

FGCU 360

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FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE

LIVES LOST TO COVID

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Undergrad's natural skin care business booming

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For a century, the Tulsa Race Massacre remained largely a murderous attack that wasn't mentioned in history books. Now a team of forensic scientists and historians – including two from FGCU – have unearthed what appear to be evidence of 11 individuals who perished in one of the country's worst incidents of racial violence.

BY DON MANLEY





FGCU's Heather Walsh-Haney (right) at Tulsa Race Massacre dig.

PHOTO BY THE CITY OF TULSA

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ON THE COVER:

"Field of Remembrance, Cathedral of Sky" art installation at sunrise on the Great Lawn at FGCU.

PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO

FIRST

CUTTING EDGE

Research could save thousands of endangered sea turtles

BY KYLE MCCURRY

AFTER YEARS OF studying sea turtles in Ghana, Florida Gulf Coast University vertebrate zoology associate professor Phil Allman found a way to save them. In a new study, Allman proves a simple, low-cost innovation reduces the number of endangered sea turtles killed because of fishing nets operated by small-scale fisheries. It's a



Phil Allman

light shown on a sometimes-overlooked industry section that negatively impacts sea turtle populations.

“Research published 10 years ago reported 85,000 sea turtle deaths annually across the globe, but the number of participating boats represent less than

1 percent of the global fishing effort,” Allman said. “The magnitude of sea turtle bycatch is unsustainable and driving sea turtles closer to extinction.”

Allman partnered with fishers in Ghana to modify fishing nets. He installed several green LED lights around each net, a simple change that has worked in commercial fisheries. Allman said this



Green turtles like this one perish in fishing nets. RIGHT: This simple green LED light could help prevent turtles from getting caught in gillnets.



The magnitude of sea turtle bycatch is unsustainable and driving sea turtles closer to extinction.



PHIL ALLMAN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES AT FGCU



is the first study to try the lights on nets operated by small-scale fishers.

“Across two separate studies in different fishing communities, the experimental nets with lights captured 81 percent fewer turtles than the control nets (without lights),” said Allman, who works in FGCU’s Department of Biological Sciences.

In 2015, the first year of the study, Allman and his colleagues observed 15 gillnet fishing boats in Ghana. In that time, 64 turtles were killed or about four turtles per vessel per year. According to NOAA Fisheries, a gillnet is a “wall” of nylon netting that “hangs in the water column.” While it works well for capturing fish, it also kills other species. Sea turtles get tangled in the nets and drown if unable to reach the surface.

Allman estimates Ghana has 12,000 registered gillnet boats. He believes there are “several thousand” others working without governmental authorization. Simple math could lead one to surmise that Ghana gillnet fishers kill upward of 48,000 sea turtles each year.

“Clearly, the Ghanaian gillnet fishery may be responsible for thousands of sea turtle deaths each year, but this is likely just a tiny fraction of what is captured globally,” Allman said.

He believes this finding could have a significant impact on sea turtles. He saw many killed by gillnets during his study, including olive ridley, green and leatherback species. This was important, he said, because this was also the first study to test the effect of green LED lights on leatherbacks.

“The leatherback population in the Pacific Ocean is considered critically endangered and requires immediate action to prevent the population from completely disappearing. We hope this study gives fishers confidence the readily available green LED lights can serve as an easy and affordable strategy to reduce sea turtle interactions in their gillnet fishery,” Allman said.

Allman demonstrated that the green LED lights do not impact the size of a fisher’s target catch or its market value. He hopes this innovation will appeal to Ghanaian fishers who know capturing sea turtles can be costly.



“Fishers in Ghana do not like catching turtles because the turtles damage or even destroy their net, and it can be quite expensive and time consuming to repair. Any amount of time they cannot fish is lost food and income necessary to support their family. They also do not like catching sea turtles because it is a taboo,” Allman added.

“Including battery changes every six months (AA batteries), it costs a fisher approximately \$130 to \$165 to run the lights for three years. A turtle captured in the net will often cause significant damage to the net, which would often require replacing multiple sections. This can cost about \$225 to replace. Given that we found a fishing vessel catches around four turtles per year, it is cost effective to use the lights.”

Allman hopes fisheries take advantage of innovations like this to impact sea turtle populations significantly.

The study is published in the journal *Conservation Biology* from the Society of Conservation Biology. ■

COLLECTIVE WE

Eagles join forces to give back to the community

BY TYLER WATKINS

F GCU FRESHMAN Karoline Tyrell likes to make people smile. It's one of the main reasons she enjoys performing community service.

And it's what motivated her to form the new student organization, FGCU Give Back, a group devoted to making others smile by providing community service.

To Tyrell, it's more than fulfilling the 80 hours of service required by FGCU students.

"Our members are people with large hearts who truly care about the community and want to help others," she says.

As a volunteer lifeguard at Sanibel Sea School, Tyrell loved seeing the joy experienced by children participating in the program. That experience was a motivating factor in her decision to form the group.

"These students are doing a great job of organizing service to the community," says Heather Humann, an FGCU literature instructor and the group's advisor. "Particularly with everything going on with COVID, I think it's admirable how these young adults want to make a difference in the community."

More than 125 people joined in the first month.

"I think that this club could serve as an example to future service clubs to remind others that there are always people who want to do good," Tyrell says. "The mere fact that it makes people smile seeing others smile is enough for some to consider joining."

Tyrell's intentions inspired her fellow sailing club members, including Landen Bold. The freshman resort and hospitality management student joined after Tyrell invited him to become the event coordinator.

"When I first came to campus, I was not



Members of FGCU Give Back, a group dedicated to community service, help clean up Crescent Beach Park.

looking at being on many executive boards," he says. "Then Karoline came to me with the idea of Give Back. I believed in what the club was about and decided to take a chance with it. I knew it would be a lot of work, but I was up for the challenge to make a difference around FGCU's campus."

Bold said he wants to make a difference because he is living in this community and wants to help make it a better place.

"I believe that if I could make a difference, even if it is small, that the community would be one step closer to becoming the best community it could be for future generations," Bold said.

Give Back held its first major event – a beach cleanup – on February 21 at Crescent Beach Park. It was co-hosted by FGCU Sailing Club, with 11 members working for 3 hours to clean up the Fort

Myers Beach park.

The group planned to gear up in March, working with Blessings in a Backpack, which feeds children on the weekends when they might not have enough to eat, and writing letters to nursing home residents. They hope to team up with CREW Land & Water Trust in Immokalee to clean up the lakes and trails and to help out at the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

Activities touch on many community needs, which appeals to member James McGirr, a freshman entrepreneurship student, who views helping others as one of the best callings in life.

"A lot of people associate college students with being self-centered," he says. "It's kind of like a stereotype breaker. This proves that college students have the want to help others less fortunate and want to help because it's the right thing to do." ■

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Inclusivity is the name of the game for FGCU's Soaring Eagle Academy

BY KYLE McCURRY

WHAT WOULD you do if you wanted to go to college and there were no options? Stephanie Dangler, a Southwest Florida mom, knows what that's like. It's something she's long hoped would change for her son.

"When you are a parent of a child born with intellectual disabilities, you have to go through a lot of explaining or hearing the word[s] 'might not be able to,' or 'can't do this,' or 'won't ever attend college' when he wants to be like everybody else," said Dangler.

Fortunately for Dangler, and parents like her, FGCU President Mike Martin endorsed the creation of a new program that addresses "the university's goals of meeting the educational and career needs of some of our most underserved constituents while introducing the FGCU community to a diverse but often unseen group that exists within our communities, businesses and families."

The program is called Soaring Eagle Academy (SEA), Southwest Florida's first university program for adults with intellectual disabilities. This fall, SEA will welcome its first class of students who are eager to enhance their education and independence. Participants will learn skills that enable them to be more independent when it comes to employment, while

earning a credential in community employment within a nurturing, inclusive campus environment.

Doug Carothers, an FGCU education professor, is leading the effort to create SEA.

"What we want the students to get out of this is a college experience, like all of their peers, that prepares them socially,



academically and occupationally for life that comes afterwards," Carothers said. "We hope that SEA students will leave FGCU with all the good memories they can look back on for the rest of their lives, just like the rest of FGCU's students." ■

FOR MORE INFO

The website for SEA provides information about eligibility and intended outcomes. fgcu.edu/soaringeagleacademy



SPOTLIGHT

Poetic license

FGCU junior Niesha Radovanic isn't afraid to speak her truth

BY ARTIS HENDERSON

NIESHA RADOVANIC wants her poems to be a catalyst. The 20-year-old junior, who plans to graduate in the spring of 2022, has been writing poetry since the eighth grade. Now, she's drawing on her experience as a young Black woman

in the Southwest Florida community to write poetry that has meaning. "When I sit down to write, I definitely have something to say," Radovanic says. "Whether it's my poems on Black Lives Matter, on my childhood trauma, even love poems – every single one of those has some sort of message."

Sometimes Radovanic's message is about her own experiences. She wants readers to understand what life was like for her, the child of two young teenagers, the oldest of seven siblings, raised by her grandmother. "Traumatic" is the word she uses to describe it.

Other times, her message is about

important moments in history, moments that are too easily forgotten. While at FGCU, she wrote a poem about Emmett Till, a young Black man murdered in Mississippi in 1955. Till was just 14 at the time. His murderers accused him of whistling at a white woman in a grocery store. Till was so badly brutalized that his face was unrecognizable. His body was identified by the silver ring he wore.

Radovanic learned about Till in her high school honors English class. Her teacher spent an entire week on Till, and the details of his murder continued to haunt her after she graduated. In her creative writing class with Jesse Millner, an FGCU instructor of poetry, Radovanic

wrote a poem with Till at its center. Only later, when she was searching for the name of Till's mother, did she realize that she had written her poem on the day of Till's death.

"I think it's vital to write difficult poems like this one because they make us uncomfortable," Radovanic says. "We have to get comfortable being uncomfortable. If no one steps out of their comfort zone and speaks up, we will continue to live in a world of ignorance."

For Radovanic, the most essential ingredient in a poem is truth. All of her poetry comes from her own truth, she says. When she revises her poems, she goes back over the lines and asks herself, "Could

I have been a little more honest?" She believes this kind of raw honesty is what matters in poetry. "I think you need to sit down and make a promise to yourself that what you're about to write is vulnerable," she says. "You have to promise not to hold anything back."

Millner has seen Radovanic's not-holding-back first-hand. "I would be constantly astounded by what she did," he says. "When you read Niesha's poems, you're reading the truth. It doesn't have to be the literal truth, though sometimes it is."

The Emmett Till poem, in particular, impressed Millner. "The truth of what happened in America in the middle part of the 20th century

– the shattering truth about racism – comes out of that poem. It shows the depth Niesha has in terms of her knowledge of the world."



Emmett Till

Radovanic is a psychology major with a minor in creative writing. After she graduates, she plans to attend graduate school and pursue a doctoral degree in psychology. Ultimately, she aims to go into clinical counseling. For now, she's bringing the weight of her personal experience to her poetry. One example: When Radovanic first arrived in Southwest Florida from Clearwater, she was struck by the lack of diversity. "I was incredibly self-conscious of my skin color," she says, "of my hair being too curly, of what I wore. That came from being uncomfortable in my own body." She channeled those feelings into her writing and tapped into her vulnerability. What emerged was a profoundly honest collection of poetry about what it's like to be a Black woman in America today.

This, for Radovanic, is the ultimate purpose of her work – to be a catalyst for conversation and deeper understanding. As her poems reach the university campus and the Southwest Florida community, Radovanic is satisfied with what her work is accomplishing. "It's doing the job I always wanted it to do." ■

Let the Angels Sing

By Niesha Radovanic

Because it smelled of ivory in Money, Mississippi,
Because he and the boys were plucking pieces of cotton,
Because the scorching sun slipped sweat down their backs,
Because the meat market was hungry for a new taste of color,
Because a Black boy blew bubbles of sugar,
Because the clickety-clack of the cash register made the clerk
snap, her husband had to crackle POP.

Because the meat market men know how to slaughter locks,
Because countin' sheep turn you into dead meat,
Because a .22 turned the boy's hue,
Because lead piercing through his head was not enough
to teach little boys to hush.

Because the cotton gin separated flesh with barbed wire as a necklace,
Because the little boy still wore his daddy's ring, Uncle Wright told
his sister to let the angels sing.
Because the Black boy birthed a whistle his lips turned blue.

– *For Emmett Till*

WGPU

Sesame Street makes inroads in solving family issues

BY DAYNA HARPSTER

“**D**O YOU KNOW WHAT the average attention span of a 2-year-old is?” Stephanie Murray recently asked her Zoom audience of early childhood care providers at the Guadalupe Center in Immokalee. “It’s seven seconds.” She counted down on her fingers – seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. “And their minds are already on to the next thought.”

If they didn’t know the statistic, it’s likely the caregivers in the audience knew from experience that children’s attention is fleeting. After all, they are the experts, Murray stressed. She was just there representing WGPU, providing information about resources available from **Sesame Street in Communities (SSIC)**.

The program builds on 50 years of “Sesame Street” to offer information for teachers, parents and caregivers to help them discuss with children some of the difficult issues their families may be facing. The range of topics is vast, including divorce, food insecurity, parental incarceration and addiction, grief, homelessness, handling tantrums and dozens of others. Support materials offered by psychologists, educators and parents also address resilience issues such as being persistent, staying positive, building empathy and more. A companion website provides resources in English and Spanish, searchable by target age (0-1, 2-3, 4-6 and so on) and the time the lesson or activity should take (one to four minutes, four to 10 minutes and so on).

Before conducting a session, Murray meets with the child-care center or school directors (via Zoom) to find out what problems they



Stephanie Murray

need to address. “We’ll look at the website together and then take a deep dive into a particular topic,” Murray explained.

She dispenses this information in a combination of mom references, teacher- and doctoresse, and TVSpeak. She is uniquely qualified to do so, as an educator with a master’s degree who has written curriculum for PBS KIDS shows and launched the first workshops for SSIC for public station WNET in New York.

A Naples resident for four years and now a mother of daughters who are 4 and 5, Murray’s perspective has changed since she began conducting workshops for PBS KIDS before she had children. “The questions they (workshop participants) have are things I’m still asking myself. ‘Do they watch too much TV?’ ‘Is this show good and how do I tell?’”

She does see first-hand how the “Sesame Street” and PBS KIDS characters can help

illustrate issues in a warm, non-threatening, safe way. Her daughters' favorite characters are WordGirl and Daniel Tiger. Like other kids, and adults, too, they get invested in the characters they see on TV. "Parasocial relationships is the doctor term for this," she said.

Murray cited research suggesting that 1 in 4 children today experience some kind of trauma, and plenty of others have to navigate situations that may not rise to the level of trauma but still are vexing and could easily interfere with their education. Sesame Street in Communities aims to empower all the adults in a child's life to make a difference.

"Our teachers focus on preparing children academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally for the future, but we also want to empower parents to excel at work and advance their education," said Chris Hansen, CEO of Child Care of Southwest Florida. "We're excited to participate in the Sesame Street in Communities program because it, too, recognizes the importance of a strong school-home connection in a child's overall development."

One common question from parents and caregivers recently became trickier to answer: The perpetual unknown of how much screen time a child should spend is harder to define in the pandemic. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently revised its guidelines from no screen time under age 2 to indicate that the youngest children can benefit from screen time spent connecting with relatives in faraway places, a concession during this public health crisis.

In addition, it has been clear for several years that the quality of screen time is most important.

In a time when teachers, caregivers and parents are forced by the pandemic and social distancing to rely on programs onscreen for even the youngest learners, WGCU and Murray are spreading the word about how that quality time can be spent.

Workshop participants seem to be listening. Murray talked about one result of a recent session.

"This group was so excited," she said. "One mom went home and took out all the apps on her kid's tablet and replaced them with PBS KIDS. She really took what we were saying to heart. I walked away on such a high from that workshop." ■

LEARN MORE

For more information and materials parents can use at home, visit sesamestreetincommunities.org.

UPDATES:

WISHES GRANTED

WGCU has been energetically seeking grants for outreach programs. The stations are always mindful of how much they depend on donations, and when there's an opportunity to raise money through grants, they try to do so. Since July 1, 2020, largely through the efforts of Outreach Coordinator Anne Stavely, they have raised \$148,500 through these businesses and organizations for the purposes listed.

- **Community Foundation of Collier County** - At-Home Learning
- **Gulf Coast Community Foundation/Miriam P. Raines Charitable Fund** - At-Home Learning and PBS LearningMedia Initiative
- **PBS "Age of Nature"** - Community engagement around the program
- **WNET and THIRTEEN** - Becoming Helen Keller - Engagement and content creation around upcoming documentary
- **Arthrex** - Family Learning Workshops
- **Impact Media Partners "Inventing Tomorrow"** - STEM-Aligned Teacher Training around the documentary
- **WNET & Sesame Street Workshop** - Sesame Street in Communities (see story, opposite page)
- **Anonymous Foundation** - Two podcast workshops in partnership with Center for Autism and Related Disorders chapters throughout the state
- **Move to Include** - 18-month project stressing abilities, not disabilities, and inclusion of all people in all aspects of society
- **Penn State University "Speaking Grief"** - Virtual discussion and screening with Valerie's House of Fort Myers
- **PBS "Blood Sugar Rising"** - Virtual screening and discussion with Diabetes Alliance Network

RICK JOHNSON RETIRES

WGCU General Manager Rick Johnson is retiring after 13 years. His career in broadcast media spans 52 years, with four decades and eight sets of call letters to his credit before joining WGCU in 2008.

"Rick Johnson is one of public media's outstanding leaders - not just in Florida, but everywhere he has served," said Patrick Yack, executive director of Florida Public Media. "Always dedicated to our mission, Rick has left an indelible mark on our craft and our profession." Corey Lewis, former station manager of WBUR in Boston, will succeed him. ■



FEWER INTERRUPTIONS

This fiscal year, WGCU reduced on-air pledge drives by 44 percent. This year there are nine single-day campaigns. With some greater sourcing of revenue and an ongoing focus on existing donors (who hear the message "Don't wait until the drive, donate now"), the monthly campaigns aimed to increase the number of sustaining and new members with minimal program interruption. Interestingly, though, there are people who enjoy the frenzy of a fundraising day and like to hear their names called out on the radio, so some do wait until the on-air pledge days. ■



STUDENT SUCCESS

Entrepreneurship more than skin deep for FGCU student

Business booming for undergrad’s natural soaps, scrubs and shampoos

BY HANNAH LEE

FOR STORMIE Pruskauer, not passing chemistry class was far from a failure.

“It was kind of a smack in the face, and that’s where I realized forensic science wasn’t completely my passion,” she said.

Pruskauer knew she wanted to learn more about the human body when she started college. She’d considered becoming a dermatologist or a coroner, and thought

forensic science would be a path toward medical school. But her experience with chemistry gave her the push she needed to follow her true dream – entrepreneurship.

Before she started college in 2018, Pruskauer had already launched her own business, Stormie Seas, a 100 percent natural, eco-friendly skincare line designed to suit any skin-care needs, especially sensitive skin conditions such as rosacea and eczema. Her products are formulated with soothing ingredients such as oatmeal,

lavender and coconut milk. Products including soaps, shampoos and scrubs give customers plenty of options.

“I realized that the sensitive-skin industry was hugely neglected,” Pruskauer said. “Oftentimes, a lot of [soap] bars are not compatible with sensitive skin types because of how many chemicals are put into our everyday products. I’ve always been an eco-conscious person, and I wanted to create a bar that was not only good for the environment but good for every kind of skin type.”

“It’s easy for most people to see a failed test as a stopping point, but Stormie is able to see ‘failures’ as learning experiences that can help her to make necessary changes to her business and offerings.”

SCOTT KELLY, RUNWAY PROGRAM MENTOR

The Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship at FGCU opened a world of opportunities for the aspiring businesswoman. Support from her Runway Program mentor, Scott Kelly, helped Pruskauer expand her business. She now sells her products in three Southwest Florida retail stores, in addition to her online shop.

The Runway Program is a free business incubator that helps students and alumni access resources including shared workspaces, computers, cameras, audio equipment, design and development software and mentoring.

“I am most proud of how well she has learned and applied the process that we teach in the Runway Program,” Kelly said. “It’s easy for most people to see a failed test as a stopping point, but Stormie is able to see ‘failures’ as learning experiences that can help her to make necessary changes to her business and offerings. She has built an impressive business and it continues to get better because of her willingness and determination to work through the difficult problems to find functional solutions.”

The program simulates Shark Tank, allowing participants to go through the entire entrepreneurial process from brainstorming business ideas to acquiring seed funding. Competitors can name their goal price for winnings, and the winner receives equity-free funding to start a business.

Pruskauer was granted \$4,000 from the Runway Program her first semester in the program. With the guidance of

her mentors, her company has seen a 300 percent increase in gross sales from 2019 to 2020. Between 2019 and 2020, Stormie Seas had a 38 percent profit margin. All of this success comes from her one-woman show, working out of a studio in her home.



With the guidance of her mentors, Stormie Pruskauer has seen a 300 percent increase in gross sales from 2019 to 2020 for her company Stormie Seas.

In addition to being a full-time student, business owner, employee and a member of the Runway Program, she also is an intern for the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program.

“I help veterans actually compete with me,” Pruskauer said. “I mentor them and help them to understand the Lean Launch

Startup. I really put into work what I’m learning at school, and I help them run through the same process that I follow, like building their websites and getting their legal entitlements.”

The veteran’s program has been active on FGCU’s campus since spring 2016. It offers free instruction in Lean Startup Methodology for honorably discharged veterans to develop businesses efficiently and effectively. In addition, it helps veterans connect to local resources such as other business leaders, like Pruskauer.

Managing all of these endeavors is not easy. For Pruskauer, it often feels like there are not enough hours in the day to get it all done, but she still manages to run a successful company while being a dedicated student pursuing her entrepreneurship degree with a minor in marketing.

“I’m realizing that with working part time I’m able to slowly progress instead of getting 10 feet ahead and not being able to maintain how far ahead I get,” Pruskauer said. “So, it’s been a blessing in disguise being able to work so slowly because I’m able to manage the demand every year, instead of overwhelming myself. But I am so excited to graduate, hopefully at the end of the year. Then I can focus full time on my company and grow it to where I want it to be.

– Student contributor Hannah Lee is a senior from Melbourne majoring in communication, with a concentration in public relations, and minoring in journalism.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Podcast explores works and world of Hemingway

BY MICHAEL VON CANNON

YOU REMEMBER IN “The Big Lebowski” when Walter tells his bowling buddy, “Donny, you’re out of your element!” On the afternoon of June 16, 2017, I entered the Ritz Paris feeling a lot like Donny.

Not only because Coco Chanel, Marlene Dietrich, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Cole Porter have numbered among the guests of this luxurious hotel; or because the nightly rates of even its standard rooms were staggering compared to the cost of my modest Airbnb across the Seine. As the news coordinator for the Hemingway Society, I was there to interview someone. I had never interviewed anyone, really, much less someone like Colin Field, the head bartender at the Ritz’s Bar Hemingway, a man often ranked as the best bartender in the world. When he had agreed to this meeting, you could have bowled me over.

I was excited and in awe for other reasons, too. This was one of the places Hemingway had famously “liberated” from the Nazis upon his arrival to Paris toward the end of World War II. It was also the place where, in late 1956, two large trunks filled with some of Hemingway’s long-forgotten Lost Generation writings found their way back into his possession, a serendipitous event that led him to write one of the most celebrated books about Paris, “A Moveable Feast.”

That evening, Field generously discussed the bar’s history, his rise as a bartender,

and his love of Hemingway, as we walked around pointing out memorabilia adorning the walls. A month later, I posted the transcription of our interview to the Hemingway Society website, but something nagged. Try as I might, the transcription wasn’t conveying enough.



The back-and-forth of dialogue, the hesitations and laughter, the ambient noise were all missing from the written version but still resided on the poorly recorded voice memo of my iPhone. Although that audio would never have met quality standards for something like a podcast, I soon realized that the podcast form was, in essence, what I was after.

What we were after, actually. By early 2019, I had gotten wind that a colleague and friend, Mark Cirino from the University of Evansville, was on a separate

mission to create a podcast. Deciding to embark on a joint venture that would hopefully reach not only Hemingway scholars and devotees but also students and general audiences, we created “One True Podcast,” a show that focuses on Hemingway, his work, and his world

through conversations with scholars, artists, political leaders and other luminaries.

Hemingway once said, “Listen now. When people talk listen completely. Don’t be thinking what you’re going to say. Most people never listen.”

He’s talking about listening in order to become a better writer, maybe also a better person. Like novels and short stories – and sometimes unlike films – podcasts can carve out intimate spaces for people to listen in, listen with and listen to each other. With more than 35 episodes released to date, and many more recorded and waiting in the wings, we’ve worked and continue to work at

the art of listening and invite audiences to do the same. Guests have included Hemingway’s secretary and daughter-in-law, Valerie Hemingway, on meeting him for the first time in Spain in 1959; his grandson, Seán Hemingway, on editing a new volume of “The Old Man and the Sea”; home improvement guru Bob Vila on his upbringing in South Florida and Cuba and his work heading up the restoration of Hemingway’s Havana home; Ken Burns and Lynn Novick on their new documentary “Hemingway”; and Mark



Salter, senior advisor to John McCain, on the late senator’s deep appreciation of Hemingway.

In “A Moveable Feast,” Hemingway would declare, as much to himself as to us, “All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.” On the podcast, we play a “one true sentence” game by asking guests to share the sentence they find most significant from Hemingway’s writing. It’s a fun organizing principle that has led to insightful conversations with writers and scholars.

Joshua Ferris, PEN/Hemingway Award winner for his novel “Then We Came to the End,” landed on maybe the most famous line from a Hemingway novel. “The Sun Also Rises” ends with the war-wounded protagonist asking the female lead, “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” For Ferris, that sentence not only encompasses everything these characters have lost and probably never even had but also “almost necessitates that [the reader] start over again. It’s so good.”



Michael Von Cannon

Hemingway was great at writing endings. I’m not even going to compete on that front, and our show doesn’t really need to, anyway. It’s episodic rather than serial, gaining by accumulation. Like snow. After two years of this work, we’ve thankfully accomplished only a dusting. ■

— Dr. Michael Von Cannon teaches American literature and composition at FGCU. In addition to being co-creator and producer of “One True Podcast,” he is co-editing “The Letters of Ernest Hemingway: 1957-61” as part of the Hemingway Letters Project.

LISTEN IN

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UPDATE

Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies takes shape

BY KAREN FELDMAN

THE FLEDGLING Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies may be relatively small in size, but Ted Thornhill, its founder and director, has big plans for this space on the fourth floor of the Wilson G. Bradshaw Library.

He envisions fearless faculty fellows

conducting significant research into the painful and uncomfortable topics surrounding race and ethnicity.

“All research on race and ethnicity is not critical race and ethnic studies,” he says. “The emphasis is on the critical part. It focuses on topics such as power, domination, oppression, intersectionality, privilege and resistance. It’s meant to disrupt problematic and dangerous

narratives and elevate the concerns and interests of those groups and individuals that are historically and contemporarily marginalized, forgotten, given short shrift. I don’t want it to be watered down to be a can’t-we-all-just-get-along center.”

He’s bringing noted scholars and experts to campus to address those issues through a speakers series. He’s planning to provide



LEFT: FGCU students march to bring attention to racial inequities.

BELOW RIGHT: Ted Thornhill, founder and director of the Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at FGCU.

He, along with several CCRES faculty affiliates, are working toward introducing a critical race and ethnic studies course requirement that would ensure that all students receive exposure to topics such as systemic racism, immigration, settler colonialism, issues of gender and sexual orientation and environmental racism, among other important issues.

“It would shine a bright light at the university if done well and we would be one of a few institutions in the country to have such a requirement,” he says. “It would be an amazing thing.”

Thornhill, an associate professor of sociology who teaches courses such as “White Racism,” “Social Stratification” and “Racism and Law Enforcement,” is looking “to create a culture of intellectual inquiry in racial justice activism for students interested in advancing racial equity in this area and beyond,” he says.

To do that, he thinks it’s necessary for people of all backgrounds to understand the complex and multitudinous causes of the racial divide that continues to roil this country.

“The United States was founded in a particular manner that involved the genocide of indigenous people,” he says. “Chattel slavery in the Americas afforded people of European extraction an opportunity to enrich themselves by dehumanizing others for hundreds of years, the effects of which continue to plague Black, Indigenous, People of Color while providing those racialized as white with manifold unmerited advantages.”

While the center is operational now, it’s still in its organizational phase. Thornhill hopes to hold an official grand opening in the fall when more people have received COVID vaccines and it’s

possible to have in-person gatherings so he can open the center’s doors to the public.

He knows he’ll need support – both in terms of influence and finances – from community members. Several well-known local influencers have already expressed backing for his efforts, including longtime Senior County Judge Hugh Starnes, who resigned his post to help battle racial injustice, and former Lee Health President and CEO Jim Nathan.

“Ted has a lot of really good people (from FGCU) involved but it’s important to bring in local support,” says Nathan, who adds that he has been involved in a lot of discussions about racism in the community over the past year or so and that it’s brought him a new awareness of the problem.

“We won’t get past systemic racism until white folks in a leadership capacity speak up and say this is wrong,” he says. “This is a tremendous opportunity to position FGCU regionally and nationally.”

Thornhill hopes the center will bring with it not just praise but progress.

“My vision is to advance racial justice,” he says. ■



mentorship for students who will conduct research and have the opportunity to network with those visiting scholars. And he’s reaching into the community to engage and enlighten residents as well.

“At a minimum, we need to move beyond the conventional language of diversity, equity and inclusion,” he says. “If you intend to promote racial justice, and what you’re doing does not make at least some white people uncomfortable, then you need to question the impact of what you’re doing.”

TO LEARN MORE AND TO DONATE

Visit the center’s website at fgcu.edu/ccres

ARTS





What started as a hobby, as a means for a creative outlet, has grown into a full-blown business.

ALEXIS MARTINEZ PULEIO ('09, BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY)



PAINTING

Artist's career soaring with aerial views of our coast

Unique resin technique enhances painter's bird's-eye-view

BY DREW STERWALD

PICTURE YOURSELF in a plane descending toward the Fort Myers airport, zooming over the barrier islands and coastline of Southwest Florida. Nose nearly pressed to the window, you peer down at emerald and azure waters with foam-capped waves lapping up against sandy shores, imagining you could trail your hand or dip your toe in the shimmering, undulating tides.

That's the sensation Alexis Martinez Puleio ('09, Biology and Chemistry) aims for and captures in aerial seascape paintings rendered in acrylics and epoxy resin. But you can actually reach out and touch this FGCU alumna's artwork. Puleio encourages clients to run their fingertips over the glassy surface of her bird's-eye-view images, which sometimes are embedded with handmade rocks and greenery to create a tactile, topographical representation of a natural shoreline.

Puleio's unique technique, artistic gift and loving eye for sand and sea has driven the success of this 33-year-old artist, who didn't even major in art at Florida Gulf Coast University. Her inviting creations are sold through upscale channels at The

Ritz-Carlton Resort of Naples and The Eydel Fine Arts Gallery in Naples, as well as on her website.

"What started as a hobby, as a means for a creative outlet, has grown into a full-blown business," says the busy mother of two. "We lived in a condo when I was starting out, and I took over every square inch of table space I could find to work."

Working in oils, acrylics and watercolors, in abstraction as well as realism, she took commissions small and large for wedding-dress paintings for brides, orchid still lifes, marine life imagery and architectural landscapes. The turning point came in 2016 with a monthlong solo show at Polk State College in Winter Haven.

"From there, the doors of opportunity opened," Puleio says. "Word of my art spread, and I landed the job of a lifetime creating four oversized (10-feet by 5-feet) paintings for the new Carol Jenkins Barnett Pavilion For Women and Children" at Lakeland Regional Health in Lakeland, Florida.

I am truly grateful for every door that has opened up

for me in my art career, and hope that they continue to open as I grow as an artist."

As her business flourished, so did her family with husband Vincenzo "Vinny" Puleio, owner and operator of Enzo's Italian Restaurant in Bonita Springs. They now have a 7-year-old daughter, Giuliana, and a 9-month-old-boy, Sebastian, as well as a home with an upstairs studio so she can have her own workspace but still be home with the children.

"I create every day in my studio," Puleio says. "It can be challenging at times, with my second-grade daughter doing school from home virtually this past year because of the pandemic,

and with a new baby in the house. But I make sure to devote a portion of my day to creating. Not only is it good for business, but it's good for the mind as well."

In addition to wall-enhancing artwork, she produces functional home items such as serving trays and charcuterie boards, and jewelry for men and women featuring smaller-scale evocations of her aerial seascapes.



LEFT: No, that's not an aerial photo of a beach in Southwest Florida, it is one of Alexis Martinez Puleio's seascape paintings. She creates these images using acrylic paint and epoxy resin.



Her inspiration often comes from actual shorelines, bays and waterways but her imagination and technique help her visualize her own perspective.

Growing up in Lakeland, Puleio visited Anna Maria Island every year with her family, then fell in love with Naples when she moved to Southwest Florida for college.

“There is something about the warm Gulf waters that can renew your soul,” she says. “Outside of Florida, Hawaii is by far my most favorite location.”

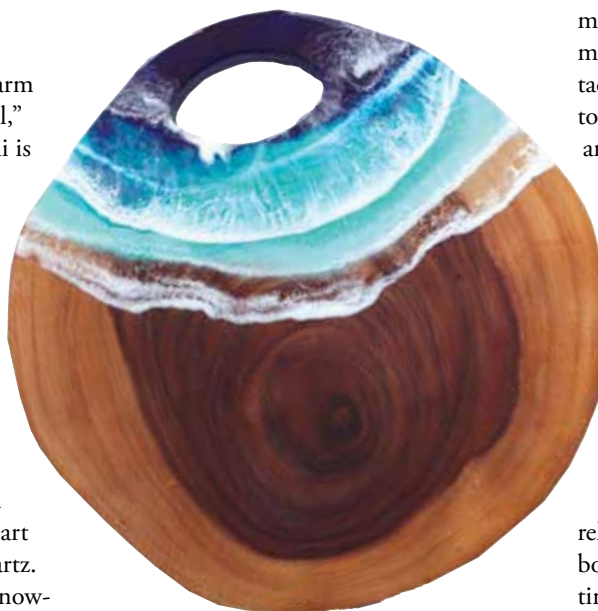
Puleio incorporates her food-safe resin technique on charcuterie boards and serving trays.

Taking advanced art classes in high school, she was nurtured by teachers and parents who encouraged her to pursue her creative talents. Intending to go on to medical school to become a surgeon, she enrolled at FGCU on a pre-med track, but took a couple of art classes taught by the late Carl Schwartz. During her senior year, she met her now-husband.

“I was swept off my feet,” she says. “I decided to put medical school on hold, and I am so very happy that I did. We have a beautiful, fun and full life together. I get to spend every day doing my true

TOP: Puleio sometimes adds raised greenery or rocks to the canvas for a textured effect.

BOTTOM: Puleio incorporates her food-safe resin technique on charcuterie boards and serving trays.



passion in life – creating a piece of me that gets to stay on this earth, even after my lifetime has passed by.”

Following favorite drone accounts on social media, she puts ideas together in

a sketch book, then draws out her plan on canvas before painting in acrylics and tinted resin.

With tools or gloved hands massaging the canvas, she spreads the resin – a clear, honey-like substance that when mixed with a hardener creates a glass-like topcoat and sheen that protects the painting. Using a small blowtorch, she can move sections of curing resin to create a watery effect.

“The high-gloss shine, with its reflective surface, gives your art a wow factor that you can’t get with paints alone,” she says.

Resin is a petroleum-based product, and the brand Puleio uses, ArtResin, is non-toxic, free of volatile organic compounds and certified food-grade safe (for the serving trays and boards).

“These are important factors for me, with my studio being in our home,” Puleio says. “The very first time I used resin was after searching for a product to protect one of my orchid oil paintings. I wanted something to give it a high shine. That’s when I discovered resin.”

One downside: The artist has to plan ahead – and then surrender control. Once the hardener and the resin have been mixed together, she has 45 minutes to manipulate it before it starts to become tacky and solidifies. Color additives have to be premeasured, tools must be handy and a pouring strategy considered. Once the process begins, any distraction in the studio could mar the outcome.

Resin is self-leveling and moves around the surface for hours before it settles and starts to cure in place – sort of like sand washing up on a tide and settling on a beach. Not knowing how the coating will land adds a layer of chance and excitement to the artist’s vision.

“It’s a process where you have to relinquish your need to control, which is both restrictive and freeing at the same time,” Puleio says. “I can control my ideas, and my vision, the placement of the rocks, or greenery, and I can plan where I want the resin to go, but where I lose control is where the resin ends up. You have to have faith in your process, your knowledge of the medium, and hope for the best.” ■



TOP: Puleio created the four panels of artwork on display at the Carol Jenkins Barnett Pavilion in Lakeland, Florida.

ABOVE: Resin creates a glass-like topcoat and sheen on Puleio's artwork.

LEFT: Puleio at work in her studio.

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MUSIC

Percussion ensemble sets new tempo at Bower School of Music & the Arts

BY NINA BARBERO, '16

FOUR MUSIC education students will take that education to new heights this spring when they release their own album, along with a performance video to be featured on the Vic Firth percussion YouTube channel and potentially viewed by students and teachers around the world. It all started when they asked each other, “Wouldn’t it be crazy if…”

“A lot of the things our quartet got started with started with hypotheticals,” says Stephen McMullan, principal musician for the Bower Percussion Quartet. “Wouldn’t it be crazy if we could get a video on Vic Firth?”

Vic Firth is a company that produces percussion sticks, mallets and educational resources for percussionists. One of the quartet members, Nick McConnaughey, is a Vic Firth-sponsored musician.

Troy Jones, FGCU associate director of bands, works closely with the quartet and says, “It’s a very big deal if you’re selected by Vic Firth to be featured. There are millions

of young percussionists at varying levels who look at those videos as a means of education.”

The Bower Percussion Quartet includes the top four students from FGCU’s Percussion Studio. In Spring 2020, that group included McMullan, McConnaughey, Eduardo Ortega and Michael Balars. Ortega has since graduated.

“It is quite an honor to be selected to be a part of it,” Jones says of the quartet. “For these four gentlemen, they click really well. They wanted to take the ensemble in a direction that would be even higher than usual because they stayed with it for about two years.”

That direction involved two firsts for the Bower School of Music & the Arts: a student-led, three-day performance tour at schools in Central and South Florida – completed just before COVID-19 shut schools down in March 2020 – and a CD, which the group recorded over two days in December. The recording sessions were filmed, and the video for the piece “DisArchitecture” will be featured on the

Vic Firth YouTube channel.

Each member of the quartet is widely involved in music education and performance in Florida, including teaching as percussion specialists in area schools, as staff for Infinity Percussion in Orlando – which competes at a national level – and for McConnaughey, arranging music for groups as far away as Germany, where he taught for two months in 2019.

Each of these experiences helped the quartet build industry connections. From the videographer who filmed their recording sessions to the photographer who took promotional photos for the CD, they knew everyone involved.

The \$3,500 budget, including paying the recording and mixing teams and providing accommodations for them, was funded by the Bower School of Music & the Arts. The CD and videos will be released online this spring, and the Bower School of Music & the Arts will distribute the recordings as an educational tool for Florida students.

“We had the idea that we wouldn’t have to go to these high-budget rates,” McMullan says, “because everybody on the team we know from the connections from the band experience that we all have.”

New connections helped the project come to life, too.

The CD features four pieces. One of the pieces, “DisArchitecture” by Dave Hall, suggests an instrument called a static whip, which the quartet learned is no longer being made.

“The composer actually mailed us his, that he used when he first made the piece,” McMullan says. Hall also listened to the group’s early recordings of the piece and sent feedback.

The album also features “Torched





TOP: The Bower Percussion Quartet, Michael Balars, Nick McConnaughey, Stephen McMullan, Eduardo Ortega

LEFT: The quartet during one of their practices.

and Wrecked” by David Skidmore, “Living Room Music” by John Cage and McConnaughey’s own piece, written during quarantine: “State of the Arts.”

“Nick’s piece was written very smart,” Ortega says. “He wrote that piece with the recording in mind ... it’s fun, light-hearted and it grooves heavy.”

The group needed that lightheartedness as they planned album logistics, rehearsed – for six hours every week between summer and the December recording sessions, more, McConnaughey says, than any other ensemble on campus – and finally recording the album over two six-hour days.

“We recorded in the rehearsal hall in Bower,” Ortega says. “It was very surreal the night before, and about 15 minutes into it. Then it became this giant monster. Especially the first block of the first day was very taxing because we were high-energy, hyper-focused.”

Fortunately, Ortega says, Jones was there to keep the group relaxed.

The title of the album, “A Legitimate Excuse,” is a nod to a phrase Jones uses frequently and jokingly with his students to remind them that as music educators, students are counting on their preparation. In other words, there are no “legitimate excuses” for not practicing, or for showing up late to a class you’re teaching.

Jones hopes students at the Bower School of Music will continue to try new projects, like what Ortega, McMullan, McConnaughey and Balars have done with the album and video recordings.

“Music changes the ordinary to the extraordinary in a unique way,” Jones says. “There are so many opportunities this creates for you, but also for others ... that’s what we’re trying to do here every day.”

The group has two pieces of advice for students looking to do a similar project: Ask for help, and work with your friends.

If you have an idea for something,” Balars says, “the best first step is to ask somebody for help. The worst you can get is a ‘no,’ and the best you can get is a ‘yes,’ and then you can record an album.”

“It really was fun, because you’re making music with your friends,” Ortega says. “I can’t imagine doing the album with anyone else.” ■

WATCH THE VIDEO

See the Bower Percussion Quartet on the Vic Firth YouTube channel.



MAN BEHIND THE MISSION

Founding President Roy McTarnaghan reflects on some of FGCU's core values and how they've shaped the university and its graduates.

BY DREW STERWALD



When the surging pandemic spurred most schools to pivot to remote instruction in spring 2020, that mode of teaching was hardly a new concept at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Distance education took root in the institutional culture before FGCU even had a physical campus or welcomed its first class of students in 1997 – though no one could have foreseen then the necessity of one day closing classrooms, temporarily teaching and learning 100 percent online and celebrating commencement in a virtual setting.

In the beginning, part of FGCU's mission was to serve not only traditional-age college students but to bring higher education to community members who couldn't come to campus because of jobs, family life or other considerations. Distance education was one aspect among several that made the university unique:

a commitment to service-learning; in lieu of tenure, renewable faculty contracts and the flexibility to work elsewhere; a focus on sustainability in operations and in curriculum.

The man behind the mission, founding president Roy McTarnaghan, had done his homework well before drawing up institutional plans and guiding principles for FGCU. Since his first administrative position at the State University of New York-Geneseo in the early 1960s, if not earlier, he persistently explored ways to run educational systems more effectively and efficiently, and to measure their success, with the analytical aptitude of an engineer.

Decades of professional service at local, state and regional levels in higher education and research into institutional models around the world informed McTarnaghan's priorities. He saw what worked and what didn't. Then he brought the best ideas and proven leaders together at FGCU, one of five colleges or universities McTarnaghan helped get off

the ground in the course of his long career.

"As a new institution we could propose doing some things other places were not doing – we were not locked into doing things a certain way," says McTarnaghan, who served as president from 1993 until 1999 and continues to take an active role in university events and build on his philanthropic legacy (see story on page 31).

"I made sure our Board of Regents and the Florida Legislature endorsed this mission because it was different from what other people were doing. All the individual elements existed somewhere in the world. I can proudly point to places where they are working. It was all done with clear intent to solidify the structure of what we were going to do initially to get up and running, and to know our goals and how to measure their effectiveness when we got there."

"Visionary" is a word many choose when talking about McTarnaghan, including Wilson G. Bradshaw, FGCU's president from 2007 to 2017. He says,



FGCU campus in 1997, with entrance road at the left.

“Roy knows education and the higher education system inside and out.”

“He saw that online distance education was going to be the wave of future. While we did not get there by embracing it altogether, we got there by necessity,” says Bradshaw, FGCU’s third president, referring to COVID-19’s reprioritizing of remote instruction. “What we were doing then wasn’t happening anywhere else in the country in higher ed, and Roy left a solid foundation at FGCU. But he also had an impact on the entire State University System for many years.”

As vice chancellor for academic affairs for that system since 1975, McTarnaghan was already poised to play a major role when discussion began in the late 1980s about developing what would become a new university serving Southwest Florida. By the time he was put in charge of planning FGCU, he’d already amassed close to three decades in higher education administration.

As a member of the Florida Board of Regents, which governed state universities at that time, longtime educator and administrator Audrea Anderson of Fort Myers helped select McTarnaghan as FGCU’s founding president. She then worked with him throughout the 1990s as they sought input and buy-in from a sprawling, diverse field of stakeholders. “Roy McTarnaghan’s vision for Florida’s 10th university paralleled the critical needs of our region,” says Anderson, who served as FGCU’s associate vice president for Community Relations and Marketing from 2000 to 2009. “I recall his emphasis on establishing a premier academic institution that aggressively supports the region’s most critical resource, the environment. McTarnaghan’s passion for responsibly caring for the environment was always evident. He worked tirelessly to build resources – faculty talent, funding, facilities, internal and external support – to ensure the university’s lead position in protecting and preserving Southwest Florida’s natural resources while enjoying its benefits and beauty.”

“

The impact Roy McTarnaghan had, and continues to have, on FGCU transcends any simple accounting. Roy, along with his wife, Beverly, began shaping this university from day one. His relentless commitment to serving students and the community is part of FGCU’s DNA. Roy has remained engaged in supporting FGCU’s ongoing journey to excellence and service. On a personal level I’ve come to value Roy as a friend, a colleague and a wise counselor.

– FGCU President Mike Martin

”

“

Roy McTarnaghan was an exceptional founding president. He brought such character and heart to the university, and I think that is his greatest legacy. Roy’s integrity and his passion inspired the community. He was very inclusive, and treated everyone around him with decency and respect. In short, he was a great leader and FGCU would certainly not be what it is today without his contributions. Our community and past, present and future students owe him a debt of gratitude.”

– Amy Gravina, APR, founder of Gravina, Smith, Matte & Arnold Marketing and Public Relations, who worked with McTarnaghan to establish what became the annual Founder’s Cup fundraising golf tournament

”

Early experiences influence mission

McTarnaghan was FGCU Employee No.1.

His first hire, Employee No. 2, was Executive Assistant Barbara Krell, who served as the gatekeeper for six FGCU presidents – including three interims – before retiring in 2015. She had a front-row seat to the birth of the new university and many of its growing pains.

Krell and others still marvel at how focused McTarnaghan remained through four years of organizational planning and execution. Through site selection, construction challenges, environmental litigation. Through curriculum development and the race for accreditation. Through fundraising and myriad other challenges. McTarnaghan chronicled the success story of opening the doors on schedule in August 1997 in his book, “On Task, On Time: The Development of Florida Gulf Coast University.”

“He was the person for the time,” Krell says. “It’s more clear to me now than ever how important his understanding of the political background was, how to accomplish educational goals within that political arena, and the absolute attention to all details. Not everyone has all of those things. And he had understanding of what it means to be a student.”

Three months after hiring Krell, McTarnaghan brought Susan Evans on board as a public information/public relations officer. Her role expanded into chief of staff and vice president while serving each successive president over 27 years until this March. Looking back at McTarnaghan’s leadership, Evans zeroes in on the positive ripple effect of signature FGCU programs like service-learning on generations of students and individuals and organizations in the community: 3 million hours of service in nearly 25 years.

“We opened with some unique features,” Evans recalls. “Dr. McTarnaghan was able, after a long career in higher education, to take meaningful yet novel ideas and bring them into the fabric of this university.

Think of all the entities that have had the benefit of our students contributing time and service to them – what a value that has as a community. That was his idea.”

The commitment to public service stems from a patchwork of personal experiences stitched together over McTarnaghan’s 87 years, including his stint in the U.S. Army during the early 1950s. Later, he earned degrees at two land-grant institutions – a master’s in speech education from The Ohio State University and a Ph.D. in educational administration from Michigan State University – that had strong cooperative extension service programs helping farmers and others in their communities. And in the mid-1980s, through his responsibilities and travels for the Florida State University System, McTarnaghan discovered a service-learning program at the University of Costa Rica that would one day provide inspiration for FGCU’s program.

“It made students at the university there more aware of the surrounding area and what they can and should do to build a better society,” he recalls. “I think service to one’s country and service to one’s community tends to bring people together from various backgrounds and economic strata for a common goal. As part of a mission plan for a university it would be a very positive psychological and philosophical benefit.”

‘Always about the students’

Likewise, McTarnaghan’s enthusiasm for technology and distance learning harks back to early life experiences. Education was a high priority in his family. He was one of few in his high school class who had a grandparent who graduated college, he says.

TOP RIGHT: Barbara Krell, FGCU’s second employee, stands by the sign announcing the university in 1995.

RIGHT: Even before there were buildings on site, Roy McTarnaghan proudly explored the university’s future home.



It was his high school physics class, though, that set him on course toward distance learning. Noticing that the teacher, fresh out of military service, was barely ahead of his students in understanding the subject, the college-bound McTarnaghan found another way to keep his own learning on track: early-morning “Sunrise Semester” courses offered by New York University via the relatively new technology of television. Students could get textbooks by mail, watch lectures at home before school or work, and take exams in secure locations. By the time he sat for the New York State Board of Regents’ college entrance exams, he “pretty well aced the physics exam,” he says.

“I had a need and was motivated and could learn without being in the classroom setting,” says McTarnaghan, who would build on this insight by visiting and studying pioneering distance-learning models across the world. From Athabasca University in Northern Alberta to the University of Southern Queensland in Australia to The Open University in the United Kingdom, he learned from the successes and failures of leading online universities.

Those lessons helped shaped his approach when developing plans for FGCU to meet not just campus needs but community needs. He talked about aiming for 25 percent of classes to be offered remotely – a far cry from what 2020 would eventually call for – and early on worked with the FGCU Foundation to set aside money to encourage faculty to develop online courses.

“It was always about the students,” Evans says. “For him it was a way to provide access to higher education that these folks would not have had without distance learning.”

Surprising the skeptics

Some of FGCU’s unconventional approaches met with skepticism. McTarnaghan says he and other leaders had to sell some prospective faculty and



staff on not only distance learning but weekend classes and renewable contracts. They explained the sustainability ethos. They talked up the option of cooperative employment arrangements with area school districts.

It was a lot. And it wasn’t for everyone. “Other institutions wanted nothing to do with us,” McTarnaghan says of sister schools around the state. “They went to the legislature and said this institution will fail, it will never get accredited, nobody in their right mind would go to work there with these themes. Well, we had 20,000 faculty applications for our first 150 positions, and we were accredited in record time.”

He credits much of that success to hiring experienced leaders with proven track records, not just academic credentials. Senior staff had to be people who had “been there, done that,” in his own words.

“He was and is a visionary but not a

micromanager,” says founding faculty member Win Everham, a professor in the Department of Ecology & Environmental Studies. “He hired the best people he could and trusted them to do the right thing, to hire the people with the skill sets.”

When FGCU’s buildings started rising from former rock mining pits and next to pockets of wetlands and uplands, the construction management team met Fridays on Roy and Beverly McTarnaghan’s lanai in Pelican Landing. The couple had chosen the Bonita Springs community intentionally – halfway between Fort Myers and Naples to show

TOP: Roy and Beverly McTarnaghan are frequently seen at university events.

RIGHT: McTarnaghan Hall was so named after Student Government petitioned the Florida Legislature to dedicate a building to the founding president.

that FGCU would be serving as well as fundraising in both.

Those sessions were intended to resolve by day's end any issue that arose in the previous week – without the formality of a drawn-out committee meeting. McTarnaghan calls it the J.C. Penney approach: "We'd have a vote. 'All in favor say aye. All opposed say I quit.' It was a joke, but we had to make up a lot of time and were going to have to make tough decisions as a small group of people."

Some decisions were easier than others. The school colors of emerald green and cobalt blue were chosen to represent earth and water and FGCU's commitment to environmental and sustainability education.

"My wife and I were pushing

for that to reflect the mission," McTarnaghan says. "No one seemed to object. There's a lot you can do when you don't have large committees."

FGCU's mascot was actually in his back pocket for years, a tucked-away trump card saved over decades of service in the State University System.

"It surprised me to no end that no one had chosen the eagle, the American mascot, as the emblem for their college or university," he says. "We've got the burrowing owl at FAU, the rattler at FAMU, but we didn't have the eagle. Always in the back of my mind, I had the idea if I had the chance at a new institution, I'm going to really try to have the American eagle as a mascot."

Another mission accomplished. ■

McTARNAGHAN LEGACY SOCIETY HONORS FOUNDING PRESIDENT

The FGCU Foundation's Legacy Society was established in 2005 to recognize donors who have included Florida Gulf Coast University in their estate plans. These forward-thinkers help ensure that the university sustains its commitment to academic excellence and student success for generations to come.

The man who put this institution on that path – and who led creation of the FGCU Foundation to support that mission – is Roy McTarnaghan. To pay tribute to the founding president and his philanthropic support over two-plus decades, the Legacy Society was recently rechristened the Dr. Roy McTarnaghan Legacy Society.

"We started talking to him about this five or six years ago, as a way to honor the gentleman who started this university and continues to support it through his scholarship endowed fund and now through planned giving," says Bill Rice, senior associate vice president in University Advancement. "What could be more appropriate than recognizing our first president in perpetuity through the naming of our Legacy Society?"

McTarnaghan and his wife of 65 years, Beverly, have remained active in FGCU's campus life and philanthropy since he stepped down in 1999. They especially enjoy the foundation's annual scholarship luncheon.

"We are very happy to support student scholarships. When our scholarship students say thank you, I always tell them the way to thank us is that when you get to be 65 you give some of your money to help someone else with a scholarship," McTarnaghan says. "One of the reasons FGCU was established here was that this area had the lowest college-going rate in the entire state. A lot of people couldn't get higher education unless a new institution came to them."

Membership in the Dr. Roy McTarnaghan Legacy Society is open to anyone who has made a gift of any amount through an estate plan, or through a life income arrangement or life insurance policy. Benefits include a subscription to this magazine and the Planned Giving e-Newsletter, an engraved memento and invitations to special events.

For details, call University Advancement at **239-590-1067** or visit **fgcu.edu/advancement**. ■



TRAINING GROUND

FGCU researchers learn from the dead
at Pasco County forensics lab

BY ANNIE HUBBELL

PHOTOS BY JAMES GRECO

Austin Polonitza ('10, Criminal Forensic Studies; '16, MS, Criminal Forensic Studies) digs a shovel test pit to reveal soil types.





LAND O' LAKES, Fla. – There are certain memories we can't forget. They're triggered by random things – a smell takes you back to your grandmother's house on Christmas morning or the way the clouds darken the sky on a random afternoon transports you back to the day your mother died. Sometimes we collectively remember where we were at a certain moment – like the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the space shuttle Challenger exploded, or terrorists attacked the World Trade Center.

The last is true on multiple counts for FGCU Associate Professor Heather Walsh-Haney. She remembers the moment she found out about the 9/11 attacks, but she also knows the smell, sound and sights from being on the ground in New York City during those awful days. As a member of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Disaster Mortuary Response Team, Walsh-Haney was called to the Fresh Kills landfill (where evidence was taken from Ground Zero) within three days of the planes destroying the Twin Towers. It's an experience she will never forget.





While many professors use a memory to offer an anecdote or give students a way to relate to material, Walsh-Haney did something more substantive.

In 2017, FGCU partnered with Florida's Forensics Institute for Research, Security & Tactics, or FIRST. Managed by the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, FIRST is dedicated to creating safer communities by enhancing public safety through research, education and innovation. FIRST approached FGCU after hearing about Walsh-Haney's extensive background in forensic science and significant work with law enforcement to help locate and uncover the dead.

Walsh-Haney shared her experiences from New York and elsewhere to help FIRST create The Urban Search and Rescue Rubble Piles. They are designed to give K9 units and others – like FGCU forensic studies students – a space to train in real-world scenarios.

One pile simulates a bridge collapse. A school bus and several cars look as if they were tossed onto the mounds of smashed concrete. The second pile is considered more treacherous at four stories tall. It was

ABOVE: This rubble field is designed to train students to collect physical evidence and map disaster scenes.

LEFT: Austin Polonitza and Dayanira Lopez use ground-penetrating radar to evaluate subsurface anomalies while Leslie Urgelle and Xenia Kyriakou prepare to dig.

designed to mimic a collapse of an elevator shaft. A full-size helicopter sits on the pile minus its main and tail rotor blades. Students in FGCU's engineering program helped to design and build both of these training facilities.

"When students choose to become part of our forensic studies program at FGCU, they are committing to finding and studying human remains," said Walsh-Haney, an American Board of Forensic Anthropology diplomate, considered a top recognition in the field.

"FIRST helps them understand the physicality of the job. What we do is often uncomfortable for long periods of time. Not to mention, it's hot, especially in Florida. FIRST – and everything that comes with it – helps my students

understand what it takes for them to do this job, remaining a vital, functioning member of a team despite the challenges," Walsh-Haney said.

The demands of a job in forensic studies are not lost on the dedicated students who make their way to FIRST on a sweltering fall day. Three FGCU graduate students and their professors climb aboard a Pasco County sheriff's Humvee as they head to a fenced-off tract of field and forest.

The team sets up tents in the rain-softened ground to serve as shields from the relentless sun. They unload shovels and ground-penetrating radar that will help them tell the story of what lies in the soil below.

Laboratory coordinator for the FGCU Department of Justice Studies, Dayanira Lopez, pushes the radar equipment across the ground. It resembles a large lawn mower, but is connected to a tablet that can read what might be buried in the ground beneath it.

"These are the three antennas," she explains. "They can go down as deep as seven meters. All we do is hit play, we will then walk and pause it if we see something. The data on screen will give us measurements and



let us know how far we need to dig.”

The team is probing the ground some 200 yards from the rubble piles. To untrained eyes, it may look like nondescript fields and forest but it’s actually another aspect of a unique lab and training ground for students hoping to one day uncover answers for people who no longer have a voice.

Commonly known as a “body farm” – a research facility where decomposition can be studied in a variety of settings – the phrase was made famous by crime novelist Patricia Cornwell in her 1994 book “The Body Farm.”

Walsh-Haney, who chairs the justice studies department, prefers the term outdoor forensics laboratory.

“At FGCU we focus on making sure our scientists are educators and we find ways to take difficult information and present it in a way that students can hold onto,” she said. “Having the opportunity to work outdoors and talk with law enforcement officials and medical examiners about real-world cases helps the students learn on a deeper level.”

ABOVE: Forensic studies graduate students Sonya Concepcion Jones, left, and Savanna Dungan use the robotic total station to map in the FIRST rubble pile.

RIGHT: FGCU Department of Justice Studies students Sonya Concepcion Jones, Leslie Urgelles, Savanna Dungan, Dayanira Lopez and Xenia Kyriakou enter the Pasco County rubble pile.

Rodgerick Green is the FIRST manager. “This facility will allow practitioners to hone their skills, be better at what they do and pass that on to the students,” Green said.

The outdoor forensics laboratory is the only one of its kind in Florida. Scientists are able to study the decomposition of bodies in a subtropical climate. Students work with state-of-the-art equipment to learn how to locate, excavate and recover surface scattered and buried remains and other types of physical evidence with the help of human detector dogs.

“With the subtropical climate it is brutally hot,” Walsh-Haney said. “We have

insects, snakes and other types of animals out here that sometimes pose a threat, and this creates a safe space for the students to work.”

Using ground-penetrating radar and other tools, the students cover the ground slowly and with purpose as they search for body parts.

The ground below is clear, as it should be. At the moment, the facility does not have any bodies in it. Donations have slowed because of COVID-19. But when bodies are donated, the remains are buried or left above ground to be exposed to elements like sun and rain. This is done to mimic the various scenarios officials could come across when working on investigations or natural disasters that involve fatalities.

“When you are in the classroom, you learn it from people who are professionals in the field, but it’s very different when you get to see it in action,” said Lopez. “It’s a completely different feeling, and you know what you’re getting yourself involved in. You can really figure out if this is what

you want to do or if there is a different path for you within the field of forensics.”

Graduate student Sonya Concepcion Jones carefully takes measurements and marks a path for the radar with red and yellow flags. She talks through the process with members of the FIRST team. This hands-on and collaborative experience is why Concepcion Jones moved south for the FGCU program.

Her itch for the industry came from watching television shows like “CSI” and “Bones” while in middle school. Her motivation now comes from the families she is helping with the answers she finds.

“The program brought me all the way from New York City because we are getting experience most people will not get until after they graduate and are working,” Concepcion Jones said. “Knowing that I am helping give people answers that don’t have a voice for themselves, that really does hit home for me and has inspired me to stick with this career from the beginning.”

When hearing about the Pasco County facility and the unique work done there, people often ask Walsh-Haney how they can help. She recommends they consider FGCU’s private human remains donation program. She says a lot of donations have come from the families whose loved ones have been the focus of her forensic analyses. The families want to ensure her students train with real human remains and understand the benefits.

“I think of one family who has donated a grandmother and a great uncle,” Walsh-Haney said. “They reach out to me asking to come visit, wanting to see their grandma and learn ‘what your students have found.’”

That granddaughter and great niece is Tanya Scotece. Not only is Scotece’s connection to FGCU her family’s donation, she earned a master’s degree at FGCU in 2009 as one of

Walsh-Haney’s students. With an extensive background in funeral services, Scotece went on to earn a doctoral degree and now teaches at Miami-Dade College.

“There are so many people that don’t know about body or anatomical donation, so I made it my mission to tell them,” Scotece said. “So many people don’t want cremation or to be buried, but they don’t know about this program.”

The skeleton of Scotece’s grandmother and great uncle will not go to the outdoor forensic laboratory, but the bones are helping students further research on campus. The team was even able to pinpoint and diagnose the terrible arthritis in her grandmother’s shoulder she had complained about for years. The family found comfort in learning even more about their loved ones after death.

“I love it because in her day my grandma was always so busy. She was never the type to just sit home and knit,” Scotece said, “so she’s busy even in death.”

Scotece, her mother and her daughter plan to donate their remains to the program. “We all want to go there. I love educating the students. I love giving back,” she said. “I went through Dr. Heather’s program, I learned under her and I saw her work first-hand.”

Walsh-Haney’s work continues to inspire her students, past and present. She’s not only helping them learn the science that is used to solve a crime, but also guiding students through feelings they may be experiencing in what can be an emotionally draining profession. Concepcion Jones is grateful for Walsh-Haney’s leadership in a field historically dominated by men.

“It’s so important that women are leading careers and being innovators,” Concepcion Jones said. “To have mostly women in our program and to be led by Dr. Walsh-Haney, it means a lot to me as a woman, and a woman of color. I am surrounded by supportive and likeminded individuals with similar goals.” ■

ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
DAY AT
THE LAB





**Part of Greenwood District burned in
race riots, Tulsa, Oklahoma / June 1921**



May 1921

What is considered the worst incident of racial violence in America's history took place almost a century ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma when an angry white mob descended on the vibrant Black district of Greenwood, destroying more than 1,000 businesses and homes, killing between 50 and 300 people and committing untold atrocities on the residents.

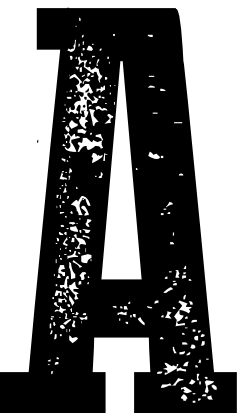
The rampage was sparked by a rumor that a Black teen had assaulted a white elevator operator in a downtown building. The Oklahoma Historical Society reports that he more likely stepped on her foot, causing her to scream. Nonetheless, the rumor raced through town and the massacre ensued. Eighteen hours later, the city was under martial law and the state's second-largest Black community had burned to the ground.

While the massacre remained a taboo subject for decades, a state commission formed in 1997 investigated the event. Scientists and historians uncovered evidence that unidentified victims were buried in unmarked graves.

In the trenches

Tulsa Massacre dig illustrates importance of forensic science skill

BY DON MANLEY



fter a first attempt in July failed to turn up any bodies, a forensic team unearthed 11 coffins in a mass grave in Tulsa's Oaklawn Cemetery in October.

They are believed to be victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, although it will take time and painstaking work to identify the remains found there.

Heather Walsh-Haney, Florida Gulf Coast University associate professor, chair of the Justice Studies department and an in-demand forensic anthropologist, is among the experts working to uncover the truth about who was buried in this unmarked grave. With her was graduate student Sonya Concepcion Jones. They were invited to take part by



Heather Walsh-Haney

Phoebe Stubblefield, University of Florida forensic anthropologist and leader of the physical evidence investigation.

For Concepcion Jones, taking part in locating the grave validated the journey that brought her to

FGCU's Justice Studies program.

Over 10 days last fall, the graduate student assisted a team of scientists investigating whether multiple victims were buried in the unmarked grave a century ago.

The work yielded evidence of 10 individual burials in one location and another nearby. The outlines of coffins, at depths of 13 to 14 feet, were found using ground-penetrating radar. The excavations unearthed wood, nails and handles from coffins, as well as biological material such as bone, teeth and skull fragments.

Concepcion Jones didn't hesitate when Walsh-Haney asked her to take part in the project.

"As soon as she asked me, I said, 'Yes, whatever I need to do, I'll fit it into my schedule, I'll rearrange things, I am down to go on this journey,'" Concepcion Jones said recently, excitement still evident in her voice.

A native of Queens, New York, she earned a BS in applied forensic sciences, with a concentration in forensic anthropology, from Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania, before coming to FGCU. She expects to receive her master's degree in 2022.

"I felt this opportunity was one of my main purposes for coming to this program," Concepcion Jones said. "After completion, I felt at peace. I felt happy with my journey in Florida, with my journey educationally, all the way from Mercyhurst to now. I felt going to Tulsa was definitely the reason I stuck with it and kept choosing forensic anthropology over and over again."

The work being done now is the result of the state commission formed in 1997 that is attempting to determine what happened to all of the victims, identify them and ensure that their story is now told as it has been largely absent from history books for the past century.

Concepcion Jones assisted Walsh-Haney at the dig site, supplying tools and other equipment, providing an extra pair of hands and helping in whatever way she could.

Walsh-Haney's role involved assisting with the identification and logging of osseous (bony) material and taking meticulous notes on where evidence was found, soil changes during the dig that suggested the presence of caskets or osseous material, and other significant findings. She also worked with the physical evidence team to determine where the strongest ground-penetrating radar signals were.

Large earth movers skimmed off layers of compacted soil in search of artifacts or changes in coloration. When they came upon something, the team would gently dig and graduate students would sift soil to turn up evidence.

"The process used was very similar to what I have done on scenes where we're trying to find a clandestine grave that might contain one person, or two or

three," Walsh-Haney said. "The process was similar in that ground-penetrating radar was used to find a location where there was a subsurface disturbance or anomaly that wasn't mirrored by what was on the surface, meaning that there were no headstones or outward signs of a burial.

"What was so unusual was the caskets were not laid out neatly, as you would expect. They were overlaying one another and put in at odd angles, as you would do hastily to hide a mass burial in a very deep trench."

Great reverence, befitting the solemn nature of the work, was shown throughout the project, she said.

"Every day we began with a prayer and every day, we ended with a prayer," Walsh-Haney said. "All the remains, the entire time we were there, whether it was a small casket nail or a tiny piece of skeletal material, we were constantly aware of the importance of the site."

Concepcion Jones said that as an Afro-Latina (Black and Puerto Rican),



Sonya Concepcion Jones

the experience was especially meaningful. She also took note of what her presence symbolized to the people of color who visited the dig site.

"I could feel all the eyes that were on me, that people were noticing that I was there and that's the point of things like this," Concepcion Jones said. "We always talk about how being there and showing that people of color can do everything is important. Once you see that one person, it makes you think, 'I can do that.' I hope that seeing me makes people feel more comfortable with the work that was being done there."

Walsh-Haney views amplifying diversity, equity and inclusion as part of her role as an FGCU faculty member.

"I've spent my career trying to open up science and forensics to underrepresented minorities," she said. "Working with Phoebe (Stubblefield) and her team






has given me the opportunity to allow students like Sonya to have a real impact and to gain power back in a safe place where they can see communities watching these young, Black females use science for social justice. I'm moved and floored to even have a tiny part in this huge project."

Stubblefield has been part of the effort to locate the mass graves and identify victims since 1990. She was invited to join by Scott Ellsworth, a professor of history at the University of Michigan and author of the first book addressing the tragedy, 1982's "Death of a Promised Land."

Ellsworth served as a historical consultant to the Race Massacre Commission.

She, in turn, asked Walsh-Haney to take part in the cemetery dig. The women have been friends and colleagues since they were students at the University of Florida, where Walsh-Haney obtained her bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.

"Heather and I are sisters from different parents," said Stubblefield, whose parents were born and raised in Tulsa. "She was the first one I thought of inviting because I trust her and I knew she would do her best to represent both me and her alma mater, UF, and to honor the victims, because I have concerns about how these individuals are described and handled as we uncover

..... 

This site is important because it documents the systemic racism in the United States and the way that bureaucratic structures have hidden evidence of racism.

— Heather Walsh Haney,
forensic anthropologist

them. I instantly knew that Heather would be right there, having a decedent-focused approach to this investigation."

Concepcion Jones said finding evidence of a mass grave "felt like a big win" because of the hard work involved and the support it offers for what had previously been unsubstantiated.

Work is slated to continue this summer and Walsh-Haney intends to take two grad students with her.

Researchers, including FGCU's Heather Walsh-Haney (center), and City of Tulsa workers pause for a prayer and moment of silence before working on a test excavation at Oaklawn Cemetery in a search for a possible mass burial site from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

For Walsh-Haney, the Tulsa Race Massacre project has taken on additional importance, given the issues related to Black lives that arose in 2020.

"This site is important because it documents the systemic racism in the United States and the way that bureaucratic structures have hidden evidence of racism," she said. "This massacre was not included in our history books for our children to read, for communities to know about. That's why this documentation is so important.

"I think some people don't understand the depth of racism in the United States, how widespread it is, how insidious it is and that there was a rich, lively, wonderful community that was wiped out by white racism. That our country hasn't talked about it until recently is stunning. I'm proud to be part of a committee that is shining a bright light on historic racism so we can learn from it and move forward." ■

SPORTS

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Team shows promise amid pandemic-plagued season

BY SETH SOFFIAN

The 2020-21 FGCU men's basketball team makes no excuses.

The Eagles didn't get it done in the postseason – losing to North Alabama in the semifinals of the ASUN Tournament in early March – and fell achingly short yet again of the destination that all in the program make clear is still everyone's expectation: the NCAA Tournament.

But the Eagles also made another thing very clear following a maddeningly erratic campaign plagued by full-scale shutdowns for positive COVID-19 test results.

Despite missing considerably more practice and games than all other league peers, FGCU still made significant strides. And the Eagles expect to do so again next season.

"There were teams this year (nationwide) that allowed the coronavirus to wreck them, in terms of their record, their performance, their buy-in, and that was not this team," said third-year Eagles coach Michael Fly, the long-time former FGCU assistant.

"At the beginning of the season we all had expectations

within the program. We thought we had a team to be playing (in the ASUN final), and we didn't get there. But there were a ton of takeaways in terms of player development, growth as a program and looking to the future."

The final tally was a 10-8 record – up from 10-22 in 2019-20 and 14-18 in Fly's debut season – and a 4-5 record in ASUN play. Fourteen games were wiped out by coronavirus, including seven of 16 regular-season league games.

In the postseason, sixth-seeded FGCU showed the team they knew they could be, going on a 60-20 scoring explosion spanning the first and second halves of a 72-60 defeat of third-seeded,

preseason league favorite Lipscomb in the ASUN quarterfinals.

A night later, though, despite beating North Alabama twice in the regular season, FGCU could not slow the fifth-seeded Lions, who shot 11-for-21 on 3-pointers in a 96-81 victory.

Top-seeded Liberty beat North Alabama 79-75 in the final two days later for its third consecutive ASUN Tournament title since

joining the league in 2018.

"We beat Lipscomb, so there's no excuses," said FGCU junior guard Caleb Catto, second on the team in scoring with 13.3 points a game. "We just didn't perform to our capability."

The Eagles won't blame a staggering 28 days of lost game and practice time – far more than all league peers – in the second half of the season due to positive coronavirus tests.

But the 14-day shutdowns in January and February halted the rhythm the Eagles had been developing. FGCU had won three of four games, including a 66-62 victory at Miami, prior to an early January stoppage, and four of six ASUN games before the second stoppage.

Despite film study and what limited activities the Eagles were permitted while halted, they looked like a team without much cohesion in their first games back, losing a pair of weekend games to Bellarmine in mid-January and at Kennesaw State to close the regular season.

"You could see both times we resumed it wasn't the prettiest basketball," Catto said. "It takes you a game or two to get back in some sort of rhythm."

The result was often uncertainty over



LEFT: Junior guard Caleb Catto

RIGHT: Coach Michael Fly talks with the team during the FGCU vs FAMU game in the 2020-21 season.

“

There were teams this year (nationwide) that allowed the coronavirus to wreck them, in terms of their record, their performance, their buy-in, and that was not this team.

MICHAEL FLY, FGCU MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH

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how much poor showings were the result of the normal ebbs and flows of basketball and how much resulted from rust and unfamiliarity.

“In a normal year we’re telling them to get to know each other, spend more time together,” Fly said. “This season we’re telling them to stay as far apart from each other as you can. This year was a hard year to know what was real and what wasn’t.”

Regardless, the Eagles are eager to show what a multi-year rebuilding effort can produce next season given an uninterrupted campaign and strong returning player rotation.

That includes Catto, who was ninth in the league in 3-point percentage at 39.2; sophomore guard Cyrus Largie, who led FGCU with 13.4 points a game and led all ASUN guards in shooting accuracy at

55 percent; sophomore forward Dakota Rivers, whose 1.9 blocks a game in just 17.1 minutes a game easily led the ASUN; and freshman point guard Luis Rolon, who led the league in assists per game and steals per game.

“This is going to be the strongest group of returners that we’ve had in a long time,” Fly said. “We just want to be able to play our basketball season.” ■

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Women's team rules ASUN, ranks 25 nationally

Bell named top mid-major player in the country

BY SETH SOFFIAN

F GCU WOMEN'S basketball players Kierstan Bell and Tishara "TK" Morehouse looked at each other and laughed in unison, their friendship off the court as evident as their cohesion on it.

"You can talk," the diminutive Morehouse said shyly to the taller, more vocal Bell when asked about their uncanny success in their first season with the Eagles.

"I just talked," Bell replied, triggering more laughter from the duo.

Just minutes earlier, even as the Eagles danced and celebrated yet another ASUN tournament title and berth in the NCAA Tournament, their cerebral, now storied coach was doing what would have been the oddest of things prior to this season.

He was trying to keep his players apart.

"You hate to tell players not to be celebrating on the court. But I was out there trying to get everybody to space out," said Eagles coach Karl Smesko, named the ASUN Coach of the Year for the 11th time in FGCU's 14 seasons in the league. "We want to be able to celebrate again."

In a world turned sideways by the COVID-19 pandemic, FGCU distinguished itself among the nation's elite programs yet again in 2020-21 not just for its on-court exploits.

Even with a first-round loss in the NCAA Tournament to a Michigan team widely thought to be under-seeded, the Eagles warranted praise, firstly, for simply playing all their scheduled games, something many peers in the 64-team NCAA Tournament did not do.

"I was somebody who was pretty skeptical of how many games we'd actually get to play this year with the COVID situation," said Smesko, who saw his team's favorite status going into the ASUN

Tournament final at the end of the 2019-20 season wiped out by COVID-19, leaving this year's NCAA Tournament appearance as the program's seventh in 10 eligible seasons.

"Our players made a lot of sacrifices to make it possible for us to have essentially a full season," said Smesko, noting multiple weekly tests and extra social distancing restrictions. "You just had to be ultra-responsible if you wanted to have your season, and our players did a really good job with it making those types of sacrifices for the betterment of the team."

The restrictions made FGCU's on-court success all the more remarkable – and arguably unthinkable if not for the kind of team-wide unity Bell and Morehouse helped showcase.

After losing all five starters and the top seven scorers from last year's 30-3 team, FGCU didn't even know who would play this season because of multiple transfers and waiver requests for immediate eligibility, including for the highly touted Bell.

When the 6-foot-1 Bell, the three-time Ohio high school Ms. Basketball award-winner before playing one season at Ohio State, was declared eligible three games into the season, FGCU's prospects improved greatly.

Still, given the many intricacies of





Smesko's systems, his past teams that have endured major roster turnover routinely have struggled out of the gate.

"It happened really quickly how good we started playing together," Bell, the first in ASUN history to be named Player and Newcomer of the Year, told the Canton Repository.

"We just enjoy being around each other, competing at practice and learning new information. Because a lot of us were new, either transferring over or incoming freshmen, everybody had a learning mindset. I think that's what brought us up another level."

Bell, an Associated Press honorable mention All-America and winner of the prestigious Becky Hammon Mid-Major Player of the Year award, was instrumental helping FGCU to a 25-game winning streak, 26-3 overall record and rankings in both major polls.

That included the No. 25 ranking in the AP post-season coaches poll, FGCU's first since finishing the 2014-15 season at No. 20. FGCU was No. 21 in the coaches' poll entering this year's tournament.

But also critical were fellow newcomers Morehouse, Aaliyah Stanley and Andrea Cecil, as well as returning players Alyssa

TOP: Roommates Tishara "TK" Morehouse and Kierstan Bell on the court playing against Temple.

Left: FGCU sophomore Guard Kierstan Bell played a key role in the team's success.

Blair, Tyra Cox and Emma List, among other contributors.

"We were very fortunate. Our assistant coaches did a great job helping bring in some really talented players, and helping develop some returning players," Smesko said. "(Blair, Cox and List) really took such a step forward this year. For a team with so many new players to be able to have the kind of season they were able to experience was pretty remarkable."

In the NCAA Tournament, FGCU's hopes to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time in program history were doused early by an exemplary performance from Michigan.

The sixth-seeded Wolverines, ranked 16th in the AP media poll and 14th in the USA Today coaches poll at the time, raced away from 11th-seeded FGCU in the fourth quarter of the 87-66 decision. It was the first time in seven NCAA appearances FGCU didn't win or go down to the wire or overtime in the first round.

Michigan backed up arguments it had been worthy of a better seed by rolling through third-seeded Tennessee 70-55 in the second round.

But even with the disheartening loss, FGCU was able to appreciate all it accomplished this year bolstering its reputation as one of the nation's top programs.

"Coming from (junior college) and being able to transfer here and get to the NCAA Tournament my first year is an amazing experience," said the 5-foot-3 Morehouse, who was a unanimous First Team All-ASUN selection. "I can't wait to come back next year."

With only Blair and fellow senior Sheahen Dowling scheduled to depart, that seems more likely than it did entering this most unusual of seasons.

"We should have a lot of exceptionally talented players returning," said Smesko, also noting FGCU's potential to land a couple of "high-caliber" Division-I transfers in the offseason.

"I'm really excited, because usually (between) players' first and second year in our program is when they make the biggest jump. If we can do that I think we can take another big step forward." ■

Covid causes merger of Fall, Spring seasons

BY RICK WEBER

IF 2020 WAS THE YEAR LIKE no other, then this has been the spring like no other.

COVID-19 rocked the world last year, and the ensuing developments shifted FGCU's athletics program into a period of unprecedented logistical mayhem.

When the ASUN Conference announced last August that the fall sports schedule was postponed and would resume in the spring, FGCU's volleyball and men's and women's cross country and soccer programs went into practice-only mode. And the ASUN Presidents' Council decided that the sports that normally play in the fall but have their championship season in the spring (men's and women's tennis and golf) would have no fall intercollegiate competition.

Throw in the winter sports (men's and women's basketball) and the normal spring sports (baseball, softball, beach volleyball, swimming and diving), and there was a dizzying time when 15 teams were all playing at once.

On Saturday, Feb. 20, the craziness truly crystallized for Director of Athletics Ken Kavanagh.

"I was in my office and our volleyball match with Stetson started at noon, so I watched it on ESPN Plus," he says. "Thankfully, we won it in one hour and fifteen minutes. Women's basketball at Jacksonville on ESPN Plus started at 1, so I turned over to that. Baseball was up in Tampa for a doubleheader against USF, and I was watching that. Out my window, I could see softball going on with Northern Illinois, and I was checking live stats. Just trying to juggle all of it as a fan."

Has Kavanagh, who is in his 12th year at FGCU after 13 years at Bradley University, ever experienced anything like this?

"Nobody has," he says. "Hopefully nobody ever will again. This will be something we can learn from – how to be efficient, in some ways as we've seen across the landscape in a lot of places, with more people working remotely.

"Logistically for our staff, our student-athletes and coaches had to understand that we only have so many people, and we just have to do the best we can. And the bottom line is we have to do it safely."

That meant that volleyball coach Matt Botsford had to be sidelined for two weeks – missing two matches and forcing Kate Morrell to serve as interim head coach – due to COVID-19 protocol. John Sinnott, associate athletics director for athletic communication, says that in his 20 years with college athletics programs, he can recall no more than three times that a coach missed one game during a season.

And never multiple games.

Everyone has had to work harder and smarter. Some low-risk teams like swimming may only have to test once a week, but the others are testing multiple times. The trainers have to do that, then hand over specimens to a Miami lab, which picks them up each day, takes them to Miami and turns around the results within 48 hours.

Scheduling has been an intricate chess game. While virtually every team's schedule has been truncated – for example, the men's soccer team is playing eight games instead of 17 – the specter of 15 sports at one time has upped the ante considerably for the facilities and operations staff.

By reducing the number of games, scheduling closer to home and traveling by bus instead of plane, and scheduling many games as one-site doubleheaders, FGCU has trimmed \$2 million from its normal \$13 million budget.

Through it all, some of FGCU's teams have risen to inspiring moments:

- **Men's tennis** beat the University of Miami for the second time ever – and did it in Coral Gables – prompting head coach CJ Weber to say, "I think this weekend is the start of something great for our squad."

- **Softball** upset #21 UCF 3-2 as Taylor Bauman tossed a six-hitter and jacked a three-run home run in the sixth inning.

- **Volleyball**, which entered the season with 103 wins over the previous four seasons (11th-best in the nation), opened the spring by sweeping USF in Tampa, rallying from a 2-0 deficit to win the first match, then winning the next day convincingly in straight sets.

- **Swimming and diving**, down 59 points going into the final day of the CCSA Conference Championship, rallied for a share of the title with Liberty – the Eagles' 10th in program history.

- **Women's soccer** tied the University of Miami as Louise Lillback scored the equalizer in the 80th minute.

"This is all about safely getting kids to play the sports they love," Kavanagh says. "We hope we will see the postseason. Nothing was more heartbreaking than to hear how much kids lost last spring.

"I remember I was going down to tell baseball that its season was over. They had already heard by the time I got down on the field. There were many tears in the eyes of players and coaches. What they wanted to do was gone. It's not just the game. It's the relationships. Some of the kids didn't come back. They just couldn't afford it. They had graduated and were on little or no scholarship. Even if they were on a half-scholarship, who's coming up with the other half?

"What we experienced is certainly secondary to the loss of life and people still battling potentially long-term consequences of COVID-19. But from what we do, it is enjoyable to see kids out there competing and having opportunities they didn't have a year ago." ■



ALUMNI

This year's alumni awards showcase outstanding service by loyal Eagles

It's no secret that the university's 36,000-plus alumni comprise an impressive group, but the growing number of nominees for the annual alumni awards shows just how impressive they are.

This year's field was the largest yet with noteworthy winners in every category.

"The Alumni Awards are the highest honors presented by the FGCU Alumni Association," says Kim Wallace, director of Alumni Relations. "Selected through a highly competitive process, each recipient has made a lasting impact on FGCU through outstanding professional, philanthropic, or volunteer accomplishments. As the university continues to grow, so does the number of applications we receive. What impressed us the most was

how our alumni continue to thrive, even in a pandemic."

The recipients were recognized during a remote ceremony as part of Homecoming festivities earlier this semester. The Alumni of Distinction is the most prestigious award the association bestows upon a graduate, honoring alumni who have upheld the tradition of excellence through their personal accomplishment, professional achievement and/or humanitarian service.

Soaring Eagles Awards are bestowed to graduates from each college for outstanding achievement or service in their professional or volunteer life. These are given to those who have graduated in the past decade.

And the winners are:



ALUMNA OF DISTINCTION

Ita Neymotin, '19, received her master's in Public Administration, and is this year's Alumna of Distinction.

"She represents everything the Alumni of Distinction award stands for," Wallace says. "She is a leader, mentor and innovator. Neymotin is a star within the legal justice system and I am so proud to call her an Eagle."

She was nominated by Diana Golden, administrative director of the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, Second District Court of Appeal, where Neymotin is employed as regional counsel and agency head.

"She is a leader and educator in many ways," Golden says. "Ms. Neymotin works tirelessly to improve both the administration of justice and strives to be the best steward of taxpayers' dollars."

Christopher Boldt, managing attorney of the homicide division of the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel of the Second District of Florida, added his support for her nomination as well. Having worked with Neymotin for 8 years

in the homicide division, he was impressed by her proposal for a cross-jurisdictional death penalty program that provides representation for those who face the death penalty at a lower cost to taxpayers while still ensuring adequate client representation.

Her solution was to assign regional counsel attorneys who receive set salaries to represent these clients rather than private attorneys who bill hourly.

Neymotin, who has both a law degree and a master's in public administration, manages 140 attorneys and staff across 14 counties.

In addition, according to another associate, Byron Hileman, assistant regional counsel, chief of the homicide division for Regional Counsel District Two, "she has meticulously helped build a group of skilled capital litigators" and "also been very active in helping improve ethical standards of the Florida Bar."

Neymotin was appointed to her current position in 2011. She is also first chair qualified as a death penalty attorney. ■



SOARING EAGLES AWARDS

ENGINEERING

Teri Lytle Raasch, '12, Environmental Engineering, saw that her supervisors were too busy to write a recommendation for the awards, so she included her last performance evaluation instead. It did the trick for the senior engineer at Carollo Engineers in Costa Mesa, California.



"Every client Teri worked for ended up with key management staff quickly making her a primary contact for them because of her responsiveness, excellent client service skills, her understanding of their 'driver' issues and the quality of the work that she delivers," her supervisor wrote.

The wastewater design engineer also serves as the committee chairperson for the company's workplace charity campaign, which has raised several hundred thousand dollars for Water for People, a non-profit working to end global water and sanitation crises.

"I know my experience at FGCU cultivated my passion for cleaning water, which has fueled my career success," says Raasch, who also was on the university's swimming and diving team. "I couldn't be more grateful. Once an eagle, always an eagle!"

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

If you've not heard of or seen **Jakub Adamowicz, '19**, an interdisciplinary entrepreneurship studies grad, over the past couple of years, you haven't been watching the news.

He's won a slew of awards and recognitions for his RoomDig app, developed through the FGCU Runway Program, which operates in the School of Entrepreneurship and allows participants access to mentors and materials they need to launch businesses.



His app helps college students secure compatible roommates and housing.

"Jakub's determination, willingness to learn and love for innovation led him to join the FGCU Runway Program in 2016," according to his nomination form. "Through the amazing mentorship Jakub received from the FGCU Entrepreneurship team (Dr. Sandra Kauanui, Timothy Cartwright, Eric Arseneau, Amy Andrews and Scott Kelly, to name a few) Jakub was able to achieve some pretty amazing things."

His invention led him to become a University of South Florida Daveler Fellow Scholar, a Y-Combinator Start Up School Graduate, a Forbes 30 Under 30 Fellow, and won him the Florida Governors Cup at a statewide competition at Florida State University.



HEALTH

Christina Metz, '14, earned a doctoral degree in physical therapy at FGCU. She is a board-certified clinical specialist in neurologic physical therapy, working at Siskin Hospital for Physical Rehabilitation on the brain injury unit in Chattanooga, Tennessee

She is also the neurologic residency program director.

ARTS & SCIENCES

Malaina Mote, '15, a communication major, is head of empowerment and social mobility at the Southwest Florida Community Foundation.

She was a standout in service-learning at FGCU as a worker at Mothers Against Drunk Driving. That position turned into a job when she graduated.



She then went on to work for the Southwest Florida Community Foundation.

Malaina “is a true success story of the value of service-learning to the community and to the individual serving. She embodies our university’s mission of service and has lived this out in her professional life,” says Jessica

Rhea, senior director of experiential learning and career development.

Her current role allows her to create educational opportunities for high school students, adult learners, and others who require financial assistance. In 2020, Southwest Florida Community Foundation funded education for 135 students.

BUSINESS

Hasan Kajtezovic, '16, earned his MBA and became a supply chain buyer/planner for Arthrex. He launched a local trade group, the Supply Chain Forum of Southwest Florida, to help FGCU create future supply chain grads to serve the needs of the local business community that needed them. Two years later, the trade group helped establish the supply chain undergraduate major.



He now serves as an adjunct for the program and was recognized by Gulfshore Business magazine in its 40 Under 40 feature in 2020.

He also has been asked by the Congress of Bosniaks of North America to join the team as a Director of Homeland Relations, to work with other

volunteers to support the organization to enrich citizenship of Bosniaks in North America through community empowerment, activism, leadership, preservation of heritage and remembrance.

EDUCATION

Erica Schiraldi, '16, who majored in elementary education, teaches at Veterans Park Academy for the Arts Middle School in Lehigh Acres.



She was nominated by her mentor and FGCU professor, Jackie Greene, who says she “significantly supports new teachers in Lee County by providing mentoring, sharing ideas, develops professional improvement opportunities for them and presents education classes and seminars.

She also volunteers on school committees to improve curriculum and learning experiences for Lee County students and gives of herself and her expertise to support the profession at a high level.”

EAGLE SPIRIT AWARD

Elizabeth Perez-Lavin, '03, earned an accounting degree at FGCU and has risen to become president of Service Painting Inc., overseeing 400 employees, while still in her 30s. She has involved her company with a wealth of service projects around the community including Habitat for Humanity and FGCU.

For those reasons, she has been awarded the 2021 Eagle Spirit Award.

“The 2021 Eagle Spirit Award goes to someone who has helped advance the association and the university in so many ways,” Kim Wallace says. “Elizabeth Perez-Lavin truly represents what it means to have Eagle spirit. She is always willing to assist – from speaking to classes and participating in events, to sponsoring programs or serving on a board, she is ready to support us.”

Attorney Suzanne Boy, who recommended her for the award, says, “Liz never shies away from a challenge or from stepping outside her comfort zone, and she is not afraid to take changes when she sees potential opportunities for her company. When not dealing with employee issues or studying at night to earn her MBA, Liz is at events with her girls, throwing birthday parties for a family member, or traveling out of the country to see another. Her dedication to everything and everyone she cares about is inspiring.” ■



CLASS OF 2007

Alumna finds fulfillment working with children of farmworkers, low-income families

BY RICK WEBER

GLORIA GONZALEZ has found her calling. And that's extremely calming. Gonzalez got her start with Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) in 2004 as an assistant center coordinator at LaBelle's Krome Child Development Center, which provides high-

quality early education, health care and support services for children of farmworkers and other low-income rural families.

Sixteen years later, as one of RCMA's regional directors, she's watching those same kids graduate from high school.

"It's been so amazing to see that," Gonzalez says. "The job is very fulfilling when you see those proud families and

those children graduating years later.

"I personally don't want to take the credit because it belongs to the teachers. But I feel I have helped in the management piece – helping them with everyday management of the centers, making sure we're following guidelines, policies and procedures. When there is an issue, making sure we do what we need to in order to resolve it. When



PHOTO BY BRIAN TIETZ

there is a hurricane, making sure these families are getting food and resources.”

Gonzalez received her bachelor’s in management from FGCU in 2007 and her master’s in management from Hodges University in 2012. She could be making far more money in the private sector, but she remains at RCMA, where she oversees 17 centers serving 961 children and their families throughout Hendry, Glades, Highlands, Indian River and Palm Beach counties.

“It’s very rewarding at the end of the day, knowing these children are getting early-education services and we’re preparing them for kindergarten so that they have that same start and foundation that other kids have,” says Gonzalez, who was elected to the Florida Head Start Association’s board of directors last June. “As a mom, I would help

my kids read and work on school projects. But for some of these kids, their moms and dads work out in fields all day. Some parents have little or no education, and some families are homeless.

“If they didn’t have this foundation we’re giving them, they would probably be lost when they got to kindergarten. Some of these kids wouldn’t even be able to speak English.”

The criticality of her work at RCMA has been amplified by COVID-19. When Florida experienced its coronavirus surge in June, Immokalee was disproportionately battered. Its 34142 zip code had more infections than any in Florida – including the far more densely populated Miami-Dade and Broward counties – stoked by the dynamics of large families of agricultural workers living in close quarters. The economic impact exacerbated the region’s poverty rate of 44 percent, with some 11,000 residents living on less than \$26,000 for a family of four.

“Some of these families don’t have internet or have lost their jobs,” Gonzalez says. “We’ve really had to look for grants, donations and resources in the community to support our families. We’ve been supplying families with baby formula, diapers, cleaning supplies, food, rental and utilities assistance.”

The staff takes lots of precautions, sanitizing classrooms and the playground, making sure the children all wear masks. It’s important for the children to be able to attend so their parents can go to work.

“All the centers are open and operating, moving forward the best we can just like everybody else,” she says.

Gonzalez didn’t take the well-traveled, conventional road to get to where she is today. When she started taking night classes at FGCU in 2003 – drawn by its management program that had a concentration in Human Resources – she was 40, married and had two children.

“FGCU gave me a foundation,” she says. “My classes helped me a lot in my current role as regional director, and being part of a management team. Those classes in leadership and ethics prepared me to be in the position I am in, providing leadership to RCMA’s central region area. I remember taking classes in employment law, leadership and group dynamics, and

“

The job is very fulfilling when you see those proud families and those children graduating years later.”

GLORIA GONZALEZ

conflict management. Those classes have helped me throughout my career.

“FGCU focused on group projects. Every class had a group project per semester. I didn’t like working on those group projects. But do you know what? They helped. When you get in the real world and have to work with people from different backgrounds and age groups, you have to put your all into it. I remember working with students of all ages. That helped me a lot.”

Her most indelible memory? Walking into Alico Arena in her cap and gown, with her family cheering her on.

“I could see the proud look on the faces of my husband, son and daughter,” she says.

After her daughter, Marissa, graduated from high school seven years later, she was leaning toward studying music at the University of Miami.

“She was excited,” Gonzalez says, “but I said, ‘Give FGCU a chance.’ She went for a tour at FGCU and talked to the staff and students, and fell in love with the music education program.”

In December 2018, Marissa followed in her mother’s footsteps, walking out of Alico Arena in her cap and gown with a music education degree.

The legacy lives on. ■



GIVING

Pandemic creates greater need for life-changing scholarships as family budgets feel strain

BY KAREN FELDMAN AND KAREN BOOTH

PROFESSIONALS such as nurses, teachers, counselors and social workers play vital roles in times like these, when the whole community's wellbeing hangs in the balance. They help people heal. Ensure that children learn and families stay strong. They innovate solutions that serve the public good.

FGCU does its part by preparing these frontline heroes. With exceptional faculty and hands-on learning, students graduate ready to hit the trenches and conquer real-world challenges. Support by generous donors helps get them there.

By funding a scholarship or supporting a program, donors empower more individuals to follow this path and make a difference where it matters most: on the frontlines.

Last year, more than 8,300 students relied on scholarships to help them earn a degree. The need continues to exceed the available funds despite the fact that FGCU has not raised tuition or fees for 7 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified that need for financial assistance as families have lost their primary sources of income and the part-time jobs students relied on to help pay their way disappeared at the same time.

Erick Sandoval is among those feeling that impact. As the fall 2020 semester approached, he worried that he might not be able to start his junior year at FGCU.

His father lost his job as a finish

carpenter in March 2020 when businesses shut down because of the pandemic and, although both Erick and his mother were still working, money was tight.

"I was thinking I might have to take a break from school to work more hours to help my family pay rent and other expenses," said the sports management

major who was already putting in 30 hours a week at a local condo complex.



Erick Sandoval

But Erick was lucky. Just in the nick of time, he received two scholarships – the Donald and Elizabeth Manchester Scholarship and an FGCU

Foundation Board Scholarship. Together, they enabled him to take a full course load in both the fall and spring semesters.

"I feel so blessed," he said. "I'm the first person in my entire family to graduate high school and the first to go to college. I am super thankful for this."

Erick is one of thousands of students for whom scholarships and grants make a college education possible.

The FGCU Foundation Board of Directors recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic had created even greater economic hardships for students. That gave Foundation Board Treasurer Charles Ketteman an idea.

He suggested that the board members create a scholarship fund to which each

member would donate "as much as we felt good about then ask friends and acquaintances to match us," he said.

The group raised \$30,000 in the first 48 hours and has raised close to \$70,000 for the Foundation Board Scholarship Fund.

"I relate to this," said Linda Taylor, former Board of Trustees member and former FGCU Foundation Board chair and now Foundation Fellow, speaking about the fund. "I would not have been able to finish school if I had lost my job."

Although the Foundation has distributed a record \$4.4 million in scholarships this year, this special fund might mean the difference between whether dozens of students can return to school or not.

Meanwhile, the FGCU Foundation continues to seek contributions to augment its scholarship funds, changing the lives of students who will graduate and take their newfound knowledge and skills back into the community that helped them get there.

Here are some donors who have stepped up to help FGCU students with scholarships.

Cornelius "Pat" and Leonie Cacho Family Scholarships

Since establishing their scholarship, Pat and Leonie Cacho have helped more than 44 students achieve their dream of pursuing higher education. As of this



I feel so blessed. I'm the first person in my entire family to graduate high school and the first to go to college. I am super thankful for this.



ERICK SANDOVAL, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

4,311

Number of students who applied for scholarships in 2020-21

1,574

Number of students who received FGCU Foundation scholarships so far this year

\$4.6M

Awarded so far this year

\$2,260

Average amount awarded per scholarship this year

writing, 23 students have completed their degrees; others are currently enrolled and successfully progressing toward graduation.

Dolly Farrell, FGCU senior development officer, reported that “many of the Cacho Family Scholars have gone on to have very impressive careers and are very passionate about helping others.”

Pat Cacho came to Naples via Belize; Leonie Cacho, via Jamaica. “We wanted to help underprivileged youth who wanted to make something of themselves, to help them know they belong. The underprivileged among us are at a terrible disadvantage.”

“You can see the brightness in their eyes and on their face,” said Leonie Cacho. “Yet because of background, environment, or other constraints, they need an opportunity to move forward. Giving such a person that opportunity is about the best thing anyone can do.”

Scholarship recipient Philip Belidor, a sophomore majoring in psychology, is progressing nicely toward graduation. His goal: medical school. In a letter to the Cachos, Belidor expressed his gratitude: “You are both an inspiration to me. I will forever remember your generosity and when I go to medical school, I will do my best to become the best doctor in my class. Thank you.”

Leonie Cacho said, “I believe that by being the best doctor in his class, Philip is paying it forward.”

NeoGenomics Laboratory

To those not conversant in the language of laboratory sciences, neogenomics is a mystery. To those interested in laboratory diagnostic

and clinical trial services with a focus on cancer, neogenomics is a career path.

Which, not surprisingly, makes the scholarship offered to FGCU students by NeoGenomics Laboratories in Fort Myers an exciting – and unique – opportunity.

At the risk of oversimplifying, NeoGenomics Laboratories is a national and international company specializing in molecular testing and cancer diagnostics. The scholarship supports the laboratory science program at FGCU.

“We’re expanding in Fort Myers, adding the molecular portion to the lab to mirror our facility in California,” said

Tiffany Chouinard, Sr., director of employee development and wellness at NeoGenomics.

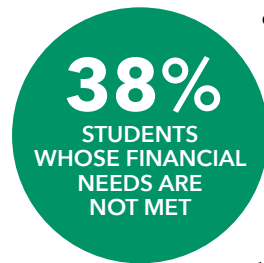
“Hiring for our expansion is a huge need. Our partnership with FGCU helps us and the students.

They take the classes we need to round out our workforce;

they participate in an internship with us and, in return, agree to work with NeoGenomics for two years.

Julie Zemplinski, FGCU program director of clinical laboratory science and diagnostic molecular science, said, “Given the shortage of workers in the healthcare industry and the specific skills needed by NeoGenomics, a partnership with FGCU makes perfect sense. Graduate students are eligible and required to take classes relevant to the work of NeoGenomics, which aims to build their employee base by gaining competent and efficient workers in the future.”

It’s a win-win. FGCU students who graduate in good standing are almost guaranteed to land a job at NeoGenomics. In turn, the company gains an educated workforce well versed in the knowledge and skills needed to excel.



“From the deepest part of my heart, I want to say thank you. You have given me an opportunity I might never have had. When I am able, I would love to do the same and change someone’s life the way you have.”

TYRA COX, '20, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Athletic scholarships

Grit and determination – that’s what it takes to be a student-athlete. And that’s what defines FGCU’s student-athletes on and off the field. But it also takes financial support, and therein lies, perhaps, the greatest challenge. Practice ... study ... work ... It’s a grueling cycle and without the generous support of so many FGCU donors, many well qualified student-athletes might not have the wherewithal to even attend university never mind compete in their chosen sport.

The good news is scholarship support for FGCU’s students and teams is impressive. Each year, multiple general and restricted scholarships are awarded to deserving students who not only excel in their sport, but also in the classroom. To wit, fall 2020 FGCU’s student-athletes earned a record term GPA of 3.5, according to Graham Diemer, associate athletic director for Advancement.

Then there is the Eagle Scholarship Society, which currently has 20 members. A minimum gift or pledge of \$20,000 annually for five years is required for membership. Each scholarship is assigned one student-athlete recipient.

Tyra Cox, women’s basketball, ('20, Business Management) now working on her MBA, speaks for many: “From the deepest part of my heart, I want to say thank you. You have given me an opportunity I might never have had. When I am able, I would love to do the same and change someone’s life the way you have.”

Lennar Fellows Scholarship Program

Established in 2019, The Lennar Homes Scholarship for construction management



Tyra Cox

and select business students, offers the opportunity of a lifetime to three – soon to be four – students each year.

The \$20,000 full-ride scholarship covers tuition, room, board, technology and books; an opportunity to participate in two internships; and the potential of fulltime employment on graduating in good stead. If recipients keep their grades up, the scholarship renews each year.

Alexandra Barrios, a junior majoring in accounting, is “super thankful” not only for the financial assistance, but also for the related opportunities.

“Participating in the internship with Lennar is a great way for me to gain experience in my field. I couldn’t be more grateful.”

Division President Darin McMurray said, “Our main goal is to give our youth the opportunity to attend university. We also hope to interest students in the construction industry, whether on the building or business side.

“We’ve been very successful hiring FGCU graduates,” adding that 15 current employees are FGCU graduates, among them Steve Gabor (’01, Finance) who worked his way up from purchasing agent to vice president of purchasing.

Angela Kunkle, FGCU senior development officer, said, “Lennar Homes has invested not only in our students’ futures, but also in the future of our Southwest Florida workforce. We could not be more grateful for their generous support.”

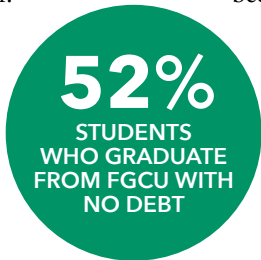
According to McMurray, “FGCU is a great place for us to recruit great talent and great people. We love what they stand for, and we’re proud to be part of their success.”

David A. Plonski Scholarship Endowed Fund

“Paying it forward” is personal, often taking root in days past and challenges overcome. Paying it forward

is life’s gift, encouraging others to be strong, to say with conviction, “I got this.”

Dave Plonski grew up in a middle-class family in Pennsylvania, second-generation immigrants. Life, however, threw a curve ball, and Plonski, not by choice, became “a street kid,” homeless. He worked hard, married, had two daughters, divorced, and became a custodial single



parent. In 1989, disaster struck when his youngest daughter Erin, then five years old, was diagnosed with AML leukemia. “I received lots of support,” he said, and thanks to a bone marrow transplant his daughter recovered. In 1998, he met his wife, Chris Nesheim-Plonski, whom he credits with his ongoing success and joy.

Through it all, Plonski worked hard, started and sold his HVAC company and moved to Fort Myers. He and his oldest daughter, Terra Anderson, then started Gulfshore Trucking. For eight years, he also acted as a children’s advocate for the Florida 20th Judicial Court, serving children in the system and foster care program.

Which brings us to the David A. Plonski Scholarship Fund. “From my life’s experiences, I understand the obstacles some young adults ‘in the system’ face. This scholarship is not academically based; it requires a GPA of only 2.0. It is heavily weighted for young adults who have experienced foster care, homelessness, or single-parent homes.

“Could you ever hope to find a better return on an investment, with zero risk? I think not.” ■



TO DONATE

For information or to make a gift, contact the Foundation office at (239) 590-1067 or give online at fgcu.edu/givenow.

LONGTIME FGCU SUPPORTER JOHN GUIGON DIES AT 90

John Guigon was an ardent supporter of Florida Gulf Coast University from its early days until his passing last October at age 90.

He joined the FGCU Foundation Board of Directors in 1998 when he and his wife, Dorothy, saw the university’s great potential. He served until 2006.

“That was the beginning of our love affair with FGCU,” he said in 2014.

Through scholarships and other forms of support, the Bonita Springs couple helped ensure an education and promising future for many FGCU students. They were inducted into the Order of the Majestic Eagle, the FGCU Foundation’s highest honor reserved for benefactors who have contributed \$2 million or more.

In addition to philanthropy, he shared his wisdom and leadership.



John Guigon

“We miss John every day,” says Dolly Farrell, senior director of development. “I miss seeing John at the basketball games. There was rarely a game he and Dorothy did not attend. John Guigon will be remembered as a visionary who impacted every corner of campus just like Ben Hill Griffin, Bill Merwin, Elaine Marieb and many others. These are the people who changed the trajectory of our future through their leadership and philanthropy.”

John Guigon spent 37 years practicing private and corporate law. After his association with a New York City firm, he worked in corporate law with Merck & Schering-Plough. In 1979, he was appointed vice president and general counsel of Schering-Plough, retiring in 1991, when he and Dorothy moved to Florida.

In addition to his longtime support of FGCU, he was active in the Lee County Guardian Ad Litem program, serving on its board for five years and as president for two years.

He is survived by Dorothy, his wife of 51 years, and their pet Havanese, Sir Spencer. ■



Occupational therapy students take turns practicing their techniques during class.

Marieb College students benefit from Shady Rest Foundation generosity

BY KAREN FELDMAN

CARE FOR A burgeoning elderly population is something this country must come to grips with – and quickly.

The Urban Institute reports that by 2030 all baby boomers will be 65 or older and one in 5 people will be retirement age. That means that caregivers for those who are aging will be in greater demand than ever.

Thanks to the Shady Rest Foundation, Florida Gulf Coast University is able to help students interested in the field of geriatrics fund their educations through scholarships.

The foundation donated \$200,000 to the Marieb College of Health & Human Services in the fall, designating five

scholarships of \$6,500 each for current students majoring in exercise science, public health, nursing and social work and another \$3,000 scholarship for nursing.

Twenty additional scholarships were awarded to graduate and doctoral students majoring in the fields of occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant studies, nursing and social work. All are to be used for students who plan to work in the field of aging services in some capacity.

The Shady Rest Foundation Board members who presented the gift included foundation President Bob Murray and Vice President Jo Stecher.

Haylea Trotter, a senior nursing student, said, “To me, working with geriatrics means the world. After high school, I got a job at a skilled nursing facility locally

at Lee Memorial. Working with that population really builds up this love of geriatrics and being able to take care of patients like them. I do plan to pursue that after school.”

For Keisha Poleon, who is in the graduate physician assistant studies program, the scholarship is equally meaningful.

“I spent about three years working in geriatrics and learning how the elderly are truly special. They have touched my heart and it did not take long for me to know that I wanted to work in geriatrics. I hope to become the best healthcare professional that I can be to provide the best care possible. Thanks to (the Shady Rest Foundation) contribution, I will be able to do that.” ■

FGCU Foundation honors four loyal supporters

BY KAREN FELDMAN

THE FLORIDA GULF COAST University Foundation has honored four new Foundation Fellows.

Richard Ackert, Lee Seidler, Linda Taylor and Charles Winton were recognized in March for their support to the university. They join Barron Collier III, J. Dudley Goodlette, Alan Korest, W. Bernard Lester, David Lucas, Juliet Sproul, and the late Ben Hill Griffin, III.

“The designation honors people who have gone above and beyond in their support of the university over a long period of time,” says Kitty Green, vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation. “We deeply appreciate all they have done to make this the excellent institution it has become.”

Richard Ackert was a founding foundation board member. He is past chair of the FGCU Financing Corp., and was instrumental in creating student housing. The Commons Building is named the Richard C. Ackert Community Center. He is the retired president and CEO of SouthTrust Bank and Alico Corp. board of directors.

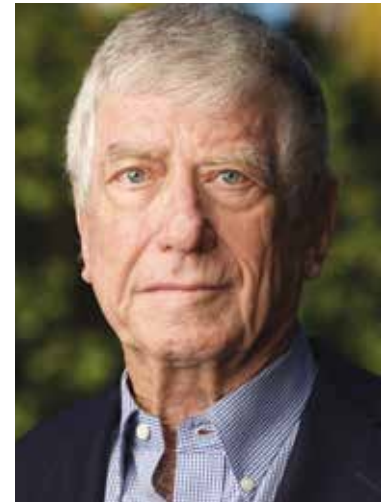
Linda Taylor was a founding foundation board member and vice chair of the FGCU Board of Trustees. A retired elementary school teacher, she served on the Florida Board of Education and as a trustee for the Foundation for Florida’s Future.

Lee Seidler is a foundation board member and longtime donor for whom Seidler Hall is named. He supports an annual lecture series, art exhibitions and First Generation scholarships. An author on accounting and taxation and Price Waterhouse professor of auditing at NYU Stern School of Business, he was a general partner and senior managing director at Bear Stearns & Co.

Charles Winton is a former chair of the foundation board, served as summer 2020 commencement speaker and provided cars to the Athletics department as well as scholarships. A certified public accountant, he is president of Estero Bay Chevrolet, and additional car dealerships. ■



Richard Ackert



Lee Seidler

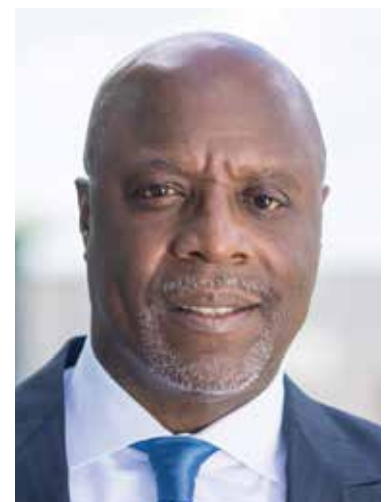


We deeply appreciate all they have done to make this the excellent institution it has become.”

KITTY GREEN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FGCU FOUNDATION



Linda Taylor



Charles Winton

Schulze Family Foundation devotes resources to enhance area’s STEM education

BY KAREN BOOTH

THE CRITICAL importance of STEM education is the future. And the time to act is now. The Richard M.

Schulze Family Foundation not only understands the ramifications of non-action to our future as a nation, but also chose to take action. Now.

For many reasons – lack of finances among them – students in the United States risk losing ground when it comes to taking their places as innovators in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

In Southwest Florida, thanks to the generous support of STEM education by the Schulze Family Foundation, FGCU students and area teachers have the opportunity to reverse the trend. Foundation support focuses on three distinct pathways, each with the goal “to attract, educate, inspire, mentor, and prepare the future leaders and workforces for the challenges ahead.”

STEM education is, however, much



more than content. It is equally about inspiring educators to take their knowledge and skills into the classroom in a way that engages students, intensifies their interest in the sciences, and encourages them to embrace the challenges in an increasingly complex world. Support is available to undergraduate and graduate students as well as educators focusing on teaching STEM in Southwest Florida schools.

Mary Beth Geier, Florida director and senior program officer for the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, underscored this critical importance: “STEM education stimulates critical thinking, increases scientific literacy, and helps shape the next generation of innovators. Proficiency in the sciences is a huge step forward for almost everything we do, sustaining business and the economy as well as helping to build a

healthier life and a stronger one.”

When asked why FGCU, Geier said, “Our intent is to invest in best-in-class organizations. We know FGCU, with its strong leadership and its capacity to scale, is best in class. Our support of FGCU’s future teachers is directly related to our understanding of the great need for STEM educators in Southwest Florida and of FGCU’s continued success.”

Dolly Farrell, senior director of development at FGCU, calls the generous support of the Schulze Family Foundation “an extraordinary opportunity not only for FGCU’s current students – and their future students – but also for our community, which benefits from a workforce well versed in the sciences.”

Schulze Future Teacher Scholarship

Pathway One offers the Schulze Future Teacher Scholarships, focusing on existing STEM majors and incentivizing them to add a minor in education. In return, recipients agree to teach one year for each year they receive the grant (for a maximum of two years provided the student remains in good standing). The idea is to take STEM students’ in-depth subject knowledge and train them to teach in the K-12 environment.

Since its inception, 12 FGCU students have received the scholarship, several going on to make teaching their fulltime career after their obligations as grant recipients were met. Pathway One relies on recruitment through STEM faculty and advisors and the FGCU Foundation.

Brad Windey (’16, environmental science) learned of the scholarship from his chemistry professor. “I was an environmental science major,” Windey said,

The STEM Institute Summer Workshops offer teachers hands-on experience integrating STEM into their activities.



“but I had been thinking about teaching. My professor knew that and recommended me; I applied, and the rest is history.”

Today, Windey teaches physical science to eighth graders and earth science to sixth graders at Varsity Lakes Middle School. He is pleased with his career choice and

wherewithal to take this final step toward permanency in the classroom.

While Matuszak’s journey is atypical of many career changers, it does illustrate how well a person’s job experience – regardless of the profession – translates into the classroom.

profession,” she said. “The art and science of preparation and presentation of the deceased is just one part. But you also must be proficient at writing and speaking with families during their difficult time. You need to be respectful, compassionate. You need to know about different religions

“The theme is about giving teachers the tools to learn how to teach STEM and instilling in them the confidence to create engaging lesson plans. This, in turn, gives the students the confidence to pursue the sciences as a viable career interest.”

LAURA FROST, ASSOCIATE DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

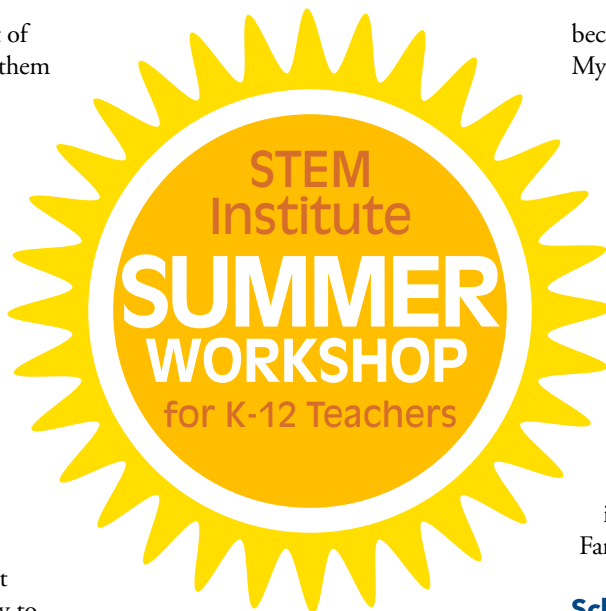
said, “I’m very proud to be a recipient of the Schulze scholarship. I can’t thank them enough,” he said of the life-changing support. Without the scholarship and its one-year teaching requirement, he would not have found his passion.

Teacher Immersion Program (TIP)

Pathway Two focuses on career changers, adults who are interested in taking their knowledge into the classroom, sharing not only subject content with students, but also life experiences. The four-semester graduate-level Teacher Immersion Program (TIP) is designed to support these career changers on their journey to earning teacher certification.

In some cases, TIP participants have never been in the classroom; others have secured temporary teaching jobs but need the required certification to carry on in a permanent capacity.

Michelle Matuszak, an adult career changer, teaches science at Golden Gate Middle School in Naples. She is in her last semester of TIP, soon to take her final teacher certification exam, at which time she will move from temporary teacher status to permanent. She credits the support of the Schulze Foundation Scholarship for giving her the financial



When she was 19, Matuszak accepted a job in a local funeral home as a receptionist. She comforted grieving families, performed odd jobs and learned about preparing human remains. And she learned two more important things: She loved it and was good at it.

Fast forward – she changed her major to mortuary science; earned her degree, took the national board exam for funeral directing and licensing, and enjoyed a 20-year career working her way up to funeral home director. “All kinds of skills are needed to be successful in this

because each has its own needs and rituals. My education is really well rounded.”

And it is the sum total of Matuszak’s education that she brings to her classroom. That is the gift of a career changer – the infusion of varying life experiences to share with their students.

Until learning about the TIP program at FGCU, Matuszak was unclear as to how she would manage her journey to certification from a financial standpoint. As of this writing, she is one exam away from solidifying her second career and is grateful for the support the Schulze Family Foundation afforded her.

Schulze Summer STEM Institute

Pathway Three, the Schulze Summer STEM Institute for K-12 teachers, is a one-week master in-service summer workshop open to teachers – in any subject area – who are interested in learning how to create innovative ways to introduce STEM in the classroom; enrollment is free.

Laura Frost, now associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and formerly director of the Whitaker Center for STEM Education, cofounded the STEM Institute in 2013. Between 2013 and 2019, 275 teachers participated, facilitated by a team of FGCU faculty, each of whom conducts

GIVING

different aspects of the program.

"In 2016, with the infusion of the Schulze funding," said Frost, "the program expanded greatly, and we couldn't be more grateful. In 2020, due to COVID, we pivoted to a virtual workshop."

The STEM Institute takes place onsite at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, FGCU's partner in the program, as well as one day each at FGCU and the Vester Field Station in Bonita Springs. Consisting of two week-long workshop sessions each summer, the Institute serves an average of 25 participants per session. Heather Skaza-Acosta, assistant professor of environmental education at FGCU, holds a joint appointment with the Conservancy and, as its education director, helps to coordinate activities.

"The theme," said Frost, "is not about teaching content. The theme is about giving teachers the tools to learn how to teach STEM and instilling in them the confidence to create engaging lesson plans." This, in turn, gives the students the confidence to pursue the sciences as a viable career interest.

Robyn Peer graduated from the University of South Florida in 1991. Seven years ago, after 18 years teaching language arts, she moved into the gifted classroom, teaching second through fifth graders once a week at Edison Park Elementary and two days at Colonial Elementary in Fort Myers.

With 27 years teaching under her belt, Peer was feeling burned out – the been-there, done-that feeling that creeps up on us from

time to time. "I love teaching but I was at a standstill."

That's when she and a friend enrolled in the STEM Institute. "Honestly, I had zero interest in science. I didn't like it. But I do love to learn, grow and find out new things. So I gave it a try.

"Attending the STEM Institute completely changed my life," she said. "The professors were amazing. They cared. They were interesting. I fell in love with science. I learned I can teach it, and that it's fun and exciting. The STEM Institute sparked a whole new fire in me."

Participants completing the STEM Institute are given a \$1,000 stipend to buy supplies for their classrooms or, alternatively, fund science-related field trips. Peer purchased a hydroponic garden tower and developed creative lesson plans for her students. One example: comparing and contrasting seeds grown in the indoor hydroponic tower with seeds grown outdoors in the sunlight. Students kept scientific journals documenting their findings.

"FGCU is on the cutting edge of things happening all over the world," said Peer. "I was so impressed and proud for our community."

"The Schulze Foundation understands teachers' needs, the community's needs," said Peer. "I am so grateful that they chose to invest in us. The whole experience was so eye opening for me and totally changed my perspective as to where I was in life and how far I could still go. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the Schulze Foundation for giving me this life-changing experience." ■



PROGRAMS HELP YOUNG CHILDREN SHARPEN LITERACY, SOCIAL SKILLS

It's called "summer slide" – those neither here nor there weeks between pre-school and kindergarten when children tend to lose academic and social skills.

"The Schulze Family Foundation is a huge supporter of early education and literacy," said Professor Elizabeth Elliott, chair of the Department of Teacher Education and interim director of the Little Eagles Learning Center. "And with their generous support, FGCU offers its Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program, serving approximately 100 Lee County children each summer."

The VPK is conducted at Little Eagles Learning Center on campus as well as four additional partner centers in Lee County. Funding covers teacher salaries, children's tuition, supplies, two family events and a yearly one-day conference focusing on transition from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

Then there is the year-round Early Literacy Learning Model (ELLM). Thanks again to the Schulze Foundation, area children have a leg up on learning. The program is operated by Childcare of Southwest Florida. The grant for ELLM funds a part-time literacy coach and all program materials for 10 Lee County classrooms.

As principle investigator for both initiatives, Elliott wrote the grants and is responsible for distributing the funds. "The impact of both programs is impressive," said Elliott. "Post-program assessments judge participants ready academically and socially to enter kindergarten with the skills they need to be successful." ■

TO APPLY

Scholarships are available for the 2021-22 academic year. For more information about the Summer STEM Institute, visit fgcu.edu/whitaker12. For information on the teaching program, visit fgcu.edu/schulzeteachers. Or call the Whitaker Center at (239) 590-7444.

Golf management program names lab after loyal Eagles alum

BY SETH SOFFIAN

BRIAN BLOMBERG WAS never sick as a kid. From kindergarten through his senior year of high school growing up on Long Island in Farmingville, New York, he didn't miss a day of school.

Then, as a model student and diehard sports fan at FGCU a decade ago, his boundless dedication and enthusiasm came across in early morning text messages he'd send to friends and colleagues in the Professional Golf Management program.

"Rise and grind boys," Blomberg would tell them, a defining mantra in a work-hard, play-hard mindset that has come to be known as "The Blomberg Doctrine."

"Don't make excuses in life," the doctrine decrees. "Work hard. Seize the opportunity. Inspire others. Try new things. Enjoy Life. Be the reason someone smiles today."

So when Blomberg was diagnosed in 2019 with the rare, aggressive bone cancer Ewing sarcoma, it never occurred to him he wouldn't beat it.

"He was always positive," said his mother, Julie.

"He was never thinking he couldn't do something," said his father, Bret.

In March, FGCU dedicated the PGM program's student lab in Sugden Hall in honor of the distinguished 2012 graduate, who died in September 2020, only 14 months after his diagnosis and about 17 months after first experiencing back pain.

Named the Brian M. Blomberg Golf Management Student Lab, it is yet another reflection of the proud Eagles alumnus who continued inspiring others long after leaving FGCU.

"Brian just had a great personality. He was full of life," PGM Director Tara



TOP: Brian Blomberg as Azul during the Miami vs FGCU game in 2012.

BELOW: Brian with a more recent Azul.

McKenna said of Blomberg, who interned at several top 100 clubs while at FGCU and was an assistant pro for seven years at the acclaimed Maidstone Club in East Hampton, New York.

"If there was an event supporting FGCU

Athletics or Golf Management, Brian was always first to raise his hand and say, 'Let's go do it and have some fun and raise some money.' The response we've received to naming that room has been pretty amazing."

As a passionate member of FGCU's student fan group, the Dirty Birds,

Blomberg knew there were times when a fill-in was needed to don the mascot costume for Azul the Eagle.

So he asked. After a couple successful tryouts, he was rewarded during his last semester in fall 2012 with the plum

assignment for FGCU's breakthrough home upset of Miami early in the 2012-13 campaign that culminated in the Eagles' historic Sweet 16 appearance.

"He loved the school so much he had being Azul on his bucket list," said FGCU Associate Athletics Director Denise Da Silveira, recalling Blomberg's distinct in-costume persona that matched his nature: athletic and outgoing, filled

with high-fives and celebratory push-ups.

"He had a charisma and attitude that worked. I thought that (game) was a special memory to give to a student like Brian. He was just a great kid."

After Blomberg died, so meaningful was his impact on others that the \$25,000 needed to support the PGM program and name the student lab in his honor rapidly poured in, with much coming from club members at Maidstone.

"It was unbelievable the letters we got," Julie Blomberg said. "There was a lot of stuff I didn't even know. He did a lot for a lot of people. He had such an impact."

Despite the distance, FGCU remained a proud second home to Blomberg, who continued enthusiastically supporting the PGM and Athletics programs long after graduation.

"FGCU was a big part of his life," said Bret Blomberg, noting annual Southwest Florida vacations the family took that included trips to FGCU games, the bookstore to buy Eagles gear and even to Brian's prized alumni donor brick near the Cohen Student Union.

"He was so proud of that school. He loved it even after leaving. It meant a lot to him." ■





'Field of Remembrance': FGCU reflects on pandemic's toll

AS THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC passed the one year mark in spring, this art installation and other campus events offered the FGCU community a moment to reflect on those we've lost to COVID-19 as well as what we've learned during these challenging times. "Field of Remembrance, Cathedral of Sky" featured 10,000 ceramic tributes inspired by votive candles traditionally used as prayer offerings in many faiths. Handmade by students, faculty and other volunteers, the floral shapes were placed on the Great Lawn to symbolize the magnitude of the pandemic's toll. Representing Southwest Florida lives lost, about 2,000 were treated with a copper glaze that turned shades of green and blue when fired. "Because they're shaped by hand, they are not uniform," said Professor Maria Roca, who proposed and organized the memorial along with Professor Patricia Fay. "Each person lost to COVID-19 was unique, too." ■

ON THE
WEB

FGCU360.com

HIGHLIGHTS FROM
DEDICATION

AT RIGHT: A student was one of the dozens who created this tribute to those who died of COVID-19.



PHOTO BY TIFFANY SHADDEN



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