Friday, January 9, 2009

Spotlight

Chili’s chosen to replace Gracie’s Grill

Christopher Lazaga
Staff Writer

The vacant dining area left behind by Gracie’s Grill in the Graham Center will soon be refurnished and reopened as a Chili’s Too. According to Mike Oestreicher, marketing manager of Dining Services Department, the Dallas, Texas-based Chili’s restaurant chain was the best choice to replace the failed Gracie’s Grill.

“We did a large market research project last year and [Chili’s] was one of the recommended names we made,” Oestreicher said. Bill Debus, director of retail operations for dining services, said the Chili’s franchise is the strongest candidate for a successful on-campus restaurant, as it has already enjoyed success on other campuses such as University of Florida, Baylor University and University of Houston. Oestreicher said the new "Chili’s Too would be like Chili’s Express, featuring a limited food and drink menu at prices determined by the corporation. Although a menu has not yet been finalized, Chili’s Too will be serving beer, wine and margaritas with a limited selection of spirits.

Students will be looking forward to the prospect of on-campus two-for-one drink specials, but according to Debus, “As far as specials go, nothing’s been decided.”

When asked why replace Gracie’s Grill with a Chili’s Too, Debus said his research found that students wanted more of a dining experience.

To provide that, Chili’s Too will feature a waited service area as well as a counter service area. “[Gracie’s] was a very slow operation,” Debus said. “It really wasn’t performing, it was more of a place to just sit.”

Debus said he tried changing Gracie’s menu twice in the past, adding things like salads and specialty burgers to attract more students, but nothing ever caught on.

Chili’s Too will be open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends.

U.S. Century Bank Arena

University community gathers for unveiling

David Barrios
Senior Staff Writer

The newly renamed U.S. Century Bank Arena, formerly known as FIU Arena, was inaugurated and unveiled on Jan. 9. A crowd of over 75 people stood in front of the arena during the short ceremony as the newly painted sign was unveiled to the public.

“This is a great day for us, not only for the donation involved, but because it is the beginning of a friendship and the beginning of a partnership that will be very long lasting,” said University President Modesto A. Maidique. “I think that you will be hearing many great things in the years ahead that will be done together by U.S. Century Bank and FIU.”

U.S. Century Bank, based in South Florida, has agreed to donate at least $1 million to the athletics department in an agreement that will last for five years.

“In these difficult economic times, U.S. Century Bank stepped up to the plate for our University,” said Athletics Director Pete Garcia.

The arena is home to the University’s basketball and volleyball teams.

“We are going to use the money to improve and enhance the arena and we’re also going to develop a relationship with them,” said Maidique. “They’ll be coming to our games; their people will feel connected to the University.”

Octavio Hernandez, U.S. Century Bank president, said he was “extremely proud to be here today. I’m an alum and a member of the first registered class.”

Aside from that, we are a community bank and we are really glad to be in a partnership with the best public university in Florida. It is the perfect fit for us,” he said. “We’re proud of what the University has accomplished as we are proud of what we’ve accomplished.”

Over 30 of the bank’s employees are graduates of FIU, with almost the same amount of employees currently attending, according to Hernandez.

U.S. Century Bank, founded in 2002, is one of the 10 largest community banks based in Miami, with assets of $1.7 billion.

The arena was previously known as the Pharmed Arena after a $1 million donation by the Pharmed Group in 2004. After the Pharmed Group filed for bankruptcy, the University purchased the arena for $1 million.

The arena is home to the University’s basketball and volleyball teams.

“We are going to use the money to improve and enhance the arena and we’re also going to develop a relationship with them,” said Maidique. “They’ll be coming to our games; their people will feel connected to the University.”

More information can be found at the U.S. Century Bank Arena website.

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Jeh Bush decides not to seek elected office

Former Gov. Jeb Bush announced Jan. 6 he won’t run for the U.S. Senate in 2010 to replace the retiring Mel Martinez, saying that it was not the right time to return to elected office.

Bush gave a run a serious consideration after Martinez said last month he wouldn’t seek a second term. Bush spoke with senators, supporters and family, including his brother, President George W. Bush. He said his decision wasn’t based on politics, but on his “personal journey.”

Business bankruptcies rise 84 percent in 2008

Business bankruptcies rose 84 percent in South Florida during 2008, setting a rate that has not been seen since 1990, according to statistics from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida. The court received 1,429 business bankruptcy filings last year, compared to 778 in 2007.

Most of the 129 business bankruptcy filings in December were Chapter 7 liquidations. Total bankruptcies, including consumer cases, rose 72 percent for the year.

Chapman focused his attention on the University using his influence and power to assist in its foundation in 1969.

A dedicated Dade civic leader and former president and publisher of The Miami Herald, as well as the CEO of the now defunct Knight-Ridder Corporation, Chapman was once considered to be “the most powerful man in Miami,” according to Reuters.

Born in Georgia in 1921, to a family with deep roots in the newspaper business spanning two generations, Chapman began his career as a newspaper boy in West Central Florida after his father was named publisher of The Bradenton Evening Herald.

Chapman spent time at Citadel Military College where he learned martial discipline. He also spent time as a bomber pilot and squadron commander in World War II.

After serving in the war, Chapman dedicated his time to philanthropic causes and the flourishing of the newspapers he associated with and cities he lived in.

He moved to Miami in 1960 where he led the Orange Bowl Committee, Miami Citizens Against Crime, the city’s Coalition for a Drug-Free Partnership and the committee to build the Miami Performing Arts Center.

Chapman is survived by his wife and two daughters, along with a legacy that demonstrated his veracity and love for not only the newspaper industry, but to the Miami and University community as well.

The Chapman family asks that any donation made go to the Community Partnership for the Homeless in his honor.

Future Chili’s brings mixed feelings

I miss it.”

Alejandro Caos, a senior liberal studies major, shares a similar sentiment.

“Way to sell out,” Caos said. “It doesn’t surprise me though, they already have a Burger King and a Pollo Tropical. They better have two-for-ones!”

The price the University paid for the franchise was not available as of press time.

Former BOT Chair remembered

Chapman's success as a publisher, businessman and philanthropist was considered to be “the most influential” in Miami. Chapman was once considered to be “the most powerful man in Miami,” according to Reuters.

Former BOT Chair remembered

MICHELLE MULLER

Contributing Writer

Alvah H. Chapman, Jr., passed away on Dec. 25 after succumbing to a severe case of pneumonia. He was 87.

Chapman focused his attention on the University using his influence and power to assist in its foundation in 1969.

In the 1980s, Chapman was appointed Chair of the University Board of Trustees.

FIU’s recognition of Chapman’s success as a publisher, businessman and his positive influence as a Floridian leader led to the naming of the Graduate School of Business after him.

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AC I restrooms renovated; more changes to come

ERIKA PEREZ
Asst. News Director

Students, faculty and staff in the Academic I building have been searching for alternative restrooms while renovations are underway.

Since early December, the restrooms on the first and second floors of the AC I building have been undergoing renovations, which are being overseen by Honore Filimon, coordinator of construction projects and the senior project manager. The bathrooms are estimated to be completed in approximately 10 months, according to Filimon.

“[AC I] is a 24-year-old building. We needed to have the renovations. It’s not only a cosmetic improvement, it’s also functional,” Filimon said.

The renovations, which are being performed by Bi-Tech Construction, Inc., were also necessary to comply with standing codes and regulations. According to Rafael Aguazo, president of Bi-Tech Construction and the contractor hired for the renovation project, the new restrooms in AC I will be fully improved. Changes include new flooring, electrical wiring, light fixtures, plumbing, an alarm system, porcelain tiles, new doors and a paint job.

The renovations are being funded by the Department of Facilities Development, according to Filimon, but Sylvia Benen- guer, director of construction of minor projects, was not available to respond to questions about renovation costs, despite several attempts.

Though some questioned whether the restroom renovations were necessary with the current budget crisis, many welcomed the improvements.

“I think it’s good because it shows that FIU is willing to put money into the north campus, and it helps to debunk any rumors of trying to tłum. "the kitchen and the bathroom sell the house."

According to Lechter, the changes to the restrooms are proving to be inconvenient for some, though the end result will be worth it.

“They were shut down predominantly during winter break, which makes it a small inconvenience to anyone or students," Lechter said. “I don’t know how long they will continue to be shut down or how many bathrooms are currently available at the campus, but I do think that in the end, people will feel better about attending this school if more parts of it are beautiful.”

I’ve Barreiros, mathem- atics and statistics coordi- nator at the Learning Center, which is located on the first floor of AC I, said the effort put into the renovations will be worthwhile if students put in the effort as well.

“As long as they put a sign for the people to take care of them – because even if it is not the University personnel, it is the users that are abusing the bathrooms. I heard the cleaning ladies complaining that they clean the bathrooms and immediately after one hour they are just awful,” Barreiros said.

One of the renovation- ers is the underwater theme. There are TVs, good prices and excellent service; water materials that make eating there like a trip to the ocean.

There is nothing I love more than like a trip to the ocean. This seafood restaurant’s food is fairly priced, with meals starting at about $10. This seafood restaurant’s food is fairly priced, with meals starting at about $10. I had the Greek salad.

Of course, there is more to living in South Florida than just going to the ocean, there is the cultural aspect as well.

One place to take advantage of the area’s diverse culture is Lemon Fizz Café & Restau- rant (16310 West Dixie Hwy., North Miami Beach).

Hey, if you live in a melting pot, you may as well taste all of its flavors!

Since I’m Middle Eastern, I love that it has all of my favorite foods from the region, including spinach sandwiches, which are spinach and onions wrapped in dough.

While the food is good here, I would much rather go to take part in one of my favorite pastimes – smoking hookah.

This Middle Eastern smoking method consists of putting flavored tobacco in a pipe, with water on the bottom and coals on top, and smoking it out of a tube. Think of it as an exagerrated ciga- rette. First-time smokers should try fruity flavors, like apple or grape.

Like any good South Florida resident, I am a huge sports fan. So naturally, I want to share my love for sports with my relatives when they visit.

I always find my self driving by Miami Prime Grill (16395 Biscayne Blvd., North Miami Beach) and I used Hastie visiting as an excuse to stop there.

This sports bar/restaurant is the best place to show off Miami’s strong sporting tradition.

The location offers a happy hour that starts at noon, more than 17 flat-screen TVs, good prices and excellent service; and I wouldn’t bring my family anywhere else.

My favorite are the pictures of great athletes such as Larry Bird and Dwayne Wade lining the walls, along with a great painting of the Miami Heat that hangs upside down over the bar.

Miami Prime is open until 3 a.m. Thursday through Saturday and features Ladies Night on Thursday evenings.

Needless to say, going to all of these locations left my cousin enjoying her trip to Miami even more.

So next time your friends or family call you from out of town, relax and get ready to show off your city. I mean, it’s Miami – there is always something to do!
Barack Obama living up to his title of ‘changer’

ANDREW SOLOMON  Contributing Writer

It has been almost two months since Americans voted for change and elected Barack Obama as the United States’ first black president. Running as the successor to a highly unpopular incumbent in George W. Bush, Obama sold the idea of a new beginning and following eight years of failed two wars and the worst economic crisis of our generation and many voters reacted with a mandate to change. Once Obama won the election in a mandate to change from the people of this country, he wasted no time in getting to work and shaping his administration. The day after his victory, Obama announced his transition team and set up his interactive transition Web site: change.gov. The site features YouTube broadcasts of Obama’s press conferences and weekly addresses to the nation. Obama plans to continue to use this technology in its most effective way: communicating directly with the American people. The Web site hosts pages for job listings and people can also submit their own life stories and suggestions and visions for a better America. No other U.S. president in modern history has used technology to reach out to the people in this extent. Obama plans to continue to use YouTube to update Americans on events in Washington, D.C. when he is in the White House. Now, young Americans can feel like they have a president who can identify with their generation. Being technology-savvy is definitely a key element to bring about change in today’s world.

Mirroring Abraham Lincoln’s strategy of placing political rivals in his cabinet, Obama appointed Hillary Clinton to be the next Secretary of State. Another former opponent, Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, was also chosen for Obama’s team as Commerce Secretary, because he withdrew himself from consideration due to an ongoing investigation about his donors—those who have potentially hidden up the hearings that would have finalized his nomination.

Obama’s economic team was formed quickly after the election, showing the nation that he was focused on bringing immediate relief to this recession. People such as Tim Geithner, former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, to lead the Treasury Department and former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, who served under President Clinton, to lead the National Economic Council, are exactly the kind of experienced, capable servants Obama needs to bring our economy back to where it was before Bush. With all this in mind, let us not forget what tends to slip further and further from our minds each year since it happened: 9/11. One of the promises that President-elect Obama made during his campaign was a responsible end to the misguided and poorly executed war in Iraq and refocusing our efforts on the real enemies: Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. In his good judgment, Obama chose to let Republican Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stay onboard. He also picked Arizona Gov. Jan Napolitano to head the Department of Homeland Security and former Clinton Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder to now take the step-up to become Attorney General, the chief law enforcement officer and lawyer in the U.S. government. Obama’s critics can say what they like, but so far America has spoken. But for any criticism he may face, he is still receiving overwhelming praise and support from both sides of the political spectrum.
A month of movies satisfies every taste

And so it begins: A new year gives Hollywood another chance to get people into theaters with another batch of movies, ranging from the horrific to the heroic. Here are just a few of this month’s offerings.

JAN. 16
MY BLOODY VALENTINE 3-D

Nothing screams excitement like a horror remake in all of its 3-D gory glory. Jensen Ackles (TV’s “Supernatural”) plays Tom, who returns to his hometown 10 years after a killing spree claimed 22 lives.

The messed up part is that the killer was a man: Tom put in a coma when he caused an accident as an inexperienced coal miner. As soon as Tom returns, the body count begins to rise.

Rapper Christopher Wallace, aka "The Notorious B.I.G.," has been featured in a lot of hip-hop related documentaries and movies. This time, his life is told on the big screen in Notorious.

The movie chronicles Wallace (played by newcomer Jaml Woolard) drug dealing on the Brooklyn streets, trying to make it big only to become one of the most influential hip-hop artists of all time.

Notorious is produced by Sean "P. Diddy" Combs and Voletta Wallace, Biggie’s mother.

The movie features an interesting cast that includes Angela Bassett as Voletta Wallace, Derek Luke as Sean Combs and Anthony Mackie as Tupac Shakur.

NOTORIOUS

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iTunes kills digital rights, lowers rates

JESSICA MINTZ AP Wire
Apple, Inc., is cutting the price of some songs in its market-leading iTunes online store to as little as 69 cents and plans to make every track available without copy protection.

In Apple’s final appearance at the Macworld trade show, Apple’s senior vice president of worldwide marketing Philip Schiller, said Tuesday that iTunes song prices will come in three tiers: 69 cents, 99 cents and $1.29. Record companies will choose prices will come in three tiers: 69 cents, 99 cents and $1.29. Record companies will choose from junior and special education major Glorie Garcia in the Graham Center Bookstore on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009.
Golden Panthers’ point guard unfazed by new role

STEPHANIE GABRIEL
Staff Writer

When sophomore point guard Michelle Gonzalez made the transfer from Cisco Junior College in Texas to the Division I level, she expected to play as a backup to Iva Ciglar, the No. 4 all-time assist leader for FIU.

However, Ciglar decided not to use her final year of eligibility, but rather chose to play professionally for Croatia, leaving no one to fill her Adidas but the 5-foot-6 Puerto Rico native.

“Rico native,” said Gonzalez. “I think this has been a good start.”

The Golden Panthers’ record (3-11, 1-2 Sun Belt) doesn’t reflect a good start, but it’s the new point guard’s numbers that are improving fast. Gonzalez reached double figures just once in her first six games, but over her last eight games she averaged 12.3 points and 4.9 assists.

The sophomore is currently tied for second in the conference with 4.5 assists per game. She also leads the SBC in minutes played at 37.6 per game.

“This is something new, but all of my life I have been liking new things,” Gonzalez said. “Such as when I came from Puerto Rico to the United States. It’s a new language, but I like it. When they said, ‘You’re going to start and play 40 minutes,’ I said, ‘Alright, I can do it.’”

Looking across the stat sheet for Gonzalez, there is a down-fall that stands out: 87 turnovers in 14 games, an average of 6.2 per game. However, she refuses to see that as an obstacle as the women’s team finishes all their remaining games vs. conference squads.

“I think I have to work on my defense, I also get frustrated during the game – I need to stop that and just play,” said Gonzalez. “In turnovers, I just talk to my teammates, not just in practice, but outside. I tell them that I need them there and if they’re going to pressure me I need [them] to take care of the ball.”

On a team with three seniors and four juniors, there’s a lot of experience to go around for the young players.

Aside from her coaches, Michelle Gonzalez expressed how much help the other women have been in her adjustment to the new league.

“Being a point guard, I already have a lot of pressure and now I have to lead 12 players and be positive all of the time. The coaches are helping me a lot, as well my teammates. The juniors and seniors tell me what I have to change or do better,” she said.

“I don’t see it as an obstacle in my life.”

Golden Panthers’ point guard guarded by new role

When sophomore point guard Josue Soto has waited much longer than expected to make his debut as a Golden Panther, he is doing it in stride. Although he is healing on schedule from a broken right hand he sustained during a pre-season practice, he hinted for the first time that it might be better suited to take a medcal redshirt and not burn a season of eligibility.

Soto sat out last season per NCAA transfer rules after one season at Florida Southern and there is a chance he will miss consecutive seasons.

“I don’t know yet. It depends when I come back, I want to play but I shouldn’t play just a couple games,” Soto said. “It’s still a bit stiff, it’s kind of painful but I think I’ll be back by February,” he said.

The sophomore has set a limit on the amount of games it would be worth returning for.

He is hoping for an accelerated recovery and a late-January return, but ruled out playing less than 10 games on the season.

“At less than 10 games, I don’t think I would play,” Soto said.

COOLING OFF
Junior Nickola Gacesa’s breakout season has hit a slide of late, with the forward experiencing a small slump recently.

Over the last seven games, Gacesa missed two due to injury and has touched double-digit scoring just once, with a 10-point effort at Troy.

Over the unfavorable stretch, beginning Dec. 12 at Miami, Gacesa is averaging 7.2 points on 31 percent shooting from the floor, both considerably below his season averages.

SEASON BEST
Marlon Bright recorded a season-high 11 points in the Golden Panthers’ loss to Troy on Jan. 3, which is the most since he scored 20 vs. Palm Beach Atlantic on Dec. 22, 2006.

Bright, a walk-on who first joined the team in 2005, and played for two seasons before taking last season off to focus on his hectaric academic schedule, has been a valuable veteran to head coach Sergio Rousso’s injury-riddled rotation this season.

GAME RESULTS
Game results for Jan. 10 at Middle Tennessee State at 8:30 p.m.

MDC, the team posted a 202-79 record. Damas recruited several current and former Golden Panthers including Eric Berkowitz, Greg Waddell and James Lajiness. With his hiring, coach Thomas adds the third assistant coach to his staff as the base team’s season opener is set for Feb. 20 at home against Jacksonville.

SOCCER GAME
The FIU stadium, home to the Golden Panthers’ football team, will host the national teams of Chile and Honduras on Jan. 18. This is the first time FIU hosts an international soccer game.

Both teams are in the middle of the World Cup Qualifying Cycle for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.
SPORTS

SWIMMING

Team starts new year with win

CHARLIE GRAU
Senior Staff Writer

The swimming team started the new year on the right track, finishing second at the FIU Invitational on Jan. 3. In the relay-only meet, the Golden Panthers finished second behind Oakland University and ahead of American University and Carnegie Mellon. The Golden Panthers finished second in the 500-yard freestyle, 400-yard freestyle, 200-yard backstroke and 400-yard medley relays.

Elly James, Colleen Neubert, Caroline Foster and Katrina Stevens finished less than a second behind Oakland in the 400-freestyle with a time of 3:45.44.

Led by senior Sara Giovannoni, who was the first swimmer in FIU history to qualify for the NCAA Championships and place 18th in the 200-yard breaststroke, the Golden Panthers are looking to make a splash this year.

The native of Italy, who began swimming at the age of 3, holds the school record in the 100 breaststroke (1:04.07) and three other records (200 breaststroke, 200 individual medley and the 400 free relay), is aiming to cut down her best times.

Giovannoni said the team has been swimming more this year, which should give them more endurance during meets.

Head coach Noemi Lung-Zaharia, who has been the swim team coach for its five years of NCAA competition, believes this year’s team has a lot of strong swimmers.

“We have lot of strong motivated personalities on the team that are goal-oriented and know what they have to do and go for it,” she said.

The Golden Panthers will take on Kansas and Cabrini on Jan. 9 at 5 p.m. in a 13-event order and will face Florida Atlantic, Iowa, and Purdue on Jan. 10 at 11 a.m. Both meets will be held at the Miami Shores Aquatic Center at 10200 Biscayne Blvd.

“’All the teams we are swimming against: Kansas, Iowa, Purdue, are some of the top ranked teams in the country. So we’re competing against the best of the best and competing against them is not going to be easy,'” Lung-Zaharia said.

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

Team starts new year with win

The swimming team started the new year on the right track, finishing second at the FIU Invitational on Jan. 3. In the relay-only meet, the Golden Panthers finished second behind Oakland University and ahead of American University and Carnegie Mellon. The Golden Panthers finished second in the 500-yard freestyle, 400-yard freestyle, 200-yard backstroke and 400-yard medley relays.

Elly James, Colleen Neubert, Caroline Foster and Katrina Stevens finished less than a second behind Oakland in the 400-freestyle with a time of 3:45.44.

Led by senior Sara Giovannoni, who was the first swimmer in FIU history to qualify for the NCAA Championships and place 18th in the 200-yard breaststroke, the Golden Panthers are looking to make a splash this year.

The native of Italy, who began swimming at the age of 3, holds the school record in the 100 breaststroke (1:04.07) and three other records (200 breaststroke, 200 individual medley and the 400 free relay), is aiming to cut down her best times.

Giovannoni said the team has been swimming more this year, which should give them more endurance during meets.

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Talented squad lacks valuable experience under pressure

I’ll work itself out fine
All we need is just a little patience - Guns N’ Roses “Patience”

If only Axl Rose could suit up for the women’s basketball team this season, then he might be able to calm down the young team that could win the Sun Belt Conference crown if it would just be patient and protect the ball.

With their leading scorer LaQuetta Ferguson and point guard Iva Ciglar not returning to the team this season, the Golden Panthers started the 2008-09 campaign 1-8.

Now the team has had enough time to learn to play together just in time for its most vital set of games against Sun Belt Conference opponents.

Despite an impressive road win vs. Arkansas State, the Golden Panthers have not yet maximized their potential due to lack of experience.

With inexperience comes impatience, which leads to mistakes under pressure.

Their talent is not the problem.

Yet talent becomes obsolete when the team leads the conference in turnovers. If the Golden Panthers could create a game plan to counter full court presses and double teams, they would be an above .500 team.

Early struggles are expected from a team with a new starting point guard with no prior Division I experience and just two seniors on the depth chart.

But sophomore Michelle Gonzalez is no longer the timid player she was during the first nine games.

She fast-forwarded her evolution as the offense’s brain by gaining trust in her shooting abilities and her coach.

She may be leading the team in turnovers, but she’s also leading the team in assists, steals and minutes.

It’s logical for the player with the ball most of the time to turn over the ball more than any other player.

Gonzalez runs the offense, but she is not its main source of points. Junior guard Monika Bosilj has taken charge of most of the scoring duties this season, averaging nearly 18 points per game.

Her development as the leading scorer dates back to last season. She used to show spurts of offensive sparks, but now