May is always a month of celebration, but May 2018 was an exceptional month of festivities for our college.

On May 4th, we celebrated the ground-breaking for the Nurses Monument located at the Air Force Armament Museum. The NWF State College Nursing Department and the Military Order of the Purple Heart have been instrumental in bringing the vision for this tribute marker to reality. The monument will stand as a testament to the efforts of nurses such as Florence Nightingale, Lt. Annie Fox, 1st Lt. Sharon Lane, and NWF State’s own Linda Whitenton, who spent her life serving in the civilian field of nursing.

I had the opportunity to share a few remarks at the ground-breaking, and I quoted a portion of the Florence Nightingale Pledge, “I pledge myself to do all in my power to raise the standards and prestige of nursing; May my life be devoted to service and to the high ideals of the nursing profession.” I believe all nurses live their lives in service and devotion to the wellness of others and that is to be celebrated!

On May 5th, we came together to celebrate the college’s 53rd Annual Commencement Ceremonies. It was indeed a momentous day for our college as well as our 1,861 graduates and their families!

NWF State College Celebrates 53rd Annual Commencement

Northwest Florida State College Board of Trustees congratulated the college’s 1,861 graduates at the 53rd Annual Commencement Ceremonies. Pictured left to right: Trustee Major General Thomas “Rudy” Wright, USAF Ret.; Trustee Charlotte Flynt; Trustee Shane Abbott; Vice President for Teaching and Learning Scott Behrens; Executive Vice President of Operations for Southern Company and Chairman, President, and CEO of Gulf Power Company Stan Connally; President/CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce Mark Wilson; President Dr. Devin Stephenson; Trustee Chairman Brian Pennington, Trustee Lori Kelly, and Trustee Vice-Chairman Jeff Floyd.

May Celebrations

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Gulf Power CEO Stan Connally, Representative Brad Drake, Florida Chamber of Commerce CEO Mark Wilson, Florida’s Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis and Representative Mel Ponder joined Dr. Devin Stephenson at NWF State College’s 53rd Annual Commencement Ceremonies.

NWF State College Foundation Receives Generous Donations for Indoor Practice Facility

Dr. Jerry “Doc” Hollingsworth was all smiles as he threw out the first pitch for the NWF Raider Baseball team on Monday, April 16th. Dr. Hollingsworth has been involved with youth and athletics most of his life. He was the team doctor for Choctawhatchee, Ft. Walton Beach, and Niceville high schools for almost 35 years and helped found the All-Sports Association of Northwest Florida, which honored him with its Community Service Award for helping youngsters in athletics. He has also helped found the first chapter of Special Olympics in Florida. Dr. Hollingsworth is also widely known for his remarkable contributions to the University of Mississippi.

(continued, page 2)
Our special guests for our first ceremony were Stan Connally, Executive Vice President of Operations for Southern Company and Chairman, President, and CEO of Gulf Power Company, and Mark Wilson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Chamber. Special guests for our second ceremony were Representative Mel Ponder and Jimmy Patronis, Chief Financial Officer for the State of Florida. It was an honor to have these special guests participate in NWF State’s commencement ceremonies!

On May 22, we celebrated the success of our Collegiate High School graduates. As you well know, these 96 graduates are also leaving our institution with an associate’s degree. These outstanding students are among the brightest and most talented in our state. We are very proud of all 2018 Raider graduates!

In my remarks to this year’s graduates, I challenged them to surround themselves with people who help them to raise their standards. We should all seek to surround ourselves with individuals who help us to become the best version of ourselves. I challenged our graduates to move into a circle of friends who want to see them win. I challenge you to do the same! Our college is moving the needle to surround itself with community partners who are challenging us to be the best. We will answer that challenge by providing quality education to improve the lives and quality of place in Northwest Florida.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this column, the portion of the Nightingale pledge that states, “I pledge myself to do all in my power to raise the standards and prestige...” still rings in my head many weeks after our Nurses Monument ground-breaking. Raising the standards and prestige of NWF State College is precisely what we are doing, and I pledge to you that we will be the best!

Dr. Devin Stephenson
#TheBestIsOurStandard

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**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

- **The NWF State College Madrigal Singers** were recently nominated for the A Cappella Music Awards’ Collegiate Group of the Year.

- **Northwest Florida State College** joined the Military Order of the Purple Heart for the groundbreaking of a monument honoring military and civilian nurses at the Air Force Armament Museum.

- **The Mattie Kelly Arts Center Galleries** joined the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families for their annual Blue Star Museums, a program which provides free admission to our nation’s active-duty military personnel this summer—Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day 2018.

- **Northwest Florida State College** hosted the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors and Building Industry Association for the 2018 Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast.

- **Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida** graduated 96 students at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on Tuesday, May 22. The Summa Cum Laude students in the class of 2018 are Ally Keen and Kasey Rigby.

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**FEED-A-RAIDER**

In an effort to provide students with the necessary resources to be successful while attending NWF State, the “Feed-A-Raider” food pantry initiative was created to address the issue of food shortages faced by many college students. The Feed-A-Raider Food Pantry is a campus food pantry initiative spearheaded by the Northwest Florida State College Student Government Association. Feed-A-Raider was created to address food insecurity by providing supplemental food to students in need, as well as education and resources to students related to purchasing and preparing balanced food on a budget.

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**STRATEGIC PLAN**

- Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
As the 2017-18 school year comes to an end, we can sit back and reflect on the success of our student-athletes. The success came early on when Andres Feliz was named the FCSAA/NJCAA Region VIII Player of the Week for the very first week of the regular season. The men’s basketball team went on to win 25 straight games and spent 8 straight weeks at the top of the national rankings. Head Coach Steve DeMeo was named Coach of the Year in the conference and Region VIII.

The Lady Raider women’s basketball team went undefeated in the non-conference portion of the season. Men’s basketball clinched the Panhandle Conference championship and then went on to win the FCSAA state championship to earn an automatic bid to the national tournament. Women’s basketball earned an at-large bid to the national tournament in Lubbock, Texas. Both men’s and women’s basketball made it to the Elite 8 in their respective tournaments.

Grant Stewart and Christian Camacho, of Raider Baseball, were each named Pitchers of the Week for FCSAA Region VIII. Stewart went on to be named NJCAA Pitcher of the Week after an incredibly impressive complete game shutout.

This spring our student-athletes achieved:
• An average 3.13 spring GPA
• 3.06 academic year GPA
• 43 Raider athletes had an average 3.0 GPA or above
• 27 student-athletes earned their degrees and moved on to four-year colleges and universities.

There were ten Raiders from our teams named to the First Team Panhandle All-Conference Teams. But aside from the hard work each team dedicated on the field or court, all four teams made time throughout the year volunteering in the community, from hosting camps with the Boys and Girls Club to Autism Surfs to helping the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance build an oyster reef.

We are proud of our 24 student-athletes who graduated from NWF State and move on to four-year schools to continue their academic and athletic careers. They each contributed countless hours and have left their impact on the NWF Raider Athletic program.
Field Trip Month at the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

Students of all ages hit the shoreline this month on CBA field trips. Grasses in Classes 3rd and 5th graders visited the Choctawhatchee Bay – including new areas on Eglin Air Force Base – to study native aquatic species and plant the smooth cordgrass they raised all year. Across the Gulf of Mexico, CBA worked with Fort Walton Beach High School to take marine science students to Dauphin Island’s Estuarium to learn about coastal ecosystems and oyster gardening. During the 2017-2018 school year, CBA reached over 2,000 students each month.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center

The Mattie Kelly Arts Center is pleased to announce our summer production – The Hunchback of Notre Dame. From the Academy Award-winning team comes a lushly scored retelling of Victor Hugo’s epic story of love, acceptance and what it means to be a hero. A sweeping score and powerful story make The Hunchback of Notre Dame an instant classic. Audiences will be swept away by the magic of this truly unforgettable musical.

The cast of The Hunchback of Notre Dame is made up of local community members. The performance will be shown nightly July 11-14 at 7:30 p.m. along with a matinee performance at 2 p.m. on July 14. Tickets for this show are $25 for adults and only $10 for youth (18 & under). NWF State College students can enter for FREE with student ID.