FIU alumni celebrate in matrimony ruling for legal same-sex marriage

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FIU alumni and former student editors Andrea Vigil and her partner Rebekah Monson always considered Florida to be their home. It was where they met almost nine years ago at the Sun Sentinel and it is where they knew they wanted to get married.

“We’ve never wanted to go somewhere else to do it, we wanted to wait until it was legal in Florida,” said Vigil, who graduated in 2013 with a degree in Liberal Studies after taking a hiatus from school to focus on work. “This is our town; it doesn’t make sense to go elsewhere.”

After same-sex marriage became legal in Florida on Jan. 6, the couple joined other eager-to-marry lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered couples in a marriage license bureau downtown, at midnight, to tie the knot.

“The couple flew in Monson’s mother from Alabama, filled out marriage license forms and were married by an efficient, an hour and a half later. It’s a wonderful experience to finally be able to have my relationship with this person be recognized by everyone,” Vigil said. “We thought it was going to take many more years for it to happen.”

For years, South Florida gay rights advocates groups like SAVE, have been fighting for equal rights, including rights to the same marriage benefits given to heterosexual couples.

Now, since the ruling in Florida, LGBT couples may qualify for state’s coverage for health insurance and retirement benefits.

Last week, FIU’s Division of Human Resources notified FIU employees that the Division of State Group Insurance (DSGI) will recognize any legal marriages as of Jan. 6, and will open a chance to apply for state’s benefits programs and family plans through Friday, March 6, 2015.

“I’m glad to see FIU’s HR moving forward,” said Gisela P. Vega, Associate Director for LGBTQA Initiatives and Multicultural Programs and Services at FIU. “We [LGBTQA] knew it was a matter of time before the Florida ban was overturned.”

Two FIU alumni from the LGBTQA community, Cathy Pareto and Karla Arguello, agree.

Last fall, the couple of 14 years were guest speakers during National Coming Out Day at FIU, and have been committed to LGBTQA initiatives, such as promptly supporting and preparing for the ruling on Jan. 5.

It was that afternoon, Pareto and Arguello became the first same-sex couple married in Florida.

Miami-Dade Circuit Judge, Sarah Zabel, wedded the couple and after the ceremony they stood outside in their cream colored dresses and held a green sign that read: ‘IT’S TIME FOR MARRIAGE IN FLORIDA.”

To be involved with FIU LGBTQA visit their “Welcome Reception,” in MMC Jan. 14, in GC 243, from 4-6 p.m., or Jan. 15, at BBC, WUC 157, from 12-2 p.m.

“Argosy” sculpture to be returned after renovations

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The traffic circle at the entrance of the University was blocked off Saturday, Dec. 20 by a crane that lifted the red towering sculpture that is placed there, similar to how Marty’s Cube was lifted from its spot in front of Deuxieme Maison in May.

The sculpture, owned by the same collector that retrieved the 15-foot spinning cube, was returned once the base of the sculpture was renovated.

The Margulies Collection curator, Katherine Hinds, said the University informed her that “Argosy,” a sculpture by Alexander Liberman, would undergo renovations in December.

The sculpture is part of the Margulies Collection and on loan to the University.

Universities make budgetary decisions

Katherine Hinds
Curator
Margulies Collection

Marty’s Cube, however, had been donated to the school around 2009 and the University chose to return it after housing it for 16 years.

In May, President Mark B. Rosenberg made the decision to return the cube to Marlin Margulies as a safety measure. Hinds said in May that over a period of time outdoor sculptures tend to have maintenance needs.

“Universities make budgetary decisions,” said Hinds, who was glad that the University gave her the opportunity to take back the cube to renovate it and bring it back to top-notch conditions.

After receiving renovations, the cube will return to FIU.

“We will then decide where to re-donate the work,” said Hinds.

Hinds said the cube will be donated to and maintained by an another educational institution in Florida.
Women are at forefront of China’s anti-smoking crusade

NATION & WORLD BRIEFS

2 hostage dramas unfold as French police close on terror suspects

French security forces were locked in standoff Friday with two sets of hostage takers who appear to be part of a single cell responsible for the murders of 12 people at the offices of a satirical Paris newspaper.

The first case was unfolding at what was described as the offices of a business not far from Paris’ Charles de Gaulle Airport, where the men, believed to be Said and Cherif Kouachi, had taken a hostage and had told authorities they were “willing to die as martyrs.”

As police surrounded that site, a third and possibly a fourth suspect – believed to have killed a police woman Thursday morning in a Paris suburb – apparently took live hostages at a Kosher grocery store on the eastern side of the city.

Television reports showed anti-terror police frantically moving into position at both standoff.

Police had initially said that the Wednesday attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper was carried out by three people. But authorities had focused on the Kouachi brothers alone after an 18-year-old incident initially identified as a suspect was found to have been in school during the Wednesday shootings.

But on Friday, authorities said the same Charlie Hebdo killings were linked to Thursday’s shooting of the police woman in Montrouge in southern Paris and asked the public for information on the whereabouts of two people – a man and a woman – suspected in the case. The man was reported to have been dressed similarly to the assailant at the newspaper office.

A few hours later, Paris authorities said the male suspect in the Montrouge case had taken hostages at the grocery store, which is located in Paris’ 12th Arrondissement. The French Interior Ministry later identified the Montrouge shooter as the likely third gunman in this Charlie Hebdo assault.

French news reports said the suspect at the grocery store had told police “You know who I am. I won’t release these hostages until you end the siege.”

The Montrouge grocery store had told police “You know who I am, suspect in the Montrouge case had taken hostages similarly to the assailants at the newspaper office.”

Police woman in Montrouge in southern Paris and authorities they were “willing to dies as martyrs.”

As a result, women quit smoking, even as Chinese leaders such Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping smoked openly in public, encouraging the habit among men.

Today, China is the world’s biggest consumer of tobacco. It’s also the largest manufacturer, producing more than 2.3 trillion cigarettes yearly, nearly half the world’s total. Unlike in the United States, private companies such as Philip Morris do not dominate the market. Instead, the China National Tobacco Corp. – an arm of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration – controls nearly all the cigarette brands sold.

That puts the Chinese government in an unusual dual role: One arm of the government, the Health Ministry, tries to restrict tobacco use and warn of its dangers, while other government agencies benefit from tobacco’s profits and tax revenues, which totaled nearly $210 billion in 2012, about 6 percent of government revenues.

“This is why tobacco control in China happens so slowly,” said Yang, a professor of medicine who directs the Burden of Disease Research and Dissemination Center in Beijing. “The tobacco industry is very powerful.”

Yang, who formerly worked in China’s version of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, became interested in smoking-related diseases and other preventable illnesses while attending medical school in Chengdu in the early 1980s. Early in her career, she studied at Harvard School of Public Health and became involved with health projects for the World Bank and the World Health Organization. Because of her WHO experience, she became part of the Chinese delegation that worked on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which China ratified in 2005.

China’s signing of that treaty was a triumph for the global tobacco-control movement, but expectations quickly diminished. Smoking has remained common in public places across the country, particularly in rural areas, where half of the population lives. Large numbers of doctors in China smoke. It wasn’t until 2010 that the Health Ministry banned smoking in its own building.

In recent years, attitudes toward smoking have started to shift. Top leaders of China’s Communist Party are either nonsmokers or are careful not to be spotted lighting up in public. Late in 2013, the party banned government officials from smoking in public or giving cigarettes as gifts. Individual cities have enacted their own restrictions on tobacco.

The draft regulations unveiled in November, if enacted and enforced, would take China into another realm. The proposed rules would ban indoor smoking and make private businesses responsible for enforcing the ban, subject to fines if they don’t. It would further limit the marketing of tobacco in China and require larger warning labels on cigarette packs.

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FIITOP

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I attempted an extremely interesting seminar last semester covering the effects of climate change (formally known as global warming) on the rainforest in South America. It was by one of our biology professors Dr. Ken Feeley who runs a program that takes students to the rainforest to do field research.

According to Dr. Feeley, the Earth is heating quickly, even quicker than originally expected. By 2100 the average global temperature may be as much as three degrees hotter.

Three degrees is the difference between the average global temperature now and the last ice age. Six degrees would wipe out humans completely.

How is the rainforest reacting? Not quickly enough. The majority of species are not able to deal with the hotter climate and there’s not enough time to change their genetic makeup, so options are slim.

With temperatures rising, plant species are migrating upward in elevation, called upward species migration, in attempt to save themselves. But the rate just isn’t fast enough.

Plants (mainly trees) are climbing at a rate less than half of what is necessary. And that’s not the only problem.

Although space on the Andes Mountain is more plentiful at higher elevations, due to the shape encompassing more plateaus and less peaks, the cutover (where trees don’t grow) is not moving up high enough.

How is the treeline moving up? At a rate necessary to the plant species. At the current rate, if the treeline doesn’t move and upward migration continues at its current rate, we will see a loss of 42% of the plant species in the rainforest. With there being about 2,500 species accounted for, that would be a significant loss. And that’s not taking into account deforestation which sees thousands of trees being cut down every day.

What can we do? Generally, not much. Manual migration would be too difficult and slightly unethical. Our best plan would be to stop getting in nature’s way and allow it to do what it does best.

We must understand we are seeing a global shift at a rate never seen before, just as the Earth has done for millions of years, it will develop a new look. Temperatures will fluctuate throughout the world and weather patterns will change. Animals and plants will become extinct and more adaptive and better-suited species will take their place.

The real question is, will humans be one of them?
Recapping the biggest trends of 2014

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Some of us have already taken down the Christmas lights, unassembled the fake Christmas tree, freaked out about our credit card statements and gained a few pounds from the Christmas dinner leftovers.

The nostalgia is slowly wearing off and the new years resolutions are in full effect. However, before we close the chapter on 2014, below are a few trends and happenings that made it memorable.

Although Brazil left the World Cup early like Cinderella at midnight, they made it far enough to give the locals something to talk about. The fever was enough to make LeBron James tweet about his favorite Colombian player; James Rodríguez (pronounced Ha-meer) and make everyone jump on the soccer band wagon. People who never cared about the sport were decked out in jerseys of their favorite team and filling up local bars as if it was the Heat play-offs.

The Ice Bucket Challenge - raised about 115 million dollars for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as “Lou Gehrig’s Disease,” and raised many more goosebumps. The challenge required anyone being “challenged” to drop a bucket of ice cold water over themselves while being recorded. The catch - challenging someone else to do it within 24 hours. If the person declined, they had to make a donation to the site. ALS is a neurodegenerative disease that affects that neurons by destroying their structure and/or function. It’s because of this challenge that 18.5 million dollars were raised and will be allocated directly toward the advancement of ALS research, according the ALS association.

Hipsters - Either you love them or you hate them, or you’re in denial that you are one - hipsters are here to stay. An easy way to spot most hipster guys are by their handlebar mustaches or beards, a pompadour haircut and tattoos. Most hipster girls wear a black hat that makes them look like cute pilgrims and they can usually be spotted in their natural habitat - Wynwood.

One thing is for sure - they mostly have great taste in music and their Spotify playlists consist of artists with less than 400 followers. What’s more hipster than that?

A big part of what makes “Commando” so enjoyable is the humor, which sometimes comes off as bordering on parody. Still, the action is excellent and reaches ridiculous upon ridiculous extremes during the climax.

The acting by the supporting cast is good too, even though this is clearly Arnold’s show. My only complaint over the top action that seems to be aware that it’s over the top. The acting by the supporting cast is good too, even though this is clearly Arnold’s show. My only complaint.

Ferguson and police brutality were hot button topics in 2014. Protests and riots blazed in the streets of Missouri with people fired up against police officers use of excessive force against civilians; predominantly African-American men. Beginning with the death of Trayvon Martin which sparked controversy against the Florida “stand-your-ground” law. The deaths of other black men such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner and Hispanic Israel Hernandez who died after being tased by Miami Beach Police, have brought forward talks about the use of body cameras on police officers for the protection of everyone involved.

The film’s score, by James Horner, is notable for not being useful. It’s a thoroughly enjoyable film overall, never having dull moments and being entertaining throughout. The film’s sense of fun.

The acting by the supporting cast is good too, even though this is clearly Arnold’s show. My only complaint

Fans of Arnold Schwarzenegger have no doubt already seen this film, but anyone who’s a fan of these types of films should check it out if they haven’t already. Arnold alone would be the main reason to recommend this film, since it’s a prime example of him at his best. It’s also wickedly funny.
Hip-hop artist Hopsin announced on all his social media accounts that he was disillusioned with the rap industry, permanently ending his career, and moving to Australia on Wednesday, Dec. 17 of this past year. Eight days later, on Christmas Day, he posted a video on YouTube revealing that it was all hoax and that he was releasing an album, Pound Syndrome, sometime this upcoming year.

Hopsin, a native of Los Angeles, started his career in hip-hop as a signee of Ruthless Records back in 2007. His career stalled there, a fact he mentions in many of his songs, while flaunting his rabid hatred for his old record label. This setback, painful as it must have been, was the catalyst for the bigger and better things he has achieved in his career. As his exit from Ruthless became inevitable in 2009, he co-founded an independent label (Funk Volume) and got to work. Slowly, he began to generate a buzz nationally. He released an album (Raw) in 2010, but rather predictably this effort was ignored.

It was the success of his singles released on YouTube that carved him a permanent place on the independent hip-hop scene. The singles, “Sag My Pants” and the Ill Mind series (“Ill Mind of Hopsin” 3, 4, and 5), have amassed a combined tens of millions of views with the formula of excellent rhyming quality, comical one-liners, and a keenness for exploring subject matters that are taboo to mainstream hip-hop. Bragging about being broke with no girlfriend? Check. Mocking the biggest names in the industry (e.g. Drake, Lil’ Wayne, Tyler the Creator, and many others)? Check. Calling out and imploring his own listeners to take responsibility for and change their destructive habits? Check, yet again.

By the end of 2012, it was clear that Hopsin had both established a dedicated and sizable fanbase and cemented a place for himself in hip-hop. However, his track record as an artist contains too many flaws for a talent of his caliber. No album he has ever released has been anywhere near mediocre in terms of quality. On his most recent release, Knock Madness, he spends an insufferable amount of time complaining about the issues in his life.

Then there are the antics. He skipped out on a show in Fort Collins, Colorado, in which he was slated to perform in January of last year. Many can’t get past the fact that he wears white contacts in his videos, and many others complain that he appeals too heavily to skateboarders. All this brings us back to the publicity stunt Hopsin pulled off this Christmas. Due to his personality and especially because he bailed on a show, this hoax he pulled was very believable. This will be taken by many as another sign of his childishness. Others will simply be relieved that Hopsin will continue to work on his craft.

In the end, Hopsin’s antics are just a distraction to what’s important -- the music. Should he continue to churn out subpar albums, there’s a very real danger that the sizable fanbase he has built will begin to dissipate. Make the albums he’s capable of making, and establish he leaves no doubt as to his credibility as an artist.

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SPORTS

University to host Youth Football Championship for next six years

A WCFL All-Stars running back breaks through the Key West All Stars defense at the Orange Bowl Youth Football Alliance Championships on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2014.

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FIU's athletic department has agreed to a five-year, 2.6 million dollar contract with Adidas for the outfitting of its 18 sports teams. The company has been sponsoring the Panthers over the next five years.”

Every Division I program at the university will continue to be exclusively outfitted by Adidas. The company has been sponsoring athletic wear for the Panthers since July 1, 2005.

The new contract also includes bonuses for achievement in football, men’s and women’s basketball, baseball and softball. A bonus will be awarded if a coach wins “Conference Coach of the Year” in any of the five sports.

“We are pleased to announce that the FIU Athletic Department will be outfitted in Adidas for the first time in company history. Now that Adidas is also working with the Hurricanes, who had been partnered with Nike for the past 27 years, the company will outfit both Division I Miami-Dade football teams for the first time in company history.

SPORTS

Panthers agree to new deal with Adidas

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The Panthers did not go “bowling” this year, but that did not stop their conference mates from putting on a show. Of the twelve teams in Conference USA, five were selected to represent the conference in post-season bowl games. Marshall University, Rice University, Western Kentucky University, Louisiana Tech University and University of Texas at El Paso combined for a 4-1 record in their bowl games. This included two wins against the Mid-American Conference, a win against the Big Ten Conference and a split against the Mountain West Conference. The only slip came in a 21-6 UTEP loss to Utah State University.

The biggest win for the conference was Marshall’s domination of MAC champion Northern Illinois University. The C-USA champs thrashed the Huskies with a score of 52-23. For much of the regular season, Marshall was regarded as one of the top 25 teams in the nation. The Thundering Herd started the year 1-0, their first and only loss coming in a 67-66 overtime shootout against Western Kentucky. Marshall defeated FIU 45-13 at Ocean Bank Field at FIU Stadium on Monday, Oct. 13.

Although C-USA is not listed as one of the “power five” conferences, C-USA teams have fared well recently. Over the last four years, C-USA is 15-6 in bowl games. In this day and age, conference strength is a huge factor in determining strength of schedule. C-USA’s exceptional post-season play shows the program’s ability to perform, which is why the conference continues to grow.

CONFERENCE USA PRESENTS THE 2015 BOWL RECORDS

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Love to write? Enjoy taking photos? Grammar enthusiast? Design savvy?

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CAMPUS LIFE AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY - BISCAYNE BAY CAMPUS

FIU
FIU @ FIFTY
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WEEK OF
WELCOME

SPRING 2015 • January 12-16

Monday, January 12th
Ask me into Tables - 9 AM - 4 PM | AC I Area
Week of Welcome BBQ - 11 AM - 2 PM | Panther Square
SPC Dancing with the Wolfe: Salsa and Bachata - 12 PM - 2 PM | Rec. Center

Tuesday, January 13th
Ask me into Tables - 9 AM - 4 PM | AC I Area
Involvement & Volunteer Fair - 11 AM - 2 PM | Panther Square (Organized by SOC, Campus Life and GCS)

Wednesday, January 14th
Councils and Cocoa - 11 AM - 2 PM | Panther Square
Peer Advisor & Panther Camp Announcement - 2 PM | Panther Square (Organized by Orientation and Parent Programs)
SPC Dancing with the Wolfe: Belly Dancing and Haitian Kompa - 2 PM - 4 PM | Rec. Center

Thursday, January 15th
New Year’s Brunch - 9 AM - 11 AM | Panther Square

Friday, January 16th
Yoga by the Bay - 10 AM - 11:30 AM | Lawns by the Bay (Organized by Recreation & SIS)
Panther Packed Friday - 12 PM - 1 PM | Panther Plaza (Organized by Panther Power)
SPC Dancing with the Wolfe: Modern Dance - 4 PM - 5 PM | Rec. Center

Supported by the Office of Campus Life at Biscayne Bay. Sponsors include FSA. Qualified individuals with a disability requesting an accommodation to attend this event must make the request no less than five working days in advance by calling 305.891.6864 or TTY via 911.

Campus Life at Biscayne Bay Campus

Work Hard, Play Hard!
BBC students bring FIU Panther spirit

As we wave goodbye to last year’s memories, we welcome in 2015 with excitement and pride to be FIU Panthers. There is a lot to look forward to this year as FIU embraces its 50th anniversary as the only student centered public research university in South Florida. Despite BBC’s smaller student population, there’s just as much student life here than at MMC, the University’s main campus.

With a breathtaking scenery of nature and the waters of our bay, certainly we carry an advantage over MMC. At last year’s newly opened Panther Plaza stands a fierce panther that represents the University’s strive and vigor to help us be truly World’s Ahead.

With a welcoming space at the plaza and grassy areas throughout the campus, students have to come agree that BBC’s quiet and more peaceful environment than at the main campus, has its perks. Walking outside near the bay area, the fresh, warm breeze of the waters help me feel at ease with the stress of a life as a busy college student.

Rather than walking through MMC’s Graham Center, the heart of the campus, I choose to lay underneath a palm tree and read whatever my next assignment may be. As a journalism student, I’ve been given the opportunity to broaden my horizons and meet different professors who aspire to help me grow in my field.

Looking across the bay, I see myself interviewing a future President of the United States and perhaps as a global CNN correspondent. I don’t mean to sound pompous, but I do have high hopes for myself.

At BBC, hospitality, environmental, business and journalism major students hark these halls with passion in their eyes. Personally, I’m anxious to try the next all-time food and wine dish at the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management’s South Beach Wine and Food Festival – a highly-esteemed festival of its kind.

Not only are University students setting their hearts on their goals at the Bay, but so are the younger generations of BBC’s high schools. These students from the MAST @ FIU Academy, a public magnet secondary school on campus, also look forward to a rigorous and exciting academic experience.

I look forward to meeting the youngsters who are undoubtedly benefiting from university professors and activities.

Along with the MAST @ FIU students, University students, faculty and staff have been persistent in bringing awareness about South Florida’s frightening consequences of sea level rise. Professors like Peter Harlem, coordinator of library’s Graphic Information System Center, has developed a system of maps that depict the severity of sea level rise within 100 years.

On the other hand, 15 of the high school students and five School of Journalism and Mass Communication students have participated in an “eye on the rise” project with journalism professor Robert Gutsche. The project aims to raise awareness in South Florida communities about the challenges that come with sea level rise and its possible solutions.

I probably sound like a ranting cheerleader, but with the growth of our University, many positive and challenging experiences are sure to come by. At BBC, we look forward to another year as the close-knit community of FIU.

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Students looking to cycle across campus on a fully-equipped beach cruiser are in for a treat this semester.

FIU’s Biscayne Bay Campus Recreation Center will launch Bike by the Bay, a bicycle-sharing program that allows students to rent bikes and gear needed for a fun and safe ride.

“[Students] will be able to come to our department, rent a bike, use that bike to either leisurely ride around campus... or have fun with other riders,” said Jonathan “JT” Torrey, recreation administrator at BBC.

The program has been in the works for over a year now and was originally scheduled to launch last fall. However, the purchasing of helmets and reflective vests, and training rec center staff led to a delay.

Torrey said Bike by the Bay was a culmination of wanting students to ride at the Modesto Maidique Campus.

Rentals will be between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Sundays.

To ensure a safe ride, Torrey said it is planned to host safety seminars for prospective cyclists.

Rental fees paid each semester, unlike other recreational activities offered at the center like kayaking and paddleboarding that charge additional fees.

Torrey said students can ride along the 3-mile bike path around campus or can ride off campus to local restaurants and shopping centers.

However, students are discouraged to take the bikes far from campus. In the event a bike or other equipment malfunctions, the center will be not be able to assist riders in those situations.

To secure a safe ride, Torrey said it is planned to host safety seminars for prospective cyclists.

Rentals will be between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Sundays.

The program was launched at BBC, however, Torrey said the program may provide opportunities for students to ride at the Modesto Maidique Campus.

The REC Center is considering to allow students to check out bikes at BBC, take them on the shuttle to MMC and commute to class.

The program will run for a few terms and then issue a survey for participants to complete, assessing the program’s success.

After evaluating the program, the REC Center will consider re-fencing the Aquatic Center shed to house more bicycles.