job and you have to prove that theory wrong with him,” he says. “It’s kind of the reverse of a lot of bosses.

“What I love about Mike Martin is his passion for higher education. He is probably the greatest champion of higher education I’ve ever met with his belief that it changes lives. It’s at his core and it drives him every day.

“He didn’t come in as a know-it-all, even though it turns out he probably knows it all times two. He will never say that. You will learn that he is a very seasoned person.”

FAMILY MAN

While his primary focus may be on educating students, he’s a family man, too.

“He’s a very loving father,” says his son, Sam, 38, a medical science liaison for a genetics company who holds a bachelor’s degree and two master’s. “When we were kids, he obviously worked but he always helped us out in everything – with our homework and when we got into sports, he helped there, too – baseball, soccer, tennis. He used to play me all the time in tennis.

“He wanted to be part of our lives as much as he could be. Even when he moved higher up in the administration, he always went to my games and my sister’s gymnastics meets.”

More recently, while his parents lived in Colorado and Sam’s job required him to travel a lot, he moved into their basement, traveling during the week and spending weekends with them.

“It was a good two years,” he says. “It was good to be able to see them so much.”

“What I love about Mike Martin is his passion for higher education.”

“He’s genuine and he lives his values. It’s a really wonderful trait.”

Among the things he says he learned from his father is that “if we had a problem, he asked us to think about the solution, not just come to him with the problem. He doesn’t just fix things. He makes you think about them, hoping you’ll come up with the solution.”

His sister, Amanda, was unarguably the most disappointed by her father’s decision to take another job so far from Minneapolis-St. Paul, where she lives with her husband, Paul, and their sons – 5-year-old Logan and 2-year-old Charlie.

“I cried for a week,” she says. “Then I moved on.”

Though painful for her, it was, she concedes, a good decision.

“As he cut back at Colorado, he seemed to get depressed. He’s really come alive again,” she says. “He needs to work full time and I know he can make a difference.”

She, too, recalls that her father was present for virtually all of her activities as she grew up, although she thinks that the fact that he was a professor played a part in that.

“If he had a job like this, he probably wouldn’t have been a good dad or he wouldn’t have been a very good president,” she says. “That came later in his life when we were older.”

As they matured and his jobs became increasingly more demanding, much of the family logistics fell to her mother.

“Dad got it all done because my mom made it possible,” Amanda Martin says. “They are a really good team.”

CRAFTING A NEW VISION

Here at FGCU, Martin sees much to be done and views his role as a multitude of responsibilities.

“I’m the external representative of the institution in both a formal and informal way,” he says. “The president has to be an advocate with the legislature, with other decision makers, the governor’s office, so I think there’s an advocacy role.

“Obviously you have to be a decision maker. I prefer to be a consensus builder, but at times you simply have to be willing to step up and make a decision when it has to be made. You have to be a team builder. And in the process, you’ve got to be a mentor to those who can follow when you’re gone and sustain the core values of the institution.”

One decision he’s already made is that he won’t be the president to bring football to FGCU, citing the massive expense and what he sees as a decline in the number of top football players.

“I’m not interested in launching a program that’s likely to be permanently mediocre,” he says.

Among the actions he’s taken so far



Assistant Athletics Director for Advancement
Graham Diemer and President Mike Martin

is to revamp the university's five-year strategic plan, provide a week-long waiver of application fees for Florida residents in recognition of the hardships created by Hurricane Irma, and restructure his administration somewhat, including asking Provost Ron Toll to step down from his post as he seeks someone with fresh perspective for that key role.

A major challenge he sees is significantly improving student outcomes, but not simply by accepting higher-achieving students.

"I think the challenge is to serve those people that desperately need a higher education but will need more than a modest amount of assistance to finish it," he says. "They are bright enough but face other challenges, whether it's financial, academic background, cultural, whatever."

Another area of concern: graduate studies. "We really have to start upping our game at the graduate level," he says, "including adding a couple of highly visible excellence-driven Ph.D. degrees, raising the

bar for faculty, recruiting students who can come in and challenge us."

The emerging initiative to create a School of Integrated Coastal and Watershed Studies is a prime opportunity to "learn about and teach others about living in a growing complex, tropical, fragile environment and pass it on to future generations."

And he sees the demographics – a lot of well-off older people and many less-well-off younger people plus an ever-changing racial mix – as an opportunity to learn and to teach.

"I want to accomplish what other people want to accomplish as long as we can agree on what that is," he says. "I want to be part of the team that figures it out but I'm going to bring my value system to it."

Gov. Richardson praises what Martin did for New Mexico State and believes he'll be just as good for FGCU.

"He's going to put you on the map," says Richardson. "You watch." ■

WHAT I BELIEVE: THE CORE OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY BY MIKE MARTIN

Over a lengthy career in higher education and through roles at several institutions, I've come to believe six basic tenets that frame my approach to leadership. Here they are:

► Excellence is a journey, not a destination. Every university must continually seek new ways to improve and serve. Complacency leads to mediocrity. Being truly great is a permanent aspirational goal. And in this regard –

► Universities are ongoing experiments. Since the University of Bologna (Italy) was established in 1088, this experiment has been ongoing. Great universities are unafraid to try new approaches. When a new approach proves successful, it is shared with others. When it fails, the institution admits it and moves on to the next attempt at improvement. Willingness to take a reasonable risk is central in every useful experiment.

► Faculty, administrators, staff, facilities, all resources are means to an end, they are not the end. The end is transforming individual lives through education so that an educated citizenry transforms the larger society. It's not about us, it's about who we serve. The most important part of individual transformation is to foster systematic curiosity so learning is life-long.

► Embracing diversity in all its forms is fundamental in the journey toward excellence. Every university that aspires for greatness welcomes and builds a community around people from every race, ethnicity, gender, orientation, perspective and background so as to celebrate differences. Each member enriches the transformational experience of all others.

► While pursuing excellence, seeking to transform and embracing diversity, public universities should share their values and model civilized conduct for the larger society. Public universities should be "public" in every way.

► Every job worth doing should be interesting, rewarding and fun.





20TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebration honors two great decades

With new president on board, university now looks forward

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THAT NOT much more than 20 years ago, the Florida Gulf Coast University campus was mostly a blank slate and a dream. In two decades, it's become a respected educational institution, a cultural hub and an economic catalyst for Southwest Florida.

Today, almost 26,000 proud graduates have become engineers, teachers, business leaders, health practitioners and other public- and private-sector professionals – imbued with a commitment to sustainability and community service. Together, they have contributed more than 2 million hours of service to the region.

While the university's administrators and faculty have been advocating for and teaching those students for two decades, they also have been expanding academic programs, growing campus infrastructure and extending community outreach – in what can only be described as explosive fashion.

Student-athletes, artists, musicians and actors have gained knowledge, maturity and experience while entertaining thousands of residents and visitors, bringing greater fame to the university.

We've done plenty in 20, that's for sure. We like to call it The FGCU Effect – inspiring those who inspire others. And as we begin the next 20 years under the leadership of our new president, Mike Martin, we are excited to see where inspiration will lead us.

– Keith Gibson

MORE STORIES ONLINE

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ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com



WIS for ENT



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION



HIDE SHIES

FGCU scientists study invasive lionfish,
endangered smalltooth sawfish
in research projects

BY KEVIN LOLLAR

A PAIR OF SCIENTISTS at Florida Gulf Coast University are studying a pair of fish species that swim on opposite ends of Florida's ichthyological spectrum.

On one end, lionfish are beautiful and all-too-plentiful non-natives that people wish would just go away; on the other end, smalltooth sawfish are weird-looking and endangered natives that people wish we had more of.

Emma DeRoy, a graduate student at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, is observing live lionfish at FGCU's Vester Marine Field Station in Bonita Springs to understand the species' feeding behavior – lionfish are a major threat to any marine environment they invade because they eat vast quantities of juvenile native fishes, including economically important species such as snappers and groupers.

Hidetoshi Urakawa, an associate professor in FGCU's Department of Marine and Ecological Sciences, is part of a team that is using molecular ecology approaches to determine the diet of smalltooth sawfish and how the species uses its habitats in Southwest Florida – smalltooth sawfish were listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 2003; the species' current population is 5 percent of its historic size.

With lakes St. Clair and Erie the closest large water bodies to Windsor, DeRoy became interested in lionfish through undergraduate course work and wrote a research paper on the species. When the time came for her to do her master's thesis, she decided to study lionfish in Southwest Florida, where one of her biggest challenges was the summer heat – the average high temperature in Windsor during July is 82 degrees, and the average low is 62, compared to Southwest Florida's average July highs and lows of 92 and 75.

"Lionfish are a model invasive species," said DeRoy, who has been living and working at Vester since April. "They're



Researcher Emma DeRoy studies the invasive lionfish at FGCU's Vester Marine Field Station.

generalist feeders. They have a wide range of physiological tolerances. A lot of research has been done on invasive freshwater and terrestrial invasive species but not on marine invasive species. I'm trying to use feeding behavior to understand the impacts of lionfish, and that could be translated to other invasive species.”

Natives of the Indo-Pacific, lionfish were first reported off Florida in 1985, probably the result of aquarium releases. Since then, lionfish, which have few known natural predators and reproduce at an alarming rate (females can spawn every four days and produce 2 million eggs a year), have spread in huge, voracious numbers throughout the Western Atlantic, including the Gulf of Mexico.

For her study, DeRoy needs live lionfish, so field station manager Bob Wasno and a rotating team of divers have been capturing them in 90 to 100 feet of water at the Captiva Blue Hole, 30 miles off Redfish Pass.

Capture protocol, devised by Wasno and DeRoy, is simple: Lionfish don't



**NATIVES
OF THE
INDO-PACIFIC
LIONFISH
WERE
FIRST REPORTED
OFF FLORIDA IN
1985,
PROBABLY THE RESULT
OF AQUARIUM
RELEASES**

spook when approached by divers, so the lionfish team just swim up to them and catch them between two short-handled nets. Then the lionfish are put into a cage (designed by Wasno) on the sea floor and slowly brought to the surface.

Back at Vester, DeRoy observes, among other things, lionfish attack distance (the distance the fish travels to catch its prey), which “adds another dimension to understanding feeding ecology.”

Such information could lead to further research about feeding and prey-capture techniques of other invasive species.

DeRoy is also looking at how lionfish density (the number of lionfish in a given area) affects feeding dynamics.

“Are lionfish better hunters in groups?” she said. “Some studies have suggested that lionfish hunt cooperatively, but when you get a higher density of predators, sometimes they compete for prey, so that each predator ends up with fewer prey items when hunting in groups. So, with lionfish, does cooperative hunting increase consumption?”

Divers descend 90 to 100 feet to capture lionfish for DeRoy's research.





RED LIONFISH (*Pterois volitans*)

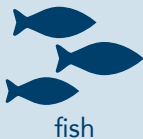
Native to Indo-Pacific reefs, lionfish have infiltrated warm ocean habitats globally.

AVERAGE
12 INCHES
in length and may reach up to 15 inches

DIET



invertebrates & mollusks



fish

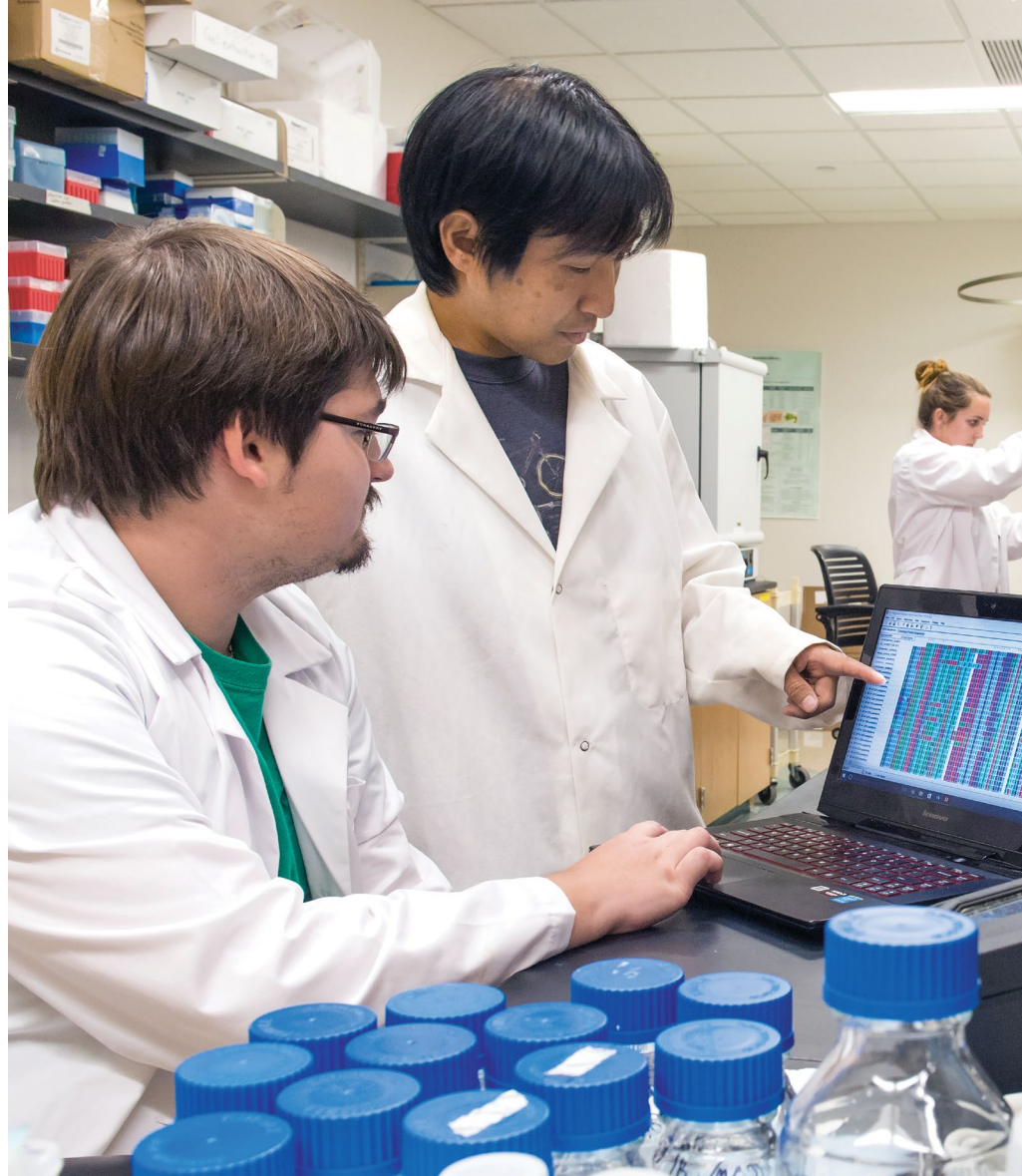
HABITAT



Tropical and sub-tropical reefs, mangroves and seagrass

FUN FACT

Lionfish are voracious predators. Their stomachs can expand up to 30 times their normal size.



Student Taylor Hancock, left, and Associate Professor Hidetoshi Urakawa analyze the DNA sequence data of fish eaten by sawfish, while student Carissa Flaherty prepares a specialized gel used to visualize DNA samples.

To test the effects of density in feeding, DeRoy will put different numbers of lionfish in a tank and feed them specific numbers of prey items (small fish and shrimp).

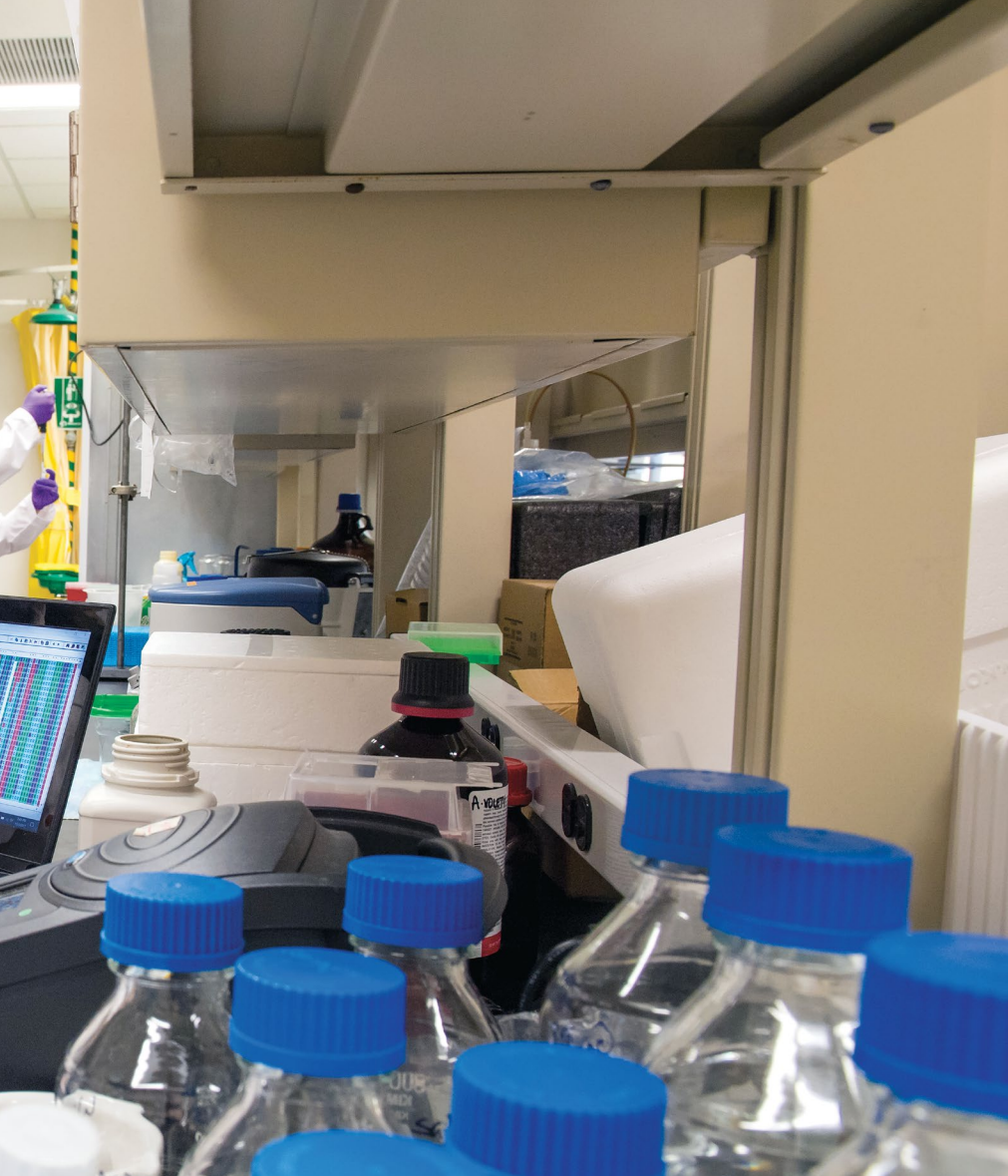
“Invasion biologists have done a lot of research on the impacts of invasive species,” DeRoy said. “But we still don’t really understand the scope of their impacts because the impacts are often subtle, they change over the invaded range, or they’re delayed, which makes them difficult to quantify and predict. This is especially the case with marine invaders.”

DeRoy’s research, which is being funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, can fill in some of the gaps concerning impacts of invasive marine species.

“Better understanding their impacts is key in mitigating their threat and developing appropriate management strategies,” DeRoy said.

Smalltooth sawfish were once common in Florida and ranged from Texas to North Carolina, with sightings as far north as New York. Today, smalltooth sawfish are restricted primarily to Southwest Florida from Charlotte Harbor to the Keys.

Fishing pressure was the primary cause of the species’ collapse. Recreational fishermen caught sawfish and cut off the saws as souvenirs; commercial fishermen didn’t target sawfish, but many sawfish were killed when they became entangled in



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**Better
 understanding
 their impacts
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 mitigating
 their threat.**
 ”

commercial nets. Fishing pressure is still a concern along with habitat loss.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) sawfish researcher and FGCU adjunct professor Gregg Poulakis was the lead author of a new sawfish paper published in *Endangered Species Research*, titled “Sympatric elasmobranchs and fecal samples provide insight into the trophic ecology of the smalltooth sawfish.” This work was done with Urakawa as a member of a broad collaboration team. The project also included researchers from Florida State University, Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, N.Y., and, coincidentally, the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and was funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service.

“This was a multi-disciplinary



SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH *(Pristis pectinata)*

A member of the ray order Rajiformes, sawfish are closely related to sharks.

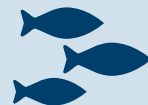
**AVERAGE
 10 FEET**

in length and may reach up to 25 feet

DIET



crustaceans



fish

HABITAT

shallow, coastal waters
 and swim into freshwater
 river systems



FUN FACT

Sawfish are able to replace their teeth if they are worn down or lost, known as polyphyodonty.



FGCU sawfish researcher Gregg Poulakis collects sawfish excretions that FGCU researchers will study.

approach,” Urakawa said. “All the researchers had different skills. We had different kinds of researchers working together.”

Urakawa’s part of the project was, with the help of two FGCU students, Taylor Hancock and Carissa Flaherty, to determine what sawfish eat and how they use their local habitat (the Charlotte Harbor system, including the Caloosahatchee, Peace and other rivers). Aside from anecdotes and some supporting data that sawfish feed on schooling fishes and crustaceans, little was known about the species’ diet.

One of the methods the team used was to look at stable isotopes (atoms that have more or fewer neutrons than protons) in sawfish fin tissue samples supplied by Poulakis. Different prey species contain specific amounts of carbon and nitrogen isotopes, which become stored in the tissue of the predator as it grows, so researchers can indirectly determine what a predator has been eating by analyzing the isotopes that have been incorporated into the tissue samples.

Researchers have been using stable isotopes in dietary studies since the late 1970s, but Urakawa combined new molecular tools to study feeding ecology of sawfish: high throughput DNA sequencing and environmental DNA (eDNA), which is DNA released by an organism into the environment. Sources of eDNA include feces, mucous, and shed skin.

“On TV, you see FBI agents going around a crime scene with a piece of tape, picking up skin cells and hair for DNA analysis,” Urakawa said. “We’re doing the same thing in the marine environment. You can get eDNA from the water, soil, and sediments. You filter the water or take a tablespoon of sediments, extract the DNA, and identify what kind of animals have been there.”

Urakawa used feces from sawfish caught by Poulakis and his team – simply put, DNA from what sawfish eat can be found in sawfish feces.

“When they catch sawfish, the sawfish sometimes poo in the boat,” Urakawa said. “Gregg has been collecting sawfish poop for a decade. He has a most precise collection, and I had the good fortune to be able to work with it.”

“High throughput DNA sequencing is kind of a miracle. You can identify what an

animal is eating without killing it or using a stomach pump. You can’t kill sawfish because they’re protected by law. Also, trying to pump a sawfish’s stomach would be dangerous. The poop method is the best method for sawfish.”

Fish also leave eDNA in the water and sediments of their habitat, and Urakawa is using eDNA to detect the presence or absence of sawfish and to track sawfish movements in area waters.

“It’s a very powerful method,” Urakawa said. “You could apply this method to Florida panthers, which are cryptic and difficult to find. You bring soil samples from an area to the lab, and the eDNA would show evidence that a panther existed there.”

Researchers could also use eDNA to track unwanted non-native species such as lionfish and pythons, Urakawa said.

“Environmental DNA is cutting-edge technology,” he said. “This was the first feeding ecology study performed for sharks and rays using a high-throughput DNA sequencing. FGCU is taking the lead, but it’s only possible with the cooperation of FWC. We’re in a good position now.”

Among the team’s findings is that sawfish, which are shark-like rays, eat bony fish and elasmobranchs (fishes with cartilaginous skeletons such as sharks and rays) throughout life and that sawfish are born in the Caloosahatchee and other rivers and live in those rivers for up to three years; also part of the study, bull sharks are born in the same rivers but move out during their first year.

For the next projects, the team will use eDNA to determine whether or not smalltooth sawfish inhabit the Indian River Lagoon and Tampa Bay, which historically contained smalltooth sawfish, and will continue looking at the sawfish diet in Southwest Florida.

Ultimately, this work will help assess the recovery of sawfish populations.

“Students prefer to work with iconic marine creatures like manatees, sharks, and sea turtles, but marine ecosystems are more than that,” he said. “People are always attracted by visible creatures, but most creatures in the sea are invisible and they play fundamental roles in the ocean as well as many physical and chemical processes.” ■

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**Environmental
DNA is
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of FWC.**

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HOW TO

...kill, clean and cook a lionfish

Beware the venomous spines when cleaning / **BY KEVIN LOLLAR**

OLD JOKE: HOW DO porcupines mate? Very carefully. The same could be said about killing, cleaning and cooking lionfish.

You see, lionfish, which are very tasty, have 18 venomous spines that can inflict an excruciating wound, so you need to handle the fish very carefully.

The killing part can be done by scuba divers and snorkelers, and the weapon of choice is usually a pole spear with three or more prongs.

Shooting lionfish is easy because, unlike grouper and snapper, they don't spook when approached by humans. Maybe they think nobody's going to mess with them and their spines.

You really need to start being careful once you've speared your lionfish because that's when you start dealing with the fish close-up.

You can't just put lionfish on a stringer, as you would other species, because the spines of a lionfish on a stringer will stick you. So, an essential tool for lionfishermen is a lionfish containment unit (or LCU), of which there are two main types (you can find these at your local dive shop or online):

1. A PVC tube closed at one end with a funnel at the other. All you do is jam the end of your spear, with the lionfish on it, into the funnel end; when you pull the spear out, the fish stays in the LCU.

2. Puncture-proof bags, which come in various designs and have different mechanisms for getting the lionfish off the spear.

When you get back to shore with your LCU full of lionfish, you need to fillet them – very carefully.

The important thing to know is the location of the 18 venomous spines: 13 in the dorsal fin, three in the anal fin and two in the pelvic fin, and those spines can sting



Chef James Fraser cleans a lionfish in preparation for cooking.

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
CLEAN & COOK
LIONFISH

PREPARE



ENJOY



COOK



you long after the fish is dead.

Some people cut the spines off with a knife or pair of scissors; others just work around them. If you decide to cut them off, make sure you get all 18.

Whether you remove the spines or not, filleting lionfish is like filleting any other fish. Of course, you can cook the fish whole and avoid the whole filleting process.

If you don't dive or snorkel or just don't want to kill your own lionfish, Florida's 26 Whole Foods stores sell whole lionfish, and if you don't want to mess with

cleaning the fish, a store fishmonger will do it for you.

As for cooking your lionfish, here's what Chef James Fraser, an instructor in FGCU's School of Resort & Hospitality Management, wrote in an email for this story:

"Because lionfish is delicate and not very meaty, in the sense that there's a lot of bone and spine, I like to fillet the fish, batter and deep fry!! And of course, that leaves many options for the type of batter, i.e., beer-batter, tempura batter, or various breadings, and can be paired with many

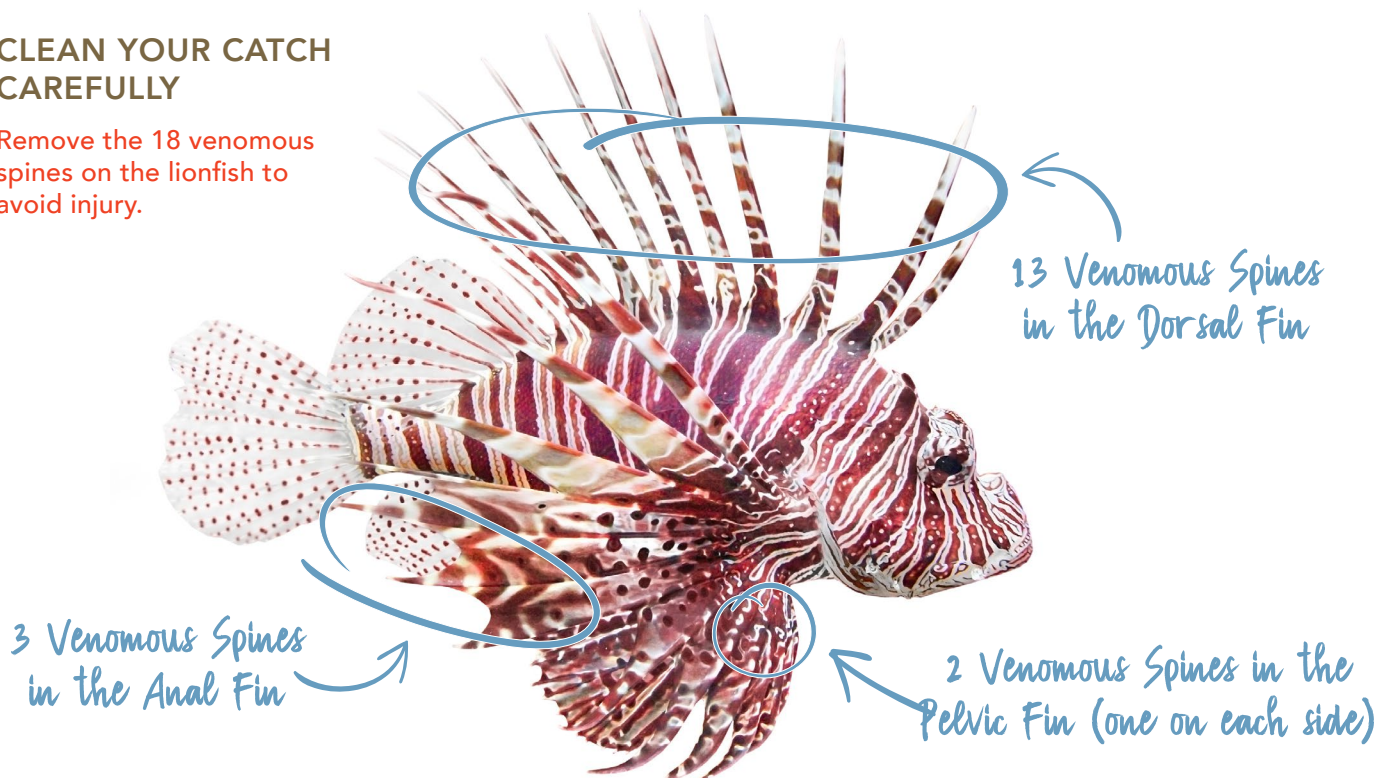
types of sauces, like aioli, sweet chili sauce, honey mustard – whatever matches the theme of your meal.

"For those who shy from fried foods, (try) a nice blackening seasoning, or just salt and pepper, sautéed with a small amount of oil or sprayed with a light coating of oil of choice and broiled in a preheated oven. I love fish tacos with a squeeze of lime, spiced mayo and fresh cabbage slaw."

Lionfish also need to be cooked very carefully: The worst thing you can do to a tasty fish is overcook it. ■

CLEAN YOUR CATCH CAREFULLY

Remove the 18 venomous spines on the lionfish to avoid injury.



SPORTS

BASKETBALL

FGCU basketball is a hot ticket

Men's, women's teams get better and better / **BY KEITH GIBSON**

HOW PROMISING DOES 2017-18 look for Florida Gulf Coast University basketball? Well, one telling clue is the Eagles' preseason promotional video for season-ticket sales.

Men's basketball Coach Joe Dooley enters his fifth season with three of the top four scorers returning from a record-setting, 26-win team that swept the Atlantic Sun Conference regular-season and tournament championships and earned an automatic NCAA Tournament bid. Among those returning is Brandon Goodwin, FGCU's single-season scoring record holder and ASUN Newcomer of the Year. Yet the "host" of the video who first introduces viewers to Eagles basketball 2017-18 is a new face of the program, one who didn't even play last year.

Meet Ricky Doyle, a junior who will finally introduce his much-heralded, 6-foot-10, 250-pound power game both to FGCU fans and a wary slew of ASUN opponents after transferring back to Southwest Florida (he's a Cape Coral native and Bishop Verot High School grad) from the University of Michigan and sitting out a season under NCAA rules.

He's the pleasant young man seated in the Alico Arena stands who greets potential ticket buyers at the start of the video before yielding the stage to other Eagles men and women basketball stars, most notably 6-foot-2 senior guard Goodwin, the greatest one-year scorer in FGCU history with 629 points (18.5 per game). Only a prize catch

such as Doyle, who ESPN ranked as one of the top players in the country at his position coming out of high school, could relegate a talent such as Goodwin, who Dooley said "had one of the best, if not the best, season in program history," to co-star status, at least in the video pep rally.

Heck, even the video's leading ladies – FGCU's women's basketball seniors Taylor Gradinjan and Rosemarie Julien, the team's top returning scorer (11 ppg) – and their team's equally inspiring resume of an identical 26 wins, ASUN Tournament title and NCAA bid, are introduced on camera only after the new Big Man on Campus debuts.

Doyle's starring role in the preseason hype is no disrespect to Goodwin, junior guard Zach Johnson (11.9 ppg) or senior guard Christian Terrell (10.2 ppg), the other top returning scorers. Nor is it a slap at FGCU women stars Gradinjan, a guard; Julien, a forward; guard Erica Nelson (9.2 ppg), or guard China Dow (8.7 ppg, 4.5 rebounds pg), leaders of a returning group that got hot as the 2016-17 season progressed under Coach Karl Smesko, who arguably did his finest job last year – even though he didn't add to his seven ASUN Coach of the Year honors. Instead, all the basketball coaching bling at FGCU after 2016-17 went to Dooley, who was named top men's ASUN coach and National Association of Basketball Coaches District 3 Coach of the Year.

Indeed, what Doyle's signing and starring role in the official Eagles season-ticket push means is that FGCU – which consistently



“The season-ticket holders who are at almost every game are very important to our success, and I just want them to know that we appreciate all their support, and the support of all our fans.”

BRANDON GOODWIN, FGCU BASKETBALL PLAYER



Men's basketball Coach Joe Dooley (left) and women's basketball Coach Karl Smesko

COACH PHOTOS BY LINWOOD FERGUSON/CAPTIVERPHOTOS.COM; CROWD IMAGE BY JAMES GRECO



ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
SEASON-TICKET
VIDEO

backs up all the men's "Dunk City" and women's "Raining Threes" hype with 20-win seasons, ASUN dominance and postseason trips out of both locker rooms – is on to the next step as an emerging mid-major basketball power and worthy destination for top collegiate hoops talent nationwide.

Build the programs, and they will come.

On the men's side alone, more evidence of FGCU's rising national profile is another transfer, junior Michael Gilmore, who brings pedigree as the nephew of basketball legend Artis Gilmore along with an attacking game on a 6-foot-10 frame as a transfer from Virginia Commonwealth and Miami. Two other transfers with collegiate experience include another 6-foot-10 player, sophomore Brady Ernst out of Indian

Hills Community College and Iowa State; and Dinero Mercurius, a 6-foot-4 junior billed as a pure shooter out of Daytona State and South Florida. Mix these players with incoming freshmen Darnell Rogers and Brian Thomas, both highly touted, and sophomore returnees Christian Carlyle and RaySean Scott Jr., and you quickly see why this is unquestionably the team to beat in the ASUN – and perhaps beyond, especially with 6-foot-8, four-star recruit and University of Nevada-Las Vegas transfer Troy Baxter bringing three years of eligibility starting in 2018-19.

Flip over to Smesko's always-strong women's team, and besides Gradinjan, Julien and Dow, the Eagles bring back their leading rebounder, sophomore Tytionia Adderly; and senior guard Jessica Cattani, who averaged almost

TOP: Senior Brandon Goodwin (0) returns after averaging an FGCU record 18.5 points per game.

AT RIGHT: FGCU seniors Taylor Gradinjan (24) and Rosemarie Julien (32) return to lead a women's team that won 26 games last season.

seven points per game. A transfer who is eligible this season after earning her undergraduate degree at Houston Baptist, guard Lisa Zderadicka, is expected to make an immediate impact after leading her former team in scoring (11 ppg), assists and steals; and another transfer was granted a second season with FGCU, senior guard Mikala McGhee out of George Mason. On the horizon in 2018-19 are two more transfers – former Dunbar High star Keri Jewett-Giles, who is coming to FGCU from Southern

Mississippi; and sharpshooter Kerstie Philis, who joins the Eagles from Wagner – along with a collection of recruits.

The bottom line is that there is little to suggest FGCU's women will not continue a string of 13 seasons of at least 20 wins, and seven consecutive years with at least 25 wins, under one of the winningest coaches in the sport's history. Smesko has won more than 400 games at FGCU – including an incredible 93-3 ASUN record the past six years – and decided to stay with the program he founded after turning down Southern California of the PAC-12, which five years ago hired Dunk City architect Andy Enfield away from FGCU as men's basketball coach.

It all adds up to what likely will be a winter of wonder for FGCU fans at Alico Arena, which has become a house

FOR TICKETS

Call (239) 590-7145 or visit fgcuathletics.com.

of horrors for visiting teams with the men (16-3 in 2016-17) and women (17-1) increasingly tough to beat at home. Toss in the best – and likely toughest – regular-season schedules either team has played, including home non-conference dates with power schools Illinois State (men, Nov. 11), Illinois (women, Nov. 12), Middle Tennessee (men, Dec. 2) and Kentucky (women, Dec. 8), and it's no wonder FGCU Athletics is beating the drum hard on ticket sales.

"We are really excited to be hosting Kentucky at Alico Arena," Smesko

said. "We always try to put together an attractive schedule for our Southwest Florida fan base. Our players also appreciate the opportunity to play a home game against such a quality opponent."

As for the guys' feelings about The Nest, returning star Goodwin says that Eagle fans "give us a huge edge. They push us when we need a little help, and they wreak havoc on our opponents. The season-ticket holders who are at almost every game are very important to our success, and I just want them to know that we appreciate all their support, and the support of all our fans."

Sounds like the perfect season-ticket sales pitch. Just tell your friendly FGCU ticket rep that video stars Ricky, Brandon, Taylor and Rosemarie sent you. ■





Student-athletes touch the academic bases at the Hartley Academic Resource Center.

ATHLETICS

Student-athletes score high in the classroom as well as in competition

BY KEITH GIBSON

IF YOU FOLLOW FLORIDA Gulf Coast University athletics, you know the Eagles are winners. Consider that in 2016-17, FGCU captured its third consecutive Atlantic Sun Conference All-Sports Championship, and the swimming and diving team has won eight titles in nine years in the Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association.

But beyond the courts, fields and pools, FGCU student-athletes also are winning at the “student” part of their game.

With a 3.27 cumulative grade-point

average this past spring, some 260 Eagle athletes in 15 intercollegiate sports topped the overall student average GPA (of 3.08) for the 16th consecutive semester. And with more than 7,000 collective volunteer hours performed by those student-athletes and the department’s staff in 2016-17, the regional impact of FGCU Athletics made the university one of three national finalists for the inaugural Community Service Award (with Maryland and East Carolina) presented by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and the Fiesta Bowl.

That’s taking FGCU’s formula for athletics success from the scoreboard and spreading it to the bigger game of a complete student life.

Such accomplishments don’t happen by accident. While the FGCU coaches provide the most obvious guidance in building well-rounded citizens away from their respective sports, much of this non-competitive success can be credited to university “coaches” of a different sort put in place by Athletics Director Ken Kavanagh.

Meet Kelly Jean Brock and Tom

Roberts, who push the student-athletes academically; and Kathy Peterson, who coordinates the teams' highly visible volunteer presence in the community. While the coaches and players go about their business on the competitive side of the equation, this trio behind the scenes makes sure the non-sporting side of running an NCAA athletics program gets the attention it needs.

All three say the common denominators in achieving success in both academic achievement and community service are the same as those needed to build

“never worked with a better faculty than the one we have at FGCU. They make every effort to be fair not only for athletes, but for every student who has other commitments.”

That's where Roberts, an associate and graduate professor of Educational Leadership who serves as FGCU's faculty athletics representative, comes in as liaison.

“I always encourage our student-athletes to be proactive about keeping professors informed when they will be on the road, to see what they can do in advance to stay up with the work,” said Roberts, who

their talents to some 30 Southwest Florida organizations through the years, including three primary initiatives: Habitat for Humanity, the Harry Chapin Food Bank and Golisano Children's Hospital. Eagles also are a presence in local elementary schools, primarily through the basketball teams' Eagle Reading program, which Peterson says is a “huge thing for the younger kids.”

“They really look up to our players,” said Peterson, the associate athletics director for student-athlete services. “We get a lot of positive feedback from the schools in appreciation for us coming.”

The first day I was on campus, they pulled me aside and told me how it was going to be. They gave me a plan, and we stuck to that plan, and it put me in position to succeed.

NICK RIVERA '17

a winning sports team: effective time management and teamwork.

“Coordinating time demands of student-athletes is where we help them the most,” said Brock, assistant athletic director and director of the Hartley Academic Resource Center. “We have the resources to help them get organized. Sometimes it's as simple as keeping a to-do list.”

Brock oversees two other full-time staff members, about 20 tutors and 15 student peer mentors who help athletes remain academically eligible and on track to graduate in four years. Athletes meet once or twice a week with the support staff to make sure they're staying on course. Besides the tutoring and coaching, FGCU Athletics works closely with Undergraduate Studies and takes full advantage of the Center for Academic Achievement and Writing Center. Team study halls are scheduled eight to 10 hours a week — with cellphones confiscated for maximum concentration.

Behind all this is an FGCU faculty that's equally critical to student-athlete success. Brock, who worked at the universities of Tennessee and Minnesota before coming to FGCU four years ago, said she has

just finished his first year in the athletics faculty role. “Our faculty members are understanding and accommodating. I have yet to come across a problem between student-athletes and professors.”

The work ethic and responsibility that are necessary to win games translates perfectly into coursework, given the proper guidance. “My personal experience with athletes as students is outstanding,” Roberts said. “They are top-notch, both in classrooms in the traditional sense, and in online courses. They tend to be active participants and get assignments done on time. I think those qualities are attributable to what it takes them to be successful as athletes.”

At FGCU, another part of being a student-athlete is fulfilling the university's requirement of performing at least 80 documented service-learning hours to graduate. Each of FGCU's 15 teams completes at least one service project each academic year that engages at least 90 percent of the roster and doesn't involve their sport. In other words, the baseball team can't get off easy by staging a clinic for local Little Leaguers.

Instead, Eagle student-athletes have lent

The community visibility also helps attract FGCU's neighbors to campus.

“When people see our athletes and meet them, it makes them want to come and see them play,” Peterson said.

This support system for success isn't taken for granted by the Eagles athletes who benefit from it. Nick Rivera, a first baseman on the baseball team from Cape Coral who was the most accomplished power hitter in FGCU history with career team records of 46 homers, 63 doubles and 220 runs batted in, says he never would have earned his degree in criminal justice last spring if it weren't for Brock, Roberts, Peterson and the rest of the team behind the teams.

“The amount of effort they put in motivates us to do better,” said Rivera, whose criminal-justice plans are on hold as he pursues his dream of becoming a baseball coach himself. “When I got here, I needed to be pushed, or I never would have graduated. The first day I was on campus, they pulled me aside and told me how it was going to be. They gave me a plan, and we stuck to that plan, and it put me in position to succeed. I'm tremendously grateful.” ■

ALUMNI

CLASS OF 2006

His foresight is full-sail ahead

Vision-impaired Kris Scheppe finds success on the seas

BY KAREN BOOTH

THE FGCU SAILING Club has Kris Scheppe to thank. It took time to make it happen, but happen it did, albeit a little more slowly than Scheppe might have liked. By the time he garnered all the support he needed from the South Atlantic Intercollegiate Sailing Association, he'd graduated. The following semester, FGCU Sailing Club members competed in their first sailing regatta without him.

Perhaps more remarkable than Scheppe's love of sailing and his founding of the club is that he is vision impaired. Born with a genetic eye disease, Scheppe, 37, has no peripheral vision; his forward sight is reduced to a pinhole, "like looking through a straw," he said.

Not that his vision challenges have ever stopped him. An environmental studies major at FGCU, he was director of environmental affairs for Student Government; president of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and, as a member of the powerlifting club, took third at collegiate nationals and second at the North American Powerlifting Championship.

His experience in Student Government and his competitive drive have served him well over the years. "I definitely had great opportunities at FGCU," said Scheppe, who



Kris Scheppe

PHOTOS BY BRIAN TIETZ

“

**I definitely had great opportunities at FGCU.
Student government taught me how to advocate.
And sports are always big. Honestly, without competing
in sports, I don't think I'd be where I am today.**

”

KRIS SCHEPPE, SAILOR AND WEB DESIGNER

lives in Naples. “Student government taught me how to advocate. And sports are always big. We had a great powerlifting coach in Jim Dundon. He was there for all athletes. Honestly, without competing in sports, I don't think I'd be where I am today.”

Where he is today is nothing short of inspirational. He races competitively in national and world blind sailing competitions. His latest achievement is the 2016 Boston Open Blind Sailing Regatta where he placed first. In 2015, he earned a bronze medal in the Blind Fleet Racing World Championship. The year before that, it was bronze in the Blind Match Racing World Championship.

Which brings us to the logistics of blind sailing – Match Racing vs. Fleet Racing. In Match Racing, two boats compete; the winner progresses through a bracket system much like March Madness basketball finals. Match boats have a three-person crew, all visually impaired. Buoys and boats emit sounds. Crew members work as a team, navigating via sound and feeling the wind.

In Fleet Racing many boats compete, “much like how runners line up at a track meet,” said Scheppe. “A four-person team has two visually impaired and two

sighted sailors. One blind sailor steers the boat, the other is mainsheet trimmer. One sighted sailor is jib trimmer. The other is tactician, not allowed to touch any controls. He gives the commands and figures the tactics needed to win the race.”

“Sailing definitely feels good,” said Scheppe. “On the water, you feel a sense of freedom. Sometimes it's relaxing; other times, exhilarating.”

With a grant from the Community Foundation of Collier County, Scheppe started Blind Sailing Unlimited, a non-profit organization committed to providing opportunities to the visually impaired. That's a volunteer job; he makes his living as a freelance web designer.

“In the fall, we're going to fundraise to buy our own boat,” he said, which will allow BSU to offer programming on a more consistent basis. “I want to share the enjoyment of sailing with others,” he said. ■

For information on Blind Sailing Unlimited email info@blindsailingunlimited.org, call (239) 206-3451 or visit blindsailingunlimited.org.



Kris Scheppe and a friend head out for a sail.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

UPDATES:



NOMINATE HIGH-FLYING ALUMNI

It's time to nominate deserving graduates for this year's Alumni of Distinction and Soaring Eagle awards. Recipients will be honored on Feb. 16, during Homecoming Weekend (see below).

The deadline to nominate is Friday, Jan. 12.

Visit alumni.fgcu.edu/alumniawards for award criteria and nomination forms. For questions, email alumnirelations@fgcu.edu.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR HOMECOMING

Homecoming is set for Feb. 15-17 and will offer plenty of fun, festivities and time to visit with fellow alumni.

The weekend begins at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 15, with a Meet the President cocktail reception at the newly created facilities at North Lake. President Mike Martin will be introduced.

At 6 p.m. Friday, the annual Alumni Awards presentation will take place during which this year's Alumnus or Alumna of Distinction and Soaring Eagles will be honored. (See previous story for details on nominating someone for these prestigious awards.)

Saturday is basketball day. The FGCU women's team plays Lipscomb at 4 p.m. There's an alumni tailgate party at 6 p.m. at the ROC (Recreation Outdoor Complex), followed by the men's game vs. Lipscomb at 7 p.m. ■



CLASS OF 2016

Love comes out of the closet

Jessica Goodall takes care of necessities in her social work / **BY RICK WEBER**

THE IMAGES ARE seared into Jessica Goodall's soul: the countenances of despair and heartache that were transformed into hope and comfort.

She spent many of her childhood days – and sometimes even the nights – at Abby's House, a shelter for abused women and children that her great aunt, Eva Engel, founded in Worcester, Mass.

That's where Goodall's passion for social work began. She was one of the lucky ones. She knew with inextricable certainty at an early age what she wanted to do with her life.

"I've just always felt it was my purpose ever since I was pretty young," Goodall says. "I just always felt I was meant to help the most underserved population. I have always been extremely blessed and lucky in terms of having a very loving and stable upbringing. I just felt like I was given the opportunities and skills and abilities to be able to intentionally give back. As I grew and realized that you could do that as a profession through social work, I just knew that was my purpose."

For more information, visit evas-foundation.org

After obtaining her bachelor's in sociology from Framingham State College in Massachusetts in 2002, she moved to Southwest Florida to be closer to her parents. She worked in the child welfare system in Naples for 11 years, but left it in 2014 to pursue a master's in social work at FGCU.

That's where Goodall, 37, hatched the idea to start her own company, Eva's Closet, in honor of her great aunt.

"The most impactful thing about FGCU was the understanding of what would be the most effective social service agency to serve the populations in Southwest Florida," she says. "And not only serve them, but serve them in a way that social agencies weren't

necessarily doing. FGCU impacted me in a lot of different ways I didn't realize until I was done with the program. Dr. Amanda Evans and Dr. Thomas Felke were hugely impactful. They were amazing."

In her last semester in 2016, she founded Eva's Closet, a Fort Myers non-profit that provides necessities to those in need with "grace, respect and honor." It supplies gently used clothing, shoes, household goods, baby supplies and other essential items to families and individuals at no cost and also aids the local public school system in providing school uniforms and clothing to homeless and transient families.

"The combination of what I'm providing is a little bit different from what most agencies do in that I'm able to directly allow my clients to come in and give them clothing, food and baby supplies," she says. "And I refer them to other agencies if I know it will be pertinent to their situation. It's super gratifying." ■



Jessica Goodall,
founder of Eva's Closet

PHOTOS BY BRIAN TIETZ

CLASS OF 2008

Running at the speed of data

Jonathan Forbes keeps distribution moving fast for ReachMobi / **BY RICK WEBER**

JONATHAN Forbes can't identify with the worker who is burdened by abject servitude, trudging lifelessly to work every morning knowing today isn't likely to be any different from yesterday or tomorrow.

He is senior director of distribution for ReachMobi, where he built the company's vast product distribution strategies from the ground up. Based in Fort Myers – with a satellite office in Philadelphia and an email division in Kansas City – ReachMobi's Mobile Division builds free-to-use, direct-to-consumer mobile apps that it monetizes in partnership with major advertising brands.

ReachMobi began four years ago, when Forbes joined the company. At the time there were four employees. Now there are 66 at the three locations with another 20 expected to be hired this year in Fort Myers alone. ReachMobi is a driving force in the Southwest Florida tech economy, he says, and is creating a home for FGCU's tech grads.

Forbes, 31, compares it to a Silicon Valley startup: casual dress, a pool table, lots of energy and a culture that encourages undaunted entrepreneurial spirit.

"It's a dynamic workplace and dynamic market we operate in," he says. "You can have an idea in the morning, you can throw it out to the marketplace at noon just before lunch, and by the time you get back, you've got data on whether the market likes the idea or not.

"The thing I like the most is how quickly



Jonathan Forbes, senior director of distribution for ReachMobi

we're able to run. We love the speed and rapidity. We can execute, quite frankly, faster than anyone else. It's just so different than a typical brick-and-mortar shop."

Forbes graduated from FGCU in 2008 with a degree in accounting. But he has been obsessed with computers since he got his first one 18 years ago, has always wanted to get into technology and says that the university's technology-focused accounting program set him up for success.

"I think some of the things I learned at FGCU really accelerated my career," he says. "Now we're seeing a ton of emphasis on business intelligence, which is using big data, and being able to mine through that data and get actionable insights. That's what we do every day at ReachMobi. With my accounting work at

FGCU, it was being able to understand the flow of data and know what's important and what's not, and even how to self-audit that data and make sure I'm looking at it correctly before making a decision. It's been super important in every function I've had outside of FGCU."

Forbes loves the pace. If it ever slows down and seems mundane, he'll get out.

"What's most exciting is waking up every day knowing the idea that I might have or one of my team members might have that morning might be the next big product that levels the business up to quintuple its current revenue run rate," he says. "And just knowing that's always there is incredible – just knowing every single person in the company has the power to influence those decisions." ■

Collier leaders follow former teacher

Amanda Beights develops a wiser workforce through Naples chamber / **BY NINA BARBERO, '16**

SCHOOLTEACHERS often encourage their students to try new things, but Amanda Beights needed some encouragement of her own when, in 2013, a fellow FGCU alumna told her about a job opening at the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce.

Kaitlan Benedict ('06, Legal Studies), then the Chamber's executive assistant, wanted Beights to set aside a decade of teaching and apply to become vice president of the Chamber's nonprofit arm: the Leadership Collier Foundation.

"At first, she thought she wasn't qualified," Benedict said. "I said, 'It's just another aspect of teaching.'"

Beights, who earned a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at FGCU and is now more than four years into the VP position, agrees with that assessment. In her role, she manages three leadership programs: Leadership Collier, Growing Associates in Naples and Youth Leadership. Beights leads groups of about 30 to 40 students on educational daytrips.

Each program has different time frames and audiences, but they share a mission.

"They're all focused on civic engagement for rising or established leaders," Beights said.

Leadership Collier helps locals learn more about the community through trips to non-profits, educational facilities and more. Graduates of the program often complete service projects as a team.

Beights said one class was shocked to learn, during a tour of a Title I school, that many students there had never visited the beach.

"That struck a chord with several of them," Beights said. "They felt that is something they could change."

The class planned a beach trip for nearly 50 third graders.

"The kids had so much fun and they left with goodie bags full of books,"

Beights said. "That's the power of a group like this."

As the only full-time staff member of the Foundation, Beights relies largely on volunteers. She rolls graduates of Leadership Collier into planning positions for future classes.

"That's really what makes our program so dynamic, is that it's not being planned by me," Beights said.

Leadership Collier students come from a variety of industries, from law enforcement to healthcare. These different backgrounds help them create unique, behind-the-scenes sessions.

Through the Chamber, Beights helps members of the younger-focused GAIN and

Youth Leadership build business relationships.

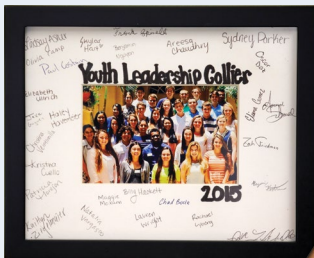
"We very easily connect students in both high school and college to opportunities," Beights said.

Outside of work, Beights and her husband, Andrew, are proud volunteers for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast.

Her advice for FGCU students is to find a volunteer role they enjoy, with both "like-minded and not-like-minded people. Get outside of their dorm room, get outside of their campus, and get involved with the community."

The Foundation programs help develop Collier County's workforce. And, although no longer in a classroom setting, Beights is still doing what she loves: teaching. ■

In her job at the Greater Naples Chamber, alumna Amanda Beights learned that teaching takes many forms.



CLASS OF 2015

FGCU professor inspires Jessica Vena's professionFurthering a forensic fascination / **BY BETSY CLAYTON**

IT'S BEEN ABOUT 10 years since Jessica Vena ('15, Master's Forensic Studies) first wrote about a topic that sounded like an episode from TV's "Criminal Minds." Her Fort Myers High School International Baccalaureate paper explored the credibility of people using mental insanity as a defense.

Later, there were times she found herself re-reading the plaques along a row of palms at the University of Florida that serve to remember the victims of the Gainesville Ripper, a serial killer she studied as a psychology undergraduate. And then came her FGCU thesis — a comparative analysis of adolescents who are shooters vs. adult mass murderers.

The 27-year-old green-eyed alum's warm smile and easy demeanor wouldn't hint at her acute interest in what many may consider macabre.

"I have two sides to me," she explained recently at a Fort Myers Starbucks not far from where she'd finished her shift at the District 21 Medical Examiner's Office. "I have an academic approach to topics — a sterile, analytical one. And I have the human side of me that knows this is a human behavior that happens that's really awful. This side of Jessica is like, 'Wow, I can't believe that.'"

Although her interest in forensic studies started young, she credits much of her subject-matter expertise and success to FGCU's Duane Dobbert, professor of forensic studies, her master's program



Jessica Vena's job at the Medical Examiner's Office isn't like "CSI," but she loves it.

mentor and the author of "Deviance: Theories on Behaviors That Defy Social Norms" (Praeger, 2015). Dobbert and Thomas X. Mackey edited the book with contributions from students like Vena, who assisted with two chapters.

She speaks emphatically about his dynamic classroom atmosphere and Socratic method of facilitating discussions. "The way Dr. Dobbert taught us, he made us communicators," she said. "It was, 'I respect your opinion, however this is how I feel' ... on topics of rape, crime, why crime happens, what makes someone predisposed to something another person wouldn't do."

While she ponders pursuing a doctoral degree, she helps out at her family's longtime North Fort Myers restaurant, Fabio's, and works as an administrative

specialist at the office of Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Rebecca Hamilton.

Her days involve handling public records requests, updating policies and procedures, and ensuring the office is in compliance with statutes that govern it as it interacts with federal agents, local law enforcement officers, attorneys, hospitals and funeral homes. District 21 handles traumatic deaths (accidents, suicides, homicides) for Lee, Hendry and Glades counties.

It seems a long time since as a girl she devoured every Nancy Drew novel she could find. It's nearly every week someone asks her if her job is like TV's "CSI." (It's not.) "If I pursue a doctorate, then I'd probably move into teaching — and I'd completely, wholeheartedly adopt the way Dr. Dobbert taught us," she said. ■

GIVING

FUNDRAISING

FGCU exceeds goal for capital campaign

SUPPORTERS OF FLORIDA GULF COAST University contributed \$127 million over the course of three years to enhance the university's efforts in the areas of academic excellence, athletics, scholarships, student success and community and regional impact.

And while the three-year-long \$100-million capital campaign has come to a close, financial support by the private sector remains critically important, says Chris Simoneau, FGCU's vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation.

"The reason the university has continued to grow and expand is due, in large part, to ongoing investment by private donors," he says. "Tuition and state money has remained flat. We have to continue to have investment from the community to sustain a thriving organization."

One of the most important aspects of the campaign was that it grew the university's endowment significantly, from about \$63 million in fiscal year 2013-14 to \$84.6 million in fiscal year 2016-17.

The funds raised enabled the university to provide a record amount of scholarship money to a record number of students – more than \$3 million to 1,091 students. That's double the amount awarded in 2013-14, the year before the campaign commenced. The campaign enabled the university to expand Alico Arena, enhance programming at WGCU Public Media, broaden programs at the Bower School for Music & the Arts and much more.

While the campaign has ended, scholarships continue to be a high priority as only about one-third of students who apply receive them because there still is not enough money to meet demand.

Another top priority is funding for the proposed School of Integrated Coastal and Watershed Studies. The state has allotted some funding for planning purposes but this critically important initiative still needs additional capital if the university is going to be able to build a structure to house the laboratory and classroom space needed for the research and learning that it will provide.

To find out how you can help advance the regionally important programs of FGCU, visit fgcu.edu/foundation. ■

– Karen Feldman



Philanthropist Myra Janco Daniels made a \$3 million commitment to WGCU Public Media.

“

The reason the university has continued to grow and expand is due, in large part, to ongoing investment by private donors.

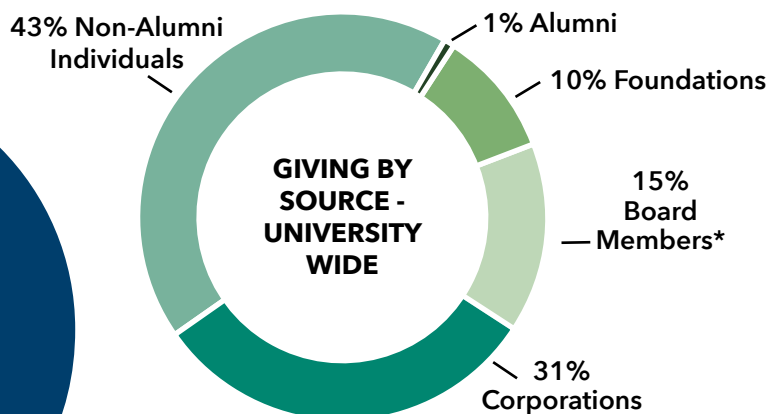
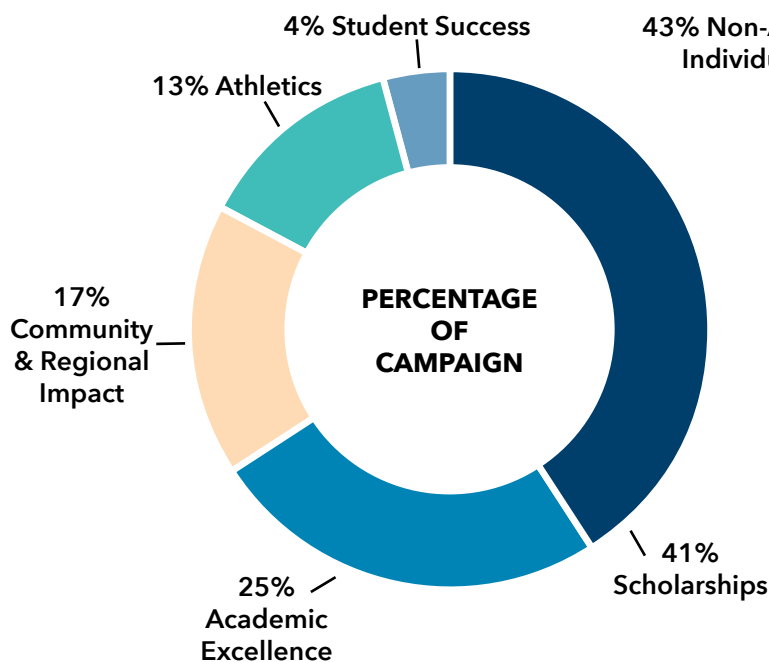
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CHRIS SIMONEAU

FGCU VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT
AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FGCU FOUNDATION



The campaign provided funds for the expansion of Alico Arena.



ENDOWMENT VALUE

FY17	\$84,643,790
FY16	\$72,931,535
FY15	\$74,882,500
FY14	\$75,745,604
FY13	\$62,967,823

*FGCU Board of Trustees, FGCU Foundation Board, Florida Board of Governors



Educational impact

Blair Foundation funds scholarships, environmental research / **BY HELEN NOBLE**

PROTECTING environmentally sensitive and important mangroves, determining the impact of micro-plastics on area waters and game fish and helping to improve the health of aquarium fish during transport are just a few of the many research projects upon which Blair Foundation gifts have made an impact at Florida Gulf Coast University.

The foundation's gifts this year have again made scholarships and grants possible for students majoring in Environmental Engineering, Environmental Science and Marine Science. These scholarships are awarded to

first-generation students as well as those who qualify academically and demonstrate serious commitment to protecting the environment through their studies, research and volunteer service.

The foundation is named for philanthropists and ardent conservationists Dorothy and John Blair, who became Naples residents in 1967. Today, family members serve as trustees of the foundation.

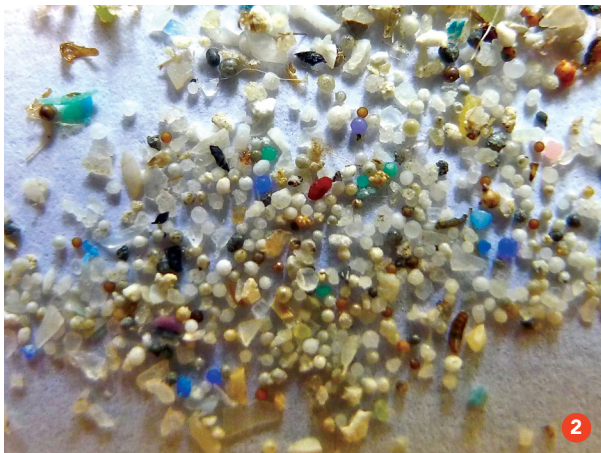
Since 2014, the Blair Foundation has provided funding for FGCU students to study environmental impacts on the Southwest Florida ecosystem and beyond. The foundation has donated \$225,000. Matching funds from Florida's First

Generation program added another \$165,000, making it possible to provide scholarships to more than 70 students.

"We like to do STEM and natural resources investment," says Dick Reiman, a trustee of the foundation and the Blairs' nephew. "The family thought if you have an education, no one can take that away from you. So we have invested in education with FGCU."

Among this year's scholarships, 10 were awarded to full-time undergraduate and master's students who conducted summer research through FGCU's Whitaker Center for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education.

Laura Frost, director of the Whitaker



Center, said, “Part of the mission of the Whitaker Center is to support student research in STEM areas. Blair Foundation scholarships allow full-time focused summer research. This is significant for master’s students as there often are less available scholarships for their work.”

Blair Foundation grant funds also were allocated to FGCU’s Vester Marine and Environmental Field Station in Bonita Springs to support studies that address local environmental issues.

Michael Parsons, director of the Vester Field Station, said, “The Blair Foundation funding has allowed us to expand our capacity for student research and further utilization of the Vester Field Station.

“One study will establish a long-term monitoring capability at several mangrove locations in Estero Bay. This will allow researchers to determine how mangroves are responding to coastal development and sea

1. Associate Professor of Marine Sciences David Fugate conducts a lab at Vester Field Station.

2. Micro-plastics are often invisible to the naked eye and can enter the food chain via fish.

3. The Nutrient Recycling Study explores possible solutions to a problem experienced with the transport of aquarium fish.

4. Red mangroves near FGCU’s Vester Field Station in Bonita Springs.

level rise over the next 10-plus years. These results will help to safeguard these important ecosystems for our fisheries and coastlines.”

Other studies funded by Blair Foundation funds involve micro-plastics and nutrient recycling.

“Prevalent in apparel and many fabrics, micro-plastics appear to be getting past

water treatment plants, entering directly into the watershed,” said Parsons, a professor of marine science who also serves as director of the Coastal Watershed Institute. “This study will determine if they represent a danger to game fish and filter-feeding shellfish. Ultimately we need to answer the question, how are we and our environment impacted by the micro-plastics in our everyday lives?”

The Nutrient Recycling Study explores possible solutions to a problem experienced with the transport of aquarium fish when ammonia levels build up, resulting in many deaths. By reducing ammonia levels, fish will remain healthier and more will survive transport.

Increasing survival rates of fish in transit creates a positive economic impact on businesses and consumers, and will improve the sustainability of the aquarium fish trade – thereby protecting this resource for future generations. ■

Vitellis' love of music inspires gift

Scholarship fund will benefit generations of talented students / **BY KAREN BOOTH**

JOYCE ANNE AND Raymond Vitelli moved to Pelican Bay in Naples two decades ago and immersed themselves in the community.

Joyce Anne passed in 2006; Raymond in 2016. But their legacy lives on in the Joyce Anne Vitelli Scholarship Fund, established by Raymond in 2010 to honor his wife and to benefit music majors in FGCU's Bower School of Music & the Arts. In 2017, the university received a generous bequest from the Vitelli estate, significantly enhancing support for students wishing to pursue careers in music performance, music education, music therapy or music composition.

Music was in Joyce Anne's blood. She attended Syracuse University on a violin scholarship, earned her master's in music and became a public-school music teacher in Newington, Conn. While her early adulthood was focused on her work as a music teacher, she went on to volunteer for several music-focused organizations. After retiring to Naples, Joyce Anne continued to play music and sing and volunteered with Artis-Naples for several years.

Raymond, too, enjoyed music, in particular, Beethoven, Mozart and Gershwin. He also loved patriotic songs, having served in the Navy during the Korean War. A highly educated man, he began his career as an administrator in the public school system in Ellington, Conn. His career included consulting for the U.S. Department of Justice; director of education and training for the Connecticut Department of Correction, and consultant for major corporations such as Hallmark. He eventually got into land development and retired to Florida.

Judie Cassidy, senior director of Advancement, got to know Raymond Vitelli. Through her friendship with him,



Roland Forti '11, was the first recipient of the Vitelli Scholarship. He is the choral and orchestra conductor at Diplomat Middle School in Cape Coral. Below left: Raymond and Joyce Anne Vitelli

she was privileged to have insight into the heart of his wife as well. Cassidy described Raymond Vitelli as "very much in love with Joyce Anne, insightful and thoughtful." The Joyce Anne Vitelli Scholarship Fund is a godsend for FGCU music students. "Joyce Anne was a wonderful musician," said Cassidy. "And Ray, a great benefactor of music. The Joyce Anne Vitelli Scholarship

Fund creates untold opportunities for music majors to broaden their horizons, and it ensures they have what they need to develop superior skills for performance."

Cathy Albergo, Bower School director, said, "The Vitelli gift is a very important part of our endowed scholarship program."

"Students must audition to be accepted as a music major," she said. "Out of approximately 130 students who applied this year, the class of 2017-18 will include

50 new music majors. Given the rigors of the required core courses for music majors and an additional three to five hours of practice and performance each day for their solo instruments and ensembles, students have very little time to work at a job. The Vitelli scholarship is very helpful."

Roland Forti, a 2010 recipient of the Vitelli scholarship, double majored in Music Performance and Music Education; he graduated in 2011. He was the first student to receive the award, and his success is a testament to its impact. Forti is the choral and orchestra conductor at Diplomat Middle School in Cape Coral, where he also teaches guitar. In 2013, he received the Outstanding Young Teacher of the Year award from the American String Teachers Association in Florida. He also serves as conductor of the Concert Orchestra of the Southwest Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Cassidy summed up what the Vitelli scholarship means to FGCU music majors: "Because of Ray's love for Joyce Anne and his creation of the Joyce Anne Vitelli Scholarship Fund in her honor, FGCU music majors will benefit for generations to come." ■

For details on making a gift, contact the FGCU Foundation at (239) 590-1067.





Bower School, gallery benefit from Wasmer gift

Family pays tribute to matriarch's love of art / **BY KAREN BOOTH**

MARY WASMER has had a longstanding love affair with the arts. Her son, Martin Wasmer, has had a longstanding relationship with Florida Gulf Coast University. And therein lies our story.

In May 2017, Wasmer, together with his brother and sisters, honored his mother with a gift to FGCU in support of the visual arts programming and art galleries of the Bower School of Music & the Arts. In recognition of this gift, the main university art gallery has been renamed Wasmer Art Gallery.

Wasmer, CEO of Wasmer Schroeder & Company, an asset management firm, has been involved in one way or another with FGCU for many years, both as a loyal donor and member of the board of trustees of the Marieb Foundation. "Marty and his family are outstanding philanthropists," said

Christopher Simoneau, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation. "This gift is a testament to the importance of the arts at the university. It allows us to create an endowment fund to support exhibitions in a perpetual way at the gallery."

"Our family has always been philanthropic," said Wasmer. "From a legacy point of view, I think of Ursuline College's Florence O'Donnell Wasmer Gallery in Cleveland, Ohio, which

was named for my grandmother. With that as a reference, we felt it would be wonderful to honor our mother in a similar fashion."

Mary Wasmer ran her own interior design firm – Mary Wasmer Interiors – in Cleveland for many years. "Our mother is multi-dimensional," said Wasmer. "She's not only into design, but she's also an avid collector of fine arts and antique furniture. Before moving to Florida in 1988, she also served on the board of the Cleveland Museum of Art."

Last spring's juried student art show in the recently named Wasmer Art Gallery. Below: Mary Wasmer

John Loscuito, gallery director for the Bower School, said, "The arts are really one of the ways we can explore all the interconnections between who we are and what we do as humans. Artists make connections with the sciences, nature and philosophy, intersecting with all disciplines."

And that is why the Wasmer gift is so important to the university. "The types of exhibitions and programming in our gallery are student focused," said Loscuito. "They touch on the sciences, humanities and so much more, so we are engaging our students within the arts and other academic departments. The goal is to enhance the educational outcomes for all FGCU students and the public."

"The Wasmers' gift will help us bring our exhibitions to a higher level and give us the ability to attract world-renowned artists and lecturers to enhance our programming."

Wasmer said, "We wanted to do something for our mother, and we wanted to work with an institution that we are familiar with and comfortable with. To me, that's a great advantage." ■





Mary Rodriguez (front left) and Luis Gonzalez of Off Market Miami, a company that helps investors acquire distressed properties, collaborate at the Venture X office in Naples along with (back from left) Jana Greer, Venture X community coordinator; Jason Heartgrave of Futurepreneur; and Martha Diveley of Arivs Appraisal Management.



THE FGCU EFFECT

The X factor: Diamonds shine a business model that's a jewel

THE BUSINESS-OFFICE of tomorrow is here today in Naples thanks to the vision of FGCU alum Brett Diamond, ('12, Business Management).

The same year Diamond graduated, he ventured into a revolutionary concept for collaboration with his dad, David, a serial entrepreneur best known as co-founder of DeAngelis Diamond Construction, a leading national commercial builder. The Diamonds' rough theory: the "co-work" space – a concept favored by many tech startups to minimize operating costs – would also work for a broader base of business models.

So five years ago, the Diamonds introduced Venture X, a shared-workspace environment designed to encourage free collaboration and communication. With the flagship office in the Mercato development in Naples, Venture X is billed as part boutique hotel and part modern office space, where a diverse community of architects, publishers, tech startups, attorneys, real-estate brokers, small businesses and other professionals choose among a variety of membership options – all designed to foster communal work habits and networking.

The younger Diamond, who also carries the title of chief innovation officer at DeAngelis Diamond, is a glittering example of FGCU helping to inspire a young mind that grows and goes on to inspire others. The venture is clearly a success. The Diamonds have commissioned Venture X locations in San Antonio, Texas; and Ontario, Canada, with five franchises planned in Texas, two in Florida (Miami and Sarasota), two in Colorado, another in Maryland and plans for a satellite location in Australia.

When X marks the spot Down Under, it'll truly be a small business world after all.

– Keith Gibson



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A new lakefront boardwalk adds a new
social gathering spot in North Lake Village.

