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Build a bear for your sweetie — for free

PAGE 5



Forget the flowers, these ladies are in it to win it

PAGE 8

SPOTLIGHT

AT THE BAY PAGE 3

Living Single: Our columnist Sabrena may be playing the field, but she has Valentine's Day advice for those who have no strings attached.

AT THE BAY PAGE 3



The Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce is using Valentine's Day to make a statement regarding same-sex marriage.

OPINION PAGE 4

The armed forces has discharged qualified men and women because of their sexuality since 1993. Is it time for a change?

OPINION PAGE 4

A proposed initiative for a high-speed rail system in Florida could save residents time and money.

LIFE! PAGE 5

How to celebrate Valentine's when you're in a long distance relationship.

SPORTS PAGE 8



FIU softball kicks off its season with a long home stand, beginning with N.C. State and Providence.

SPORTS PAGE 8

Intramural basketball riddled with mercy rule blowouts as Kappa Alpha Psi, Pi Kappa Phi and Phi Sigma Kappa roll to easy victories.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall in Love with the Garden, Feb. 12, 5 p.m. In honor of love and community, the Garden Club will be hosting a potluck. Beautify the garden and have some fun. At the FIU Garden next to Baseball Stadium.

FIU Softball, Feb. 13, 1 and 3 p.m. Cheer on your Golden Panthers as they take on Southern Illinois and UIC, respectively, at the Softball Field.

A Lie of The Mind, Feb. 14, 2 p.m. \$10 for students with ID, \$12 general at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center.

— More events can be found in our Monday and Friday issues of Life!.

WEATHER



FRIDAY
Mostly Cloudy
LOW: 60 HIGH: 74



SATURDAY
Partly Cloudy/Wind
LOW: 49 HIGH: 69



SUNDAY
Partly Cloudy
LOW: 50 HIGH: 70

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SETTING THE MOOD

MARIA MURRIEL
Contributing Writer

Seeing Hallmark cards, flowers, chocolates, and hearts everywhere you go? Some may like it better than others, but the fact is Valentine's Day is here.

For the eternal procrastinator, here's a compressed list of V-Day activities for lovebirds and loners the same. (For those who already have a luscious evening of romantic debauchery prepared, cheers!)

Most Miamians already know about the yearly art events that take place around the city. In February, it's the Coconut Grove Arts Festival's turn to exhibit multicultural arts on V-Day weekend from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. As for entertainment, live music acts like Suenalo and local Latin funk-meisters, the Spam Allstars, will flood the festival with their Afro-Cuban beats throughout the weekend, all for a measly \$10.

Care for a fancy dinner and walk in the park? The fest is complete with a Global Food Village that's stocked with, well, food from the globe. If that's not enough, the Culinary Pavilion Showcase will tend to the sophisticated tastes of the hungry with a variety of professional platters and garnished hors d'oeuvres.

The Deering Estate — from the family who built Vizcaya Gardens — will also hold a festival of their own

V-DAY, page 5

Local hot spots you can help make hotter

Four-day schedule set for Summer

GABRIEL ARRARÁS
Asst. News Director

When summer rolls around, FIU will once again adopt a modified workweek schedule.

Starting June 25 until Aug. 5, the University will begin operating on a four-day, 10-hour schedule for the 2010 Summer B semester.

"I believe there are positive benefits with this schedule as long as we continue to emphasize quality service," said President Rosenberg in an e-mail to all FIU faculty and staff.

FIU has operated under a four-day schedule the past two summer semesters. According to Rosenberg, the four-day schedule has saved the University approximately \$337,000 in utility fees over the past two summer semesters.

"It [also] reduces commuting costs for our employees and it provides faculty and staff extended time with their families," he added.

A survey taken by the University showed results indicating that more than 80 percent of FIU's faculty and staff were satisfied with the four-day work schedule and would like to have the program implemented again this summer.

According to Rosenberg, the Division of Human Resources will be providing further reminders regarding the implementation guidelines and logistics as the start of the four-day schedule approaches.

"We look forward to the participation of each of you once more in making this a successful endeavor and thank you in advance for your continued dedication and contributions to the University," Rosenberg said.

SGC-MMC

New council members fill empty seats

PHILIPPE BUTEAU
Senior Staff Writer

The Student Government Council at Modesto Maidique Campus appointed two new members and promoted a current member during their Feb. 7 senate meeting.

Kierstin Koppel was appointed to a justice position, Miriam Blasco to the elections board and Adam Johnson, the former finance committee vice-chair, is now chair of the committee.

Chief Justice of SGC-MMC Luis Robayo recommended that the council confirm Koppel.

"She's more than ready for the job," Robayo said.

Koppel said during the meeting that she has been working with Robayo since Spring 2009 and has

SGC-MMC, page 2

Roundtable tackles cyber law

MEENA RUPANI
Staff Writer

Web sites like YouTube provided the Tuesday Times Roundtable a topic Feb. 9, revolving around the subject of intellectual property law.

Each week the roundtable discussions are sponsored by Student Government, *The New York Times* and the Global Learning for Global Citizenship and are used to enhance the students' perspective on global issues, according to the Student Government Web site.

Hosted by Professor Hannibal Travis, a former attorney for human rights and intellectual property, he has recently been focusing on the issue of cyber law in his recent publications, according to the College of Law Web site.

The specific *New York Times*

article discussed was published in March 2007 and dealt with Viacom suing YouTube for more than \$1 billion in damages for "some 150,000 videos that Viacom claims it owns and YouTube users have shared."

According to the article, the complaint by Viacom is that YouTube has used technology to willfully infringe copyrights on a large scale.

Before beginning the discussion of the article, Travis provided some background on the YouTube Web site.

"In 2003 and 2004, students from the company PayPal decided to construct a Web site where users could post videos to a common site. It would be user created and user generated videos. This would be a better alternative than going to a site owned by Viacom such as NBC, MTV, etc.," Travis said.

According to Travis, YouTube was willing to take it down but other users are going to continue to re post videos. They also could set up an automatic filter but then these companies must give every clip they own to YouTube in order for YouTube to filter these videos out.

"Instead Viacom sued YouTube and then others began to follow. The English soccer league and Japanese anime producers also became involved in this case. It has now turned into a class action suit," Travis said.

Travis then turned the discussion onto to the students and wanted to know if they believed YouTube was doing enough to settle with Viacom or if could they be doing more to appease these companies.

Two specific students were

TIMES, page 2

NEWS FLASH

NATIONAL

Former congressman Charlie Wilson passes away at the age of 76

According to CNN, The 12-term Democratic representative, who served Texas' 2nd Congressional District and inspired the book and movie "Charlie Wilson's War," had been in a meeting with a friend Wednesday morning when he complained of difficulty breathing.

The 2007 film told the story of Wilson's efforts to get weapons to mujahedeen fighters after Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan.

Small earthquake alarms residents in Illinois

According to the *New York Times*, The U.S. Geological Survey reported that the earthquake, which had an initial estimated magnitude of 4.3, but was later changed to 3.8., was centered near Virgil, about 50 miles northwest of Chicago, at a depth of about three miles. No aftershocks were reported.

Amy Vaughan, a geophysicist with the U.S.G.S., told NY Times reporters that the tremor was only the second notable earthquake in more than 30 years in that area.

- Compiled by Gabriel Arrarás

HIGHWAY TO HELL



CHRIS ADAMS/THE BEACON

Jesse Morrell, a missionary from *Open Air Outreach*, preached his version of the Bible to a large crowd of angry students while wearing a sign that warned them against sins such as Fornication, Gangster Rappers, Homosexuals, Marijuana smoking and Dirty Dancing. This took place by the GC Fountain on Feb. 10.

THE BEACON

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President addresses student concerns

MAUREEN NINO
Asst. News Director

With an auditorium filled with students and faculty, University President Mark Rosenberg addressed issues and concerns during an annual town hall meeting on Feb. 9.

The meeting, held in the Mary Ann Wolfe Theater at Biscayne Bay Campus, gave students the opportunity to ask Rosenberg questions.

One of many issues brought to the president's attention involved gender-neutral bathrooms on campus. Junior and liberal arts major Jason Remedios presented the need for the bathrooms and importance of

its accessibility to all students.

Remedios, also the promotional communications chair for Stonewall Pride Alliance organization, which supports gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and ally students at the University, said such facilities would benefit the transgender community.

"I know that we don't have a large population of transgender students, but we do have them. Will they be facilitated?" Remedios said.

In response, John Cal, assistant vice president of facilities management, said that the University currently does have several family bathrooms, which may be considered gender-neutral.

Furthermore, according to the Assistant Vice President of Business Services Jeff Krablin, students will now be offered an additional family bathroom in the new Parking Garage 5 building, currently in construction.

"We're taking a step in the right direction," Rosenberg said.

Yet Remedios felt the issue was left unresolved.

"Family and gender-neutral [bathrooms] are not the same," said Remedios in an interview with *The Beacon*.

The greatest concern shared by students related to campus transportation and the

TOWN HALL, page 3

Election process studied

SGC-MMC, page 1

learned a lot from him. She said she worked with him on the Constitution.

None of the senators had any questions for Koppel, a former SGC-MMC intern, who was voted in unanimously.

Miriam Blasco and Monique Rodriguez were both planned to be appointed to the elections board during the meeting, but only Blasco was present.

Taylor Prochnow, senator from the College of Arts and Sciences, asked Blasco several questions regarding how she and the board will handle problems that arose during last year's elections and how her position will help her understand "the dynamic of elections" and make the process better.

Blasco answered the elections problem question by saying that the board will look at last year's elections, look at the issues that caused problems, re-read the elections code

and make some changes.

She was not specific during the meeting on what changes the board will be make to the elections code.

Blasco said during the meeting she will be able to help improve the election process because she can provide the viewpoint of someone who was not involved with elections last year.

Altanese Phenelus, senator from the College of Arts and Sciences, asked Blasco if she would remove herself from the board if she knew one of the candidates personally.

"My friendships and involvement with SGA are completely separate," Blasco answered.

Blasco said in a response to a question that one of biggest problems of last year's elections was that students didn't know about student government.

"They didn't know who was running, they didn't know the candidates and they didn't know what they had to do to

vote," Blasco said.

Prochnow expressed general concerns about the elections board during the meeting. She said she was concerned that Blasco did not give specific examples on how elections in general will be improved.

"It didn't seem like there was any real plan in action," Prochnow said.

William-Jose Velez, senator from the Engineering Center, said that Blasco is a hard worker and said she would be a "valuable asset to the elections board."

The final vote of the meeting was the appointment of a new finance committee chair.

Marcos Oyola, the former finance committee chair, resigned due to personal reasons according to Mykaelle Figueiredo, SGC-BBC vice-president.

Johnson was nominated and named the new finance committee chair during the meeting.

YouTube, Viacom lawsuit among topics

TIMES, page 1

actively participating throughout the duration of the discussion.

Political science major David Dixon, a junior, did not believe YouTube could possibly do anything else.

"YouTube is acting reasonably, they are doing all they can. They have no possible control over what is being submitted," Dixon said.

Another student, international relations major Ludovico Pereira, a junior, brought up the competing Web site of Hulu.

"Hulu gets permission from copyright holders, they are at the mercy of Viacom and other companies. YouTube is a different type of site and it should not be shut down by these large corporations," Pereira said.

Professor Travis then brought up the controversial topic of parodies and mash-up videos.

Mash-up videos are when music is added to video or news clips to make them a humorous segment, similar to a parody.

"Parodies and mash-ups should be legal because they are substantially different than the original. However, if YouTube has to automatically filter out copyrighted clips this will include the mash-ups and the paro-

dies," Travis said.

Dixon commented on this controversial topic.

"Mash-ups and parodies should be allowed. Users should have some freedom of speech and the ability to say what they want to a degree," Dixon said.

Toward the end of the discussion, Travis brought up the fact that there are already versions of the site in different countries.

According to Travis, the sites in other countries will be difficult to control because they have different rules and different statutes.

"In the end, there are two possible solutions, we could stop U.S. infringement inside the country and at the border. Or allow the YouTube site to keep running or else foreign businesses will benefit instead," Travis said.

Students brought up the idea of a monthly subscription fee to the site. However, Pereira argued that this would prove to be expensive to users.

"We have to assume that people will pay if they want higher quality videos like the ones given on iTunes as long as YouTube remains to show low quality videos," Pereira said.

LIVING SINGLE

Valentine's Day guide for singles and couples

It's that wonderful time of year again when men and women alike get together and express their undying love for each other. For many, Valentine's Day is a day filled with romance. For others, it is a horrible reminder that they are indeed living single.

However, there is no rule that says this day is only for couples. In fact, there are several ways that singles can have fun on Valentine's Day.

For instance, you can get together with all of your other single friends and go to the movies and out to eat.

If you are one of those people who have not collected many friends, or maybe you are new in town, well you happen to be living in a city that is known for its night clubs. You can put on a nice outfit, get all dolled up and

go dancing. Who knows? Maybe by the end of the night, you will not be single any longer.

For those of you who are not living single, here are a few things you can do to make your significant other smile on Valentine's Day.

Guys, women absolutely love receiving flowers at work. I think it's the look of envy on the faces of their co-workers that fills their hearts with joy the most.

In fact, women like the attention so much that sometimes they actually send flowers to themselves.

For those who are dating on a budget, you can still pull off a romantic evening. All you need are some candles, soft music, and if you don't know how to cook, take-out (if you go with the latter, keep it a secret).

Women love to be wined and dined, and

many would prefer a romantic dinner at home versus going out to a noisy crowded restaurant.

Ladies, we have to do our part as well. I know some women view Valentine's Day as a day to be on the receiving end of the gifts, but I'm here to tell you that is just not so. We have to make our significant others feel loved too.

This can be achieved in several ways, but I don't recommend having flowers delivered (men don't feel the same way about that as we do).

You can prepare a romantic candlelit dinner, buy him a bottle of his favorite cologne, or you can go in for the kill: stop by Victoria's Secret and pick out the sexiest piece of lingerie your money can buy. Trust me, this will make him very happy.

Whether you decide to spend the evening with your friends, family or significant other, be safe and have a happy Valentine's Day!

COLUMNIST



SABRENA JOHNSON

SWEET HEARTS



SERGIO MONTEALEGRE/THE BEACON

Sidney Emmanuel, a senior in computer engineering (left), purchases a cupcake from a Valentine's bake sale hosted by Alternative Breaks members Berlanda Boliere, biology senior (front right), Nady Moline, social work sophomore (middle right), and Portia Morrell, computer engineer junior (back right), on Feb. 10. Proceeds will go toward disadvantaged children in the Dominican Republic.

Valentine's Day event to make statement on same-sex marriage

TOMAS LOPEZ-MELIS
Staff Writer

The almost exclusively heterosexual-marketed holiday of Valentine's Day is typically accompanied with a romantic date, and the classic box of chocolates.

This year, Miami is offering a not-so-typical Valentine's Day event to its lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community, (commonly known as the LGBT community). The Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, in association with Miami's Jungle Island are hosting Commit 2 Love, a commitment ceremony and reception on Feb. 14 at 6 p.m. at the Jungle Island Tree Top Ballrooms.

LGBT couples will be able to publicly pronounce their love for each other in a commitment ceremony similar to a typical wedding. Although the couples will not be legally recognized as married, Michael Vita of the Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce thinks it's still worth it.

"Anything like this that we do is one step closer toward equality for our community," Vita said. "By people standing up to commit to each other, it makes the statement that we are ready to take the step toward a long-term relationship, like anyone else in America."

Stonewall 2 BBC (the LGBT support club at the Biscayne Bay Campus) members shared their thoughts on the Valentines Day Commit 2 Love Ceremony.

Stonewall's President Danny Anzueto, a senior in psychology says he "thinks it's an amazing concept" and he is "very excited to hear that they're doing a domestic partnership event".

"It would be nice to have a marriage event, rather than a commitment ceremony, but the fact they are doing this shows support for the LGBT community," Anzueto said.

Stonewall is following this concept with a similar event on Feb. 25 with the S2B Marriage event at BBC. The event will allow for same sex couples to take part in a public commitment ceremony on campus.

Although the road to equality seems long, events like the Commit 2 Love Ceremony, and S2B's marriage event demonstrate there is a growing interest in the LGBT community having equal marriage rights.

The LGBT community's effort in a commitment ceremony on Valentine's Day is a challenge to traditional values being redefined through events like these. Elise Withbrs, Stonewall's vice president, and a junior in advertising said, "Everyone wants to say something special to the person they love, whether they are a man or a woman."

Shuttle service discussed

TOWN HALL, page 2

need to charge for bus passes when students pay parking fees, an issue even Rosenberg was curious about.

"I would like to know the answer to that question myself. I know this is a continuing challenge for us to offer transportation between both campuses at the times needed and the availability that you need," Rosenberg said.

Krablin said the bus is subsidized in part by Parking and Transportation and is a high cost to transport a bus back and forth.

"The right thing to do is to go back and look at those numbers in again and do further analyze to see if there is a service that may be more affordable," Krablin said.

Several of those in attendance seemed frustrated not only by the cost but also the lack of communication from bus drivers.

"Sometimes they take alternative routes instead of the Turnpike," said Ed Yellin, a campus services associate who has taken the shuttle for the past 30 years.

According to students the alternate route may take an hour instead of 30 minutes to get to the other campus.

"I know sometimes when you sit in the bus you may wonder why is the driver taking an alternate route but they may be trying to avoid something," Krablin said.

Christin "Cici" Battle, BBC student government vice president, believes these are issues that may be resolved if the drivers communicated more effectively with students.

"This bus issue is very very important and we have to get it right and the only we can do that is by listening to you and what the concerns are," Rosenberg said.

Another matter brought up during the meeting was the possible health insurance mandate. SGC-BBC Clerk of Council Mawou

Francois read a question submitted by an anonymous student that said, "With a University mandating health insurance for its students how can a decision like this be left to SGA?"

According to Rosenberg, a state-wide discussion regarding the matter due to the inadequate coverage of the typical college health fee. "Students are finding that if you break an ankle or arm that they don't have any place to have it fully covered," said Rosenberg.

Rosenberg also pointed out that, despite the cost it may add to tuition, the mandate would be well worth it.

"The argument is that if we did it state wide we could get insurance, for the semester, that could be full coverage for around \$800 or \$900. A lot of money but when you consider what you might need, it could cover a lot."

According to Rosenberg, the health mandate is "not even close" to being implemented.

The health insurance mandate as it stands would not apply to students who already have adequate coverage, according to Rosa Jones, vice president of student affairs.

"Students with insured will be exempted from the requirement, students out insurance would be required. But as President Rosenberg said we seem to be quite far from that recommendation. There is a lot of discussion and SGA students from along the state are weighing their hand on that issue," said Jones.

A final issue regarding delayed graduation was brought up by several students. Heather Callam, who has received her bachelor's degree in social work but will not obtain her master's on time, citing that "the director and assistant director [of the school of social work] did not follow policy and procedure.

She then openly requested a meeting with President Rosenberg, which he openly accepted.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell is fiscally irresponsible

DEAN WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) has been a source of controversy since its inception in 1993, during Bill Clinton's first term.

The political atmosphere at the time was such that the Clinton administration, in conjunction with the Army and Congress, sought to devise an amicable manner in which homosexuals could continue serving the military and retain their basic human rights, all while protecting the military's integrity as the strongest in the world.

As one of the highest ranked and decorated military officers in the United States' armed forces, chairman of Joint Chief of Staff and chief military advisor to President Obama, Admiral Mullen feels compelled to state his support for repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," a viewpoint quite different from that of the armed forces.

"I am speaking for myself and myself only," Admiral Mullen asserted after his testimonial in Washington D.C. on Feb. 2.

Instead of the question being centered on whether homosexuals should be allowed to serve openly in the military, perhaps it should concentrate on why such a policy has been retained despite its various shortcomings.

The language used in the policy makes it clear as to why DADT is so controversial.

The policy, as stated in Chapter 10 of the United States Code, Section 654, prohibits anyone who "demonstrates a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts" from serving in the armed forces of the United States; it "would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of the moral good, order and discipline of the unit cohesion that are the essence of the military capacity."

Understanding the shortcomings of DADT

will involve a look at studies conducted by two credible organizations.

As of February 2005, the Government Accountability Office estimated the overall cost of DADT at approximately \$190.5 million, with recruiting costs totaling \$95.4 and training replacements for the 9,488 troops discharged between 1994 and 2003 costing \$95.1 million.

In February of 2006, the University of California Blue Ribbon Commission estimated DADT costs closer to \$363 million, with \$14.3 million in separation costs once a service member is discharged, \$17.8 million for training officers, \$254.4 million for training enlistees and \$79.3 million for recruitment costs.

The UCBRC's estimated costs of DADT is significantly higher than the GAO's calculations, considering GAO didn't take into account the value that the armed services lost as individuals were dismissed under DADT.

This notion of perceived value that the UCBRC bases its calculations is just a precursor as to the shortcomings of this policy.

Boston Globe writer Bryan Bender notes a total of 13,000 troops have been discharged as a result of DADT, from 1993 to the present.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, a study conducted by Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and *365gay.com* takes particular note that discharges related to DADT have declined, and that discharges have exceeded 600 every year until 2009.

This, in conjunction with the aforementioned evidence leads me to conclude that the continued preservation of DADT is not only a bad economic policy, but is in direct conflict with Chapter 10 of United States Code Section 654 that implicitly states that



anything that inhibits the advancement of the armed forces is a detriment to its future.

Some may find my analysis an inappropriate interpretation of the law. Those in favor of maintaining the law argue that with the volatile state of both foreign affairs (i.e., the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) and the American economy, now is simply not the time to overturn DADT.

In response, I offer the old adage, "excuses are the tools of incompetence."

As it pertains to economic volatility, it would be fiscally responsible to repeal DADT, as it would afford the armed forces anywhere from \$190 million to \$363 over the span of a decade.

While it might equate to a small part of the defense budget, continued fiscal respon-

sibility will equate to harmony within the defense budget in the long run.

As it relates to foreign affairs, the armed forces is discharging qualified men and women because of their sexuality, which infringes upon the "unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as dictated in our Declaration of Independence.

For servicemembers discharged because of DADT, it is disheartening to know that their rights are infringed upon because of intellectual and social shortcomings.

In the words of Consul David Saranga from the Israeli Consulate in New York City: "It's a non-issue. You can be a very good officer, a creative one, a brave one, and be gay at the same time."

Bringing high-speed rail system will alleviate traffic

CHRISTOPHER DIAZ
Contributing Writer

A high-speed rail system in Florida just makes sense.

During his State of the Union address, President Obama spoke about the creation of a high-speed rail system.

On Jan. 28, the day right after his SOTU address, Obama traveled with Vice President Joe Biden to Tampa, Fla. to announce the construction of an 84-mile high-speed rail track that goes from Tampa to Orlando.

Hopefully this initiative will spread to Miami, to address our own traffic problems, which have increased dramatically over the last 10 years.

Remember a time when traffic in Miami occurred only between 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., then from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.?

Well now you can pretty much encounter a pretty intense amount of traffic at any time of the day.

And it's only going to get worse.

As population grows with the influx of domestic and international migrants attracted by what Miami has to offer, drivers find themselves in the middle of a perpetual traffic jam.

On top of this, we live in a society where everyone wants a car.

In the 1950s, there was an average of one car per household. Now Mom, Dad, Jackie and even "Pepito" all have a car.

Public transportation in this country, especially in urban areas such as Miami, have gotten a lot of flack - and it's warranted.

Have you tried to catch a public bus lately? There are hours when busses don't pass by their stop at

all. They are unreliable, and in a world where we have to be at places on time, they are not practical and are inferior to personal vehicles.

Subways and metro rails are far more reliable and faster, but they are absent in many areas.

In order to have a good mass transit system you want to create a grid.

A grid provides relief to our increasing population and our increasing urbanization. The idea is to have a mass transit system that will put any person from point A to point B (and do so quickly and reliably) without the need of a personal vehicle. High-speed rail is a key component of that grid.

Connecting major cities via high speed rail allows for quick transportation of large numbers of people at a lower economic and environmental cost.

Combined with train and subway systems found in cities like Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York City and you can have large numbers of people transition from smiling with Mickey to screaming aboard Busch Gardens' rollercoaster, Sheikra.

All said and done, going from Tampa to Orlando in high speed rail should take about the same amount of time it would take to fly.

While a plane does fly faster, traveling via high-speed rail you do not need to check luggage or repeatedly queue for security checkpoints. Plus, high-speed rail has much higher on-time reliability than flights do.

And while allowing cell phone use and providing wireless Internet may not get you there faster, it's great to have.

High-speed rail is a key compo-

nent of a mass transit grid. We don't live in cities insolated and isolated from the rest of the country. So far we've either been driving or flying between cities. Both have shown to be either inefficient or costly, and neither are desirable.

If this transit system is made "green," there is a potential to also reduce CO2 emissions and help the environment.

Electromagnetic pulses can be used to propel trains forward without the use of fossil fuels.

When connected to well-designed mass transit systems, high-speed rail should be able to get someone from their home to a hotel hundreds of miles away quickly, efficiently and conveniently.

In the grand scheme of things, it will reduce congestion, increase travel, and improve quality of life. And who wouldn't want that?

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Got a problem with parking? Want to give kudos to faculty? Or do you just have something to say about FIU? Send your thoughts in to opinion@fiusm.com or drop by our offices at either GC 240 or WUC 124. With your letter, be sure to include your name, major and year.

WINNER/LOSER

 Miami is ranked the second most romantic city in the U.S. according to Amazon.com. Other Florida cities on the list include Gainesville and Miami Gardens. The most romantic city? Alexandria, VA. Enjoy scenic civil war reenactments with your lover.

 Chinese spy Dongfan "Greg" Chung was sentenced to 15 years in Prison on Feb. 8. He was the first individual to be convicted on economic espionage charges in American history. Chung was attempting to retrieve secrets about the U.S. Space Shuttle.

QUOTATIONATION

"That girl was like crack cocaine to me... Sexually, it was crazy. That's all I'll say. It was like nappalm, sexual nappalm."

John Mayer
on relationship with Jessica Simpson

LOVE on the MIND

FAR, FAR AWAY

Despite distance, V-Day can be sweet

IRIS A. FEBRES
Staff Writer

For those with sweethearts in another state or overseas, Valentine's Day can be a real bummer. At this time of the month, you're inundated with images of couples - happy, sappy, totally-in-love couples - exchanging gifts in their extremely cheesy glory. Meanwhile, you wonder when you and your honey are going to be back together, in person, for X amount of time.

Perhaps you're lucky enough to get to see your beau on a regular basis, but when distance comes into play (and you're on a tight budget), it can cost a pretty penny to fly out of town for a weekend.

If you can't be with your sweetie for Valentine's, there is still plenty you can do to make your Feb. 14 happy, sappy and lovely for you both.

EXCHANGE GIFTS

You don't have to spend a lot of money on your

sweetheart in order to provide them with The Perfect Gift. Being in each other's arms is much more valuable than a cologne set or a shiny bracelet.

However, small, homemade gifts - a poem, a drawing, a picture frame - are much more meaningful than something with a big price tag. After all, these are personal to you.

When you exchange gifts, do it together - open your presents via webcam, if possible.

(If you don't use Skype, which you can download for free at skype.com, do yourself and your significant other a favor and get it now. The program features messaging, Voice Over Internet calls and video conferencing abilities. However, a microphone and webcam is required.)

If no camera is available, do it over the phone. The point is to share the moment together - not to impress your sweetheart with a showy present.

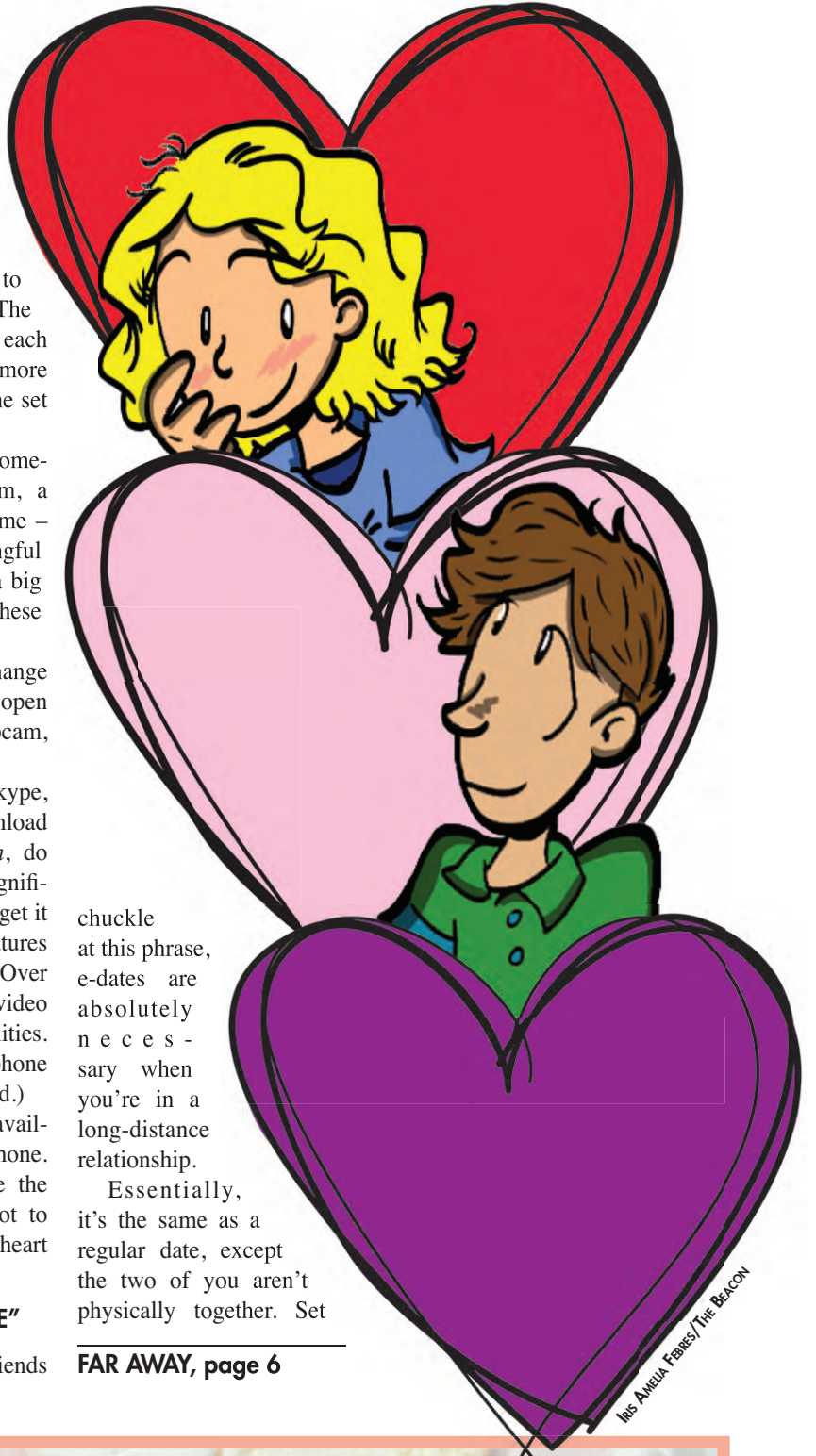
HAVE AN "E-DATE"

While my friends

chuckle at this phrase, e-dates are absolutely necessary when you're in a long-distance relationship.

Essentially, it's the same as a regular date, except the two of you aren't physically together. Set

FAR AWAY, page 6



IRIS ANIELA FEBRES/THE BEACON

Feeling cuddly? Build a bear for free

MARGO BARTLETT
Contributing Writer

On Feb. 12, the Student Programming Council will be hosting a Valentine's Day event in the Graham Center Pit from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will feature products from the Build-A Bear line of

stuffed animals and will give students the opportunity to create a personalized gift for their loved ones.

There will be several different bear "skins" to choose from including monkeys, koala bears, teddy bears and hippos. Each bear will come with its own birth certificate.

Typically, Build-A-Bear animals range from \$10 to \$25, but SPC will be providing them to students at the event for no cost.

"Students get the chance to build a bear without paying the prices that Build-A-Bear charges," said senior and SPC secretary, Linda De La Paz.

The event has been popular in the past so availability of supplies is limited. SPC recommends arriving early to make sure you are able to participate.

Along with the stuffed animals, there will be other giveaways including candy and T-shirts.

This Valentine's,
spice it up
and see
what Miami
has to offer

V-DAY, page 1

on Sunday, the closing event being the 11th Annual "Moonlight and Music" Valentine's Day Concert at 7 p.m.

The SoBay Festival of the Arts is a celebration of the literary, visual and performing arts in sunny South Florida. For \$20, couples and friends can join pianist Johnny Rodgers in a tender moonlit sonata.

If an evening among exotic plants seems more interesting, Fairchild Tropical Gardens is also hosting a concert event, this one featuring Jon Secada. Doors open for picnics

at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 14 and tickets cost \$60 for non-members.

Of course, one can always abide by the tried-and-true way of the Valentine: a romantic dinner and a movie. Or one could take a less traveled path and take a date to the Miami International Boat Show & Strictly Sail. Tickets start at \$16 and will grant patrons access to all of the boat show's features, including a Guy Harvey show and a meet-and-greet with none other than SpongeBob Squarepants.

Maintaining the spirit of V-Day, the Miami Seaquarium is holding a "Dine With Dolphins" event from 8 to 10 p.m., priced at

\$398. While this option proves a bit exorbitant in price, it does include two Dolphin Odyssey certificates and annual passes to the park.

For the animal lovers, Jungle Island is another option. The park will provide a \$100 expedition tour through the island throughout the weekend. They are also hosting the Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce's Commit 2 Love Event, which will offer gay and lesbian couples an opportunity to "formalize their unions" in what they call "a special evening ceremony."

You can spend time with your sweetheart almost any day. This Valentine's Day, spice it up, go out and see what Miami has to offer.

Valentines Day

Matty Cakes,
You're the yeast that makes my
muffins rise. I see masculine power
in your eyes. You're the cream in all
my pies.
Love, Bobby

Alfred,
Pros: Great advisor, good use of pastels
in wardrobe, good dental hygiene.
Cons: Sarcasm, poor phone etiquette,
hatred of emoticons ;)
Overall: B

To my Photos,
Thank ya'll for your hard work, dealing
with my ridiculousness and last minute
txts. BTW – STANDALONES!! :):)
Love,
Snappys :D

*To Natasha C.,
Bebe, we've been through so much,
yet you're still my blanket and I'm
your pillow.
Love You Always,
George L.*

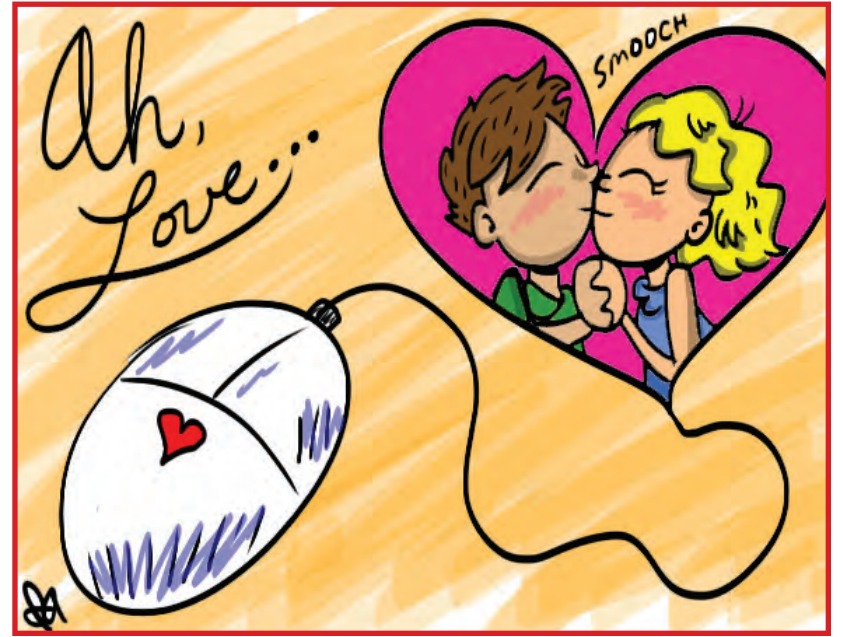
*To Nicole,
Happy V-Day. Sorry I work so much. I
finish at 10:50 tonight.
Love,
Jorge*

*To David,
I love that you love Sinatra, too. I
wish that you could woo me with all
his songs every night.
Michelle*

*To Tiffany Twinkle Toes,
Your walk captured me the first day
and I told myself "this little piggy
won't get away."
<3, Vidz*

*To Paunu,
If I say something wrong today, I'm
sorry in advance. I mean, c'mon –
it's been 4 years; you know me.
Love,
Chris, Pb, G, K*

Dedications



Virtual dinner, movie can be just as good

FAR AWAY, page 5

aside time for just the two of you and plan something to do together.

You can do dinner and a movie; plan a meal you can both have (my boyfriend and I usually order in sushi) and pick a movie you both can watch.

Synchronizing the film to play at the same time can be tricky, but it can be done (minute markers are your friends)! Aside from this, you can play games online (I'm partial to *pogo.com* for board games and *iSketch.net* for a Pictionary-like experience).

GET TO KNOW HIM (OR HER)

Because the two of you will have some time to talk, use it to get to know your honey better. Do you know his favorite color? Do you know her favorite place for coffee? You'll be surprised about how much you'll learn about your sweetheart by just asking them questions.

Make a game out of it and take turns. If you don't know what to ask, scour the Web for question lists.

If you have an iPhone, there's an app called "Question of the Day" that cycles through questions in varying degrees.

Make sure there's a progression with the questions you ask; as time passes, dig deeper to see how your

boyfriend or girlfriend thinks or feels in order get in touch with them.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Most of my conversations with my boyfriend discuss what we're going to do when we see each other again. Start an e-mail thread (or even better, a wave with Google Wave) to gather ideas for outings and events you two would like to do when you're together.

List your ideas – go to the movies, visit a museum, have a picnic, or stay in for a "cuddle day" – so that there are plenty of suggestions to choose from when the day finally arrives.

Having both of you involved with your future plans guarantees dates both of you can enjoy.

While he may want to go hiking one day (which you may or may not be a fan of), the next day you can catch an opera. It's all about finding a balance.

Finally, if you're stuck for more ideas, there are plenty of Web sites with more ideas than even I can think of. For example, *lovingfromadistance.com* lists many ideas for gifts, as well as advice and testimonials from couples currently in long-distance relationships.

This Valentine's Day, let your sweetheart know you care. Make the day special enough to last until you two are together again.

CLASSIFIEDS

SERVICES

ATTENTION MATH AND SCIENCE MAJORS! We are looking for high achieving college students, familiar with upper levels of high school mathematics and science such as chemistry, physics, algebra, algebra 2, geometry and calculus, to join our staff. Must have excellent written and verbal communication skills. Several job openings available at our Learning Center. Flexible hours and excellent pay.

Call Lucy Zelman's Learning Center at (305) 233-3777 or (305) 378-8582 for more information. You may fax us your resume at (305) 233-3777 or send via email to lucy@tutorlz.com.

THIS WEEKEND

FRIDAY, FEB. 12

FILM FESTIVAL
Presented by the African and African Diaspora Studies Graduate Student Association

WHEN: 5:30 p.m.: "Katanga Business"
8 p.m.: "Democracy in Dakar"
9:15 p.m.: "Bronx Princess"
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: All films shown in GC 140

FIU SOFTBALL

WHEN: vs. N.C. State @ 7p.m.
vs. Providence @ 9 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Softball Field

VALENTINE'S DAY SOCIAL

WHEN: 7-10 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Lakeview North Lounge

STRIDE AGAINST HEART DISEASE



Join Rec Services in a 45-min. walk through campus part of Healthy Heart Month.

WHEN: 12:15-1 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free, registration required at Rec Center membership window
WHERE: Rec Center

Teach-In on the women and girls of DRC

Educate yourself about what's happening to the women of Congo. Presented by Jean Muteba Rahier, Ph.D.
WHEN: 4:30 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: GC 150

SATURDAY, FEB. 13

FIU SOFTBALL

Combat Classic.
WHEN: FIU vs. Southern Illinois @ 1 p.m.
vs. UIC @ 3 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Softball Field

COCONUT GROVE ARTS FESTIVAL



WHEN: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$10
WHERE: 3390 Mary Street, Coconut Grove

LIE OF THE MIND

FIU Theatre's Spring production.
WHEN: 8 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$10 students, \$12 general
WHERE: Wertheim Performing Arts Center

FILM FESTIVAL

Presented by the African and African Diaspora Studies Graduate Student Association
WHEN: 11 a.m. "Tulia Texas"
12:15 p.m. "Jamaica for Sale"
2 p.m. "Katanga Business"
4:20 p.m. Roundtable.
5:35 p.m. "Homegrown: Hip Life in Ghana"
6:45 p.m. "Say My Name"
8:15 p.m. "Democracy in Dakar"
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: All films shown in GC 140

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

Second Saturdays free for families. "Mixed Media Marvels."
WHEN: 1 - 4 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: 101 West Flagler Street
305-375-4073

SUNDAY, FEB. 14

VALENTINE'S DAY CONCERT



"Moonlight and Music" featuring Johnny Rodgers.

WHEN: 7 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$20
WHERE: Deering Estate
16701 SW 72 Ave
www.deeringestate.org

LIE OF THE MIND



FIU Theatre's Spring production.
WHEN: 2 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$10 students, \$12 general
WHERE: Wertheim Performing Arts Center

FIU SOFTBALL

Combat Classic.
WHEN: vs. UMass @ 1 p.m.
vs. North Florida @ 3 p.m.
HOW MUCH: Free
WHERE: Softball Field

SUNDAY BRUNCH



Enjoy a Sunday brunch buffet at Perricone's Italian restaurant.

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$18.95
WHERE: Perricone's
15 SE 10th St.

COCONUT GROVE ARTS FESTIVAL

WHEN: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$10
WHERE: 3390 Mary Street, Coconut Grove

Sudoku answers from 2/10

7	3	2	8	9	1	6	4	5
9	6	4	7	2	5	1	8	3
1	5	8	3	6	4	9	2	7
2	8	3	5	4	9	7	6	1
5	7	9	1	8	6	4	3	2
4	1	6	2	3	7	5	9	8
3	9	5	4	1	2	8	7	6
8	4	1	6	7	3	2	5	9
6	2	7	9	5	8	3	1	4

Puzzle by websudoku.com

Thanks for playing!

INTRAMURAL BASKETBALL: FRATERNITY

Blowouts, uneven play highlight fraternity rivalries

BRIAN AYALA
Contributing Writer

The mercy rule caused three of the five games played in this week's Fraternity intramural basketball league to end early.

LAMDA THETA PHI 33, SIGMA CHI 27

Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Incorporated (1-1) defeated Sigma Chi (0-2), 27-33.

Sigma Chi rallied at the start of the second half with a 7-0 run to come within four points of Lambda, but they were unable to finish some defining plays to put them ahead.

While Lambda would try to pull away, Sigma Chi hung around with solid three point shooting.

In the final minutes of the game, Lambda tightened up their defense and Sigma Chi missed crucial key shots.

"We were up, so we were trying to control the ball and force them to foul us so we can go to the free throw line," said

Lambda guard Jorge Rivera.

SIGMA ALPHA MU 37, SIGMA PHI EPSILON 34

Sigma Alpha Mu (1-1) forced turnovers and attacked the basket in the last minutes of play to defeat Sigma Phi Epsilon (1-1), 34-37.

Both teams struggled offensively in the first half, but in the second half, Sigma Alpha Mu changed their game plan to penetrate through SigEp's 3-2 zone defense to score points in the paint.

"On defense we were being a little more aggressive," said Sammy forward Marcos Jimenez. "At the beginning, we were letting them do whatever they want and take some open shots, so we started pressuring the ball more and on offense we worked the ball around by passing and tried to get it to the open man."

SigEp stayed close in the final minutes of the game, but they missed some critical free throws down the stretch and ultimately fell short. SigEp fell to 1-1 on the season while Sigma Alpha Mu evened their record.

KAPPA ALPHA PSI 49, PI KAPPA ALPHA 17

Kappa Alpha Psi (2-0) showed resilience and was quick to defeat Pi Kappa Alpha (1-1), 49-17, with their fast-paced style of play.

Pike, the defending fraternity league champion, couldn't transition on defense.

"The big man had the ball up top and they didn't have any ball handling skills, so we'd attack up there, got some steals up front and made some lay-ups," said Kappa guard Mark Justice. "Our three's were going down and we got them excited during the game, causing them to throw the ball away."

PI KAPPA PHI 55, PHI GAMMA DELTA 15

Pi Kappa Phi (2-0) defeated Phi Gamma Delta (0-2), 55-15.

FIJI, the league's worst team by point differential, was incapable of handling PiKapp's full court press, creating numerous turnovers and easy baskets.

FRAT LEAGUE STANDINGS

TEAM	OVERALL	PCT	PD
Pi Kappa Phi	2-0	1.000	79
Phi Sigma Kappa	2-0	1.000	68
Kappa Alpha Psi	2-0	1.000	41
Sigma Phi Epsilon	1-1	.500	12
Sigma Alpha Mu	1-1	.500	-6
Lambda Theta Phi	1-1	.500	-9
Pi Kappa Alpha	1-1	.500	-2
Tau Kappa Alpha	0-1	.000	-30
Sigma Chi	0-2	.000	-45
Beta Theta Pi	0-1	.000	-50
FIJI	0-2	.000	-58

*All records up to date as of Feb. 10

PHI SIGMA KAPPA 52, BETA THETA PI 2

Phi Sigma Kappa (2-0) defeated Beta Theta Pi (0-1) 52-2, not allowing a single point in the second half.

FIU SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT
Feb. 12	N.C State*
Feb. 12	Providence*
Feb. 13	Southern Illinois*
Feb. 13	UIC*
Feb. 14	UMass*
Feb. 14	North Florida*
Feb. 19	Long Island*
Feb. 19	Bethune Cookman*
Feb. 20	Long Island*
Feb. 20	Bethune Cookman*
Feb. 21	Wisconsin*
Feb. 21	Florida Gulf Coast*
Feb. 27	Western Kentucky
Feb. 27	Western Kentucky
Feb. 28	Western Kentucky
Mar. 4	Eastern Michigan*
Mar. 5	Robert Morris
Mar. 5	Fordham
Mar. 6	Penn State
Mar. 6	Boston
Mar. 7	Bradley
Mar. 12	Michigan State*
Mar. 12	Michigan State*
Mar. 14	George Washington*
Mar. 14	George Washington*
Mar. 16	Florida State
Mar. 16	Florida State
Mar. 18	Alabama
Mar. 20	Troy
Mar. 20	Troy
Mar. 21	Troy
Mar. 27	Stetson
Mar. 27	Stetson
Mar. 28	Stetson
Mar. 30	Florida Gulf Coast*
Apr. 2	North Texas*
Apr. 3	North Texas*
Apr. 3	North Texas*
Apr. 10	Louisiana*
Apr. 10	Louisiana*
Apr. 11	Louisiana*
Apr. 14	Florida Atlantic*
Apr. 17	Middle Tennessee
Apr. 17	Middle Tennessee
Apr. 18	Middle Tennessee
Apr. 20	Florida
Apr. 24	South Alabama
Apr. 24	South Alabama
Apr. 25	South Alabama
May. 1	Louisiana-Monroe*
May. 1	Louisiana-Monroe*
May. 2	Louisiana-Monroe*
May. 7	Florida Atlantic
May. 8	Florida Atlantic*

*Denotes home games

Barrett, Gniadek lead deep pitching staff

PREVIEW, page 8

Prior to FIU, Rojas led the Cowboys to a state championship in 2009 and was also named defensive player of the year.

"She's really exciting and I think her personality really goes along with it. Nobody expects somebody that little to do the things she does so I think she's going to be a fan favorite," continued McClendon. "This kid is a power hitter in a 5-foot tall body."

ON THE MOUND

Returning to the mound as the same pitching staff from last season will be Kasey Barrett, Paige Cassidy, Jennifer Gniadek, and Ashley McClain.

McClendon expects this part of the team to be the strongest, especially since Barrett will be participating in her last year as a Golden Panther.

"I think we're experienced in the key spot, which is on the mound and I think that will carry us through just about any situation we face," said the coach. "I think [Barrett] is in a better spot than she's ever been. She's worked really hard this year. I think she'll just continue to build and this will be her best year yet."

Barrett has handled most of the pitching load since her arrival to the team in 2008. Last season, with a win-loss record of 18-13, the right-hander threw 220 innings with a 1.94 ERA and 197 strikeouts.

"There aren't words for how valuable she is to the team. Just her as a person, on and off the field, you're not going to find a better kid or someone with more integrity than that kid has," said McClendon. "She's definitely more than just a pitcher for us. She is 100 percent the leader of this team."

Although Barrett is the go-to pitcher, she is confident that the rest of the staff will be able to dominate the mound behind her.

"I feel that if I ever get in

trouble there's Jen, Ash, or Paige to come in and help me," said Barrett. "I don't feel that I have to be perfect."

Gniadek and McClain enter their sophomore seasons this year while Cassidy is playing in her final year as a Golden Panther.

As a freshman, Gniadek contributed right away and went 10-10 at the mound with a 2.71 ERA over 121.1 innings. McClain pitched 45 innings with a 2.49 ERA while Cassidy threw 30.1 innings and accumulated a record of 1-4 in 2009.

"[Gniadek] was probably the hardest worker this fall. She threw a lot of drops last year. She's worked on a couple of other pitches (curve and rise) so that she doesn't have to rely on just one," said McClendon. "She has thrown really well and I think that you are going to see her as our most improved player."

INFIELD

On the infield, the defensive duties will be handled mostly by young players, with the exception of first base where fans will see redshirt senior Lauren Spiers.

At second base, Rojas will see most of the playing time in her first year as a Golden Panther while Jessy Alfonso and sophomore Kelsey Grabiak will most likely split time at third.

Meanwhile, Burri and Alfonso will both see playing time at the shortstop position.

"I feel like when people come and see this infield, they're going to be surprised and it's going to keep them coming out for a long time," said McClendon. "They make plays that you feel like you would see in the major leagues; they're really exciting."

Behind the plate, as catcher, will be sophomore Jenny Welch with Spiers and newcomer Casals to back her up.

OUTFIELD

Although centerfielder Seldi Soberon will be out the first week

with an ankle sprain, the junior hopes to be back toward the end of February at the latest.

In the meantime, Peller, who is a natural left-fielder, will help out in center.

"Peller has practiced some out there in center but it's a spot where we truly didn't have a back up," said McClendon.

Senior Morgan Huling will see time at both left and right field while Peller will contribute to left when Soberon returns to center. In right-field, McClain will continue to see time when she's not pitching on the mound.

OFFENSIVE EXPLOSION

According to McClendon, the multi-talented McClain along with catcher Welch, freshman Rojas, and veteran Spiers will be the heart of the Golden Panthers' batting lineup.

Last season the team compiled a batting average of .249 and totaled 211 runs and 286 strikeouts.

McClain and Welch proved to be a dynamic offensive duo as freshmen in the 2009 season. McClain batted .285 while Welch led the team in RBI with 30 and tied for most homeruns on the team with five.

"McClain is the one who you will see the most from offensively. She did some really good things at the end of last year, making the all-tournament team and she really turned it on late but she is an extremely talented hitter."

McClain had five three-hit games last season, and should see her power numbers improve from 2009, when she hit one home run.

WHAT COACH SAYS GOES

In order to help her manage all the talent brought in this season, McClendon hired assistant coach Megan Higginbotham during the off-season.

"The biggest selling point for me with Megan was that she was such a talented player," said McClendon. "She set a ton of

records, did so many things in her career, and played a bunch of different positions and she brings that kind of competitiveness, determination, and enthusiasm to our kids. She kind of expects that from them."

Higginbotham enjoyed a four-year softball career at the University of Minnesota before joining the FIU coaching staff.

Lindsay Leftwich will return as the other assistant coach in her third year alongside McClendon.

BATTLE TO THE TOP

Although the 2010 schedule is challenging and includes competition against six squads that reached NCAA Championship Regional action a year ago, players and McClendon are confident that they can at least compete for the conference title.

Barrett's not holding back.

"I want to win conference. I feel like we're better than three but it's a good spot to start the season," Barrett said.

In the preseason polls released earlier this week, FIU was picked to finish in third place in the Sun Belt Conference with 58 points behind Louisiana and Troy who finished with 80 and 70 points, respectively.

"I think that these kids are going to surprise a lot of people and I hope that we put ourselves in a spot where we're going to be in the post season no matter what our finish is in conference but we're in it to get first," said McClendon.

Overall, the coach feels that as long as the FIU team is healthy, and the freshmen are able to be productive right away, the Golden Panthers are guaranteed to be competitive not only in the regular season but also the post-season.

"I think a lot of it hangs on how these freshmen respond to division I softball and if they do the things they're capable of we're right there," she said. "I feel like this group is a post season team if we can stay healthy."

2010 SOFTBALL PREVIEW

Infusion of talent bolsters Golden Panthers

NEW FACES TO KNOW



CASALS

Alexandra Casals starred at local staple Florida Christian, where she led her team to a district title in 2009. The catcher should back up Jenny Welch this season.



PELLER

Outfield recruit won three state championships at local powerhouse American Heritage. A slap hitter with surprising pop.



ROJAS

A defensive player of the year in high school, Brie Rojas can also smack the ball out of the park routinely. Will likely start at second base.



ALFONSO

Jessy Alfonso will join her sister, Jenny, on the team in 2010. This Alfonso hit 20 career home runs at Coral Park High,



BURRI

Kayla Burri, a slick-handed infielder, could start at shortstop. McClendon said she "has the potential to be the best shortstop in the [SBC]."



ZAVALA

The California native played against "great competition" in high school, and should factor into immediate playing time.

STEPHANIE GABRIEL Asst. Sports Director

The FIU softball field may look a bit rough with all the hard work that has taken place on it this off-season.

Head coach Beth McClendon wants everyone to know, however, that there will certainly be no holes on the field or on her team when the 2010 season starts on Feb. 12.

The third year coach, who led the team to a 31-29 record last season, says she has successfully filled the spots of the five departed seniors from last year.

"I think once you see these freshman you will understand that there aren't very many holes on our field," said McClendon. "They were a highly recruited bunch. They're going to make mistakes, no doubt about it because they're young but talent-wise, I would run these kids up against anybody."

NEW CREW

The class includes six players, five from Florida and one from California.

Alexandra Casals comes to the team from Florida Christian. The 5-foot-1 catcher received second team All-Dade recognition from the Miami Herald in 2009 and led her high school to a district championship that same year.

"She is a local kid who I think you'll see do some pinch-hitting," said McClendon. "She will also back up [Jenny] Welch some behind the plate and then I think you'll see her come off the bench in some different situations."

Infielder Kayla Burri, who played high school ball at Cocoa High, joins FIU as a four-year letterman and is the most highly recruited player of the class, according to McClendon.

"Kayla Burri I would say was the most highly recruited amongst them. She is a really talented shortstop," said McClendon. "She has some of the fastest hands you'll ever see, she gets rid of the ball really quickly, and she's a very consistent hitter. I think she has the potential to be the best shortstop in the conference."

Meanwhile, Jessy Alfonso is a local who even has a sister, sophomore Jenny Alfonso, on the team. The newcomer held a batting average of .537 at Coral Park High and knocked out 20 homeruns and 69 RBI over her career.

"I think Jessy is the most athletic one of the bunch," said McClendon. "She can play any position on the field. I think she would be the best short stop on a lot of the teams in a

conference too. What she has going for her though is she can play anywhere on the field because she's so athletic so she gets moved around a little bit more but arm strength I would put that kid up against anybody too, she can really throw."

Also on the list is Beth Peller from American Heritage High school in South Florida. The outfielder was a second team all-state selection as a sophomore and helped the Patriots to championships on three different occasions.

According to McClendon, Peller has a style at the plate



Ashley McClain, middle, and FIU were picked to finish 3rd in the SBC by coaches

that is really different from anything she has ever seen but expects her to be able to contribute right away.

"She's real different; she's not your typical slapper," said McClendon. "She doesn't just touch it and run. She can hit the ball too; she can hit the ball out when she wants. She's unlike a lot of kids I've had."

Patty Zavala is the only out-of-state recruit this season. The infielder attended Sonora High School in Whittier, California where she was named first team all-league in 2005 and second team all-league in 2009.

"Patty is the most experienced of them all. She just played against some great competition in California," said McClendon. "She's had so many quality at-bats in her life that I think that's really going to show in the games where as some of the other freshmen might struggle with the pitching."

Last is local Brie Rojas from Cooper City High School. "Brie is going to be the crowd favorite," said McClendon. "She is just a little fireball; always talking and always joking. She swings out her shoes every time; she's already hit three homeruns in 10 scrimmages this spring."

PREVIEW, page 7

Softball welcomes six teams for season opening series

STEPHANIE GABRIEL Asst. Sports Director

The FIU softball team will open the 2010 season with some of the toughest competition they may face all season long.

Head coach Beth McClendon, however, is ready to grab fans' attention and turn some heads this weekend when the team faces N.C. State and Providence as part of the FIU Combat Classic at 7 and 9 p.m. on Friday at the FIU softball field.

"I think this will really set the tone for the year. I'm really hoping we can turn

some heads," said McClendon. "There's some very good teams coming down, we have our work cut out for us for sure."

N.C. State, who finished 23-25 overall last season and 5-13 in the Atlantic Coastal conference, has never faced the Golden Panthers prior to this weekend.

The Wolf Pack return 17 players from last year and has brought on five newcomers while FIU returns 11 and brings six newcomers after a 31-29 record in 2009.

Junior Alyssa Ishibashi led N.C. State with a .282 batting average, 40 hits, and 17

runs in 2009 and was also the only player to start every game.

On the other hand, Providence did not have such a successful campaign in 2009 as they finished 17-34 overall and 9-14 in the Big East.

"I know early on we seem to have a little bit of an advantage because we've been outside a lot more than the teams that come down from up North," said McClendon. "I'm really hoping to kind of set the tone and I hope we can have a big win or two."

Senior Christy Becker will hope to

lead the Friars offensively. Last season the infielder totaled 40 hits with a batting average of .284.

"I think non-conference wise this is possibly our toughest six games in a row," continued McClendon. "As far as everything being pushed together, this is going to be our toughest competition."

Also part of the Combat Classic, the Golden Panthers will face Southern Illinois and University of Illinois-Chicago on Saturday at 1 and 3 p.m. along with UMass and North Florida on Sunday, also at 1 and 3 p.m.