

The Patriot

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Francis Marion University's award-winning student newspaper

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FMU celebrates spring commencement Graduates receive COVID-19 degrees

Kei'yona Jordon
Copy Editor

FMU celebrated the graduation of 379 graduates who said their final good-byes to FMU as they walked across the stage on Friday, Sept. 18 and Saturday, Sept. 19.

Out of the 379, 90 graduated with honors. The youngest graduate was 21 and the oldest graduate was 71.

President Fred Carter said he was proud that 92 percent of the graduates were South Carolina natives.

Due to COVID-19, the commencement ceremony had to be pushed back several months to make sure CDC guidelines could be followed.

Carter said that if the students gave the school time, they would find a way to celebrate their achievement.

"Francis Marion had never cancelled a commencement ceremony in its entire 50-year history," Carter said.

Each of the ceremonies were split up by the different areas of study. Friday's ceremony celebrated the school of business and the school of education. Saturday's ceremony celebrated graduates from the college of liberal arts.

Although there was no commencement speaker,



Kelcey King and Dadria Harris embrace each other after the graduation ceremony outside of the Smith University Center.

PHOTO BY ELODI BREG

Carter gave a few words of encouragement and apologized to the graduates for not being able to finish their senior year in a traditional manner.

"I am profoundly sorry for what you lost in those final weeks," Carter said. "But I am appreciative for what you've gained. You've gained an enormous sense of confidence in yourself and your ability to absorb uncertainty and to keep your eyes on the prize."

Graduates had already received their diplomas through the mail over the summer while the school was debating whether they would be able to hold a commencement ceremony.

When they walked across the stage, Carter handed them a scroll that acknowledged them as the first class to graduate during a pandemic.

A lot of graduates said being able to walk across the stage gave them the closure

they needed.

"I was happy that I would finally end this chapter in my life," FMU graduate Aaron Simmons said.

Some of the graduates said they were discouraged when they heard there was a possibility that they wouldn't be able to walk across the stage.

"When I first found out that we may not be walking, I thought it was unfair," Simmons said. "We went through all these four years

and it just ends like this."

Simmons also said the end of the semester really affected their mood and their attitude.

"No one knew what was going on and the school wasn't certain about what would happen either," Simmons said. "The matter was completely out of our hands and that tested the strength of our mental health, but instead of caving in we stayed strong and made it through."

Simmons' mother,

Yvette Simmons, said they had planned a lot of surprises and was hoping to make it a special moment for her son.

"Aaron had persevered through a lot this year and overcame his own personal obstacles and really made everyone proud," Simmons said. "So when I found out that we would finally be able to celebrate him and all the other hard working graduates, I felt relieved."

Many students said they were happy to be known as the first class to graduate during the pandemic.

"I mean, we got COVID degrees," FMU graduate Angela Acosta said. "Who else can say they got COVID degrees?"

Acosta, like many other graduates, was also happy that her parents were able to celebrate the occasion with her.

Her father, Jose Acosta, said he had been looking forward to taking a selfie with his daughter at her graduation for four years.

"I'm glad I was finally able to get my graduation selfie with my daughter," Acosta said. "I was scared that after four years of college I wouldn't get it and that made me sad for her."

Movie night at the UC

Kei'yona Jordon
Copy Editor

The Campus Activities Board (CAB) hosted another movie from 7-9 p.m. on Sept. 24 outside the Smith University Center (UC).

CAB originally hosted a drive-in movie night but had some technical difficulties, so they changed it to a movie on the lawn instead.

To accommodate the chance of heavy rainfall, CAB moved the big screen to the front steps of the UC. Students brought their towels and blankets and spread out on the steps and deck of the UC.

CAB said they wanted to do whatever it would take to keep the students happy.

"Students had really been looking forward to it and we got a lot of activity on our social media about it," said student life specialist Alex McGill. "So we didn't want to cancel it."

CAB played the movie "Now You See Me" and handed out candy to everyone who wanted some.

"We chose this movie because it was light-hearted," McGill said. "It's not childish, but it's not doom, gloom,

murder and apocalypse."

McGill said they wanted to keep hosting events so students wouldn't be bored.

"We're trying to stay consistent and keep events going," McGill said.

With the COVID-19 restrictions limiting the type of events they can host, CAB decided that hosting a movie night would be the safest option.

Students said they were eager to get out their rooms and be around other people.

Junior accounting major Nyquera Chisholm said that attending the event was a great way to socialize and enjoy the movie.

"For some reason, watching movies outside when the sky is getting dark and you're sitting on top of your blanket eating snacks is much more fun than watching a movie in the room by yourself," Chisholm said.

Dominique Scott, a senior health administration major, said he appreciated CAB making sure they had things to do during the week that could relax them.

"I'm thankful that they put these events on, and obviously everyone else is because they stayed even

after the rain," Scott said. "It was a great way to relax and come down from a full day."

CAB was surprised at how many students came to see the movie despite it being changed and moved twice.

More than 50 students came out. Not all of them stayed when it began to rain, but more than half of them remained.

"We had, like, three people come out," McGill said. "And so I thought that would be it, but people kept coming and people even stayed during the rain."

With movie theaters closed down because of the pandemic, CAB said they wanted to bring back a sense of normalcy to the students.

"It's fun, it's safe and it's a good time," McGill said. "And I think people miss going to the movies."

McGill said it was important for CAB to keep hosting events for the FMU community, especially during these times.

"There is just a lot going on," McGill said. "Students have so much on their plates and I worry about every student, but especially freshman. That human connection is so important."

Professor wins award

Ansley Lesley
Staff Writer

South Carolina Humanities awarded Jon Tuttle, professor of English and director of the honors program, the Governor's Award in the Humanities for his work in the literary community and his commitment to FMU.

The Governor's Award is given to people who have made contributions to teaching the humanities and to the South Carolina community, both local and academic. Tuttle said he was honored to receive this award.

"The work itself is its own reward, but a little appreciation from an agency like SC Humanities goes a long away," said Tuttle. "I'm most pleased that my name will join other members of the FMU community on the list of those who received it."

Tuttle is responsible for bringing several different events to FMU, such as the Mother Emanuel Symposium in 2018 and the Moving Wall Vietnam Memorial. He is also the author of a book of plays titled, "The Trustus Collection."

The Mother Emanuel Symposium was a three-day

panel that discussed race and race relations. It was held in the Chapman Auditorium and hosted a wide variety of speakers from across South Carolina. As it progressed, attendance grew, resulting in a nearly full house on the last day of the symposium. Tuttle brought the symposium to campus shortly after a fight broke out between protestors in Charlottesville, VA. Tuttle said this event was the inspiration for hosting the symposium at FMU.

Tuttle was also responsible for bringing the Moving Wall Vietnam Memorial to FMU. A replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., people from all walks of life were able to visit the memorial for its week-long stay. Tuttle taught a course on the Vietnam War and American culture that semester, and his students helped prepare the wall for display. Tuttle said he was ecstatic to give people who hadn't seen the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., a chance to see it.

"I should add here that I don't organize these events alone," said Tuttle. "They're a product of many offices on

campus, and a lot of cooperation."

Currently, Tuttle is working on "South Carolina Onstage," a collection of plays written by South Carolinians over the years. Tuttle is compiling and transcribing the plays. According to Tuttle, the book is progressing smoothly and will most likely be completed before its 2023 deadline.

Tuttle is also the Nellie Cooke Sparrow Writer-in-Residence for FMU, which is an endowed chair that grants a small reduction in teaching hours, among other things. He credits the position as a huge help in bringing about "The Trustus Collection" and "South Carolina Onstage."

The Governor's Award is relatively new, having been founded in 1991. Among the recipients are President Carter, and two late FMU professors: Bill Moran and Joe Stukes.

"The Governor's Award is really a reflection on how healthy and functional this whole university is, and what we value," said Tuttle. "If I didn't work here, I'd never have received it."

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The Patriot is interested in what you are doing on campus. To increase the likelihood that your events are covered, please submit news releases and schedules to us. We look forward to hearing from you.

The Patriot

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AAFS Coalition hosts forum and picnic

Kei'Yona Jordon

Copy Editor

Students safely gathered together for a picnic hosted by the African-American Faculty and Staff Coalition (AAFSC) from 4-6 p.m. on Sept. 9 at the Smith University Center.

The event had light refreshments for the students to enjoy throughout the event. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, a sandwich, chips and a cookie were all pre-wrapped and packaged in to-go boxes.

Even though students, faculty and staff took as many boxes as they could, there was still a lot of food left over.

Linda Sullen, president of the AAFSC, addressed the students and told them about what their organization was about.

Sullen said the picnic was to make students aware of the AAFSC presence on campus because many students, and even faculty, didn't know they existed.

"We've heard from faculty members, staff members and students that they were not aware we existed," Sullen said. "And it was an opportunity for us to express who we are and what our mission is."

Sullen told the students about the different opportunities for students that the AAFSC provides through five scholarships.

Sullen wanted to erase the stigma around the title of the organization.

"The title kind of scares

people away," Sullen said. "And I don't know if they think that we're a cult and we don't mean for the title to be offensive to anybody, but at the same time we don't want to lose our identity."

Although the AAFSC is a group of black faculty and staff, they provide assistance and guidance to all students.

"It's just not minority students that we are here for," Sullen said. "We are here for all students."

The cookout also highlighted the growth of the organization, which started

25 years ago.

"Twenty-five years ago, this campus did not look the way it looks today," Sullen said.

Arthenius Jackson, a former member of AAFSC, performed two of her original songs at the event.

Jackson said she had worked at FMU for five years before leaving in 2017 and always looks for opportunities to give back.

"I try to stay connected because I appreciate everything that they're doing," Jackson said. "I want

to keep giving back and do as much as I can to still be a part of them."

Jackson said it felt good to be back on campus with the coalition and to see them still interacting with the students.

"It's good to see the coalition still moving and progressing and doing what they started from the beginning," Jackson said. "Giving back and helping students."

Jackson also said her organization, One Touch Transformation, a group geared toward sexual abuse

awareness and prevention, also gives money to the AAFSC Yvonne G. Davis Scholarship.

SGA President Tymoshio Robinson said the event went well and he was informed about an organization he didn't know was on campus.

"I think it was a great event," Robinson said. "But I never knew about them, so it was great to see the faces behind the organization."



PHOTO BY ADAM ROSE

Bishop Donald Jackson addresses the crowd at the AAFSC picnic in the Smith University Center.



PHOTO BY ADAM ROSE

Arthenius Jackson performs original songs for the audience.

CAB holds auditions for FMU's Got Talent

Ansley Lesley

Staff Writer

The FMU's Got Talent auditions took place from 5-7 p.m. on Sept. 21 at the Chapman Auditorium.

FMU's Got Talent is a talent show where students can perform their talents in front of an audience and a panel of judges.

FMU'S Got Talent will still take place this year despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Student safety is the Campus Activities Board's (CAB) top priority.

Students will be able to watch the rounds and perform in-person under additional safety guidelines. Students must wear masks at all times, while the contestants will also wear masks except for

when they are performing. Contestants will stay in the middle of the stage, and the first few rows of seating have been closed off. Chapman Auditorium has been set up for social distancing, and attendance has been limited to half-capacity. The event is also being live-streamed for the first time in its three-year history.

The judges this year have yet to be determined. Unlike other talent shows, the judges do not decide which contestants advance to the next round. Votes from the audience members, whether in-person or online, decide who advances. Judges will provide the contestants with feedback on their performance. In previous years, judges had the Golden

Buzzer, which instantly sent a contestant to the next round. CAB is still determining whether the Golden Buzzer will be used this year.

There will still be four rounds this year, two this fall and two next semester. CAB has plans in place for the rounds to still be held in case FMU goes online due to COVID-19.

FMU's Got Talent has been a highlight in previous years, and CAB said it was happy to bring it back this year.

Alex McGill, student life coordinator for student engagement, was instrumental in creating the FMU's Got Talent event along with CAB. She loves to see shy students break out of their shell and shine on stage.

"It amazes me to see how much talent our students have," McGill said.

Isiah Carroway, a freshman computer science major, is one such student. The talent he showcased was playing the saxophone. He played "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys and said he was excited to continue on to the next round.

"It all started in fourth grade, when I started playing recorder," Carroway said. "My music teacher told me I had the lips for a saxophone. Then, I joined in sixth grade, and it just kind of came to me naturally."

Leah Brazell, a freshman accounting major, sang "Bounty" by Christina Aguilera for her audition. Brazell said she has been

singing since childhood.

"I started chorus in sixth grade, and I've been obsessed with singing ever since," said Brazell.

Sophomore nursing major Asia Senhouse competed in last year's FMU's Got Talent with her dance group. This year, she is singing solo. Senhouse said she started singing in middle school.

"I was supposed to be in band, but they put me in chorus instead, and I found I like singing better than playing an instrument," Senhouse said.

The next round of FMU's Got Talent will be held from 5-7 p.m. on Sept. 30 at the Chapman Auditorium.

Florence builds Red Wolves new home

Kei'Yona Jordon

Copy Editors

After several years of using FMU's baseball stadium, the Florence Red Wolves will finally be able to call another ballpark their home.

Florence Mayor Stephen Wukela announced the city's plan to build a new sports complex beside the Florence Tennis Center with a stadium baseball field that seats over a thousand people.

The stadium will cost about \$15 million and the Florence Red Wolves will be able to use the stadium baseball field as the main attraction.

The complex will have six fields and the central field will be used by the Florence Red Wolves.

Kevin Barth, owner of the Florence Red Wolves, said

the partnership was right on time and was a saving grace.

"My wife and I were at the point where we decided we were either going to have to close the team down or move it to another city because the ballpark just wasn't suitable anymore," Barr said.

Barth said FMU rescued the longevity of their team by offering to let them use the FMU baseball stadium.

According to Wukela, FMU President Fred Carter has been the saving grace for a lot of people in Florence.

"At every opportunity where you see someone in the community who's working to move the community forward and they might be struggling or facing obstacles, what do they end up doing?" Wukela said. "They end up talking to Fred Carter."

Carter said the school had been delighted to be a

part of the growth of the Red Wolves and he was pleased to have partnered with Barth.

"Mayor, I'm going to tell you that there is no better tenant in the world than Kevin Barth and his family," Carter said.

Wukela said they didn't know they would acquire the different partnerships they have now when they were planning to build the complex.

"As we started this construction, we knew we were going to build this nice, central stadium that was going to be an attraction for the city," Wukela said. "But what we didn't know was that we would find partners who would occupy this stadium in a way that's going to be incredibly vibrant for this community."

Having the Florence Red Wolves along with the other

partnerships will help to further improve the economy of Florence. Wukela said it would attract business, draw hospitality dollars, accommodations tax dollars and move the city forward.

Wukela and the city of Florence acknowledged Carter for letting the Florence Red Wolves use their field and grow into the team they are now.

"We want to thank Dr. Carter and Francis Marion for allowing that to occur – the benefit it provided for this community and the benefits it's provided for the Red Wolves," Wukela said.

The money for the complex will be coming from funds that they started raising since October of 2017. \$15 million was budgeted for city-wide recreation facility improvements.

The construction will

lead to the extension of Jennie O'Bryan Avenue and will also include a full-size track and field facility. There will be two parking lots that will have more than 500 spaces and seating for each of the fields.

The Red Wolves plan to section off VIP seating, a beer garden, a place for children to play and group outing hospitality areas.

"It's going to allow us to not only bring baseball here in the summer," Barth said. "But it's going to allow us to be a year-round venue."

The Florence Red Wolves said they were excited to be able to offer families and people in the city more opportunities to come together.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT | Jadin Vereen

Julia Fulmer
Staff Writer

Jadin Vereen, a sophomore human resource management major, said she wants to make the workplace more accessible for deaf individuals.

Born in Conway, SC, Vereen lived in Columbia for eight years before moving to Florence in 2012.

Along with her three siblings, Vereen was home-schooled from middle school until she graduated high school. This unique academic experience is what led her to learn sign language, which began when she decided to take an American Sign Language (ASL) course offered by her local home-school group.

“I took it just as a fun class,” Vereen said. “I actually ended up falling in love with it.”

A year after she finished her first class, Vereen decided to give sign language another chance when she had the option to continue the courses in high school.

“When it came to choosing my foreign language elective for high school, I knew I didn’t want to do Spanish and I didn’t really want to do French,” Vereen said. “But I naturally talk with my hands, so I thought ‘Let’s give sign language a chance.’ I did three years of sign language for my language elective and found that it came very easy to me, and I began to incorporate it into all



PHOTO BY JULIA FULMER

Jadin Vereen wants to use her ASL skills in the work place, along with her human resource management degree.

aspects of my life. I’m kind of addicted to it.”

Vereen said she always enjoyed business and knew she wanted to go into the field as she pursued her college career.

“My family runs our church thrift store, and my dad has worked in business his entire professional career,” Vereen said. “I’ve been around business just in general for a long time, and I’ve always known that I liked it. I like how business runs, and how you can really get to know different types of people and communicate with them and just see the

different types of views.”

Though sign language may seem like it has little to do with human resource management, Vereen said her ability to interact through signing could help simplify conversations in the workplace for individuals with hearing loss.

“For example, if a company were to hire me, I would save them both time and energy because I could have direct communication with the potential client and employee,” Vereen said. “Typically, a company would have to wait for an interpreter to come to the business and

translate. I can literally do all of it for you.”

Vereen recently transferred from Liberty University, where she majored in American Sign Language and Interpreting with a minor in business. She said that although she enjoyed her time at Liberty, she struggled financially with a recent increase in tuition and needed to find another option.

“As a typical college student, the majority graduate with some sort of debt,” Vereen said. “I just reconsidered taking on so much debt and realized

I could still pursue my passion.”

One of the reasons Vereen chose to come to Francis Marion University (FMU) was her past experience with the school. During her senior year of high school, she was a dual-enrollment student at FMU. She said that this, as well as the reputation of the business program, was key in making her decision.

“Since I previously attended FMU for dual credit and was familiar with the campus, I knew what the classes were like and I liked the smaller size,” Vereen

said. “FMU is known for their School of Business, and that’s where my major lies. So I did some research, and I just really enjoyed learning about the business program and what they’re trying to do for the individual.”

Specializing in compensation and recruitment, Vereen said she is looking forward to incorporating ASL into the world of human resources after graduating.

Though it is her first semester back at FMU, Vereen has already made a lasting impact on the university as one of four founding members of the FMU chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management.

Vereen went on to say that she attributes much of her work ethic to her parents and the effort they put into providing for their family. She said that from a young age she learned to work hard and always strive to do her best.

“My mom and my dad raised us in a way that they wanted us to have a better opportunity in life than they had,” Vereen said. “Ever since my parents were 18 and 19, they were very independent. They both worked extremely hard and never once made excuses. That’s how I was raised. You give a hundred percent in everything that you do. No matter if it’s school, your job, whatever it is, you do your best. Eventually, it will pay off.”

PROFESSOR SPOTLIGHT | Jeanne Gunther

Joshua Hardee
Co-Editor

For Jeanne Gunther, associate professor of education and program chair of the early childhood education, her 26 years as an educator have been just as rewarding and educational for her as it has been for her students.

Gunther said she loved elementary school but was uncertain at first that her interest could be applied toward a career in education.

“The only career I could think of that I saw women doing, besides something in healthcare, was teaching,” Gunther said. “I thought, ‘Well, I always liked that when I was little and maybe I could do that.’ And that’s why I always say I’m lucky, because I never stopped to consider all the possibilities and then really choose one. I was limited by my own agency; I think this is something a woman could do. Then, I got into it and I’m like, ‘This is awesome.’ And I became a really progressive

teacher right out of the gate and loved it.”

According to Gunther, she started to find her schoolwork interesting and compelling once she was able to get directly involved with students. She earned her bachelor’s in early childhood education from the State University of New York at Fredonia, and during that time, she worked at a recently established Head Start program, which provided access to early childhood education to low-income families.

“When I got into the professional program of education, the content was so much fun to me,” Gunther said. “It made sense to me; I identified with it. They had just opened a Head Start, and I got a clinical assignment there for one of my classes. I thought, ‘Yes, this is exactly what I want to do.’ It was about supporting children’s development in every realm that there is, and it was so satisfying.”

Gunther also said she

had an experience at that time that reinforced her desire to teach and has helped her empower her “candidates” – students who are on track to become teachers.

“I had one professor in undergrad who talked about the power of a teacher,” Gunther said. “It was something I had never considered, and I’m sure always to tell my classes this very same thing. Teachers have the power to change society for the better. You have this power, and it’s not just handing out worksheets and gold stickers. You can make this community in your classroom that’s a place every student wants to come. And we’ve all been in a classroom that hasn’t been that. I want to make sure every kid has every class like that.”

After graduating, Gunther said she knew she wanted to work with young children, and she got her first teaching job in North Carolina teaching fourth graders. However, she found that reading skills varied among

her students to a concerning degree. She said she was faced with having to help students catch up, which prevented them from learning that year’s material. She said it was a problem that she did not know how to address.

“They’re ten and they don’t read, and I don’t know what to do about it,” Gunther said. “That was really scary. That was something I would take home every day.”

According to Gunther, there wasn’t an issue with the teachers or the students, but there was a lack of understanding about how to engage each student on their level to make sure no one was left behind. Because of this, she pursued her master’s in education with a focus in reading at the State University of New York at Albany and her Ph.D. in early childhood intervention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel-Hill.

“Becoming a professor of education, specific to supporting reading, was a way to impact change on a large

scale,” Gunther said. “I’ll have 60-70 candidates per semester. They will each go on to have 20-25 students a year for 30 years. That’s not a job I take lightly; I want to make sure they’re really ready to do that. The number one reason teachers leave the field is that they don’t feel that they’re effective. This is one way I can make sure we keep people in teaching; you’ll be effective in teaching reading. And there’s maybe nothing more satisfying in life than giving somebody that.”

Since coming to FMU, she has spent nine years working with the Richardson Center for the Child (RCC). The RCC is a state-of-the-art academic preschool, and early childhood education students take classes there and get involved in clinicals. Biology, nursing and psychology students have also been involved in some way with the RCC. All students in the education program take classes at the RCC, at the undergraduate and grad-

uate levels.

Besides providing children with a good learning environment and preparing candidates to become teachers, Gunther said the RCC also allows these children to make meaningful connections with candidates.

“I even like the idea that such young children will map onto college students identity-wise, and think even at age four – this is something I didn’t have – ‘Maybe I’ll go to college one day,’” Gunther said. “I didn’t have that kind of role model. I wonder if I had, maybe I would have been a better student. You’ll see little kids here and they develop relationships with students they’re working with in class and they’re like, ‘I’m going to go here for college.’ It’s more than just sweet; it’s salient. It adds to their identity, their perceptions of self, their agency.”

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT | John Castro

Finn Millions
Staff Writer

For John Castro, a sports management junior and defender for the Patriots’ men’s soccer team, finding his way to FMU has allowed him to continue playing the sport he loves and to pursue his degree.

Born in Bogota, Colombia, Castro was kicking a ball around from the age of seven.

“Soccer in Colombia is a big sport; it’s kind of like basketball for you guys,” Castro said. “I’ve been playing since I was seven.”

He played seriously until his young adulthood when

Luis Rincon, then head coach for the men’s soccer program at Ohio Valley University (OVU), contacted him.

“When Luis contacted me, I realized this really great opportunity,” Castro said. “I took the chance and tried to take advantage of it.”

However, two years into his career at OVU, he had to go back to Colombia.

“There was some trouble back home, so I wasn’t able to keep playing soccer here in the United States,” Castro said.

As luck would have it, when Rincon signed on as the head coach for the Patriots, his path would cross

with Castro’s once again.

“When I was back in Columbia, I kept playing; but when Luis called me back, I didn’t have to think too much to say, ‘Yes,’” Castro said. “It is a huge opportunity, not only because of soccer, but the degree also; and the language – I am trying to improve it.”

Castro said his dream was to play soccer; however, soccer was not the only thing to draw him to FMU.

“I did my research,” Castro said. “I was looking on the internet about the campus and the university, and I was really surprised with the campus we have here. It is a really nice campus.”

Now, looking at his future at FMU, he has plans for his role on the team.

“I am the oldest on the team,” Castro said. “I am supposed to be the mature guy. I want to play; I want to show that I can play in the starting eleven. The thing is, when you go to a place and you are the oldest guy, you have to prove what you have.

With his competitive nature, it is no wonder that his ambition does not only apply to the sport he loves.

“You have to prove that you are the best every single day,” Castro said. “Not only in soccer, but in every single aspect of your life, you have to prove that you are the

best. But when I say prove it, prove it not to the rest of the people, but to yourself.”

Soccer is not Castro’s only goal. While he is in the U.S. for the sport, he is also here for the educational and career opportunities this country provides. Even with his sports management degree, Castro said it would still be hard to find a good-paying job in Colombia.

“I am waiting on all the options I have,” Castro said. “Colombia is not the easiest place to find a really good job. This country has a lot of opportunities, not just for the North American people, but for international students. So, I am still looking for all

of the options that I have.”

The only other thing Castro loves as much as soccer would be the kitchen. He enjoys cooking for himself and for others, much to the enjoyment of his teammates who live with him.

“I love to cook,” Castro said. “Right now, I am cooking something for them; I am cooking lunch.”

It seems that one aspect of being the oldest on the team is certainly showing through – he is planning on proving himself on the field, but for now he is proving himself in the kitchen.

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VOICES
STUDENTS

SKIN CANCER AWARENESS

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It is hard to believe summer is almost over. September is here and fall is right around the corner. Soon the leaves will be changing and cool crisp air will greet us in the morning. We must not let down our guards when it comes to protecting our skin from the sun. Did you know that an article in JAMA Internal Medicine found that

skin cancer is more common than prostate, lung and colon cancer combined?

According to the American Cancer Society, it is likely that there will be over 1,900 new cases of skin cancer in South Carolina this year. You may think you have never known anyone with skin cancer and you may very well be right. How-

ever, that does not mean you are less likely to get skin cancer. The National Cancer Institute estimates that in Florence county there will be 48 new cases in 2020.

Risk factors you cannot change include light colored eyes, blonde or red hair, skin that burns or freckles easily or a light skin tone. Also, a family member with skin

cancer or being older puts you at higher risk. The good news is that the number one risk factor is under your control: sun exposure. It is true the heat from the sun will be much less in the fall. However, the sun's rays will continue to shine and damage our skin. Thankfully, the sun's rays can be blocked with the use of sunblock, hats or

clothing.

According to the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, one risk factor for skin cancer that you can change is your use of indoor tanning. Tanning exposes you to a high dose of UV rays. The tan you get from a tanning bed is actually skin damage. JAMA Internal Medicine found that tanning

beds are the cause of over 10,000 new cases every year. The good news is that spray on tans and home tanning lotions have come a long way. You can now get the same sun-kissed tan without the bad sun rays and cancer risk. Enjoy the coming fall weather, but please don't forget your sunblock or hat the next time you go outside.

PAP TEST: TAKING TIME TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CERVICAL CANCER

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Cervical cancer is the third most common cancer for women. This cancer is often caused by a virus. According to an article in Seminars in Oncology Nursing, this virus is called Human Papilloma Virus or HPV. This virus is why women are urged to have an exam called a Papanicolaou (Pap) test. Up to Date recommends an exam every three to five years. The cancer caused by this virus is cancer of the cervix. The cervix is located at the end of the vagina and connects to the uterus. The

uterus is a necessary part of a woman's body to carry a baby. If a woman gets HPV, it could become cervical cancer. She could then need a procedure to remove her uterus. She would not be able to carry any children or any more children. This cancer can also lead to death.

However, if caught early through a Pap test, it can be treated. Treatment is different for everyone. Treatment depends on many things. Did she have HPV? Did she develop cancer? How bad did the cancer get? A Pap

test allows a doctor to see the cervix for clear signs that are not always seen on the visual exam. Sometimes warts may be present but not always. A doctor will also take a sample of the cervix during the Pap test. They will use this sample to test for cervical cancer.

An individual often does not show physical signs of HPV. This is why testing on time is important. Up to Date recommends that any female that is 21 or above have a Pap test. This includes women who have not had sex yet. If

a woman does not have any health problems and she does not have a positive Pap test, it is recommended she have a Pap test every 3 years. Women who have other health problems, such as HIV, may be screened more often.

Cervical Cancer is seen to be a problem in South Carolina. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), in 2016 \$5.9 million was spent on cervical cancer patients in the hospital. This included 121 women. For every

100,000 people in South Carolina, 7.62 women on average had cervical cancer. The Pee Dee was even higher than the state average. In the Pee Dee, for every 100,000 people, 8.87 had cervical cancer.

Up to Date found that there have been cases of false positive results from a Pap test. A positive test means a patient must go to follow up exams and have more tests done. This can also cause a lot of emotional stress. Pap test can be uncomfortable. They can cause patients

to feel nervous about what will happen. However, it has been shown that screening through Pap tests have led to a decrease in developing cervical cancer from HPV. It has also led to a decrease in death due to cancer. Your doctor can refer you to a doctor who can do this test if they cannot. Local health departments offer Pap tests. Many clinics also offer Pap test.

SMOKING CESSATION: A PLAN TO QUIT SMOKING

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Do you smoke cigarettes? Have you ever been told you needed to stop? Choosing to stop smoking can be hard, but there are many ways that can help you stop smoking for good.

There are many reasons why you may smoke. Maybe you smoke when you are around friends, or maybe you smoke because it keeps you calm. Your reasons are important but what matters most is that you work on stopping. By not smoking, you can have a healthier lifestyle.

You may be asking, "Why should I stop?" That is a good question. One reason is that cigarette smoking is a big cause of death in the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 16 million Americans have a sickness from cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking is dangerous because it can harm your body. An article in Drug & Alcohol Dependence found that studies show adults do not know how bad cigarettes are to the body. If you do not

know how bad something is, you may not know why you should stop doing it.

Smoking also changes a person's attitude. For example, smoking causes weakness. Being tired makes it hard to work or do other things, which can cause depression.

The CDC also found that smoking can cause different illnesses, such as heart attacks and cancer. Also, a person is more likely to drink alcohol and do drugs when they smoke. These sicknesses can also affect those you

are around – your friends and family. This means that smoking harms the body and the mind.

Smoking causes sickness for people of all ages. In South Carolina, 22 percent of children said they smoked cigarettes, according to the Mayo Clinic. CDC studies report the first age of cigarette smoking as young as 7 years old. According to the Mayo Clinic, 7,500 people in South Carolina die each year from sicknesses caused by smoking. This means that smoking is a big problem for

our state.

Do you want to stop smoking cigarettes, but do not know what to do? There are many ways to stop smoking cigarettes. The CDC suggests some ways, including medicine and patches. The first step is getting help and support. There are programs to help you make a plan that best fits you.

Maybe you are thinking, "What would I do in place of smoking?" Many people smoke to keep busy. This time could be replaced with fun activities, such as exer-

cising or drawing. Exercising for thirty minutes three times a week is a great way to stay active. If you are used to having something to chew on, you could try sugar-free gum or mints instead.

Remember that you are doing something to help you feel better and maybe live longer. The CDC found that when you stop smoking you will have more energy and clearer skin. Be kind to yourself and do not give up. The sooner you stop, the healthier you will be. Do not be afraid to stop today.

HOW TO KEEP STRESS FROM MAKING YOU OVERWEIGHT?

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According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2018, the obesity rate in the U.S. was 42.4 percent. In 2008, it cost \$147 billion to treat people who were overweight in the U.S. The United Health Foundation found that South Carolina had an obesity rate of 34.3 percent in 2019.

HCA Healthcare reported that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), stress is a big problem in the world. How much

stress someone thinks they are under can change how the body acts. This can cause people to get sick in all kinds of ways.

An article in Eating & Weight Disorder found a link between high level of chemicals in the body and stress. Another study in Biological Research for Nursing showed that stress causes changes in the body. This makes you hungry. You might eat too much and gain weight.

How can you stop gaining weight if you are worrying? You need to figure out how to not worry so much. There are things you can do to help.

Meditation is one way to help. Focusing on what you see, hear, smell or taste can take your mind off the things causing stress. It allows you to focus on right now. You might think about the ocean if you like it. You can think about how it sounds with the waves or how the warm sand

feels. This focuses your mind on something besides what you are worrying about. Exercise is another good way to help you worry less. Taking a walk gives you a change of scenery and changes the chemicals in your body, which can reduce stress. Hugging someone you love can cause the body to release "the cuddle hormone," and makes you feel happy. Sitting quietly to relax your muscles, one at a time, while focusing on your breath-

ing, can direct your mind to a peaceful place. Eating a healthy diet can also help.

Science shows a poor diet – one that is high in fat and sugar, for instance – may make you feel better now; however, it will change your body's reaction to stress in the long run. Last of all, getting rid of the things in your life that cause the stress, is a good way to get rid of the stress. Spending too much time watching the news, being on the phone or com-

puter, or drinking caffeine are a few things that could be causing you more stress. Getting rid of those things may allow your mind to be at peace.

To help keep weight under control, it requires a conscious effort to control the things you can that cause stress. This can help you stay healthy and be less likely to develop diseases that are caused by being overweight.