March marks the time of year that our clocks “spring forward,” and Northwest Florida State College is springing forward in many ways!

George Washington once said, “We should not look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dearly bought experience.” Our college is looking forward, not backward, and there are numerous opportunities and possibilities ahead. It is understandable and appropriate to learn from our experiences, but a forward-focus is necessary to capture all the excellent things that are coming our way!

One of those good things is the unanimous passing of the Military Tuition Assistance Bill (HB75) through the Florida House and Senate earlier this month. This bill authorizes institutions to waive state fees for active duty service members using Military Tuition Assistance (MTA) at Florida College System (FCS) institutions such as NWF State. This bill will also serve as a “springboard” toward establishing a presence on military installations.

Charlotte Flynt, of Miramar Beach, is a retired general contractor and owner of Two Oaks Construction, Inc.

Lori Kelley, of Fort Walton Beach, is a certified public accountant with Warren Averett, LLC.

Thomas “Rudy” Wright, of Niceville, is a retired Major General in the United States Air Force and served as the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations for SHAPE HQ.

Governor Rick Scott recently announced Charlotte Flynt, Lori Kelley and Thomas “Rudy” Wright to the NWF State College Board of Trustees.

“We are honored to have our three new trustees join us at NWF State College,” says Dr. Devin Stephenson, President. “Each of them brings a passion for the college, deep community knowledge and extensive experience in their industry. I’m confident that they will be a tremendous asset to the college as we further our mission.”

Florida State University Panama City announced a new scholarship program for students transferring to the campus with an Associate of Arts degree. Applicants with transfer GPAs of 3.0 or higher will be automatically considered for scholarships ranging from $1,500 to $3,000 per academic year.

The new scholarships are the second in a series of initiatives to ensure students can earn a higher education quickly and efficiently. FSU Panama City recently established
Throughout our state. With great pride, I can share with you that as I’m writing this column, Governor Rick Scott is signing the MTA bill!

Thanks to this bill NWF State will be able to increase our enrollment by expanding our educational offerings to members of our Eglin, Hurlburt, and Duke Field communities.

In case you are still asking yourself why this is so important to our college, I would like to share two statistics with you:

According to the VA, NWF State College ranks 11th by headcount in the state of Florida among all public colleges and universities with a total of 1,216 students receiving benefits.

Through the tireless efforts of Senator George Gainer and Representative Mel Ponder, NWF State can now provide an affordable, quality education for members of our military without requiring them to pay state fees. I cannot think of a more appropriate way to honor them for their service to our country than through this provisional step to outstanding educational opportunities and a better quality of life upon degree or credential attainment. Please join me in thanking our local legislative delegation for their efforts to pass this historic legislation for our college and our partner colleges in The Florida College System.

I would also like to recognize and thank our NWF State College Foundation Board of Directors for their continued support of our lobbying efforts in Tallahassee. Their support has been instrumental in the success of the signing of this bill.

Another spring forward this month was the news that U.S. News & World Report again ranked Florida as the best state in the nation for higher education. The ranking was determined based on several factors, including the time it takes students to complete two- and four-year postsecondary education programs, the cost of tuition and fees, and the burden of debt for college graduates. This year is the second consecutive year Florida has ranked No. 1.

Northwest Florida State College is already among the BEST in Florida, and we will continue to strive to be the “best of the best” in the nation!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- The American Association of Community College (AACC) recently selected NWF Welding Instructor Scottie Smith as one of the nearly 50 recipients of its inaugural Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty designation, an award established to recognize individuals making a difference in the classroom.

- The Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation (TLLCCF) recently announced NWF student Tawanda Brown, owner of the Brown Family Child Care Home in Crestview, as a recipient of the 2018 Terri Lynne Lokoff/Children’s TYLENOL® National Child Care Teacher Award.

- The Northwest Florida State College Child Development and Education Center recently passed their inspection from the Florida Department of Children and Families with zero violations.

- Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College ranked first in their division at the 31st Annual Math Bowl at Northwest Florida State College. CHS students also secured the top three spots for the individual awards: Aly Keen (1st place), Kasey Rigby (2nd place), and Teertho Bhattacharya (3rd place).

- Amy Krafcik, English Instructor at the Collegiate High School at NWF State College, was recently selected as a high impact teacher by the Florida Department of Education for the second consecutive year.

- NWF Student Jennifer Smalley was recently selected as a Coca-Cola Academic Team Gold Scholar! Jennifer was selected as one of fifty Gold Scholars out of more than 2,000 applicants. She will be awarded a $1,500 scholarship for the Fall 2018 term compliments of Coca-Cola.

- Florida Governor Rick Scott recently awarded NWF State’s Executive Officer for Government Relations and Strategy Jack Capra a Veterans Service Medal.
connect programs at Gulf Coast State College, Northwest Florida State College and Pensacola State College to assist with advising and smooth the transition between college and university.

“The key to our success is collaboration; we have to work together to make good things happen,” said Devin Stephenson, president of Northwest Florida State College. “This scholarship is the current that should move students in the right direction.”

CINDERELLA AT THE MATTIE KELLY ARTS CENTER

The Mattie Kelly Arts Center presents Rodgers + Hammerstein’s Cinderella on Saturday, April 14 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The Tony Award-winning musical will delight the audience with its contemporary take on the classic tale. The lush production features an incredible orchestra, jaw-dropping transformations and all the moments you love - the pumpkin, the glass slipper, the masked ball and more - plus some surprising new twists!

Tickets for this show are $45 for adults and $35 for children (18 & under) and are on sale now. Secure your spot today by visiting mattiekellyartscenter.org or by calling the box office at 850-729-6000.

ATHLETICS

BASKETBALL SEASON COMES TO AN END; BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL BEGIN CONFERENCE PLAY

The NWF men’s basketball team was crowned FCSAA/NJCAA Region VIII Champs after defeating Chipola 92-67 in the final game of the state tournament. This was the largest margin of victory ever in a championship game in the history of the tournament. The Raiders were led by Andres Feliz who was named MVP of the tournament and the Player of the Year for the state. Derek Funderburk and Kelvin Robinson were also named to the All-Tournament Team. Tray Boyd and Andres Feliz earned All-State honors, along with Steve DeMoe who was named Coach of the Year. The Raiders were off to Hutchinson, Kansas for the NJCAA National Tournament where they entered as the #2 overall seed after posting a 30-2 record. In their first round matchup against Western Nebraska, the Raiders won 109-91 to advance to the Elite Eight. Once there, they fell to College of Southern Idaho 107-93 to end their season at 31-3.

The Lady Raider women’s basketball team earned an at-large bid to the national tournament in Lubbock, Texas after not making an appearance in the FCSAA state tournament. Their notable regular season record allowed them to impress the selection committee and earn a #14 seed in the tournament. Four members were named to the All-Conference Teams – First Team: Trinity Baptiste, Georgia Gayle, and Jade Lewis; Second Team: Ann Jernigan. The Lady Raiders advanced to the Elite Eight of their tournament after thrilling wins over Panola College (70-57) and formerly undefeated Moberly Area Community College (68-47) in earlier rounds. They were ultimately eliminated by the eventual 2018 NJCAA National Champion Tallahassee Eagles in a 55-52 loss.

Raider Baseball and Softball are both in the midst of Panhandle Conference play after noteworthy preconference starts. Raider Baseball currently sits in third position in the standings with hopes of moving up as the season continues to lock themselves into the postseason. The overall batting average of the team is currently .306, led by Jake Randa who boasts a .468 average with 8 homeruns and 33 RBIs.

NWF Softball is currently in fourth position of the Panhandle Conference standings after the first round of conference play. The team is currently batting .302 and is ranked fourth in the nation in doubles hit (88), twelfth in homeruns (36), and eighth in extra base hits (134). They are led by Brittani Crawford, who is batting .352 with 8 homeruns.

(Merit Scholarships, continued)
NWF State College Recognizes President’s Circle Members

On Wednesday, February 21, NWF State College President’s Circle members were recognized at center court of the Raider Arena before the start of the last home men’s basketball game. This year, 62 members and their families were recognized as the largest President’s Circle since the inception of the program.

Members of the President’s Circle are committed to the future of higher education in our community. Through their contributions and membership in this program, President’s Circle members demonstrate their commitment to improving lives at Northwest Florida State College. President’s Circle gifts provide the college the flexibility to use the funds where they are needed most – for program support, instructional needs, support to the Foundation, and many other crucial expenses that benefit NWF State College students. The President’s Circle has provided $31,000 in unrestricted gifts this year. These gifts have been used for scholarships as well as to create a student emergency fund.

The President’s Circle is open to any individual or organization contributing an unrestricted, minimum gift of $500 annually. Membership perks include a distinguished lapel pin, recognition on the NWF website and in other publications, newsletter subscription and VIP invitations to special college-sponsored events. The membership form is available online. For more information, please call the NWF State College Foundation at (850) 729-5357 or visit our website at www.nwfsccfoundation.org.

Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance partners with 30A Coastal Dunes Wine Company

The 30A Coastal Dunes Wine Company has partnered with CBA for the second year in a row to support the Dunes in Schools program throughout Walton County. Founders Charlie Modica, Jr. and George Barnes have been friends since the 1990’s, and have long been dedicated to giving back to both the community and environment they love so much. With the generous $1000 gift, CBA will continue to work with middle schoolers across the region to inspire coastal stewardship and restore critical shoreline habitat around the Coastal Dune Lakes.