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Club prepares to observe World AIDS Day



IN MEMORIAM: Volunteers set up a quilt bearing the names of 70,000 AIDS victims in the Washington, D.C., National Mall, a familiar staple of the annual World AIDS day on Dec. 1. **COURTESY PHOTO**

By **C. JOEL MARINO**
News Editor

From Washington, D.C., to the UK, from California to Africa, individuals around the country and globe will unite on Dec. 1 in honor of the 17th annual World AIDS day.

At FIU, the Stonewall Alliance, a gay and lesbian student organization, will hold several programs throughout the day, the first time the club holds such events for the public.

"We felt this was an important day, that there are many things about AIDS that people still don't know about," said Chris Scalfani, president of the Stonewall Alliance. "We wanted to open up and get this information across."

The virus which causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is known as HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Those infected do not have AIDS until the virus damages their immune system, making them vulnerable to infections that may lead to death.

According to the National AIDS Trust, 5 million people acquired the disease in 2003. About 8,000 people die of it every day.

The Stonewall Alliance plans to hold a candlelight memorial at 9 a.m. commemorating those who have died of the disease in University Park's Graham Center Pit. They will then distribute pamphlets regarding the virus, information on safe sex and free condoms until 2 p.m.

"Students need to know that this is an important issue. Even though we have made advancements in treatments, AIDS still affects people every day, whether they're black, gay, straight or white," Scalfani said.

As some suggest, the event is geared for a broad audience.

"We plan on commemorating not just those who have passed away, but also all the people touched by the disease," said Danielle Neid, a club member. "We can't ignore this issue or think that AIDS is not a threat anymore. Information is the best prevention."

DVD Station at University Park gains popularity

By **AMANDA RAMÍREZ CASTAÑEDA**
Staff Writer

The University Park campus bookstore is home to a new DVD rental system, which allows customers to rent DVDs for \$1 a day. The DVD Station has been on the first floor of the bookstore since October but became available to the public on Nov. 15.

The bookstore has thousands of DVDs in stock that are chosen by the DVD Station company, which is based in San Francisco, Calif.

Phredd Hunter, assistant general manager for the bookstore, said that it's good that the company has so many movies, because the rental system has been a great success.

"There is always someone at the DVD Station," Hunter said. "We have been trying to get the word out by placing signs, and we even had a two week campaign in which people passed out flyers throughout the university and we gave

out vouchers for a free DVD copy of the movie 'Dodge Ball.'"

Students at UP seem pleased with the convenience of a DVD rental system at the campus.

"I've only rented one movie at the DVD Station, but I think it is very easy and convenient," said student Josue Ignacio. "Although you are only able to rent according to the hours of the bookstore, which are not very convenient, I think this rental system could replace other video rentals, because it is cheaper and you can rent the DVD right after class."

Hunter said the book staff has been trained to answer any questions about the DVD Station. Bookstore employee, David Machin, is the official technician and consultant for DVD Station.

He received a three-day training session to resolve any technical difficulties that may occur with the system.

"We haven't had any problems since it's been running, although yes-

terday we had to place an 'out of service' sign because the machine ran out of the receipt paper," Machin said. "We ran out of the paper because we never expected to have such a great opening."

On the first day we rented more movies than we had imagined.

But the DVD Station company sent the materials we needed, and we already had the receipt paper before opening this morning."

The rental system does not currently offer memberships, so all fees are charged to the renter's credit card. After customers make a selection, the machine prints out a receipt which they must take to the customer service counter. First-time renters must pay \$2 to rent their first movie.

Returning customers are charged the rental fee for their movies when they return them.

Machin said that customers who do not own a credit card will not be able to rent DVDs until the membership system



AT YOUR FINGER TIPS: Student Manny de la Portilla selects a movie using the DVD Station, recently installed at the University Park campus Bookstore. **JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON**

is working.

The company has placed rental kiosks in stores and universities around the nation. Machin said the company is trying the system in universities and targeting students with low-cost rental fees.

Biscayne Bay Campus

does not have a DVD rental system, and there are no plans to put a DVD Station there. BBC students are displeased by this.

"I don't live at the dorms in BBC, but I used to, so I know how really boring living there is, especially during the weekends.

It's bad enough that the cafeteria isn't open on the weekends, and there is nothing to do," said student Gabriela González. "Having videos would at least provide the students living at the housing with a whole lot more of entertainment than what they have."

THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

MONDAY • NOVEMBER 29

Pan-African Committee meeting: 3 p.m., Graham Center 305, UP.

TUESDAY • NOVEMBER 29

Student Tuba Concert: 8 p.m., Wertheim Performing Arts Center, UP.

WEDNESDAY • DECEMBER 1

Catholic Student Union Holy Mass: 12 p.m., GC 150, UP.

Women's Basketball hosts Ford: 7 p.m., Pharmed Arena, UP.

FIU School of Music presents "The Messiah": 8 p.m., Wertheim Performing Arts Center, UP.

THURSDAY • DECEMBER 2

FIU Big Band Jazz Night: 8 p.m., Wertheim Performing Arts Center, UP.

FRIDAY • DECEMBER 3

Catholic Student Union "Bible Alive": 8 p.m., FIU Catholic Campus Ministry, St. Agatha Church.

Choreography III: New works by students majoring in dance: All day, VH 100 Dance Theatre, UP.

Panther Pagan Student Union: 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m., GC, UP.

Women's basketball hosts "Herald Thanksgiving Classic," vs. Elon: 5 p.m., Pharmed Arena, UP.

The Wolfsonian-FIU Art Basel Miami Beach Celebration: 8 p.m. - 11 p.m., South Beach, Miami.

SATURDAY • DECEMBER 4

Prism Concert: 8 p.m., Wertheim Performing Arts Center, UP.

Women's Basketball hosts Miami: 7 p.m., Pharmed Arena, UP.

Choreography III: New works by students majoring in dance: All day, VH 100 Dance Theatre, UP.

WEATHER

MONDAY



Hi/Low
82°F/66°F
t-storms

TUESDAY



Hi/Low
81°F/65°F
partly cloudy

WEDNESDAY



Hi/Low
80°F/64°F
partly cloudy

THURSDAY



Hi/Low
80°F/64°F
partly cloudy

FRIDAY



Hi/Low
78°F/64°F
partly cloudy

SATURDAY



Hi/Low
79°F/64°F
partly cloudy

SUNDAY



Hi/Low
80°F/64°F
partly cloudy

Courtesy of www.weather.com

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THE BEACON

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spotlight on Black Student Union

By ANA SANCHEZ
Staff Writer

University Park's Black Student Union, one of FIU's largest cultural and social organizations, completed its mission this year to celebrate black culture and contribute to the community.

Founded in 1980, the club has been notably active on and off campus by holding empowerment conferences for different black student unions around Florida and by starting a tutoring and mentoring project for inner city youth in Opa-locka.

Even though the union was established two decades ago, the club remained dormant from 1991 to 2000 due to lack of leadership. In 2000, senior Starex Smith restored the club with friends to give black students a place to unite.

"We noticed there were few things which represented black culture [at FIU]. Black students were not a part of the mainstream and felt ostracized. We wanted a place where students of color could

feel comfortable and share black culture with the FIU community, while also involving and improving the black community throughout Miami-Dade County," Smith said.

As part of their community outreach initiative, the BSU established the Opa-locka tutorial program with the hope of improving the reading skills of inner city students.

"We've come a long way, accomplished a lot and this is only the beginning," said BSU secretary Alexina Jeanni. "We've gotten good results, improvements on school grades and FCAT scores."

The club plans to hold a special dinner and awards banquet in December to acknowledge the young students' efforts and reward their scholastics improvements.

The BSU also initiated a community action partnership with University of Miami students to create their first Empowerment Conference, from Oct. 21-Oct. 23.

Seventy people from universities such as the University of Miami, Florida Atlantic University,

the University of Central Florida and University of Florida attended the program. Speakers included Lisa Del Pit, a Harvard graduate and Professor of Urban Education, and Elaine Brown, former chairperson for the Black Panther party in 1974.

The conference discussed ways to motivate and encourage black students to become involved on and off campus.

"Issues discussed in the conference included political involvement, leadership roles on campus, becoming socially active within the black community and having a sense of civic responsibility and improving economic status," Smith said.

The BSU plans to recruit Biscayne Bay Campus students to form another chapter of the club to be called the Black Student Association.

"We want to encourage all FIU students—and especially black students—to get involved on campus and in the club," Smith said.

As the year progresses, there are many goals the club wishes to accomplish, like the unification of dif-

ferent cultures within the university.

"[We want] to be a unifier of different black cultures on campus [in order] to break the separation and help integrate similar historic cultures and background between American blacks, Caribbeans, Haitians and Africans," said Vice President Sheldon Bailey. "That will help us to be stronger and learn more about each other."

According to the club's leaders, the organization is centered around promoting cultural learning and giving back to the community.

"The club motto is 'Knowledge, Unity and Service.' It's a place for all FIU students to learn and grow spiritually, mentally and culturally," said club member Nina Nunez.

Plans for the year include a month long celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. in January and activities in honor of Black History month in February. The BSU meets every Tuesday in GC 140 at 8:00 p.m. For more information contact the club at bsu1914@hotmail.com.



Open positions!

Start your journalism career now! We are looking for dedicated individuals to join our staff and begin training for the Spring semester. The following positions are available:

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Beat Writers
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OPINION

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

With Thanksgiving having come and gone, what did you do with your leftover turkey?

- Had more the next day/Made sandwiches for lunch.

81%

- Threw it out/Gave it to the dog. I wasn't able to handle seeing anymore turkey.

3%

- Got creative/Made turkey smores, turkey shakes and turkey upside down cake.

8%

- Turkey?! No, ham ruled at my house.

8%

Total participants: 73

Cast your vote at www.beaconnewspaper.com

WINNER & LOSER

WINNER



The lazy: Australian scientists have discovered a gene that may explain why some people are inherently less inclined to physical exercise than others, leaving lazy people everywhere ready to celebrate – after a nap.

LOSER



Maria Morales: The California woman lost her life savings of \$17,000 in a fast food restaurant. Distrustful of banks, Morales kept all of her money on her, because as we all know, the only person you can rely on is yourself. Oh wait...

QUOTEABLES

"I'm very into what I do, and many times, as a performer, when I'm playing...this sounds strange, but... I hear voices in my head."

– **Alicia Keys**, recording star, on an interview aired on "60 Minutes."

"It wouldn't be no beef. I just seen him. It ain't like that. People think it's like that. If he was beefing, you would be hearing about it."

– **Chingy**, rap-star, in an interview with MTV in which he was asked about his supposed conflict of interest with fellow rapper Ludacris.

"Certain artists my age [who] are going through this phase of not wanting a younger audience or not wanting people their age to like them will take their clothes off, and I definitely don't think that's a sign of maturity."

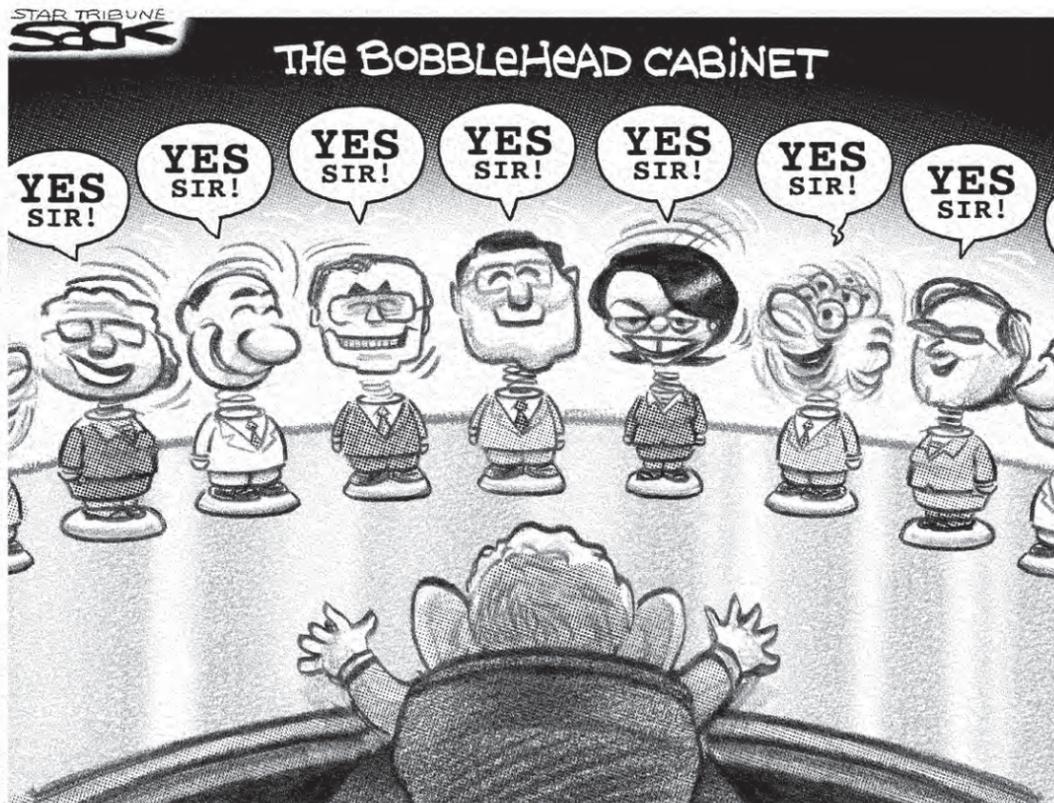
– **Hilary Duff**, actress and musician, in an interview with reporter Abbey Goodman, when asked about her changing image.

"I would not take care of polar bears. You have to feed them dead animals. It's gross. It's sick."

– **Paris Hilton**, heiress and socialite, in an interview with MTV, when asked about her third season of "The Simple Life."

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Letters to the Editor must be dropped off in GC 210 at the University Park campus, WUC 124 at the Biscayne Bay Campus or sent to beacon@fiu.edu. Letters must include the writer's full name, year in school, major/department and a valid phone number for verification purposes. If brought in to an office, a legitimate ID may be accepted instead of a phone number. *The Beacon* reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and/or spacing constraints. Letters must adhere to a maximum of 400 words.



Lesson in building healthy relationships

By **RANDY HENDERSON**
The Seattle Times

My first roommate sat silently watching television. I sat at the table, eating cereal. Suddenly, he turns and yells, "Do you have to slurp your milk?!"

Ah, relationships. Whether with your roommate, significant other, boss, friends or family, they can be quite the challenge.

So, too, is dealing with stress and anger. But while sex education is common in schools, what about relationship and stress-management education? Unfortunately, such classes are few and far between.

Yet when the question of relationship or "life skills" education comes up, many often say young people should learn such lessons at home or simply through experience.

But many kids aren't raised in the healthiest environments, and expecting teens to learn from peers is inadequate and risky.

Ultimately, there's a big difference between the random, uncertain and often painful process of learning by trial and error, and someone handing you a guidebook up front.

A quick Google search delivers

A program called "Reconnecting Youth," for example, was piloted in Seattle high schools, teaching about 600 "at risk" students to develop more personal control, communication skills, positive coping behaviors and better relationship skills.

The program had great results: a 20-percent increase in GPA, 60-percent drop in drug use, stronger and more positive relationships with family and peers, and better personal control and anger management.

We should push for such classes, ones that also cover commitments, finances, family crises, dating preparation and stress management as part of our state's high-school curriculum for all students.

The additional costs now will be far less than those paid in health and crime related costs later.

“Ah, relationships. Whether with your roommate, significant other, boss, friends or family, they can be quite the challenge.”

dozens of studies that show that healthy relationships and coping skills reduce substance abuse, eating disorders, suicides, job and unemployment stress, health problems, crime and violence.

While Washington state has some programs that address these issues, most are targeted at already "troubled" teens in school or juvenile corrections.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Student views article as non-factual, misleading

As a student of FIU, I take exception to the sentence in the opinion article of the Nov. 22 issue, which stated that, "The beginning of the holiday season marks a rise in depression and suicide."

It may be true that there is an increase in depression during the holidays, but there is no documented proof that there is an abnormal amount of suicide between Nov. 25 and Jan. 2.

Please verify your statement with documentation from a leading, known source that deals with mental health, suicide and holidays.

You will not find it, because there is no correlation between suicide and the Christmas holiday.

All you are doing is perpetuating a common myth. The reason people believe that the holidays cause people to manifest feelings of depression is because everyone on this planet, at one time or another, did not have a festive holiday.

Have you ever heard of someone who was upset during the holidays because someone else ruined a get-together or someone who did not get the pony that he/she always wanted?

The holidays do not induce depression and suicide any more than the other 46 weeks of the year do.

If I am wrong, then prove it in your next article.

Jerome Bruce
Senior
Business major



SAND ART: The mandala represents different things to people. It represents art for artists, music to musicians and dance to the dancers. **FRANK CONSUEGRA/THE BEACON**

Gods in the sand

Mandala sand painting brings Tibetan culture to BBC

By **JENNIFER LOPEZ**
Contributing Writer

Biscayne Bay Campus' Panther Square filled with students, teachers and visitors Nov. 17, to watch the consecration ceremony of the mandala – an oriental sand painting with symbolic designs.

All eyes in the room were glued to the stage. Tibetan Buddhist monks chanted and played instruments as their peaceful hums filled the campus. The sound of golden horns told the FIU community that the monks were about to clear the mandala that had taken over Panther Square for three days.

Thupten Chosang, spokesperson for the monks, said they travel all around the country, as well as to universities to

accomplish two goals.

First, through the mandala, they promote world peace by using sacred music, dancing and art. Secondly, the monks raise awareness of their Tibetan culture.

On Nov. 15th the monks began their three-day creation of the mandala for the "Buddha of Conflict Resolution."

"This mandala is really healthy for purification, world peace and world health," said Chosang.

Monday's opening ceremony began with dancing and the playing of musical instruments such as horns, cymbals and drums. The FIU community stood in awe as the monks proceeded to the table. The sight of the monks dressed in religious robes with musical instru-

ments took some students by surprise.

The monks drew lines across the table in an intricate painting process to create the mandala.

Later, they chose sand from little plastic cups and carefully dispersed it across the table.

Chosang said the mandala represents many things for different people.

It represents art for the artists, music for the musicians and dance for the dancers.

From Nov. 16 to Nov. 18, the monks continued to complete the artwork.

They were able to rest and eat, but devoted much of their time to the painting.

They used funnels called *chakpur* to pour the sand



HEAVENLY GRAINS: Tibetan buddhist monks worked diligently on the mandala for three days before removing it to consecrate the ritual. **FRANK CONSUEGRA/THE BEACON**

See **MANDALA**, page 5

Students unite for ceremony

MANDALA, from page 4

and different colors to form intricate patterns and messages.

By Nov. 17, the mandala had become a grand mixture of red, yellow, green and white sand with tiny symbols and pictures.

The monks stood around the mandala one last time for the consecration ceremony, where they hummed a prayer.

Student Jennifer Camille, said the mandala sand painting was a way to bring something different to BBC.

"I think it is very good they had this, because both campuses do not bring

"I think it's very good they had this, because both campuses do not bring enough events centered on humanity."

Jennifer Camille
Student

enough events centered on humanity," said Camille. "It would be very good if they could bring things of different cultures."

As the monks erased what they had worked so hard on for three days,

gasp and oh my gods filled the room.

Chosang said the removal is important because it consecrates the

ritual, and the monks must move on to the next mandala in the next city.

The sand was distributed in bags to students and onlookers who wished to take home the art form. It is said that the sand brings blessings for personal health and healing.

Many students were open and willing to participate in the ceremony, regardless of their religion, race or ethnicity.

Spiritual or not, many learned something new from the mandala ceremony.



When FIU opened in 1972, its mascot was the Sunblazer. In 1987 the mascot was changed to the Golden Panther because it better represents Florida's natural environment and FIU's maturing athletic department. The colors blue and gold were adopted along with the new mascot.

Don't let the season ruin your fitness efforts

By EDWIN RYAN
Contributing Writer

So you have worked hard all year to improve your health and fitness, but the holiday season is here, and you might be concerned that holiday eating will destroy all your efforts. Don't panic!

The good news is that you CAN enjoy the holiday season and maintain your health and fitness accomplishments by simply engaging in regular activity and adhering to some of the healthy eating tips outlined below.

Healthy eating is about learning to eat a variety of foods in moderation and focusing on nutritional content.

This means learning to reduce fat intake, consuming an adequate amount of water and eating a diet that is balanced with the six essential nutrients - carbohydrates/fiber, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water.

These important nutrients can be found in whole grain products (wheat bread and pasta), vegetables and fruits.

The first step to having a successful, healthy eating plan this holiday season is knowing how to choose foods wisely.

This holiday season, eat foods that are nutrient dense.

Foods that are nutrient dense contain a moderate amount of calories and a high amount of nutrients.

For example, eating a slice of nutrient dense whole-grain bread, rather than a couple of crackers made from processed flour with lower fiber content, is a better dietary choice.

Foods made from white

flour, such as white bread and pasta, lose much of their nutrient value as they are processed.

Snack foods made with processed flours should be avoided during the holiday season, because they have added fat.

You should also limit or avoid eating processed foods with high amounts of unsaturated and trans fats.

Another good dietary choice would be to replace refined, sugary cereals with whole-grain cereal.

These sugary snack foods and cereals contain a lot of calories and taste great, which could tempt you to eat them in excessive amounts.

Instead, the American Heart Association recommends choosing lean meats, poultry, fish, low-fat dairy products and drinking water every day.

Along with making better dietary choices, it is beneficial to spread your calories throughout the day and avoid over-eating at any one meal.

This will help you burn more calories, and may prevent excessive weight gain and bloating. It also helps to provide you with just the right amount of energy for the demands of your lifestyle. In general, some key points to remember this holiday season are to eat in moderation and practice portion control.

Eat a variety of foods that are nutrient dense and contain fiber.

Drink lots of water and choose low-fat products and lean meats over high-fat foods and fatty meats.

Finally, if time does not permit your regular exercise program, remember to stay physically active.



Additional tips to maintain good health during the holiday season:

- Sauté onions and celery in a small amount (1 tsp.) of butter/margarine.
- Roast the turkey on a rack so the fat drips away during the cooking process.
- Use a fat separator for the roasting pan juices and skim off all fat before making the gravy.
- Make pumpkin pies with canned, evaporated, skim milk.
- Use half the amount of sugar in your pumpkin pie recipe.
- Eat your pumpkin pie with light or fat free whipped topping.
- If there is more than one choice of pie after the meal, choose ONE, not a bit of each.
- Eat the filling of the pie and just a bit (or none) of the high fat crust.
- Have potatoes mashed with chicken broth and canned, evaporated, skim milk.
- Sprinkle hot vegetables with lemon juice and black pepper for flavor instead of butter.
- Use low-fat canned cream soup in a traditional green bean casserole.
- Use all-fruit spreads on rolls instead of butter or margarine. Or, skip the rolls altogether!
- Don't skip meals the day before the big holiday meal. You will be too hungry and might overeat.
- Begin the meal with a salad. You might eat less during dinner.
- After dinner, go for a long walk, and remember to maintain your exercise program and physical activity.

WHAT the...



LUIS NIN/THE BEACON

Man Statue, made of granite and created by Isamu Noguchi, has become very popular on the University Park campus.

DID YOU KNOW?

While 7 men in 100 have some form of color blindness, only 1 woman in 1,000 suffers from it.

- Compliments of
www.hookedonfacts.com

A Latin rendition of American Idol Emerges

By JENNIFER LOPEZ
Contributing Writer

Early on the morning of Nov. 18, a long line of young men and women dressed in their best pop-idol wear formed along the American Airlines Arena. It was an all too familiar line for those who auditioned for "American Idol," the year before. This time, however, they were in line for the opportunity to participate in a television show that will hit close to home.

"Nuevas Voces de America," a Spanish language reality show that will transform 20 singers into Latin pop idols, held auditions which thousands of hopefuls attended. Like "American Idol," each

week a contestant is booted off if they receive the least number of votes, cast via telephone.

Throughout the show, the contestants will get to work with some of the most experienced professionals in the Latin music business.

The show's mastermind and producer, Emilio Estéfán, will oversee the pop hopefuls on their journey to stardom.

Besides Miami, the auditions will take place in Puerto Rico, California and New York. Over 7,000 people are expected to audition.

By 6 a.m. there were several hundred people in line jumping up and down and shaking their arms with the hope that the

cold air wouldn't penetrate their vocal cords.

As the morning began to warm up, both in temperature and tension, the occasional outburst of song could be heard.

A woman dressed in black patent leather pants and a tight, red top shouted "Azucar," and no one seemed to be as startled as I was.

Two local Miami DJs from the Sol 95.7 radio station patrolled the line to find the worst singers. They picked odd-looking and older people to sing over the radio, as they laughed at them and told them not to quit their day jobs.

Finally, at 9 a.m. sharp, a man holding a megaphone shouted the schedule of events for the day.

At around 10 a.m., I finally reached the check-in table; I auditioned too. I had done my fair share of singing in the school choir when I was younger, but it was purely curiosity that led me to audition.

After checking in, I was given a number and a comment sheet for the judges to fill out. I was number 1,127. My stomach flipped. I did not realize what I was getting myself into.

My group of 25 was finally led into the Bongo's Cuban Café restaurant of the American Airlines Arena.

To our surprise, Emilio Estéfán sat in a chair overlooking the stage. He was not only a judge, he was the only judge.

One by one, we were called up by numbers on

to the tiny stage and literally given a minute to sing. There were all sorts of singers in my group, including salsa singers, rappers and even opera singers.

It was finally my turn, and I suddenly felt like turning around and running out the door. I carefully stepped on stage and introduced myself.

Looking straight into a camera, I gave my best rendition of Gloria Estefan classic, "Con Los Ano's Que me Quedan." I put the microphone back on its stand, stepped off the stage and shook Estéfán's

hand. The producers gave no feedback, only a thank you.

Unlike "American Idol," where judges take a crack at the worst singers, the audition was simple and professional.

Leo Berrojo, the general producer of "Nuevas Voces de America," would have liked to see less nerves and more personality. Although it is a singing contest, talent alone will not make you a finalist in the competition.

"We are looking for the comedian and the sexy mama, as well as many

others, so don't be afraid to go in there and show us what you can do," Barrojo said.

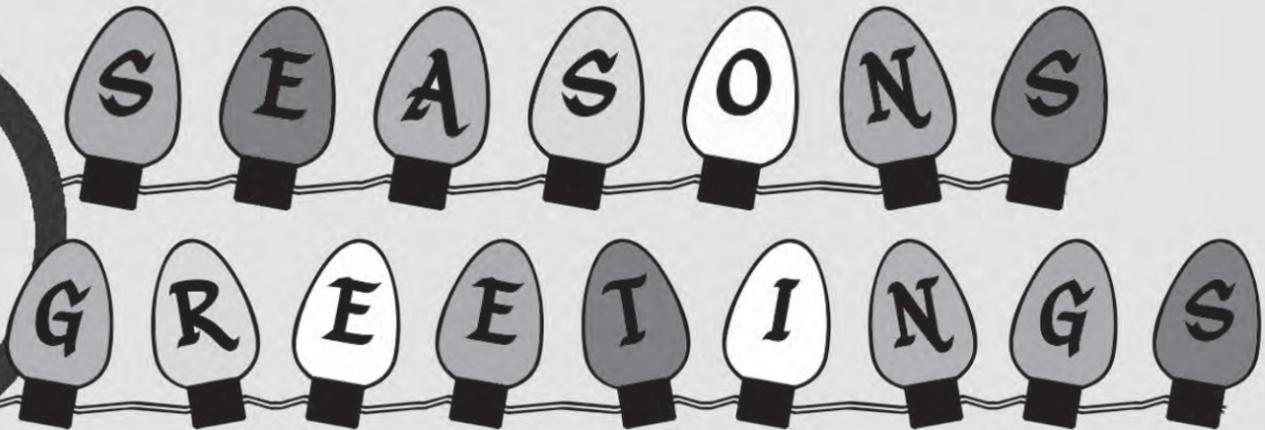
Berrojo also said they will contact the 100 finalists in the second week of December. During this time, they will do background and medical checks on those finalists.

The top 20 finalists will then be announced on the Telemundo Network, so people will have to stay tuned to find out if they made the cuts.

The show is scheduled to air in February 2005 on Sunday nights.



ART BY LUIS NIN/THE BEACON



The Beacon wishes all faculty and students
a happy and safe holiday season.

There are several positions available at *The Beacon*.

Stop by GC 210 or WUC 124 and apply to begin training for the Spring 2005 semester.



BOOM: Ismael N'Diaye has been a major addition to the Golden Panthers team. The former University of Miami player said he was happy to be here at FIU after the home opener this season. **JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON**



FIVE IN A ROW: By losing to Western Kentucky on Nov. 20, the football team lost its fifth game in a row. Western Kentucky controlled the second half of the game on its way to a 35-14 victory. "We didn't do a very good job stopping them in the second half. At the same time, we had opportunities on offense, but couldn't convert. It seems like an old record," said FIU head coach Don Strock. **GEOFF ANDERSON/SPECIAL TO THE BEACON**

Rouco and 13 new players look to avenge last year's 5-22 record

By **ANDONI GONZALEZ-RUA**
Staff Writer

The recruiting period, the signing period and the preseason have passed.

The Nov. 19 game at Pharmed Arena versus Florida Atlantic marked the beginning of a much anticipated chapter in FIU basketball history. The buzz has circulated and the time is finally here. It's the start of the Sergio Rouco Era.

After finishing the season with a 5-22 record, the last thing anyone on the team wants to talk about is the past. The present is upon us as new basketball expectations rise higher than ever in South Florida, and it's not just at American Airlines Arena. After beating FAU by three on Nov. 19, the Golden Panthers fell to visitors Hofstra University by two on Nov. 21. Having left FIU just two years ago, Coach Rouco is back as head coach for the first time in his NCAA career.

Coming off a season that saw him take part in the Promised Land of the NCAA Tournament in March with the University of Texas-El Paso, players are already talking about March Madness and believe that they are not too far away— all this after a season that many would like to forget.

"This is going to be a different story, a different situation for years to come," said senior center Byron Burnett.

Thirteen new players will wear an FIU jersey this year.

Rouco likes it that way.

"It's 13 new guys, but we're going to fight," Rouco said. "Our motto this year is that we fight through everything. We're not very pretty, but we will hustle."

Rouco brought in players that will fit his system and help turn FIU around.

"I'm extremely proud of them," Rouco said of his players. "These are my guys. These are not guys that are back; these are guys that I brought in and have bought [the system]."

Burnett came into his own last year, and led the team in rebounds and blocks.

He has put his faith in Coach Rouco, something that players and fans may need as the team prepares to face a very tough schedule, both in and out of the conference.

Some of the tough teams that the Golden Panthers are scheduled to play include: defending champions University of Connecticut, ranked 7th in the preseason Coaches' Poll; cross-town rivals and ACC member, Miami; as well as Florida State and George Washington University. And that's all before the New Year and the conference games start.

FIU dominated in the preseason, blazing past St. Mary's 89-54 and squashing Florida Memorial by 45, 100-55, a game in which FIU never trailed, following an 18-0 run to start the game. But that was the preseason against mediocre teams, and the team will need to prove themselves when the conference games begin.

"We have changed our attitudes ... this team is together more. We are a more humble team. [It's] a kind of family situation," Burnett said, referring to the changes that have taken place this season.

FIU is ranked fifth in the Eastern Division of the Sun Belt Conference and received the least amount of votes in either of the two divisions.

This however, is no surprise to some, after the Golden Panthers struggled last year in the conference, finishing the season at 1-13; their only victory came late in the season over New Orleans.

The team has a new look on life, and much of that can be attributed to the new attitude that Coach Rouco has brought to this once demoralized team. Burnett realizes the immensity of the task facing the team on Nov. 30.

"We can't back down, because it will give us a lot of experience heading into our conference schedule. Playing teams like UCONN and Florida State, and good teams like Miami and George Washington, will only help us," Burnett said.

Rouco brings in new ideas

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running with the team in the Everglades on the first day of practice in order to become more unified, Rouco has changed things on the basketball court.

New uniforms came in this season and one major difference is that there are no player names on the back of the jerseys. Reason is that Rouco doesn't want his players to play for the name on the back of their jerseys but for the name on the front — FIU.

Another uniform change is that Rouco requires his players to wear the same sneakers — blue and white Nike Shocks — which Nike donated to the team.

Rouco admits though, that he finally got players to wear the sneaker only when he told them that is the same shoe that Duke and the University of North Carolina wear.

These are the things that make Rouco different from other coaches. He wants his players to attend sorority parties,

school events and clinics around the county to get them involved and have the college experience that many of us take for granted.

I've watched Rouco coach and listened to his goals and the expectations he has of his team. Deep down in my heart, I truly believe this basketball team will turn around and become an elite power house in the Sun Belt Conference in years to come.

I have talked to Rouco and seen him in action. My impression of him is that he is not at FIU to fool around. He is here to work his players, to get them involved in school, and to help them become better people.

Go watch this Golden Panther team for yourself and come to your own conclusion. Rouco is genuine and so are his players. With a little time and fan support, this team can and will achieve the success it has lacked since the days of Raja Bell and Carlos Arroyo.

SPORTS

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Forget last year's losing season: The chemistry of this year's team will make it into a winner

COMMENTARY



By **HARRY COLEMAN**
Sports Editor

The definition of *team* is a group organized to work together. A true example of a team is the FIU men's basketball team.

The addition of head coach Sergio Rouco last March has made this year's men's basketball team a highly one.

Fans at the three home games have received a glimpse of good things to come in the future. In the first two minutes of the first home, Rouco excited the crowd and his players by taking off his jacket to argue with referees.

Last season, the team played a half court offense, where its philosophy was based on defense. Things have changed this year, as the team plays an up tempo style that ignites the crowd on every single possession.

In the first game alone against cross-town rival Florida Atlantic, two alley hoop dunks and one monster dunk in which Raphael

daSilva flew Jordan-like in the air, got every single person on their feet, applauding the team.

Since FIU basketball became a Division I school in 1988, only six players have played four consecutive years at FIU.

Rouco hopes to change that by getting young players to stay at FIU while at the same time, getting his freshman players to experience the freshman sensation.

When the FIU football team had The Year's Best Slumber Party on Oct. 1, in which fans slept at the stadium, Rouco sent his four freshman players to the event. The difference between the players and the rest of the fans though, was that they had practice at 8 a.m. the following morning.

Rouco has turned the team around to become a family.

Last season, the team failed and had a miserable 5-22 record under head coach Donnie Marsh, because it didn't have team players, just a bunch of individuals.

Players would drive the ball down the court and play as a one-man team, hoping to score points. This year things are different. Besides doing activities with his players off the court like

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TEAM EFFORT: Coach Sergio Rouco has changed things around this season. Players no longer have their last name on back of jerseys. Rouco wants players to play for the name on the front—FIU. (Top) Ismael N'Diaye drives by Florida Memorial opponent. (Left) Ivan Almonte pulls up for a jumper against Florida Atlantic. (Bottom) Rouco pumps up his players in the game against FAU. PHOTOS BY GEOFF ANDERSON/SPECIAL TO THE BEACON