



SOUTH BEACH WINE AND FOOD FESTIVAL PREVIEW

Hospitality students take part in festival

BY REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

The South Beach Wine and Food Festival is one of the largest culinary festivals in the country.

The fifth edition of this popular festival, hosted by the Southern Wine & Spirits of Florida and the FIU School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, brings together some of the world's greatest chefs, wine makers, spirit producers and culinary personalities who come to the festival to entertain in high style and demonstrate with wine seminars and cooking demos.

This year's event takes place from Feb. 23 to Feb. 26.

"It's the fifth year that we've been doing the South Beach Wine and Food Festival and every year it gets a little more exciting," said chef Michael Moran, who also serves as the culinary coordinator of the festival. "Not only are we able to take students in our classes to the festival, but we also able to learn new things every year."

Among the highlights of the festival are 13 high-profile chefs, including chef Bobby Flay cooking up a champagne-drenched beach-side barbecue (Feb. 24) and the Grand Tasting Village (Feb. 25-26).

All chefs are expected to arrive on Feb. 22 from outside South Florida. It is during this time that most of the preparation will take place.

"All the preparation will happen within a 48-hour span between [Feb. 22 and 23]," said Aaron Abramoff, teaching assistant to Moran. "We need to prepare for it early, although the party isn't until Friday, mainly because the party takes place down on the beach."

Junior Joseph McKinney, who will be in charge of all personnel on the days of the festival, is looking forward to the event, although he is quick to point out all the work that goes on behind the scenes.

"People see the lights, the tents and the food and drinks. What they don't realize is that there's a lot of people putting in a massive amount of hours to make sure everything goes seamless," McKinney said.

Andrew Lyman, another teaching assistant to Moran, agrees with McKinney.

"It's like a play or a sporting event. We put in a lot of work and hours and then it's over in a span of two hours," he said. "But for those two hours, it's the most magical event."

At the Grand Tasting Village, chefs and culinary personalities will share recipes and cuisines of dozens of South Florida restaurants in two huge tents.

Guests will also be treated to a competition similar to the Iron Chef competitions shown on Food Network where two professional chefs battle each other in a friendly match-up.

"The Grand Tasting marks the combination of wine and food prepared by



PARTNERSHIP: Over 300 hospitality management students are expected to serve at this year's South Beach Wine and Food Festival. Last year (above), 18,000-20,000 visitors attended the festival. **FILE PHOTO**

chefs, as well as exhibitors who were not part of our portfolio when we first started on the beach," Moran said.

Apart the Grand Tasting Village, other events expected to hold patrons' attention include the Wine Spectacular Best of the Best, which brings together wines from 25 of the nation's top wineries.

The festival also offers guests seven seminars ranging from a seminar hosted by master sommelier Andrea Robinson that pits the Pinot Noir, a recent star of the silver screen, courtesy of the film *Sideways*, against the classic Merlot.

Kids can learn how to cook in workshops hosted by superstar chefs from the Food Network: Emril Lagasse, Rachael Ray, Alton Brown and Giade De Laurentis.

All proceeds from the festival go back to the School of Hospitality Management for scholarships.

Ninety percent of the food is donated by the festival sponsors, which include *Food & Wine Magazine*, Southern Wine and Spirits of Florida and China Grill Management.

Moran believes the coupling of students and industry chefs makes for a tremendous interaction.

"It really is a win-win situation," Moran said. "I'm going to have 85 students on the site. It is very important

that there's good organization and everybody knows their duties."

Lyman agrees with Moran and adds that the biggest part of the festival for him is watching the professional chefs work.

"To us, they're movie stars like Tom Cruise," Lyman said. "I don't have any interest in shaking their hands and getting their autographs. They got there for a reason and I enjoy watching them work. It's an opportunity to watch a superstar; someone who's the best in the world and watching how they do it. That's what I'll be getting out of this festival."

Tickets for the Grand Tasting Village and most events are sold out. For ticket information, visit the event website at www.sobewineand-foodfest.com.

MORE INSIDE

— Iron chef to cook barbecue at BubbleQ event Pg. 3

— FIU chef Michael Moran coordinates festival Pg. 6

Health fee increase proposed

BY GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Staff Writer

Students may soon face up to a \$13.20 increase in the University health fee. If approved by the University Fee Committee, the proposed increase would go into effect Fall 2006 and raise the current health fee of \$54 to \$67.20.

"It's been three years since the last health fee increase," said Assistant Vice President of student affairs John Bonanno. "Over that period of time, we've expanded the Health Center [and] as a result, more services are provided to students and more staffing is needed in order to provide those services."

The current health fee covers both physical and mental health needs. The Health and Wellness Center, the Counseling and Psychological Center, the Victim's Advocacy Center and the Disability Resource Center are all services included in the health fee, so students can use them throughout the semester without having to pay for each visit, according to Bonanno.

"Students are just like everybody else — they have problems. If they were to go out into the community and see a psychiatrist, they're looking at \$150 an hour — sometimes. You can't beat our health coverage," Bonanno said.

The University Fee Committee, consisting of four student representatives and four faculty and staff representatives, makes the final decision on the proposed increase Feb. 23. The four student representatives of the committee are include University Park Student Government Association President Alex Prado, UP SGA Comptroller Nancy Cadavid, Biscayne Bay Campus SGA President Lemar Linton and BBC SGA Comptroller Zachary Trautenberg.

University President Modesto Maidique appointed the four faculty and staff representatives. In case of a tie, Charles Tinder, chairman of the committee, will cast the deciding vote.

Although the proposed fee increase is \$13.20, it could be lower.

"State law restricts fees from raising more than five percent a year, so the health fee increase is capped at \$13.20. The finalized increase could be less than that amount," Prado said.

Even if the health fee is increased by the maximum \$13.20, this fee would still be lower than the current health fees of the University of Florida and Florida State University. UF's \$126.60 health fee is currently the highest among Florida public universities while FSU's \$110.25 fee is the second highest.

Before the final voting on the fee increase can take place, state law requires

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THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

MONDAY • FEBRUARY 20

Pan-African Women Celebration: 12 p.m., WUC Ballrooms (BBC)

War and Terror: How the New York Times Covers Today's Global Conflicts: 12 p.m., WUC 155 (BBC)

Tri Sigma Bake Sale: 12 p.m., GC Forum (UP)

Panther Rage Meeting: 4 p.m., GC 140 (UP)

TUESDAY • FEBRUARY 21

Jazz Era Casino Benefit Night: 7 p.m., WUC Ballroom (\$20 VIP tickets) (BBC)

SPC and Panther Rage present Karaoke Night: 7 p.m., Gracie's Grill (UP)

Student Composer's Concert - Orlando Jacinto Garcia, Director: 8 p.m., Wertheim Performing Arts Center (PAC 170) (UP)

Wild Succulent Women: 9 p.m., Everglades Hall (UP)

WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 22

Student Government Association Meeting: 3:30 p.m., WUC 155 (BBC)

The RAGE of the Bull - Bull Riding Competition: 12 p.m., The Pit (GC Forum) (UP)

SPC Coffee House featuring performances from Addax, Homebody: 6 p.m., GC Starbucks (UP)

Florida Accounting Association hosts Business Industry Night: 7 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

THURSDAY • FEBRUARY 23

College of Law presents Composite Picture Day: 12 p.m., GL 482 (UP)

Panther Rage Pep Rally: 12 p.m., The Pit (GC Forum) (UP)

SPC Comedy Show: 7:30 p.m., GC Ballrooms (UP)

FRIDAY • FEBRUARY 24

SPC Pan-African Gospel Celebration Explosion: 7 p.m., Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre (BBC)

United Nations Association of Greater Miami presents Wave of Violence Lecture series: 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., GL 100

- Compiled by Reuben Pereira

Club celebrates British culture

BY JOSE PAGLIERY
Contributing Writer

With Scottish highland games, Curry Nights and the occasional Cricket game, the FIU British-American Student Association embodies culture and diversity.

"I've always thought that this club offers something different," Helyett Harris, president of BASA said. "You'll actually learn something along the way."

Harris is one of the original founders of the club, along with students Brent Capley, Robert Dunn and Mariel Garcia. They met at the Student Organizations Council club fair during the 2003 Fall semester. They decided to start a club that embraces British culture.

Harris, whose father served in the British Royal Navy, had always been interested in British culture, but hadn't found a club that embraced that passion.

"When I couldn't find one, I decided to create one myself," Harris said. So began the dive into a sea of pub nights, polo games, British car shows and Indian Curry Nights, an activity otherwise known as "hitting the Punjab."

The monthly Pub Night always falls on a Friday, usually at John Martin's in Coral Gables.

"We do it religiously," Harris said.



BASA: From left, secretary Robert Dunn, President Helyett Harris and Vice President Brent Capley set up in the Graham Center to recruit members for the British-American Students Association. CHRIS CUTRO / THE BEACON

This outing allows club members to socialize in a British-influenced environment, exemplifying what the organization is all about: A chance for students living in a diverse city to experience and celebrate a culture they may know little about.

The same applies for the Curry Night, where club members visit either the Punjab Palace or House of India in an attempt to get a taste of the food that Harris describes as "colorful and not as spicy as most people think."

There, members of all ages get the chance to enjoy foods ranging from 'sausage and mash,' a delicious combination of sausage, mashed potatoes, peas and gravy, to 'sticky toffee pudding,' where a sugary syrup is poured onto a small cake, allowing it to sink to the bottom.

Another perk to membership is the chance to take part in the annual Scottish Highland Games, full of strange events such as 'tossing the caber,' where a player sees how long he or she can toss and flip a 20-foot-long, 18-inch thick log.

Members also enjoy the art of highland country dancing, piping and massed bands, in which about 150 musicians march with pipes and drums for minutes at a time - for free.

"It's good to volunteer," Harris said.

Knowing that his club members will get in without being charged. The arts also play a large role in the BASA.

"We support the FIU theatre and try to get a good British movie once in a while," Phillip Church, the club's advisor said.

The British-born Church is one of the head faculty members of the Theatre Department, and is quite supportive of the initiative. Even British music plays its part in the cultural experience.

"I've been the most involved with music," Harris said. Harris introduces club members to bands like Keane, The Doves, The Verve and Travis, while enjoying well-known bands such as Radiohead and Coldplay and inviting fellow members to attend concerts with him.

Harris, who is majoring in international relations, now enjoys the fruition of starting a club with others over their common interest in British culture, although things weren't always so easy.

When asked about starting his own club he said that, "it's not easy if it's an undermanned club. Most clubs at FIU have trouble finding members because it's often seen as a commuter school."

He explains that students regularly find themselves packed with credits, trying to graduate as quickly as possible, therefore not finding the time to join clubs that may interest them.

Still, he believes that the club will gain students' interests over time.

"We've met each other as strangers and we've all become friends," Harris said.

Upcoming hearing to determine fee increase

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that public hearings be held on campus to inform students of the proposed changes. The first hearing occurred Feb. 15 at BBC.

"About 25 students showed up to the public hearing at BBC," Linton said.

The second public hearing is scheduled for Feb. 22 at 3:30 p.m. in Graham Center 150. Members of the University Fee Committee will be in attendance to answer students' questions and discuss the fee increase.

"Students need to come out to the hearing on Wednesday so they can voice their opinions. By having many students show up and ask questions, students could have some influence over the outcome," said SGA Lower Division Representative Marbely Hernan-

dez. Last year, only about four people showed up at the fee increase hearings, according to Hernandez.

To inform students of the upcoming hearing, SGA will have tables placed in GC from Feb. 20-22 with representatives announcing the hearing date.

In addition, giveaways will be handed out to students who stop by the tables and fill out a survey concerning the Health and Wellness Center. The

survey consists of five questions asking students if they want the center to have extended operating hours.

"Many students can't make it to the center's weekday operating hours of nine to five because of work and classes. Plus, the center isn't open on weekends, so students who need medical attention on Saturday and Sunday have to go elsewhere. If the fee is going to be increased, students want

to see more benefits," said SGA Representative at Large Alfonso Leon.

According to Leon, about 4,000 Health and Wellness Center surveys have been printed and at least 2,000 are expected to be collected by Wednesday.

Students can turn in their surveys at the SGA office located on the second floor of GC. The results of the surveys will be revealed at Wednesday's hearing.

SGA BEAT

- American Heritage week will be the week before spring break.
- Rage week will take place Feb. 20-26. Panther Rage will be hosting a variety of events across campus.
- Justin Farenger has been elected as the Graduate Representative. Rosie Perez has been elected as the Honors College Representative.
- MTV campus invasion will be visiting FIU on April 11.

- Compiled by Adrian Diaz

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Construction blamed for congested lanes

BY JOSE MAYA
Contributing Writer

Stressed drivers may be happy to hear that construction for the new sewer system along 151st street near the Biscayne Bay Campus is close to completion, according to Aleen Ghany, City of North Miami representative.

"By late February, the majority of the road should be clear of debris," Ghany said.

Many upset drivers have dealt with the problem for several months because only two lanes are open for traffic.

The closure of the two lanes is from the entrance into 151st street to the BBC parking lot.

However, the new sewer system will be improving the water pressure at BBC, and its other surrounding area.

This system consists of putting in a new 16-inch diameter water main that should prove helpful.

"I am very sorry about the inconvenience, and the City of North Miami is very sorry about the delays," Ghany said.

Ghany also said that there had been some plumbing and schedule delays because of last year's busy hurricane season.

"Whenever possible, officers are put on the street entrance to reduce the possibility of accidents," said Bill King, Department of Public Safety director. "I do know there have been a few complaints in the difficulty of getting in and out of the campus, but I ask for patience."

King also mentioned that there is a plan for a future alternative entrance and exit route, but did not specify any dates.

Traffic along 151st street has also increased because of the developing con-



struction of the joint elementary-middle school and Biscayne Landing, the new condominium buildings, according to Jorge L. Padron and Brian Bitar, coordinator and assistant director of the Department of Facilities at BBC, respectively.

"I think it's great the lanes are going to re-open because it is becoming very difficult to drive in and out of the campus," said Moses Perodin, a sports management major.

Advertising major Jason Wright agreed.

"I am definitely happy that the construction is almost over, and I hope that the street comes back to normal," Wright said.

Students must be aware that there are many workers and heavy machinery on the other closed lanes of the street

and should take extra precautions.

Students and staff are all able to get a ticket if they decide to speed.

Peak hours for traffic are in the mid-morning and late afternoon.

Traffic has also accumulated because of the increase in students and personnel around the area. When the street is restored to its normal setting it will be open for four lanes, two incoming, and two outgoing.



BUMPER TO BUMPER: The entrance into the Biscayne Bay Campus along 151st street is under construction, closing off one lane and using the other for two-way traffic. Drivers take the congested detour designed to get to campus. North Miami Representative Aleen Ghany assures that by late February most of the road should be clear of debris. **CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON**

Iron chef Flay, students to cook at BubbleQ event

BY FALLAN THOMPSON
Staff Writer

As the Food and Wine Festival approaches, many students at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management will start preparing for their biggest event of the year.

Along with grand tasting tents to be held Feb. 25 and 26, students are preparing for BubbleQ with Bobby Flay and friends – an event that combines together barbecue and champagne.

FIU chef and festival organizer for the past five years, Michael Moran, will lead both his beginning and advanced culinary event management class to help 13 chefs prepare for the Feb. 24 event.

The event is sponsored by Moët and Chandon Champagne.

"Champagne and barbecue are not just for a fancy

“Jake Gurlides, hospitality management major and part of Flay's team

Champagne and barbecue are not just for a fancy wedding or a house party. People can throw burgers on the grill and pop open a bottle. It feels great to work with someone with [several] shows on the Food Network. I got lucky to be on his team.

wedding or a house party. People can throw burgers on the grill and pop open a bottle," said Jake Gurlides, a hospitality management major and part of Flay's team. "It feels great to work with someone with [several] shows on the Food Network. I got lucky to be on his team."

Gurlides is in Moran's advanced food production class and currently works at DiSalvos, a family-owned Italian restaurant.

"I will be assisting him; basically cooking with [Flay]. He's bringing his own pit smoker and he will run the booth," Gurlides said.

BubbleQ will take place on the beach shore behind the Delano hotel.

Moran describes the event as the amalgamation of the best of American barbecue and the best of French champagne.

Flay's team will be serving spiced rubbed smoked chicken breast with black pepper vinegar sauce and green onion slaw.

The sold-out barbecue event will serve sample portions to the 1,600 guests who paid \$300 each for an admission ticket.

Each chef will prepare 1,600 sample portions – a total that adds up to 20,800 sample portions of food for this particular event.

Over 300 students from FIU are signed up to volunteer at the festival, but many more are still needed, according to Denise Coelho, the student volunteer coordinator at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Any student interested should contact Coelho at (305) 348-4518 or in HM110 at BBC.



SPECIAL GUEST: At the BubbleQ event of the Wine and Food Festival, Iron chef Bobby Flay, who is known for barbecue, will run the booth with his pit smoker with assistance of FIU students. **COURTESY PHOTO**

OPINION

Harry Coleman Editor in Chief • Leoncio Alvarez Managing Editor • Christopher Necuze Opinion Editor

THE BEACON | Editorial

Fee increase revenue should be used wisely

The proposal by the University to increase the health fee by \$13.20 may perhaps come as a surprise to some, particularly those who didn't know that they had to pay a health fee, or forgot that health facilities existed.

With approximately 36,000 students enrolled at FIU, a tuition increase of \$13.20 would give the University almost an additional half-million dollars to play with and for what?

Perhaps such a small amount may not seem like something to get all worked up about. Most of us spend that much money on food on a daily basis, if not more.

Yet the majority of us will hardly ever find ourselves in one of the various health facilities located on campus, particularly because the facilities are open only during the day, when most students are either in class or working.

This is not to say that these facilities are completely useless, as we are sure that some people take advantage of them, as they should. The point here is that to the majority of students, these facilities are a convenience they will never use.

The University could probably use the added funds to provide free transportation between University Park and Biscayne Bay Campus, so students who travel between both campuses can take some pressure of their pocket books.

Should the increase pass, and we are sure it will, students would have to be assured their

money will be put to good use. The hours of the health facilities should be changed to accommodate those students whose schedule does not permit them to visit these facilities during their current hours of operation.

The additional money should be used precisely to make more readily accessible what has until now been a service not used by the majority of students.

However, the services offered are quality ones. The services of nutritionists, dieticians, mental, physical and sexual health professionals are only the tip of the iceberg of things these elaborate facilities have to offer.

The problem herein lies in the fact that most students do not take advantage of these services either because they do not have the time, or simply do not know that they exist.

Should the proposed increase pass, it will most likely come into effect at the beginning of the Fall 2006 semester. With the approval of this increase, it is our hope that the University will wisely use the money to properly inform students of the services they are paying for and in making these services more available – because as of now, the only thing most students know about the health services is that they are, in fact, paying for them.

Socialism rising in Latin America

BY HARY TOLEDO
Contributing Writer

No one can doubt the rise of socialism in Latin America. With the election of leaders who lean politically to the left, many of the people in the countries of Latin America have responded to the impoverished conditions by electing leaders who promise them a better quality of life, regardless of the fact that these leaders may have an ideological coup in mind, rather than feeding the hungry or clothing the naked.

The United Fruit Company – known today as Chiquita – had such a great impact on Latin America that in most countries, it subverted the authority of the government, essentially taking over the economy.

This is what basically caused the rise of the socialist revolution, when government movements started to fight the negative effect the company was having on the economies of Latin American countries.

Most of the movements were overthrown by a silent American counterrevolution, but, after years of free trade reforms, many countries are turning away from the changes the counterrevolution brought and are looking to start on the path they had abandoned. Venezuela – thanks to its president, Hugo Chavez – is one.

Chavez has landed on the United States radar with his control of 2.1 million barrels per year of exportable oil (Venezuela is ranked seventh in the world for oil exports). Following in the Chavez path is newly elected Bolivian President Evo Morales, who has acknowledged he would be a nightmare for America.

Morales wants to decriminalize coca production and roll back much of the market reforms. This should come as no surprise since he came to power through his strong standings in the cocalero movement (a loose federation of coca leaf-growing farmers).

Peru has its own revolution forming, with Ollanta Humala at the helm. Humala shares many of the same ideological beliefs as President Chavez. Néstor Kirchner, president of Argentina, elected 2003, is also moving in the socialist direction.

After Argentina's economic failures, President Kirchner has decided to cut the country's ties to the International Monetary Fund.

Many other countries are joining the revolution and changing the dynamics of international politics toward Latin America. The next country



BAD LEADER: Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela, has been one of the factors that has turned South America away from the changes of the counterrevolution. COURTESY PHOTO

that could join the revolution is Mexico. Mexico's elections are to take place this year and Andrés Manuel López Obrador looks to have a chance at winning the presidency.

Obrador is trying to separate his image from Chavez, seeing the tension in recent years between Venezuela and Mexico. Obrador might also be interested in keeping the relationship Mexico has with the United States.

The socialist movement is using economic poverty to gain strength. I believe the first thing these countries need are strong leaders who will stand up for their countries' national interest. The leaders of Latin American countries give in either to America or the gangs that run rampant in their countries. Giving into the demands of Western nations usually means countries being one-crop producers.

If it has an interest (looking for assistance on the war on terror, say, or the war on drugs), America will invest time and interest to helping. This strong leader must look to use his or her resources to the fullest and handle their homeland security themselves.

Another thing that needs to be addressed is the imposition of economic imperialism on Latin America. The world needs to stop exploiting these countries

to the brink of extinction. On that note, this hypothetical "strong leader" should stop making deals that will only temporarily fund the country, and inundate it further into debt.

In other displays of indifference to Latin America, the president failed to mention even one Latin American country in his State of the Union address. Disregarding these countries will not solve anything and will cause America to have trade problems with them. This general lack of concern by the U.S. will only make the situation worse.

Most of these Latin American countries are depicted as third-world countries while they have the potential to feed their people and succeed economically. Their leaders should be demanded to stand up and respond to the people.

They need to know why the rich get richer and the poorer get poorer. These leaders must answer why year after year corruption is allowed to grow and murders are going unpunished. If this leader cannot take charge of the situation, then a new one must be found.

I believe that this revolution is destined to fail. And, hopefully, when it does, it produces an economy that will propel the country and the people to a better place; a place which has taken too long in coming.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Smock has the right to hold rallies despite his unpopularity among students

Campus Ministry USA preacher Jed Smock is well within his rights in regard to what he preaches. The First Amendment clearly states that a person has the right to express himself in any matter he deems fitting so long as he does so peacefully. Last time I checked, Smock did not incite a violent protest of any sort.

Censorship is not an option.

A person should not be silenced simply because the masses don't agree with his ideals. No, freedom of speech doesn't come with a stipulation of that sort. There is no

First Amendment Addendum stating that a person is free to speak his mind so long as his opinions are politically correct. It's the price we pay for freedom. The system isn't perfect, but its one saving grace, the one area in which it is infallible, is its proclivity to defend the basic rights that each person has. It's plain and simple: If you strip someone of his right to organize and voice his ideals, then you lose the right to do the same.

-William Orta
junior
English major

Democratic Party fails its supporters

BY JAMIE BLANCO
Staff Writer

First of all, let me say that I am a staunch democrat, but the problems of my party cannot be ignored. First we lost Congress, then the White House. Now our failed efforts have done nothing but ensure an ideological shift of power in the highest court in the land.

This latest loss is the most profound, and most far reaching, essentially removing a vital check on the ruling party.

Decisions made by this court will define American life for generations to come. It's the latest in a series of continuous failures which have plagued the Democratic Party since Bill Clinton left office six years ago – that's where I think all of this started.

"They have no more strong, charismatic leaders" said Patrice Adolphe, an FIU graduate, "They have no concrete plans and appear indecisive."

As a friend told me once, John Kerry didn't lose because he's a Massachusetts liberal, he lost because he didn't stick to his guns.

"They don't seem to offer a comprehensive way of governing, or a set of core values," said FIU graduate and adjunct Gilbert Saint-Jean. "They operate by opinion polls and have lost because of it." I see Democrats appearing on television, whining and criticizing, lavishing in their hindsight wisdom and offering few realistic solutions.

Unfortunately, most are guilty of giving into pressure at the time when they could have really made a difference. It's gotten to the point today where hardly anyone remembers what Democrats truly stand for, even among their staunchest supporters, like me. That is what the American people see, and that is what we have to change.

The latest Gallup polls show the lowest Congressional approval ratings since 1944, with 67 percent of Americans unhappy with the way the republican majority Congress is handling its job right now.

Why, then, do we continue to fail to reach the masses even though there is an apparent mass desire for change?

THE GOP AND THE MEDIA

The Republican Party, if nothing else, is a glowing example of organization. They dominate the political arena with their centralized message, expertly utilizing the media for their public relations and marketing campaigns. The Bush administration broke records in 2004, spending at least \$88 million on contracts with major public relations firms for his re-election. The administration spent \$250 million on public relations contracts during its first term, compared with \$128 million spent for President Clinton between 1997 and 2000.

Those hundreds of millions go directly to making Bush visible and presentable and to convincing the American people that Bush's ideals are right for them.

Despite the fact that those ideals allow for government spying, the constitutionalization of inequality based on sexual orientation and the continued shipping of American jobs overseas, their message was strong, clear and successful.

This is where Democrats need to fight back, but it is also where most of our problems lie. We use the media unsuccessfully.

In 2002, I volunteered for the Senate campaign of a local Democrat Annie Betancourt. She had almost a decade's experience and a great message, but little funding. Her opponent was one of the Diaz-Ballard brothers, with millions at his disposal.

He attacked her in ads, made outrageous claims and associated her exaggeratedly with communists, something he knew would scare the largely Cuban population.

Instead of allocating her limited funds to firing back, to defending her reputation, exposing Diaz-Ballard's wrongs and publicizing her views and solutions, she sat back and did almost nothing.

When I asked her why she didn't want to spend money on commercials, she said she didn't want to be a part of the mudslinging.

Honorable as her intentions may have been, allowing those commercials to play without

death sentence for her campaign. Most citizens only have time enough to sit down and listen to what comes out of their television. They do not have time to go back and research the candidates.

In a fast paced world, we Democrats must realize how valuable a tool the media has become and use it to our advantage, because for a party that claims itself to be progressive, we are woefully behind in utilizing such vital tools.

MASSIVE ISSUES TAKEN IN STRIDE

With all the latest scandals erupting over the some of the biggest players in the Bush Administration and Republican Party, the democrats should have the GOP on the ropes.

Yet we are allowing the subjects of these inquiries to fall discreetly into the background – another PR move.

It's been too long since I heard about White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove and Dick Cheney's former Chief of Staff, Lewis "scooter" Libby, both under investigation for leaking the identity of a CIA officer in apparent retaliation for her husband's remarks against the White House.

When was the last time you heard about former Senate Majority Leader Tom Delay and his money laundering scandal? Or what about big-shot republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff, accused of bribing senators for their votes?

How is it that the Democratic Party is allowing these men more rest from public scrutiny than even Michael Jackson received, even though the severity of their crimes is mind blowing?

Despite all of this, a Pew Research Center survey reports that the American people are taking the multiple controversies in stride, and Democrats' continued inaction is failing the American people.

"I used to vote nothing but democrat, but now I'm past that," Adolphe said, "I would consider voting independent, but given the choices now, I would even consider voting republican. If the democrats can't stand up and fight for themselves, how the hell are they going to fight for me?"

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you agree with the proposal by the University to raise the health fee?

- No – I'm broke!
- No – Why should I have to pay for services I do not use.
- Yes – It will help better the medical services in the campus and that's good for all of us.
- Yes – It really isn't that much money.

Cast your vote at www.beaconnewspaper.com

WINNER & LOSER

WINNER



South Beach Wine & Food Festival: The festival has provided FIU students with scholarships for five years in a row and celebrates some of the best food and drinks in the world. The festival has become a staple in the community.

LOSER



Lindsey Jacobellis: The olympic athlete threw away what would have been a runaway victory. She was much farther ahead than Switzerland's Tanja Frieden when she grabbed her board on the second-to-last jump before the finish line. I guess thinking about losing her Mastercard didn't calm her as much as the commercial suggested.

QUOTATIONATION

"My family and I are deeply sorry for all that Vice President Cheney has had to go through this past week."

– **Harry M. Whittington**, the man vice president Dick Cheney shot in the face, on the hardships the vice president has had to face after the accident.

"I think the Legislature recognized that it had to do something with levee boards, and I think they kind of left the other out there to dry."

– **Barry Erwin**, president of the nonpartisan Council for A Better Louisiana, on the vote Louisiana lawmakers made to better the maintenance and care of the state's levee's.

"One has to think a hundred times before publishing something, doing something or drawing something."

– **Vladimir V. Putin**, Russian president, on the closing of a newspaper that published a cartoon depicting Muhammad, Jesus, Moses and Buddha.

"These Israeli decisions are part of the policy of repression, terrorism and collective punishment against our people."

– **Ismail Haniya**, the man expected to become Palestinian Prime minister, on Israeli proposals to restrict the movement of money, people and goods into and out of Palestinian territories.

"Students are just like everybody else – they have problems. If they were to go out into the community and see a psychiatrist, they're looking at \$150 an hour – sometimes. You can't beat our health coverage."

– **John Bonanno**, assistant vice president of student affairs, on the proposal to raise the health fee at FIU.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

— SPRING BREAK DESTINATIONS —

FLORIDA

Spring break fun right in your backyard

Look for this spring break series in the Life! section every Monday issue through March 6.

BY GEOFFREY ANDERSON JR.
Staff Writer

Spring break is a short time away and plenty of students will be thinking of heading out to hotspots like Panama City Beach and Daytona Beach during the week of March 20-25.

With so many exciting locations in Florida, students have many vacation options which don't require spending tons of money on plane tickets and allow for fun road trips with friends. An active nightlife, beach parties and other activities can be found all over the state.

With MTV filming their spring break coverage at Panama City Beach this year, the city will be flooded with college students from all around the United States. Aside from students, Panama City Beach will also be home to one of the biggest parties of the year at Club La Vela, a nightclub with over 14 dance floors and 48 bars.

Because MTV is in town, expect to see some of your favorite celebrities, too. Musicians Pitbull and Daddy Yankee will be making appearances along with "Laguna Beach" and "The Real World" stars.

Even with all the TV coverage in Panama City Beach, don't worry about spending too much money on hotels—several hotels offer spring break discounts for college students.

Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort has rooms available for as low as \$59 a night, while Beachbreak by the Sea room rates are as low as \$39 per night. Both hotels are just a short walk away from the vast beaches. With such reasonable prices and great locations, Panama City Beach hotels are a steal for any student.

"For spring break last year, I spent some time in Panama City Beach and I loved every minute of it. The hotels were very affordably priced and I could walk anywhere [and be there] in a matter of minutes," said junior Daniel Lopez.

If you are unable to make it to Panama City Beach, Daytona Beach offers a number of activities to keep you entertained.

Twenty-three miles of beautiful beaches allow for some good times to cruise the sands while parasailing and jet skiing; two available options if you're feeling adventurous.

When the beaches get boring, head over to Daytona USA and try out the stock car simulators and interactive car exhibits. After the sun goes down, make sure to

check out the beach parties at 600 North and Ocean Deck Beach Club—just two of the many lively nightclubs in town.

Although both Panama City Beach and Daytona Beach are probably the most well-known spring break locations in Florida, the state has other cities which can be just as fun for any college student.

Orlando is the home to Disney World and Universal Studios Florida, two of the largest theme parks attractions in the state. Whether you're riding Space Mountain or helping E.T. find his way home, Orlando can also satisfy your spring break needs.

If theme parks aren't interesting enough, Downtown Disney and Citywalk provide bustling nighttime entertainment with attractions such as Margaritaville and Pleasure Island.

"Disney is always fun," said sophomore Melissa Nieves. "Go to the parks during the day and hit up Downtown Disney at night and party the night away. You can't ever go wrong with Disney or Universal Studios."

About an hour away from Orlando, Tampa also provides college students with several distractions to keep their minds off of school.

Roller coasters can get your blood pumping fast at Busch Gardens, owned by Amheuser-Busch. With the new roller coaster Shiekra sporting a 90-degree drop and other roller coasters having fierce twists and turns, riders should look forward to plenty of thrills. Tampa also hosts Ybor City, where shopping, food and entertainment are found around every corner.

"Busch Gardens has tons of crazy roller coasters and gives away free beer samples. Plus, some event is always happening at Ybor City, so you'll never get bored," said sophomore Frank Rodriguez.

No matter where you spend your spring break in Florida, you can't go wrong—there is something fun to do everywhere. The state hosts an abundance of entertainment locales which will make this spring break unforgettable. Just make sure to put on sunblock.



Panama City Beach



With MTV headed to Panama City Beach this spring break, many surprises will be in store.

Daytona Beach



At Daytona USA, one can experience the thrills of car racing shows and still have time to go to the beach.

Orlando



Orlando is a place full of childhood memories. This spring break, it can also provide young adults with exciting and fun experiences.

University's world renowned chef coordinates festival

BY REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

Michael J. Moran, a chef instructor at the School of Hospitality Management has taught at FIU since 1991. Since joining the University 15 years ago, Moran has received numerous awards for excellence in teaching from both students and faculty alike.

Before joining FIU, Moran served as the executive chef at the Bella Luna Restaurant, a top rated South Florida venue and, more interestingly, as the executive chef for the late King Hussein and Queen Nor of Jordan from 1983 to 1985. Moran has also served as the culinary coordinator for the South Beach Wine

and Food Festival since 2001. The 2006 festival takes place from Feb. 23-26.

Moran, who has been busy planning organizational aspects of the festival with his team of student assistants, is excited about the festival which students gain valuable experience and offers gets their feet in the door.

"It really is a unique experience from the standpoint of being in school," Moran said. "We really have turned this into a huge exercise in organization and planning which is really something that students will be able to walk away with. It really is something special."

Moran has been involved with the festival since its commencement year in 1997, when it was known as the Florida

Extravaganza.

"Originally, we had a small wine tasting at the [Biscayne Bay Campus] Kovens center, but it outgrew the campus," he said. "When we moved it to South Beach, it obviously got a lot of attention. Wine & Food magazine collaborated with us and we got a lot of sponsors."

Although Moran is a world renowned chef, he won't be cooking at the festival. Andrew Lyman, a teaching assistant to Moran in one of his culinary classes, elaborated.

"Our job at the festival is to see that everything is going according to plan," Lyman said. "Mr. Moran is the chief coordinator of the event and he'll be

making sure we're doing our jobs as well as enjoying ourselves in the process."

Moran said that the prospect of seeing students, who have worked so hard on all the planning, finally get to work and take the lead; running this event is the main payoff for him.

"I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction in seeing [students] not only being pro-active in looking for things that need to be taken care of, but also, more importantly than anything else, having a good time doing it," Moran said.

Moran considers the lineup of talent scheduled to appear at this year's festival

Background aids culinary expertise

From CHEF, page 6

to be historical in many ways. The exposure and interaction with the world's top chefs and other industry figures is what he thinks students will find most beneficial.

Speaking about cuisines he pre-

fers, Moran was quick to admit that he was tongue tied.

"Today, it would be French. Yesterday, it was Spanish or Portuguese," he said. "I'm a chef, an artist, an educator and all of the things at the same time. Food is a subject that excites me."

Moran added that although he has a preference for French cuisine because of its focus on fresh ingredients to create simple elegant dishes, he admitted that it wouldn't be fair to have a favorite.

"Considering the influences I have had from students from over 60 countries and the things I have learned along the way, picking a favorite would go against the grain," he said.

Moran described working for the King and Queen of Jordan as a boot camp for a chef in the sense that it

taught him many valuable things and gave him many fond memories.

He clearly recalled the day when he was offered the position.

"I was working under a French master chef for the Jordanian first family. After two months of working under him, the *maitre' domo* of the palace [called] me to his office and [held] out his hands. He told me that in one hand was a plane ticket and in the other was a contract," Moran said.

Moran said he had been preparing lunch for the royal family on his own for a couple of weeks when he received the call.

"I had been making Mickey Mouse pancakes for the kids and they loved it," he said. "They would come into the kitchen wanting to help out. The other chefs would throw them out, but I would peel carrots with them and have fun with them."

Moran was 23 years old when he became the executive chef for the royal family of Jordan. During his two and half year tenure, a record that still stands, he supervised over 50 people and three different kitchens in three different palaces at the same time.

"I was able to surround myself with some really good people and I had some very intense experiences there," Moran said. "I made cuisines from all over the world and I had an unlimited budget. It was an incredible experience that most chefs don't have a chance to experience and I'll always cherish those memories. It's been a good ride."



CHEF EXTRAORDINAIRE: Chef Michael Moran has had many years of experience, including having worked for the King and Queen of Jordan and help coordinate the South Beach Wine and Food Festival. **DALE GOMEZ/SPECIAL TO THE BEACON**

Disney drama breaks into new boundaries

BY ZACHARY DUARTE
Contributing Writer

When most individuals see a Disney logo after a movie trailer, a feeling of another cheesy, heart-warming story that includes a dramatic climax and a happy-go-lucky ending may come to mind.

If that is your point of view about *Eight Below*, then I highly recommend that you reconsider because it's not the case here (except for the heartwarming part).

The main plot of the movie consists of eight sled dogs who are abandoned in the beginning of winter.

Jerry (Paul Walker) plays survival guide to oncoming geologist (Bruce Greenwood) as the two set out to discover a new meteorite that may have landed in Antarctica. When bad weather approaches, Kate (Moon Bloodgood) and Cooper (Jason Biggs) warn Jerry to start turning back and the two are forced to retreat back to base.

With a sub-plot of worry on behalf of Jerry for abandoning his dogs and his endless attempts at getting back to Antarctica, any one would be pleading for the movie to have a happy ending.

Toward the middle of the film, I started to realize this Disney movie actually had my attention, just



HEART WARMING: *Eight Below* is a fun and exciting movie that has brought Disney pictures to a whole new level of drama. **COURTESY PHOTO**

like when I was 6-years-old and first watched *Aladdin*.

With the likes of Max and Maya (two of the sled-dogs left behind) and the childish acting of Biggs, I couldn't help but throw in a laugh or the occasional shriek at that scary second in every movie that has the people behind you kicking your seat.

It's not every day you can see a sled-dog voyage, penguins, sea eels and other kinds of Antarctic wildlife, piled in with meteors from outer space, weird fluorescent colors in the sky in negative 50 degree temperatures.

Eight Below is an inspiring tale of bravery, loyalty and survival skills.

The jaw dropping nature shots which director Frank Marshall (*Hook*, *The Bourne Supremacy*) throws in the film, add to an amazing storyline and a

breathhtaking adventure that is sure to have audiences expressing their emotions when critical scenes end.

Eight Below includes a typical love story and a man (or animal) vs. nature scenario, but finally gives us a Disney movie with a plausible ending. It will surely not be marked as a cliché Disney movie, but instead leave audiences with compassionate emotions and a detailed understanding of a true story of survival.

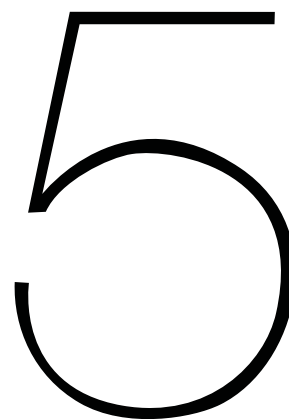
EIGHT BELOW



3.5 out of 4 stars

Starring: Paul Walker, Bruce Greenwood and Moon Bloodgood
Director: Frank Marshall

LIFE!



FIVE QUESTIONS OF INTEREST



NAME:
LARISSA LOCKETT

CURRENT POSITION:
PRESIDENT OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS COUNCIL

1. WHY DID YOU GET OUT OF BED THIS MORNING?

To go to class at 9 a.m. for my test. To go to a test which I think was unfair and my professor did not allow me to finish and if I fail, I'll be going to the dean. I make straight A's in sight-singing and there's no reason the test should have been that hard – especially when it's something you can't study for.

Otherwise, though, I get out of bed because everyday is a chance to start fresh, just in case there was a mistake made the previous day. I hope to have a good day where I can continue to succeed.

2. WHAT IS THE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS COUNCIL?

The SOC is a council that oversees over 140 organizations on campus. It shows the interests and culture of their members.

It's funded by the Student Government Association to allocate funding to the organizations and we are set up as a lobbyist for student organizations to student government and the faculty. We also organize special events and leadership workshops for students and their clubs.

3. WHAT TV ACTOR OR PERSONALITY MAKES YOU CHANGE THE CHANNEL IMMEDIATELY?

Any cartoon, I would change the channel. The animation is phenomenal, but it's just outside of my imagination.

I'd rather watch a show that can apply to my life; one that I can enjoy and that helps me to understand more of what is going on in the world.

4. IF YOU COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE FOR A DAY (FROM ANY TIME OR PLACE), WHO WOULD IT BE?

I would probably switch with Paul Desmond because he's my favorite saxophone player in the whole world. His harmony is beautiful and he plays simple, which is how I think music should be today. Yes, I'm a jazz major.

5. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NEW TREND OF SEEING POLITICALLY AND/OR SOCIALLY ACTIVE CELEBRITIES?

I think it should be raised. I think it will stop a lot of stupidity on the road. I think there should be a program to provide more training for young people, instead of them being able to get a permit because they turned the legal age to drive.

That will stop a lot of accidents and drunk driving. It would make driving a privilege, not a right.

- Compiled by Amanda Healy

POKER FACE



GAME ON: The Jewish fraternity AEPi gathered Feb. 16 to raise money for the Red Cross by playing games of poker. From left, sophomore Ray Diaz, senior Abe Shane and freshman Zac Hartstone took part in the event with a game of Texas Hold Em'. **HARRY COLEMAN/THE BEACON**

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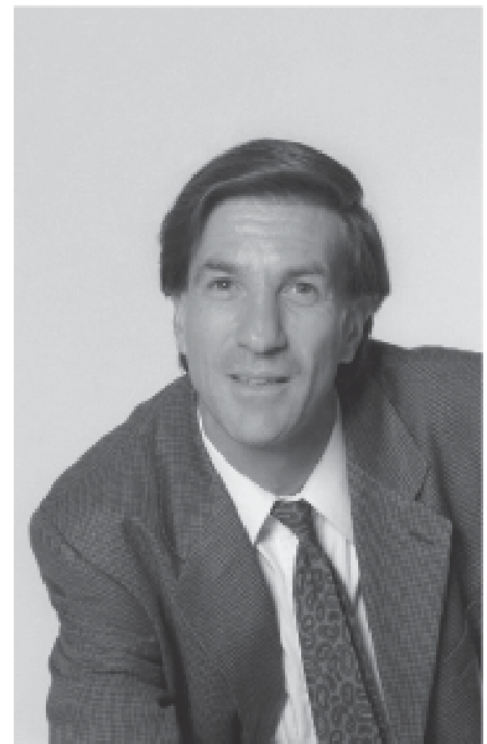
Ethan Bronner has been deputy foreign editor of The New York Times since early 2004. Before that, Mr. Bronner was assistant editorial page editor where he concentrated on foreign affairs, the law and education. He was the paper’s education editor from 1999 until 2001, and a national education correspondent from 1997 until 1999.

Before joining The Times, Mr. Bronner was with The Boston Globe from 1985 until 1997, where he started on general assignment and then covered urban affairs. He went on to become Supreme Court and legal affairs correspondent in Washington, D.C., and Middle East correspondent based in Jerusalem.

He began his career at Reuters in 1980, reporting from Jerusalem, London, Madrid and Brussels.

Throughout the autumn of 2001, Mr. Bronner worked as an editor in The Times’s investigative unit, focusing on the attacks of Sept. 11. A series of articles on Al Qaeda that he helped edit was awarded the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism.

Mr. Bronner is the author of “Battle for Justice: How the Bork Nomination Shook America,” which was chosen by The New York Public Library as one of the 25 best books of 1989.



**A Presentation by
Ethan Bronner**

Deputy Foreign Editor

The New York Times
KNOWLEDGE NETWORK
INSPIRING THOUGHT

Freshman looks to prove himself in SBC tournament

ELVIS, from page 12

bus High with 24 points and 9 assists-per-game as the Explorers won the 2004 Bronx Borough Championship. Lora's outstanding play earned the Dominican-American a spot on the PSAL



LORA

Bronx All-Borough first-team, as well as a Top 20 ranking on the *nyhoops.com* Class of 2004.

Although Lora has had an extraordinary career in basketball, he is an otherwise ordinary young adult. He keeps a pet fish in his dorm room, likes to spend time by playing basketball in the gym or hanging out with friends and his favorite movie is *He Got Game*.

Lora occasionally experiences something else typical of college students - he gets homesick.

"Being from [New York], you're going to miss home sometimes," he said. "But it's okay. Whenever I get homesick, I just call my mother on the phone."

Lora has made the basketball court his new home since arriving at FIU. Splitting time between playing point guard and shooting guard, he has become a dual-threat with no sign of nervousness.

"I did a year of prep school, so it's not like I'm a freshman straight [out] of high-school," he said. "I'm

kind of like a sophomore, so I don't really feel any pressure."

Despite Lora's individual success, FIU has struggled to improve its record of 6-16 (3-7, Sun Belt). After recently defeating Louisiana-Lafayette and almost beating conference-leading Western Kentucky, he believes the Golden Panthers can still compete.

"Western Kentucky is supposed to be the best team in conference and we were able to play with them," Lora said. "We've seen everybody

play and we know we can win the Sun Belt."

Lora will have a chance to test that theory when Middle Tennessee State hosts the Sun Belt Conference Tournament March 3.

He will also have another chance to parallel Jay-Z, who proved on his sophomore effort, *In My Lifetime Vol. 1*, that his early achievement was not a fluke.

It would make sense if Lora managed to do the same with another big performance in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Oh, Snap!

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now hiring
photographers!

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210 or Biscayne
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Bautista believes team can play for national championship

BAUTISTA, from page 12

"Playing baseball there was a great experience for me and it is what made me into the player that I am today," Bautista said. "You had to pay to play there, but it was really cheap. I just remember the great baseball players we had there. They really pushed me to get better."

"We would play every Thursday, Friday and Saturday year around," he said. "If you [made] the all-star team, then it would really be fun. You would get to travel all over the country and play against people from everywhere."

Traveling around the Dominican Republic and playing with his peers was one thing, but going to a different country by himself was a task Bautista was not prepared for.

"The hardest thing about it is that you're alone," Bautista said. "You're alone all the time. Plus, I was always used to my mom being there and taking care of me. Now, all of a sudden, she wasn't there and I had to do things on my own. It was really hard for me."

If he was going to come to the United States, he would have preferred to be in a city that had some sort of Hispanic influence, but Bautista knew he couldn't take that risk.

He had to settle for the best he got.

"If I would have just centered my thoughts on playing in South Florida it would have been so much harder," he said. "I just had to take what was given to me and do the best I can."

Bautista's first stop in his tour of the southeast was in Tallahassee, where things did not go as planned.

He was not eligible to play in his first season and spent that entire year working out to get in shape for the collegiate level. But when it came time to start playing, he noticed a lack of interest on their behalf and was completely devastated.

"When fall came around, I just realized that they were not interested in me," Bautista said. "It was one of the hardest times of my life. I was ready to give up and go back home, but my brother would not allow it. He told me that things like that are going to happen and I just need to be strong and keep on going."

It's amazing the influence one person could have on



SLUGGER : Last season at Motlow State Community College, Luis Bautista batted .376 with seven homeruns and 42 RBIs. **CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON**

another. Bautista probably wouldn't even be playing baseball if it weren't for his brother dragging him outside to play catch.

When things were at their lowest point, it was Jose - who was going through the same perils - who kept him on his feet and motivated him to persevere.

"I don't know where I would

be if it weren't for him ... just the things he did for my parents when they were struggling really taught me a lot," Bautista said.

So with a fresh outlook on life and confidence in his heart, Bautista packed up his bags and left for Tennessee where he attended Motlow State Community College, which provided him with another change.

"The cold [weather] was something I needed to get used to," Bautista said. "I was always used to the tropical climate of Santo Domingo. It took me a while to get my body [accustomed] to playing there."

A little cold weather was not going to hold back the 6'4 catcher, who had come so far. He hit .290 with three home runs and 22 RBI his freshman year. As a sophomore, he broke out in a big way.

By hitting .376 with seven home runs and 42 RBI, he was given second-team all-conference honors.

That caught the eye of assistant coach Tony Casas, who was looking for depth in the

catcher position.

"We were looking for a good defensive catcher. Somebody that was a good receiver," Casas said.

"He filled that role well and then we saw him swing the bat and he showed great power to the opposite field. Right now, it seems that we were just able to acquire the whole package."

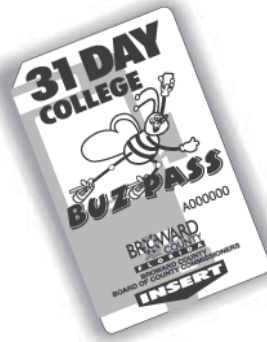
In his first six games with the Golden Panthers, Bautista has taken his game to new heights. He leads the team in batting average (.571), slugging percentage (.929) and is tied for the lead in RBIs with five.

Finally, despite all his hardships, Bautista seems to have found a home at FIU.

His parents have recovered from their illnesses and his brother has been moved up to Triple A in the Pittsburgh Pirates farm system.

As for his current team, Bautista senses something special.

"This is the closest knit group I have ever been a part of. Everybody has treated me so well since I've been here and they're all so much fun to be around ... this is definitely the most talented team I've been on [as well]. If we could just get our act together and stay focused, I could see us contending for a national championship."



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Catcher embraces move back to original position



EMBRY, from page 12

always said, 'If you have a bad game, always remember that you're getting your education paid for,' which always made it sound a little better."

Once her freshman season ended, Embry couldn't wait to start her sophomore campaign.

And with the loss of FIU's star third baseman, Jennifer Owens, Embry was once again moving to a new position.

"Sophomore year - for everybody in general - is a lot easier," Embry said. "So even though I was in a new position, it wasn't nearly as hard [of a transition]."

Embry said that watching Owens play third base her freshman season also helped her transition. Not to mention the fact that Owens was also an assistant coach last year.

The result was a good one as Embry settled in, recorded a team-leading .281 batting average - nearly double that of her freshman year - and earned all those previously mentioned honors.

"My batting came around a lot," Embry said. "So I was in it more mentally."

BACK TO CATCHER: Junior Tabitha Embry returns to her original position of catcher, a position she has not played consistently since her senior year of high school. Embry will interchange between catcher and designated hitter with teammate Jennifer Powell. **FIU ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS PHOTO**

Now in her junior season, Embry makes a return to the position she knows best - interchanging between catcher and designated hitter with team slugger Jennifer Powell - and she's loving the prospect of it.

"This [preseason] has been my least stressful," Embry said. "They haven't taught me anything I don't already know. It's all just review."

Gwydir added: "I think, finally, she's in a position where she can shine defensively as well as offensively. She's one of the best pure hitters we've ever had here."

Now an upper classman, Embry is not only expected to continue to contribute to her team on the field, but also off the field.

"Tabitha is obviously one of the strongest leaders on our team and one of the strongest people I've ever had on a team, in terms of personality and work ethic," Gwydir said. "She's a great example for the team."

With the new season underway, Embry will use her experience to improve upon last season's stellar performance and show that a small town girl can make it in the big city.

"[Her struggles have] made her a better ball player," Gwydir said. "It's made her mentally tougher and it's been nice to see that maturity [develop] from her freshman year. A lot of people who are weaker mentally would have not have made it through that the way she has."

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Dominican catcher lives the dream

BY ALDEN GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

For some collegiate-level players, baseball is a secondary alternative or just recreation. For others, like Dominican-born Luis Bautista, it's a necessity.

Bautista was born in Santo Domingo and although he was part of the middle-class society, he struggled just as much as everybody else.

Both of his parents ended up getting sick while he was growing up and were unable to work. His father suffered from brain tumors and his mother had to be operated eight times because of a tumor in her jaw.

"My mother is somebody that I admire so much because she is such a strong person," Bautista said. "Despite everything she went through, she was still able to keep fighting and support us."

Soon enough there was suddenly no money coming in for the Bautista household. With both of his parents sick and medical bills piling up, his brother Jose - four years his senior - was called upon for financial support.

For the first and not the last time, baseball was his only escape.

"My brother would get paid very little money in the minor leagues and would have to ship it home so my parents could live off of it," Bautista said. "He was their only hope."

It is hope that has carried Bautista all throughout his life. Hope is what brought him hundreds of miles to the dominant American town of Tallahassee to play baseball for Chipola College. Hope then took him to Tennessee when things didn't go too well his freshman year and hope is what brought him down to FIU with his desires to fulfill his dream and make it pro.

Bautista's story starts in the city of Santo Domingo. Here, it is baseball that drives its people as kids go through life



SWINGING TO THE FENCES : Junior catcher Luis Bautista, like many natives of Santo Domingo, has dreams of professional baseball. **FIU ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS PHOTO**

with just the game, in its purest form, dominating their lives. With little money and equipment, they take to the field with dreams in their head of doing just what Bautista is accomplishing right now: being successful at baseball in the American stage.

Thanks to his brother, Bautista began playing baseball at 9-years-old and ever

since then, it has taken up all of his focus. He started playing in the very popular Enrique Cruz baseball league along with many other skilled baseball players, including former FIU outfielder Ricardo Nanita - now with the Chicago White Sox organization.

See **BAUTISTA**, page 10

New York native makes presence felt on new team

BY ANDREW KAMEKA
Staff Writer

It makes sense that one of Elvis Lora's favorite rappers is Jay-Z. *Reasonable Doubt*, the Brooklyn emcee's successful debut album, signaled that the rapper would be a top performer in his field, a path Lora has followed at FIU.

In only the second game of his collegiate career, Lora scored a game-high 18 points as the men's basketball team defeated Central Connecticut State.

First-year players often crumble under pressure, but the freshman guard hit 10 free-throws in the final six minutes of the game to secure a win and establish himself as one of the Sun Belt Conference's newest talents.

"I expected to play as soon as I got here," Lora said of his fast start with the team. "When I was recruited, the coaches told me that I would get a shot at playing time right away."

Lora has taken full advantage of his early opportunity. The Bronx, N.Y. native has made an immediate impact on the men's basketball team by averaging 9.5 points-per-game and being ranked in the top five of every offensive category except rebounds, despite starting in only four games this season.

"I'm doing good because of the coaching staff," he said. "We've had a really good bond since [the recruiting process,] so coaching and confidence are the reason for that."

Confidence was something Lora had in abundance while he shined in the New York Public School Athletic League. He led Colum-

See **ELVIS**, page 9

Small-town girl shows she can play big

BY XAVIER VILLARMARZO
Sports Editor

Heading into this season, Tabitha Embry was selected to the preseason All-Sun Belt Conference Team because of her breakout performance in 2005. The junior had the highest batting average on the team and was second in RBIs, hits and slugging percentage.

With all of her success last season, it's hard to imagine this small town girl was struggling heavily just a year

earlier.

Embry, whose home county has a population of about 47,000, has been playing softball since the age of six, which is nothing new to her family since her younger sister also played softball and her older brother played

baseball. Embry wears the number 29 jersey because it is the number her father wore in his playing days. Her siblings also wore that number when they played.

When she was 11, she began to play fast-pitch and took a different path than most of her softball mates - she wanted to play catcher.

"Everyone - when you first start playing fast-pitch - wants to be a pitcher," Embry said. "I, for some reason, always want to be different than everybody else."

Learning the position at a young age, it was no surprise that Embry was the star captain of the Davies County High School's team - batting .586 with six homeruns one season.

However, with all her success defensively and offensively as a catcher, FIU recruited her to play shortstop.

"I knew she was probably a better catcher, but we needed a shortstop," head coach Kim Gwydir said. "And she was our best available person for that."

The move proved to be too much for Embry to handle. Her defensive struggles while learning the new position began to taint her offensive skills.

"My mind was just messed up," Embry said.

Embry started all 64 of her team's games at shortstop her freshman season, batted .141 and struck out in 50 of her 149 at bats. Despite her struggles, she did not lose her starting job partially due to the team's lack of depth in the position and partially due to the faith the coaching staff had in her.

"Coach [Gwydir] never gave up on me," Embry said.

Embry said that what got her through her freshman season was support from her family and her boyfriend, Victor Cernius - former starting center for the FIU football team.

"I would just vent to [my boyfriend]," Embry said. "[And] my mom

See **EMBRY**, page 11



EMBRY



BRONX BALLER: Freshman guard Elvis Lora is in the top five on the men's basketball team in every offensive category except rebounds. **FILE PHOTO**