

ENGAGE 2021



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Year in Review



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Friends and Colleagues,

The year 2021 has shown us just how resilient our community is. Despite the challenges, our board of trustees, faculty, and staff have continued to move forward, overcoming adversity while pursuing the mission of advancing the institution. This year's Engage magazine continues to focus on our strategic priorities in the Classroom, Campus, and Community and features some of our significant accomplishments throughout the year.

Northwest Florida State College is strengthened by the generous support of our donors. The magazine previews our successes and the great things that are to come, thanks to their continued support. It also features some of our community partnerships that bring opportunity and open new doors to help advance our campus.

Thank you all for supporting Northwest Florida State College and for playing a key role in our continued success. I hope you enjoy reading this year's edition of Engage as we recognize the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff. I can't wait to see what is in store for us in 2022!

Dr. Devin Stephenson
President, Northwest Florida State College
#TheBestIsOurStandard



Sparking

Second Chances

NWFSC helps former inmate see a brighter future

After working in the restaurant industry for almost 15 years and recently being released from the Walton County Jail, Joshua Johnson knew that he needed a career change. His chosen career path? Welding Technology.

"I learned about this program through the Walton County jail, and when I got out, I didn't pursue it right off the bat. I went back to restaurants and was just like, 'Man, I'm just spinning my tires here,'" Joshua said. "So, I ended up coming here. I did a walkthrough with my dad, and you could see that it was pretty squared away when you walked in. So, I gave it a shot. I've been here for 14 months now."

Joshua is part of Northwest Florida State College's Advanced Welding Technology program. The program takes 18 months to complete and begins with an introductory Welding Technology course. Once students graduate from the introductory course and receive their certificate, they move up to the advanced class, which focuses on pipe welding.

Joshua stated that although the program started off as an escape from everything that was going on, it has now become an opportunity for him to attain his dreams and goals and has led to a complete lifestyle change.

"I'm going to be 100 percent honest. If I were still in the restaurant thing, I'd be back in jail, or I would be dead 100 percent," Joshua said. "It helped me dial in to say, okay, well I'm making x amount of money doing the restaurant thing. But you know, I'm still in that lifestyle. And over here, it's like, wow, this is a lot of money. I wasn't getting paid anywhere close to what they're talking about in terms of numbers for this. So that's something where I'm like, oh wait, I could buy a new vehicle, I could put a mortgage on a house, you know, like do things that responsible adults do."

“I haven't seen any other programs that offer pipe fitting or blueprint reading like what we've been doing here.”

Joshua Johnson -
NWFSC Student/Welding Technology

The welding program has also taught Joshua fundamental skills that he was able to apply during his internship with the Systems Group. He explained that everything taught at NWFSC is typical for what you would see on the job. This includes the pipe fitting projects and learning how to read blueprints.

"A lot of job postings we're seeing want people that have some basic pipe fitting knowledge," he said. "That's a skill that's going to be huge. I haven't seen any other programs that offer pipe fitting or blueprint reading like what we've been doing here."

NWFSC offers its welding program at its Niceville and DeFuniak Springs campuses. Students interested in the program submit their applications through the college then attend a one-on-one orientation with the welding instructors to ensure they understand what the program is about and see if it fits their needs. After passing a drug test, students are brought in and are taught the basics about welding.

The college is also continuing its partnership with Walton County Jail and restarting its Inmate Welding Training program next year. The program is a six-week, 240-hour course that focuses on the basics of construction welding. The course is taught at an onsite welding trailer equipped with eight welding stations. Through this course, inmates learn how to prepare, weld, and inspect Flux Core welds on carbon steel plates. They are also taught welding safety and prepare to complete American Welding Society standard tests. Those who finish the course receive a welding training certificate.

NWFSC's Director of Welding Technology, Scottie Smith, has one piece of advice to those interested in the program- you won't know unless you try it.

"Come talk to us and see if this fits your career and life goals. Were glad to show you around the shop and give you a tour and let you try it out," he said. "Don't ever be scared to try this. It's a lot of hard physical work, but it's very rewarding. I mean, we build power plants and oil refineries. It's pretty cool."

Looking back on his experiences, Joshua hopes that others who are in similar positions see that no matter how much trouble they are in or how deep in the game they are, they always have the option to do something different with their lives.

"There are other options. It doesn't have to go down that way," he said. "It's very easy to take that path, you know, but if you get in here and do the work, you could make legit money. That was big for me. Just being able to financially support everything I want to do is pretty big."



Opening Doors

**Emerald Coast Autism Center
participates in Transition to Work program**

Chris showed up at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center (MKAC) with a gleam in his eye. It was his second time training as an usher for a ballet recital, and he already knew what to do.

"I got my jacket. I need a nametag. I'm ready!" said the 15-year-old as he got prepared in the cloak closet at the MKAC.

Chris is one of seven students from the Emerald Coast Autism Center participating in the new Transition to Work program, funded by the Florida Department of Education.

Transition to Work has been running at Niceville's Emerald Coast Autism Center since October 2020 and is open to students age 17-21, with some younger volunteers tagging along to learn like Chris. The purpose of the program is to prepare young adults with Autism for the workforce.

So far, the Niceville students have gained experience serving around campus at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center, the vehicle bay, the mailroom, and the Kay Litke Culinary Arts Greenhouse. Student Workers participate in activities such as greeting patrons, washing cars, sorting mail, transcribing packages, planting seeds, and watering plants.

Every student in the Transition to Work program sets their own course as each has their own abilities and limitations, Mills said. Some students are non-verbal and rely on iPad technology to communicate through pictures and short answer buttons; others are working on their speaking and social skills to communicate their wants and needs better. There is no timeline for students to finish the Transition to Work program, but with each work experience, students gain new skills and confidence.



Left to right: Stephanie Manning, Emma Borders, Nicole Haskell, Kieanna Kilgore, and Hayley Simmons

All-Florida Academic + Coca-Cola Academic Team Silver Scholars

The Florida College System announced the 2021 All-Florida Academic Team, which recognizes outstanding students for their academic achievement, leadership and service to the community.

Students were nominated by their respective colleges to the All-USA Academic Team competition sponsored by the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society. This year's team of 137 students were recognized during a virtual awards ceremony on April 23, 2021.

Five members of NWFSC's Sigma Mu PTK chapter were named to the All -Florida Academic team for 2021:

Emma Borders
Nicole Haskell
Kieanna Kilgore
Stephanie Manning
Hayley Simmons

Stephanie Manning was also named a 2021 Coca-Cola Academic Team Silver Scholar and will receive a \$1,250 scholarship.

Phi Theta Kappa Award

Our Sigma Mu Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa has done it again. Not only have they achieved the highest standard of a five-star chapter for the third year running, but they were also ranked #3 in Florida in the Distinguished Chapter Awards and were one of only three Florida Chapters recognized for the Distinguished Honors in Action Award.

The Distinguished Chapter Award is based on a composite score of the Honors in Action project and the College Project.

This year, our Honors in Action project centered around the topic of protests in small towns. The project covered petitions, speaking at city council meetings, protests, demonstrations, and ensuring peaceful and safe protests.

NWFSC's College Project addressed the need for Covid-19 safety measures on campus. PTK students gathered masks and small bottles of hand sanitizer and assembled approximately 200 packets containing each item to be distributed to students.



Gold Medalist

NWFSC Student wins National Championship at SkillsUSA

After four years of encouragement, Northwest Florida State College Early Childhood Education student Christina Walden finally joined SkillsUSA. She said, looking back, she doesn't know what took her so long to join but is glad she was talked into it.

"I started pursuing my Early Childhood Education degree in 2015, and I recently graduated with my bachelors," said Walden. "The whole time I've been going through the program, my instructor Bev Sandlin kept asking me, 'Will you do Skills? Will you do Skills?' and every time, I kind of blew her off, but this time I finally decided to go for it."

SkillsUSA is a national workforce preparation association whose goal is to produce the world's most highly skilled workforce by focusing on technical, personal, and workplace skills training. Competitions drive SkillsUSA and push members to show what they have learned through practical application in job skills, including electrical, plumbing, early childhood education, and more.



Walden submitted her written lesson plan and a video showcasing her role-playing lesson to SkillsUSA for both the state and national competitions. When her name was announced as the gold medalist in the Early Childhood Education category, Walden said she was grateful for the opportunity and looks forward to the future. She said she plans to pursue a Master's degree in Early Childhood Leadership and wants to continue working with children along the way.



Left to right: Shannon Widman, Director, Seaside School Foundation; Joy Robbins, Director of Community, Curriculum and Culture, Seaside School, Inc.; Teresa Horton, Executive Director, Seaside School Foundation; Nick Vlahos, Chairman Seaside School, Inc.; Patrick McCarthy, President, Seaside School Foundation; Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President; Lori Kelley, NWFSC Board Chair; Dr. Deidre Price, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Randy White, Vice President of Business Operations and Finance; Whitney Rutherford, Associate Vice President/General Counsel.

Partners in Education

Partnership Expands Seacoast Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College

In September, NWFSC, Seacoast Collegiate High School, and The Seaside School Foundation signed a lease agreement creating a partnership to construct a new educational facility at the College's South Walton Center. The new facility, named Seacoast Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College, will provide a dual enrollment educational center housing Seacoast and NWFSC classrooms, as well as a shared-use space for workforce development, continuing education, and other workforce preparedness instruction.

"We are pleased to share this vision and partner with Seacoast Collegiate High School and The Seaside School Foundation," said Dr. Devin Stephenson.

2021

Year in Review



Taking the Stage

Thomas Ryan goes from undercover to under the spotlight with assistance from NWFSC Veteran's Success Center

"I was losing the security of the military, I was losing that paycheck, I was losing that support, and I was going to be on my own," Thomas Ryan said as he reflected on his transition from the military. "It suddenly hit me, and it was terrifying."

Thomas recalled giving his retirement speech at Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs after almost 21 years of service in the United States Air Force. As he looked out at all of the airmen that he had supervised, Thomas remembers feeling a wave of doubt like he was making a mistake by getting out. He explained that it took him a long time to come to terms with his retirement and realize that it was all for the better.

He spent most of his career in the Air Force as a Security Forces officer. During his service, he deployed to Bosnia and Iraq. He was also approached by the Office of Special Investigations to do undercover drug work and recalls his year in OSI being extremely successful.

“ It just worked out that Northwest offered everything that I needed, and I was literally down the road from it. So, it was a win-win. ”

Thomas Ryan -
NWFSC Student/Theater Appreciation

Help for Heroes

Military Friendly Bronze-Level Status 2021-2022

This year, the College was named a 2021-2022 Military Friendly School with Bronze Distinction in the Small Public category by MilitaryFriendly.com.

Each year, schools completing the survey are weighted according to six categories: military student support and retention, graduation and career outcomes, financial aid and loan repayment, culture and commitment, admissions and orientation, and academic policies and compliance.

Final survey results and ratings are determined by combining an institution's survey scores with the institution's ability to meet minimum thresholds for student retention, graduation, job placement, loan repayment, and loan default rates for students and especially for student veterans. The score of the leading institution sets the benchmark. The bronze distinction is awarded to schools that scored within 30 percent of the 10th best school in the category.

"Northwest Florida State College strives to be the first choice in higher education for our region's veterans," said Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President. "We are proud to support our nations' finest by providing the best educational experience possible."



After retirement, Thomas said it was difficult to find employment and attributes the difficulties he faced to the negative stigma surrounding veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It became apparent to me that one of the reasons why I wasn't getting called back was because I put my combat deployments on my resume," he said. "I changed my resume, and that is when I got my only callback. The only thing I can think of is that people are just scared that veterans will flip a cap one day and go crazy. It was strange to me and sad too. I remember wondering if there were other veterans out there going through the same thing I was."

Although the first three years after retirement were difficult for Thomas, he later realized that his experiences and military background would lead him to his passion and to Northwest Florida State College.

"I was talking to one of my closest friends trying to figure out what I was going to do, and he said, 'why don't you become an actor?'" Thomas recalled. "I was like, 'that's a stupid idea. Why would I want to do that?' and he explained, 'well, you did a year's worth of undercover work. You convinced all of these people that you were somebody else. It was all improv, and you were extremely successful at it. Why wouldn't you want to be an actor?'"

His friend's idea led Thomas to realize that he had potential in the film industry. After securing some roles in background, body doubles, and extras, Thomas decided that he needed formal training if he wanted to make it to the big leagues.

Thomas was introduced to NWFSC by his ex-wife, who happened to be an alumna of the college.

"I looked at a couple of schools that were relatively close, but they were strictly theater with no specialization in acting," he explained. "It just worked out that Northwest offered everything that I needed, and I was literally down the road from it. So, it was a win-win."

Now that he has started to pursue his degree at NWFSC, Thomas said he appreciates his instructors, who have been teaching him everything that he needs to know about the industry, and the Veterans Success Center that has helped him every step of the way.

"I can go in and say, 'hey, this is what I want to do,' and they can just lay it all out for me," he said. "They showed me what I needed to do and where I needed to be to get my degree in theater appreciation. I would have been lost without them."

Public Safety

campus



Northwest Florida State College and Walton County Sheriff's Department Open the Walton Works Public Safety Complex

With a shared vision for excellence, NWFSC and the Walton County Sheriff's Department have created a preeminent public safety training facility that will transform the career opportunities available for the citizens of both Walton County and the entire Northwest Florida Region. The Walton Works Public Safety Complex is located at the Walton County Sheriff's Complex in DeFuniak Springs. In April, members of the local community joined Walton County officials, NWFSC Board of Trustee members, and College personnel to celebrate the grand opening of this multi-functional complex.

The morning's event brought together numerous partners, all dedicated to transformational action in Walton County. The Walton County Board of County Commissioners' generous allocation of \$1.5 million RESTORE Act dollars advanced this project into a reality. Additionally, the Walton County Sheriff's Office's unwavering commitment to creating the region's finest public safety training center led to generous donations of equipment to be used by future firefighter candidates in real-life training opportunities.

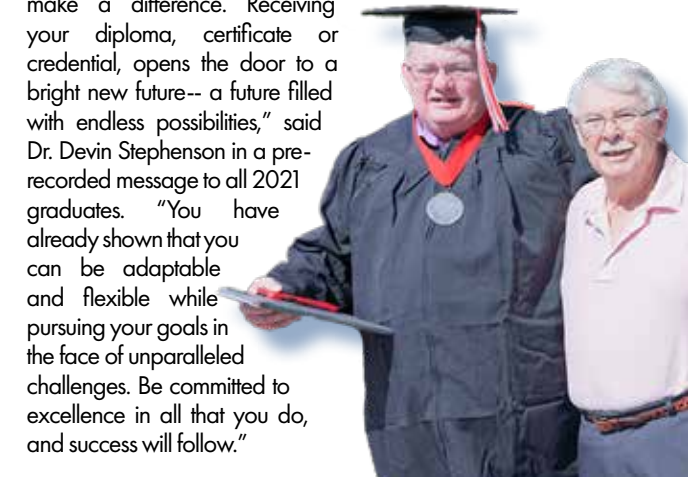
The College is thrilled to be expanding our top-ranked Public Safety program into north Walton County. The training opportunities offered at the Walton Works Public Safety Complex will produce hometown heroes who will immediately make an impact in our local community.



Congratulations, Northwest Florida State College Graduates

The College held 13 separate ceremonies for members of the 2020 and 2021 graduating classes in May. Graduates, family, and friends were given the opportunity to safely experience all the pomp and circumstance deserving of this momentous occasion in a modified in-person experience. Of the 1,333 students eligible to graduate, nearly half of them walked across the stage to receive their certificate, diploma, or degree.

"I challenge you to take what you have learned at Northwest Florida State College into our community and make a difference. Receiving your diploma, certificate or credential, opens the door to a bright new future-- a future filled with endless possibilities," said Dr. Devin Stephenson in a pre-recorded message to all 2021 graduates. "You have already shown that you can be adaptable and flexible while pursuing your goals in the face of unparalleled challenges. Be committed to excellence in all that you do, and success will follow."



Mosaic Magic

Local Artist Creates Mosaics of College Logo and Seal for Northwest Florida State College

After months of dedication, creativity, and grout, two new mosaics were completed and installed in the President's Office Suite on the Niceville campus, thanks to local artist Sarah Hawkins. Hawkins was commissioned to create the mosaics in early 2020.

The mosaics are made in the colors of the College's logo; red, black, and white. The first art piece interprets the logo "Swoosh," the second is a version of the College seal called "Educatio Optima."

Some of the tiles used in the mosaics are remnants from the red plexiglass doors of the original administrative building. The old door pieces were provided for the artwork by former NWFSC trustee and generous donor Eileen Arpke and long-time College Librarian Janice Henderson.



Left to right: Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President; Eileen Arpke; Sarah Hawkins

Hanging in the hallway just outside of the Office of the President, the large mosaics add color and history to the growing collection of art pieces owned by the College.

Workforce Training Center

Walton Works Training Center of Excellence opens door to industrial careers



Left to right: Rudy Wright, NWFSC Trustee; Charlotte Flynt, NWFSC Trustee; Lori Kelley, NWFSC Trustee Chair; Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President; Danny Glidewell, District 2 Walton County Commissioner; Michael Barker, District 3 Walton County Commissioner; Shane Abbott, NWFSC Trustee Vice-Chair; William "Boots" McCormick, District 1 Walton County Commissioner; Graham Fountain, NWFSC Trustee; Reynolds Henderson, NWFSC Trustee

The College's Walton Works Training Center of Excellence is officially open at the Chautauqua Center in DeFuniak Springs. Members of the local community joined Walton County officials, NWFSC Board of Trustee members, and College personnel to celebrate the grand opening of this state-of-the-art center in February. The evening brought together many partners, all dedicated to transformational action in Walton County, including the Walton County Sheriff's Department and the Walton County Board of County Commissioners' whose generous commitment of \$1.5 million RESTORE Act dollars advanced this project into a reality.

The \$5.7 million Walton Works Training Center of Excellence comprises two new buildings, labs, and classroom space. The 7,000 square-foot central Walton Works building houses 17 bays constructed on NWFSC's Niceville campus by our welding instructors and students and provides space for the welding and industrial programs. An adjacent 900 square-foot indoor drone arena is used for Unmanned Vehicle (UMV) certification and testing. Interior renovations modernized existing administration buildings and created a multi-purpose skills lab for the Construction Trades Program.

NWFSC is honored to share the vision for workforce education in Northwest Florida with the Triumph Board and Chairman Don Gaetz. The training opportunities offered at this center will produce both workers with the skills needed to earn sustainable family wages and new employers looking to grow and expand their businesses here.

Excellence in Action

Northwest Florida State College's Aviation Center of Excellence Takes Flight

The College's Aviation Center of Excellence (ACE) officially opened at the Hsu Innovation Institute North in Crestview in June. More than 200 members of the local community attended the celebration. With a shared vision for excellence, NWFSC, the Hsu Educational Foundation, the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners, Okaloosa County Airports, Florida Department of Transportation, Triumph Gulf Coast, and many more came together to create a 27,000 square foot state-of-the-art training facility. Complete with a hangar and lab space outfitted with Snap-On workbenches, this facility offers high-tech career opportunities for the entire Northwest Florida Region.

Our Aviation Program is poised to set students up for success in the aerospace industry, offering programs in Professional Pilot Technology, Airframe, and Powerplant, as well as Unmanned Vehicle Systems Operations. Over the next ten years, the project anticipates that at least 307 students will earn 1,255 FAA industry-recognized certificates, with 184 to be certified in airframe and powerplant mechanics and 123 to gain professional pilot certificates- providing an expanded talent pool that will bolster Northwest Florida's economy.

At the Aviation Center of Excellence, our collaboration with the Hsu Educational Foundation creates a unique learning environment where students in grades K-12 will also have the opportunity to utilize the state-of-the-art facilities for STEM education focused around the College's Aviation programming, with the ultimate goal of introducing students of all ages to advanced technology in high-growth industry sectors.

We are honored to share the vision for educational opportunity, economic development, and improvement of quality of place in Northwest Florida with the Triumph Gulf Coast Board, and are grateful to Triumph Board for creating hope and opportunity in this entire region.





Above: Don Gaetz, Triumph Gulf Coast Board Chair
 Above right (Left to right): Don Gaetz, Triumph Chair;
 Cindy Frakes, NWFSC Foundation Board Member; Don
 Litke, NWFSC Trustee; Charlotte Flynt, NWFSC Trustee;
 Representative Patt Maney; Dr. Devin Stephenson,
 NWFSC President; Dr. Paul Hsu, Hsu Foundation President;
 Graham Fountain, NWFSC Trustee; Maggie Hsu, Hsu
 Foundation Vice President; Carolyn Ketchel, Okaloosa
 County Commissioner; Rudy Wright, NWFSC Trustee;
 Amanda Negron, Hsu Foundation Executive Director
 Right: Dr. Paul Hsu and Dr. Devin Stephenson



“ I am excited to award \$2.8 million to fund a new diesel mechanic training program at Northwest Florida State College. ”

- Florida Governor, Ron DeSantis

Putting Education in Overdrive

Transit Technicians Program

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis visited NWFSC in October to announce a \$2.85 million award to the College through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund. The funds will be used to establish the College's Transit Technician program, which will support a broad range of industries through transferable skills to include the Florida Department of Transportation, heavy-duty trucks, transit, school bus, and construction equipment. The program will also fill a specialized need for diesel marine repair technicians as students apply their general experiences to targeted marine applications.

"The Transit Technician program extends our commitment to further advance the state's workforce goals with an immediate pathway to employment at a family-sustainable wage," said Dr. Devin Stephenson. "We appreciate Governor DeSantis's leadership and commitment to ensure Northwest Florida State College is equipped to provide the labor force needed to support the logistics, transportation, and distribution industry in our region."

The Transit Technician program will be located adjacent to the driving pad on our Niceville campus through the expansion of existing buildings. The program projects 340 completers over a seven-year period. The local area currently has only one Transit Technician program within 150 miles of NWFSC.

The Transit Technician program will closely support our Commercial Driving License program and will consist of three phases that build on each other. Students will be able to complete all three steps in five semesters. While enrolled, students will earn CAPE certifications provided by Automotive Service Excellence and satisfy a two-year work experience requirement.

"To support job growth in our state, we are focused on not only investing in infrastructure but also supporting workforce training programs like the great ones here at Northwest Florida State College," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "I am excited to award \$2.8 million to fund a new diesel mechanic training program at Northwest Florida State College – a high-demand field that will move our state forward and provide young people opportunities to do very well for themselves. When you look at Florida compared to the nation, it's clear that while other states have struggled over the past year and a half, our state continues to do better and better. While we are proud of the progress we have made, we know that there is more to accomplish, and with awards like the ones we are making this week, we are continuing to push that progress forward."

The Transit Technician program aligns with the College's partnership with Cummins Corporation, the single largest engine manufacturer in the world. Those who complete the program will earn industry certificates recognizing their proficiency in various skills. More importantly, they will be prepared to maintain and repair heavy trucks, buses, construction equipment, and diesel-engine-equipped boats, playing a significant role in keeping the region's economy driving forward.

Masterpieces Begin Here

Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra Names New Conductor

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, housed at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville, has a new conductor. After 18 months of meticulous searching, Todd Craven was named NFSO Music Director and Conductor, right in time for the orchestra's 35th season.

"We are pleased to announce Todd Craven as our new NFSO conductor," said Dr. Devin Stephenson. "Todd brings a wealth of successful experiences and musicianship to the Orchestra and this region. There is no question that his leadership will keep the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra as the exemplar on the Emerald Coast."



community

Local artist donates painting to Mattie Kelly Arts Center



During the lockdown months of 2020, retired pharmacist Johnny Pope of Shalimar decided to get back into his long-lost passion of painting. His inspiration? The sculpture of the seven dancers in the fountain at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center.

Pope said that although it took him several months to create the piece, it was the ideal lockdown pastime as he spent hours in his garage working on the painting daily. He added that he had loved art in high school and was planning a career in it, but his parents persuaded him to take a job in a pharmacy.

Over the past ten years since his retirement, Pope said he is making up for lost time, taking art classes at the College. It took a year for Pope to finally get the courage to bring the painting to Niceville as he said he wasn't sure if the College would accept it.

"When Johnny called, I didn't know what to expect," said Mattie Kelly Arts Center Director Jeanette Shires. "But once I saw it, I was flabbergasted. It's incredible, and it captures the beauty of the fountain with the seven dancers at night. We are just thrilled to have it."

Pope is a member of the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and the Arts and Design Society of Fort Walton Beach.

Champions Begin Here



NWFSC wins National Championship

For Bart Walker, it was always his dream to coach in a national championship game.

For players Kynadi Kuykendoll, Masengo Mutanda, Chanaya Pinto, and Laura Taylor, it was a chance to finish a mission that began two years ago.

For tournament Most Valuable Player Last-Tear Poa and others, it was a chance to shine on the biggest stage ... and shine they did.

Dreams came true in April as we defeated Trinity Valley, 67-60, to claim the program's first-ever NJCAA Women's Basketball National Championship.

The Raiders became the sixth consecutive Panhandle Conference school to win the women's national title and earned the fourth championship in school history following the 1994-95 men's basketball, 2014-15 men's basketball, and 2015 baseball teams.

"This is really sweet," Bart Walker said. "This is a special bunch of kids. They played for each other. I can't describe how proud I am of this team and this program."



Raiders Women's basketball ranked the top team in World Exposure Report

Our women's basketball team enters the 2021-22 season as the top team in the nation, according to World Exposure Report, which announced its Pre-season Top 25 in October.

The publication released its annual Junior College Player Rankings in September, with six Raiders landing on the list, including Last-Tear Poa, who was dubbed the top player in the country.

2021

Year in Review





Photo: (Left to Right) Ken Wampler, NWFSC Foundation Chair; Rudy Wright, NWFSC Trustee; Lori Kelly, NWFSC Trustee Chair; Judy-ann Zoghby; Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President; Dr. Deidre Price, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Making Space for Learning

The Guy & Judy-ann Zoghby Family Fund names Learning Commons at Northwest Florida State College

With a generous gift to Northwest Florida State College, The Guy & Judy-ann Zoghby Family Fund established the Zoghby Learning Commons at Northwest Florida State College.

The Zoghby Learning Commons is located on NWFSC's Niceville Campus, within the Susan Myers Learning Resource Center (library) and is designed to increase student engagement and learning through a campus-wide implementation of innovative academic support strategies.

An initial investment was used to start the construction and implementation of the project. Primarily home to tutoring and library services, the Zoghby Learning Commons comprises other academic support services including student accommodations and testing, as well as independent and group study areas, learning labs, student technology, whiteboards, and printing services. Two spaces are strategically designed to support these services: The Collaborative Zone and Independent Study Zones.

The Collaborative Zone takes up most of the first floor, encouraging student learning through engagement with faculty, tutors and peers. Group study rooms have been updated and equipped with furniture to accommodate group work. The addition of a Math Lab and a Writing Lab within the Collaborative Zone draw students into a dedicated space for learning, reinforcing the student-faculty relationship. The Independent Study Zones are comprised of two dedicated areas for independent study that include a computer lab and leisure area. The family has always appreciated the value of education and extra resources are often needed to help students flourish and reach their full potential. For this reason, they was drawn to the Learning Commons project.

To secure the future of the Commons, The Guy & Judy-ann Zoghby Family Fund provided a second gift to create an endowment that will provide continuing support for enhancements and improvements to the Commons. In grateful acknowledgment of the commitment at this level, the area is named the "Zoghby Learning Commons" in celebration of an incredible investment today, and enduring support for tomorrow.

"Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the Zoghby Family Fund, the College can lay the groundwork for the future to better transform the lives of our students and enrich our communities," said Northwest Florida State College President, Dr. Devin Stephenson.



Photo: (Left to Right) Judy-ann Zoghby, with NWFSC students Katie Walters and Abigail Pippen



Photo: (Left to Right) Chris Stowers, NWFSC Foundation Executive Director; Cristie Kedroski, NWFSC Senior Vice President; Cindy Frakes, ERA American Real Estate Broker; Dr. Devin Stephenson, President, NWFSC; Gloria Frazier, President, ERA American Real Estate; Keith Wood, ERA Director of Property Management; and Nikki Segraves, ERA American Real Estate Broker

Gloria Frazier and the leadership team of ERA American Real Estate made a gift of \$100,000 to the NWFSC Foundation to establish the ERA American Real Estate Endowment

In October, Gloria Frazier and the leadership team of ERA American Real Estate made a gift of \$100,000 to the NWFSC Foundation to establish the ERA American Real Estate Endowment.

The gift was made possible through a portion of the real estate commissions received from the sale of the College Courtyard Apartments in the summer of 2021. This endowment serves as seed funding for the newly established Raiders Champion Scholarship. This scholarship fund will support full-time, degree-seeking students who are recent high school graduates from Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

This gift was also made possible through the generosity of three long-term members of ERA American Real Estate team. Director of Property Management, Keith Wood, and ERA American Real Estate brokers Nikki Segraves and Cindy Frakes contributed many hours to the successful closing of the College Apartments.





Ira Mae and Gaius Bruce Wellness Classroom Endowment

With more than 50 years of service to NWFSC, Gaius Bruce has the distinction of being one of the longest-serving instructors in the history of the College, holding positions as a coach, teacher and administrator. His wife, Ira Mae, a Santa Rosa County native, co-owner of Century 21 Island View Realty in Navarre, and the County's first female Commissioner, served as a community stalwart helping to transform Navarre from a barren island to a popular travel destination.

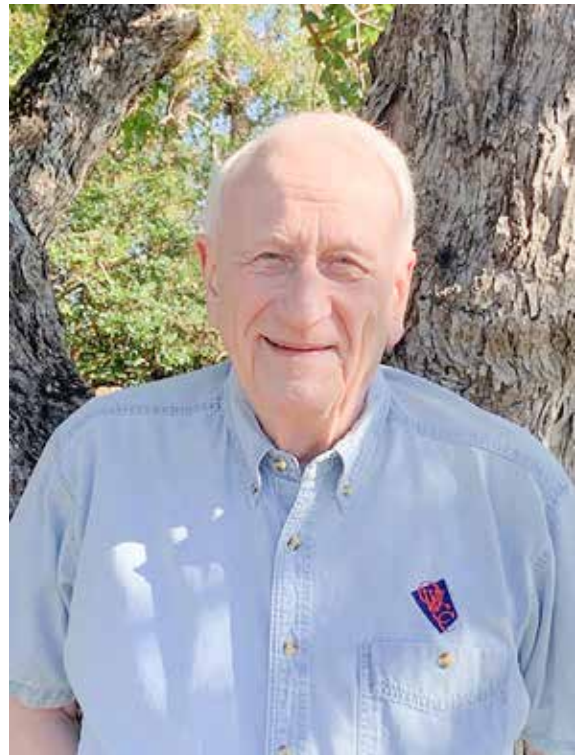
Bruce knows first-hand the value of education. He also knows that quality programs require extraordinary resources. For this reason, he has chosen to memorialize his late wife, Ira Mae, as well as his long and happy career at NWFSC by creating an endowment that names two wellness classrooms in the College's Arena, with earnings directed to support athletic and wellness activities.

Ira Mae and Gaius Bruce

C. Albert Nyquist Endowed Scholarship

With a gift of \$30,000, Al Nyquist has established the C. Albert Nyquist Endowed Scholarship Endowment. Albert Nyquist retired from Northwest Florida State College in 2009 after a 20-year career teaching economics courses, primarily at the Fort Walton Beach Campus. Nyquist served 26-years in the United States Air Force, enlisting initially as an electronics technician and retiring as an officer. His military career allowed him to travel internationally and work on classified projects. Nyquist is an avid gardener who maintains an 850 square-foot garden with a variety of vegetables. He is also an avid reader of fiction novels. Nyquist stated he created this perpetual endowment to support students and repay the benefits he received from his own education and from his time teaching.

Notably, Nyquist has indicated that proceeds from his estate will further support this endowment, as outlined in his bequest. Additionally, Nyquist intends to provide an initial gift of \$4,000 to create a restricted scholarship that will provide funding for an award in the 2021-22 academic year. The donor desires to provide such an award each year until the endowment is self-sustaining.



Al Nyquist

Donald E. Hood Theater Arts Scholarship Endowment

The Donald E. Hood Theater Arts Scholarship Endowment was established on March 24, 2021 totaling \$25,000. The Donald E. Hood Theater Arts Endowed Scholarship is Jean Hood's tribute to her husband's legacy. Her hope is to provide scholarship support to students in the Northwest Florida State College Theater Department who share his calling and passion for theater arts.



Jean Hood



Gulf Power Veterans Success Center Installment

On Monday, November 1, 2021, Bernard Johnson, Central District GM at Gulf Power and Northwest Florida State College Foundation Board Member, presented Gulf Power's third installment of their \$150,000 pledge to the Veterans Success Center at NWFSC. The gift enhances the operational capacity of the Center, which serves to expand employment, educational opportunities and transition services to veterans, active duty and guard service members, reservists and military dependents.

Left to right: Chris Stowers, NWFSC Foundation Executive Director; Dr. Devin Stephenson, President, NWFSC; Bernard Johnson, Gulf Power Central District General Manager

Maney Purple Heart Endowment

Patt and Caroline Maney have established the Purple Heart Endowment with gifts totaling \$25,000. This endowment will provide scholarship support for a student enrolled at Northwest Florida State College who is a Purple Heart recipient or the descendant of a Purple Heart recipient. The Maney's have been residents of Okaloosa County for more than 44 years. Patt is a retired Brigadier General, a Purple Heart recipient, a retired county judge and was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2020.



Patt and Caroline Maney



Fisher Endowed Scholarship

Howard and Irene Fisher have created an endowed scholarship with a gift of \$25,000. The scholarship will provide scholarship support to a NWFSC student who is pursuing a degree in nursing. Medicine has been a common thread in the Fisher's lives. Dr. Fisher has practiced oral surgery in Fort Walton Beach since 1976 and Irene was a nurse at Fort Walton Beach Medical Center until she retired in 2005. Their hope is that their scholarship will support NWFSC nursing students for years to come.



Continuing the Challenge

Dotty Blacker Contributes \$40,000 to Support Aviation Center of Excellence

Dotty Blacker loves a challenge. Nearly 21 years ago, her first gift to the College was a \$100,000 “challenge” to encourage raising funds to build a visual arts center. Since that time, Dotty has provided nearly \$800,000 in support for various programs at NWFSC. When Dotty read about our Aviation Center of Excellence, which serves as an incubator for aerospace and high-tech industry careers, she was immediately inspired to support her “favorite college” with a gift of \$40,000.

“Dotty is one-of-a-kind, and we are so grateful for her continued support,” said NWFSC President Dr. Devin Stephenson. “Her gift to this transformational program will help provide a source of opportunity and excellence for residents of Northwest Florida for years to come.”

Northwest Florida State College Unveils Public Safety Memorial

Members of the local community joined Okaloosa and Walton County Officials, NWFSC Board of Trustee members, and College personnel to pay tribute to our local fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and first responders from both Okaloosa and Walton counties. The College’s Public Safety Memorial is the first of its kind in the panhandle region and provides a tranquil space to honor and remember those who so bravely gave the ultimate sacrifice- their lives.

Construction for the external brick boundary wall started more than eight years ago with an initial gift campaign, but the space came to life in early 2019 with a generous donation from Ms. Dotty Blacker, who specified that her gift must go toward honoring our local first responders because “they don’t receive the recognition that they deserve.” Thus, the idea for a statue symbolizing each service branch, a tower that incorporates military service members and plaques characterizing each of the fallen service members in Okaloosa and Walton counties was born.

“The names on this memorial rest in their place of honor to help heal the hearts and souls of the families and



Left to right: Tim Orenic, Former South Walton Fire District EMS Fire Chief; Daniel Latour, South Walton Fire District Assistant Chief; Chris Chase, Firefighter (son of Jack Chase who is honored in the memorial); Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President; Charlotte Flynt, NWFSC Trustee

co-workers of the fallen and to serve as a reminder of the great sacrifices made daily by our servicemen and women,” said Dr. Devin Stephenson. “I encourage everyone to visit the NWFSC Public Safety Memorial on our Niceville campus to gain strength and resolve from the legacy of those who will live on forever.”



Giving to the Environment

**Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance celebrates
two generous endowments in the past year**

The Choctawhatchee Basin watershed is home to incredibly diverse natural areas. The beautiful and abundant waterways, wetlands and shorelines are especially unique and critically important to our community. For instance, the Choctawhatchee Bay estuary is an 82,500-acre expanse of sheltered waters, tidal marshes, and sea grass beds that drive productivity in the Bay and in the Gulf; in fact, up to 95% of commercially and recreationally important species caught in the Gulf spend part of their life cycle in an estuary like Choctawhatchee Bay. According to the Haas Business Center, the Bay itself creates over 36,000 jobs and has an impact on over half a billion dollars of real estate value!

CBA has been leading the charge for a swimmable, fishable, livable Choctawhatchee Basin since 1996. We provide education and experiences to empower visitors and residents alike to be good stewards of our waterways, shorelines and wetlands. CBA is the only non-profit solely focused on water resources in Okaloosa and Walton Counties; and as a small group of staff and volunteers, we have focused mostly in the southern, more coastal portion of our watershed.

CBA Executive Director, Alison McDowell stated, "The J.W. Couch Foundation believes that impact is best accomplished through partnerships with local organizations that know the people and communities they serve. Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance received their three-year grant providing programmatic and operational support to help amplify our mission throughout the watershed. We know the J.W. Couch Foundation cherishes our natural resources as much as we do. Thank you, J.W. Couch Foundation, for partnering with our organization for healthy, local waters."



Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to The Dugas Family Foundation, which chose CBA as a recipient of a three-year gift supporting the expansion of our K-12 education, living shorelines, and water quality programs. Over the next three years, CBA will focus on growing our capacity for impactful initiatives around our waterways. Thank you, Dugas Family Foundation, for your generosity!"



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Northwest Florida State College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Northwest Florida State College. Northwest Florida State College is committed to equal access/equal opportunity in its programs, activities, and employment.