

# FGCU 360

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## CAMPUS CLOSE-UP

PHOTOGRAPHER ZOOMS  
IN ON LIFE AT FGCU



Building legacies on campus  
Behind the scenes on Broadway  
Distinguished alumni honored



SPRING 2023

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VOLUME 16 / NUMBER 2

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### EYES ON EAGLES

In this issue, we've given over a whole spread to showcase the creative Eagle eye of photographer James Greco, who has captured the life and spirit of FGCU for two decades.

BY JAMES GRECO

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### THE FACES BEHIND THE FACADES

Do you know the stories behind the names gracing many of our campus buildings? They represent people in the institution and the community who made FGCU what it is today.

COMPILED BY KYLE MCCURRY

### ON THE COVER:

FGCU photographer James Greco's artful eye captured a frog in silhouette on a dewy window.





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## MUST-SEE VIDEOS



### Wet walk

Walk through a campus cypress dome with Win Everham, and learn why he calls them "magnificent places."



### Amazing Amazon

FGCU researcher studies wildlife diversity deep in the rainforests of South America.



### Spin doctors

Intramural sports like Ultimate Frisbee Club help students connect while having fun.



### MLK tribute

FGCU student Savannah Niarchos sings "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

## GOOD READS



### No 'bones' about it

A long-running crime show inspired graduate student Delanie Fether's choice to pursue a career in forensic studies.

### Journey from Jamaica

A philanthropist behind FGCU's entrepreneurship school helped family man Andre Green achieve his dream of a college degree.



### What's your emotional IQ?

FGCU teams up with NeoGenomics to offer a digital badge in emotional intelligence – an attribute in high demand by the workforce.



### Splashy opening

Hundreds of guests turned out to celebrate The Water School, aka AB9. At 114,414 square feet, it's the largest academic building on campus.



### Lifelong learning

The FGCU Academy's season, featuring hundreds of affordable, noncredit courses, is well underway at locations throughout Southwest Florida.







## STUDENT SUCCESS

## Brothers teach others how to strive for success

BY JONATHAN PRESSLEY

**A**MERICA IS A LAND of second chances, and two brothers with Florida Gulf Coast University ties use this ideology as the backbone of Strive Hall, the name they put on their new, nonprofit youth program.

"Strive Hall is a youth-development organization that we built, inspired by our life story," said Quay Longs, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in entrepreneurship in December

and plans to complete his master's in spring 2024. "The goal is to get urban youth to transition successfully into adulthood and avoid the pitfalls that we dealt with ... and we fell into."

The message delivered by Longs and his co-founder/brother, Jamaree "JJ" Jones, is clear from Strive Hall's motto: "Where Entrepreneurial Mindsets Fuel Action." Jones is a 2021 FGCU entrepreneurship graduate and spring 2024 master's degree candidate now working at the university as an

undergraduate admissions counselor. The brothers are from Plant City, a Central Florida town of about 40,000.

"A lot of times when you come from a smaller place, your perspective on the world is that it's a lot smaller," Jones said. "If you keep a baby gnat inside a jar and you put a lid on top of it, after so long, you can take that lid off and it will never leave that jar because that's all it knows."

That's his way of saying young people tend to conform to their

environment, and Strive Hall's main goal is to change that mindset among youths ages 16 to 22. One such opportunity took place last summer when Strive Hall held two camps at FGCU so young visitors could experience life outside their realm. Joshua McKnight of Dunbar High School got to do things on campus such as walk a nature trail.

"It was flooded when we went there," McKnight said. "I never really did anything like that before."

Strive Hall will host another full weekend summer camp this year at FGCU; students can apply at

despite a checkered history breeds new life into young people who face similar challenges.

McKnight explains the impact of seeing such relatable success with his own eyes.

"They told us about their past," he said of the brothers. "They did a couple of troubled things. I got in trouble with a couple things. But they still did it (attended college) even though they got in trouble."

Another camp workshop, "Energy & Effort," delivers the message: "Success requires work." "The energy and the effort that you put into

Sandra Kauanui in the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship.

"When they started taking entrepreneurship courses, they really connected with it," Kauanui said of the brothers. "When they found entrepreneurship, it opened their minds to new possibilities and opportunities."

Longs returned after 10 years. "It was never about ability for me," he said. "It was all about circumstances."

The brothers are examples of progression — not perfection. "Because (they) see themselves in the students they work with, they know

**"A lot of times when you come from a smaller place, your perspective on the world is that it's a lot smaller. If you keep a baby gnat inside a jar and you put a lid on top of it, after so long, you can take that lid off and it will never leave that jar because that's all it knows."**

QUAY LONGS, STRIVE HALL CO-FOUNDER

strivehall.org. The camps are more than nature hikes, though. One of the workshops campers have is "Choices & Decisions."

"We teach the youth how to identify if they're making a choice or a decision, and what's the difference between the two," Longs said. "Whenever I draw conclusions based on values and beliefs, it's a choice. But if I'm thinking about consequences and performance and what's going to come later, that's when I'm making a decision."

Decisions that result in mistakes can make young people feel they can't get back on the right path. Strive Hall tries to show them that is far from true. Seeing others succeed

something, it shows," Jones said. "And if you aren't working hard, it's not hard to tell."

Longs and Jones know about working to better themselves. Longs



**Jamaree "JJ" Jones**

dropped out of college with a 1.3 grade-point average. Jones wasn't far ahead with a 1.8 GPA.

"I would say growing up where we grew up — small-town mentality," Longs said. "I never was asked about my GPA or what my grades looked like." Jones lost his financial aid and worked his way back into higher education taking one class at a time. Two years later, he was a full-time student under the mentorship of

that if they can help those students utilize skill sets integrated in such areas as 'entrepreneurial mindset,' they can change lives just as their own were changed," Kauanui said.

That's why FGCU's emphasis on individual success is important to the brothers.

"For me, it's probably been one of the most impactful things in my adulthood," Jones said of the university. "The support is real, man."

His brother agreed. "It's literally a second home for me. I became a man here," Longs said of FGCU. "My life changed here. This entrepreneurship program ... man, there's nothing like it." ■

— Communication major Jonathan Pressley wrote this story as an intern with University Marketing & Communications.

**LEFT: Quay Longs, center, leads Strive Hall campers on a Food Forest tour.**





## COMMUNITY

## FGCU Campus Food Pantry serves students for 10 years

BY ANNIE HUBBELL

**I**N FALL 2014, FLORIDA Gulf Coast University sophomore Samantha Lloyd was struggling. She was a full-time student with a part-time job living in an apartment, and bills were stacking up. When they were paid, she and her now husband had \$50 in their bank account to spend on

food and gas for three weeks.

"It was pretty difficult," said Lloyd. "We relied on my mom for a couple of weeks, but she has her own life to take care of. So, we started to brainstorm and asked ourselves, what resources can we use?"

Lloyd and her mom then remembered a piece of information

from FGCU orientation the year before. The FGCU Campus Food Pantry was a resource Lloyd could take advantage of as a student.

Every Tuesday for the next three years, Lloyd utilized the pantry as a client but spent the majority of her time there giving back.

"I was so blown away by how



## CONNECT ON INSTAGRAM:

► @fgcucampusfoodpantry

amazing this resource was that I wanted to give back,” she said. “About two weeks after my first visit, I came in as a volunteer and got my 80 hours of required service-learning at the Campus Food Pantry.”

Her passion for the pantry turned into a full-time job. Lloyd has been the coordinator of the pantry since 2016. She is the smiling face you’ll see if you visit the pantry in the Music Modular building near Parking Garage 2.

“It’s a reliable and sustainable source because it is choice-based, so everything that a student takes is something they like, need and know how to prepare,” she explained.

The FGCU Campus Food Pantry has been serving students for 10 years. It was created in 2012 by Jo Anna Bradshaw, wife of former President Wilson G. Bradshaw. Bradshaw led a committee that surveyed the student body about food insecurity, and the need was apparent.

“We know students have problems with tuition costs and high costs of books, so they really have to be impacted when it comes to food,” said Bradshaw. “There was sufficient evidence (from the survey) that the pantry would be a resource that would be needed and used.”

Since its doors opened, the pantry has been visited 15,000 times. A proud partner agency of the Harry Chapin Food Bank, the pantry has been a lifeline to students, whether they visit once or once a week for multiple years.

**LEFT: Samantha Lloyd stocks shelves in the Campus Food Pantry, which has been helping students for 10 years.**

**RIGHT: Michele Coulter, one of the pantry’s founders, and Samantha Lloyd, pantry coordinator, encourage students experiencing food insecurity to take advantage of the resource.**

Michele Coulter, recently retired director of operations for Administrative Services and Finance and a founder of the pantry, wants students to see it as a safe zone. She emphasizes the process for students to acquire food is completely confidential.

“I want students to know that they can come to a judgment-free zone and be able to eat, which is a right for everyone,” said Coulter. “Everybody needs a little help now and again, and then maybe they’ll turn around and pay it forward.”

The pantry is open weekday afternoons. An emergency outdoor food pantry containing canned goods is located outside the Music Modular when the university is closed on weekends and holidays. Over the last decade, the pantry has cultivated a strong donor base, but more are always needed and welcomed. Visit the food pantry website at [fgcu.edu/](http://fgcu.edu/)

adminservices/foodpantry/ to learn what is needed and how to donate.

Looking back over its tenure, Bradshaw is grateful and proud of Lloyd for taking good care of the pantry and its clients.

“As it is with any food pantry or food bank, the goal is to be put out of business,” said Bradshaw. “But outside of that, I hope that everybody continues to embrace it, and students continue to respect others that are in need of it, and those who are in need of it use it.”

In the meantime, Lloyd hopes the pantry can relieve pressure from students trying their best to get by, as it did for her.

“I love being here for my peers and my students, and the food pantry is also here for me,” said Lloyd. “It went from putting food on my table to putting food on my table as my job. I don’t know where I would be without the food pantry. I’m eternally grateful that I had this opportunity.” ■

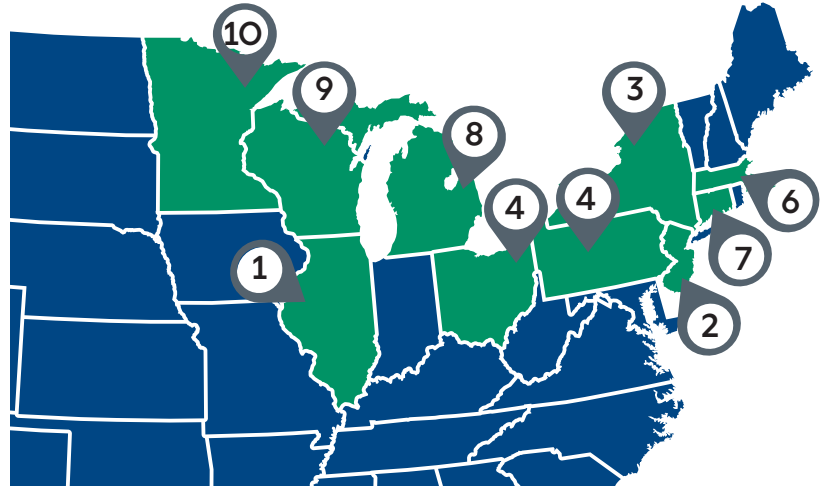


## BY THE NUMBERS

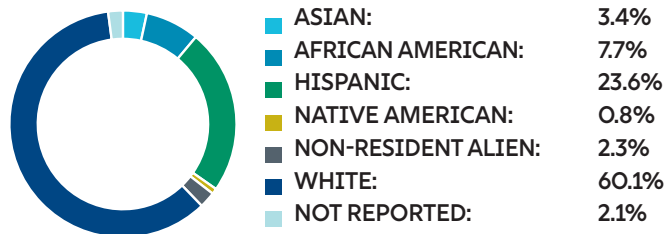
### Fall 2022 Student Profile

#### TOP 10 STATES WITH THE HIGHEST ENROLLMENT AFTER FLORIDA

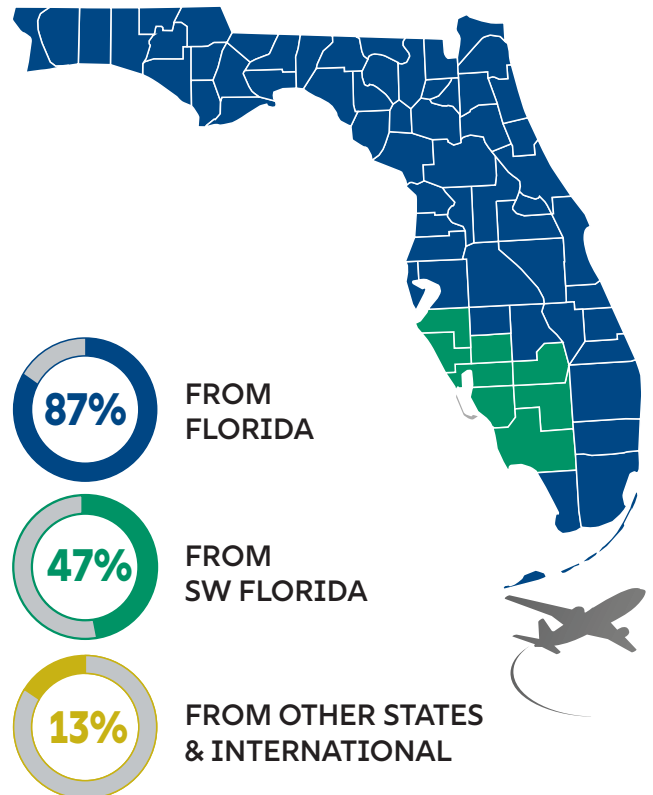
1. ILLINOIS	353
2. NEW JERSEY	256
3. NEW YORK	200
4. OHIO	172
5. PENNSYLVANIA	172
6. MASSACHUSETTS	106
7. CONNECTICUT	102
8. MICHIGAN	101
9. WISCONSIN	77
10. MINNESOTA	76



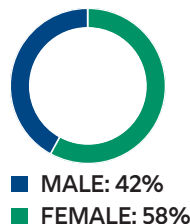
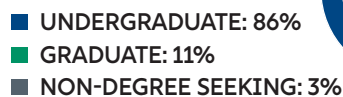
#### ENROLLMENT



#### WHERE STUDENTS COME FROM



#### TOTAL ENROLLMENT 16,004



**4.03**  
AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL GPA FOR FIRST-TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS 24 OR YOUNGER  
**83%**

**40+**  
FASTEST-GROWING AGE GROUP AMONG STUDENTS

**80%** UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ATTENDING FULL TIME

*\*Preliminary data from Board of Trustees Information System Quarterly Briefing prepared December 2022*



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## NEWS FROM THE NEST

### Scientists continue studying Ian's impact

Researchers from The Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University continue investigating Hurricane Ian's impact on Florida waters.

In partnership with the Florida Institute of Oceanography and the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, they've made several trips on the W.T. Hogarth



research vessel to observe what's happening beneath the surface in the Gulf of Mexico. Artificial reef damage and coral loss have been documented in Ian's wake.

While the post-Ian outlook may seem bleak, Adam Catusus says their data and observations convince him it's not as grim as it appears. "It will take time for the region to recover, but these natural

ecosystems have been significantly impacted by hurricanes for hundreds and thousands of years," says Catusus, coordinator of education and research at FGCU's Vester Marine & Environmental Science Field Station and chief science officer aboard the ship. "They have recovered every time to date, so we are hopeful they will recover naturally. And, hopefully, our community will do everything in its power to help that recovery along." ■

### \$23 million grant aims to improve job outlook

More than 1,000 residents of Southwest Florida are expected to land new or better-paying jobs after receiving fast-tracked training and credentials. It's thanks to a Florida Gulf Coast University project made possible by nearly \$23 million in federal funding, which represents the largest grant in FGCU history.

In cooperation with FutureMakers Coalition at Collaboratory and other regional partners, FGCU will develop workforce training programs designed to help unemployed and underemployed Southwest Floridians quickly obtain the qualifications necessary for jobs in four regional primary or emerging industries – healthcare, education, manufacturing and transportation, distribution and logistics. ■

### Two honors students earn national awards



Josie  
Lorea



Kea  
Kamiya

Two outstanding Honors College students at Florida Gulf Coast University received awards at the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) Conference in Dallas, Texas.

Josie Lorea, a senior biology major from Charleston, West Virginia, was named the 2022 NCHC Student of the Year, the highest honor the council confers on a student. Kea Kamiya, a senior from Bradenton, Florida, majoring in English and art, was named a

2022 NCHC Portz Scholar for having written the best honors thesis in the arts and humanities category for the 2021-22 academic year. Kamiya presented her work at a special session at the conference. ■



## SPOTLIGHT

## Student consultants give professors a new perspective

BY LAURIE D. BABCOCK

**W**HEN BIANCA Arello transferred to Florida Gulf Coast University from an Orlando college, she quickly wanted to learn more about her new school. While exploring the

FGCU website, she stumbled upon a job listing for a student consultant with the Lucas Center for Faculty Development and was intrigued enough to apply. After four semesters working with the center's Student-Faculty Partnership Program, the dual major in theatre and public

relations has helped faculty in entrepreneurship, accounting and language and literature by providing valuable feedback on student perceptions of their teaching.

"Teaching is way more complicated and unscripted than I thought," Arello said.



Most partnerships are randomly assigned, and student consultants are typically paired with a faculty member outside their study area. That's true of Arello, a native Portuguese speaker working with assistant professor Marianela Rivera in her intermediate Spanish course.

"When I served as a teaching assistant in college, I was grading and helping to teach the class, so those students saw me as a professor even though I wasn't. But I was standing in the front and missing some of the background conversations, just like I am now," Rivera says. She believes students don't always feel confident providing honest feedback to someone responsible for their grade. "Bianca's role is different because she's in between the students and me. They know she isn't judging them or grading them."

That helps students open up to the student consultant about their experiences in class. It also gives the consultant distance to see the class differently than the instructor. Arello says students have asked her to bring specific requests to her faculty partners.

"It sounds surprising, but the students asked for more lectures," Arello says of her faculty partner in entrepreneurship. "I'm in the class, and I see a professor who can engage her students with the content, so I understand why they want her to say more."

Ninety-five faculty and 77 students have participated in the one-on-one, semester-long collaborations since the program started in fall 2018. The

partnerships have grown from eight student-faculty pairs in the first year to 18 pairings this spring.

Each semester, student consultants

observe at least one class weekly and meet one-on-one to provide feedback to faculty partners. The student consultants survey class attendees formally and informally throughout the semester, sometimes using questions tailored to the specific needs identified by the faculty member.

For a recent class, Rivera led mock job interviews with her students in Spanish. Before the class, Arello provided examples to Rivera from a recent job interview she'd been on. After class, Arello conducted a focus group to ask for student feedback, which she then shared anonymously with Rivera.

"Not every student feels comfortable talking to us as faculty. They see a wall between student and

According to Bill Reynolds, the Lucas Center's director, 15% of full-time faculty have participated in the program. Like the student consultants, faculty apply to participate and receive a small stipend.

Student partners may not come into the program with an understanding of teaching methods. "They're not expected to be pedagogy experts," Reynolds says, but student consultants often bring fresh ideas and help faculty be more reflective and intentional with instruction method choices. Rivera says the program has become important to her growth as a language professor.

"I've been teaching the class for many years, and I wanted to develop it a little without going through the lengthy process of changing materials.



faculty, but there's no wall for them and Bianca," Rivera says.

What do the student consultants get out of the partnership? Beyond an hourly wage, they get a peek behind the curtain to see how much consideration goes into crafting each 60- to 90-minute class. The pedagogical thought and preparation required of FGCU faculty are on display for their student consultant through the partnership.

"Having this middle person, someone with a voice, shows students they are appreciated by the faculty member, that their education is valued," Arello says. She believes faculty involved in the program are demonstrating their eagerness to listen to students and make effective change in the classroom.

I wanted ideas on what is new with what I already have," Rivera says.

Reynolds knows FGCU faculty and students are interested in increasing fall and spring partners and introducing summer partnerships. But the Lucas Center would need additional resources to expand the program to meet growing demand from students and faculty. "The core intent was to bridge faculty development and student success, and we're meeting the challenge," Reynolds says.

"Having a student as a partner has opened my eyes to a different type of relationship with students. They're not only there to get a grade," Rivera says. But if Arello took the class for credit, what grade would Rivera give her? "She would be getting an A, for sure!" ■



WATCH  
THE VIDEO

**LEFT: Bianca Arello has helped faculty in entrepreneurship, accounting, and language and literature.**

**RIGHT: Arello observes Marianela Rivera's intermediate Spanish course.**

# Documentary focuses on fight for Black vote in Southwest Florida

BY DAYNA HARPSTER

**F**ACTS ARE JUST THAT. History is full of events that truly happened and not a matter of debate. Knowing those facts is necessary for their interpretation. But what if the facts just aren't known?

What if, for reasons specific to Florida, to Southwest Florida and even to Fort Myers, the struggles of one group of people to vote – Black people – aren't known? Have population growth, historically segregated neighborhoods, seasonal residency and other factors left the records about local Black citizens and voting on closed pages of history?

Certainly, say several people involved in the WGCU Public Media documentary “With a Made-Up

Mind: The History of the Black Vote in Southwest Florida.” The film debuted May 18 on WGCU and can be streamed on demand at [wgcu.org](http://wgcu.org).

People interviewed in the film not only know and relay the obstacles Black citizens faced to exercise their right to vote. They lived them.

Jarrett Eady, a fourth-generation Fort Myers native and the School District of Lee County's diversity and inclusion director for 16 years, produced a 17-minute version of “With a Made-Up Mind” that was expanded into this 26-minute film for broadcast and streaming. Amy Shumaker, WGCU's associate general manager for content, served as project director.

The effort was partially funded by a grant from Florida Humanities, a

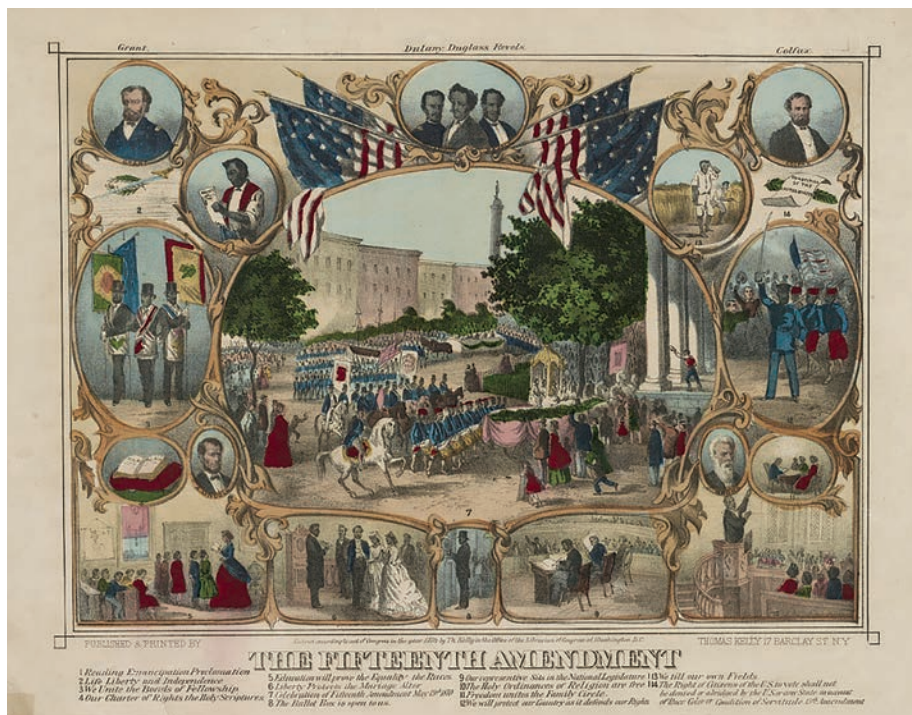
nonprofit that preserves, promotes and shares Florida's history and culture.

“Made-Up Mind” takes viewers on a bumpy journey of steps forward and back, from Reconstruction to Jim Crow, from the white primary system in some Southern states that disenfranchised Black voters to women's suffrage – a movement in which Black women played a large part. More modern electoral changes like districting in the Fort Myers City Council elections are also addressed.

Strides were made, then often lost.

Between 1944 and 1950, a local Progressive Voters League registered 116,000 Black voters, a third of eligible Black voters in the state. The white primary was declared unconstitutional and a Congressional investigation into voter suppression was launched. Finally, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, breaking down state and local barriers that prevented black citizens from exercising their right to vote under the 15th Amendment, which had been passed nearly 100 years earlier.

Like many others in the film, community activist Gerri Ware lived this national and local history. In it, she talks about voting for the first time – in Fort Myers – and knocking on doors encouraging people to vote. “I remember being very, very happy



**LEFT:** Artwork featured in the documentary marks passage of the 15th Amendment.

**RIGHT:** Veronica Shoemaker was elected to the Fort Myers City Council in 1982.



to have this paper in my hand," she says, referring to her voter registration card. "I had accomplished something for the fight and the struggle."

Voting rights were slow to be assured in Southwest Florida, which also meant it was a while before local citizens saw a Black person elected to any office in Lee County. Horace Smith was elected to the Lee Memorial Hospital Board in 1980.

The late Veronica Shoemaker, local business owner and onetime NAACP president, ran for public offices for 14 years before finally being elected to the Fort Myers City Council in 1982.

Shoemaker was the last member elected at-large to the council, in a system that made citizens from all over the city eligible to hold a seat, rather than representation coming from areas or neighborhoods. She led the effort to change the way citizens are represented – by district, rather than at-large – by suing the city.

But again, how much of that history do today's Southwest Floridians know?

"The counter-history dialogue is out there. I personally believe the story that actually happened has to be told," says the Rev. William Glover, who is interviewed in the film. "This documentary needs to be seen and the details that are in it, I'm sure are not known. This is a chronological narrative that paints a complete picture," said Glover, senior pastor of Mount Hermon Ministries in Fort Myers.

"I think most people would believe



that African Americans were only denied the vote in Deep South places like Mississippi and Alabama rather than the Sunshine State," says Jonathan Harrison, a visiting instructor at FGCU and doctor of sociology, who served as a scholar for the film. "They don't associate Florida with the racist past of other states. In reality, Southwest Florida had a lynching in 1924, which I have studied; the Ku Klux Klan marched through Fort Myers and African Americans were excluded from the vote by the poll tax, white primaries and the disfranchisement of felons."

Times have changed the voters, too. "When I moved to Fort Myers from South Carolina in 1976, the elected officials including the governor of the state were Democrats. Today it's very different," says Audrea Anderson, a former associate vice president at

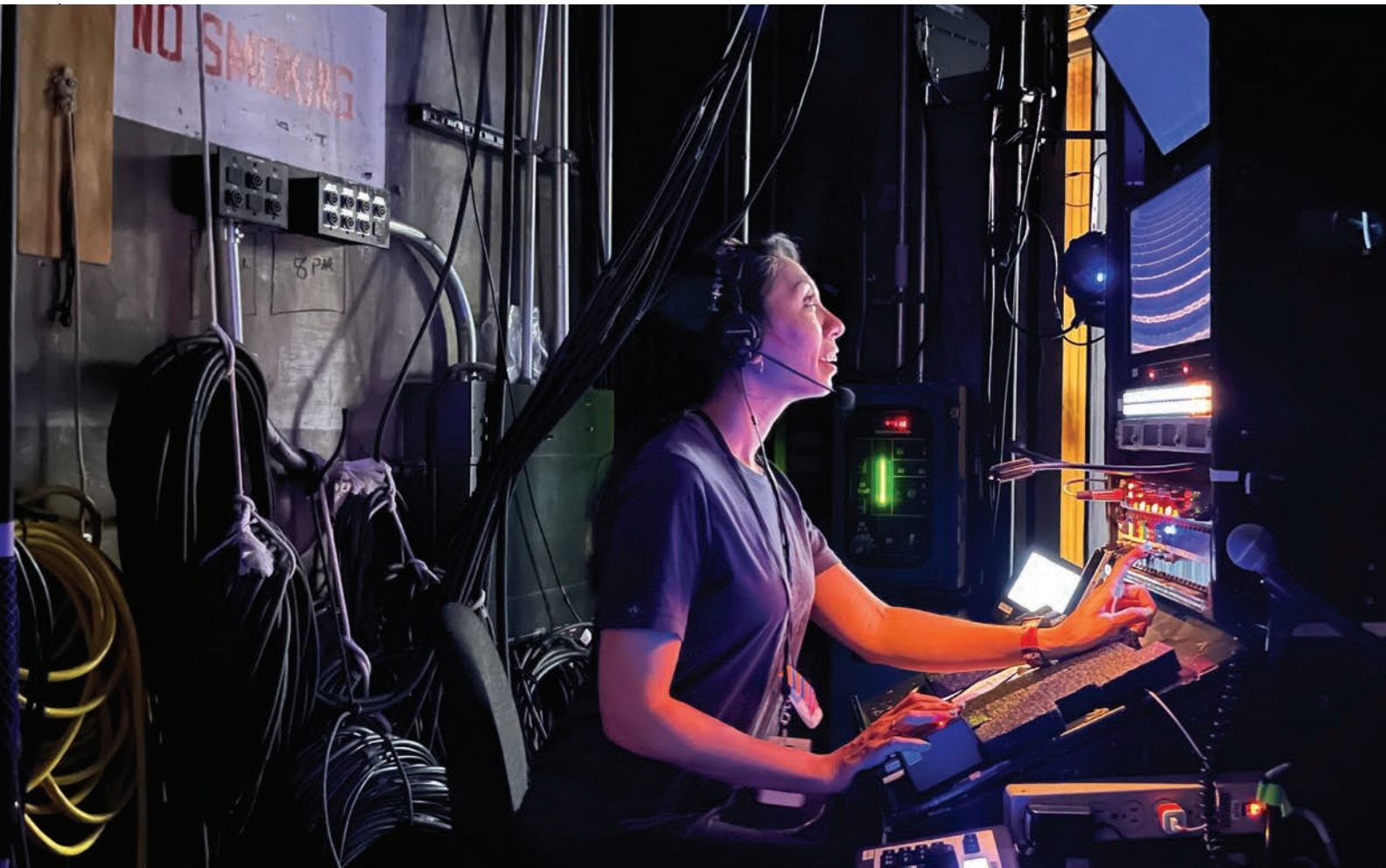
FGCU. "Very few Democrats hold elected office in Southwest Florida."

And why the title "Made-Up Mind"? It harkens to a song by the Clark Sisters gospel group: "My Mind Is Made Up." To those in the film, a made-up mind meant action.

"Change is not going to occur by waiting on it to occur. You have to get up and do something," Lodovic Kimble, Lee County NAACP president in the mid-'80s, says in the film.

"If you have the right to vote, you are an equal citizen in the United States," says Martha Bireda, a writer and consultant on racial issues and executive director of the Blanchard House Museum of African American History and Culture in Punta Gorda. "The progress that African Americans have made in this country has had to do with voting." ■

# ARTS



## THEATER

# FGCU alum manages to write her own stage career on Broadway

BY MATTHEW UDDEN

**W**HEN DANIELLE Ranno enrolled at Florida Gulf Coast University, little did she

know she'd one day thrive in New York City as a Broadway stage manager and, most recently, an author.

Ranno got her first taste of theater in high school at Alexander Dreyfoos

School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, and it became a passion that quickly grew and followed her to FGCU. The passion led to professional work at a local theater before a freelance



“

**It's always a joy to see your students live their dreams. I love watching her on her journey. Not only is she a fantastic stage manager, but she is also one of the most thoughtful humans I know.**

”

ANNE CARNCROSS, FGCU THEATRE PROFESSOR

career on Broadway, where Ranno is stage manager of “& Juliet,” a Tony Award-nominated musical comedy that puts a new twist on Shakespeare’s “Romeo & Juliet.” As stage manager, she acts as a right hand to the director, documenting stage directions, overseeing sets, props, lights and sound and ensuring performances run safely and smoothly each time.

While enjoying the box office success and critical acclaim “& Juliet” has received, Ranno cited “The Lehman Trilogy” as one of her favorite projects. She managed close to 100 performances in New York between September 2021 and January 2022, and a six-week run of the show last spring in Los Angeles. The play about the rise and fall of a financial firm won five Tony Awards in 2022.

Ranno enrolled at FGCU as a communication major with a concentration in public relations. But because of her desire for stage work, she took on theatre in the Bower School of Music & the Arts as a second major before graduating in 2011.

During her time at FGCU, Ranno got hands-on experience of the stage world by assisting with TheatreLab productions. Her adviser, theatre professor Anne Carncross, gave Ranno her first shot in stage management at the college level in a 2009 production of “There From Here.”

“That was the first show that opened my eyes to it,” Ranno said about a theatrical career. “That was actually due to professor Carncross

because she pushed me to try it.”

There was a reason Ranno caught Carncross’ eye. “She was born to do this kind of work,” the professor said.

“I remember nudging her to grad school and New York City. She has exceeded my expectations long ago. I have watched her grow into a professional stage manager that anyone would love to work with,”



**Danielle Ranno**

Carncross said. “It’s always a joy to see your students live their dreams. I love watching her on her journey. Not only is she a fantastic stage manager, but she is also one of the most thoughtful humans I know. I am very proud to call

her a student, a colleague and most importantly, a friend.”

Ranno said an FGCU production of “Our Town” particularly inspired her. Carncross would often bring in guest directors to assist with productions, enabling students to work hands-on with professionals. One such collaborator was Mark Danni, artistic director of TheatreZone in Naples.

Ranno said she connected with Danni during their work at FGCU, and that led to her interning and later working at TheatreZone as a stage manager and a production manager. Their connection is a big reason TheatreZone continues to have a close relationship with FGCU’s theater program and its students.

“I relied on her to handle all aspects of organization for each production, and I always knew she would go on to be

very successful,” Danni said. “She has incredible insight and organizational skills and a clear and calm demeanor. She remains a close friend and still helps out at TheatreZone from a distance when available.”

Besides working as a professional stage manager in theater, Ranno also developed an interest in opera stage management, which led to her authoring a textbook on the subject. That idea was sparked during her entrance interview for graduate school at Rutgers University’s Mason Gross School of the Arts, where she eventually earned a master’s in fine arts in 2019.

“At the interview, I told Leslie Lyter, then head of stage management, that when I first began working in opera, I experienced a lack of a resource to refer to on the subject,” Ranno said. “She then said to me, ‘Well, why don’t you just write it?’”

“The Beginner’s Guide to Opera Stage Management: Gathering the Tools You Need to Work in Opera” was published last November 2022 by Taylor & Francis, an English publisher known worldwide for educational books.

When she’s not managing or writing about stage production, Ranno said she enjoys listening to opera music, naturally, and indulging in ice cream. In fact, she claims to be an undefeated ice-cream eating champion.

“The handful of ice cream-eating contests I’ve been in, I won,” Ranno said. ■

– Matthew Udden is a senior communication major who wrote this story as an intern in University Marketing & Communications.

**LEFT: Danielle Ranno stage managing from a production booth.**

## ARTS BRIEFS

## Much ado about 'Nothing'

Next time you're on campus, be sure to visit the Arts Complex courtyard. Look up, and suddenly "Everything Becomes Nothing." That's the name of the art installation covering the outdoor space through Dec. 15.

Consisting of hundreds of feet of material stretched over the courtyard, "Everything Becomes Nothing" incorporates imagery cropped from vintage Florida fruit and vegetable crate labels that were once an advertising staple. A M L g M A T D, a Miami-based collaborative studio, created the installation. ■

(AT RIGHT)

## Music students study in Thailand

Music therapy and music education students from the Bower School of Music & the Arts will participate in a new faculty-led study abroad experience this summer. The six-week course will explore international clinical music therapy and music teaching practices by focusing on Thailand.

Based at Mahidol University's College of Music, students will work with clients of diverse backgrounds and needs in a variety of educational and clinical settings, including hospitals, orphanages and oncology centers. They also will have opportunities to learn more about Thai music and culture through excursions around the country.

The program is sponsored by the Music Therapy Endowment Fund and the Bower Endowment Fund. ■

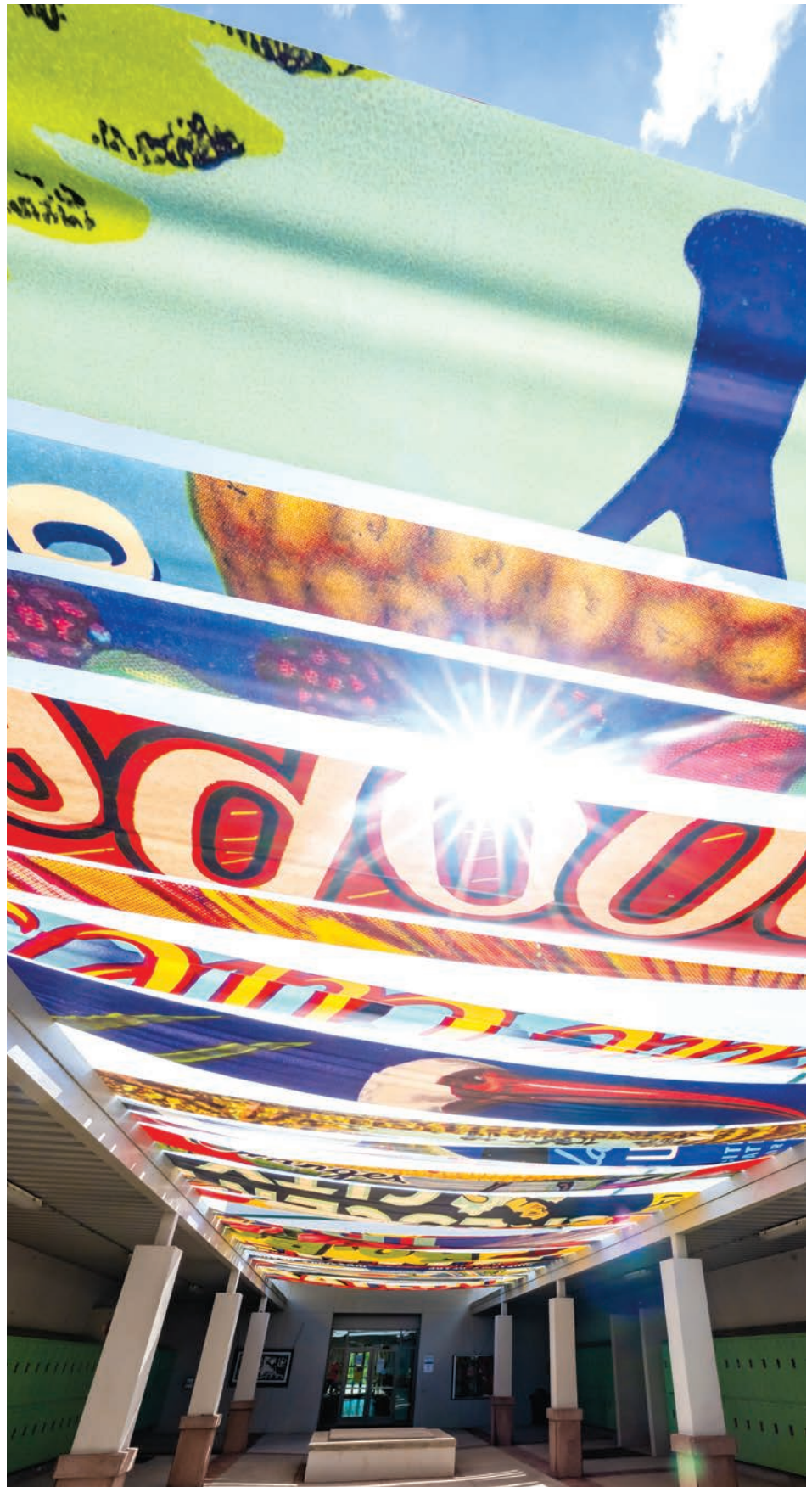


PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO





# 360 degrees of FGCU

PHOTOS AND COMMENTARY BY JAMES GRECO

I love the way the sunlight  
dances through the bald cypress  
trees on a breezy afternoon. The  
boardwalks are my longtime  
favorite photo spots on campus.





**J**AMES GRECO HAS his eye – and his lens – perpetually focused on Florida Gulf Coast University. He pops up everywhere, chronicling the panorama of campus life – skateboarding students and sunbathing alligators, spectacular sunrises and sunsets, Eagles engaged in service and celebrating the joy of commencement. After Azul, he may be the most recognized figure on campus – even with a camera covering his face.

In this issue of FGC360 Magazine, we decided to devote a spread – yearbook-style – to his favorite images of 2022-23, with his thoughts on why he chose them. ■

**1.** Academic Building 9, aka The Water School, provides new vantage points to photograph campus. From a perch there, I captured a dramatic late-August sunrise.

**2.** The intricate atrium sculpture in Academic Building 9 takes on different looks depending on daylight and the viewer's perspective. I used a longer lens and filled the frame with the dangling acrylic pyramids. I like the colors, contrast of sharpness and the repetition of the shapes and cable lines.







4.

**3.** The Bower School of Music & the Arts' Joyful & Triumphant concert is one of my favorite annual FGCU events. I carefully aligned the Christmas tree in the background with the violinist in the foreground. By using a very shallow depth of field, I created a subtle interaction between the musician and the "bokeh" – the out-of-focus area – that mimics music notes emanating from the instrument.

**4.** This photo from the ASUN Conference Tournament Championship game final captures Tishara "TK" Morehouse's athleticism and no-fear attitude. This is one of my basketball season favorites because of the composition of the two players, like two dancers, with their limbs aligning in one of two directions, and the way she floats momentarily off the ground with the soft focus on excited fans in the background.

**5.** Luna the therapy dog has become a big celebrity on campus, and I came across her celebrating her birthday with FGCU students.



5.





6.



7.





**6.** I love being on the water, especially for work. In early March, Kimberly's Reef was deployed by The Water School. While waiting for the barge to get into position in the Gulf of Mexico, another boat in our flotilla was severely backlit against the very bright sky. I braced myself on our boat's gunnel and timed the shot with the waves as I exposed my camera for the water and focused on the boat, creating a beautiful silhouette with high-rises peeking over the horizon. I really like the strong rule-of-thirds composition.

**7.** I used a slow shutter speed to creatively portray the rhythmic movement and excitement of the Eagle Revolution crowd.

**8.** FGCU alumna Miralny Marante works as a gardener at the Naples Botanical Garden. Early-morning light perfectly illuminated her and the plants surrounding her.

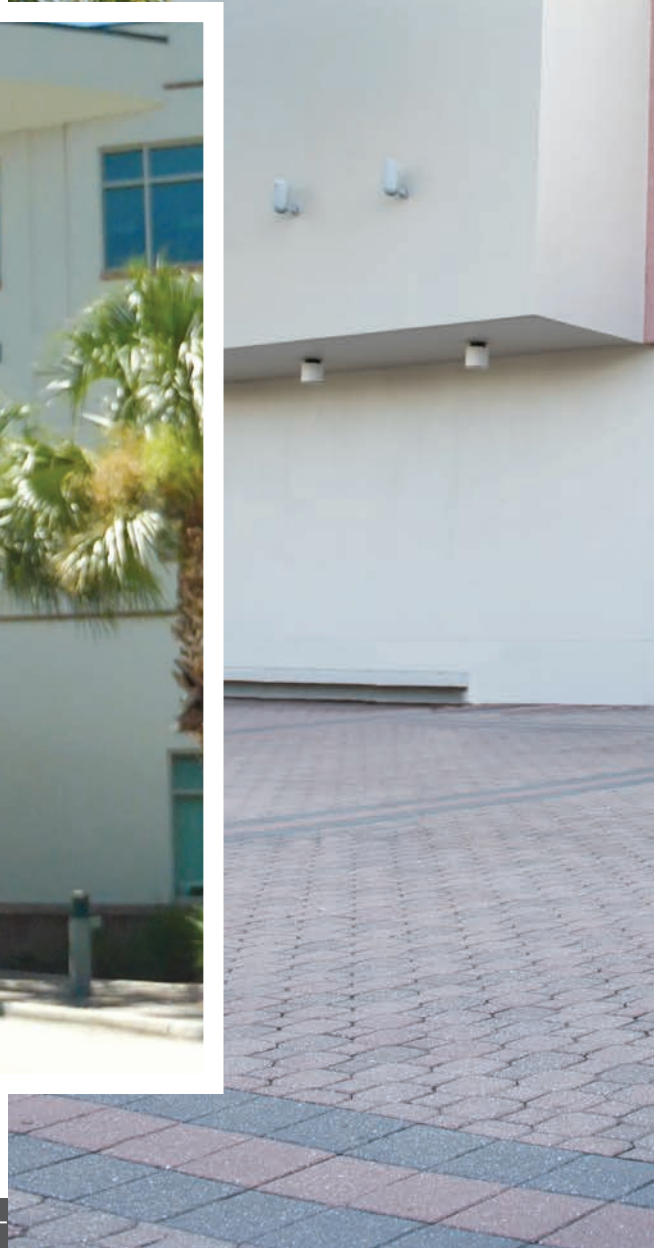
**9.** With this photo the viewer can really sense FGCU tennis player Lola Glantz's anticipation of the incoming serve. This is a good example of a perfectly composed image.



## 1. Edwards Hall

Once named Academic Building 5, this structure is home to the president's office and many other FGCU administrative branches. In 2012, Charlie Edwards' name was affixed to it. Edwards was the state Board of Regents' planning committee chair when the push for a four-year university took shape. He became the Board of Regents chair and helped persuade the Florida Legislature to pass legislation in 1991 that, with Gov. Lawton Chiles' signature, approved Florida's 10th state university in Southwest Florida.

1.







# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**A** walk through the Florida Gulf Coast University campus means you're confronted with many names – names that adorn our buildings.

Who are these people? What do they mean to FGCU? Those are good questions. This spread will enlighten you on some of the distinguished people who've shaped FGCU.

**COMPILED BY KYLE McCURRY**

## 2. Wilson G. Bradshaw Library

FGCU's third president returned to campus in 2019 when the university officially named the library in his honor. During his 2007-17 tenure, Wilson G. Bradshaw oversaw FGCU's rapid growth, thanks, in part, to men's basketball's 2013 NCAA Sweet Sixteen run. During his decade in office, enrollment increased by 60% to nearly 15,000, and the number of degrees granted annually doubled. The campus face also changed with the construction of several buildings, including Lutgert Hall and Marieb Hall.

2.

### 3. Howard Hall

It's been said FGCU wouldn't exist without the namesake of this building—William Thomas “Tommy” Howard. Howard was a banker who led the charge for creating FGCU, like its predecessor, the USF Fort Myers campus. Called the “father of higher education in Southwest Florida” by WGPU Public Media, Howard was the FGCU Foundation’s first president. The plaque dedicating the building in 1998 reads, “His vision brought higher education to students in Southwest Florida.” Here, Howard’s daughter, Ann Hamilton, holds his picture in front of Howard Hall.

3.



### 4. Marieb Hall

In 2012, FGCU named the recently opened Academic Building 8 in honor of Elaine Nicpon Marieb. During her lifetime, Marieb pledged \$15 million to FGCU, leading to the college being renamed Marieb College of Health & Human Services. In 2016, Time magazine ranked her No. 7 in its “100 Most-Read Female Writers in College Classes.” Her textbooks were at one point assigned in more than 2,400 classrooms around the world.





4.



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

### 5. Seidler Hall

Seidler Hall houses a good portion of the College of Arts and Sciences and was known as Academic Building 7 until January 2016. By establishing The Seidler Fund, Lee and Gene Seidler and Lee's daughter Laurie have continued to enhance opportunities for undergraduate scholarship, humanities initiatives and arts programming. The Seidler family is dedicated to creating opportunities through scholarships for first-generation students as well as the Seidler Summer Undergraduate Scholarship Fellowships.

5.



6.

### 6. Lucas Hall

From the creation of the Lucas Center for Faculty Development to the Lucas Institute for Real Estate Development & Finance, David Lucas' influence on the university is massive. Lucas took it to the next level when he gave the university a \$4 million challenge — kick-starting a campaign to fund a new academic building through philanthropy. The facility opened in 2021 and primarily houses the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship.



### 7. Whitaker Hall

This academic fixture opened in 2001. The Whitaker name is prominent on campus. It links to the Whitaker Foundation, which helped found the U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering, the Whitaker Center and the Whitaker eminent scholar position. All are linked to another recognizable name—Holmes—as in Burt and Ruth. Ruth's maiden name is Whitaker, and Burt ran her family's namesake foundation. Together they are a passionate couple who helped FGCU focus on STEM education in its early days.

7.



# Gift supports leadership and future of Bower School of Music & the Arts

BY DREW STERWALD

**T**HE LEGACY OF A longtime supporter who helped found and name the Bower School of Music & the Arts continues to resound in the Music Building's halls and benefit the Florida Gulf Coast University community.

Dolly Bodick Korest, whose husband Alan Korest died in June, created an endowed fund to support Bower leadership and shape the path for current and future faculty, students and alumni. Her gift established the new Alan R. Korest Endowed Director of the Bower School of Music, the position held by Krzysztof Biernacki.

Alan Korest and his late wife, Marilyn, supported FGCU for more than two decades, including a major gift in memory of her deceased father, Edwin Bower, which established the music school. After his wife's death in 2010, Alan Korest created the Marilyn Bower Korest Music Therapy Scholarship Endowed Fund.

Inspired by the vision and generosity of the man she married in 2017, Dolly Bodick Korest sought a way to pay tribute to her husband's legacy at FGCU after he died. He had a core belief that music was hugely valuable to the human soul, she said. He also believed in what he called "cathedral thinking," she said: Individuals who lay the groundwork for grand, time-spanning endeavors, like cathedrals or great music institutions, must ensure their vision is clear so the generations that follow can bring their vision to fruition.

The idea of endowing the Bower directorship to ensure the school's future struck the right chord with Bodick Korest.

**Alan and Dolly Bodick Korest shared a belief in a liberal arts education, she said.**



PHOTO SUBMITTED AND FGCU FILE PHOTO



"The endowment creates opportunities for the school and distinction for the position," she said. "When it came to me, I knew immediately it would be something fitting for Alan and that he himself would appreciate. The school is growing and evolving, creating every day. Krzysztof's leadership is quite

Foundation. World-class academics can secure grants, bring in other prominent faculty and conduct research that elevates the university's stature.

President Mike Martin noted the Korests' support of FGCU was driven not by personal recognition but by a genuine passion for enhancing students' lives.

The couple enjoyed attending concerts at FGCU and the annual "Joyful & Triumphant" holiday program performed by FGCU students at Moorings Presbyterian Church. They shared a belief in a liberal arts education, she said, and were committed to supporting scholarships.

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**"I can't tell you how many times people would come up to him and say, 'I'm an FGCU alumnus, and I wanted to tell you the Bower School of Music made a huge difference in my life, and I can't thank you enough for putting this school on the map,'"**

DOLLY BODICK KOREST

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extraordinary. I have full confidence in his ability to carry the school forward."

Her gift solidifies the Bower School of Music's prestige for future generations, Biernacki said, and celebrates Korest's life and his impact at FGCU and throughout Southwest Florida.

"Supporting the director's position with a dedicated endowment is the highest honor a university can bestow upon a member of its faculty and one of the most visionary things anyone could do for our institution," said Biernacki, who joined the school as director in 2019. "Alan will forever be remembered as a truly great man. As the founder of the Bower School of Music, he changed the artistic landscape of this region and the state. He will be greatly missed by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him, and his spirit will live on in the legacy of the students, faculty and staff of the Bower School of Music for generations to come."

Expanding endowed faculty positions is a priority for the FGCU

"Alan and now Dolly have made profoundly important investments in FGCU, especially the Bower School of Music & the Arts," Martin said. "Along with financial support, they have sent a message that they are confident our students will be 'winners.' This investment and endorsement from two people of real substance is extremely meaningful and very much appreciated."

"I can't tell you how many times people would come up to him and say, 'I'm an FGCU alumnus, and I wanted to tell you the Bower School of Music made a huge difference in my life, and I can't thank you enough for putting this school on the map,'" Bodick Korest said. "He was a man of extraordinary vision, and he created a legacy not for himself but for the good of everyone else." ■

From left, Steve McIntosh, Donna Henry, Alan and Marilyn Korest, Wilson G. Bradshaw and Robert Thayer at the Bower School of Music groundbreaking in 2009.



## \$2.5 million gift bolsters FGCU's construction management program

BY DREW STERWALD

**F**LORIDA GULF COAST University's construction management department received a \$2.5 million gift from Stock Development.

The funds will allow the program to continue building on the quality of the education and experiences it provides students preparing for careers in one of Southwest Florida's most critical industries.

In recognition of the company's generous commitment, the department within FGCU's U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering is now named the Stock Development Department of Construction Management. It's the first named academic department at FGCU.

"This program was built based on the needs of the local industry and the need to develop a high-quality workforce for the region," said Long Nguyen, professor and chair of the department. "Stock Development has been deeply involved in starting the program. This investment shows their confidence in its quality."

Stock Development is a diversified real estate company established 20 years ago in Naples under the leadership of K.C. and Brian Stock. Its executives have been actively involved at the university for years, serving on the FGCU Foundation board and the engineering college's Construction Industry Advisory Board.

"The university has done such a great job of growing over the years, to educate students so they can fulfill their dreams and better themselves," said CEO Brian Stock. "We're proud to support the construction management program's growth. It's a chance to give back to the community and to help the industry as a whole by incubating



**The leadership team of Stock Development at a reception honoring their gift: John Ferry, left, Keith Gelder, Brian Stock, Matt Sellick, Claudine Leger-Wetzel and Chris Johnson.**

talent. There are a lot of good-paying and fulfilling positions in the industry."

Construction ranks as one of the top economic drivers in Southwest Florida, but workforce demands aren't being met, added Stock Development President Matt Sellick.

"We're seeing a huge need for the next wave of industry professionals," he said. "Our goal is to keep the talent coming through the university in Southwest Florida. We need them here."

That includes FGCU students like Yulissa Valdez, a senior from Lehigh Acres.

"I chose construction management because it's a growing industry with a lot of job security," she said. "This program has helped me be exposed to the different facets of the industry and find where I belong."

Students like Valdez will benefit from Stock Development's gift by having more access to scholarships and experiential learning activities that teach skills not easily incorporated in the classroom, Nguyen said. Faculty will also see opportunities for professional development and research partnerships with local industry leaders.

Just 4 years old, the FGCU construction management program has grown to 230 students and awarded its first four degrees last spring.

"Interdisciplinary work is a core trait of U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering," said Huzefa Kagdi, dean of the college. "This program was built by the community and for the community and of the community. It really represents the benefit of public-private partnerships." ■



## Gift launches new design and technology hub in entrepreneurship

**M**ARK AIN,  
founder and  
retired CEO  
of Kronos  
Incorporated,  
understands  
what it takes  
to create and  
grow a business.

STORY BY  
KAREN BOOTH





**H**is quintessential success story is building a small startup company into a multibillion-dollar corporation serving clients worldwide.

Clearly, Mark Ain knows what he's talking about when he discusses entrepreneurship, so his praise of Florida Gulf Coast University's entrepreneurship school truly speaks to its merit: "They integrate practical down-to-earth experiences with the course offerings. Students write business plans reviewed by fellow students and their mentors. They start businesses. It's fabulous," he said.

Ain's belief in the curriculum and

how well it prepares graduates for success inspired him to pledge \$2 million to FGCU to create the Ain Technology and Design Hub within the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship.

Sandra Kauanui, the school's founding director, can't say enough about how Ain's support will grow its programming.

"We're going to purchase equipment and computers and hire students from digital media design and entrepreneurship to work as paid interns in the hub. We're going to promote our services to the community, associations, anyone who wants an upgrade on a website,

a new logo designed, anything," she said. "We'll pay the student interns, mentor them as they work with area businesses, and all profits will be funneled back to our scholarship fund."

This plan is a win-win. Students have the opportunity to learn and engage in real-life experiences. They can pursue their internship without leaving campus – a boon to those without transportation. They'll be

**TOP: Sandra Kauanui welcomes Mark Ain to a class in February.**

**RIGHT: Entrepreneurship enrollment grew from 537 in 2021-22 to 778 students this year.**



**“They integrate practical down-to-earth experiences with the course offerings. Students write business plans reviewed by fellow students and their mentors. They start businesses. It’s fabulous,”**

MARK AIN, KRONOS INCORPORATED FOUNDER

making money not only for themselves but also for scholarship funds.

Ain is pleased with the plan, noting FGCU’s undergraduate entrepreneurship program ranked 15th in the top 50 undergraduate entrepreneurial programs nationwide for 2023 by the Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine. It’s the highest-ranked undergraduate entrepreneurship program in Florida.

Ain’s investment will help sustain the school’s growth trajectory. In fall 2022, 778 students were enrolled in the program, compared to 537 one year prior. In the past six years, entrepreneurship students and alumni have started over 374 businesses, raised \$10.8 million in venture capital and earned more than \$111 million in total gross revenue, according to Kauanui.

That entrepreneurial drive reflects the national ethos, Ain believes.

“In America, we have an open society and an open culture,” he said. “That’s one of the great things we have in this country, and the entrepreneurial program feeds right into that.”

Choosing the entrepreneurial path is rooted in a person’s internal drive to succeed, often inspired by a friend or family member, he said. In his case, Ain’s

drive to succeed was fueled partly by his grandmother, who emigrated to America at 17 to join her soon-to-be-husband. He had emigrated several years earlier, secured a job, sent for her and proposed. She told him she would not marry him until he owned his company. The couple married and launched what became a successful real estate business.

Ain never forgot that story as he pursued his entrepreneurial path. He said success is the byproduct of an overwhelming “drive to succeed.” His grandmother had it and encouraged his own.

Successful entrepreneurs identify a need and work to fulfill it. When Ain

launched Kronos in 1977, workplace time clocks had not evolved much since the late 1800s. He saw a need to bring them into the 20th century. His patented microprocessor-based time clock propelled Kronos globally. Today, the company provides clients with human resource, payroll and workforce management solutions to guide clients “to achieve better business outcomes, connected workforces and happier people.”

If Ain had only one piece of advice to offer budding entrepreneurs, he said he would encourage them to involve and invest in “people who are really interested in your idea and able to advise and help you achieve your goals.” ■



# SPORTS



## HALL OF FAME

# Five new inductees join Athletics Hall of Fame

BY DAVID WASSON

**F**IVE ILLUSTRIOUS FORMER student-athletes were inducted as the 2023 Class of the Florida Gulf Coast University Athletics Hall of Fame in a January ceremony at the Cohen Student Union.

Softball player Carmen (Paez) Jimenez, golfer Derek Lamely, baseball players Richard Bleier and Casey Coleman, and softball/volleyball standout Cheyenne Jenks were

the second round of accomplished Eagles to earn the honor. Inaugural inductees in 2021 were baseball standout Chris Sale, volleyball star Brooke Youngquist Sweat, the 2012-13 "Dunk City" basketball team and a trio of foundational forefathers in Ben Hill Griffin III, Bill Merwin and Duane Swanson Sr., who were inducted posthumously.

"It was heartwarming to witness the honoring of five Eagle pioneer

icons, each of whom bet on a growing FGCU to provide them platforms for success, and who have parlayed those opportunities into generating significant success for themselves and tremendous pride for and from their institution," said Ken Kavanagh, director of FGCU Athletics.

Jimenez, who was unable to attend the campus celebration, was inducted into the ASUN Hall of Fame Class of 2019 in recognition of a stellar two-



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**It was heartwarming to witness the honoring of five Eagle pioneer icons, each of whom bet on a growing FGCU to provide them platforms for success, and who have parlayed those opportunities into generating significant success for themselves and tremendous pride for and from their institution.**

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KEN KAVANAGH, DIRECTOR OF FGCU ATHLETICS

year career in the Green & Blue. A top 25 finalist for USA Softball National Player of the Year in 2008, Jimenez was named ASUN Player of the Year and FGCU's Female Student-Athlete of the Year.

"I'm sorry I could not be there to share with Richard, Casey, Cheyenne and Derek," Jimenez said via a message delivered by David Deiros, head softball coach. "I am so proud and grateful that our entire softball team is at the ceremony to share in this honor with me and the four other inductees. The best advice I can give them, and anyone, is simple – to swing for the fences."

Lamely was a member of FGCU's first men's golf team and would go on to become the first former FGCU golfer to win on the PGA Tour, capturing the 2010 Puerto Rico Open in his rookie season. Lamely won by two strokes, finishing with a then-tournament-record 19 under par. He became the first rookie to win on the PGA Tour since 2008. He acknowledged then-head coach Jim "Doc" Suttie in his remarks at the induction.

"Doc Suttie, I wore him out over the years. Doc, Butch Perchan and Carl McAloose got me into school and got me started on this path," Lamely said. "It is the love, and how you go about it, that makes this special. The games

we would play every day, the trash talk we gave each other, was great even on days you are not your best."

Bleier earned ASUN Hall of Fame Class of 2021 honors due to his excellence at FGCU. He was a unanimous selection for the ASUN Pitcher of the Year and All-Conference first team in 2008. Bleier made 12 starts on the year and compiled four complete games, finishing with a 7-1 record and a team-best 2.09 earned run average. During his Eagles career, he made 46 appearances with 26 starts and had 181 strikeouts in 209.2 innings pitched. Bleier made his Major League Baseball debut in 2016 with the New York Yankees and continues to pitch in the majors with the Miami Marlins.

"This is an incredible honor, to be inducted," Bleier said. "I was pushed so hard by our coaching staff while I was here and spent nine years in the minors before making it to the majors. But I wouldn't have made it without the motivation from all of them who steered me in the right direction."

A 2023 ASUN Hall of Famer, Coleman went 16-6 on the mound with 171 strikeouts from 2006-08, helping lead FGCU to a 119-49 record over that span. He split time at second base, shortstop and third base, and hit .318 with 98 runs scored, 156 hits, 26 doubles, nine triples, eight home runs and 97 runs batted in. Coleman played four years in the majors, competing in 58 games with the Chicago Cubs and Kansas City Royals, with an 8-13 record, a 5.72 ERA and 123 strikeouts over 177.2 innings pitched.

"I just want to say thanks to all the people who allowed this to happen for me," Coleman said. "I was born and raised in Southwest Florida, in Cape Coral, and it is special for that reason. My dad taught me how to be humble. I wouldn't be anything without learning humility from him. My mom never said no, was never too busy, never too tired. She would hit ground balls to me, pitch to me, and always was present with me. My mom was my coach growing up, and that wasn't easy."

Jenks was inducted to the ASUN Hall of Fame in 2020 in recognition of a stellar two-sport career in the Green & Blue. She was named First-Team All-American as a senior in 2009 – FGCU's first ever in any sport – and was unanimously chosen ASUN Player of the Year after hitting .473 with 23 home runs and matching her own ASUN record of 73 runs batted in. A two-sport star, Jenks was a key contributor to back-to-back ASUN regular-season volleyball championships in 2007 and 2008 and combined 72-14 record in her three seasons.

"It is special to be inducted alongside Brooke (Youngquist Sweat), and to also be inducted alongside a teammate in Carmen," Jenks said. "Some athletes want to make the pros and win awards and make Halls of Fame. But I just wanted to play, and FGCU allowed me to do just that. I wanted to play all the sports growing up, too, and FGCU allowed me the opportunity to pursue dreams in two sports." ■

**LEFT: Casey Coleman, Derek Lamely, Cheyenne Jenks and Richard Bleier with softball coach Dave Deiros holding Carmen (Paez) Jimenez's award.**

# ALUMNI

## ALUMNI AWARDS

### Alumni Awards' top honoree exemplifies community leadership

BY KAREN BOOTH

**G**IVING BACK IS woven into Stefanie Ink Edwards' DNA. So, it comes as no surprise she was nominated for and received Florida Gulf Coast University's 2023 Alumni of Distinction Award, which honors a graduate who has upheld the tradition of excellence through personal accomplishment, professional achievement and humanitarian service.

Of the recognition, Edwards said, "It's a very humbling experience. There are so many incredible people who come through FGCU, graduate, go out in the world and do amazing things."

It is clear in talking with her, this 2008 marketing grad feels privileged to be included in this celebrated group of recipients. Speaking with Edwards is to begin to understand what giving back really means.

Edwards is chief executive officer of Community Cooperative in Fort Myers, an organization committed to eliminating hunger and homelessness in Southwest Florida. The nonprofit's impact is powerful. In Lee County, one in six residents needs food assistance. In 2022 alone, the Community Cooperative assisted more than 83,000 residents, providing more than 2 million pounds of food to neighbors in need.

Her position requires compassion, commitment, focus and, importantly,



**Stefanie Ink Edwards is the 2023 recipient of Florida Gulf Coast University's Alumni of Distinction Award.**

a willingness to work hard in service of others. At no time are these qualities needed more than during a massive community crisis – like a pandemic or Hurricane Ian. Managing the fallout of these disasters, along with the everyday reality of homelessness and widespread food insecurity, is a monumental challenge.

Leadership is, in fact, one of the factors influencing the committee responsible for choosing the Alumni of Distinction. "Stefanie's application

caught the committee's attention," said Kimberly Wallace, senior director of Alumni Relations at FGCU. "No matter what the hurdle is, Stefanie thinks creatively and finds solutions. Nothing stops her.

"She is a fearless leader, the epitome of how FGCU cares about others and serves. And she does it in such a way that it's not about her; it's about the cause."

At no time was her leadership more needed and more visible than during the COVID-19 pandemic, when she, her staff and an army of volunteers stepped up to serve an entire community in dire need.

"We had a disaster plan in place," said Edwards, "so when the pandemic hit, we were ready."

However, they couldn't have predicted the disaster lasting more than two years.

"No one could anticipate what COVID was going to look like. The goalpost was constantly moving. Our mission is to help people in crisis," she said, regardless of the difficulties.

"We had to overcome serious obstacles," she said. "So many people were out of work, scared, living paycheck to paycheck. It was overwhelming. But there's a lot of good in the community still."

Edwards remembers how school closures were announced on a Friday, effective the following Monday. "Our plan was not just about collecting



“

She is a fearless leader, the epitome of how FGCU cares about others and serves. And she does it in such a way that it's not about her; it's about the cause.”

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KIM WALLACE, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

additional food. It also looked at how to deploy to neighborhoods we don't normally serve and to people who never needed our services,” she said.

Working on the front lines, her staff and volunteers serve thousands of families in the first week alone. But that need did not go away, and they continued to find creative ways to get the job done.

Ian presented additional challenges. For starters, damaging winds and flooding threatened the organization's Meals on Wheels delivery program, which feeds predominantly homebound seniors. The solution? Edwards foresaw Ian's potential disruption of food distribution, so she assembled hurricane kits, including additional food and water to be delivered early.

One of Edwards' proudest achievements, she said, was immediately creating the Lee County Strong Fund.

“We bought a URL and started fundraising to bring dollars into the community to provide relief and long-term recovery assistance to people impacted by the storm immediately,” she said.

As a result, the organization was able to help many individuals in danger of losing their homes or cars, or who were unable to pay water and power bills.

Edwards credits her family with imbuing in her the feeling of responsibility to give back.

“Generations of my family were great givers,” she said. But she also acknowledges the impact of FGCU's focus on service-learning: “FGCU has a culture of giving.”

Wallace would agree. “FGCU alumni do amazing work giving back in such a way that it is felt by others, and that's what makes it truly remarkable.” ■



The 2023 FGCU Alumni Award honorees: Jack Hellmer, left, Troy Bolivar, Stefanie Ink Edwards, Ashley Kurns, Laura Metzler, Rebecca Sullivan and Jacquelyn Larocque.

## 2023 SOARING EAGLES

Alumni of Distinction winner Stefanie Ink Edwards was honored at a campus ceremony during Homecoming along with the Soaring Eagles honorees. Soaring Eagles are alumni who, within 10 years of graduating, have made noteworthy achievements in their professional or volunteer lives. This year's winners:

- ▶ **Troy Bolivar** ('19, Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship Studies)
- ▶ **Jack Hellmer** ('22, Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship Studies)
- ▶ **Ashley Kurns** ('20, Clinical Mental Health Counseling)
- ▶ **Jacquelyn Larocque** ('14, Civil Engineering)
- ▶ **Laura Metzler** ('12, Secondary Social Science Education; History)
- ▶ **Rebecca Sullivan** ('19, Elementary Education)

# ALUMNI



Developing leadership skills at FGCU helped prepare Michael Kemna to manage over 50 employees and handfuls of vendors and purveyors.



## CLASS OF 2016

# FGCU grad finds recipe for success in restaurant industry

BY SETH SOFFIAN

**W**HEN MICHAEL Kemna ('16, Criminal Justice) was just out of high school in Cumberland, Maine, in 2010, he put together binders of research on colleges and universities to help inform his decision.

He brought the same level of focus and commitment to campus when he chose Florida Gulf Coast University, partly swayed by campus beach and water-skiing photos. When he was later interested in joining a new campus fraternity, his natural leadership skills were so unmistakable that he was effectively hand-picked to be the chapter's first president. And when Kemna was helping pay his way through school by working at Cantina 109, a Gulf Coast Town Center restaurant, he couldn't stop himself from checking in for short stints – off the clock – to offer an extra set of hands.

Now he owns the place – or partly owns it anyway – all before he turned 31 in December.

The guy just has no off switch. "I can't be still. I can't sit," said Kemna.

His wife, fellow 2016 FGCU alum Emma Keith, is supportive, putting up with his late nights and long hours. A teacher at Bonita Springs High School, she shares his vision for expanding and opening additional restaurants – and setting up a solid future together.

"(We) go out to eat a lot. When we're out, I'll look around and notice things – a lightbulb out, if servers are

smiling. I try to take all that and bring it back to my restaurant."

Kemna can't really explain his knack for leadership other than a willingness, "a passion," in fact, as he calls it, to work hard. It was first instilled by his father, Michael Kemna, who always pushed his son to be the best he could be.

During early organizing events for the then-new Pi Kappa Phi chapter at FGCU, others routinely approached Kemna thinking he was in charge. Then the fraternity's national organization appointed him to the position.

"I think that's one of the first things that prepared me for business," he said. "I had to manage a budget. We had 75 members. And they all looked to me and said, 'What are we going to do now?'"

"I figured it out. We won fraternity of the year the first year. We won some national awards that an associate chapter – meaning a brand-new chapter – had never won before from the national organization."

Developing these skills helped prepare him for a professional career. Now, instead of 75 members of a fraternity, he manages over 50 employees and handfuls of vendors and purveyors.

At Cantina 109, which had a different name and ownership when Kemna began work there in 2014, he quickly ascended from busser to server to bartender. When a new owner took over in 2015 and raised workplace standards, his eagerness to do more only grew.

"There was no slack," said Kemna, who was named general manager just

after graduating. "A lot of times I said, 'I don't know if I can do this.' But it helped me develop the way I do things now."

By 2020, when restaurant owner and mentor David Andreas had moved out of state, Kemna was prepared for an ownership role. The COVID-19 pandemic put those plans on hold until early 2022, when Kemna purchased his first stake in what is eventually intended to be full ownership of the restaurant.

The pandemic also gave restaurateurs other challenges to navigate, such as safety protocols, supply chain delays and labor shortages. Yet under Kemna's leadership, Cantina 109's sales doubled from 2020, the first year of the pandemic, to 2021. In 2022 sales surpassed previous records, he said.

Kemna believes many businesses did well after COVID because people had been pent up for a long time.

"But the issue was being able to manage the amount of people that wanted to come in," he said. "That was the biggest part of what we did – staff correctly."

Kemna pivots quickly to praise his employees, an FGCU-heavy bunch.

"Mike has been blessed with really good people. But those people also stay because he's good to everybody," said FGCU student success counselor Barb Dietter, a longtime Cantina 109 employee whose four sons and ex-husband all have worked at the restaurant. "It really is a unique situation. These kids don't know each other when they get hired. But they do everything together now. They're a family." ■

## Archives & Special Collections a rich research resource

BY DREW STERWALD

**D**ENTURES USED BY THE prophet of a utopian society that existed near Florida Gulf Coast University. “Green Book” guides read by Black travelers during the Jim Crow era. A handful of dirt from FGCU’s groundbreaking ceremony Nov. 28, 1995.

The University Archives & Special Collections on the FGCU Library’s third floor offers a cornucopia of such curiosities and a rich resource for research on wide-ranging topics. The University Archives is the official repository of FGCU records and serves as its institutional memory. The Special Collections staff curates and exhibits rare and unique materials documenting the cultural and environmental history of Southwest Florida.

Visiting researchers have taken advantage of this physical and digital treasure trove. Students in forensic science and primatology classes can study the library’s collection of nonhuman primate skeletons. Lovers of classic Florida can satisfy their kitsch itch by clicking through a digital catalog of vintage Sunshine State postcards. Many collections are digitized, so users don’t have to visit the library to access the resources.

FGCU360 asked academic and community engagement director Melissa Minds VandeBurgt, university archivist Victoria Jones and archives coordinator Bailey Rodgers to spotlight some interesting and, well, weird, items in the collections. ■



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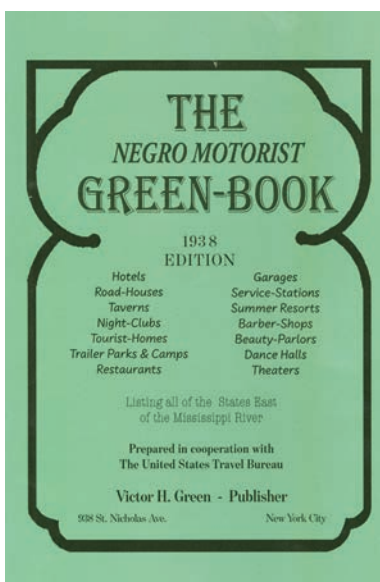
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MORE OF THE  
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### KORESHANS DREAMED OF UTOPIA

The Koreshan Collection centers on a charismatic prophet, Cyrus R. Teed, and his followers, who established their so-called “New Jerusalem” in Estero in 1894. Their utopian society faded after Teed’s death in 1908, and in 1961 the remaining few members deeded their settlement’s 300 acres to the State of Florida. The FGCU collection was a gift from the College of Life Foundation and Koreshan State Park. It includes Koreshan scholarship and publications, musical instruments they played, and yes, Teed’s false teeth.



### ‘GREEN BOOKS’: RELICS OF RACISM

The Racial and Social Justice Collection, which grew out of a yearlong library exhibition on voting rights in Southwest Florida, covers racial and social justice movements from the late 1800s to today. It includes several editions of the “Green Book” published between 1936 and 1954. This travel guide listed hotels and tourist homes friendly to Black travelers in major cities during the Jim Crow era. Viewers of the recent HBO series “Lovecraft Country” will remember a compelling character compiling such a guide. Others may be familiar with the Academy Award-winning 2018 film “Green Book.”



## POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Some of the Sunshine State's signature roadside attractions are faded memories now, so the hundreds of pastel postcards in FGCU collections represent an important historical link. Interestingly, many postcards were not printed on paper back in their heyday. "They were better made then – they were printed on linen," VandeBurgt said. "You can actually feel the woven fibers. They hold up much better, and they take on this beautiful hue."



## PIECES OF FGCU'S PAST

Preserving FGCU's history is part of the University Archives and Special Collections' mission. It's not a long history, obviously, but the staff squirrels away significant icons for future generations to unearth, such as a vial of soil dug up during the campus groundbreaking. The "Dunk City" phenomenon is represented by an official NCAA ball and used basketball net.

## 'THE ELEPHANT MAN' AND MORE

The William R. Maples Collection highlights the 1960-97 career of a world-renowned forensic anthropologist who was a mentor and friend to Heather Walsh-Haney, FGCU associate professor of forensic studies. Maples consulted in many high-profile cases, including an investigation of an exhumed skeleton proved to be that of Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro, who was assassinated in 1541. Maples' reconstruction of Pizarro's skull is in the FGCU collection, as are x-rays and photos of the skeleton of Joseph Merrick, the subject of the film "The Elephant Man."







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