

FGCU 360

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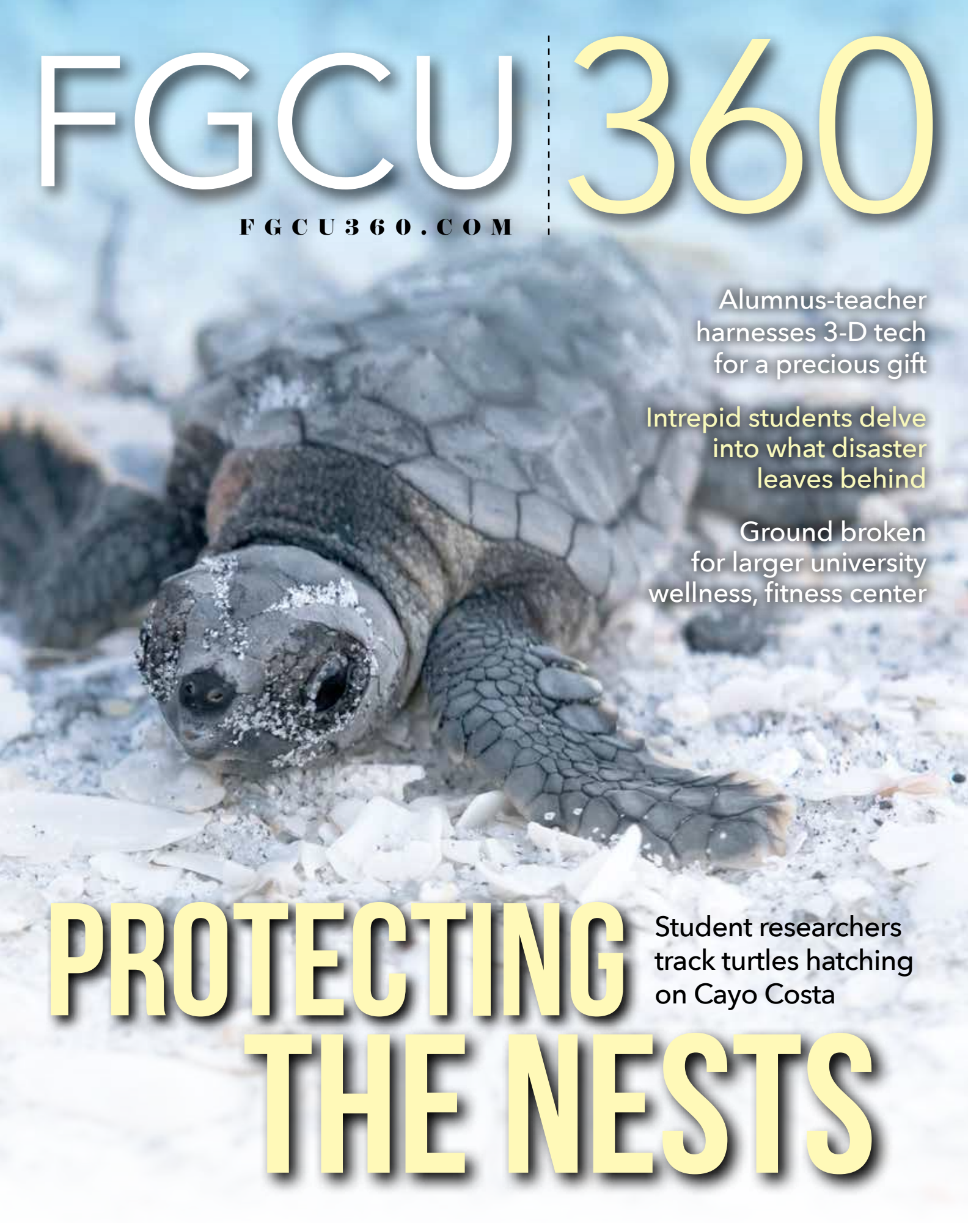
Alumnus-teacher
harnesses 3-D tech
for a precious gift

Intrepid students delve
into what disaster
leaves behind

Ground broken
for larger university
wellness, fitness center

PROTECTING THE NESTS

Student researchers
track turtles hatching
on Cayo Costa



FALL 2018

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PHOTO BY RICKY CASSELL





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FIRST

SPOTLIGHT

Getting plugged in at FGCU

University preparing senior for many career paths / **BY ED SCOTT**

HE HASN'T SPENT ANY time in laboratories. But Antonio Reyes has done a lot of experimenting.

An integrated studies major at Florida Gulf Coast University, Reyes likes to try new things, to do "a little of a lot. I really spread myself in a ton of different aspects," he says.

Scheduled to receive his bachelor's degree in December, Reyes started as a communication major. But his interests evolved, from communication to advertising, marketing and business classes, to photography, graphic design and digital media design. He also dabbles in online broadcasting. Off campus, he teaches hip-hop dancing.

"Maybe I'm just trying to find the perfect combo," he says. "The way I feel like is everything that I am doing is going to prepare me for one thing."

Reyes, whose family is from Colombia, graduated from Lehigh Senior High School then received an associate's degree from Florida SouthWestern State College before enrolling at FGCU.

For many people, college is where you decide what you want to do for the rest of your life, or at least for your first "real" job. The lab for much of Reyes' vocational experimentation has been his part-time job in Academic and Event Technology Services (AETS) at FGCU.

"We don't just do tech stuff," Reyes says. "We do a lot of different stuff on campus. So much so that it has allowed me to

explore different things. Working here I hope to find what entrepreneurial venture I feel interested in pursuing."

His supervisor, AETS Manager John Wilson, says, "Antonio is an enterprising, fun, and energetic young man who is not afraid to work hard to achieve his goals. In the year he has worked for me in AETS, he has become an integral member of our team; expanding his knowledge of classroom multimedia systems and audio/video for the events AETS supports. Antonio approaches every task with a level of maturity and professionalism that is often above and beyond the norm."

After he graduates, Reyes, 24, hopes to get a full-time job at AETS and pursue a master's degree in information systems and analytics at FGCU.

One option could be to start his post-FGCU career helping companies organize large gaming conventions such as EagleCON, which he spearheaded last April at



“

My guiding philosophy with a big project is to be meticulous. I don't like overlooking details.

ANTONIO REYES

”



EagleCON '18

Alico Arena.

Reyes led a group of FGCU students who conducted the third annual event. It offered a platform to competitive gamers, but also introduced what gamers call “geek culture” to the community surrounding FGCU.

“My guiding philosophy with a big project is to be meticulous,” Reyes says. “I don't like overlooking details.”

When EagleCON preparations began, the event was another Reyes experiment. But it grew to so much more. Some 800-1,000 people attended – including 200-300 FGCU students and FGCU President Mike Martin.

“Gaming has developed (elsewhere) to the point where it is extremely competitive, where students can receive scholarships for up to \$50,000” or a \$100,000 grand prize, Reyes says. “Competition is increasing and more platforms need to be created.”

Reyes first learned about EagleCON – then called EagleLAN – in 2017 when he was working for AETS, which helped set up some of the technology.

He wanted to be plugged

in deeper. So he approached FGCU voice technician II Michael Forbes, advisor to the FGCU club, which organizes the event.

Reyes joined what's now called FGCU Gaming Hub in November 2017 and soon became president. He and Forbes, five club members and dozens of event volunteers staged EagleCON. But the pair handled most of the details in only 60 days, evolving it from a gaming event to one with a full convention, with speakers, sponsors and vendors.

“I jumped in head first,” he says. “It was a massive outreach project to try to get as much of the local community involved (as possible) with gaming and convention all in one place. They were two very stressful months, because you don't typically plan 1,000-people events in two months.”

In addition to Forbes, Reyes says he has received a lot of support at FGCU from three AETS colleagues: C.J. McFarland and Justin Mitchell, who advise him on graduate school options, as well as Wilson. They push him to try new things, Reyes says.

To experiment.

Reyes' off-campus hobby is teaching children ages 6-12 dancing at a small dance studio in Lehigh Acres.

“What I generally teach is a lot of very modern hip-hop,” Reyes says. He prefers to call it “commercial hip-hop.”

“It's moving to beats, moving to rhythms ... where the rhythm or beat originated from hip-hop culture,” he says. No break dancing, no back flips, but lots of effort to get the students comfortable in their own bodies, and with different choreographed steps.

“My style usually originates around experimental (dance), where it's just moving to rhythm,” he says.

Reyes may never have a career as a hip-hop dancer, but he enjoys having the opportunity to experiment there, too. ■



In his spare time, Antonio Reyes teaches youngsters “commercial” hip-hop dance moves.

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
STEP
LIVELY

STUDENT SUCCESS

FGCU turtle researchers testing the nesting on Cayo Costa

BY NINA BARBERO '16

IT'S 7:30 ON A STICKY summer morning, and FGCU senior Ashley Blanchard and Ricky Cassell ('18, Environmental Studies) are on a boat with a crew of park rangers. By 8 a.m., they hit the pristine beach at Cayo Costa, an island off the coast of Lee and Charlotte counties, where the two interns hop on utility terrain vehicles and begin a slow crawl up the sand in search of turtle tracks.

They'll spend three to four hours on the beach, finding and identifying tracks, covering nests with metal screens to keep coyotes and raccoons away from eggs, and marking the nests with poles that show the nesting date and number.

"I think they're pretty incredible sea creatures," Blanchard says. "As soon as they hit the water they have all the odds against them."

The odds stack up against sea turtles before they even hatch.

Female sea turtles will lay a clutch of eggs on Cayo Costa up to eight times over the summer. Each clutch will have about 110 eggs, roughly 90 of which will hatch if they are not washed off the beach by major weather events. In 2017, Hurricane Irma struck after many nests had already hatched. Nonetheless, Phillip Allman, an FGCU biology professor who oversees the Cayo Costa internship program, estimates about 100 nests were washed out by the storm.

When the hatchlings make it out of the nest, they are at risk of getting eaten. Anything from sea birds to fish will eat a hatchling. Nearby lights from hotels and condos can disorient

the turtles so they crawl toward traffic, swimming pools and buildings instead of the ocean.

More than half of the hatchlings will die soon after they leave the nest, and only one or two will survive 20 years to adulthood.

That underdog personality is part of what interested Allman in sea-turtle research 25 years ago, when he was an intern himself tagging sea-turtle flippers in North Carolina.

"I just sort of fell in love with them, and kind of recognized that's where I wanted to take my career," Allman says. "It's a fairly competitive field to get into."

While Allman's primary research involves a sea-turtle conservation program
(continued on page 7)



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Ricky Cassell and Ashley Blanchard dig deep into sea turtle research.

(continued from page 6)

in Ghana that he developed in 2006 – the first tagging program in West Africa – for the past two years, he has trained four interns each summer for the Cayo Costa research.

“The park has been monitoring and surveying the beach for many years, and they reached out to us two years ago and indicated they were interested in building a collaboration with the university and with me,” Allman says.

Last summer, the Florida Park Service gave FGCU a \$15,000, annually recurring grant for four student and alumni interns to conduct the research. Every morning

from May 1 through Oct. 31, two FGCU interns patrol the beach.

The goal is to study nesting trends over time, so scientists can track the health of Cayo Costa's sea turtle population. The interns follow protocol created by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, so their research can be included in state reports to make recommendations for sea-turtle conservation.

Once the turtles start to hatch, the interns take inventory of each nest to calculate the hatchling success rate.

“Three days after the nest has hatched, we dig up the nest to make sure there aren't any hatchlings still left that need to go to sea, and then we count the eggshells to see how big of a nest it was,” Blanchard says.

This research on Cayo Costa, a state-protected beach with natural conditions for turtle nesting, will be compared to findings on other beaches to help improve nesting conditions there.

“Cayo Costa is like nowhere else in all of Florida,” Cassell says. “I kind of think of it as the Wild West. There’s not a lot of development out there, so the way the island is right now is how it’s been for hundreds of years.”

The global sea-turtle population has increased in recent decades, but turtles still face low survival rates.

Although Allman says the Cayo Costa research isn’t designed to document the impact of red tide on the hatchlings, who are rarely seen again once they get into the ocean, he says it is clear that red tide has caused fish mortality and is impacting other marine fauna.

This research is helping to show

“
I think they’re
pretty incredible
sea creatures.
As soon as they
hit the water
they have all
the odds
against them.”

ASHLEY
BLANCHARD

“There’s a lot of hardships for the little guys.”

Blanchard also is targeting marine research as a career path, thanks in part to her experience on Cayo Costa.

“It’s been an incredible three months,” Blanchard says. “It’s been a really good hands-on experience.” ■

potential for sea-turtle protections, and is inspiring a new generation of marine researchers.

Allman says one of this summer’s interns started a graduate program in the fall to do sea-turtle work, and two of last year’s interns are doing turtle work in Florida.

Cassell is open to any career in biology — including one with sea turtles, which the Michigan native says he saw for the first time during this research.

“I’ve definitely come to appreciate turtles a lot more after seeing what they go through this summer,” Cassell says.

UPDATES:



FGCU VIDEOGRAPHERS NOMINATED FOR EMMY

A video about FGCU’s Jazz Ensemble is among the contenders for the 42nd annual Suncoast Regional Emmy Awards in the Education Schools Program category. Produced by videographers Jasmine Kettenacker and Timothy Clark of the University Marketing and Communications department, the 2-minute video focuses on jazz musician and director of jazz studies Brandon Robertson, who directs the ensemble, and the students who have come to love jazz as well because of their involvement in the ensemble.

The videographers will find out if they’ve won on Saturday, Dec. 1, when the winner is announced at the annual event, which will take place in Orlando.

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
JAZZ
ENSEMBLE

COMPLETE PROGRAM HELPS ADULTS FINISH DEGREES

FGCU is providing more educational opportunities for working adults in Charlotte County with a new pilot degree-completion program. Known as FGCU Complete, the program enables people with 18 months or more of college credit to pursue an FGCU bachelor’s degree. The program started in October.

Three degree programs are available: Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship Studies, and Bachelor of Science in Resort and Hospitality Management.

Beginning next spring, FGCU Complete will launch across Lee, Collier, Hendry, Charlotte and Glades counties. It is pending approval of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. For details, contact FGCU’s Office of Continuing Education at (239) 745-4700 or email fgcucomplete@fgcu.edu. ■

HOW TO HELP PROTECT SEA TURTLES

Sea turtles face enormous odds to make it from egg to adult. Here are some things humans can do to help them survive.

1. Use **turtle-friendly fishing gear** and follow best practices to make sure turtles don’t end up tangled in your net or fishing line.
2. **Cut back on plastic straw use** – these can end up in the ocean and harm marine life.
3. **Don’t leave trash** or other items out on the beach to get washed into the water.
4. **If you see a nesting turtle on the beach, leave it alone.** Flash from a camera (even a phone camera) can spook it and may cause it to turn around before it lays eggs.

OBJECTS OF AFFECTION

Behind every laptop sticker, there's a story

BACK IN THE TRAVEL DAYS OF yore, when people who fly coach could actually afford to check full-size luggage on airliners, trips often were memorialized by destination stickers that tourists would affix to their bags. They were like mini-postcards with glue, each with its own tale — “Paris is for Lovers”; “Aloha! from Hawaii”; “Greetings From Miami — The Sun and Fun Capital of the World!”

Today, the clunky suitcase has largely been replaced by the soft, squishy bag that can be crammed into an overhead compartment. But for the well-traveled college student of today, one accessory-on-the-go works just fine as a place to display a mobile diary: the laptop.

Just as the traveler of yesteryear would reveal a little about her- or himself by the stickers on their bags, students you see toting laptops around the FGCU campus reveal a little — and sometimes, even a lot — about themselves by the removable artwork they plaster on PC or Apple covers.

For bioengineering major Sara Biro, laptop stickers “remind me of home” — her hometown of Muskego, Wis., near Milwaukee (which explains the Miller Lite sticker in honor of a flagship beer brewed there). **A** “It’s an expression of my interests that may not seem so obvious,” she said.

Henry Silva Quevedo, a software engineering student, has plastered his five-year-old laptop with stickers reflecting “each event and each new place I work.” **B**

“As you can see, it has been places,” Quevedo said. “Each sticker has its own story, and over the years, it has become sort of a scrapbook/memento of my college years.”

Memories he can take with him the rest of his life and, for air-travel purposes, still be counted as a personal carry-on — no extra charge. ■



— Keith Gibson

WGCU

Joyous to the world – including Southwest Florida Twisted Strings concert features youthful musicians

BY DAYNA HARPSTER



Joyous String Ensemble

Justin Yu is 11 years old and he plays the cello.

If this conjures moments as a parent trying to tune out practice sessions of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” or “Old MacDonald,” let’s settle that score right now. Yu played Carnegie Hall at age 6.

He is the leader of a string ensemble – actually several, with varying numbers of players who range in age from 8 to 14, and they’ve played on network TV shows, at NBA games, venues large and small and at the White House.

As the Joyous String Ensemble, Yu and

six classmates from the Joyous Music School in New York will play at the third WGCU Twisted Strings Music Festival, set for Jan. 26 at Top Rocker Field in Fort Myers. Other bands lined up include Violectric and a popular duo from the first Twisted concert, Moxie Strings.

The Joyous performers are equally proficient playing the Stevie Wonder tune “Isn’t She Lovely” as Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee.” Justin Yu especially enjoys playing – and singing – songs by Michael Jackson. “He’s got swag,” the young cellist says.

Justin, the son of Chinese composer and

conductor Ziliang (Julian) Yu and Korean pianist Rho Aera, was 3 years old at his first dance class, says his father. “He was so young, he could not pick up the cello yet. But the dance background would help him move his body, move his hands, when playing an instrument.”

After a subsequent six months of piano lessons and six months on cello, his father – who is director of the Joyous Music School in New York – said he realized Justin was “quite special.”

So is Justin’s sister, Christine, who at 8 years old plays violin and piano.

FGCU 360 talked to the three Yus via

Facetime on a recent afternoon.

Justin and Christine remembered performing for the Obama White House at the National Christmas Tree lighting in December 2015. The lineup that night included Trombone Shorty; Crosby, Stills and Nash; Tori Kelly; Fall Out Boy; and the United States Coast Guard Band.

They met President Obama: "We got to hug him, and he was so tall!" Christine Yu says, smiling and bouncing excitedly on a couch at home. Justin Yu recalls that first dog Bo, a Portuguese water dog, was bigger than he was. And he most vividly remembered getting lost while on tour in the White House, but thankfully not for long.

Along with about 500 other students at Joyous school, Justin and Christine Yu

don't spend their lives practicing. They go to their regular primary schools during the day and practice at lessons after school or on weekends, but at most one to two hours a day, they say.

Julian Yu explains: "We focus on everyone's ability to learn quickly and by themselves.

I grew up practicing a lot, so I try to have them do the opposite, which is practice less and better."

This is likely to keep the kids more enthusiastic about their precocious abilities. In fact, Justin Yu knows he wants to be "a cellist and an entertainer" when he grows up.

His sister, though, has other aspirations. "I want to be a lawyer and change the world," she says. "And I like to draw." ■



The Moxie Strings

WHAT

The third annual Twisted Strings Music Festival, featuring classically trained musicians on string instruments playing music in a variety of styles. Headliner is The Moxie Strings. Also starring Violectric and Joyous String Ensemble.

WHEN

5 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 26. Doors open at 4 p.m.

WHERE

Top Rocker Field, 9510 Thunder Road, Fort Myers

TICKETS

\$35 general admission for one, or \$60 in advance for two; \$150 per person VIP (includes VIP parking, catered nibbles, unlimited non-alcoholic drinks and three tickets per person for beer or wine, preferred seating and a chance to meet the bands); \$1,350 for a VIP table for 10 (with preceding VIP benefits).

For details about VIP benefits, contact Gina Dengler at (239) 590-2328 or gdengler@wgcu.org or Jennifer Denike at (239) 590-2514 or jdenike@wgcu.org.

FOR DETAILS

About the bands, food, tickets, etc., go to twistedstrings.org.

UPDATES:

YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

"Curious Gulf Coast" comprises short WGCU HDTV spots that air between PBS programs.

FGCU theater student Gabby Kadoo hosts these short segments that answer questions submitted by viewers. Tune in for the reason why both a fire truck and an ambulance go out on the same call, and where "Burnt Store" got its name.

These segments are a follow-up to earlier WGCU "Curious Gulf Coast" TV and radio segments that addressed such topics as the origin of the word "cracker," the history of dog racing in Florida, and why the state doesn't have a ban on plastic bags. ■

WHERE IS HOME?

This is a question many local people of Haitian descent likely are asking themselves now.

Temporary Protected Status granted in 2010 to refugees from the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti is set to end July 22, 2019. This earthquake in the most populated area of the country, about 16 miles west of the capital, sent Haitian people fleeing to other countries, including the United States.

WGCU's FM staff is talking about the impending end of TPS from the point of view of the people whose lives were tossed into the air by natural disaster, and now, after landing and beginning anew in the United States, their lives are being volleyed by the raging immigration debate in America.

"Where is Home? Haitians Counting Down" is the title of a series of four-minute segments running periodically during "Morning Edition," "All Things Considered" and "Gulf Coast Live." ■

WGCU



PBS

n p r

BY THE NUMBERS

Alumni

As Florida Gulf Coast University concluded its 21st year of sending new Eagles soaring into the world with a diploma and a dream, our Alumni Association celebrated a special milestone.

After the summer 2018 Commencement, **FGCU has pinned wings on more than 30,000 graduates.** Thanks to Gail Bradley of the Alumni Relations Office for digging up the following facts.



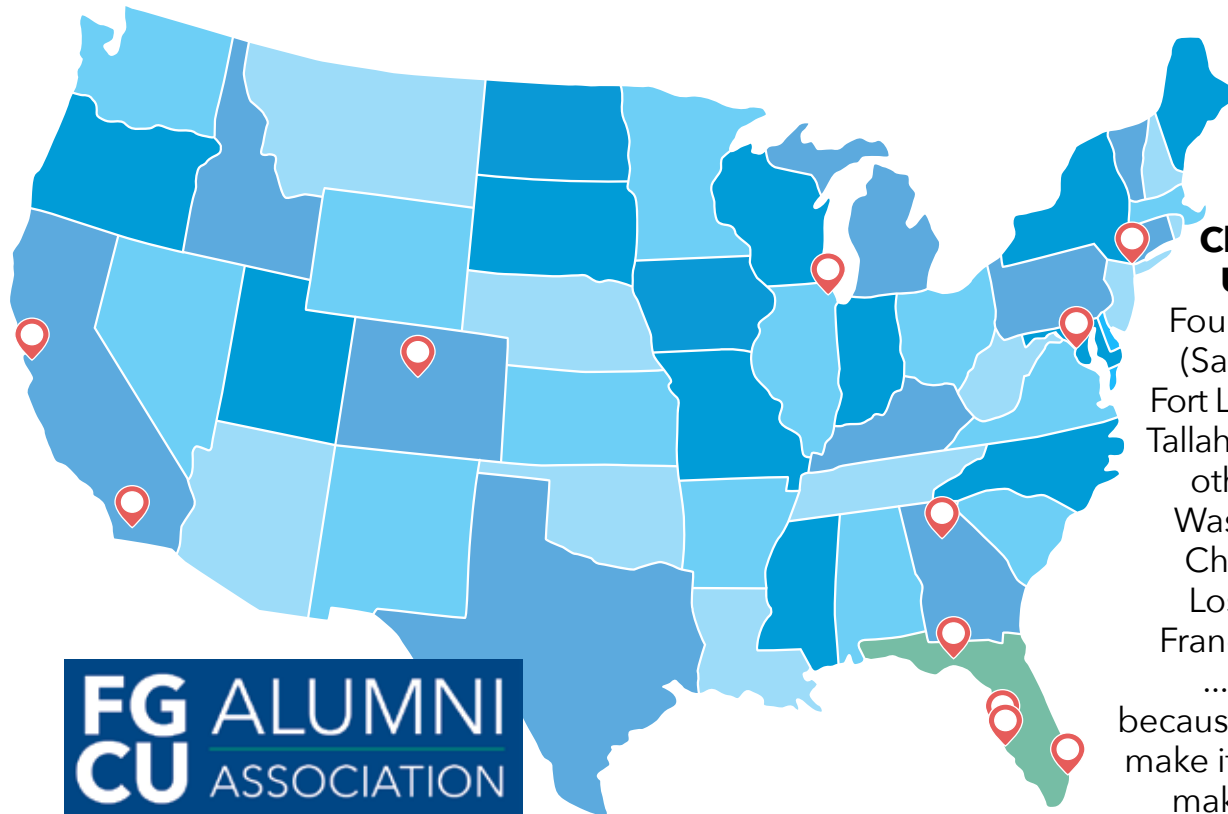
30,068

Number of FGCU alumni at the start of the 2018-19 academic year. That means an FGCU alumni gathering including families could easily sell out 36,742-seat Marlins Park in Miami.



Forever an Eagle Society members. This exclusive FGCU Alumni club offers Eagles personalized campus enshrinement with a brick paver placed in the Alumni Legacy Plaza, Alumni Association bling and special access to unique programs the Alumni Association offers. *Check it out at alumni.fgcu.edu.*





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FGCU Alumni Chapters in the United States.

Four are in Florida (Sarasota, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale and Tallahassee) with the others in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco and...yes ...New York City, because if Eagles can make it there, we can make it anywhere.

132

FGCU alumni from outside the United States. You can find FGCU Eagles from far-flung locales such as Cape Town, South Africa, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In other words, we come from everywhere an Eagle could possibly fly.



26,426

Number of FGCU alumni living in Florida.



10,393

**ALUMNI LIVING
IN LEE COUNTY**

COMMUNITY

Transgender student helps others seek truth that will set them free

BY NINA BARBERO '16

AS AN FGCU FRESHMAN, Kasey Fraize struggled to find resources that could help him learn about his transgender identity.

“When I would ask for resources from different departments, I would be directed to CAPS,” Fraize says, referring to the Counseling and Psychological Services office on campus. “When someone’s asking you for resources, they’re not asking you for counseling. They’re asking you for social acceptance and help.”

Now a junior and almost two years into hormone therapy through Planned Parenthood, Fraize is a transgender advocate on campus who spreads awareness through educational panels, talks in classrooms and volunteer work in the community.

His first major program on campus was the Trans 101 Forum, held last March with both Prevention and Wellness and the Office of Multicultural Development and Leadership.

“That was the first real transgender-focused event that we’ve hosted at FGCU,” Fraize says. “I took the initiative to bring in a couple of students, in addition to myself, to sit on a panel and have an anonymous Q&A-type session for faculty and students and members of the community to just ask the questions they want to ask.”

Ysatiz Piñero, coordinator for multicultural development at the Office of Multicultural Development and Leadership, was the event moderator. Piñero estimates the program attracted more than 100 students, faculty and staff. Participants were given digital access to a chatroom-style program that allowed them

to anonymously submit questions. Piñero read the questions to the panel, filtering out negative comments.

Piñero, also a trainer in FGCU’s Safe Zones Program, which educates the university community on LGBTIQ awareness, said feedback from the event was positive. “The acceptance ... was overwhelmingly emotional for us, who are fighting for these rights and for just awareness on campus and beyond that,” Piñero says.

Piñero says Fraize “is definitely a social justice warrior for his community, and he’s so passionate about making sure that people are aware and educated on the topic,” she says.

Registered nurse Susan Young, an assistant professor in the FGCU School of Nursing, reached out to Fraize after she attended the forum. Now Fraize is a guest speaker every semester in Young’s Community & Public Health Nursing course for upperclassmen.

“Usually it’s the most impactful day that we have all semester,” Young says. “It inspires them to give appropriate care, which they wanted to do but didn’t know how. I can talk about things all day, but to actually have someone who’s gone through that experience talk, it’s way more meaningful.”

Fraize covers topics such as how to interact with a transgender patient by using their preferred name, which is not necessarily the name on their medical chart.

“They’re really receptive to it because they’re intrigued, and I don’t think they think about transgender patients until they get one,” Fraize says. “This way, before they get a transgender patient they’ve at least had some exposure.”





PHOTO BY BRIAN TIETZ

Young says she's grateful that Fraize is willing to speak with her students. "They're all just like sponges and they want more information," she says. "He's really an advocate, and hopefully more of my students will be in the future."

As he continues to work to create more educational resources on campus, Fraize also volunteers with organizations, including Planned Parenthood and Visuality Florida in Fort Myers.

He says Planned Parenthood can help transgender individuals transition with hormone therapy, but it doesn't have many resources for counseling, housing assistance or financial assistance.

"Visuality Fort Myers is a great resource for transgender individuals and anyone in the LGBT+ community," Fraize says. "They do some group counseling and try to get people connected. They have resources for people struggling."

Fraize was a 15-year-old named Cassandra when he realized that he had gender dysphoria — in his case, the stress of identifying as a man despite being born with female anatomy. He didn't know that taking testosterone was an option until he was 17 and had read personal stories of transgender individuals online.

"The queer community is easy to find online," Fraize says, "but it's definitely not easy to find here in Florida."

When Fraize began looking at universities,

he looked for a school that put some distance between him and New Port Richey, where he grew up. "I had never felt like who I was in New Port Richey was actually who I was," Fraize says.

FGCU gave him a chance for a fresh start.

"For once I can actually be Kasey, and no one would question it," he says.

While Fraize appreciates the opportunity to be a transgender advocate, he calls the work "heavy."

"It's rewarding, but it's also dangerous, and it's not work that you get to go home from," Fraize says. "It follows me everywhere, no matter how many times I say, 'Just because I'm out in this setting does not mean you can see me on campus and out me wherever you want.' It happens anyways."

On campus, Fraize gets questions about everything from taking testosterone to more invasive questions about his body and sexuality.

"A good rule of thumb that I try to preach to everyone is, 'Don't ask questions that you wouldn't want someone else to ask you,'" he says. "I always tell people that if they're afraid to ask a question, ask themselves first and see how it makes them feel."

Despite the risks and the struggle for acceptance, Fraize is proud to be an advocate.

"It's definitely empowering, especially being in public health," he says. "This is something I aspire to do for a career, so that's really cool, to have the opportunity in undergrad to pursue some of my dreams."

Fraize wants to create more on-campus education and awareness through special events such as Pride Week, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Transgender Day of Visibility and more.

One partner in his work will be Piñero.

"I would encourage our FGCU community to be open to learning about the [LGBTIQ] community even if you don't agree with it or understand it," Piñero says. "If we can create a really great support system on our campus from students all the way to administration, I think that's the best thing we can do."

Fraize has advice for students who are going through struggles similar to what he went through his freshman year. "Be true to yourself," he says. "At the end of the day, people are going to say nasty things about you no matter what. Keep the good people close." ■

TIPS ON ASKING TRANSGENDER QUESTIONS

When people ask Kasey Fraize questions about being transgender, "all the really invasive questions seem to come out first," he says. Here are Fraize's tips for respectful inquiries.

- Before you ask a personal question, think about how your question will make that person feel. Fraize says some of the biological questions people ask him are "just weird."
- Don't ask questions that you wouldn't want someone else to ask you.
- If you ask someone a question and they tell you, 'I don't feel comfortable answering that,' leave it at that.





HOW TO

Restore yourself by savoring nature

BY LORETA SILVERIO '12

The mid-semester slump is real. It's a time when going out for drinks sounds more appealing than studying for that Colloquium exam and self-care may have fallen off dramatically. But I am here to tell you there's a way to combat this negativity, and the best part is it's right outside your door.

1. Getting outdoors lowers stress hormones and improves blood pressure.

Stress causes overproduction of cortisol, a naturally occurring hormone but one that can cause depression in increased levels. Spending time outdoors surrounded by nature can help regulate our biological system and improve our overall well being.

2. Normalize sleep schedule.

Spending time outdoors in direct sunlight (slathered in sunscreen, of course) causes our bodies to produce melatonin, a hormone that is released at night, allowing us to fall asleep with ease. A regular sleep cycle will improve your overall mood and aid cognitive function.

3. Allow for time to "unplug" and center yourself.

Taking a long walk around nearby estuaries, nature preserves or woodlands surrounding campus, and leaving your smart device at home, can give you time to process your thoughts. Hiking in a natural setting can allow our brains the peace and quiet necessary to slow mind and breath.

4. Time in nature aids short-term memory and allows for more productive studying.

There is evidence that time spent in nature can help improve both short-term and working memory. Natural settings can help calm the mind and sharpen our focus.

5. Nurture an appreciation for the outdoors.

With the increase in Florida's population and suburban sprawl, more public land is becoming privatized. If we don't take action, the beautiful nature preserves that surround our university - such as Estero Bay, Matanzas, and Six Mile Cypress - may not be available to future generations.

So take time this week to venture outside. Visit nearby public lands, volunteer at the Food Forest, or simply take a walk around FGCU's 400 acres of preserved land. Savor nature - and beat the mid-semester slump.

ARTS





EXHIBITS

FGCU Art Program sculpts students into professionals

BY NINA BARBERO '16

CAMPUS ART SHOWS may be entertaining events, but for the students who contribute work to these programs, the exhibitions are opportunities to develop as professional artists.

During the 2018-19 art season, FGCU will feature two Senior Project shows for graduating students to display their work; a new show called “The Third Dimension: Exploring Space,” presenting combined works from two sculpture and ceramics courses; the university’s 21st annual Juried Art Show; and an Alumni Exhibition with selected works to be displayed off campus at FineMark National Bank & Trust.

Both student involvement in the logistics of these shows and the art program’s emphasis on professional skills are helping students develop into career-ready artists.

John Loscuito, FGCU Art Gallery director, says that between the ArtLab Gallery and the Wasmer Art Gallery, the campus displays 10 exhibits every year that include both student and professional work.

“The student artists have the opportunity to see their work in the same space as professional artists, so I think having that combination is really valuable for them,” Loscuito says. “Both spaces are treated as professional spaces and spaces that feature student artwork, so they’re not relegated to, ‘Oh, that’s the student gallery over there, and here’s where we show the professional artists.’”

One upcoming show in particular will push students closer to the skillset of professional artists – “The Third Dimension: Exploring Space.” This exhibition, to be held in the ArtLab Gallery starting in mid-January, will exhibit work produced by students in two fall courses, one taught by Professor Tricia Fay and the other by Associate Professor Mary Voytek.

“There was a time opening in the ArtLab, so John mentioned that he’s looking for ideas for the new season,” Voytek says. “We looked at the course offerings and we saw that Tricia and I each had high-level sculpture [classes], so we just put it together.”

Voytek says the students taking her Sculpture Workshop course will be responsible for coming up with their own conceptual ideas for a series of pieces to create during class. At the end of the semester, the students will select pieces from their series to feature in the 2019 show.

“I have no idea what kind of ideas they’re going to come to the beginning of class with,” says Voytek, who is challenging students to have a conceptual link in their series, but experiment with any medium they’d like to use, from metal and wood to jewelry.

Regardless of which medium or theme the students decide to work in, they will be taking on the full responsibility of exhibiting their work. Everything from creating the pedestals their pieces stand on, to pricing, to marketing the event will be student-driven.



"It gives them a step up on how to be a professional artist," Voytek says. "It's a great foundation for what to do with their artwork once it's finished, how to go about planning a series of works for a show, how to hang it, how to install it, how to market it, what to expect from different types of galleries, what to expect from museum shows or art center shows ... It's a wonderful hands-on experience."

Korey Harrison, a senior from Orlando studying fine art, says his teaching assistantship in the ceramics studio is giving him even more of an inside look at what it takes to be a professional artist.

"I already know my way around a studio, and what it takes to run a studio," says Harrison, who plans to pursue a career in sculpture.

He says that learning from professional artists such as Voytek in the classroom has given him insight into the field. "The

assignments that the professors give you make you think and get you out of your comfort zone," he says.

The campus galleries also have five student workers who gain an additional level of experience in managing shows.

"Those student workers are very involved," Loscuito says. "They help with every aspect of running the gallery from setup, installation, marketing, hosting the event, lighting ... the whole thing."

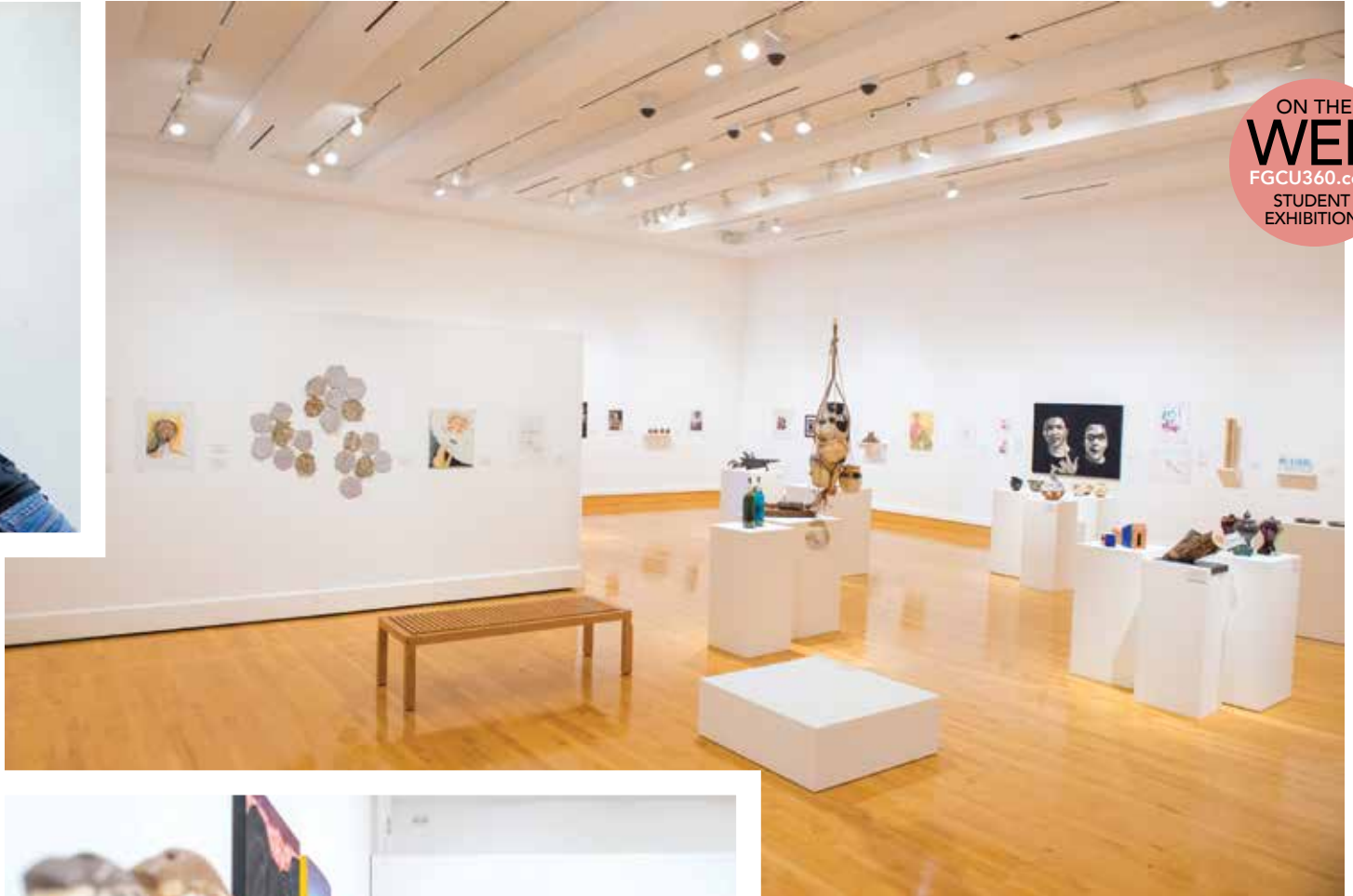
Another aspect of professional life to which student artists are exposed at FGCU is sales. Students can sell their work at all campus exhibitions, and Loscuito says he sees sales made at each event. While some shows will see one or two pieces sell, he says the Annual Juried Art Show, which features some 70 exhibits, typically sells 10 pieces or more. The most he has seen a student piece sell for is "at least in the high hundreds, \$700, \$800." Often, student artists and buyers exchange

“

The student artists have the opportunity to see their work in the same space as professional artists, so I think having that combination is really valuable for them.

JOHN LOSCUITO

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
STUDENT
EXHIBITION



FGCU's art galleries afford students the chance to exhibit their work in the same venues as professional artists.



PHOTOS BY JAMES GRECO

contact information at a gallery event on campus, which can lead to future sales.

But the work coming out of FGCU's art program isn't just resulting in sales. It's getting community attention.

Loscuito says the program frequently receives requests from organizations to do commissions or participate in outside exhibitions, and that information is shared with students, so that any who are interested can get involved.

In March 2019, selected artwork from FGCU alumni artists will hang in FineMark National Bank & Trust's Estero location for an off-campus Alumni Exhibition.

Loscuito says FineMark staff will attend the December 2018 Senior Project shows to select pieces for the March showcase.

"They'll look around at those students and they'll decide on a number of students to invite to their space in March," he says.

Loscuito estimates each of the upcoming shows will attract about 100 attendees, with about 150 for the Senior Project shows. Those shows tend to receive more attention because they feature more students and are held near the end of the semester, when family members of the student artists are likely to be in town for Commencement.

While many exhibition attendees are community members, Loscuito hopes to increase student attendance at gallery shows through social-media and word-of-mouth marketing on campus. He attends every gallery show, but says the Senior Projects one is his favorite.

"It's always rewarding to see students that we have worked with over the years graduate," Loscuito says. "It's a time when their family members are there, there's a lot of pride and congratulations, and that

really is the culmination of all of their ideas and techniques and thoughts. It's hard to beat that one." ■



It gives them a step up on how to be a professional artist.

MARY VOYTEK



About 50 student musicians joined instructor Troy Jones and visiting professor Gary Green in Washington, D.C., this summer as the FGCU Wind Orchestra blew into the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to perform a program of classical and contemporary music.

The performance was special in that it included composer James M. Stephenson's timely "Requiem Dances for Children," a work commissioned by the Bower School of Music & the Arts that was inspired by the tragic mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in February. The Wind Orchestra first introduced the piece at Artis-Naples in April.

The orchestra, which first made a national impression when it played Carnegie Hall in New York in 2015, got to spend four days touring the sights in the nation's capital, highlighted by the June 18 concert.

SHOWING HOMEGROWN TALENT

The upcoming season of exhibitions from the FGCU Art Program will feature work in a variety of mediums from artists across the nation. Here are a few student-focused programs to attend.

■ **Senior Projects:** On display at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Installations are created by each graduating art student to showcase the techniques and conceptual skills they have refined in their studies.

Opening reception: 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 4, and Thursday, April 18

On display: Dec. 4-14 and April 18-May 3

Where: Wasmer and ArtLab Galleries

■ **"The Third Dimension: Exploring Space":** Presents work from high-level ceramics and sculpture students. Students spend the fall semester developing work for this show, using a range of mediums and concepts.

Opening reception: 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 17

On display: Jan. 17-Feb. 7

Where: ArtLab Gallery

■ **21st annual Student Juried Exhibition:** Showcases submissions from any interested students, regardless of major. Jurors will include local artists, curators and professionals in the field.

Opening reception: 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, March 21

On display: March 21-April 4

Where: Wasmer Art Gallery

■ **FGCU Art Alumni Exhibition:** Features alumni pieces selected by the staff of FineMark National Bank & Trust's Estero branch from the Fall 2018 Senior Projects show.

Opening reception: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 27

On display: March 27-April 19

Where: FineMark National Bank & Trust - Estero



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



ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

When he isn't working for Academic and Event Technology Services at FGCU, Antonio Reyes is likely either gaming or teaching hip-hop dance technique to youngsters.



COMPASSIONATE MENTOR

Watch how science teacher Eric Demeri ('04, Elementary Education) used 3-D print technology to change the life of a Lehigh Acres student by designing a prosthetic arm for her.



FGCU360.COM



IN GOOD SPIRITS

Alex Voss ('08, Marketing) shows us how he creates a distinctive brand of rum in Punta Gorda at the Alligator Bay Distillers business he owns and operates with his family.

DOUBLE THE PLEASURE

Michael Nacheff ('10, Political Science) and Felicia Nacheff ('11, Finance) of Fort Myers welcomed two new Eaglets into their family this summer: twin girls Charlotte Rose and Reagan Claire. (Class of 2040 perhaps?) See what other alums are doing, too, in Class Notes.



LESSONS_{IN} COMPASSION AND COMPUTER SAVVY

CAUTION: the mouthwatering aroma of waffles cooking is not, perhaps, everything it seems to be. Rather, you just might be catching a whiff of a 3-D printer churning out its latest coded creation.

By KAREN BOOTH

Eric Demeri ('04, Elementary Education), former science enrichment teacher at Sunshine Elementary School in Lehigh Acres, says, "Everyone agrees – 3-D printing smells a lot like waffles." It is, therefore, safe to say, that as the founder of the 3-D Printing Club at Sunshine, Demeri has whiffed a lot of waffles.

It all started with an anonymous donor whose only stipulation for spending the funds was 1) that whatever was purchased was available for use by all students, and 2) the use had to be

science related. Demeri suggested the purchase of 3-D printers. "Technology is big in students' lives, and 3-D printing is the way of the future," he says. "What better time to introduce students to this relatively new technology than in elementary school?"

The idea was met with immediate enthusiasm. Three small student printers and one larger "teacher" printer were purchased, although the teacher printer is available for use by students with larger projects.

Demeri first assigned students the task of making themselves pencil holders for their desks. Students then brainstormed making something for their teachers and decided on marker holders. Next, they talked about making things for other students, and

the club progressed from there.

And that's what got Demeri thinking. He had a student, then-third-grader Dulce James, who he had known since she was in kindergarten. She had been born without her left arm from just below the elbow. "I wondered if I could do something to help her. I didn't know how I'd go about it. Could I print a prosthetic? I got in touch with her mother who agreed it was certainly worth a try. Dulce, too, was excited with the prospect."

Not knowing anything about printing a prosthetic arm, Demeri researched online and discovered just the company he needed. "E-nable is a non-profit company that writes computer programming for lots of different things, arms being one," he says. "It's an open-





ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
DULCE RECEIVES
A GIFT

source software and, once downloaded, anyone can manipulate the coding to fit their needs.”

He wasted no time in downloading the coding and manipulated it to make it fit for Dulce. He spent nearly 40 hours – the bulk of his spring break – working on the project.

“I started with the fingers, moved to palm, forearm, bicep. Each part required a different amount of time to code and print and a different technique,” he says. “3-D printers are slow. Very slow. The project required a lot of watching.”

Once all components were printed, Demeri pinned them together with, what else? – pins that had also been 3-D printed. Then he ran a strong wire up the inside of the fingers, on top of the palm and into the forearm, looping the wire around the elbow joint

LEFT: Eric Demeri, ('04, Elementary Education) at the 3-D printer.

ABOVE LEFT: Dulce James after receiving her prosthetic arm and grabbing an item for the first time.

ABOVE RIGHT: Dulce James in her classroom at Sunshine Elementary School in Lehigh Acres with the arm Eric Demeri made on the 3-D printer.

and attaching it to the 3-D printed adjustment box molded to the bicep. By bending her arm at her elbow, Dulce could control the prosthetic arm and fingers, pick up objects, wave!

It’s impossible to capture in words not only the thrill Dulce felt when she saw her arm for the first time, but also Demeri’s response to the moment. “It was emotional,” he says. “When she saw it, she was clearly excited. But when she turned to her mother and they hugged with tears in their eyes, that was the point it really hit me.”

Although FGCU 360 Magazine was unable to reach Dulce or her mother, Ana Bustos, their reactions are clear in the video produced by the Lee County School Board on the day Demeri presented Dulce with her new arm. The video can be viewed on fgcu360.com.

The story, however, doesn’t end there. One week after receiving her arm, along with all the publicity that surrounded it, the Shriners contacted the family and offered to fit Dulce with a fully functioning, medically manufactured prosthetic, free of charge.

Every story, of course, has a beginning. Demeri’s began in 1999, when he enrolled in FGCU, first as a biology major, transferring to elementary education in his junior year.

“FGCU was everything I hoped for,” he says. “In bigger schools, you’re just a number. At FGCU, the professors know your name. They’re very hands-on, especially in the College of Education. Very willing to help you, to go the extra mile to make sure everything you need done, gets done. I know I wouldn’t have found that in other schools.”

After graduation, Demeri secured a job at Spring Creek Elementary teaching third grade. From there, he joined faculty at Sunshine Elementary School, first teaching third grade for four years, later moving to teaching science enrichment with students from kindergarten to fifth grade, which was how he came to know Dulce.

In June, he relocated to Tennessee and immediately secured a job as a fourth-grade math and science teacher at Capshaw Elementary School in Cookeville.

He was so inspired and energized by his work with Dulce that he joined E-nable’s team of volunteers as a builder-volunteer. E-nable matches volunteers with people who contact the company asking to find someone willing to build a 3-D prosthetic either for themselves or a loved one. If they live within a 100-mile radius of Demeri, he just may receive the call. ■



RESEARCH IN THE WAKE OF RECOVERY

COMMUNITIES
IN TRANSITION
TEAMS TACKLE ISSUES
HURRICANE IRMA
LEFT BEHIND

BY DICK HOGAN

**THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING WE CAN DO AS
A UNIVERSITY IS
USE OUR
EXPERTISE
TO HELP ADDRESS THE
CONCERNS, ISSUES,
PROBLEMS THAT THE
COMMUNITY WANTS
ADDRESSED.**



AMID THE CHAOS AND DISRUPTIONS LEFT BEHIND AFTER HURRICANE IRMA ROARED THROUGH SOUTHWEST FLORIDA LAST SEPTEMBER, FGCU'S COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION INITIATIVE SPRANG TO LIFE.

For four years, the initiative had provided support for professors who wanted to engage in research addressing issues in the surrounding community, says Billy Gunnels, director of undergraduate scholarship.

But, he said, the category 3 hurricane “brought about a large collective realization that ‘You know, we need to do something. What can we do?’”

The answer was clear, he said: “The most important thing we can do as a university is use our expertise to help address the concerns, issues, problems that the community wants addressed.”

Now, Gunnels said, “We have four different teams made up of eight faculty, 26 students, working on four projects.”

Their subjects are as varied as sprawling, diverse Southwest Florida itself:

- Flood mitigation and water management in the booming village of Estero.
- How past generations in remote Everglades communities have passed down knowledge needed to deal with a big storm in the low country.
- The use of modern, environmentally friendly chemistry techniques to avoid the toxic chemicals that can be

unleashed in a storm.

- Offering free health screening sessions to accumulate data that could ultimately improve medical care in the low-income, agricultural community of Immokalee.

Whatever the subject, Gunnels said, students learn to solve problems faster and better in the field than in the classroom – and that’s not lost on prospective employers they may encounter.

“One of the things about the real world, for lack of a better word, is that it requires a tremendous amount of creativity,” he said.

A photograph of a wooden dock extending into a body of water. A small white boat is moored at the dock, and an American flag flies on a pole nearby. The sky is dark and cloudy, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The foreground shows a grassy area.

**THEY SERVE AS
THESE KIND OF
TOUCHPOINTS
IN CULTURAL
MEMORY
WHERE PEOPLE CAN
WORK OFF OF THEM AND
KIND OF REMEMBER
THEIR OWN HISTORY
AND THEIR OWN
CULTURAL HISTORY.**

ORAL HURRICANE HISTORIES

People in remote Everglades communities can't count on outside help when a hurricane strikes – but they still don't have to face the threat on their own.

They have the hard-won knowledge of hurricane survival that's come down through the generations to the tight-knit communities of Everglades City, Chokoloskee and Copeland.

That information isn't written down, so this year a team of students and professors from FGCU interviewed residents to learn what they have learned.

"What we were doing was collecting oral histories of hurricane experience but also of family and local culture and the experiences that surround hurricanes," says Katherine Wahlberg, an instructor in the Department of Social Sciences. "And we then took those oral histories and we're creating a video about the experience, a documentary."

The students arrived prepared for their task, she says. "The first five weeks they spent doing research on the area, so when we went down there to Everglades City, Copeland, Chokoloskee, they had a good amount of knowledge. We wanted them to come into it having that kind of background."

Then they spent eight days in June conducting interviews, winding up with 13 oral histories of 45 minutes to an hour each.

The students learned that much of the knowledge passed down is intensely practical: ways to stay afloat literally and financially in the aftermath of a storm.

"They would prioritize their boats above anything else," student interviewer Kinsey Brown says. "A lot of the time they will take them up little rivers and small channels up in the Everglades and they will tie a rope to all four corners of the boat, securing it effectively into the mangroves."

"If you tie it correctly, the boat will rise and fall with the water," Brown says. "So you don't have to worry about losing your boat and also your livelihood and your home and all of your material possessions all in one fell swoop."

Residents have also incorporated hurricanes into their lives in a broader sense, says Melissa Minds VandeBurgt, assistant librarian in charge of Archives, Special Collections, & Digital Initiatives at the FGCU Library.

"The hurricanes are interesting because they're integrated," she says. "They're part of the history. They serve as these kind of touchpoints in cultural memory where people can work off of them and kind of remember their own history and their own cultural history. They serve as reference points in people's memories."

Everglades residents often see hurricanes almost as living creatures, VandeBurgt says. "So many people will refer to them as 'she,' as entities. They were beings, like

they really do have this presence as more than just a weather thing that happens."

At the same time, Brown says, residents don't always feel the terror most people would with a hurricane bearing down on them.

"They're very comfortable with hurricanes," she says. "There have been a lot of them. They'll walk outside during a hurricane without thinking twice about it."

People in the Everglades have also developed a culture of interdependence that's helped them deal with a hurricane even though relief efforts from outside are slow coming to the remote communities, Wahlberg says.

It's hard for outside relief agencies "to have a broad organization that helps everybody equally," she says. "So we've seen the community and how this depth of time and knowledge of hurricanes really informs how they understand hurricanes and how they experience them, and then the preparation, the decisions they make, and how they help each other."

For example, Brown says, "We heard a story about a man who got in his truck when the floodwater hadn't come in yet, and drove off to go check up on people. He was driving around in the storm in his truck, checking on people."

But when Irma's floodwaters arrived faster than expected, the man was stranded on the side of the road in the truck.

"So he gets a call from his family who's riding it out," Brown says. "And everybody who was safe inside, they got on a boat and they went out after him, the second he



**WE'RE
TRYING TO
MAKE THE
PROCESS
GREENER
AND MORE
EFFICIENT.**

said he was out in the storm. And he told them not to come after him and they still went out and got him and they made sure he was OK.”

TRANSFORMING GOLDENROD

Two FGCU chemistry professors hope to achieve what legendary inventor and Fort Myers winter resident Thomas Edison could not: a safe, efficient way of producing rubber from goldenrod.

Their inspiration: the massive explosions and toxic waste spills in a chemical plant near Houston, Texas, after Hurricane Harvey struck in August 2017, two weeks before Irma arrived in Southwest Florida.

The team’s immediate goal is to use an environmentally friendly class of chemicals called ionic liquids to extract isoprene – the main component of rubber – from goldenrod.

That could be useful commercially, but it’s just a starting point, says Associate Professor Arsalan Mirjafari, who with Assistant Professor Gregory McManus is conducting the project.

“Isoprene is step one,” Mirjafari says, but ultimately the ionic liquids could be used to supplant a host of dangerous chemicals used in industrial processes.

The ones that exploded in Texas were

organic solvents that need to be kept at extremely low temperatures to stay stable, he says.

They blew up because loss of power caused refrigeration units to fail after the storm, Mirjafari says. “The temperature went up and they exploded.”

Edison also had to use organic solvents in his own efforts because ionic liquids hadn’t yet been developed.

“It was a nasty process,” Mirjafari says. “He couldn’t do it. We’re trying to make the process greener and more efficient.”

Edison crossbred a strain of goldenrod at the Edison Winter Estate that grew 12 feet high and had a high yield of isoprene.

Mike Cosden, executive vice president at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates, says they still grow that strain on the estates’ grounds and donated some to the FGCU team for its experiments.

Edison died in 1931 without succeeding in commercial production of rubber. The project continued after his death, but was abandoned because synthetic rubber was easier and cheaper to produce, Cosden says.

Taha Hmissa, one of the students doing the lab work on the project, says that if they’re successful at extracting isoprene, other uses might be possible.

For example, he says, phosphate mines are a major industry in the Miami area. “There are lots of phosphate-treating facilities there that use toxic chemicals because of all the mining that goes on there.”

Mirjafari says the project is good science but also a good way to educate the

students who are involved.

“When you train students to have a hands-on experience, they will learn better than going to the class and just talk,” he says. “You have to engage the students, they have to learn how the science works and they have to get excited.”

Hmissa says working on the project has had just that effect on him.

“That’s one thing I really do like about this project,” he says. “Dr. McManus and Dr. Mirjafari force you to go out there, they force you to e-mail people, force you to contact people. They say, ‘Hey, you’re not going to do this alone. Contact the Edison and Ford Winter Estates, contact these different companies, try to research what happened in Houston.’ They really want you to be able to network with people, make connections, collaborate, gain these social skills, because this is a project that will show you decades from now how to work as a scientist, and that’s what we all want to do, all of us that are in the lab.”

FLOODING

A team of FGCU researchers is unleashing a flood of information in response to the literal flooding caused in Estero by Hurricane Irma in September 2017.

Don Duke, professor of environmental studies, and Serge Thomas, assistant professor of environmental studies, are both presenting reports to the Village of Estero on

A group of students are on a boat, engaged in field research. One student is holding a long pole vertically in the water, while others look on. The scene is overlaid with a blue tint. The text is in white, bold, sans-serif font, positioned on the right side of the image.

**FGCU IS A MAJOR
PLAYER IN ADDRESSING
THOSE ISSUES AND
PRODUCING
STUDENTS
WHO ARE WELL
EQUIPPED
TO GO INTO THAT
IN THEIR CAREERS.**

their findings, compiled with the help of a group of students.

With the massive outbreak of blue-green algae in local waters this summer, the reports are coming at a time when people are keenly aware that water resources are important, Duke says.

"I've been working on water resources the whole 10 years I've been with FGCU," he says. "And Florida's water resources have been growing in concern and in public awareness pretty much that whole time, but it's really at a peak right now."

Duke says his report to the village will cover topics including an inventory of the stormwater ponds that exist in gated communities and a study on how land uses have changed.

Thomas will issue a report on flow studies of ponds on and near the FGCU campus and how that relates to ponds in Estero.

Yiliannis Rodriguez, an environmental studies major, says her group measured the levels of the FGCU ponds and determined how much they rose or fell after a specific amount of rain.

"By doing that we were able to create a formula that we could use to see how much the ponds rise" after a specific amount of rain, she says.

The formula includes the amount of surface on campus that's permeable and impermeable to water, and also the total surface area of the ponds, Rodriguez says.

Using the formula, "We were able to use campus as a residential community to compare to the communities in the Village of Estero," she says.

Now, she says, the Estero communities will be able to estimate how high their ponds will rise after a storm that drops a specific amount of rain. "By knowing that, they can try to figure out if they need to work on their drainage systems or do something to fix their ponds to hold more water."

As students go out into the community to solve real-world problems, Duke says, word gets around that "FGCU is a major player in addressing those issues and producing students who are well equipped to go into that in their careers."

Two of the students working with him on the project got internships with government agencies, and one of those two got a job with a consulting firm, Duke says.

Rodriguez says she hopes to go into the water management field when she graduates and she's already starting to understand the benefits of getting out into the community.

"I knew it would give me experience for what I wanted to do, and it's really helped me make connections and meet new people and learn more about water management and flooding," she says. "So yes, it's helped me a ton."

IMMOKALEE HEALTH CHECK

Some FGCU students headed for Immokalee this summer to help residents

deal with the damage to housing from Hurricane Irma – and also combat lingering health problems caused by the storm.

"The whole idea is to find out in what way Hurricane Irma has impacted the housing situation and how the housing situation has impacted their health," says Payal Kahar, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Sciences.

Also, she says, "There are other initiatives in this project such as just preparing them for future events – if such a hurricane took place this hurricane season, in what ways are they better equipped and prepared to mitigate the effects the hurricane brought?"

Kahar and Lirio Negroni, an associate professor in the Department of Social Work, are leading the project.

This summer's work built on a smaller data-gathering project by FGCU students and staff after Irma came through in September.

In August and September, students conducted six free weekend health screening events in locations around Immokalee.

"In the findings of the first study, which was exploring the health needs, we learned about health conditions that may need to be addressed in Immokalee," Negroni says. "We began to talk to agencies and health centers to learn more about the health situation."

The screenings came about because she and Kahar "felt that we not only should be going to Immokalee to gather data. We want to do something to contribute

A photograph of a flooded residential street. The water is murky and reflects the surrounding trees and buildings. Debris, including branches and trash, is scattered in the water. In the background, there are trees with green and brown leaves, and a white building with a blue roof. A speed limit sign for 10 is visible on a pole. The overall scene suggests the aftermath of a natural disaster.

**WE COULD PASS IT ON TO
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS
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PREVALENT.**

in some way,” Negroni says.

The screenings are “a way for residents in Immokalee to find out about conditions they were not previously aware of, and what it is they could do to prevent further risk in the future,” Kahar says.

Screenings are “not directly related to hurricane impacts, but then again looking at the health effects natural disasters have. They could be acute exaggerations of chronic conditions,” she says. “For example, asthma could worsen following a hurricane. There’s moisture in the house, the walls fall in.”

With all those components, the summer’s work is a big job, Negroni says at an orientation meeting for students before they head to Immokalee.

“There’s a little bit of anxiety about how we’re going to do all this as a group and how the community’s going to respond,” Negroni notes at the session. “It’s worrisome, it’s anxiety-provoking and it’s exciting.”

Logistical details aren’t all the students have to concern themselves with, she said – a major issue has been building trust in the Latino community, mainly people from Mexico and Central America.

Seemingly minor details can show that the health screenings are on the level, Negroni tells students.

For example, they’ll all wear T-shirts emblazoned with an FGCU logo and “Immokalee Latino Health Project.”

A cheer went up when student Rachel Walter announced that, “I just got a text from the vendor that the T-shirts are done.”

When the summer’s work in Immokalee is completed, the task of analyzing a mountain of data from surveys and focus groups will just be starting, Negroni says.

“We’ll be here until December, working,” she says, adding that she hopes FGCU will continue the initiative next year and in years to come.

“The whole idea is that once we gather the data, we could pass it on to other organizations in the community so that they could direct their initiatives toward addressing the issues that are more prevalent” throughout the study’s results, Negroni says. ■

THE SCREENINGS ARE A WAY FOR RESIDENTS IN IMMOKALEE TO FIND OUT ABOUT CONDITIONS THEY WERE NOT PREVIOUSLY AWARE OF, AND WHAT THEY COULD DO TO PREVENT FURTHER RISK IN THE FUTURE.

SPORTS



“I wasn’t ready for this five years ago. I wasn’t ready for this three years ago. To work my way up from second assistant to top assistant to where I am now, that doesn’t happen without Coach Dooley’s tutelage.”

“Great coaches such as John Wooden and Mike Krzyzewski had to start somewhere. We hope that one day, we can say that Michael Fly got his start here at FGCU.”

KEN KAVANAGH,
FGCU'S ATHLETICS DIRECTOR

BASKETBALL

Time to let it Fly

New men's coach Michael Fly has earned his wings, and they're a perfect fit / **BY KEITH GIBSON**

SINCE FLORIDA GULF Coast University's men's basketball program was elevated to NCAA Division I status in 2007, the head coaching job has been a huge springboard for the two guys who most recently held the position.

Andy Enfield (2011-13) came to FGCU from Florida State, and in his second season won two NCAA Tournament games to make the Sweet Sixteen and create the “Dunk City” legend that still flies today. He then departed for Southern California of the PAC-12.

Joe Dooley (2013-18) was then hired off the University of Kansas staff and his teams won at least 20 games all five seasons he was here. That led him back to East Carolina and a new deal with a Colonial Athletic Association program that had fired him from his first head coaching job in 1999.

Two great coaches. Two great success stories. Two great guys who left FGCU for bigger things.

That brings us to FGCU's new guy, Michael Fly, although he's not exactly “new.” Brought to FGCU as an assistant by Enfield from FSU, Fly is the last remaining link on the floor to the Sweet Sixteen team.

So, what makes Fly different from the two FGCU coaches with whom he worked?

For Enfield and Dooley, FGCU was always going to be a catapult to the next job.

For Fly, being the men's head basketball coach at FGCU is a destination.

“You have to look at what's important to you,” Fly says. “Are you chasing the money, the prestige, the biggest conference logo on your chest? Or do you feel the place you are has a chance to be even better than it is? We're not close to our ceiling. Our chance for long-term success — and for me, long-term happiness — is right here.”

If anyone had questions whether a 35-year-old Kentuckian who tutored under accomplished coaches Bernie Bickerstaff and Leonard Hamilton was finally ready to lead his own program, it certainly wasn't Ken Kavanagh, the Eagles' athletics director. It took Kavanagh just one day after Dooley was hired at East Carolina to name Fly head coach April 5.

“There's a certain pride that comes with being able to promote from within, from building a culture,” Kavanagh says. “You look at other programs that have been successful that way — Butler with Brad Stevens (now Boston Celtics head coach), for instance — and Michael certainly earned this chance.”

“Great coaches such as John Wooden and Mike Krzyzewski had to start somewhere,” Kavanagh continues. “We hope that one day, we can say that Michael Fly got his start here at FGCU.”

Actually, Fly might have gotten his head-coaching start at FGCU, but his beginning in the basketball business was

far less glamorous.

He's from a small Kentucky town called Fulton, and his boyhood dream of playing for the storied University of Kentucky Wildcats and going on to the NBA “died when I didn't get any taller.”

During his sophomore year as a non-athlete student at Kentucky, Fly asked Bill Keightley, the team's longtime equipment manager, about becoming a student manager with the elite basketball program. Keightley quickly snuffed young Fly's hopes about joining the Wildcat program. Instead, Keightley pointed him down the road to nearby Georgetown College, an NAIA school, where then-Coach Happy Osborne put the kid to work in 2004-05 as a student assistant. There, Fly was immersed in the nuts-and-bolts of the program while he was still attending Kentucky, earning a degree in secondary education with a focus in history and a minor in psychology.

The original fallback plan of becoming a high school teacher and coach ended when Fly “got three classes into a graduate program in education and said ‘that's not for me.’” Instead, “I took a shot in the dark and hustled my way in, with no blueprint” by landing an internship as a video coordinator with the Charlotte Bobcats (now Hornets) under Bickerstaff in 2006-07.

“That put me in a great place careerwise in terms of connections,” Fly says. “I tell every young coach that if you have a



chance to work in the NBA – even if you aren’t making money – do it. You’ll learn more than you will at any other level.”

An internship in corporate and broadcast alliances at NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis followed in 2007-08. That introduced Fly to the business side of the game. “It was great to see how all the different parts of the NCAA work,” he says.

From there, it was on to FSU as video coordinator under Hamilton for three Seminole NCAA Tournament teams from 2008-11. “The lowest rung on the totem pole, but the most valuable one from a starting point,” Fly says. “Your whole job is watching film, watching basketball all day long. It gives you the foundation you need to coach at a high level.”

It was at FSU that Fly bonded with Seminole assistant Enfield during the three years they worked there together. “I was fortunate he brought me here on staff as one of his assistants,” Fly says.

When Enfield and Fly got to FGCU, they found a team that had talent – players such as Sherwood Brown, Chase Fieler, Brett Comer and Bernard Thompson – but no attitude, Fly says. “There was no swagger. It’s about dressing a certain way, eating a certain way, traveling a certain way it was really about changing the mindset to, ‘We are here to play at a high level, and we are here to win.’”

In their first season at FGCU, Enfield and Fly guided the steadily improving Eagles to the 2011-12 ASUN Championship game, where they built a 13-point lead before losing to Belmont. “Our players were crying after the game, but we made them stay out on the floor to watch Belmont celebrate,” Fly says. “We told them, ‘See this? That’s going to be you next year.’”

So it would be, with the Eagles carrying a 24-11 record and a win over Mercer for the ASUN title into the team’s first

Michael Fly as an FGCU assistant with Kevin Mickle (left) and Marc-Eddy Norelia in 2017.

NCAA Tournament appearance in 2012-13. There, No. 15 seed FGCU upset No. 2 Georgetown and No. 7 San Diego State to become the lowest seed ever to make the Sweet Sixteen.

“We caught the right matchups, which is always a huge part of the tournament, but we had a really good team,” Fly says. “We knew we had talent, but from an X’s and O’s standpoint, Coach Enfield was doing things you now see with teams like the Rockets and Warriors in the NBA in terms of spacing, fluidity and offensive freedom ... things nobody was doing in college, and that these bigger, more talented teams had never seen.”

Not surprisingly, USC came calling for Enfield. “It was a very emotional time for Andy, but he had to make the move,” Fly says. “When you have wives and kids

involved, it's a decision you have to make.

"I had a chance to go with Andy to Southern California, but we knew the future here was bright. One of the best pieces of advice he gave me was to make sure that I got to stay on the floor and recruit. He told me if the new coach is going to let you do that, you have to stay there."

Fly's loyalty would result in a great five-season run with Dooley.

"Coach Dooley is a huge practice guy ... he looks at every practice as a win or loss," Fly says. "His theory is that if we win the battles in practice, we'll win the wars in games. I thought 85 percent of basketball was recruiting, and that I really didn't need to be at practice all the time, but he emphasized the importance of that, to spend as much time on learning how to coach.

"I wasn't ready for this five years ago. I wasn't ready for this three years ago. To work my way up from second assistant to top assistant to where I am now, that doesn't happen without Coach Dooley's tutelage."

Or without the help of the great Eagle players of the recent past. Fly is big on FGCU legacy and culture, and he always brings up the names — Comer, Brown, Fieler, Thompson, Julian DeBose, Marc-Eddy Norelia, Demetris Morant, Brandon Goodwin, Zach Johnson, Christian Terrell — who first raised the bar Fly plans to lift even higher.

"When I was younger, I wanted to recruit the very best players I could, to bring in talent of the highest level," he says. "As I've gotten older, I realize it's just as important to have guys who will love FGCU, who will love our culture, love the community they are part of. Next to family, religion and education, this logo needs to be the foremost thing in their lives.

"I tell them, 'This is my Kentucky. This is the most important program in the world.'" ■

A MAN FOR ALL 20 SEASONS

By the time you read this, FGCU women's basketball coach Karl Smesko will have celebrated his 48th birthday. It won't be too long after Thanksgiving before he reaches a much bigger number: 500 career coaching wins in his 20th season.

While he'll join a lengthy list of active NCAA coaches who have reached that milestone, he might be the first one who gets to celebrate it with a lei around his neck.

That's because after the Eagles start the 2018-19 season by playing three games on the U.S. mainland - two at home - games four through six will take place in Honolulu at the Rainbow Wahine Showdown, including one against Stanford and its legendary coach, Tara VanDerveer, who eliminated Smesko and No. 25-ranked FGCU in the second round of last year's NCAA Tournament at Stanford.

"We try to go on a nice trip every year, and our players are really looking forward to the Hawaii trip," says Smesko, who, even if his Eagles manage to avenge last year's tournament loss to the Cardinal this season in the Aloha State, still has a way to go to catch VanDerveer and the 884 wins she's earned entering her 40th season as a college coach.

Whenever his 500th win comes, Smesko (496-114 overall in 19 seasons, 435-87 at FGCU in 16 seasons, 303-66 in

Division I) can hang the accomplishment next to his flower necklace, eight ASUN Coach of the Year awards, Kay Yow National Coach of the Year honor (2012), espnW Mid-Major Coach of the Year recognition (2016), Division II South Region Coach of the Year laurel (2007), and NAIA and Mid-Ohio

Conference Coach of the Year designations (both in 1998).

That's a flowery resume, for sure. And it's only going to get more colorful this season, with leading returning players Nasrin Ulel, Lisa Zderadicka and Tytionia Adderly leading a slew of eligible Division I transfers and a handful of first-year signees as the Eagles seek a 15th consecutive 20-win season and ninth 25-win season in a row in pursuit of a ninth ASUN regular-season championship and sixth ASUN Tournament title.

"Each year brings different challenges," Smesko says. "We basically try to play to our players' strengths, show them how they can be most effective in our style of play. We take a slow, deliberate approach to get incrementally better. We call practice "progress" - the mindset that we're there to continually improve, take steps to get better."

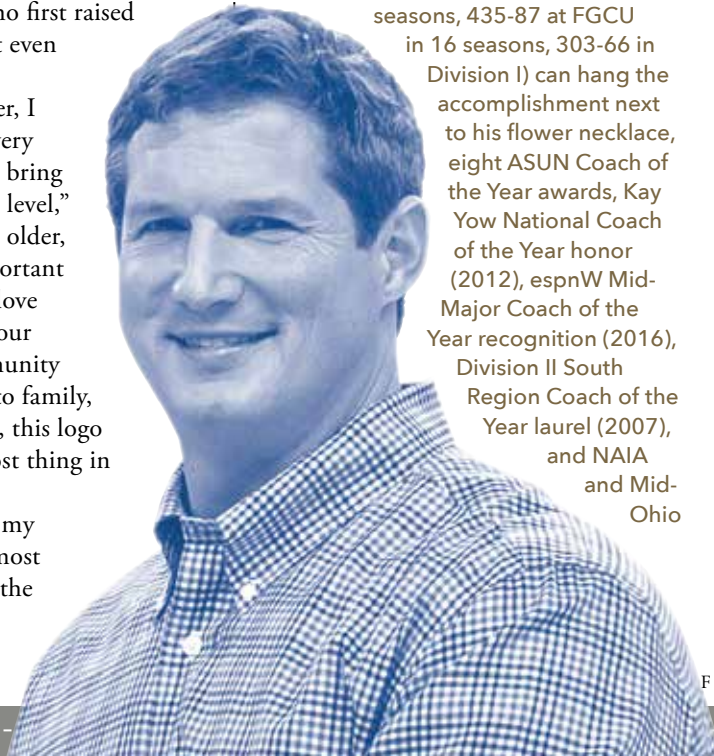
Meanwhile, Smesko, who didn't even realize he's on the threshold of 500 career wins until it was pointed out to him, doesn't "even think about past accomplishments."

"When I got started, I was really young for a college head coach (his first job was at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio, where he had earned a master's degree), and all I wanted to do was the best job I could for my players," he said. "I still have the same goal - play well this year, and worry about where we are now and what we can do better."

Smesko's resume is such that a promotion to a school in a bigger conference with greater prestige will always be an option for him, but he hasn't yet been lured away from FGCU after a run of remarkable, consistent success. "I love the university and I love the area," he says. "I enjoy my life here, and I'm very proud of our program. I factor all that into the equation."

That equation includes a bunch of other impressive Smeskoian facts and figures, but those will do for now. The numbers will take care of themselves as the FGCU coach and his Eagles, as they say on the island of O'ahu, try to "kulia i ka nu'u" - "strive to reach the highest." ■

FGCU women's basketball coach Karl Smesko



ALUMNI



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CLASS OF 2008

Rum distiller has entrepreneurial spirit

BY RICK WEBER

ALEX VOSS' DEEPLY HELD dream was to be a Mad Man – a Madison Avenue advertising executive patterned after the hard-drinking, chain-smoking characters in “Mad Men,” a wildly successful TV series that won 16 Emmys and five Golden Globes.

“I guess I’m kind of a Mad Man for this rum company,” says Voss, owner of the Punta Gorda-based Alligator Bay Distillers, “but I never made it to Madison Avenue. Which isn’t to say that I won’t one day. It’s not my end game right now, but who knows?”

For now, he is delighted to run the only distillery in Charlotte County, along with mother Margarita, the president, and brother Ben, brand ambassador and apprentice. Voss has ridden the wave of popularity, starting his business in 2014 when there were only eight distilleries in Florida and now finding it among almost 50.

He treasures the freedom of being his own boss, but his satisfaction goes much deeper.

“I enjoy the creativity used to improve both flavor and quality of production,” he says. “We can change a small step within the

line of production and create a totally different flavor profile. Some changes are planned, but some happen by mistake. I believe the mistakes are the best discoveries.”

After graduating from FGCU in 2008 with a marketing degree, Voss went through the portfolio program at the Miami Ad School, finishing at its San Francisco campus. He stayed in the Bay Area to work in PR for a small cell-phone app development company.

After he was laid off, he threw caution to the wind and moved to Maui to work on a five-month construction project. When that ended, he was scouring Craigslist when he found an apprenticeship with Haleakalā Distillers. His two-year stint there taught him about producing rum.

When he was home on vacation in 2013, his mom mentioned Cape Coral-based Wicked Dolphin Rum Distillery and suggested he investigate what they were doing. It sparked the idea of starting his own distillery.

He started looking for property in Lee and Collier counties, but found nothing in his price range, so he headed north to Punta Gorda. Financed entirely by an inheritance from his father, who died in a 2003 motorcycle accident in Naples, he bought a one-acre spread with a 3,000-square-foot building formerly used to manufacture boat lift covers. Production began in April 2016, using 100 percent Florida molasses sourced at the Clewiston sugar mill.

Alligator Bay’s annual production is 7,000 bottles of rum in five flavors, with a base price of \$20 for white. The motto: “Cane to Bottle.”

“It’s a little scary, but also liberating because I don’t have a bank loan, so I don’t have a bank hounding me for payment,” he says. “I never pulled in an investor. There are only three chefs in the kitchen, I guess. I’m going to keep it as long as I can. If an investor does come through in the mold of ‘Shark Tank,’ why not? But I’d be giving away this liberty that I enjoy.” ■



Alex Voss ('08, Marketing), his mother and brother produce rum in Punta Gorda.

Josh Leppo and Samantha Rahael are Eagles of a feather who flocked together.

CLASSES OF 2012, 2016

Former FGCU athletes have double wedding—one in U.S., one in Trinidad

BY ROBBIE SPENCER '12

JOSH LEPPA, A FORMER FGCU and professional golfer, joked with friends over the years about competing in the Olympics for Trinidad and Tobago should the sport ever make it to the Games.

The joke: As a U.S.-based golfer who consistently beat international opponents in tournaments, Leppo would have a tough time besting the many PGA veterans of his home country to make it onto a future Olympic team, but might stand a chance representing the small Caribbean republic.

So when he met FGCU swimmer Samantha Rahael at The Pub at Mercato in Naples, it seemed funnier still when he realized Ms. Rahael was a fellow FGCU student – from Trinidad.

“I jokingly told her that I’d marry her,” Leppo recalls of their first conversation.

Little did they both know that would become a happy reality.

Less than two years after their fateful meeting, the couple married on Aug. 20, 2017, in front of a select group of close family with a ceremony behind the Leppo home in the Vineyards in Naples, officiated by Leppo’s best man, Eddie Rogers.

Still, they knew a larger ceremony was in order. Weddings in Trinidad are a serious event; it’s typical for there to be hundreds of guests at a ceremony. Family and friends from all over the world return home, no matter which relative is tying the knot. With the family matriarch, Rahael’s



grandmother, Catherine, in poor health, the couple decided to celebrate their love again, this time in front of the entire Rahael universe.

"We wanted to be there with my grandmother, who we call 'Tita'," she says. "In Trinidad, family is very important for these celebrations."

And so the couple married again in front of 250 friends and family in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on Aug. 18.

Leppo ('12, Communication) and Rahael ('16, Resort & Hospitality) meshed well as fellow FGCU athletes and alumni. Leppo was a big fan of school athletics and enjoyed checking out many of Rahael's swimming and diving meets.

"Six months after we met, we went on our first date and he kept making me laugh. That's when I thought he had potential," Rahael says. "I'll never forget when he surprised me at our conference swim meet at the University of Georgia. He drove all the way through by himself!"

The two FGCU alumni are thriving in their professional lives as well. Following several years pursuing professional golf overseas, Leppo returned home and is now a financial advisor with Wells Fargo Advisors. Rahael retired from swimming and now helps run a local catering company in Southwest Florida called Tastebuds.

Despite their professional success and collegiate athlete credentials, neither has plans to compete in the Olympics for Trinidad and Tobago any time soon. ■



CLASS OF 2008

Hydrologic technician loves to test the waters

BY KAREN BOOTH

WATER. WITHOUT IT, we can't survive. With it? Well, when we're drinking it, quality is key. During a hurricane, it's about quantity. During a drought, availability tops the list.

Enter professional hydrologic technicians, whose job it is to monitor, record and analyze virtually every aspect of water and how it affects our world.

In her position as a hydrologic technician for U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Kendra Smith ('08, Marine Science) has been doing that very thing for the past decade. Two months after her graduation, she secured a position in USGS's Fort Myers office. Today, she works out of Columbia, S.C., collecting the data that scientists rely on to keep us safe.

"I started taking groundwater measurements, moved into surface discharge and tidal work," Smith says. "I learned to install monitoring sites in wells, rivers and coastal areas. We're looking for certain criteria, so we set up an enclosure with transmitters, data collectors and sensors. We look at water level, temperature, velocity and many other parameters to help us answer the question, 'What's happening here?'"

That very question was uppermost in her mind before and after Hurricane Florence hit the Carolinas. "A few days prior to landfall, several teams, including me, deployed over 100 storm-surge sensors and several temporary real-time stations along the coast," she explains.

Each sensor and temporary station collected data as the storm progressed. Immediately after the storm passed, Smith returned to the field with other technicians to collect those sensors and measure the rivers as the flood waters peaked. "Several teams were able to capture measurements at

record highs," she says.

Smith explains that the final "leg" of the field portion of post-hurricane work is dedicated to finding high watermarks, which, she says, "is usually a debris line left on a manmade structure indicating how high the water rose. Teams survey those elevations to aid in regional flood mapping."

This work is fundamental to the USGS, which is all about gathering information. Smith describes the work as, among other things, quality assurance. "It's a vast monitoring program," she says. "The site sensing systems are transmitted to satellites and posted on the web, not only for professionals, but also so the public can review data of interest to them."

Hurricane forecasting is one major example and of interest to many. "The data we collect helps forecasters make informed decisions to keep the public safe: 'Should you evacuate? When should you evacuate? What should you expect in terms of storm surge?' From my perspective, I think it's very cool to provide the data that helps solve these and other problems."

Smith transferred to FGCU for her junior and senior years, after already attending two other colleges which, she says, did not motivate, or inspire her.

"FGCU impressed me immediately," she says. "I was able to take specialized classes, only available to graduate students at these other colleges. Classes like sediment dynamics, coastal and watershed geology. We went on lots of field trips. It was a very encouraging environment."

"The culture of inspiration and the fostering of individual success sets FGCU apart from other institutions, in that graduates leave with the sense that they aren't just another product of the public university system but are capable and worthy new members of the workforce." ■



“

The culture of inspiration and the fostering of individual success sets FGCU apart from other institutions.

KENDRA SMITH

”



Kendra Smith on the job in Columbia, S.C.

CLASS OF 2001

She gives lives direction

BY KAREN BOOTH

STACEY COOK, CEO of SalusCare, embodies the FGCU Effect – and has done so each and every day since graduating in 2001 with her Master of Social Work degree as she approaches her job with heartfelt passion, unwavering commitment and steadfast leadership.

“I would define the FGCU Effect as an essential activating ingredient in my professional development,” Cook says. “Not just in terms of climbing the ladder of leadership, but also in the development of my sense of confidence and competency in positions of leadership and advocacy.”

SalusCare provides comprehensive behavioral health-care services to Southwest Florida residents. Its 400 employees serve 16,000-plus adults and children annually. Services include crisis, residential and outpatient programs and community outreach. To lead an organization of such breadth and depth requires solid leadership.

Cook says her leadership skills took root during her tenure at FGCU. “Dr. Amanda Evans (assistant professor of social work), I remember her well. She made it clear early on that many students in my program, if not all of us, would be in leadership positions when we graduated. A big focus of our work was establishing leadership skills and establishing core competencies for success.”

Although FGCU was in its infancy when Cook enrolled in the master’s program, it was, she says, “a university from day one. The program had a significant imprint on me and on my tight-knit cohort of fellow students. It was a very supportive environment and a very rigorous program. When I graduated I felt incredibly accomplished.”

Cook began working in health care in 1993 as a volunteer at what was then

known as the Ruth Cooper Center, where her mother was a nurse in the residential program. In fact, founder Ruth Cooper herself hired her. Later, her journey included running a Florida Assertive Community Treatment team (FACT) in Naples (which assisted the most seriously ill clients in their homes) and, ultimately, she joined SalusCare, where she has held various positions of leadership.

“After graduation, most of my professional life has been working in an administrative capacity overseeing clinical and administrative operations,” says Cook, who was promoted to CEO of SalusCare in October 2015.

“I work with an incredible team of professionals,” she says. “I’m only as good as the people I work with, and the people who make it all happen – the direct-care providers and workers.”

It’s a job that calls upon all of the skills she acquired as an undergraduate at the University of South Florida and as a graduate student at FGCU. It also requires stamina and patience, qualities she nurtures with early morning runs.

“It’s a great way for me to get grounded, and to connect with the environment and to clear my mind,” she says.

In looking back on her journey, reminiscing about her time at FGCU and thinking of those who influenced her most – who helped her answer the question, “How did I get where I am?” – she thinks about her mother, “my best friend and an incredible woman. She was the catalyst for me, and though she had some challenges,

she helped me to learn from them. I see our journey together positively. I give her credit for why I’m here in this position and for who I’ve become as a person.”

Cook’s mother, who died several years ago, gave her daughter a note and asked her to keep it close to her and take it out whenever she is in need of comfort. Cook tucked that note in her wallet and has had it near her for the last 18 years. “It’s super important to me. It’s a message that reminds me of her presence and light – it gives me great strength,” she says. ■





Stacey Cook, CEO of SalusCare, gets inspiration from morning runs and a note her mother left her.



Women from a Pakistani village turn out to meet with Uzair Iqbal, right, during his fellowship abroad.

CLASS OF 2016

Sanitation expert brings hygienic help to his family's native country of Pakistan

BY LORI FERGUSON

AS A STUDENT IN the late Professor John Herman's general ecology course, Uzair Iqbal ('16, Environmental Studies) sometimes found himself knee-deep in swamp water alongside alligators. The experience was a bit nerve-racking, but it made a lasting impression.

"Professor Herman believed it was important for us to get out of the classroom to see and understand what we were actually studying," Iqbal says of the FGCU assistant professor of biology who died in July. "He taught me that not everything should be learned from books – you also need to get your hands dirty."

Iqbal has carried that lesson into his professional life. In fall 2016, he

completed the research internship he had started at FGCU's Kapnick Center at the Naples Botanical Garden the previous fall, then returned to his hometown of San Antonio, Texas, to accept a job with the city's Solid Waste Management Department. He now serves as the Recycling Coordinator for ReWorksSA, the department's commercial recycling division, helping apartment complexes and businesses in their recycling efforts.

Happily, he notes, much of his time is spent out in the field. "I check businesses' recycling best practices when they apply for the ReWorksSA Recycling Certification and assist apartment managers, owners and their residents with recycling initiatives," Iqbal says.

Last summer, Iqbal decided to dive into a different type of field work.

He returned to his family's native country of Pakistan for an eight-week fellowship with the American Pakistan Foundation (APF), an organization dedicated to leveraging the knowledge and resources of Pakistani Americans and friends of Pakistan to strengthen civic, political and socioeconomic ties between citizens of both nations.

One of only nine fellows selected from a group of almost 100 applicants, Iqbal worked in the Water, Immunization, Sanitation and Education (WISE) program of the National Rural Support Programme, a non-government organization that has been active in rural development issues in Pakistan since 1993. His goal: to help villagers improve their sanitation systems.

"The rural population in Pakistan is extremely poor, so I decided to survey villages in the Sindh and Punjab provinces about the challenges of their sanitation systems," says Iqbal, who concedes it was an eye-opening experience. "It's tough to ask people to focus on sanitation when they have no toilets or electricity and their children suffer from lack of immunizations, education and water."

Yet Iqbal says the fellowship was gratifying as well. "When I studied with Assistant Professor Brian Bovard at FGCU, he taught me the importance of systems-thinking," Iqbal says. "Rather than accepting a general answer, he always pushed me to dig deeper. Working in the field, I saw firsthand how vital it is to understand that everything is connected – problems don't exist in isolation."

Bovard, an assistant professor of environmental studies, says, "I interacted with Uzair in a number of different capacities during his time at FGCU. I had him in several classes, worked with him on his senior research project, and traveled to the Dominican Republic with him as an advisor to the Dominican Republic Outreach Program. In every instance, he was as committed to the experience as any student I've encountered. Uzair is passionate about environmental issues, and when he's engaged in something, he's all in."

Now he's taking what he learned at FGCU – sometimes the wet and dirty way – to help his family's country.

"If it weren't for the experiences and education I received at FGCU, I can definitely say that I would not be where I am in my professional career now," Iqbal says. "Once an Eagle, always an Eagle!" ■



GIVING



Student fitness facility finally front and center after lengthy permitting process concludes

BY KEITH GIBSON

FLORIDA GULF COAST University has always bought into the English proverb that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body. But FGCU has faced challenges providing the fitness facilities needed to accommodate the more than 15,000 bodies that house those brains.

The 9,000-square-foot Recreation Center adjacent to Alico Arena, which includes the Fitness Center, Group Fitness Studio and a

strength and conditioning room, was built to serve about 4,000 students, or roughly one-fourth of FGCU's current student body, not to mention faculty and staff who also enjoy access.

Finally, after about three years of planning, fundraising and negotiating a rather challenging permitting process, that's about to change with the start of construction on the almost 120,000-square-foot Student Academic Health and Life Fitness Center, to be built

in the southwest area of South Village. Tom Mayo, director of facilities planning, is hoping for completion of the project by December 2019 with opening the following spring.

That has everyone pumped, especially Robbie Roepstorff, vice chair of the FGCU Board of Trustees and one of the new center's biggest champions since she was part of its original approval in 2015.

"I'm extremely pleased for our students," says Roepstorff, a founder and president



Studies show students adjust better to university life and enhance academic performance when they have a fitness center on campus where they can unwind and socialize in a healthy environment.



ROBBIE ROEPSTORFF,
VICE CHAIR OF THE FGCU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

of Edison National Bank and Bank of the Islands in Fort Myers and Sanibel Island. “This center is by no means a luxury item for our university, it’s a necessity. Studies show students adjust better to university life and enhance academic performance when they have a fitness center on campus where they can unwind and socialize in a healthy environment. Our FGCU students greatly deserve the opportunities and services the new center will offer. I look forward to opening the doors to this important facility and healthy lifestyle on campus.”

Most of the funding for the \$18 million center comes from the university’s capital improvement fund, which includes student activity fees, but other sources include a \$3-million gift from the FGCU Foundation and two private donations: one an estate gift made anonymously, the

other of \$1.5 million spread over five years from the Mary E. Dooner Foundation, a Naples-based family philanthropic organization that has been a regular FGCU benefactor. The latter gift will result in the strength-and-conditioning area of the new center to be named in honor of Gene and Mary Dooner. Besides the strength and conditioning part of the center, the facility also will include areas for health and fitness assessment and education, providing a total wellness experience for both body and mind.

But even with the funding in place, the biggest hurdle would prove to be needed approval for the project from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which, when it reviewed plans for the center along with a new road FGCU wants to build, came up with a list of issues it first wanted

the university to resolve, resulting in the almost-three-year delay. With those issues fixed to everyone’s satisfaction, FGCU is ready to move ahead quickly — and that’s good news for students such as Roxana Ruiz, a sophomore economics major from Fort Myers.

“I usually have to wait to use the bars to do work on my legs,” says Ruiz, who uses the fitness center three times a week for up to an hour and a half each visit, usually between classes. “More equipment, and more room for it, will be great.”

As for the added services the expanded facility will afford, Ruiz says nutrition advice and perhaps some personal-training expertise can only enhance her FGCU experience. It’s all part of the university making good health and happiness an integral part of the educational journey. ■





The Blair enrichment project

Foundation scholarships lead to research opportunities / **BY KAREN BOOTH**

INVESTING IN THE future. Moving forward together. Opening doors. Paying it forward. The language of philanthropy varies, but the bottom line remains: Philanthropists make a difference not only in the lives of individuals, but also in the health and wellbeing of communities and the world.

The Blair Foundation, named for the late Naples philanthropists and conservationists Dorothy and John Blair, is committed to making a difference in Southwest Florida, and FGCU students are among the fortunate recipients of the foundation's generosity. Not surprisingly, given the Blairs' passion for conservation, Blair Foundation scholarships were originally available only to students conducting environmental research through FGCU's Whitaker Center for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. This year, however, the foundation broadened its parameters.

Students pursuing an undergraduate degree and majoring in any STEM subject can now apply.

Jim Laurion, trustee of the foundation, shares the thought process behind the scholarship awards. "During the previous years that we elected to give annual scholarship gifts, we experienced very sincere and fun reports from the students at FGCU. Since the Blair Foundation was terminating, we decided to make a likewise gift that would stretch for 15 years into the future.

"Rather than an endowment, we chose to structure a lump-sum gift that would grant more numerous and 'immediate' gifts each year over the next 15 years. It's an investment and gift for the current generation of students, not smaller annual gifts that would stretch in perpetuity. We hope the result will be that more current FGCU students will benefit from and enjoy the motivations and rewards that come from education, and we all will benefit from their subsidized efforts."

Laura Frost, director of the Whitaker Center, is deeply grateful for the foundation's steadfast support through the years and for the recent exceptionally generous gift of \$1.39 million, which translates into 10, \$5,000 scholarships each year for 15 years.

"Blair Foundation scholarships have made a significant difference in the lives of our students," Frost says. "When students immerse themselves in research over an entire summer, they not only accomplish a lot, but they are better positioned to secure more scholarships outside of the university, including national scholarships like the Goldwater Scholarship for Science."

Luka Ndungu, ('18, environmental

ABOVE: Luka Ndungu '18, seeks to understand the causes of poor water quality.

AT RIGHT: Matthew Hale '18, explores the relationship of sustainable values and actions.

science), a graduate student working with Hidetoshi Urakawa, associate professor of ecological studies, is conducting research into applying hydrogen peroxide to control harmful algal blooms in freshwater ponds and rivers, a project extremely relevant to Southwest Florida.

Ndungu's interest in water quality originated in his native Kenya. "I am driven to understand what causes poor water quality and to learn ways to eradicate these problems for the sake of humans and animals," he says. Ndungu's goal is to return to Kenya and "bring transformation into Kenya's cities. With the education I gain in America, I will surely make a significant difference back home."

Receiving the Blair Foundation Scholarship was a game changer for Ndungu. "To be honest, it would have been tough to pursue this level of research without the financial support. I would like to thank my sponsors for their kind hearts in offering me this scholarship and helping me see my dream come true."

Urakawa is pleased with Ndungu's progress. "I do not doubt that his research will be published in a top-ranked journal," he says. "FGCU does not have the resources that larger universities have. The Blair Foundation offers great opportunities for our students."

Matthew Hale ('18, environmental studies), on the other hand, is interested in human behavior as it relates to sustainable actions. His research focuses on the actions of Lee County residents, who he surveyed in a random study. His overarching question: "Is there a values-action gap between sustainable values and sustainable actions in a population that is currently experiencing disasters associated with climate change?" Hale hopes that the results of his research will inform public education efforts that promote personal sustainable choices and reduce the impacts of climate change.

As to having received the Blair Foundation Scholarship, Hale could not be more appreciative. "It's monumental," he says. "I've worked my way through college and to participate in an officially funded research project is huge. The \$5,000 award gives me the opportunity to conduct research and attend academic conferences."

Hale's faculty advisor, Molly Nation, assistant professor of environmental education, commended Hale for his thoughtful approach to his research project, which, unlike many research projects in the environmental sciences, focuses more on qualitative research and human behavior.

"The Blair Foundation scholarships make it possible for students at FGCU to get real-life research experiences they might not otherwise have the opportunity to pursue," Nation says. "Scholarly

research is really a necessity. The Blair scholarships not only provide the resources for our students, but also they are really big motivators for students to engage in scholarly research."

Hale adds, "I've lived in this community for a long time. Just receiving this scholarship makes me feel more part of the community. And I believe if the community gives me my opportunity, I must do something with the community to give back." ■





A club that feels for its wheels

With about 400 active and casual members, the FGCU Car Club proudly shows its heart

FOR MOST OF US, having cars at Florida Gulf Coast University usually means trying to find a coveted legal parking spot.

But for members of the FGCU Car Club, autos are more than transportation. They can represent everything from making a personal statement to satisfying a

lifelong, driving passion.

Carter Kozminski, president of the FGCU club and a junior journalism major who plans to become an automotive writer, proudly points out that the club has about 200 active members and meets at least twice each week. “An additional group of alumni and close-friend members bring the total

number upwards of 400,” he says.

Started in 2015 and with James Greco, University Marketing and Communications photographer and FGCU photo instructor, serving as its current adviser, the FGCU Car Club’s signature event is a January show that helps benefit the American Heart Association. The 2018 event drew 225



entries with half the entry proceeds – \$2,100 – donated to the AHA, a tangible result of The FGCU Effect.

Kozminski says the club hopes to draw more than 250 entries (and in turn collect a bigger donation for the heart charity) at the Jan. 19, 2019, FGCU Motor Show, which will take place around the bus loop near the plaza outside Cohen Center. For entry details, visit the club's Facebook page at facebook.com/groups/fgcucc/. To see a video of last year's show, check this out: <https://bit.ly/2CdFwjV>.

But the enthusiasts of the FGCU Car Club are more than just automotive tinkerers and exhibitors. Greco says club members also meet up at Southwest Florida autocross and drag-racing tracks to safely satisfy their need for speed in a closed environment, pushing and testing their cars' performance limits.

Kozminski is from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, which means he can put a lot of miles on the cars he owns — a 2001 Bullitt Mustang and 2016 Fiesta ST — if he's driving to and from FGCU, which is about a 2,200-mile trip one way.

So, what does Kozminski think is the coolest car ever made? "The way I'd answer this question is by choosing the first car I'd buy if I won the lottery," he says. "I think the coolest automobile ever made is the Pagani Huayra. I've ridden in one, and it is a great combination of brute power and sleek beauty."

The Italian sports car has a base price of about \$1 million, can reach almost 240 mph and goes from 0 to 60 mph in 2.8 seconds. And, if you park one illegally at FGCU, it's going to cost you \$30.

— Keith Gibson



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