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Teacher Bernice Cochran helps students read in her class at Tortuga Preserve Elementary School. PHOTO BY ED CLEMENT

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Q: With the conclusion of the spring semester, would you look back and talk about some of the highlights of the academic year?

A: We have much to be proud of this year. Here are some of our many accomplishments:

Student success: We have made excellent use of the $6.5 million the Florida Legislature appropriated to FGCU last year to invest in programs that enhance student success. We have hired more academic advisors and expanded personnel and resources in our Career Development Services office. We also have expanded our early intervention program, which targets students who may be struggling academically. By taking action early, we are able to enhance student retention rates. We also continue to bring more of the academic experience into residence halls, locating advisors and classrooms in the freshmen halls. In this way, we offer more than beds – we provide programs integrated with the educational experience.

Costs: I’ve recommended to the FGCU Board of Trustees no increases for the coming year in tuition; student housing rental; and activity, service, health, athletics and parking fees. This is in keeping with our commitment to cost containment and ensuring that an FGCU education is both affordable and accessible. If approved, this will be the second consecutive year in which we have not raised tuition and the third consecutive year in which we have not increased parking or student housing.

Veterans: We dedicated our Veterans Pavilion on the Library Lawn and The Cortese-St. Angelo Veterans’ Room in the Library. The pavilion honors our past, present and future military personnel, while the room provides students, faculty and staff who have previously served our country a place to study, chat, rest and relax. Our efforts to facilitate and enrich the education of our military veterans at FGCU contribute to a statewide goal to be the most veteran-friendly state in the country.

Academic excellence: The FGCU Board of Trustees has approved the introduction of a Bachelor of Science degree in biochemistry and a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). We’re developing new programs that are informed by the workforce needs of Southwest Florida. We continue to achieve accreditation by specialized agencies, which validates the quality of our programs. Yet another measure of the caliber of our academic programs is the fact that four of this year’s six Lee County Golden Apple Award winners – recognizing excellence in K-12 teaching – are products of FGCU’s College of Education. Three are graduates and one completed the Teacher Immersion Program.

“We have much to be proud of this year”
A look back at the many accomplishments of 2013-14.
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Q&A: PRESIDENT WILSON G. BRADSHAW
(continued from previous page)

Research: We achieved a milestone with the award of two patents to virologists Sharon Isern and Scott Michael, FGCU faculty members who are seeking a cure for dengue fever. (See story on page 7.) The patents are testaments to their dedicated work and expertise. We have many professors conducting important research, in most cases with the help of students who gain invaluable experience in the process.

Economic impact: The university continues to play a major role in the region’s economy. In 2012-13, FGCU directly and indirectly contributed $422 million to the economy of the five-county region, and created 3,723 jobs. Meanwhile, FGCU also has played a pivotal role in creating the Southwest Florida Economic Development Alliance, a partnership among our five counties to enhance economic development. As the organization launches its website (www.swfleda.com) and works toward attracting more business to the region, the university will continue to serve as a catalyst in its development.

Final note: It is a measure of the excellence of our faculty and academic leadership that two of our longtime deans are moving on to new jobs this summer. Aswani Volety, who has done a fine job as interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, leaves for the University of North Carolina – Wilmington, to become dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Hudson Rogers, who has served us well as dean of the Lutgert College of Business, has been tapped to become the provost and vice president for academic affairs at Valdosta State University. We wish them continued success. They will be missed.
The 100 percent solution

“GENIUS IS 1 PERCENT INSPIRATION AND 99 PERCENT PERSPIRATION.”

This insightful observation was made during a 1929 news conference by Fort Myers’ most famous winter resident, Thomas Edison, who elaborated by saying, “None of my inventions came by accident. I see a worthwhile need to be met and I make trial after trial until it comes.”

I suspect that is the process by which most successful people accomplish their goals. It certainly holds true for many of those you will read about in this issue of Pinnacle. Inspiration is the spark that must come first, but it’s the perspiration – the gritty, get-down-and-grind-it-out effort – that you lavish upon that idea for hours and days and weeks and years that gives it life.

Sarah Hansen (’14, Chemistry) knows all about that 100 percent solution. FGCU’s all-star student-athlete had a vision of what she wanted to accomplish and perspired aplenty to do it, breaking records on and off the basketball court. She was an Academic All-American with a 3.9 GPA – in chemistry with a minor in mathematics, no less – a Student Hall of Famer, winner of countless sports awards and of the prestigious Eagle Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award.

The same can be said of Tara Ryan, a nurse who is teaching FGCU students to become tomorrow’s nurses. Burned as an infant over a quarter of her body, she spent much of her life recovering from those injuries and might well have surrendered to self-pity, letting others do the caretaking and healing. Instead, she became a burn trauma nurse, an example and inspiration to both her fellow health professionals and the patients with whom she works.

It applies to virologists Sharon Isern and Scott Michael who labor year-round in the laboratory in an effort to find a cure for dengue fever, one of the world’s most widespread viruses. Their findings have resulted in two patents so far, but they continue to sweat over test tubes and computers, driven to find a cure for this disease that strikes hundreds of millions of people around the world every year.

For Todd Cofer (’07, Political Science), volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters motivated him to create a computer program to help keep students from falling behind in school. Ashley Coone (’05, Management) was inspired to create an organization that help youngsters in her hometown aspire to a life that includes college and a career.

Good ideas happen all the time. We all have them. But it’s how much we are willing to sweat to transform them into reality that separates the geniuses from the ordinary folks.

KAREN FELDMAN
Editor
kfeldman@fgcu.edu
THE FIRST TIME FGCU JUNIOR EBLI DE LA ROSA JR. SAW STUDENTS PLAYING quidditch, the sport from the wildly successful Harry Potter series, he made fun of them.

“When I saw quidditch for the first time, I was on a college tour at University of Central Florida, and I saw them playing and I thought it was the biggest joke ever,” said De La Rosa, 19.

His opinion remained unchanged until he arrived at FGCU and, at the insistence of friends, attended a game.

“I went to one of their tournaments and it totally changed my mind,” said De La Rosa, a biology and software engineering double major who is now the FGCU quidditch club's captain.

FGCU quidditch is co-ed and full-contact. Classified as a club, rather than an NCAA-sanctioned athletics team, the group has nonetheless attended statewide competitions at the University of South Florida and hosted its own tournaments, most recently the Dunk City Invitational.

In the world of Harry Potter, quidditch is played aloft on flying broomsticks with chasers trying to get a quaffle through one of three golden hoops defended by a keeper, as beaters try to tag out other players with bludgers. Meanwhile, a seeker tries to catch the golden snitch, which ends the game.

In the muggle world (Harry Potter-speak for humans) two teams of seven players make up an Earth-bound quidditch game. At FGCU, players employ PVC pipes as broomsticks, using volleyballs, dodge balls and flag football gear as the quaffle, bludger and golden snitch. The golden snitch still ends the game.

The muggle version has caught fire worldwide, with many college campuses hosting their own teams and regional contests.

“Because the game is so chaotic, for some people, the only way to understand it is to play the game,” De La Rosa said.

While playing chaser, De La Rosa struggled to also serve as team captain so he enlisted fellow player Xavier LaTorre, who was on injured reserve, to act as coach and help ensure the team operated most effectively.

Throughout this year, De La Rosa and LaTorre have been rebuilding the team and are looking for more players.

“Everyone is welcome to join regardless of talent level or even knowledge of the sport, books or movies,” De La Rosa said. “We really encourage girls to try out since quidditch is a co-ed sport that requires both genders to be on the field at one time.”

— Kalhan Foley Rosenblatt

Photo by Ed Clement
Viral victory

Researchers patent potential treatment for dengue fever, work on vaccine.

As the rainy season approaches in Southwest Florida, it’s only a matter of time before mosquitoes follow. Will the bloodsuckers bring another dengue fever outbreak like the one last summer that sickened 21 people with fever and joint pain in Martin County?

Only time will tell, but two Florida Gulf Coast University researchers have patented a potential treatment for the illness and are leading the charge toward a vaccine against the mosquito-borne virus that infects hundreds of millions of people around the world each year.

Professors Sharon Isern and Scott Michael, virologists who teach in the Department of Biological Sciences, discovered a way to inhibit the virus from infecting new cells by attaching a small protein, or peptide, to the pathogen. The peptide can be easily incorporated in intravenous fluids typically used to treat the patient’s fever.

“The peptide gums up the ability of the virus to function,” Michael said. “Pieces of protein bind to the surface of the virus.”

The couple has been working on the project for more than a decade. Grants totaling more than $2 million from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, National Science Foundation and other sources have helped fund research; an additional $1.7 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant is supporting their efforts to develop a dengue vaccine.

Michael and Isern received one patent last September and another in January, No. 8541377 and No. 8637472, respectively. These are the only active patents listed on the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office website that are assigned to FGCU.

Transmitted by the bite of common and difficult-to-control mosquitoes, *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus*, dengue has reached epidemic levels in Southeast Asia and many Latin American and Caribbean countries. A study released last year more than tripled the previous World Health Organization estimate of the number of people infected each year to 390 million, of which 96 million manifest the flu-like symptoms of the illness, according to the journal *Nature*.

Dengue cases are reported each year in Florida, but they usually involve individuals traveling through hubs like Miami, Tampa and Orlando from subtropical zones where dengue is widespread. However, in 2009 and 2010, an outbreak of locally transmitted dengue occurred in Key West.

Dengue cases are reported each year in Florida, but they usually involve individuals traveling through hubs like Miami, Tampa and Orlando from subtropical zones where dengue is widespread. However, in 2009 and 2010, an outbreak of locally transmitted dengue occurred in Key West.

Prior to this, no locally transmitted outbreaks had been reported in Florida for more than 70 years. Last summer, a new locally transmitted outbreak occurred in Martin County.

There’s no specific treatment or cure for the dengue virus. To make matters worse, symptoms are extremely variable and a mild case can appear similar to other viral infections, which makes dengue challenging to diagnose in a clinic. Antibodies left in the bloodstream from a previous dengue infection also can make victims more susceptible to other strains of the virus.

Until a vaccine is established, mosquito control is the most effective prevention.

“It’s a re-emerging virus,” Isern said. “If Florida didn’t have good mosquito control, then outbreaks would really take off. What’s here is minor, compared to the Caribbean and South America, but it’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

Trials of the duo’s dengue inhibitors in animals are under way in California; if results are promising, it can be tested on humans and then licensed for commercial production.

In the meantime, Isern and Michael continue working on a vaccine designed to neutralize all four types of dengue virus—unlike other vaccines in the research pipeline. Their NIH support shows that public health officials think they are on the right track, Isern said, especially considering government cuts in research budgets.

“We’re very fortunate,” she said. “I think our idea is good. We’re ahead of the field.”

— Drew Sterwald
Be contemplative

TURN OFF YOUR ELECTRONIC DEVICES, READER. TAKE A DEEP breath, release it slowly, then repeat. Sweep away the jumble of thoughts cluttering your mind: Is the mortgage check going to bounce? Why did I wear this sweater that makes me look fat? Am I going to be late to pick up the kids from school?

Now you are ready to contemplate contemplation.

From silent reflection in meditation and journaling to physical activities such as yoga, t’ai chi and walking, a range of methods can help us achieve a contemplative state in which we can tune out the literal and figurative noise of the world and concentrate on being “in the moment.” Whether performed solo or accompanied by others, reflective practices can help reduce stress while enhancing empathy, communication skills, sense of purpose, mental focus and creativity, according to The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. The nonprofit organization based in Massachusetts works toward integrating contemplative practices and perspectives in higher education.

Maria Roca, an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Philosophy, has trained at the center and teaches the interdisciplinary course “Issues in Culture & Society: The Contemplative Life” at FGCU.

“There are more distractions in the world than ever before in history,” she says. “We’re so outwardly focused now, we’ve forgotten how to connect with our being and recharge our batteries.”

Roca hasn’t. Raised and schooled in Catholicism, she has prayed and meditated since she was a youngster. Not that spirituality is necessary for contemplative practice. In the sciences contemplation can be a tool for freeing the mind of past thinking and discovering fresh concepts; in the arts it can break down barriers to creative ideas and expression.

Individuals need to figure out which practice works best for them, Roca says.

1. **To start with, yes, ditch the smart phone and other distractions.**

At first, you might need to find a quiet location to practice, whether it’s a library, park or the shower. With experience, you might be able to get in your contemplative zone even in a bustling coffee shop.

2. **Begin with a series of deep breaths “to anchor your breathing.”**

Let your thoughts go, especially self-critical ones. “Be kind and gentle with yourself,” Roca says. “Make it positive.”

3. **Whenever possible, get outdoors.** “The natural world is one of the most powerful experiences. It invites a sense of wonder,” Roca says.

4. **Find a way to make it a daily part of your life.** “If you do 10 minutes of meditation twice a day, it reduces anxiety, increases productivity and increases health and well-being,” she says.

And on the practical side, it’s free. No electronic devices needed.

— Drew Sterwald
THE GOAL OF A CONTINUING-EDUCATION PROGRAM IS TO ENGAGE the community, but for Nancy Staub, who coordinates FGCU’s Herald Court Centre in Charlotte County, it’s more personal.

Staub embraces the community she serves. And it hugs her back.

“Nancy loves Punta Gorda,” said City Manager Howard Kunik. “She shares our vision moving into the future, and she’s very proactive in promoting all her facility has to offer.”

Charlotte Symphony music director Raffaele Ponti orchestrates a perfect description. “Dynamic,” said Ponti, who on concert weeks conducts a lecture at Herald Court Centre that gives a behind-the-baton preview of the upcoming performance. “She’s one of the most unique people I’ve ever worked with.”

While community leaders testify to Staub’s passion for spreading her love of education from the first floor of a three-story parking garage/office building in downtown Punta Gorda, the numbers speak just as favorably.

From 22 classes in October 2010, the program has quadrupled to 88 this January.

“Growing the center has allowed me to get out into the community and build relationships,” Staub said. “Lifelong learning is a family trait, so I guess I’m right where I’m supposed to be.”

Staub’s path to Punta Gorda was marked by a childhood spent mostly in Indonesia with her parents and two siblings – and a penchant for guys with variations of the name Charles. Staub’s husband is named Charles, and the pit bull-hound mix she adopted the day after Hurricane Charley ravaged Punta Gorda in 2004 goes by Chuckie.

But the Charles in charge of raising this woman was Staub’s late father, a World War II pilot-turned-cargo pilot who trained other pilots in Indonesia, where Staub grew up on the island of Sumatra. Rising political tensions eventually led Staub’s parents to send her stateside. She graduated from Cypress Lake High School and earned a bachelor’s degree at the former University of South Florida-Fort Myers branch at what was then Edison Community College. She left a job with General Electric to join FGCU’s continuing-education program in 2008. Today, she lives in North Fort Myers with her husband and Chuckie, another dog and a cat.

While Herald Court Centre offers typical lifelong learning courses such as history, arts and nutrition, Staub is most proud of the three-level Dynamics of Supervision course, as well as more unusual offerings such as a course on ants, a children’s theater program and Ponti’s popular orchestra talks.

Rick Ramos, a graduate student adviser and publicity assistant who works closely with Staub, believes she is the center’s greatest asset. “Her passion for the job, the way she has connected with the community, it’s rare,” he said. “She’s so approachable and welcoming … the kind of personality you want to be around.”

— Keith Gibson
Right from wrong

Restorative practices help wrong-doers find path to reform and success.

The Alternative Learning Center (ALC) Central in Fort Myers is a last resort for middle and high school students who are removed from their schools for significant or repeated offenses. Disruptive students move to ALC for about two months to continue their education and improve their behavior in hopes of being able to return to their traditional classrooms.

It’s supposed to be a critical wake-up call for students headed down the wrong path.

When behavioral troubles began reaching an alarming peak at ALC, Lee County School Board member Mary Fischer grew concerned that students weren’t improving. Some were receiving new suspensions while serving suspensions. Fischer, a former school counselor and prevention specialist, was mulling these issues when she met Sandra Pavelka, associate professor in public affairs, founding director of the FGCU Institute for Youth and Justice Studies and an advocate of a practice known as restorative justice.

“Restorative justice is a community based approach for addressing offenses by gathering together the three stakeholders involved – the perpetrator, the victim and community members – to explore the ramifications and make amends.

There are as many approaches to restorative justice as there are schools. “All schools are different, and they have different cultures and discipline issues,” says Pavelka. Popular forms of restorative practices feature an accountability board that develops a case plan for the wrong-doer to complete and peer mediation in which two or more students involved in the dispute meet to work out problems with the assistance of a student mediator.

Another method many schools embrace is the use of “circles,” which include school administrators and teachers, peers and others, such as law enforcement, volunteers or community leaders.

“The students take it very seriously,” says Pavelka. “They know that instead of going to the dean of students, they go in front of their peers, and may have to write a letter of apology or an essay, have a tutor assigned to assist with improving their grades or do service around the school. Otherwise, they are referred back to the dean for whatever sanctions the dean may impose.”

The three main goals are to repair the initial harm, reduce future risk and empower the community. That’s what has happened at ALC. During the summer, teachers and administrators were trained to employ circles as part of the school’s positive behavior support philosophy.

ALC began instituting restorative justice in August and by the end of February, school principal Ruthie Lohmeyer declared, “It’s been able to reduce our suspensions by 72 percent.”

At ALC, circles range from four to a dozen members. They might include teachers, the district behavioral specialist and mental health clinicians. The school has recruited mentors from 25 churches and businesses for especially high-risk students. Fischer, Pavelka and Lohmeyer have participated. Meetings are more often poignant than accusatory and punitive.

“Somebody always cries, and it’s usually me,” says Lohmeyer. “How they open up is just so brave. If they had that when they were young, maybe they wouldn’t have made the mistakes they did to get here.”

Says Fischer: “Every child who made poor choices has a story. Anyone who is participating – you are compelled to tell your story. The students find out that they are not alone, that other kids and adults have feelings and issues they are dealing with.”

Pavelka works with school districts across the nation to implement restorative justice. In Florida, she’s helped introduce it into the Lee, Collier, Sarasota, Duval, Marion and Miami-Dade county school districts. She heads to Michigan this summer to supervise a study to determine the effect
of practicing restorative justice from middle school through the sophomore college year.

Pavelka has long been witness to how positive, consistent behavioral modeling can help prevent and deter a host of problems, from getting kicked out of school to becoming a threat to society to incarceration. Her 2000 doctoral dissertation on national restorative justice research was a “seminal project of its time, and still is,” she says.

Where restorative justice is used, research shows that rates of school detention, suspension and expulsion decline, while academic achievement rises.

Fischer says she is going to advocate for its spread in Lee County schools: “Using it at ALC has been an amazing success. Hopefully it’s going to be a start for us for handling the disciplinary process in more traditional schools.”

Marshall Bower, former state attorney and now executive director of The Foundation for Lee County Schools, calls restorative justice “such a simple concept” that society can’t afford to ignore. “The cost beyond initial training – there isn’t. Look at other costs. For in-school suspension, we’re paying teachers to watch them. The bigger cost is they’re out roaming the streets, which is what they wanted in the first place,” he says. “One of the beauties is that it can be adapted into the environment you’re working in, and when you set your own parameters, it leads to more buy-in.”

— Cathy Chestnut
Roland Forti, ’11
Teacher strikes the right chord with students.

When conductor Roland Forti takes up his baton at the front of the stage, he might almost be mistaken for one of the students in the orchestra. At 25, he’s barely more than a decade older than most of his music students at Cape Coral’s Diplomat Middle School. But the enthusiastic young teacher has quickly proved to be talented beyond his years, upping the caliber and changing the dynamics of music education in Lee County.

The Music Education and Performance major got his first taste of teaching during his sophomore year at FGCU. While volunteering with Music Scores, a pre-kindergarten violin literacy program, Forti discovered his love for teaching music. After graduating in 2011, he found many opportunities to expand his teaching experience.

Shortly after his first day at Diplomat Middle School, Forti learned of a position as youth conductor with the Southwest Florida Symphony. He applied, thinking someone with more experience would likely be selected.

“I was surprised more than anything when I got it,” says Forti. “I was not even a first-year teacher! I was a one-month teacher, a newborn.”

With two jobs already under his belt, Forti continued to take advantage of every opportunity presented to him. The director of the Southwest Florida Symphony approached him after seeing him work with the youth orchestra, inviting him to play as an on-call concert violinist. Next, he went on to revive Lee County’s dwindling All-County Orchestra program for grade-school musicians.

“I felt like if I didn’t help coordinate it, it wouldn’t have happened,” Forti says.

By the time he finished his first year at Diplomat in 2012, he had made such a significant impact that he was recognized by the state Department of Education as Florida’s Outstanding New Teacher of the Year.

Forti’s mentor, Judy Evans, was also his string methods professor at the Bower School of Music and the Arts for three years. She supervises middle school orchestra programs in Lee County and helped bring Forti’s excellence to light.

“I nominated him [for the award] because he chose to take a job at a school that had been struggling to pass its program evaluations,” Evans says. “He ended up leading them to the highest values possible, totally turning the whole program around. People would come up to me saying how amazing he was, and I knew that everyone else would agree.”

With plans to eventually get his master’s in music education, Forti hopes to one day spend all of his time teaching orchestra. Until then, he plans to stick to his formula for success.

“Stay focused,” he says. “Know what you want and don’t stop until you get it.”

—Tiana Brown, FGCU senior and news editor for Eagle News
The shape of things to come
Engineering students learning to apply 3-D printing technology.

IMAGINE A TIME WHEN YOUR DOCTOR CAN WHIP UP A REPLACEMENT PELVIS THAT mirrors the shape and angle of the one you were born with, or use your cells to fabricate a liver for transplanting that your body is less likely to reject.

“It’s not as much science fiction as people would believe it to be,” says Associate Professor Chris Geiger, who teaches bioengineering. “Windpipes and skull fragments have been bioprinted and used in humans. It’s a far cry from an organ, but we’re on that cusp. It may not be my lifetime, but it will be close. Hang on to your hats!”

Enthusiastic as they are about the technology’s future, students and faculty aren’t “printing” human cells – yet. But they are learning to harness 3-D technology to design and fabricate prototypes for research projects such as scaled building models and advanced arthroscopy tools, according to Mark Chew, engineering lab manager at the U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering.

“It’s a game-changer,” he says, comparing the innovation to the introduction of computer-automated machining tools in the 1950s, which increased speed, reduced costs and lessened human error in manufacturing.

FGCU purchased a 3-D printer in 2009 for about $15,000. It uses extruded molten plastic to build three-dimensional structures digitally designed with computer software. Not much bigger than a mini-refrigerator with a clear glass door, the tabletop device fuses layers of plastic about .007 of an inch thick through a nozzle that moves back and forth over a platform like an inkjet printer. Depending on the size of the project, the process takes minutes or hours to render a product that allows engineering students to assess the viability of a design while bypassing the expensive and time-consuming manufacturing and machining processes.

“It’s a cool concept,” says Scott Kelly, a senior bioengineering major from Palm Beach and one of the co-creators of FGCU’s award-winning AquaRamp invention for helping disabled people get in and out of pools. “I feel lucky to be able to work with it. I wasn’t expecting I’d be able to do 3-D printing here.”

The technology could revolutionize manufacturing and health care, especially when printers can be adapted to extrude materials such as metals or human cells. FGCU accounting students already are studying how the advancement might impact production costs, and visual arts faculty are eyeing ways it might be applied in sculpture.

By providing experiences with such futuristic technology, engineering colleges like FGCU’s are poised to stay at the innovation forefront and meet the needs of the professional market.

“Our students are learning to use all the tools of engineering design,” says Professor James Sweeney, chairman of the bioengineering department. “Companies like Arthrex (the Naples orthopedic medical device company) are saying, ‘You need coursework and experiences like this for students.’

– Drew Sterwald
Prescription for living
Nurse finds teaching others helps her heal as well.

HAD TWO CHOICES: ALLOW THE EVENTS OF MY “BURN DAY” TO CONSUME MY LIFE, OR STAND courageously, beautiful and proud. Here I am, a registered nurse. An educator. A burn survivor.

I am not angry about my burns or sad, nor do I wonder why. I know why: I was chosen. When you are chosen, there is no room for grief in your heart, only love.

Nearly 30 years ago, at the age of 8 months old, I survived a burn injury that covered more than 23 percent of my body. I have no memory of the initial injury or the physical pain I endured. I am one of the lucky ones. I was never forced to grieve for the self that I once was.

The injury occurred in a matter of seconds; medical treatment spanned 18 years. Countless doctors’ appointments,

SHARE YOUR STORY
Faculty, staff and alumni are invited to share their stories of what inspired them to do what they do.

Contact Pinnacle editor Karen Feldman at kfeldman@fgcu.edu or call her at (239) 590-7093.
I remember the first time a patient told me she felt as if I understood.

It was in these moments that I knew I was exactly where I was supposed to be. I was home.

Fast forward 8 years…

I stand in the front of Florida Gulf Coast University’s Marieb Hall Room 100 and share my personal story, as well as my expertise in the world of burn nursing, with a group of students not much younger than I.

I hear the silence of the room. I see the tears in the students’ eyes as I speak about working in the burn unit. I feel the contagious enthusiasm that fills the room as they realize that dreams can come true.

Nursing has been the core of my existence and teaching is an extension of my nursing practice. Teaching allows me to model my own love of learning and self-discovery to the students. Teaching students how to administer medications, how to insert an IV or the pathophysiology of a particular disease process is only a small portion of why I do what I do. I come to work with the intention of inspiring students not only to love their career but to love themselves, to feel comfortable in their own skin.

Success is proportionate to courage. Undoubtedly, my personal exposure to the nursing profession led me to nursing, led me to the burn unit, to the students and to this moment.

– Tara Ryan

reconstructive surgical procedures, painfully horrific dressing changes, hours and hours of physical therapy and time spent in pressurized garments followed.

Surviving a burn injury is a multi-dimensional physical, mental, emotional and spiritual process. People often ask how long did it take to recover, how long did it take to heal? It’s a short but complex answer: a lifetime. Recovery is a continual process. It occurs each time I step into a patient’s room, each time I stand tall in front of my students.

I was 20 when I walked into the West Penn Burn Center in Pittsburgh, Pa., wearing that brand new name badge that read Registered Nurse. It was everything I had ever wanted and more. In taking care of others, I have learned to live.

I remember the first time I saw a raw, fresh burn other than my own.

I remember the first time I witnessed the silent cry of a patient as I changed his dressing.

I remember the first time a patient looked me in the eyes, pointed to my burn and asked “Is that what my scars will look like?

FGCU stages TEDx talks

Eighteen minutes can change everything.

This March, TEDxFGCU took place at WGCU on the FGCU campus. The nonprofit event organized by staff and students consisted of nine speakers who shared “ideas worth spreading.” Each presenter was connected to FGCU as a student, alumnus or professor.

TED talks began as 18-minute talks about Technology, Entertainment or Design but have broadened to include almost anything. The program spotlights motivational speakers with extraordinary outlooks on ordinary subjects.

The FGCU program ranged broadly. Michael Salmond, an assistant professor of art, discussed the role video games can play in strengthening cognitive function. Sisters Claire (a senior) and Catherine (‘12) Gorman shared the importance of following one’s passion through service by using their experience with St. Baldrick’s Day, a charity dedicated to helping children with cancer, to prove that small gestures can alter lives in big ways. Dual-enrolled high school student, Hunter Osking, explained that holding on to the wonder of childhood is as easy as building a pillow fort.

Each speaker brought a fresh perspective to everyday life, encouraging the audience to make changes in the world.

“Our hope for our presentation was simply to inspire people to get involved,” Claire Gorman said. “So if even just one person left here tonight after hearing us talk and decided that they want to act and make a difference, I would consider this a success.”

– Tiara Brown

The presentation can be viewed by searching tedxfgcu at www.ted.com/tedx/events.
2014 ALUMNUS OF DISTINCTION

Matt Caldwell

The ‘Man of the House’ thrives on life as a state legislator representing his hometown

When Matt Caldwell was a boy, Fort Myers Beach was a tiny town you veered toward near McGregor Boulevard’s end, Estero had more cattle than people and FGCU “was rock mines and melaleuca forest.”

Now, with Lee County’s population headed toward 700,000, Caldwell’s position as a state representative (R-Lehigh Acres), a seventh-generation Floridian and a father of a 5-year-old makes him even more devoted to public service and shaping policies and laws to help residents.

“Southwest Florida is a special corner of the world – it’s been fantastic to grow up in – and it will be as long as we have folks with the right attitude about public service,” said Caldwell, 32, who is the first FGCU alum to be elected to the Florida Legislature and is the university’s 2014 Alumnus of Distinction.

The FGCU Alumni Association Board of Directors annually welcomes one distinguished graduate into the Alumni of Distinction Society. It is the highest honor the association bestows.

That serendipitous purchase has led to many more such ties, and now the state rep owns at least a dozen of the symmetrically tied neckwear. It has become his signature look.

Caldwell, who is a real estate appraiser with Fort Myers-based Maxwell & Hendry Valuation Services, Inc., says he appreciates the Alumni of Distinction recognition – but mostly he appreciates his time at FGCU.

“I’m proud I was able to get out with a degree; I wasn’t a terrible student but I’ve never been accused of being a stellar student either,” said the 2004 history grad. “The best gift FGCU gave me is my wife, who I met in my last semester.”

He and Yvonne delight in their daughter, Ava, and each Sunday gather at the Gulf Coast Church of Christ with Caldwell’s two younger brothers and his parents, who met at Florida Atlantic University and had Caldwell four days after their first wedding anniversary.

The Caldwell clan’s fishing and hunting days have given way to backyard swimming pool time on Sunday afternoons. Since winning his first election in 2010, he scarcely has time for much else but work and campaigning. Caldwell frequently speaks with voters about conservative principles and limited government. “I love policy work – getting into statutes, working on a problem and figuring out the impact of the law,” he said.

Caldwell is effective, thanks to his passion, said state Rep. Ray Rodrigues (R-Estero), who is budget manager for FGCU’s College of Arts and Sciences.

“I witness Matt’s ability to work with diverse groups, identify common ground and work together to find solutions,” Rodrigues said in the Alumni of Distinction nomination form he submitted for Caldwell. “Matt is a tireless worker who wants to see the right thing done and is not worried about who gets the credit.”

Caldwell says he is proud to have sponsored, and to have the governor sign into law, several pieces of legislation including: The Andrew Widman Act, which provided greater protection from career criminals; an act relating to optometry, which will lower the cost of, and increase access to, eye care; an expansion of the Everglades Forever Act, which will complete Everglades restoration in the area south of Lake Okeechobee; and an act relating to local pension reporting, which will increase transparency and allow pensioners to know how their money is invested.

He won’t forget his FGCU roots as he follows his career in the Legislature. “I’m really honored to be a small part of the growth of the university, which is bigger and better today,” he says.

— Betsy Clayton
Todd Cofer
CLASS OF '07

Age: 28
Hometown/residence: Marco Island
Degrees: B.A., Political Science; Master of Professional Studies in Technology Management from Georgetown University
Career: Co-Founder/CEO at Bookend Technology. Bookend developed software that helped kindergarten through 12th-grade schools better identify where students were falling behind in class using grade and attendance information. Bookend was acquired by Pearson in 2013, and today Cofer runs the marketing efforts for Pearson’s School System division.

Proud moment: “I am proud of being part of FGCU at its infancy. It was large enough to have a true college experience but small enough to where you had the opportunity to make a difference on campus. The best example I can give is when I founded the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity on campus with a few of my close friends. It is great to look how far the chapter has come and know that I was a part of it at the beginning, serving as the chapter president.”

FGCU’s personal meaning: “FGCU truly is my family. I met my wife while an undergrad at FGCU and have a close group of friends with whom I speak regularly to this day. It means so much that I have moved my family back to Estero this year to be close to our family and FGCU friends.”

Why you think you were selected: “Not sure, but I have a feeling my wife had something to do with it.”

Nominator said: “Inspiration for the Bookend project came from his involvement with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. He saw a gap and created the tools to bridge it. He also served as FGCU’s recruiter for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America when he was an undergrad. He served as Director of Student Advocacy and was a Student Senator in FGCU’s Student Government. He was also named winner of the 2012 Hoya Challenge Business Competition, and an Entrepreneur to Watch by The Washington Post.”

Kelsey DeLoach
CLASS OF ’11

Age: 24
Hometown/residence: Boynton Beach
Degree: B.A., Secondary Social Science Education
Career: 2012 Teach for America Corps Member for the Greater New Orleans Region; currently a fourth-grade teacher

Proud moment: “I’m very proud of the work I’ve been able to do with Teach For America in the past two years. I was thrilled with my placement in the Greater New Orleans area, as I had attended two alternative spring breaks with FGCU to that location and fell in love with the culture of the city. Since living here I’m extremely grateful for the connections and impact I’ve made with my students and community. I’ve been able to see kids grow numerous years in reading, express themselves in writing, encourage each other in times of need and break educational boundaries with 98 percent of my class passing the statewide assessment. At the end of my first year, I was selected to be a part of an elite group of teachers who are a part of a pilot leadership program that seeks to understand the potential for transformational change with each additional year of teaching.”

DeLoach travels to India this summer to connect with fellow education advocates to learn how they are creating change in their communities. “To create this transformational, sustainable change in education in Greater New Orleans, we need to study and learn from the leadership paradigm that has emerged in India and apply our findings to our context.”

FGCU’s personal meaning: “FGCU is a synonym for opportunity to me. Entering the university in 2007, I was amazed with everything the school made available to me. I was able to work on campus all four years, be a starting member of my sorority and be involved in Student Government. I can say that many of those opportunities would not have been afforded to me in a larger institution. While the university has grown, I feel that it embodies the mindset of supporting students and giving them chances to flourish during their time there.”

Why you think you were selected: “I was honestly shocked when I found out I was nominated for this award. I feel that I’ve only done what many graduates before me have, which is to continue to be an Eagle long after graduation. I carry with me the great lessons I learned during my time at FGCU and apply them to my life now.”

Nominator said: “She has put her leadership, education and passion for education to the test.”
Ashley Coone
CLASS OF ’05

Age: 31
Hometown/residence: Arcadia
Degree: B.S., Management; M.S. Management and Leadership, Webster University
Career: Executive Director of Desoto County Chamber of Commerce

Proud moment: Coone is most proud of the achievement so far of Links2Success, a program she founded. “I wanted to be sure that students graduating from DeSoto County were prepared for life after high school, specifically, for post-secondary education.” Today, the program has helped more than 200 students prepare for post-secondary education. One way it does that is through a summer leadership and career conference. Last year, seventh and eighth-graders toured the health department, the hospital, a solar energy plant, a stockyard and a college. They learned about personal finance from a bank official and volunteered for a food bank and Habitat for Humanity.

FGCU’s personal meaning: “Many people don’t know this, but FGCU was a last-minute decision for me, mainly due to my need to be near home. I’d been accepted into FSU and USF and after backing out of both due to the distance from home, I settled on FGCU. There were less than two weeks until Christmas break, and I begged Tami Tassler in Admissions to look at my application and accept me. It was the best decision that I could’ve made.”

Why you think you were selected: “I’m honored that my peers thought that my career path and passion deserved such a distinguished award. It’s very humbling. I am even more inspired to continue reaching for the stars and giving back.”

Nominator said: “She routinely works behind the scenes to create strategic alliances and strong partnerships with an emphasis on collaboration.”

Sarah Adams Levin
CLASS OF ’11

Age: 25
Hometown/residence: Estero
Degree: B.S.N., Nursing; currently pursuing a master of science degree in nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham to become an advanced practice nurse (online program with periodic campus courses)
Career: Registered nurse at Gulf Coast Medical Center for the Medical & Progressive Care Unit, which handles medical-surgical and progressive care patients, adult population, acutely and chronically ill

Proud moment: Receiving the SPIRIT award, a Lee Memorial Health System program that recognizes employees for going above and beyond normal duties and to celebrate their demonstration of the organization’s spirit. Nomination and recognition can come from colleagues, patients, management and others. SPIRIT stands for service, professionalism, integrity, respect, inspiration and teamwork.

FGCU’s personal meaning: “FGCU prepares their eagles to soar when they leave the nest.”

Why you think you were selected: “I was honored to be nominated by my director and supervisor; they are outstanding leaders and I feel privileged to work with them. I have high standards for the care of my patients. It can be challenging to deliver safe, excellent and efficient care while maintaining the LMHS SPIRIT, but that is what I endeavor to do. I try to always do what is right by my patients, be their unflinching advocate and coordinate their care efficiently and effectively. I always try to give my very best, 100 percent. Moreover, I seek the ‘how’ and ‘why’ and ‘what can I / we do better?’ That is the driving force behind pursuing my master’s degree — to practice primary care in the local community in order to help my patients improve and maintain their health and quality of life, and to avoid illness. When I was a student at FGCU pursuing my bachelor’s degree, I was eager to begin my career and make a difference. It’s awesome to actually be doing it and humbling to be recognized for it.”

Nominator said: “Sarah is a true patient advocate who shows care, compassion and kindness to all her patients...It’s not uncommon to see her providing comfort to a distraught patient or family member one minute and analyzing lab results with a physician of another patient the next.”
FGCU’s Food Forest inspires students and alumni to cultivate sustainable practices in agriculture and business.

By DREW STERWALD
Growing up in Palm Beach, Addison Hicks says he didn’t feel a sense of community or a connection to nature. He arrived at Florida Gulf Coast University as a self-described “conservative Reaganite” who “thought hippies were bringing down society” and didn’t see the point of spending time in the natural world.

Through the environmentally focused University Colloquium all students are required to complete, he heard about FGCU’s Food Forest. A seed was planted in his mind: He wanted to learn how to grow his own food.

Now, the senior philosophy and communication major can teach other students how to transplant, clone and nurture plants. He can sustain himself on vegetables he has harvested with his own hands. He was awakened, he says, to the physical demands of horticulture, the psychological benefits of working outdoors and the injustice of migrant worker conditions. He hopes someday to practice environmental law and to fight for the rights of field laborers.

“I would never have found that direction without the Food Forest,” he says. “The Food Forest opened my eyes. When I got involved it was my first chance to be part of a community project, working shoulder to shoulder with someone else to get a job done. It showed me the importance of human connection and connecting with nature. That’s not generally part of my generation’s experience.”

Getting young people to put down their smart phones and interact with each other and the planet is just one of the ways in which a half-acre of land between the Sugden Welcome Center and Kleist Health Education Center has borne fruit in just a few years. Firmly rooted in FGCU’s sustainability and interdisciplinary values, the Food Forest has yielded a bumper crop of dividends: nourishing food, contemplative time and service-learning opportunities; hands-on learning about native plants, soil science and sustainable agriculture; and alumni entrepreneurs who are transplanting their Food Forest experience into the business world and creating jobs.

Since plans were approved for the botanical garden in spring 2011, almost 1,300 students have worked more than 12,000 service-learning hours on the project. Associate Professor of Management Gerry Segal, who teaches courses in green business, entrepreneurship, permaculture and environmental sustainability, serves as an adviser to the Food Foresters student group along with Dean of Undergraduate Studies James Wohlpart.

“It has been a pleasure to work with such dedicated, passionate students. They live, eat, breathe and sleep the Food Forest,” Segal says. “It was a student initiative. Students designed it. Students are maintaining it. It’s the most amazing student project at FGCU.”

Plans for a campus botanical garden began in 2008-09 with the Fruit Tree Initiative launched by green-minded students, faculty supporters and Student Government leaders. The Backyard Farmers student group formed in fall 2009 to groom volunteers who could teach others planting techniques and share knowledge of sustainable agriculture.

In spring 2011, core members presented a detailed plan for the Food Forest to Student Government, which approved spending $100,000 of student-generated fees to launch the project. The Food Foresters still largely depend on SG funding but are now planning fundraising events to compensate for budget cuts.

In the heat of summer 2011, students prepped the land with layers of compost, mulch and topsoil, berms for raised growing beds and footpaths that snaked around the plot of land. An irrigation system funded by FGCU administration was installed.

During the following fall and winter terms, volunteers pitched in to plant ground cover, perennial and annual vegetables and subtropical fruit trees such as bananas, papayas, mangoes and avocados.

Two years later, pendulous papayas dangle from trees reaching 10 feet tall. Delicate orchid-like flowers spring from tamarind limbs. Red pineapples, purple eggplants and yellow bananas dot the edible landscape with streaks and dabs of color. Gulf fritillary and zebra longwing butterflies flit among firebush shrubs, and bees buzz around, pollinating crops. Although the fenced garden has a gate, it’s not locked, so visitors can enter any time and pluck a piece of fruit.

The Food Forest was designed as a permaculture garden, an ecological system that maximizes sustainability and productivity while minimizing maintenance. Plantings are arranged to meet each species’ nutritional, water and sunlight needs but also in relation to other plants’ requirements. Soaring stalks of...
bamboo acquired from the Fruit and Spice Park in Miami create a natural windbreak, while banana fronds shade sun-sensitive crops such as sweet potatoes. Nitrogen-producers like pigeon peas are planted to benefit nearby nitrogen-needling fruit trees.

In addition to nourishing food for humans, these sustainable agriculture practices produce forage for beneficial insects and pollinators and create habitat for wildlife including birds and snakes.

Permaculture's synergistic tenets are nothing new. Native Americans had their own trio of "guild" plants that were mutually beneficial. Corn provided structure for sprawling beans to climb; beans provided nitrogen to enrich the soil; and squash vines blanketed the ground to block weed intrusion.

"Sustainable agriculture has been going on for thousands of years," Segal says. "Permaculture incorporates the wisdom of indigenous people as well as the latest scientific research. It's self-contained, self-renewing and holistic. It works really well in tropical and subtropical climates."

Erica Lynn Klopf ('12, Environmental Studies and Art) designed the layout of the Food Forest as a senior research project but originally got involved in the Fruit Tree Initiative when she was Director of Environmental Initiatives for Student Government. The grassroots movement for a campus garden gained traction as early proponents teamed up with allies in Student Government and faculty and staff. The project seemed like a natural for a university with values like FGCU's. Discussions with groundskeepers and university administrators narrowed down potential locations and finally settled on an unused plot south of the main campus entrance.

"It was a great experience to see how the campus came together," says Klopf, who now runs her own company, Florida Edible Landscaping. "It was completely student driven – that's what's so special about it to this day. The students know all the plants, how to work irrigation, how to solve..."
problems. They have to stay on top of every little issue that comes up."

Project comes to fruition

From the beginning, the Food Forest has been a model of multidisciplinary collaboration involving environmental science, biology, engineering, business management and communication. Students analyzed soil samples, designed and built structures, used critical thinking to solve horticultural problems and created a website to chronicle the garden’s growth. Artists and writers have also found inspiration within its winding paths, according to Food Foresters President Arlo Simonds.

“It connects all over campus,” says the senior environmental science major from Islamorada. “It’s creating a community.”

It’s also reaching out to the community off campus. The Food Forest’s Facebook page, which has more than 800 members, has gotten the attention of area schools. The Monday Group, an environmentally focused high school program for students in Lee and Collier counties, toured the forest this year, as have several elementary schools.

A committed “locavore,” Simonds often cooks with pesticide-free food from the campus garden and posts pictures online. One recent “Meatless Monday” he prepared a salad that included tatsoi (a spicy spinach), dinosaur kale, cranberry hibiscus, moringa leaves and other harvested items. All FGCU students are free to pick produce at their discretion, and only a few incidents have occurred in which inexperienced harvesters have damaged plants, Simonds says.

“It’s an amazing experience people don’t often have now, to pick food you’re going to eat that day,” he says. “More students are concerned about where their food is coming from and whether pesticides are used. We’ve had 20 to 25 students working in here every week for the last three years.”

Getting their hands dirty in the soil, sweating through hours of physical labor and helping grow food sustainably has altered the perspectives and paths of other students who’ve volunteered in the Food Forest.

Former Backyard Farmers President Scott Stimpson (‘11, Environmental Studies) was there at the beginning, planning and planting, organizing and fertilizing. He now inspects citrus groves in Lee, Collier and Hendry counties for the U.S. Department of Agriculture but plans to pursue a graduate degree in Oregon.

Stimpson admits he initially opposed interdisciplinary education and compulsory service-learning – even though he did plenty of volunteer work in high school. After completing FGCU’s “Foundations of Civic Engagement” class, he wrote an essay describing service-learning as a waste of time. Then he moved into a house with a garden, which sparked an interest in horticulture and led him to get involved in the effort to establish a campus garden.

A year after writing his essay, he was leading a student organization promoting service-learning. Last spring, he returned to FGCU to give the keynote address at Community Engagement Day.

“When I was a freshman and sophomore, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do,” Stimpson says. “Once I found something that sparked my passion, I understood. The Food Forest is so close to the FGCU mission of sustainability and community engagement. It’s kind of a keystone project. It really does hit home for our university.”

Illustration by Erica Lynn Klopf

Above: Erica Lynn Klopf designed the Food Forest as a senior research project.

Right: By November 2013, the Food Forest had grown into a lush oasis of native greenery and subtropical fruits and vegetables, including squash, passion fruit and papayas.
Permaculture courses proving popular

Erica Lynn Klopf, who led the design of the Food Forest, went elsewhere to learn about permaculture design because FGCU had no course offerings on the subject when she was a student. Now the alumnus is helping teach permaculture here, and classes are in high demand.

“There’s a huge opportunity for this program to be successful,” says Klopf, whose 1½-year-old business, Florida Edible Landscaping, designs and installs sustainable gardens for commercial and residential clients. “We are creating jobs in this field. I need to hire people coming out of such a program. Years ago, when I was brewing up these ideas, people said ‘Who’s going to pay you to do that?’ Well, I’m doing it and I have plenty of work. The permaculture movement in Florida has exponentially grown in the last three or four years.”

Klopf already has several FGCU students and alumni working with her on a 3-acre food forest and an organic vegetable garden at Shangri-La Springs, a wellness resort in Bonita Springs.

Associate Professor of Management Gerry Segal, who teaches permaculture and sustainable business management, says Klopf is part of a wave of alumni capitalizing on the fact that more Americans are interested in where their food comes from and how it’s grown. Another Eagle inspired by the Food Forest, Lara Collier (‘11, Environmental Studies), co-founded Collier Family Farms, an organic Community-Supported Agriculture business in Ave Maria. Fellow Food Forest founder Kelly Walsh (‘13, Environmental Studies) works and teaches with Klopf and helps coordinate Colloquium programs at FGCU.

“Utilizing my education in ecology and applying it on the landscape gave me more confidence to apply it after I graduated,” Walsh says. “The Food Forest guided me toward my dream of educating people about the environment.”

This spring, Segal had more demand than seats for his year-old permaculture class.

“Our university is at the leading edge of offering curriculum in permaculture and an educational demonstration site,” Segal says. “Only a handful of universities in the United States offer a permaculture class, and the Food Forest is a premier example of sustainable agriculture.”

LEARN MORE

For more information about FGCU’s Food Forest, including a wish list of tools and other donations, go to fgcufoodforest.weebly.com. The Food Forest also is on Facebook.
Bernice Cochran sits in the Literacy Corner of her fourth-grade classroom at Tortuga Preserve Elementary School in Lehigh Acres, surrounded by a tight semicircle of 20 rapt students.

It has already been an action-packed literacy block on a very busy day.

The class started with the Fluency Mad Minute, in which students pair up, go to different sections of the room and read to one another, creating a cacophony of voices that reverberate off the walls. That went well. Cochran congratulated the class, saying, “I’m noticing a lot more of you changing your voice and your expression.”

By RICK WEBER
Photos by ED CLEMENT
They then split into groups of four or five and worked on the vocabulary-building Frayer Model, in which each group took a word (aquarium, dolphin, enchanted, flexible, glimpses) and a piece of paper divided into four categories (definition, facts, illustration, examples) and had to create a visual representation.

That didn’t go quite as smoothly, but Cochran noted that they hadn’t done it in more than two months. Rather than chastise them, she asked them to list the challenges they faced. When Group Four’s students said they had trouble coming up with examples of “flexible,” Cochran opened it up to the entire class, receiving suggestions such as “rubber band” and “gymnast.”

“Four brains working together are better than what? One, right?” she said. “Did all of you have a group discussion? Do you see what happens when all these brains come together? You come up with lots of …?”

“Ideas,” one student said.

“Ideas!” she responded.

And now, surrounded by her students, she reads from “The Case of the Gasping Garbage.”

“Hurry! Hurry! It’s a major emergency! There’s a monster in my garbage can!”

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This is Cochran’s passion. It always has been – it’s just that family circumstances led her down a different path, forestalling her teaching career until she was 32.

That she was able to realize her dream was due, in part, to a scholarship awarded
by the THA Foundation – a philanthropic organization established in 1963 by Thomas Haggai, who made his fortune operating the IGA supermarket chain.

The foundation’s mission evolved over the years to include the support of non-traditional students preparing for careers in early or middle childhood education. The foundation’s board recognized that there was a shortage of qualified teachers in those areas, so it began offering scholarship assistance for tuition, fees and books to nontraditional students – high-school graduates who were at least 23 and lacked a fully authorized teaching license and who had exceptionally high grade point averages.

FGCU is one of six colleges that the THA Foundation supports. The others are George Mason, Winthrop, Miami (Ohio), Texas A&M and North Carolina-Greensboro. Since the 2003-04 school year, 82 FGCU students have been awarded THA scholarships.

“The program makes an incredible difference,” says Marcia Greene, dean of the College of Education. “They’re fulfilling their dream of being a teacher. They’re doing what they were passionate to do. Some of them got a little sidetracked, perhaps, in the beginning. That exhilaration of having the classroom they dreamed of for so long – it’s so satisfying to watch them in that role as a teacher. I feel a lot of pride for our FGCU alums when I see them teaching.”

When he visited the university last fall, Haggai spent some time in Cochran’s classroom, among others.

“It could hardly go to sleep last night,” the philanthropist said the following day. “It was one of the great days of my life. We are grateful that we can make an investment in their lives.”

Scholarships vary, with a maximum award of $7,500 per year.

“It saved me,” Cochran says. “Without THA, it would have been almost impossible. It was the most amazing gift ever.”

Cochran dreamed of being a teacher – just like her father – almost from the time she could remember thinking about a career.

As a student at Naples High School, she started working at Dairy Queen to support her struggling family. Her mom had died, leaving her father to support four children.

She thought it would be just a high school job. She was promoted to shift leader as a sophomore, assistant manager as a junior and store manager as a senior. When the Fort Myers store was added to her responsibilities, her salary grew to $45,000 a year.

“It was all about making the money,” she says. “I was young. I started thinking, ‘It kind of makes sense.’ My father had always placed a huge emphasis on
education, and I still wanted to go to college. But instead of going toward my dream of being a teacher, I thought, ‘Teachers don't make a lot of money. Let me go toward a career that will make money.’”

She enrolled in FGCU in 2005 with the goal of gaining a business administration and management degree. That was put on hold in 2006 when her daughter, Maria, was born with severe congenital heart disease. After 10 months in intensive care at All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, she died in her mother’s arms on July 24, 2007.

Cochran ultimately went back to work, but “I felt like life had no meaning,” she says. “I said, ‘I can't feel like this, I'm too young. I cannot feel like this my whole life. I have to do something. I have to make some changes. I can't change the fact that my daughter died. What can I change?’”

She took stock of what she'd done and realized that, although she had made good money, her job was just a job. It was time to change course.

“I said, 'I'll start pursuing my original dream. I won’t be rich. But I'll feel like my life has meaning and has passion,’ ” she said.

She returned to FGCU, taking a reduced course load while managing a La Quinta Inn and Suites. She gave birth to a daughter, Isabella, and life grew even more hectic.

When it was time to do an internship, she quit her job to focus her energy on being in a classroom all day and with her daughter at night. She had accrued $28,000 in student debt. She didn’t know how she was going to make it. Then she received the THA scholarship in January 2013.

That allowed her to graduate in May and start at Tortuga Preserve in the fall.

“I’ve been working since I was 15,” she says. “Thirteen of the 17 years were management, and this is the hardest job I’ve ever had. Not even close. But it’s also the most rewarding. There’s not a greater
feeling. You have days where you go, ‘Oh, man, I can’t take this anymore.’ But you have days when everything else doesn’t matter. You go home feeling like a million bucks because you know you got through to the children and they learned because of you.’

Philip Sawdon and Karen Cole know exactly what Cochran is talking about. They waited even longer to pursue their teaching dreams, and both have found themselves at Pinecrest Elementary in Immokalee.

Sawdon, 56, of Bonita Springs, graduated from Rochester (Michigan) High School in 1975. Although he aspired to be an architect, he married his high school sweetheart, Wendy, and they both joined the Air Force. They had a son, Eric, and a daughter, Jennifer, and “life got away from us,” he says.

He entered residential building and land development, working for Crossman Communities in Michigan. He transferred to Fort Myers in 2002, but after the building boom went bust, he and his wife committed to being teachers. They started at Edison State College and transferred to FGCU, but by the end of 2011, they were running out of money. The THA scholarship came through in the spring of 2012, and he started at Pinecrest after graduating from FGCU in December 2012.

Because of overcrowding at Immokalee Middle School, he is in the unique position of teaching sixth grade at an elementary school.

“We have a migrant population, with kids coming and going,” he said. “A lot of times, you get a student in the middle of the year and you have to put the brakes on, figure out where they are and then catch up. But they really like to get engaged.

“I used to hear teachers say, ‘I’m doing it for the kids,’ and I’d question that. ‘Are you really doing it for the kids? Or because you get the summers off?’ But I can now see how you get into that groove. I love these kids. I wish I could take four of these kids back to Michigan for two weeks and let them experience something different. There’s a whole different world out there they don’t see.”

For Cole, 56, of Naples, the THA scholarship saved her in 2011 when her husband died. Now, in her first year of full-time teaching after seven years as a substitute, her second-grade class is her life.

“I don’t even know how to describe it,” she says. “They are so eager to learn. They love being here. That’s a difference. A lot of that goes back to the kind of life they have. You might be at Christmas break, and they’d rather be here. They love school. I know I’ve had an impact. I have respect for them and they have respect for me.”

The literacy block is almost over in Cochran’s class. Sophia Toboada and Madison Potter are working on a project together.

Just a few feet away is a sign – LEARNING TAKES YOU TO GREAT PLACES – that is surrounded by photos of Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone, Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon. Near that is a sequence of inspirational quotes. One of them, from American historical fiction author E.L. Doctorow, says: “Good writing is supposed to evoke sensation in the reader. Not the fact that it is raining but the feeling of being rained upon.”

In this place, Cochran’s students are inspired.

Toboada turns to you and says, “She’s the best teacher. She makes everything fun – even the most boring things. She gives us rewards. She’s a really nice person.”

Later, when Cochran learns what Toboada said, she seems to melt.

“Ah,” she says. “That’s awesome. That makes me feel good.”
Casting about

Maximizing nutrition, minimizing risk when eating seafood requires some fishing for clues.

By KEITH GIBSON
The seafood industry has come along swimmingly since a time not too long ago when consumer options largely were limited to frozen fish sticks and the Friday fry-for-all at the neighborhood fraternal hall.

Improvements in refrigeration and transportation and an aquaculture industry spawned by demand that exceeds wild-caught supply now bring fresh or flash-frozen seafood to neighborhood markets daily. And in our health-conscious quest for a tasty flesh rich in protein and beneficial omega-3 fatty acids, we’ve fried, baked, broiled, sautéed, steamed, poached, shucked, slurped, picked and eaten raw with enough stuff that swims for global analysts to predict 2015 worldwide consumption of more than 135 million tons and a $370-billion market.

But the whopping demand creates even bigger fish to fry – especially in the United States, which imports an estimated 90 percent of the seafood it consumes, about half of it from fish farms around the world.

Aquaculture originally was the hot solution – both to meet demand and to restore livelihoods to fishermen squeezed off the water by laws and lean harvests – but fish farming also brings with it potential hazards, depending on the country and how it’s practiced and monitored. Then there is the slippery subject of genetically engineered fish designed to grow bigger faster, bringing concerns about “Frankenfish” upsetting the natural balance and the possible effects on humans of eating these marine monsters. And even with wild-caught fish, there remain concerns about mercury-contamination and other toxins.

**Better schools of thought**

Things were a lot simpler when all we needed to know about our fish dinner was to preheat the oven to 425 degrees, spread out the sticks on an ungreased sheet and bake for 20 minutes, turning once halfway through.

So how does a health-focused seafood lover navigate these murky waters? Just about anyone you meet who knows that not all salmon are spawned equally points to the Internet as the resource needed to land a healthy catch of the day. The hottest fishing spot on the Internet, say many experts, is the continually updated seafoodwatch.org, site of the Seafood Watch program managed by Monterey Bay Aquarium in California.

“The best thing you can do is get educated, and Seafood Watch is the ultimate tool,” said Darren Rumbold, FGCU marine science professor.

Rumbold should know, as a working expert on the seafood chain – or “web,” as he calls it. “Food chain is a bit of an oversimplification,” he said. “We study the food-web dynamics, biomagnified in the estuary.” (A web connotes more of an interrelated community rather than the linear relationship of a chain.)

He joined the faculty of FGCU’s Coastal Watershed Institute in 2006, after working as an environmental scientist coordinating all mercury research for the South Florida Water Management District. He continues that mission at FGCU with a current focus on the presence in estuarine and coastal systems of methylmercury, an organic compound created by the accumulation of toxins in fish that can cause adverse health effects in humans. Rumbold conducted a three-year collaboration with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association investigating methylmercury in Florida Bay, and among the many studies he has published the past 20 years is a recent risk assessment of methylmercury’s impact on birds in the Everglades.

By the time the marine life Rumbold studies ends up as fillets you see in the cooler, he’s just like any other conscientious consumer who wants to make the best choices. It’s as simple as pulling out his mobile device and consulting the Seafood Watch app he has downloaded from the website. Seafood Watch also offers a pocket-sized guide you can print on your home computer for quick, portable reference, if you prefer.

The site has every edible fish in the sea categorized alphabetically with Seafood Watch’s detailed ratings, along with scads of other advice for consumers and businesses, sustainable recipes, links to other resources – even recommended wholesale suppliers for chefs.

Consider the aforementioned salmon, which has become the Holy Grail of the American diet as a relatively affordable, omega-3-loaded, go-to fish you can buy just about anywhere.

Some varieties of salmon – freshwater Coho farmed in U.S. inland tank
systems, and wild-caught Alaskan fish either fresh/frozen or canned – are in the top five spots on Seafood Watch’s best-of-the-best Super Green List, which means they have low levels of mercury, provide at least 250 milligrams of omega-3s per recommended serving and are classified as a Seafood Watch “Best Choice,” which signifies an overall “green” harvest. Five other salmon varieties are classified as “Good Alternatives” by Seafood Watch.

But Atlantic salmon – which is widely farmed, readily available in all market forms and served at many restaurants – is red-flagged as a species to “Avoid.” Why? Because of what Seafood Watch determines to be high PCB levels in the flesh, open-ocean farming techniques that can release parasites and diseases into the natural ecosystem, the fact it can take up to 3 pounds of wild food fish to produce 1 pound of farmed salmon, and the hygienic and ethical ramifications of eating fish that are often are raised in essentially what Rumbold describes as “hog farms.”

Then there are the potential pitfalls of genetically engineered salmon, which, compared to conventionally farmed salmon in research cited by The Ocean Conservancy, have fewer health benefits, including about 12 percent less omega-3s; higher levels of a growth hormone known to cause cancer; and appear to pose a higher food-allergy threat.

“That’s a whole other can of worms,” Rumbold said. “What happens if these things escape and get into the gene pool?”

Emily Porter, an adjunct instructor at FGCU who recently completed a master’s thesis on sustainable seafood practices by Southwest Florida restaurants, thinks she knows what might happen: That genetically engineered fish could pose irreparable risks to wild populations and our entire marine environment.

“No long-term safety studies have been completed to determine risks to human health or the environment (of these genetically modified foods),” Porter said. “Now the FDA is considering allowing the sale of the first genetically engineered animal (salmon) for human consumption to enter into that equation. In my opinion, there needs to be in-depth, independent risk assessment studies and FDA regulatory transparency.”

This whole stink catches the attention of consumers such as FGCU junior Jill Himmelfarb, a journalism major who recently wrote an op-ed piece published in Eagle News, the student newspaper, on the fragile state of ocean health and sustainability.

Himmelfarb, another huge fan of
Seafood Watch who works part time as a waitress at an upscale restaurant off campus, put it this way: “I won't eat the farm-raised salmon that we serve.”

**Mercury rising**

One of the most prevalent and overriding health considerations is mercury contamination, although risks also include other metals, industrial chemicals such as PCBs and dioxins and pesticides that include DDT.

The general rule of thumb: The higher up you go in the fish food chain, the higher the risk of contamination.

“Try to avoid fish that eat a lot of other fish,” is the way Rumbold put it. This cannibalistic list is topped, of course, by the undisputed kings of the ocean predators, sharks, but also includes popular menu favorites such as grouper and swordfish, two other high-ranking bullies of the deep. On the other hand, “snapper is a good fish to eat because its diet is heavy with crustaceans and mullet because it eats vegetation,” Rumbold said. (See the chart accompanying this story.)

Still, for the average person who adheres to the recommended nutritional guideline of two 6-ounce servings of fish weekly, health risks are minimal. “The person I worry about is the one on a high-protein diet who I see in the checkout line with 12 cans of tuna, or the fisherman who catches a boatload of mackerel, fills his freezer and eats way too much of it,” Rumbold said.

**You get what you pay for**

For those who purchase their fish at a market or restaurant, prices can be intimidating. So do you go the bargain route and reach for the frozen fish sticks?

“Fresh is always better,” said Greg Tolley, FGCU marine science professor and chair of Marine and Ecological Sciences. “Any time you get into processed seafood, you’re sacrificing quality. A better alternative might be catfish, which is more nutritious and a little easier on the wallet, or tilapia.”

Tolley, too, is quick to point the concerned consumer toward Seafood Watch as the source to guide buying and dining decisions. And that’s the takeaway: Get informed and educated, download the app or pocket guide and once you’re ready to test the waters, empowered by knowledge and the wish to make a difference – well ... go fish.

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**SEAFOOD CONSUMER GUIDE FOR SOUTHEASTERN USA**

The guide was prepared by the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program. The program creates science-based recommendations that help consumers and businesses make ocean-friendly seafood choices. The list below has a limited number of seafood items, for a full list of recommendations, visit www.seafoodwatch.org

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**BEST CHOICES**

- Abalone
- Arctic Char (farmed)
- Bass: Striped (US hook & line, farmed)
- Catfish (US)
- Clams, Mussels, Oysters
- Cod: Pacific (US hook & line, longline & trap)
- Crab: Dungeness & Stone (US)
- Crawfish/Crayfish (US farmed)
- Halibut (US Pacific)
- Mahi Mahi (US Atlantic troll, pole)
- Mullet: Striped (US wild)
- Salmon (AK)
- Sardines: Pacific (Canada & US)
- Scallops (farmed)
- Tilapia (Ecuador & US)
- Trout: Rainbow (US farmed)
- Tuna: Albacore/White canned (Canada & US troll, pole)
- Tuna: Skipjack/Light canned (FAD-free, US troll, pole)
- Tuna: Yellowfin (US troll, pole)
- Wreckfish (US)

**GOOD ALTERNATIVES**

- Crab: Blue & King (US)
- Flounder, Soles (US)
- Grouper: Red (US Gulf of Mexico)
- Lobster (Bahamas & US)
- Mahi Mahi (Ecuador & US)
- Monkfish (US)
- Pompano (US wild)
- Porgy: Red (US)
- Salmon (CA, OR & WA wild)
- Scallops (wild)
- Shrimp: Canada & US wild
- Snapper: Red (US)
- Squid (US)
- Swordfish (US)
- Tilapia (China & Taiwan)
- Tuna: Albacore/White canned (US longline)
- Tuna: Skipjack/Light canned (imported troll, pole and US longline)
- Tuna: Yellowfin (imported troll, pole and US longline)
- Wahoo (US)
- Yellowtail: California

**AVOID**

- Abalone (China & Japan)
- Conch (wild)
- Crab: Red King (Russia)
- Crawfish/Crayfish (China farmed)
- Lobster: Spiny (Belize, Brazil, Honduras & Nicaragua)
- Mahi Mahi (imported)
- Orange Roughy
- Salmon: Atlantic (farmed)
- Sharks
- Shrimp (imported farmed)
- Shrimp (LA & Mexico wild)
- Squid (imported)
- Swordfish (imported)
- Tuna: Albacore/White canned (except Canada & US troll, pole and US longline)
- Tuna: Bluefin
- Tuna: Skipjack/Light canned (imported longline and purse seine)
- Tuna: Yellowfin (except troll, pole and US longline)

Check every column, your favorite seafood could be in more than one.

**BEST CHOICES**

Well managed, caught or farmed in environmentally responsible ways.

**GOOD ALTERNATIVES**

Some concerns with how they are caught or farmed.

**AVOID**

Overfished, or strong concerns with how they are caught or farmed.

**YOUR CHOICES MATTER**

Worldwide, the demand for seafood is increasing; yet many of the fish we enjoy are in trouble due to overfishing or destructive fishing and farming practices. Purchase fish caught or farmed using environmentally responsible practices to support healthy, abundant oceans.

SOURCE: Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch
Researcher aims to keep fish population in the swim

If Chilean sea bass is no longer on the menu at your favorite Southwest Florida seafood restaurant, you might thank Emily Porter.

The Florida Gulf Coast University adjunct instructor who teaches three environmental courses in marine science, social sciences and Colloquium, recently completed a master’s thesis that assessed sustainable seafood practices by restaurants in Lee and Collier counties. As the result of her work, she says by restaurants in Lee and Collier counties.

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Emily Porter.

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menu at your favorite Southwest Florida

unsustainable.”

She did an initial survey of their seafood-

contacted – participated in her project.

them – roughly two-thirds of those she

prominently on the menu, and 42 of

the two counties that feature seafood

bass off the menu is a nationwide chain,

had a positive impact on the fishery

overall.  She declined to name the

restaurant chain due to the confidentially

of her study.

Porter reached out to restaurants in

the two counties that feature seafood

prolutinely on the menu, and 42 of

them – roughly two-thirds of those she

contacted – participated in her project.

She did an initial survey of their seafood-

buying practices.

“I went directly to the decision-
makers,” Porter said. “In some cases, it

was the chef; in others, the manager or

owner. My goal was to speak directly with

the person who actually purchased the

seafood in each restaurant.  My intent was

to collect data, but also educate decision-
makers on the sustainability of seafood.”

Nine months later, she followed up with a second survey to see if the restaurants made any menu changes based on what they learned from the first survey.

Porter agrees with those who believe that while great strides have been made to manage fisheries, much more needs to be done, including increased regulation of aquaculture.

“If proper standards are addressed and implemented, aquaculture can become a viable alternative to wild-caught fisheries,” she said.

Another practice Porter cautions the public to be wary of is what she calls “fish fraud,” the intentional mislabeling of one fish as another. “It’s rampant throughout the United States,” she said.

“According to a recent study by Oceana, seafood fraud, or mislabeling, was found as often as 25 to 70 percent of the time for major species.”

The best way to minimize your risk of being defrauded is to shop at reputable fishmongers and be suspicious at restaurants and retail stores when prices are lower than they ought to be for the type of fish being sold.

Like others who have made sustainable seafood practices a personal project, Porter says consumer education is important for improving and protecting marine fisheries. “We’re heading in the right direction, but we need to encourage the public to start using downloadable smartphone apps,” she said. “Most people want to do the right thing and make sustainable seafood choices.”

The ironic thing, Porter said, is that many of the fish consumers seem to love – and abuse – the most don’t even taste like … well, fish. Take the Chilean sea bass she helped off the hook.

“It’s so mild it doesn’t really have any taste,” Porter said. “What people really like are the sauces they put on it.”

To that end, the next time a restaurant doesn’t have your beloved Chilean sea bass on the menu, try the snapper instead.

— Keith Gibson
On the air

From NPR to ‘Gulf Coast Live,’ public radio reaches from FGCU to seven Florida counties.

This suite of rooms in the WGCU Broadcast Building is the nexus of public-radio programming in Southwest Florida. On FM radio, WGCU/WMKO reaches more than 110,000 listeners in seven counties – one-fifth of the state of Florida – delivering National Public Radio newscasts, local news, weather and traffic, and syndicated cultural and public affairs shows supported by station membership. Music airs on its HD Radio channel, and a streaming station to be run by FGCU students is part of WGCU’s 2015-19 strategic plan.

All of this is managed in the Master Control Room, in the foreground of this photo, where staff and automated software ensure that programming stays on the air 24 hours a day. Public radio in Southwest Florida has come a long way since it was established in 1983 as a satellite operation licensed to the University of South Florida’s WSFP-FM. WGCU became an independent entity in 1996, when the licenses were transferred to Florida Gulf Coast University; the staff moved into the Broadcast Building in 1998.

1 **BOARD CHAIRMAN** The desktop audio console, or sound board, is where hosts read news reports and mix and fade transitional music and NPR feeds.

2 **KEY COMPONENTS** This stack of electronics includes a digital recorder for short audio bites, a “codec” or device that decodes the digital data stream from a remote broadcast location and a power conditioner to reduce cross-component interference.

3 **LOCAL ON THE ‘85** A monitor tuned to The Weather Channel provides up-to-the-minute information about weather conditions that hosts can share with listeners.

4 **MAGIC MIC** Microphones opposite the sound board are mostly used by guests during on-air pledge drives. Each has a “cough” button to mute the mic.

5 **STU-STU-STUDIO** Musicians and other performers appearing as guests on the locally produced “Gulf Coast Live” program set up in this soundproof performance studio. Station management hopes to expand the weekly...
show to five days a week within the next few years.

6 NECESSARY PAPERS WGCU Public Media is licensed to FGCU’s Board of Trustees through the Federal Communications Commission. The current license runs through 2021.

7 AUTO PILOT Radio automation software runs on a PC. It stores, finds and plays programming so the sound board doesn’t have to be controlled by a staff person at all times.

8 NOISES OFF Acoustical foam keeps sound from reverberating in the control room. Double-paned glass also prevents noise from seeping between rooms.

9 QUIET PLEASE This sign is turned on during live broadcasts to warn people entering the control room that a reporter or host is on the air.

10 ON THE RECORD Reporters record interviews, weather forecasts, stories and other audio in this booth.
The camera lingers on Kellam’s face as she appears to experience an arc of emotions – shock, incomprehension, sadness. A staple of movies and TV shows when a dramatic revelation occurs, this shot is called a “slow burn” in “Acting for the Camera: Techniques and Principles of Acting for Television and Motion Pictures.” Taught by Gerritt VanderMeer – aka, the director – the new course is designed, in simplest terms, to teach students the difference between acting on a stage and acting for a camera.

The distinction might not seem dramatic to the casual observer, but then these novice thespians critique each other’s takes. The playback rolling on a large monitor in the Broadcast Building’s green-screen studio reveals how the camera captures and amplifies moments of Acting with a capital A: gaping eyes, hands flying to the face, repeated blinking.

Candid camera

Students in a new acting class learn from watching themselves on screen.

“QUIET ON SET!”
THE DIRECTOR SHOUTS. ASHLEY Kellam stands in front of a camera, under a boom microphone, as Joshua Johnson stands next to the cameraman and begins their short scene.

“Oh, they haven’t told you?” Johnson asks Kellam. “Your brother’s been dead for two years.”

“Expressing the inexpressible”

THE ARTS

[ THEATER ]
“There were some moments of telegraphing to the viewer,” observes VanderMeer, FGCU assistant professor of theater. “What feels like truth and what’s showing? The fine muscular reactions that are beyond our conscious control—that’s the genuine reaction. Those authentic moments are fleeting. Give yourself the opportunity to explore your feelings in the moment. When it feels the most spontaneous, you’re doing your best work.”

As VanderMeer explains later, actors should never “help” the camera see what they are feeling. Any exaggeration comes across as false on screen—“showing” or “mugging.”

“It’s a challenge to get young actors to trust that their honest, unfiltered reactions are enough,” VanderMeer says. “The camera is wonderfully sensitive to emotional truth. I think they are able to see that instantly for themselves when we screen their work on the monitor.”

The 15 students in “Acting for the Camera,” who auditioned to secure a place in this advanced acting class, gain practical techniques and on-camera experience that are not as easily conveyed in a traditional classroom. With Academy Award-winner Michael Caine’s “Acting on Film” as their textbook and a 10-year stage and screen veteran as their director/instructor, they learn how to translate what they’ve absorbed in other acting classes to a medium in which they don’t have to project their voices and emotions to the back of a theater. They learn how professionals behave on a production set, the language of camera operators and how to work with a green screen, the monochromatic backdrop that is replaced with computer-generated imagery or special effects on television and in film.

Caine likens acting to a delicate medical procedure: “I regard the theater as an operation with a scalpel. Movie acting is an operation with a laser. It’s so tiny, so small.”

Intimacy is the major difference between the two venues says VanderMeer, who has had recurring roles on FX’s “Rescue Me” and on “All My Children” and appeared in the movie “Men in Black III.”

“When you act for the camera, you act for one person—the viewer. The distribution allows it to go to millions of people, but you’re reaching out to one set of eyes,” he says. “The camera tells the viewer what to look at, and students need to learn to come to terms with that. It’s a different type of concentration. Theater is meant to be shared by a number of people at the same time, and they can be looking at anything or anyone on stage at any time.”

Like many in the class, Ashley Kellam of Naples hopes to parlay her theater degree into a career in movies or television. After appearing in FGCU’s production of “Romeo and Juliet” for children and graduating this summer, she plans to move to Los Angeles to pursue her dream.

“My main goal is to be acting and making a comfortable living doing it,” she says. “I really want to do a sitcom one day. I’ve always loved acting.”

VanderMeer’s class is the first opportunity she has had to gain experience in front of a camera, and she has learned a lot from it.

“The way you move and speak and deliver your lines—it’s so different than how you do it on stage,” Kellam says. “You have to take it down a notch—or like 10 notches. That’s something we’re all trying to work hard on. We’re afraid the audience is not going to get what we’re playing. It’s important to know how the camera sees you. I’m really lucky to be able to take this class and experience that.”

Knowing how to work with the camera is essential in the competitive world of film and television, where stars often perform take after take of the same scene and where wasted time is wasted money. A lot of people’s jobs depend on the professionalism of the actors; if one person is missing the marks literally or figuratively, there are droves of unemployed replacements eager to fill the role. The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists estimates only 15 percent of its members are employed.

Jonathan Perez, a senior with a biology major and theater minor, has a little experience being on stage and being in front of a camera. He worked as a movie and TV extra when he lived in New York City and has acted with local theater troupes since moving to Florida in 2010. After graduating in December, he plans to apply to Master of Fine Arts programs in theater and pursue an acting career.

“I like being able to explore different parts of myself and living through someone else’s experience,” he says. “You learn a lot about yourself.”

Technology is creating job opportunities outside the traditional entertainment system, he adds.

“There is so much film and TV being produced around the country that I feel like any one of us could go to a market and potentially be hired,” he says. “People can produce their own stuff these days.”

Indeed, YouTube could be considered the new independent film industry. Anyone can upload a video anywhere in the world, and millions of people might view it if it goes viral. All the world’s a stage, right?

“The next big thing is not necessarily coming from New York or Hollywood,” VanderMeer says. “Production is less and less centralized. They don’t use film anymore. The technology changes, but the skills are the same. The way you interact with the camera doesn’t change. Truthful acting is truthful acting.”

—Drew Sterwald
ASKETBALL AT FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY THIS SEASON WAS SOMETHING of a rollercoaster ride. The women’s basketball team rained threes smack into the 2013-14 Atlantic Sun Conference season and tournament championships and on to a coveted NCAA Tournament berth. It was the team’s second trip to the tourney in three years, only to suffer a heartbreaking loss in overtime, 61-60, to fifth-seeded Oklahoma State.

For the men, there was no NCAA play this year, after winning the A-Sun but falling to Mercer in the post-season tournament.

Still, there was much to savor about a season that could have devolved as men’s and women’s basketball team up to become a Terrific Ten.

By KEITH GIBSON

Alico Arena is a house of thrills as men’s and women’s basketball team up to become a Terrific Ten.

Just great stuff
into little more than a hangover from the intoxicatingly perfect alignment of basketball stars that converged into Dunk City last year. While it ended March 18 in Tallahassee with a 58-53 loss to Florida State in the National Invitation Tournament, team members can hold their heads high and Eagles everywhere should be proud, too.

Why was it hard to be the least bit disappointed in a 22-13 Eagles team that fell a tad statistically and a ton emotionally short of the Dunk City squad that spoiled us?

For starters, the season after THE season brought FGCU's men's program a share of the A-Sun Conference championship (14-4 league record) along with a return to the conference tournament title game, played at a packed, manic Alico Arena that got progressively rowdier with each tournament contest. Even the disappointment of a 68-60 loss to Mercer in the final that cost FGCU a return to the NCAA dance was somewhat tempered days later when those same Bears coldcocked mighty Duke in the first round of the big tournament, further validating the high quality of ball that has become the new standard at The Nest.

Attendance averaged 4,340 in 17 home dates, 13 of them sellouts anchored by a boisterous section of student “Dirty Birds” who were the driving force behind the ear-shattering atmosphere that is now Alico Arena on game night – suddenly a dreaded road destination for opposing teams. The season total of 73,780 fans who came to see the Eagles were 12,000 more than the two previous seasons combined.

“It was so loud in there it was crazy … you couldn't help but feed off it,” said rising senior Brett Comer, the 6-foot-3 guard from Winter Park who became a masked marvel of sorts when a broken nose forced him to play much of the season with Phantom of the Opera-style face protection.

Of course, sitting – and on sellout nights, standing – behind those students making lots of noise was a Southwest Florida community enraptured a year earlier by the contagious excitement generated by Dunk City. Corporate spirit remained high, too, evidenced by all those new business-sponsorship billboards hanging like medals throughout the arena.

Chad Lutkenhaus, FGCU's director of ticket operations, says season-package sales alone were up about 400 percent year-over-year. “To go from where we'd draw about 1,000 people when I played (Lutkenhaus was a member of FGCU's basketball team from 2007-11) to where we actually had to turn people away at the box office this year, it really was incredible to see.”

Joe Dooley, the Jersey guy who confidently and successfully followed the act some felt was impossible to follow when he left a higher-paying job as a Kansas assistant to succeed Andy Enfield as FGCU’s head coach, knows a thing or two about rabid hoops atmospheres after spending years listening to Jayhawks fans. “The support was just tremendous,” said Dooley, fresh from a whirlwind road trip visiting high school prospects during an open NCAA recruiting period. “The people of Southwest Florida were just great to us.”

Another sign the bar has been permanently raised is the fact FGCU was the only school to get two players, Comer and fellow rising senior Bernard Thompson, named to the first All-A-Sun team – a program first. The team's only graduating senior, Chase Fieler, made the second team for the second time, but his true crowning glory was getting picked for a national slam-dunk contest that took place as part of the Final Four festivities, a fitting farewell for one of the original dunkmeisters.

Even Dunk City’s former coach Andy Enfield – who left FGCU to rebuild the University of Southern California program – cashed in one more time on the phenomenon he helped create at FGCU when he landed a postseason gig as a studio analyst for FOX Sports’ NCAA coverage. That wasn’t a job Enfield got on the basis of his most recent body of work, but instead because of lingering name recognition from his meteoric rise with the Eagles.

Therein lies the enviable problem of being a basketball program that’s suddenly on everyone’s radar. Dooley quickly emerged as a sizzling name himself on the short lists of bigger schools dangling bigger money that can’t realistically be matched in front of mid-major coaches with star potential, with Tulsa and Boston College among Dooley’s reported suitors.

There is other tangible evidence of FGCU’s basketball success. The athletics department reports sales of Eagles merchandise is up almost 150 percent over 2012-13, and that much of an estimated 31 percent increase in admissions applications this academic year can be credited to exposure fueled by several national and regional television appearances (think ESPN’s “Breakfast on the Beach” to kick off the season this past November). Also factor in online
streaming and expanded social-media networking organized by new sports information director Jason MacBain—all fueled by nationwide interest in the FGCU hoops program.

But there are other signs pointing to creation of a lasting craze.

Look at the Alico Arena lobby so jammed at halftime of games that one can’t tell where the lines in and out of the restrooms begin and those at the refreshment windows end. Sit in a line of traffic backed up Lake Boulevard leading to the only road in and out of Alico, and take the leisurely but long walk or shuttle from off-arena parking sites to the front gate. These are every university’s dream problems.

Sit near the student section, if you dare. During two rollicking weeks of A-Sun tournament games as both the men’s and women’s titles were settled in Alico, the thunderous end zone on more than one occasion was worked into a feverish lather by a pompom-waving president who raced down on the floor to lead cheers—not the president of the booster club or the Student Government president, but FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw himself. The well-timed moves might have made the unpretentious Bradshaw, shirt untucked over shorts, the first top university official to have his name loudly chanted on campus by a crowd of students (“Presi-dent Brad-shaw! … (clap) … (clap) … (clap, clap, clap!)” in admiration rather than protest.

“The great thing about all this is we earned it, both of our teams,” said the man most directly behind the men of Dunk City and the women dripping wet from “Raining Threes,” as that slogan goes. FGCU Athletics Director Ken Kavanagh, visibly delighted by the electricity and live-gate boost the A-Sun tournament games generated, took his own share of bows while he mingled with the women’s team and their fans March 16 as they celebrated a 72-70 championship victory against Stetson in overtime. “These tournaments aren’t something we bid on and bought,” Kavanagh said. “We earned these games on our campus by winning.”

While the men’s team is comparatively new to this expected-to-win-big thing, perennial success is something FGCU’s women’s basketball team knows better than any other team on campus. This season was a typical hardwood harvest: a 26-8 record that yielded A-Sun regular season and tournament championships served with Karl Smesko’s fifth conference Coach of the Year award (fourth consecutive) and senior Sarah Hansen’s second Player of the Year and third Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors on the side (See story on page 46.) Hansen joined rising junior guard Whitney Knight on the A-Sun first team for the Eagles, who
They really came together as the season progressed.”

Neither flock of Eagles is likely to be bumped off the perch anytime soon. Each is losing only one senior: Fieler leaves the men’s team as the only player in program history with 1,000 points and 600 rebounds with 1,306 and 714, respectively, while Hansen departs the team record that isn’t bolted to the wood job – a dozen in all – as the A-Sun’s No. 7 all-time scorer with 1,901 career points.

“What was probably our most rewarding season,” said Smesko, who likely has difficulty differentiating between great and greater when it comes to such comparisons with 12 incredible seasons and 340 wins to pick through as the only women’s basketball coach FGCU has known. “After Sarah, we didn’t have a lot of experience out there early, especially with several new players just learning the system. They really came together as the season progressed.”

Although such hype as order-of-finish predictions and preseason all-conference teams for 2014-15 are still a few months away, it doesn’t take Dick Vitale to figure out FGCU will be the one for which they gun in the A-Sun, especially with archival Mercer leaving the conference along with East Tennessee State.

Welcome to the club, say the Eagle women, who are always the red-circle opponent on the schedule of the A-Sun teams upon which they ruthlessly prey season after season. Next year, however, a truly majestic bird will be missing.

“You can’t replace someone like Hansen, with her knowledge of the game and especially our system,” said her former teammate and roommate, rising senior Jenna Cobb, who’ll have as wingwomen top returning scorers Whitney Knight (12.3 ppg) and Stephanie Haas (11.6 ppg), both rising juniors, and a flock of other returnees, including a healthy Taylor Grandinjan, who went down with a knee injury this season.

“I think next season, you’ll see a lot of us who are ready to step into leadership roles,” Cobb said.

Cobb, a transfer from Butler who sat out the 2012-13 season, described Smesko as the “smartest coach I’ve ever played for. I learned more in the first two months I was around him than I had in all the years I’ve been around the game.” Leadership is what Smesko and Dooley over in the men’s locker room expect from their young veterans. With an abundance of talent and experience to work with, both coaches are like card sharks trying to hold poker faces with royal flushes when they use nondescript phrases such as “familiarity with the program” and “comfortable with each other” and “confidence in what we do” and “greater fluidity in play” in describing how the A-Sun’s best teams will be even better in the next rodeo.

And the fervor that’s been evident this year is apt to continue – the standing-room-only crowds, the extra campus police and student wavers-and-greeters needed to direct the masses on and off university grounds. The search will continue to find real estate around the arena to hang still more good-luck placards from proud local business sponsors. Those restroom and concession lines will remain long and entwined. And FGCU will continue to deal with having both a men’s and women’s basketball program that everyone else in the conference hates and wants to be.

This court-side Camelot known as Dunk City will live on, but let’s face facts: the 2012-13 confluence of sweetness created by those young men who flew with the greatest of ease just can’t be replicated, kind of like a first kiss.

Nonetheless, fans can expect that the men’s and women’s teams will continue to play with hustle, aggression, speed and willpower, fueled at home by fanpower that makes Alico Arena unquestionably the most exciting, most electric place to be on game night in Southwest Florida.
She’s got Hall of Fame game

Sarah Hansen courted success in everything she did at FGCU ... and she did plenty.

A glance at the credentials submitted by Sarah Hansen with her application for FGCU’s Student Hall of Fame shows clearly why the spring graduate who majored in chemistry with a minor in mathematics was selected as one of the hall’s inductees for 2013-2014.

Hansen’s grade-point average at FGCU was 3.9. She graduated with special-recognition honors as an Academic All-American, a classroom record punctuated with strings of consecutive appearances on scholastic all-star teams that range from FGCU’s President’s and Dean’s lists to prestigious national and regional scholar-athlete designations.

She’s one of the first FGCU students to apply for the holy grail of postgraduate studies, the Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University. In keeping with FGCU’s emphasis on community service, her record as a student leader is equally impressive: the past five summers spent as a camp counselor at a Penn State University branch campus near her hometown of McKean, Pa.; two years working with the Special Equestrians program, a therapeutic horse-riding program for children and adults with disabilities; plus projects with a children’s hospital, children’s science center and after-school program for at-risk kids. It figures that she plans to eventually attend medical school and become a pediatrician.

Hansen also found time this spring to work behind the scenes for a team of eight FGCU students who ran to Key West, raising $15,000 in a fundraiser dubbed Trails for Tails. “We decided to donate it to the Ocean Conservancy because they do a lot of work that helps our Gulf,” Hansen said. “I couldn’t actually run because I was in season, so I worked in social media, posting about the group’s progress.”

The “in season” to which she refers is a nod to another side of Hansen’s impressive resume.

If she wasn’t already a swish shot as a Student Hall of Famer based on academics and volunteerism, consider that Sarah Hansen also graduates from FGCU as perhaps the most decorated NCAA athlete – male or female – the university has ever been blessed with. And that makes the two-time Atlantic Sun Conference women’s basketball Player of the Year – just to mention a pair of her sports awards too numerous to list in this space but easily viewable at www.fgcuathletics.com/whbasketball – an uncontested slam-dunk for the student hall.

“She’s a perfectionist in everything she does,” said an FGCU mentor who perhaps knows Hansen better than anyone at the university, women’s basketball head coach Karl Smesko. “On the court, in the classroom, wherever, she always puts pressure on herself to be the best.”

Smesko ought to know. Consider the thousands of hours the two spent together in practices and games the past five years, when they dominated the A-Sun and went to multiple NCAA and WNIT tournaments. He’s the man responsible for bringing Hansen to FGCU after he watched the General McLane High School grad play a few minutes in an AAU game up North, called her cold and invited her to campus for a visit just when she was on the verge of committing to West Liberty University in West Virginia, where her older sister, Tori, was playing.

Smesko’s also the guy who almost lost Hansen before her career barely started at FGCU.

Sarah Hansen was an all-star student as well as a star on the basketball court.
She really blossomed at this university. She was a leader of sorts in high school, but here, she found a perfect fit.”

- KATHY HANSEN, MOTHER OF FGCU WOMEN’S BASKETBALL PLAYER, SARAH HANSEN

“We go through conditioning, preseason practice and get to the first game of my freshman year, and the only two girls who don’t get in the game are a walk-on and me,” Hansen said. “Second game, the walk-on plays, and I’m the only one who doesn’t get in. I don’t know what’s going on other than I’m really upset, so I call my sister and tell her I’m almost sure I’m going to be transferring. “Then Coach calls me in and says, ‘I’ll bet you’re wondering why you’re not playing.’ And that’s when I learned they were going to redshirt me.”

“She was playing behind two seniors and wasn’t going to get any minutes,” Smesko said. “She got to practice for a year and work on some things, and it made her a much more complete player.”

But no one could have predicted how complete Hansen would become at FGCU. “She really blossomed at this university,” said her mother, Kathy, a three-sport, small-college athlete herself who coached Sarah, the middle of her five children, in youth basketball leagues. Sarah’s father, John, also had a hand in her athletic success as an assistant coach with her high school team.

“She was a leader of sorts in high school, but here, she found a perfect fit,” Kathy Hansen said.

Proud mom was talking in the middle of an on-court celebration at Alico Arena on March 16 after the Eagles had defeated Stetson 72-70 in an overtime thriller to win the A-Sun Tournament championship. She watched as her daughter, a slice of the cut-down victory net draped around her neck and the conference trophy in hand, posed for photos with fans and friends.

Minutes earlier, Kathy Hansen’s daughter had almost ended her home career flat on her back, trying to work out a bad cramp incurred scrambling for a loose ball with about a minute to play in the overtime period. There was the team captain — all 5 feet and 10 inches of her, the dynamo who averaged a team-leading 13.6 points and 7.1 rebounds during a final season that ended with 12 career team records, including 1,901 points and 887 rebounds; the sparkplug who constantly exhorted “Let’s go!” to her teammates – apparently down for the count on the wooden floor in front of the FGCU bench. The A-Sun championship, once comfortably in the Eagles’ lap, was slipping away.

Sarah Hansen wasn’t watching, faced away from the action, guzzling cup after cup of fluid handed to her by one trainer while another stretched her cramped leg. But she wasn’t worried. “For some reason, I never got the feeling we were ever in danger of losing,” Hansen said. She worked the kink out in time to make a key free throw in the closing seconds and end the game standing tall at center court, surrounded by jumping, jubilant teammates.

One of them was junior Jenna Cobb, Hansen’s roommate.

“Lots of princess posters around the room … she loves Disney,” Cobb said. “And she’s gotta have her Mountain Dew.”

The soda comes in handy to wash down Hansen’s favorite food, french fries. “The waffle fries at Pollo Tropical are the absolute best,” said the young woman whose dead-serious game face gives way to an easy smile as she chats in a center-court suite high above the Alico floor she ruled. The season has been over for two weeks, but she has just finished her still-daily, still-intense workout. Her immediate hope is to play professional ball overseas for a year or two before starting medical school.

In her spare time, Hansen enjoys all types of music (“country to alternative”) and lists “Remember the Titans,” based on a true story of triumph inspired by racial harmony played against a high school football backdrop, as her “go-to” movie.

Hansen’s own triumphant tale goes something like the passage from a movie that Sarah says is her father’s favorite, “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.” She remembers the moment she decided that FGCU would be her scholastic destiny. During her official visit, Hansen and her father were in an elevator talking about the decision she was about to make. “My dad said to me, ‘Remember what happened to the little boy who got everything he wanted? He lived happily ever after.’”

This hall-of-fame student’s story couldn’t end any other way.

– Keith Gibson

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Winding up
Vives, Toussaint named athletes of the year.

[ BASEBALL ]

Few NCAA Division-I teams had more players drafted by major league baseball teams last year than FGCU. But that development hasn’t stopped the team from winning.

The young, brazen Eagles raced out to a strong start this spring. Freshman second baseman Jake Noll, sophomore pitcher Mike Murray and sophomore first baseman Nick Rivera stepped up and filled the shoes left by seven FGCU players who were drafted by major league baseball teams last year.

FGCU upset Florida 2-1 on the road in March. The Gators were ranked No. 23 in the country at the time. Murray allowed just one run over 7.1 innings in the win.

“It’s huge for a young club to get a win like this,” Eagles coach Dave Tollett said. “It’s always a good day when you beat a ranked team.”

The Eagles also beat Rhode Island three times as well as University of South Florida, Florida Atlantic and Florida A&M.

By April 30, they were 29-17 overall, in second place behind Mercer overall and second in conference play with a 12-6 record.

Of the seven FGCU players drafted last year, six were juniors. The draftees, including the No. 1, No. 3 and No. 4 pitchers in FGCU’s rotation, were tied
for fourth most of any program in the country, behind Arkansas with 11 and LSU and San Diego with nine each.

FGCU lost pitcher Ricky Knapp to the Mets in the eighth round. Fellow junior pitchers Harrison Cooney and Brandon Bixler went to the Angels and Twins in the sixth and 16th rounds, respectively.

Second-baseman Brandon Bednar left FGCU for the San Francisco Giants in the seventh round, left-fielder Sean Dwyer went to Colorado in the 11th round and senior catcher Mike Reeves joined Toronto in the 21st round.

Despite the departures, FGCU fared well this season. FGCU is following up on its strong baseball history. The program has won three Atlantic Sun Conference regular-season titles in seven seasons of Division I.

Junior outfielder Michael Suchy and Rivera have been this year’s top offensive players. Rivera was an all-conference freshman selection last year after hitting .287 and finishing second on the team in doubles, home runs and slugging.

FGCU will host the 2014 A-Sun Tournament May 21-25. The winner earns an NCAA berth.

[TENNIS ]

A member of Southern California’s national championship tennis team in 2012, Jordi Vives is no stranger to winning on the big stage.

This spring, the Barcelona native did it again in Southwest Florida.

The USC transfer helped lead the FGCU men’s tennis team to a program-record six Atlantic Sun Conference victories this year. Overall, the Eagles ended the regular season with a school-record 12 wins.

Vives went 20-2 this spring, winning A-Sun Player of the Year as well as spots in the All-Conference First Team, Academic All-Conference Team and the...
All-Tournament Team. Vives’ 17 wins was the most in the conference. He also was a perfect 10-0 in conference play. He is the first FGCU player to automatically qualify for the 2014 NCAA Men’s Tennis Individual Championships, set for May 21-26 in Athens, Ga.

Vives put FGCU in the national spotlight as the Intercollegiate Tennis Association ranked him as the 45th best college player in the country. An FGCU player had never appeared in the prestigious rankings before.

Vives helped punctuate his spring by leading FGCU to a win over Stetson for the first time. On Senior Day, the Eagles beat Stetson 4-3 at home. Seniors Gabriel Echeverry, Lance Lvovsky and Dean Tsamas played key roles in the win.

Tsamas registered FGCU’s most wins (60) over a four-year period in its Division I history. Over their careers, the trio of seniors has aided in getting FGCU its inaugural winning season in Division I, back-to-back A-Sun tournament appearances and its first postseason victory.

“They’ve been through a lot in the last three years and it’s because of their leadership that we have been able to develop this program into what it is today,” FGCU coach CJ Weber said.

[ SOFTBALL ]

Riding a senior-dominated lineup, the FGCU softball team began the year wanting to surpass FGCU’s historic 2011-12 win total.

That year, the Eagles beat Florida in an NCAA regional to become the first team in school history to register an NCAA Division-I tournament victory.

This spring, FGCU’s nine seniors pushed hard to set up a similar postseason run.

The Eagles posted eye-opening victories over Wisconsin, Mississippi, Michigan State and Virginia Tech. FGCU senior catcher Chelsea Zgrabik has been at the center of it all.

Zgrabik, who was voted the A-Sun Conference Preseason Player of the Year, didn’t play at the end of last season after tearing her anterior cruciate ligament. Without Zgrabik, FGCU lost in the A-Sun postseason tournament.

Junior pitcher Shelby Morgan, the A-Sun Pitcher of the Year as a freshman, is also recovering well from an injury. Morgan, who tore the biceps in her right pitching arm last year, registered five strikeouts in five scoreless innings in an 8-0 victory over Michigan State in March.

“When (Morgan) pitches like that, it gives our defense a chance to make plays,” FGCU coach Dave Deiros said about the victory. “That’s when we are at our most efficient.”

FGCU used that same pitcher and catcher connection during its historic 2011-12 run. Zgrabik was behind the plate, clubbing home runs. Morgan was on the mound, striking out opponents. Without the duo last year, FGCU went 1-2 in the A-Sun tournament to fall short of a second consecutive A-Sun title and NCAA tournament berth.

Now that Zgrabik and Morgan are healthy, the Eagles are hitting on all cylinders. Other seniors like centerfielder Jessica Barnes are hitting well. In April, Barnes earned Atlantic Sun Player of the Week honors. She batted .474 with nine hits in 19 at bats in the week.

As of April 30, the team was ranked sixth in the A-Sun, with a 28-24-1 overall record (11-13 in the A-Sun).

FGCU senior catcher Chelsea Zgrabik at the end of a game against Eastern Michigan in February.
Forced to practice off-campus because of a leaky home pool, the FGCU swimming and diving team had myriad reasons to struggle this year.

The Eagles, however, didn’t submit to any of them.

FGCU took second place in the Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association Championships before registering points at the 2014 NCAA Division I Women’s Swimming and Diving Championships. Swimming just three events, FGCU junior Emma Svensson and freshman Kira Toussaint garnered 22 points at nationals to place the Eagles 32nd in the year’s fastest college swimming meet.

“We had never scored points in our two previous (NCAA) appearances, so to leave this year with 22 is incredible,” FGCU coach Neal Studd said. “I am so proud of what we have accomplished and very thankful for the support we’ve received from those back home.”

FGCU registered more points at nationals than powerhouse programs LSU (17), Missouri (16), Alabama (13), Ohio State (8), Kansas (2) and Duke (1), that despite being locked out of its own pool.

The $4.5-million Lee County/FGCU Aquatics Center has been closed since November after leaks were discovered.

Pool experts have had trouble pinpointing and fixing the leaks. The Eagles were forced to practice off-campus in Naples and elsewhere around the area.

Nevertheless, FGCU took second place at the CCSA Championships. The runner-up finish ended FGCU’s run of five consecutive CCSA titles.

“I have never been more proud of a team before,” Studd said. “They gave everything they had and fought all the way to the end. This squad is the best team in our program’s history and it’s a shame we made a couple of mistakes that cost us a championship.”

“Above: Junior Georgia Price was one of the team’s standout players. Below: Freshman Kira Toussaint was named CCSA Swimmer of the Year.”

Led by three standout upperclassmen, the FGCU women’s golf team put together one of the program’s best spring seasons.

The Eagles finished the regular season with a program-best round average of 308. Redshirt senior Briana Carlson and juniors Georgia Price and Chelsea Guoynes spearheaded the squad. Carlson led the team with a round average of 75.65 in the regular season. Price finished one stroke behind with an average of 76.35.

Carlson, Price and Guoynes each registered team-low individual rounds of 71.

The FGCU men’s golf team had an uneven spring. The Eagles won the five-team Harmony Preserve Intercollegiate tournament in Harmony, Fla., but then finished 11th and 12th, respectively, at the Sea Best Seafood Invitational in Jacksonville and the Jim West Intercollegiate tournament in McKinney, Texas.

Matt Cote, the squad’s lone senior, was the Eagles’ most consistent player. Cote had FGCU’s highest finish at the Jim West Intercollegiate tournament, finishing 34th. With five freshmen and sophomores returning to the squad next year, FGCU should have more experienced players next season.

“– Chris Duncan

“...so to leave this year with 22 is incredible.”

– Neal Studd, FGCU Swim Coach
THE THEME, “THE FUTURE: BOLD AND BRILLIANT,” COULD NOT HAVE BEEN more appropriate for this year’s President’s Celebration gala, held Feb. 1 at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples.

With more than 400 supporters in attendance, the university’s signature event celebrated more than $3 million in contributions for scholarships and academic excellence during a festive evening in a ballroom filled with vibrant hues, lively music and bountiful giving.

The outpouring of generosity included a $2 million pledge by David and Linda Lucas that will establish The Lucas Center for Faculty Development at Florida Gulf Coast University. (See page 54.)

FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw thanked the guests for their attendance and support, saying, “Together, we can make FGCU an even more valuable institution for our students and the community as a whole. As you enjoy this festive affair, please remember that this gala has a higher purpose – to enable FGCU to expand programs that will ensure student success, advance research and programs that benefit society and enrich our region’s cultural resources.”

A highlight of the evening was a surprise performance by a flash mob made up of members of the FGCU Cheerleading Squad and the Dancing E’Gals, who thanked the evening’s sponsors with an energetic musical number.

As FGCU Foundation Board President Charles Winton said, funds raised at the President’s Celebration provide vital funding and resources, giving students a “ticket to the game” to which they might otherwise not have access. Winton and his business partner, Pat Denson, own Estero Bay Chevrolet, which served as the event’s grand sponsor. ■
1. Charles Winton, FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw and David Lucas
2. Brooke and Pat Denson
3. Kimberly and Ken Johnson
4. Geoff and Robbie Roepstorff
5. Deborah Griffin, Nancy Humphries, Jim Humphries and Ben Hill Griffin, III
6. Paula Bautista Woods and Paul Woods
7. Pat Barton, former FGCU President Roy McTarnaghan, Beverly McTarnaghan and Alan Korest
8. Lynn and Jim Knupp
9. President Bradshaw and the Flash Mob thank gala sponsors
10. Nancy and Norm Vester
$2 million gift establishes Lucas Center for Faculty Development

WHEN FGCU HELD THE FIRST MEETING OF ITS BOARD OF TRUSTEES, David Lucas was at the table. Since then, he and his wife, Linda, have been active and ardent advocates for the university and generous donors in supporting the university and its many programs and initiatives.

The most recent example of their generosity is a $2 million gift, which was announced by President Wilson G. Bradshaw at this year’s President’s Celebration. The gift will establish The Lucas Center for Faculty Development at Florida Gulf Coast University. The center will transform the university’s Teaching, Learning and Assessment Initiative by expanding training and mentoring opportunities for faculty throughout their teaching careers. This commitment to faculty development will assist the university in its continued growth in academic excellence within the classroom, leading to student success and better learning outcomes.

“I have been involved with FGCU since before the university opened its doors,” says David Lucas, “and have always been interested in supporting education. In thinking about how I might continue my support of FGCU, the idea of playing a part in helping faculty improve their teaching skills resonated with me. It was an easy decision to make.”

“We are honored once again to be the beneficiary of Mr. and Mrs. Lucas’ generosity to the university,” says Bradshaw. “This transformative gift will support our faculty and students in the teaching-learning process, the heart of what we do at FGCU.”

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Ron Toll created the current Teaching, Learning and Assessment Initiative, with the long-term goal of establishing a center dedicated to faculty development.

“Through this tremendous gift, our faculty will have the benefit of a full range of resources in support of their instructional roles,” says Toll. “Development opportunities are essential in order to assist new faculty as they begin their careers, as well as for experienced faculty as they strive for continuous improvement. Of course, the ultimate beneficiaries of Mr. and Mrs. Lucas’ generosity are our students, whose superb academic experiences at FGCU will rival the top universities in the state and across the nation.”

Linda Serro, professor of literacy and the director of the new center, says the gift will give FGCU the opportunity to explore creative ways to enhance the classroom work of faculty as the university continues to be a center of teaching excellence.

“This generous gift will allow us to support and expand the excellent teaching that takes place in many of our classes and significantly support our newest faculty colleagues as they develop their teaching expertise,” she says. “Their gift is a wonderful statement of their belief in our university’s mission and Mr. and Mrs. Lucas’ vision to impact all of our students through quality teaching.”

The Lucas Center for Faculty Development will focus on offering faculty training in a range of areas: instructional design, classroom management, learning theory, assessment and teaching techniques. It also will expand the training offered so that it will be relevant to all stages in a faculty member’s teaching career.
Local philanthropist urges everyone to craft a plan for giving

JOHN SHEPPARD IS A FIRM BELIEVER IN PLANNED GIVING, BOTH PERSONALLY and professionally.

As a board-certified attorney, he spent 37 years helping clients craft carefully thought out plans so that their loved ones and the causes about which they were passionate were provided for when they were gone. He also saw the unhappy results that transpired when people failed to make those plans in time.

The Fort Myers resident, and member of FGCU’s Planned Giving Council, faced his own need to get his affairs in order at age 59, when tests indicated he might have early-onset Alzheimer’s disease. His physician advised him to close his law practice and prepare for a day not too far hence when he’d no longer have the capacity to work. He did so, but later found another physician who recommended a holistic approach that changed his diet and exercise regimen and challenged his mind.

He chose to challenge his brain by writing a book, starting with a subject he knew well. He called it “If I Should Die Before I Wake (and even if I don’t): A Personal Guide to Protecting Your Assets and Providing for Your Loved Ones.” That was 20-plus years and eight books ago, yet much of what he discusses in his debut volume remains true today.

At 82, Sheppard remains of sound mind and body and is well positioned to dispense some wise counsel to others.

He’s learned that “the more love we give, the more love we have to give. Love grows on itself and we may find we are able to give much more than we ever imagined,” he says. “Everyone has something to give. One of the ways is to make a lasting charitable gift of a tangible or intangible asset that we possess.”

Giving to charitable causes allows donors to leave a legacy that’s both meaningful to them and enormously useful to future generations, he says.

“We can give a legacy that will benefit others in perpetuity,” Sheppard says.

When planning to leave a gift, he advises that donors make it a flexible one.

“Needs change, circumstances change, the community, life, the world changes,” he says, so ensuring the charitable entity receiving the gift can make adjustments as circumstances require will maximize the gift’s effectiveness.

There are multiple ways to make a planned gift, which allow donors to meet their individual needs, realize tax advantages and make a lasting impact on the future, says Bill Rice, FGCU director of gift planning.

There are gifts that anyone can make, such as bequests, which are the simplest and most popular deferred gifts. These are made through wills or trusts.

There are gifts that provide income. A charitable gift annuity provides a fixed income for life on rates determined by the donor’s age and that benefit one or two people. A charitable remainder trust provides income to the donor, his or her family and, eventually, the charity. A charitable lead trust provides current income to the charity and a deferred benefit to the donor’s family.

There are also gifts that protect assets and result in tax savings.

“The goal of gift planning is to provide the avenue for people to enjoy their lives, take care of their families and provide charitable support for the institutions and causes they hold dear,” says Rice. “By working with your professional advisers and favorite charity you can positively impact the future of that charity in a way that you never thought possible.”

Sheppard urges everyone to make plans while they are healthy and thinking clearly, long before they may think they will need them. And after formulating a plan, make sure to revisit it periodically to ensure that it still reflects your wishes, circumstances and current laws.

“Whatever it is we have to give brings joy to the donor and the recipient when we share bountifully,” Sheppard says. “After all, you can’t take it with you.”

For more information on planned giving, contact Bill Rice, FGCU director of gift planning, at (239) 590-1077 or brice@fgcu.edu.

Their gift is a wonderful statement of their belief in our university’s mission and Mr. and Mrs. Lucas’ vision to impact all of our students through quality teaching.”

- LINDA SERRO, PROFESSOR OF LITERACY AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE LUCAS CENTER FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AT FGCU
Gift of iPads helps education professors train future teachers

WITH THE DEADLINE JUST 16 MONTHS AWAY FOR FLORIDA K-12 schools to begin conducting half of classroom instruction digitally, Florida Gulf Coast University’s educators are hard at work learning how to teach future teachers how best to use that technology.

Thanks to a gift from Naples residents Karl and Alice Sheffield, the College of Education purchased 30 iPads and offered education professors a course in the use of them.

Elizabeth Elliott, a professor of education, is among those who took the course. She believes it’s something whose time has come even if the state hadn’t issued the mandate.

She said she and her students recently visited a class at Mike Davis Elementary School in Naples and all the students were working on tablets and smartphones and many used them outside of the classroom as well.

“If we don’t figure out how to teach our teachers how to teach with these, we’ll be behind the curve,” she says.

That’s a philosophy with which Dean Marcia Greene wholeheartedly agrees. “The college believes that if we as educators want to engage and motivate students, we need to use the tools they are using,” she says. “This is true in public schools and institutions of higher education.”

The Sheffields’ gift came about through a casual conversation Karl Sheffield had with Greene.

“I asked Marci ‘If you had a magic wand and could wave it, what one thing would mean the most to your program?’ he recalls. “She thought for 10 seconds then said ‘I wish we had iPads for the faculty. It would make a big impact.’”

He responded, “In that case, I’ll make a special donation to cover that since it clearly means so much to you.”

After obtaining the iPads, the college offered a training course, which covered topics such as using tablets, smartphones, and notebooks to engage students as active learners; using technology to create relevant and challenging learning experiences; and selecting the most appropriate and effective apps for teaching.

Family honors memory of FGCU student with art scholarship

KEVIN WHITE WAS A PASSIONATE ARTIST WHO DREAMED OF BECOMING a physician’s assistant. He was earning top marks at Florida Gulf Coast University when he died unexpectedly in October 2012 at the age of 38.

To honor his memory, and to help other students pursue art degrees, his family has established the Kevin S. White Memorial Art Scholarship Endowed Fund. His parents, Robert and Carolynn White, are Estero residents.

Scholarships will be awarded to undergraduate degree-seeking visual-arts majors who have earned 30 or more credit hours from a nationally accredited college or university. Preference will be given to nontraditional students, those pursuing their first bachelor’s degree, individuals who have demonstrated passion in regard to sharing art with people and/or promoting healing through their art and individuals who have overcome significant personal obstacles.

On a website created in Kevin’s honor, his sister, Debbie White Groebner, writes: “While Kevin’s career goals evolved over the years, his passion for art was unwavering…He lived for sharing what he had and helping other people as much as he could. The Kevin S. White Memorial Art Scholarship was developed to keep Kevin’s spirit of giving alive by providing awards to help nontraditional (e.g., older) art students in their first college degree program pay for tuition, university fees, books or art supplies.”

The family welcomes others to donate to the fund so that more scholarships can be awarded. For more information, visit www.kevinswhitememorialartscholarshipfund.org/chicken-flippin-blog.html.
Foundation Board member supports scholarships with a personal touch

When he initially established an endowed scholarship fund at FGCU in 2011, Jeff Provol wanted to engage with the students—not just support them financially.

With the help of the FGCU Foundation to screen applicants, Provol spent two afternoons on campus interviewing candidates. His scholarship targets students with a 3.5 GPA or better who are mathematics or science majors or education majors who plan to teach math or science.

“It was an exhilarating, enriching experience. The students were inspiring, energetic and committed to FGCU,” Provol says. “After the student interviews, I was even more motivated to become involved with the university and to interact with the student body. It became clear to me what a treasure FGCU is to the community and to the state of Florida.”

While his recent substantial gift will go a long way toward perpetuating scholarships, the Naples resident’s relationship with FGCU runs deeper. Last year, as a mentor in the Accelerated College Experience (ACE) program he helped some of the university’s brightest students in achieving their goals. Currently, Provol is focused on exploring mentoring opportunities within FGCU’s successful Honors Program. As a member of the FGCU Foundation Board of Directors, he also brings business acumen to the table that benefits the university.

Joshua Jorgensen, who graduated in December with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics, was the first recipient of the G. Jeffrey Provol Scholarship, and he continues to appreciate his benefactor as he prepares for graduate school and a master’s degree in mathematics.

“It is so hard to put into words the gratitude that I have for Mr. Provol,” the Cape Coral resident says. “If it were not for his generous scholarship, the financial burdens of college would have pulled me away from actively participating in research here at FGCU and at the University of South Florida. His scholarships have allowed otherwise impossible goals to become feasible in my academic career and in my goal of using statistical mathematics as an important tool to help cure cancer and other diseases.”

Jorgensen provides a shining example of how FGCU readies the next generation of trailblazers for success in the professional world.

“Like Josh, students at FGCU are learning to think analytically and critically. As future leaders, they will be well-prepared to confront the many challenges ahead,” Provol says. “Josh is a fine young man and a talented, dedicated student. One never knows where a star is born. Giving deserving students the opportunity for higher education enables dreams to become reality.”

Second-generation donor, Ann Hamilton, establishes scholarship

For Ann Hamilton, supporting Florida Gulf Coast University is a family tradition.

Her father, W. Thomas Howard, was one of the community leaders who lobbied tirelessly for the 10th state university to be situated in Southwest Florida. He went on to play a key role in the site selection and naming of the university then served as the first chair of the FGCU Foundation Board.

Her mother, Mary Frances Howard, founded Town and Gown, the women’s organization that supports the university.

Today, Hamilton follows in both of her parents’ footsteps, serving on the FGCU Board of Trustees and as a member of Town and Gown. She recently established the Ann Howard Hamilton Scholarship Endowed Fund, which will provide scholarships to student-athletes.

“It is such a privilege to be able to provide a ‘hand up’ for deserving students by funding a scholarship,” she says. “After debating on which area of study or achievement to focus my gift, I decided to provide scholarship support to students who not only excel academically, but athletically.

“I was impressed by the statistic indicating that the grade point averages of our student-athletes generally exceed the GPAs of the student body as a whole. As we are now realizing, athletic team achievement can bring positive attention to our university. This attention can provide a myriad of advantages.”

Her gift wasn’t based strictly on numbers—she’s also a fan.

“I have attended our men’s and women’s basketball games,” she says. “It is so exciting and so much fun.”

Christopher Simoneau, vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation, says, “At FGCU we create an environment ideally suited for educating and inspiring the next generation of leaders, innovators and explorers. Ann Hamilton’s generosity creates opportunities that will advance knowledge, encourage discovery and sustain excellence.”
PHILANTHROPY
(continued from previous page)

B&I Contractors’ gift supports athletics and engineering

B &I CONTRACTORS HAS LEFT ITS MARK ALL OVER CAMPUS, FROM THE plumbing system in the Sugden Hall kitchen and ballroom to the electrical workings in the Marieb Hall human performance lab to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning networks in some two dozen locations around campus.

The Fort Myers company’s efforts keep much of FGCU cool in the summer and cozy in the winter, but its commitment to the university goes well beyond fulfilling installation contracts. B&I has contributed more than $100,000 in gifts and sponsorships over the years, including a recent donation to support athletics programs and engineering scholarships.

“We’ve been supportive of the university since its inception,” B&I Vice President Jason Grabowski said. “We are happy to have an institution of higher education here and proud to see it grow and be as successful as it is. It’s an asset to the community.”

Established in 1960, B&I Contractors is an employee-owned subcontractor offering plumbing and electrical installation services on commercial, institutional and industrial projects. B&I’s relationship with FGCU has helped to spark synergy between the university and the local building and engineering industry, Grabowski said.

Bonita Springs couple support students through charitable annuity

D EAN AND ALICE FJELSTUL BEGAN THEIR SUPPORT OF FLORIDA GULF COAST University about a decade ago with a gift to the First Generation scholarship program. Later that year, they attended the President’s Scholarship Luncheon and met their scholarship recipients.

“I was so impressed with our students that I wrote another check as we left the luncheon,” says Dean Fjelstul. “I was fortunate to come from a family where we never thought ‘Should I go to college?’ We just knew we would and we did. These students didn’t have that advantage, but, through hard work and persistence, they, too, made it to college.”

The Bonita Springs couple have been enthusiastic donors ever since, and recently established two charitable gift annuities. Through these annuities, they receive a fixed income for life as well as tax savings, and will fund life-changing educational opportunities for students for years to come.

“My grandmother went to college so I am a third-generation college student,” says Alice Fjelstul. “I realize how important an education is to a person. You cannot succeed without it.”

The Fjelstuls are happy to be able to help.

“The scholarship recipients I have met are wonderful,” Alice Fjelstul says. “They are remarkable young people. They have the drive to succeed.”

Adds her husband, “The students we now support are talented, but they needed help to get to college. We all need to help others like them get there. It is critical, not just for these individuals, but for our society as a whole.”
Rogers family pays tribute to parents who taught them well

MINIA AND RUFUS ROGERS RAISED 10 CHILDREN. RUFUS Rogers worked long hard hours as a welder and pipe fitter while his wife stayed at home and took care of the children, doing odd jobs, first in Trinidad and, later, in the United States. Neither of them attended high school, but they knew the value of an education and made sure their children understood this as well.

“They were adamant that we get an education – the girls and the boys,” says their son, Hudson Rogers, outgoing dean of FGCU’s Lutgert College of Business.

His mother dreamed of becoming a nurse and her father always wanted one of the children to become a doctor. In order to ensure that their children had access to good educational opportunities, the family immigrated to the United States in the early 1970s. All 10 children not only finished high school but also went on to post-secondary school, becoming educators, healthcare professionals, nurses, bankers, accountants, and one, an engineer.

Although their mother’s dream of becoming a nurse was not fully realized, she became a certified nursing assistant. “In her 50s, she got her diploma and white cap and was able to achieve a portion of her dream,” says Rogers.

To help others who share their mother’s passion for nursing and their father’s passion for medicine, Hudson Rogers, his three brothers and six sisters created a scholarship fund in memory of their parents, who died in 2012 (Rufus at age of 95, in July, and Ominia, age 94, in November).

The Ominia and Rufus Rogers Scholarship Endowed Fund will be awarded to students who are the first generation in their family to attend college and who have been admitted to the School of Nursing or other medical-related program. Preference will be given to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago or descendants of Trinidad and Tobago citizens; Caribbean citizens or descendants of Caribbean citizens; U.S. citizens or descendants of U.S. citizens, in that order.

In his lifetime, Rufus Rogers’ dream came true as well: two of his 29 grandchildren are medical doctors, two earned Ph.Ds. and others are continuing their college education or have graduated from college and attained successful careers, which Rogers attributes to his parents’ influence.

“If our parents did not have that vision, our lives would have been very different,” says Rogers. “This is a very small way to show our appreciation for the opportunities we received and to give something back to help future generations. It’s not about us. It’s about our parents who had the vision and the foresight. We are simply saying thank you Mummy and Daddy and celebrating them and what they were able to achieve you Mummy and Daddy and celebrating them and what they were able to achieve”

Eagle painting lands at FGCU library

A massive, vividly hued painting inspired by 9/11 heroism has found an appropriately lofty perch in the FGCU Library’s west wing thanks to the generosity of the artist.

Leoma Lovegrove, an impressionist-expressionist painter known for colorful images of Florida flora and fauna, donated “Remember 9/11 Tenth Year,” a 10-by-18-foot acrylic painting depicting a bald eagle in flight against a field of bright orange and red. She created the work in 2011 in front of an audience at a Fort Myers event commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

“It was a time to honor the heroes,” she said. “The eagle represents the power of America and that freedom will prevail. Since early in my career I’ve painted a lot of wildlife, and I’ve always painted the eagle but never one this large.”

The regal bird and national symbol also serves as FGCU’s mascot, which makes it a natural home for the painting. The gift grew from a conversation Lovegrove had last year with FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw at a reception where the painting was displayed.

“The eagle embodies a spirit of strength and freedom that we value at FGCU and instill in our students,” Bradshaw said. “Leoma Lovegrove’s striking work of art is sure to inspire those who view it for many years to come.”

Lovegrove’s tropical colors are inspired by her surroundings at Lovegrove Gallery and Gardens in Matlacha. Her portrait of President Jimmy Carter hangs in the Jimmy Carter Library & Museum in Atlanta, Ga., and her artwork is in the private collections of the White House in Washington, D.C., and in President George W. Bush’s Presidential Library & Museum in Dallas.

"Remember 9/11 Tenth Year" by Leoma Lovegrove
HAD LUTKENHAUS GREW UP IN LABELLE, A RURAL TOWN OF 5,000 NORTHEAST OF Fort Myers. When he attended FGCU and played basketball here, the university was just transitioning into the NCAA Division I and getting a ticket to a game was never a problem.

Things have changed.

This past season, almost as many people attended each men’s basketball game as lived in his hometown. It’s a big transition and one Lutkenhaus, now FGCU’s Director of Ticket Operations, has witnessed from a front-row seat.

The former FGCU student-athlete helped set the stage for the Dunk City phenomenon, arriving at FGCU in 2007, fresh from success in both football and basketball at LaBelle High School, where he earned two MVP awards for his gridiron talents and three MVP awards on the hardwood, scoring more than 1,500 points.

Although he was successful in both sports, his passion for basketball was greater. “I had a few talks about playing football collegiately, but I just liked basketball better,” said Lutkenhaus, now 25.

Wanting to stay close to home, Lutkenhaus chose to attend FGCU. “Staying local was a top priority so that my family and the people from my hometown could come and watch,” the former guard said. “It helped a lot. It’s pretty cool to have your friends there.”

Lutkenhaus was a student-athlete at FGCU from 2007 to 2011 and a member of FGCU’s inaugural Division I basketball team in 2007-08. During his four years, he played in more than 100 games, serving as team co-captain during his junior and senior seasons, sharing the court with some of the players who were on the historic NCAA Sweet Sixteen unit in March 2013.

When Lutkenhaus played, the Sweet Sixteen was a faraway dream. As a new D-I member, it would be four years before FGCU would even be eligible for post-season play. “We were in the Division I transition stage, so we took some lumps and some beatings. That part was tough, but the whole student-athlete experience was awesome,” Lutkenhaus said. “Going to play at the likes of Kansas, Michigan State, Indiana and all of those schools that I never would’ve dreamed of going to was great.”

Lutkenhaus earned his bachelor’s degree in communication with a minor in interdisciplinary studies in 2011, then landed his first job at FGCU as the ticket office assistant.

“It kept me in athletics and close to the people that were here when I played,” he said. “I kind of knew everyone so it was a pretty easy transition.”

Last September, after working on site during the magical NCAA tournament games in Philadelphia and Dallas, Lutkenhaus was promoted to his current position when his supervisor took a job at Auburn. He now oversees ticket sales for the seven ticketed FGCU sports, assists with season and group sales, ticket marketing and in-game activities, supervises his previous position plus eight to 10 student employees and oversees special event ticketing at Alico Arena for graduations, concerts and speakers.

A big-time responsibility for a small-town guy.

— Vanessa Mosquera, FGCU student
[WEDDINGS, ENGAGEMENTS AND BIRTHS]

’05
Amy Benvie, (Master’s, Curriculum and Instruction), and Paul Benvie welcomed the birth of their second son, Luke Franklin, on May 4, 2013. He weighed 6 pounds, 14 ounces. Amy is an instructor of mathematics at FGCU.

’08
Dana (Angeloro) Alvarez, (Elementary Education), and Juan Alvarez welcomed their first child, Dylan Joshua, on Sept. 22. He weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces and was 21 inches long.

Jamii Yenne, (Criminal Forensic Studies), and Dane Peterson, ’07 (Marketing), were married on Nov. 23 in Palmetto.

’09
Baden Mudge, (Business Management), and Ashley Izzo, ’08 (Elementary Education), became engaged on Dec. 14 at Walt Disney World. Baden, a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, and Ashley, a member of Zeta Tau Alpha, met at FGCU. A June 2015 wedding is planned.

’10
Autumn Peterson, (Health Science), and Jeremy Graves, ’10 (Communication), were married Nov. 16 in Naples.

Angela Rosenberg, (Elementary Education), and Evan Rosenberg, ’03 (Management), announced the birth of their son, Emery Pierce Ray, on July 17. He weighed 7 pounds, 4 ounces and was 22.25 inches long.

Katelyn Uhler, (Master’s, Counseling), and Ryan Uhler, ’06 (Liberal Studies), welcomed their first child, Tucker Joseph, on Dec. 19. He was 6 pounds, 6 ounces and 20 inches long.

’13
Nicholas Zarrillo, (Master’s, Criminal Justice), and Kathryn Bello, ’12 (Child and Youth Studies), announced their engagement on Nov. 28. They will marry on Dec. 13 in Fort Myers.

[NEWSMAKERS]

’00
Sam Kiburz, (Master’s, Management), is the portfolio manager in the Trust & Investment Management Services division at Charlotte State Bank & Trust.

’02
Franklin Adderley, (Criminal Justice Studies), was recently installed as chief of the Broward County Chiefs of Police. He was the first black officer to reach the rank of assistant chief, and he became the agency’s first and only black police chief. He lives in Fort Lauderdale.

’03
David Colorato, (Master’s, Accounting and Taxation), is an auditor for Myers, Bretholtz & Company, PA in Fort Myers. He is a certified public accountant in the state of Florida, and has experience in both private and public industries.

’04
Caitlin Hustrulid, (Communication), is the new marketing coordinator for Pulte Group’s South Florida Division. She is responsible for providing marketing support for Pulte Group brands, including Pulte Homes, Del Webb, Centex and DiVosta.

Michael Weisgerber, (Finance), won the New Era Wrestling Lightweight Championship in October in Fort Myers.

’05
Courtney Curatolo, (Master’s, Public Administration), has been appointed director of public affairs and education at Planned Parenthood of Collier County. She will be responsible for building community support for the organization through public affairs, advocacy, education, community outreach and volunteer engagement.

Scott Guelcher, (Art), was honored at the Arts for ACT Gallery and Boutique when it hosted a 10-year retrospective of his work in February.

Nick Salazar, (Master’s, Business Administration), obtained his Juris Doctor from John Marshall Law School and passed the Georgia Bar exam. He is working as an associate attorney at the Palazzola Law Firm in Atlanta.

’06
Christine Braden, (Management), accepted the position of executive director at MidCoast Fine Arts in Davenport, Iowa.

’07
Jesse Bouchard, (Marketing), was recently promoted from operations manager to district director of the Glenn Black Group of Northwestern Mutual.

Deidre Evans, (Master’s, English), received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She will join the faculty at Virginia Military Institute as an assistant professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanities in August.

(continued on next page)
Sonja Sieling-Boumenot, (Master’s, Business Administration), has been named president-elect for the Human Resource Leadership Association of Eastern Connecticut and 2014 co-director of college relations for Connecticut Science Human Resource Management State Council.

Amber Crooks, (Master’s, Public Administration), was recently promoted to senior natural resources specialist at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. She specializes in environmental policy and advocates to protect environmentally sensitive lands and waters within a five-county region.

Sven Hahues, (Master’s, Business Administration), has been appointed director of network services and help desk at FGCU. He has been employed in various technology positions at FGCU for the past 12 years.

Matt Simmons, (Management), was promoted to partner at Maxwell, Hendry & Simmons, LLC. He is a Florida state-certified residential real estate appraiser and broker, and is one of only nine members of the Florida Real Estate Appraisal Board appointed by Gov. Rick Scott.

Steven Binninger, (Bioengineering), graduated from Northwestern University, magna cum laude, in June 2013 with a master’s degree in biomedical engineering. He is employed at Fresenius Kabi as an R&D cellular therapies engineer. He lives in Illinois.

Adam James, (Elementary Education), is the founder and owner of Sights, Sounds, & Success. His company is a motivational speaking business through which he offers a variety of motivational presentations.

Bryan R. Silverio, (History), recently graduated from basic infantry training at Fort Benning in Columbus, Ga.

Kyle Binninger, (Civil Engineering), was accepted to the master’s program in structural engineering at the University of Florida.

Brandi Harrison, (Communication), was crowned the 2014 National Watermelon Association’s Queen in February.

Lenise Joseph, (Theatre), has joined Comcast as a customer account executive for bulk accounts, and assists with all aspects of customer care.

Darren Thomas, (Communication), is the new marketing and social media assistant at AdSource. He assists account managers in the implementation of various projects, including social media and production.

Amanda Truxillo, (Sociology), is working as a missionary in Haiti with an organization called Respire Haiti, where she is teaching art and dance.

Tiffany Claypool, (Marketing), passed the American Institute of CPAs’ examination and met the requirements to become a licensed certified public accountant.

Krista Adams, (Finance), has been named the new business development officer for Blue Sky Lending. She will be based in the Lakewood Ranch office.

Alexis Barkis, (Legal Studies), is an associate attorney for Weldon & Rothman, PL. She was previously the firm’s law clerk. She was also a member of the Ave Maria Law Review, serving as editor-in-chief when she attended Ave Maria School of Law.

Jonel Gomez, (Master’s, Nursing), has been invited by The UCLA School of Nursing as a guest faculty and lecturer at the Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital. She will teach Advanced Ophthalmology for Nurses.

Maxwell, Hendry & Simmons, was promoted to partner at FGCU for the past 12 years.

Charles R. Blackburn, (Master’s, Business Administration), has been appointed director of network services and help desk at FGCU. He has been employed in various technology positions at FGCU for the past 12 years.

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ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CALENDAR

6/5 THURSDAY
Summer Soirée
Celebrate the start of summer by mixing and mingling with fellow alumni, colleagues and friends. Be sure to bring a business card for a chance to win an Eagle souvenir. 6 p.m., at Seasons 52, 8930 Tamiami Trail N., Naples.

8/2 SATURDAY
Alumni Night with the Rays: Tampa Bay Rays Game.
Join fellow FGCU alumni for an exciting evening of baseball as the Tampa Bay Rays take on the Los Angeles Angels. An exclusive fan bus is available roundtrip from FGCU. 7:10 p.m., Tropicana Field, 1 Tropicana Drive, St. Petersburg.

9/6 SATURDAY
Dollars for FGCU Scholars
Have a ball bowling for a good cause at the eighth annual fundraiser benefiting the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund. Register a team of five or sign up as an individual for an evening of glow bowling, fun, food and Eagle giveaways. Members are invited to a behind-the-scenes tour of Beacon Bowl. Companies interested in sponsoring a lane or donating a silent auction item may call (239) 590-1087. 6 p.m., Beacon Bowl, 5400 Tamiami Trail, Naples.

For details or reservations, call the Alumni Relations office at (239) 590-1075.
From researching forced disappearances in Latin America to monitoring the treatment of farm laborers in Florida, Tatiana Devia’s passion is social justice.

For Devia, 27, the route to human rights evolved while earning her master of science in forensic studies, with a concentration on human identity and trauma analysis. Since September, the native of Colombia has worked as an investigator/monitor for the Fair Foods Standards Council.

How did she transition from bones to tomato harvesters?

“I learned the concept of corporate social responsibility, got more interested in that aspect of social justice, and deviated a little from forensics,” she says.

Devia and her colleagues at the Sarasota-based nonprofit are the teeth behind agreements between tomato growers and corporate produce buyers. They oversee implementation of agreements for improved working conditions and higher wages for farmworkers who have toiled for generations under substandard conditions, earning less than a dollar for every 32 pounds of tomatoes they pick. As a result of a 20-year campaign by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, agreements have been reached between buyers for Yum Brands, McDonald’s and Walmart and 90 percent of Florida’s growers. The Fair Food Standards Council was launched in 2011 to monitor and implement the new codes and upgraded standards demanded by the coalition.

Devia fields complaints, investigates by interviewing half of the workforce, making observations, auditing documents, writing reports and developing action plans. “We are very meticulous in what we do,” she says.

After graduating from University of Central Florida with a degree in anthropology, Devia arrived at FGCU leaning toward graduate studies in public administration. Her curiosity about human physiology and anatomy – coupled with meeting Assistant Professor Heather Walsh-Haney, who teaches forensic science – led Devia to change course. “I fell in love with the program. It was quite unique,” says Devia. “It was very flexible and gave me the opportunity to make out of it what I wanted to make.”

Opportunities included working with Walsh-Haney on suspicious-death cases in the Collier County Medical Examiner’s Office, traveling the state to gather data, and attending and presenting at international conferences. For her thesis, Devia returned to her home country to collaborate with the global human rights group, Equitas. There, Devia pored over old police reports and analyzed autopsy data on victims who “went missing” at the hands of the military. She also met with families of the disappeared, most of whom were farmworkers, so her focus “moved from the technical to social aspect,” she says. “It turned out to have an element of human rights work.”

Walsh-Haney says forensics experts “also work with the living. Not only do we need to understand human nature and the subtleties of culture to interview victims, we need to push ethnocentricities aside and ferret out clues, behaviors, what they’re saying – and find out where it’s lining up. That’s what she’s doing with the farmworkers to make sure they are being treated fairly.”

– Cathy Chestnut

From Colombia’s missing persons to Immokalee’s farmworkers, Tatiana Devia champions their causes.
Speed of (sun) light

Photographer Brian Tietz captured a photo of a solar-powered kart as it raced around the loop at FGCU. Teams from 10 area high schools outfitted and raced their vehicles in the second annual FGCU Solar Go-Kart Challenge.

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

23rd annual Founder’s Cup Golf Tournament

Friday, October 10, 2014

Pelican’s Nest Golf Club
Pelican Landing, Bonita Springs

Buffet Lunch
11:30 a.m.

Shotgun Start
1:15 p.m.

Cocktails, Buffet Dinner & Awards ’til 7:30 p.m.

For more information regarding sponsorships and/or participation, please contact Lindsey Touchette at (239) 590-1016 or ltouchet@fgcu.edu

FGCU Speakers Bureau offers a wealth of faculty and professional experts.

Connect your organization or school with some of Southwest Florida’s brightest minds.

www.fgcu.edu/CRM/speakersdirectory.asp or call FGCU Community Relations and Marketing at (239) 590-1081.
Named One of the Top 50 Cardiovascular Hospitals in the Nation for 2014.