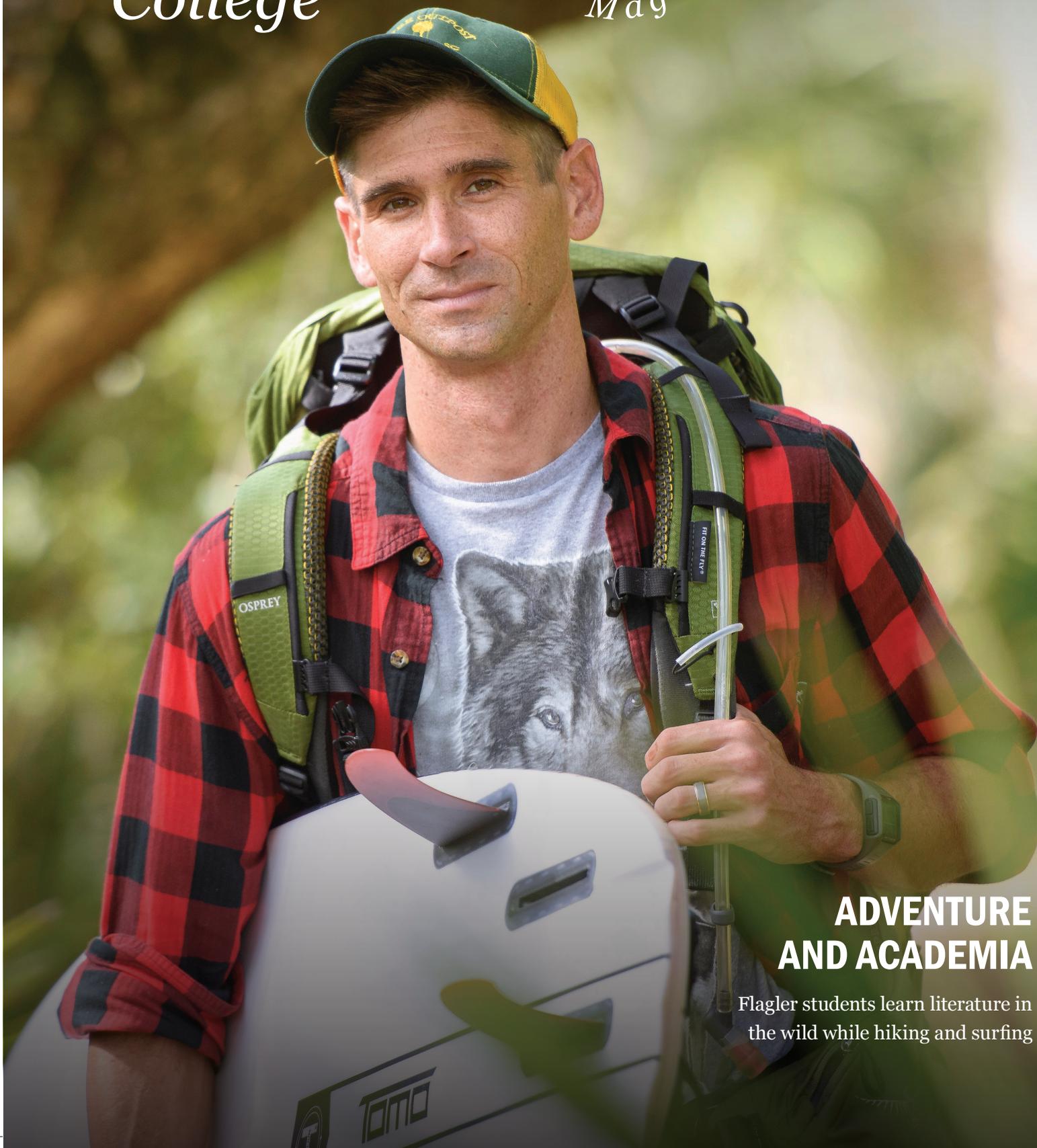


Flagler

College Magazine



SPRING
2025



ADVENTURE AND ACADEMIA

Flagler students learn literature in
the wild while hiking and surfing

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visit www.flagler.edu/magazine

COVER PHOTO BY ZACH THOMAS, '00



STUDENT RIDES THROUGH CAMPUS IN THE 1970S

Photo Courtesy of the Flagler College Archives

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A portrait of President John A. Delaney, a middle-aged man with light hair, wearing a blue blazer over a white shirt. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery. The portrait is set against a decorative gold and brown patterned border.

President's Letter:

DEAR FLAGLER FRIENDS,

At Flagler College, we believe education is more than just a degree — it's a catalyst for transformation. The experiences our students gain here shape not only their futures, but also the communities they go on to impact. This issue of Flagler College Magazine celebrates the ways in which our students, faculty, and alumni are putting their passions into action and making a difference in the world.

You'll read about Professor Sam McMillan, who takes his adventure literature students beyond the classroom and into the great outdoors to experience firsthand the lessons of nature. Student Lily Dietz shares her eye-opening journey to Finland, where she examined innovative solutions to homelessness as part of her Pulitzer Center project. Meanwhile, alumnus Matthew Murasko is leading reforestation efforts in Hawaii, and Afghan student and author Sana Mohtasebzada is using her writing to inspire healing and hope for her homeland. These stories illustrate the power of a Flagler education — one that encourages exploration, critical thinking, and a deep commitment to service.

This spirit of impact extends across our academic programs, community engagement, and new initiatives. Whether through the FlagSHIP program, which immerses students in real-world learning, or the introduction of our biology major, Flagler remains committed to preparing students to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow with creativity and purpose.

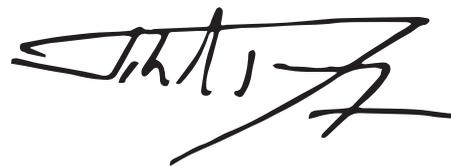
Our momentum continues with exciting milestones that reinforce our pursuit of excellence. A new partnership

with a university in Oviedo, Spain, is expanding global opportunities for students, while our Athletics program is celebrating standout achievements, including Andrea Fernandez's recognition as Regional Player of the Year in women's soccer. The expansion of our tennis center is another step forward in enhancing the student experience and Flagler's competitive spirit.

As we look to the future, I am reminded of the wisdom shared by author R.L. Stine during his recent visit to campus: "Write the stories you're passionate about." At Flagler, we empower students to do just that — not just for themselves, but for the betterment of others. This commitment to purpose-driven leadership is the hallmark of a Flagler education.

Thank you for being a vital part of our community. Your support and engagement help us continue this journey, shaping the next generation of leaders and changemakers. Together, we are making history — one story, one impact, one student at a time.

SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Delaney". The signature is stylized and fluid.

President John A. Delaney



FLAGLER'S HEALTH SCIENCES MINOR

Offers New Career Opportunities

BY ANNA BOONE

Against the backdrop of a booming regional healthcare industry, students at Flagler College can now minor in Health Sciences to enhance their career prospects and personal well-being.

“By offering a minor in Health Sciences, Flagler aims to provide students with a holistic understanding of health,” said Taylor Behl, Health Sciences Program Coordinator and Professor (bottom right). “This equips them with knowledge that can improve their personal well-being while also opening doors to various career paths in healthcare, public health, fitness and wellness sectors.”

In recent years, these sectors have represented a healthcare industry that’s experiencing drastic growth driven by factors like an aging population and advancements in medical technology.

“According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare occupations are expected to grow faster than any other sector, creating a need for professionals with a strong foundation in health sciences,” Behl said.

Flagler is well-equipped to provide students with a strong foundation in health sciences, enabling them to effectively engage with this rapidly growing industry and make meaningful contributions to health-centric organizations both regionally and globally.

St. Johns County and nearby areas like Jacksonville offer a robust

healthcare industry, featuring over 20 hospitals and clinics that employ more than 121,500 professionals. This extensive network provides a wide range of healthcare services and ample opportunities for hands-on student experiences in the field.

“The proximity to such a dynamic healthcare sector enables students to apply their classroom knowledge in real-world settings, whether by shadowing professionals, participating in research projects, or engaging with local health organizations,” Behl said.

For instance, one Health Sciences student recently held a summer internship with Mayo Clinic. Mathematics and Computer Science double-major, Kathryn Dunn, secured the role after meeting a Mayo Clinic epidemiologist through her Principles of Health and Wellness course.

Dunn was even flown to Rochester, Minn., where she delivered an in-person presentation at Mayo Clinic’s main campus.

Unlike other similar programs at other institutions, Flagler’s Health Sciences minor integrates relevant coursework from several major programs like Biology, Sport Management, Psychology, Sociology and Communication.

“The minor’s required courses provide students with a solid foundation in health and wellness, while the elective options allow them to tailor their studies to their specific interests and career aspirations,” Behl said.

The interdisciplinary nature of this minor makes it an ideal complement to a wide range of majors offered at the College, preparing them for a scope of impactful careers. ♥



A NEW BRIDGE FOR

International Collaboration with Spanish University

BY BETH SWEENEY, '05 | PHOTO BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

Flagler College is developing a new global partnership with Spain's University of Oviedo that will pave the way for student and faculty exchanges, research collaborations and immersive language experiences.

The university in the Asturias region of northern Spain is more than 410 years old and has a historic campus in the city near the Spanish coast. Oviedo is close to Aviles, Spain, which has had a "sister city" connection with St. Augustine for more than 100 years and is the birthplace of St. Augustine founder Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in September by Flagler President John Delaney and Christina Valdés, the Rector's Delegate for the Royal Complutense College in Harvard and North America.

"The connection between our two areas is strong and will only get stronger once our students and faculty can engage with each other and the host areas' culture," Delaney said about the new partnership.

This marks the third pathway for international academic exchange formalized by Flagler in the past two years, including relationships with Germany's University of Würzburg and Ansbach University of Applied Sciences.



The MOU outlines various objectives, including implementing student, teacher, researcher and staff exchanges between the two institutions. It also emphasizes the development of a comprehensive study plan, which includes the possibility of double-degree programs.

Valdés said the partnership highlights the shared commitment of both institutions to producing knowledge and returning it to society.

Notably, the signing coincided with the sister-cities connection's 100th anniversary, underscoring the two regions' deep historical and cultural bonds.

Flagler's collaboration with the University of Oviedo and the city of Avilés opens up exciting opportunities for students and faculty to engage with a different culture and expand their academic horizons. The MOU signifies a milestone in the college's ongoing efforts to foster international collaboration and create a global learning environment. ♥



REMEMBERING PAMELA PROCTOR

Flagler lost an important and long-time member of its family in 2024 with the passing of Pamela Evans Duke Proctor, 90. She was wife of former Flagler President and Chancellor Emeritus William L. Proctor. During his 30 years as the second president of the College, she immersed herself in the role of First Lady by hosting events on campus and attending college functions, activities and events.

In April of 1971, after her husband accepted the offer to become the president of Flagler, they moved to St. Augustine just three years after the founding of the College. She was an ardent supporter of Flagler even after he retired, and the Proctors started the Samuel M. Proctor Memorial Scholarship Fund at Flagler in honor of their son who passed away in 1992.

She was a grandparent who loved, adored and doted on her two grandchildren, Maddie and Sam. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Proctor; her daughter, Priscilla N. Proctor; her niece, Charlotte P. Stavres; and her two grandchildren. ♥



FOUNDING FACULTY MEMBER TOM RAHNER PASSES AWAY

Thomas P. Rahner, one of Flagler College's founding faculty members, passed away in December 2024 at the age of 89. Rahner was a beloved member of the Flagler community and a widely respected figure within St. Augustine whose remarkable contributions to the performing arts and education left an indelible mark.

Joining Flagler in 1968 as a member of its original faculty, his passion for theater led to the establishment of the Flagler Theater Arts Program in 1971, and the design and construction of the College's first theater in 1975. He later played a key role in designing Lewis Auditorium in 1991. The second stage theater is named the Rahner-Gibbs Theater in recognition of both him and his wife, Jean Rahner, also a retired Theatre faculty member.

In addition, he also frequently portrayed Henry Flagler, including in a self-authored one-man play. He is survived by his wife Jean of 65 years, daughter Laura Olsen, son Philip, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren. ♥



FERNANDEZ SELECTED AS

NCAA Div. II National Player of the Year

Flagler College women's soccer forward Andrea Fernandez was selected as the 2024 Ron Lenz/D2CCA National Player of the Year and earned third team United Soccer Coaches All-America honors.

The senior is the first Flagler player to be selected as the national player of the year in the history of the program.

"Andrea is a worthy winner of this award," said Ashley Martin, head women's soccer coach. "It's quite the accomplishment to put up the goal and assist tally she did this season, especially given Flagler had the toughest strength of schedule in the nation. This accolade is only possible with the support of her teammates, and her effort and dedication to be the best player she could be for the team."

The Pozoblanco, Spain native has quite a cache of awards this season. To go along with the player of the year award, she was a consensus All-American, a consensus all-region pick and was the D2CCA Southeast Region Player of the Year, the Peach Belt Conference Offensive Player of the Year, the Select Sport Gold Ball Award recipient, and a first team all-conference selection.

In her final season with the Saints, Fernandez scored 22 goals and tallied 13 assists for 57 points. She currently leads the nation in goals, points, goals per game (1.22), points per game (3.17), third in assists, and second in assists per game (0.72).

Her career accolades are endless, but notable achievements were being the only four-time PBC Player of the Year in women's soccer and winning the gold ball all four years.

MICHAEL BUTLER ADDED TO

American Historian Distinguished Lectureship Program

Dr. J. Michael Butler, Kenan Distinguished Professor of History at Flagler College, has been appointed to the Organization of American Historians' "Distinguished Lectureship Program," alongside 28 historians from institutions such as Brandeis, UT Austin, Ohio State, Michigan, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Vanderbilt and Yale.

The Organization of American Historians (OAH) is the largest scholarly organization devoted to the history of the United States, and to promoting excellence in the scholarship, teaching and presentation of that history.

An international non-profit membership organization, the OAH has over 6,000 members who are university and college professors, as well as individuals employed in a variety of scholarly and institutional settings, including libraries, museums, national parks and historical societies.

"It is one of my greatest career achievements to be appointed to the Distinguished Lectureship Program," he said. "The nomination demonstrates that Flagler College is a place where nationally recognized scholars place teaching – and students – at the center of their work."

Butler has taught at Flagler since 2008, and his work has appeared in many leading peer-reviewed academic publications.

SAINTS CAP OFF THE SEASON AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The Flagler College women's cross country team punched a ticket to the 2024 NCAA National Championship at Sacramento, California in November, finishing in the top 25. After a season filled with tremendous highs, the women's team capped off 2024 with their second national championship appearance in a row.

Taylor Stone topped her career season finishing 60th overall. After finishing in first place at the NCAA Division II Southeast Regional, the senior from Largo, Florida, was named the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Southeast Region Athlete of the Year. She is also the first individual champion in the Southeast Region in the program's history.



TENNIS CENTER

Expansion Underway

The Flagler College Tennis Center has begun an expansion project that will mean new locker rooms, coaches' offices and study spaces for student-athletes at the campus facility, which hasn't seen major work since it was first built in the 1980s. It comes on the heels of re-surfacing the six-court facility, as well as state-of-the-art, energy-efficient LED lighting. ♥



GOOSEBUMPS AUTHOR

R.L. Stine

PHOTO BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

Flagler College's Presidential Speakers Series continued its tradition of hosting remarkable public figures with a visit from R.L. Stine, the renowned author of the Goosebumps series. Stine engaged with a group of creative writing students, participated in a student-led interview at the College's WFCF radio station, and drew an eager audience to his lecture on campus this past November. Stine's prolific career includes over 400 million books sold worldwide. ♥



FLAGLER RANKS #3 IN U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT'S 2024-2025 REGIONAL COLLEGES IN THE SOUTH

BY BETH SWEENEY, '05

Flagler College maintained its #3 rank among regional colleges in the South in the 2024-2025 U.S. News and World Report Rankings. This ranking reflects Flagler's dedication to providing a transformative educational experience to its students. Flagler also achieved a #2 ranking in the Undergraduate Teaching Programs category, up from #5 last year.

This year also marked the first time that Flagler made the top 500 colleges in the country, according to The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse Best Colleges in the U.S. ranking for 2025.

“Now, more than ever, Flagler is on a forward trajectory. We’ve created stand-out academic programs, invested in our facilities, and hired top faculty to benefit our students,” Flagler College President John Delaney said. “This year’s U.S. News Rankings are a testament to the work being done by every employee on campus to push Flagler out front and ahead of the competition.”

The Undergraduate Teaching Programs category highlights institutions whose faculty and administrators are committed to high-quality undergraduate teaching. Flagler’s runner-up spot underscores its focus on fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment that empowers students to thrive beyond the classroom.

The College also made a nine-spot jump in the Top Performers on Social Mobility category, ranking #43, and was once again recognized as a Best Value School, ranking #14 among peer institutions. The Best Value rankings are based on four weighted indicators: quality-to-price ratio, need-based aid, percentage of need-based aid recipients awarded scholarships or grants and average discount.

In August, Flagler College was also named one of the Best 390 Colleges and Best Regional Colleges by the Princeton Review in its 2025 guide. ♥



OF DEDICATION TO THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Deaf Education Program at Flagler College continues to send teachers out to help the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

By London Collins Puc, '26 | Photography by Zach Thomas, '00

Flagler College launched its Deaf Education Program in 1973, just five short years after the opening of the College. In the 50-plus years since, Flagler has built a superior reputation in the Deaf Education field, offering a unique and comprehensive program in the state for preparing teachers to work with students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

LEFT, Senior Allie Masterson has been studying to work with the Deaf and hard of hearing.

Right, Masterson with Assistant Professor Jennifer Catalano, director of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Deaf Education.

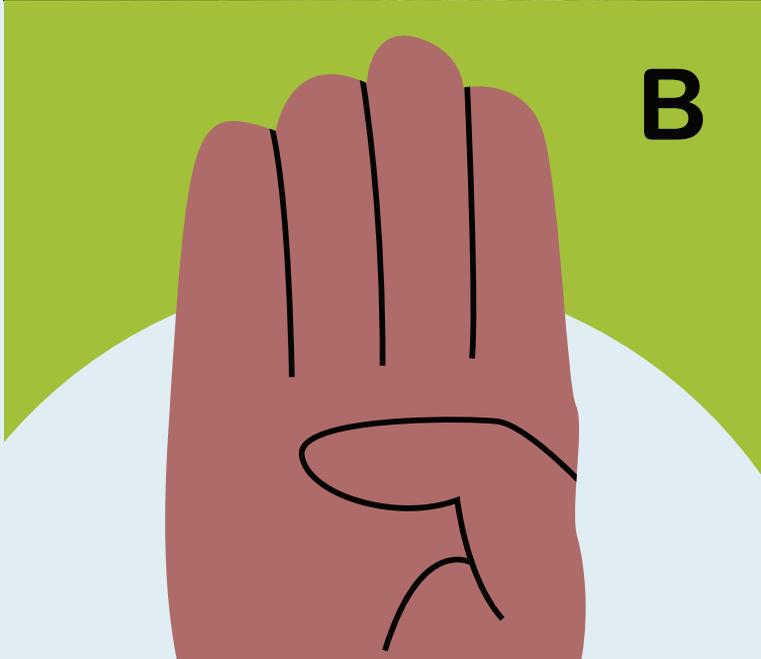
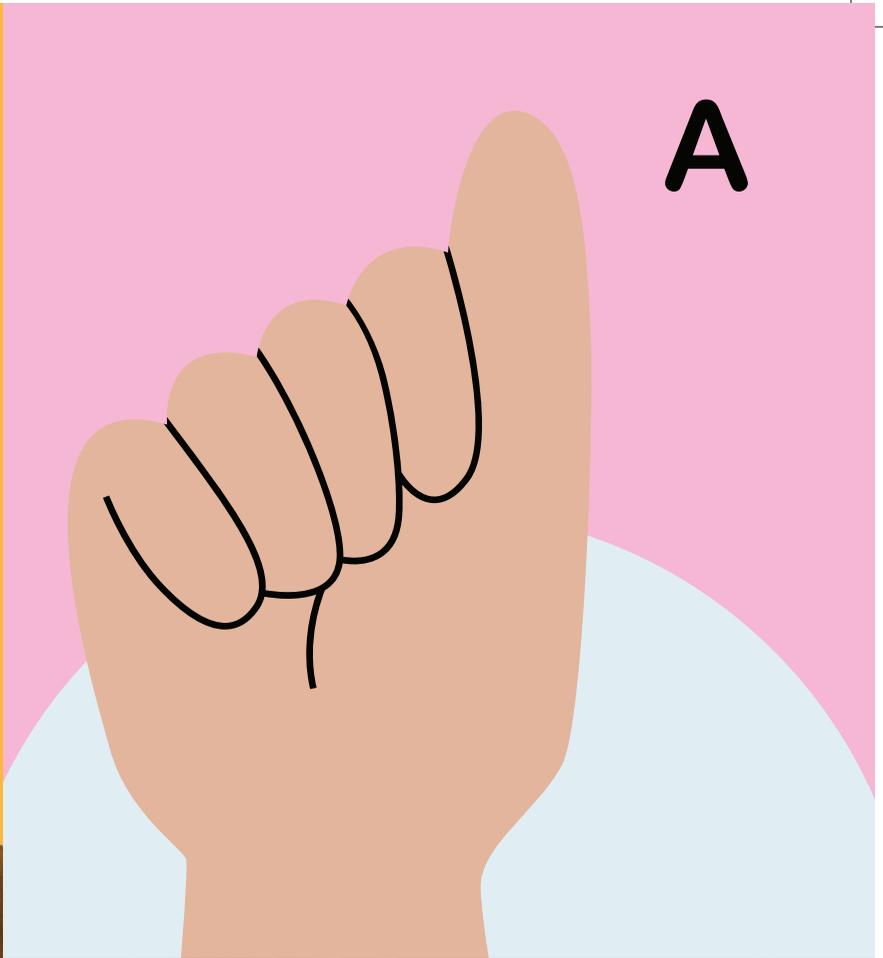
One of those dedicated and committed students is Allie Masterson, a senior at Flagler, and former president of the Deaf Awareness Club (DAC).

While Masterson didn't always know she wanted to go into deaf education, her passion for teaching has always been strong. "My oldest brother had a few disabilities, and I loved the challenge of teaching and helping him understand the content from elementary school throughout high school," Masterson said. "As soon as I found out that I could teach using ASL,

I knew that it was the right career path for me."

She is just one of the many students keeping the Deaf Education program alive-and-well at Flagler, making it stronger than ever.

"There's not that many deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the world, which means there's not that many teachers of the deaf," said Assistant Professor Jennifer Catalano, director of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Deaf Education. "We have small numbers compared to a lot of other majors, but we're constantly





getting new students and new interests. Even though we're such a small program, we continue to thrive at Flagler College. We have students move through our program and go on to do really amazing things."

Offering preparation tools for deaf education settings for primary and secondary levels, the program is highly regarded around the country and primarily focused on the best possible experience for Deaf and hard of hearing learners.

Masterson founded the American Sign Language Honor Society (ASLHS) at Flagler. "In the short time that ASLHS has already been here at Flagler, we have created events such as the Silent Market which provided a space for deaf business owners to sell their goods with full communication being provided through interpreters and students who know ASL," said Masterson. "These have been very successful events thus far, and I hope they continue as it only

creates a more safe space for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals."

"In a time where it's becoming harder and harder to be a teacher, it amazes me that we get such dedicated, and committed students who, you know, truly want to dedicate their lives to working with deaf children," Catalano said.

One of Flagler's notable alumni, and a testament to the success of the Deaf Education program, is Cara Wilmot. "When I talked to the people at Flagler, they were really engaging," said Wilmot about her choice to study deaf education at Flagler. Now she works as an educator at the NTID Regional Stem Center through the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind and is pursuing her Educational Doctorate at the University of North Florida. "Trying to find out what true inclusion is isn't just providing an interpreter," said Wilmot about deaf inclusion and equal opportunity. "It's about

making the world more accessible."

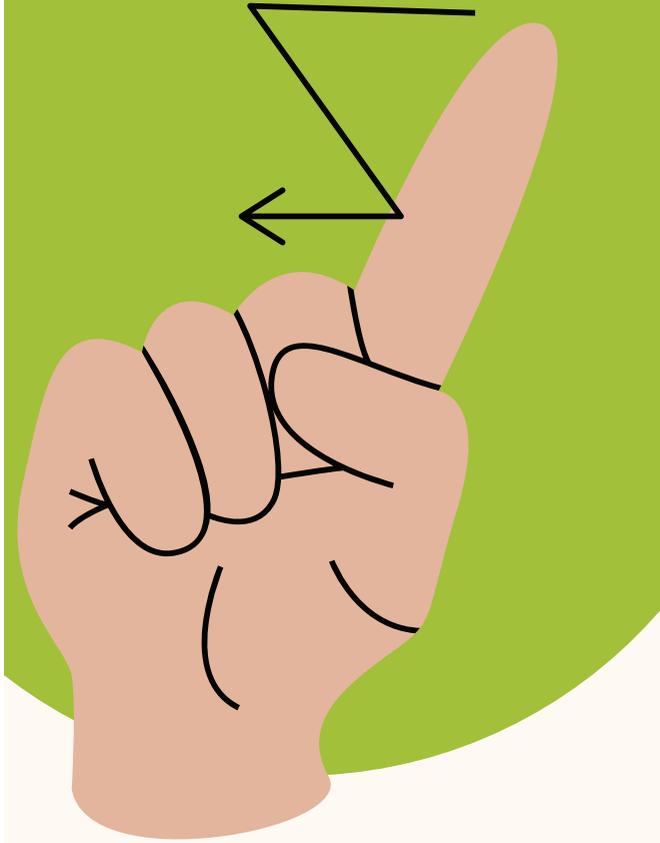
Before diving into the field, Wilmot was unaware of the numerous issues within the deaf community, and Deaf Education. "I didn't realize how big the challenges were for Deaf and hard of hearing," she said. "Some of us are ignorant just because we don't know some of the things that we do, subconsciously, to not make the world accessible."

While Deaf Education is often overlooked, the reasons to involve yourself in the community reign high.

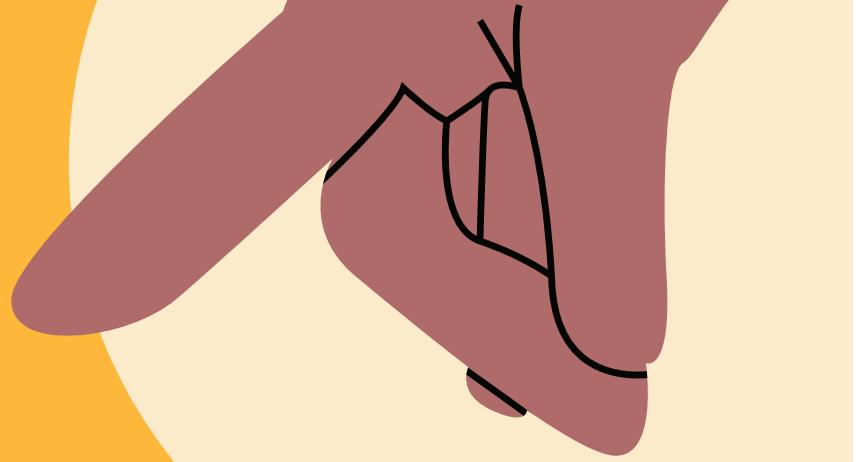
"The best piece of advice that I can give to someone considering going into Deaf Education is to believe in what you are doing," Masterson said. "This is a field where you have to be patient and make sure that you have the students' best interest at heart."

More specifically, building and fostering connections with the deaf and hard-of-

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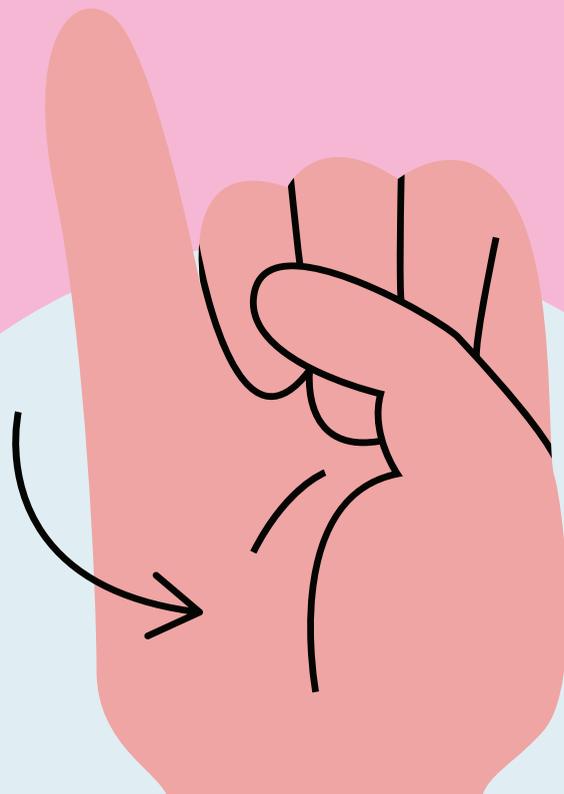


"The best piece of advice that I can give to someone considering going into Deaf Education is to believe in what you are doing. This is a field where you have to be patient and make sure that you have the students' best interest at heart. Working with Deaf and hard of hearing students is such a blessing and I hope more people consider it."

ALLIE MASTERSON

Senior Deaf Education Major

J



hearing contribute immensely to the value of the program. "Immerse yourself in the community," Wilmot suggested. "Make sure you find those partners, because it's hard to advocate for this field. It's really a lot of fun, just being able to interact and get to know a different culture other than yourself."

Throughout the years, Flagler's Deaf Education program has allowed students to explore, develop and maximize their communication skills, learning resources and creativity in order to create an environment where deaf and hard of hearing people can thrive. "I believe Deaf Education is and will always be important," said Masterson. "For a long time the education system has failed Deaf students, and I think that we need to make sure that we continue to do research and advocate for (them), as it is vital so one day they will have equal access to education." ♡

OVERCOMING THE D HOPELESSNESS

BY GABBY ALFVEBY, '24 | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

The day started off just like any other day for Sana Mohtasebzada as she got ready for school. But this time, something felt different: the possibility of another Taliban takeover of her home country, Afghanistan.

“I was sitting in class, leaning back in my chair, unable to think of anything except the disaster that might be awaiting us,” Mohtasebzada, a Flagler student, said about the day. “Suddenly, our professor opened the classroom door and shouted, ‘The Taliban are here; they have reached Kabul.’ His shout shattered a deadly silence and filled everyone with fear. On the way back home, tears streamed down my face without pause; I just kept running, hoping my family was safe.”

This happened shortly after her 18th birthday and her world became completely altered as the Taliban set off explosions on Aug. 15, 2021, to signal that they captured Afghanistan’s capital, Kabul. Three days prior her native city of Herat, one of the first cities to fall, was captured.

When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, Mohtasebzada and her family were forced to leave the country to seek safety, residing in Pakistan temporarily and eventually making it all the way to St. Augustine where she began as a freshman in the Fall of 2024.

Mohtasebzada said she was always drawn to Flagler, which has allowed her to live out her writing dreams and creativity. She is double majoring in Cinematic Arts and Digital Media Production and Journalism. She also has the distinction of being the first Afghan author to publish a fantasy novel, “Henry Smith and the Nightmare Monster.”

“Since I was in Afghanistan, I dreamed of studying at this college,”

Mohtasebzada said. “I had researched its history and learned that its beauty was like the worlds I imagined, which made me eager to explore this environment. From the moment I saw Flagler, an idea sparked within me.”

Mohtasebzada shared that in Afghanistan it was normal for people to live in fear, but it was hard for her and her family to grasp that the country had to go through another Taliban takeover.

“We couldn't believe that something which had happened once in the past was happening again,” she said. “We didn't know what awaited us. Early in the morning, I left home with a sense of dread and said goodbye to my family, feeling as if it might be the last time I'd see them. This feeling had somehow become a habit for all of us, expecting something disastrous to happen at any moment.”

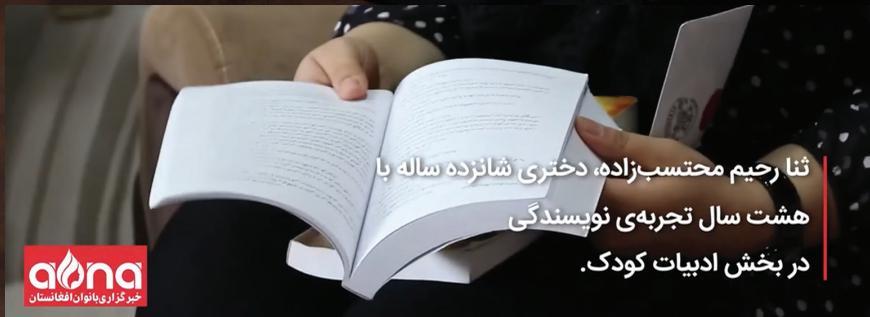
As the days went by filled with what she called the “days of hopelessness,” she was able to find strength through the art of writing and the stories and characters she created. Writing has always been Mohtasebzada’s outlet.

“After the Taliban’s arrival, we had to return to Herat for safety,” Mohtasebzada said. “All doors were closed to us, especially to women ... Writing helped me free my mind; my pen was my magic, a place where the darkest nights could become bright ... As I wrote in my book: ‘Don't forget that light remains; if you believe in it, it will find a way to infiltrate your days.’ I wrote these sentences to heal my wounds, to find peace.”

Leaving her country wasn't easy, but she said there was no choice if she wanted to protect her safety.

“Leaving Afghanistan felt like losing a mother in whose embrace I had spent my entire life,” Mohtasebzada said. “Until you're

DAYS OF WISDOM



ثنا رحیم محاسبزاده، دختری شانزده ساله با
هشت سال تجربه‌ی نویسندگی
در بخش ادبیات کودک.





forced to put all your attachments, memories and loved ones into a small suitcase and leave, you can't truly understand the feeling of leaving your homeland. ... I felt that half of my being had remained there.”

Mohtasebzada was born July 25, 2003 in Herat, Afghanistan, located on the west side of country and parallel to the capital, Kabul. She began picking up a pen and writing stories at the young age of eight. She has written a fantasy novel, short stories and even children's television programs.

Mohtasebzada immigrated to the United States in hopes to inspire women and future generations through her writing. This resulted in the publication of her book titled “Henry Smith and the Nightmare Monster,” which is thought to be Afghanistan's first fantasy novel.

“We waited a long time in Pakistan for the opportunity to enter the U.S., waiting for the chance at a peaceful, normal life — something every human being deserves,” Mohtasebzada said. “When we finally arrived in the U.S., the first thing I felt was calm — a calm that I had lost through years of war, violence and fear. At last, we could, even for a moment, think about a new life and try to rebuild ourselves from all that pain.”

Mohtasebzada hopes for a brighter future for her home country although the memories she has of the takeover will

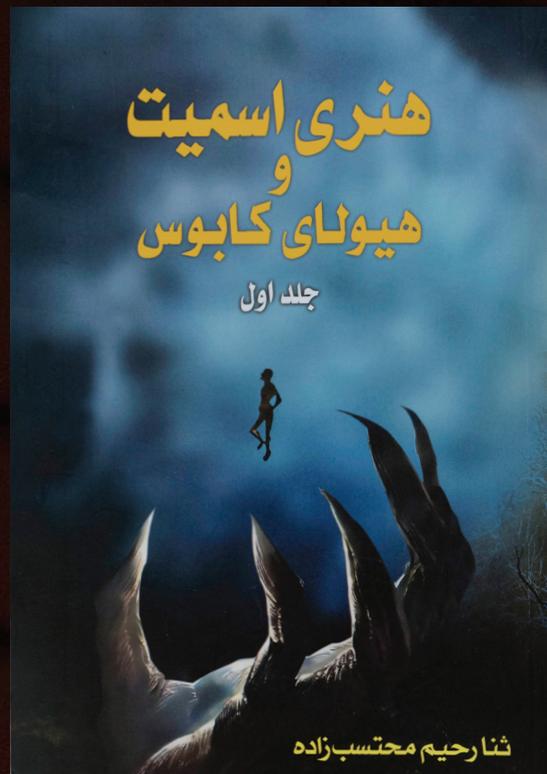
always haunt her. She said that what she remembers most are the sleepless nights, intense anxiety and the fear she felt.

“I hope that one day I'll see Afghanistan free and peaceful, its streets and alleys filled with laughter and music, with free women and men,” Mohtasebzada said. “I hope that the women of my country will achieve their human rights, that students can study freely without regard to gender, and that no innocent blood will be shed. My only wish is for Afghanistan to be like any other ordinary land, immersed in peace.”

While she has been able to find a home here in the U.S., Mohtasebzada one day hopes to return to the country she loves. ♡



Sana Mohtasebzada is a freshman at Flagler College who uses fantasy writing to depict the harsh circumstances of her homeland of Afghanistan.



"Don't forget that light remains; if you believe in it, it will find a way to infiltrate your days'... I wrote these sentences to heal my wounds, to find peace."

SANA MOHTASEBZADA



FROM FLAGLER TO FINLAND:

A STUDENT'S PULITZER REPORTING
JOURNEY INTO NATIONAL SOLUTIONS
FOR HOMELESSNESS

BY LAUREN PISKOTHY, '20

Senior Lilly Dietz's passion for understanding the problems homeless people face began well before she took Flagler's "Global Issues and the Pulitzer Center" course, where she earned a Pulitzer Fellowship to explore the topic further.

Dietz, a Digital Media Production major with a minor in advertising, was drawn to the "Global Issues and the Pulitzer Center" course due to her long-standing fascination with journalism. The class, taught by Tracy Eaton until his recent retirement after 17 years, further fueled her interests.

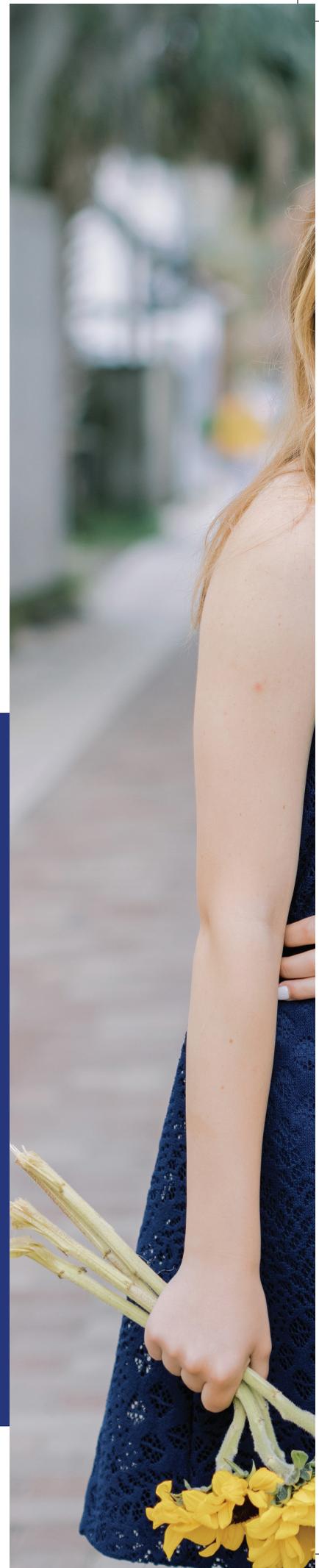
"I've always had a love for journalism, and honestly did consider transferring majors, but my real passion is digital media production," Dietz said. "I love that I can combine the art of videography and production with journalism to tell a story."

As a Campus Consortium partner with the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, Flagler offers students like Dietz the chance to research and



"I have been volunteering for homeless communities since the age of five...My family thought that it was important to understand how lucky I am to have all the things I grew up with."

LILLY DIETZ





Dietz attended the Global Homelessness Summit in Helsinki, where the “Local to Global” summit panel answers questions about what Finland is doing to eradicate homelessness.

report on key global events and issues that interest them. The course guides students in proposing, designing and producing projects such as journalistic articles, data interactives, e-publications, photo essays or documentaries.

Each semester, one student is awarded a \$3,000 reporting grant to produce their project as a Pulitzer Fellow, based on submitted proposals. Dietz’s compassion for homeless communities inspired her project proposal which was selected from among her classmates’ to receive the grant.

“I have been volunteering for homeless communities since the age of five,” Dietz said. “My family thought that it was important to understand how lucky I am to have all the things I

grew up with, so we as a group would go to the local soup kitchen to cook and serve food to homeless people at least two times a week.”

Dietz’s project proposal for “Transforming Lives: Finland’s Innovative Approach to Homelessness,” delves into Finland’s successful implementation of the Housing First Initiative.

“Homelessness is one of the world’s largest problems,” the introduction of her project summary reads. “There are an estimated 150 million people facing homelessness around the world. However, there is one country that may have found a way to eradicate this global problem.”

During her Flagler Sophomore High Impact Practice (FlagSHIP)



TOP LEFT: Finnish newspapers
BOTTOM RIGHT: VVA ry day shelter

course, “Unsheltered: Homeless and Voiceless in St. Augustine,” with Professor Sandra Gehring, Dietz volunteered extensively with Dining with Dignity, a ministry of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church. She also visited local organizations like St. Francis House and the Homeless Coalition. These experiences deepened her connection to the issue of homelessness.

“I already had a perception of the homeless from volunteering with them before but it’s a lot different when you experience the homeless you see every day,” Dietz said. “Most of the individuals I interacted with were people I would pass walking to class or work.”

While investigating homelessness seemed like a natural choice for her Pulitzer project, Dietz initially considered various angles for her proposal, many of which were “shot down.”



“When things didn’t go my way, I found a different angle and kept trying until something stuck,” she said.

While waitressing one day, Dietz served Professor Gehring, and during their chat, she mentioned her struggle to nail down a topic for her Pulitzer class. Gehring suggested she look into homelessness in Finland and the country’s Housing First Initiative. That night, Dietz researched the topic and quickly chose it for her project, thanks to this encounter.

Before arriving in Finland, Dietz did extensive research, watching YouTube videos from organizations like Y-Säätiö, Rinnekodit, and VVA ry, all involved in the Housing First Initiative. This preparation helped her establish initial contacts and laid the groundwork for her field research.

Her efforts paid off when one of



ABOVE: Scenes of the VVA ry day shelter's dining room, a place that laid the groundwork for Lily Dietz's field research.

her contacts invited her to the Global Homelessness Summit in Helsinki, perfectly aligning with her travel schedule. The summit, which answered questions about what Finland is doing to eradicate homelessness, opened new doors and connections.

Armed with her research and new contacts, Dietz visited housing complexes like Silta, observing the impact of the Housing First Initiative firsthand. She gathered insights from Marko Lahtela, head of Silta, who explained how government support helps tenants afford rent and fosters a supportive environment.

The trip went smoothly, thanks to the serendipitous timing and connections she made. However, Dietz discovered a different narrative than her pre-reporting research suggested. One of her sources, Jan Vapaavuori, former

mayor of Helsinki, was skeptical about Helsinki reaching its goal of eradicating homelessness by 2025.

“When I began my interviews, I began to see just how different the article outcome was going to be,” she said.

Due to privacy rules, Dietz couldn't conduct interviews with homeless people in Finland. She only had brief encounters with them, mostly at night. Instead of panhandling, she observed that many homeless individuals collect bottles and cans to exchange for money, noting their self-sufficiency.

“Most trash cans are left unlocked, or people will place their bottles to the side and that is so that the homeless can collect them,” she said. “Each item can give you anywhere from five to forty cents depending on what it is.”

Through her in-depth research

and firsthand observations, Dietz concluded that while Finland's Housing First Initiative has made significant strides in reducing homelessness, challenges remain.

“Organizations [like VVA ry] work together with city and national departments to make a difference, not only in targeting the stigma surrounding homelessness, but also eradicating the issue,” Dietz wrote. “However, Finland has had a stall in efforts to decrease homelessness, and the government has been blamed for it. Although the Finnish had put many efforts into programs in the beginning years, they are starting to decrease funding, as well as focus on other issues.”



PONCE THROUGH THE YEARS

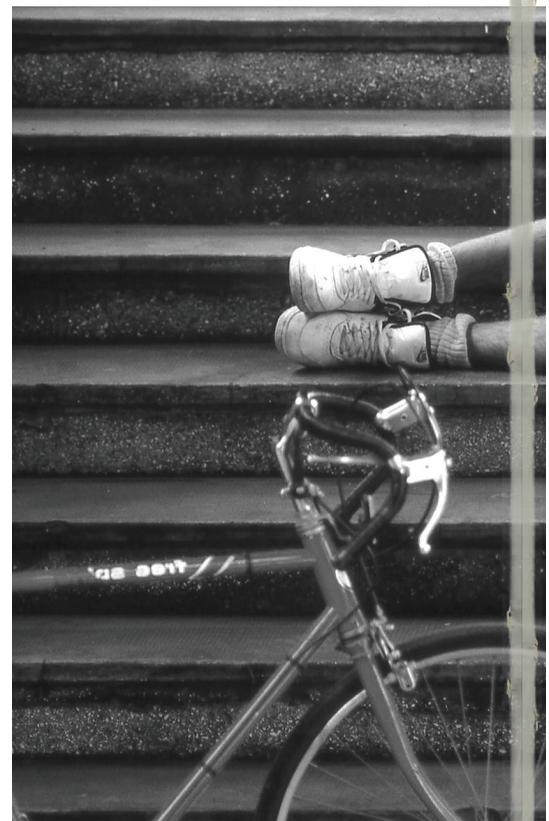
Through the generous support of Flagler College donors and the State of Florida, work is moving forward on renovation of the west wing of Ponce Hall with a reopening date set for August 2025. The first phase of this more than \$100-million restoration of the National Historic Landmark began in the summer of 2022 with the east wing of the former hotel. Work includes renovating residential rooms, installing entirely new electrical and plumbing systems, adding a modern HVAC system that better controls temperatures and humidity, renovating laundry and bathroom spaces, and re-imagining lounge and study areas. Take a look back through the years of this historic building's use as a residence hall for Flagler students. ♥



All images are courtesy of alumni and the Flagler College Archives. Designed to honor "The Towers" yearbooks of the college's past.

Flagler College Archives is dedicated to broadening access to unique items of historical value within its collection by creating a valuable and enduring resource available to the Flagler College community, scholars, and the public alike. The Digital Archives consists of Flagler College yearbooks, college catalogs, the Flagler Review magazines, student newspapers, and a selection of photographs ranging from the late 19th-century to the present.

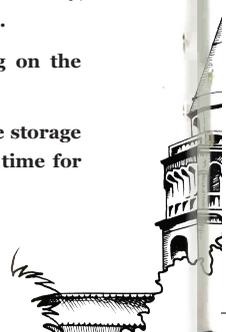
See more at:
digitalarchives.flagler.edu



TOP: Reading in the former library, currently the Flagler Room.

ABOVE: Students studying on the steps of Ponce.

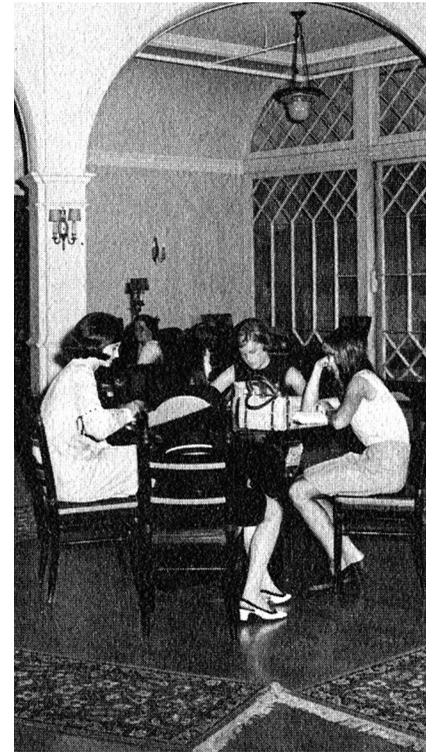
LEFT: The courtyard's bike storage area has stood the test of time for decades of Flagler cyclists.



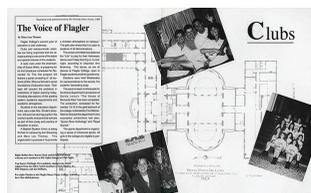
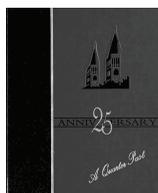
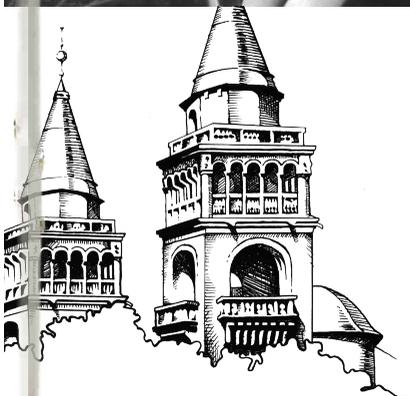


LEFT: Students spending time together in one of the college's lounges.

BELOW: The Solarium had many uses over the course of its history: a ballroom, library, study space and currently a lecture/event space.



ABOVE: A band strikes up at the college's pool back in the 70s.



REMEMBER THE TOWERS YEARBOOKS?

Browse the Flagler College Archives for yearbooks, student newspapers, magazines and college photographs from past through the present.



Adventure and Academia

Flagler students learn about literature in the wild | By Anna Boone | Photography by Zach Thomas, '00

LOCATION	Flagler College		
CITY	St. Augustine, FL	DATE	2024-Current
DURATION	1 Semester	MARK ALL THAT APPLY:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIKE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SURF

By leading adventures through the wilderness and onto the waves, one Flagler College professor is helping students develop a deeper understanding of literature, the natural world and their place within it.

“Being outside the classroom does not mean you’re not in a classroom,” Professor Sam McMillan said.

First-year students in Professor McMillan’s “Adventure Literature” Core courses “Exploring the American Wilderness” and “Get Radical: The Literature and Culture of Surfing” are challenged intellectually, physically and spiritually.

“In [Exploring the American Wilderness] I truly learned discernment between what we think the wilderness is versus what it actually is,” one student said in their final reflections. “Overall, this class augmented my outlook on life.”

McMillan’s pedagogical approach emphasizes “place-based learning,” where students deepen their understanding of literature through direct engagement with the environments they study.

“The basic assumption on which these courses are founded is that our understanding of writing and other cultural concerns can be enhanced by knowledge and experience in a place,” McMillan said. “For me, right now at least, this is two particular places: the wilderness and the ocean.”



EXPLORING THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS

This course transforms students’ perception of the natural world through literature, philosophy and wilderness exploration.

“It’s almost like an experiment,” McMillan said, likening their classroom study of authorial perspectives on wilderness to hypotheses and the course’s “three big adventures” as tests for students to find their own subjective truths.

They dive into challenging seminal works like Roderick Nash’s 1967 book “Wilderness and the American Mind.”

“It’s excruciating, but we can get through it because, eventually, all these boring ideas, the histories of national parks and things like that, are put into conversation with us actually being in that space,” McMillan said.

Insights from Nash’s book and other readings, like Jon Krakauer’s “Into the Wild” (1996) and the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau, can be challenging to grasp. However, McMillan has observed that experiencing the actual places discussed in these works profoundly deepens students’ understanding and appreciation of the wilderness.

“We’re spending our class time reading authors who write about what the wilderness is and the sorts of values we attach to it,” he said. “Then, because it’s very abstract, we take students out into the wilderness. This gives them a chance to see how those ideas they’re reading about in the classroom materialize in the real world.”

CONT. >

NOTES



EXPLORING THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS

McMillan explained that he leads three outdoor adventures throughout the semester.

The first adventure takes students to the untouched wilderness of Cumberland Island, Ga., less than two hours away by car and ferry.

"This is where we get our feet wet and break in our hiking boots," he said, also noting the wild horses that graze this Georgia national seashore.

At the end of the semester, the final adventure asks students to reflect on their connection to local ecology through an excursion to Vilano Beach for a surfing lesson.

"We get to think about the ways something like surfing can allow us to perceive our environment in a different fashion," McMillan said.

But the "big one," as McMillan calls it, is a journey to the Blue Ridge Mountains for a 4-day backpacking trip along the Appalachian Trail. He describes this trip as "type two fun," the kind of fun that may take years of reflection to look back on with fondness.

"I spend almost every single class before our trip telling the students, 'It's going to be bad, you're going to hurt, but suffering is good,' he said. "You are going to learn to embrace suffering.' And this is where we read Cheryl Strayed's 'Wild' which has the best descriptions of suffering while backpacking that I've ever read."

Reflections from a former student highlight how this immersive physical challenge helps them develop a deeper appreciation for nature and discover their own potential.

"This class is life-altering, all because of the hiking trip," the student wrote. "You don't know how capable you are or what your limits are until you hike uphill with 60 pounds on your back for over 10 miles. You honestly feel limitless."



GET RADICAL: THE LITERATURE AND CULTURE OF SURFING

While surfing makes a cameo in McMillan's "Exploring the American Wilderness" course, it's the star of the show in "Get Radical: The Literature and Culture of Surfing."

Throughout the semester, students participate in about 10 surfing sessions, connecting philosophical insights from their readings with their experiences in the ocean. Before hitting the waves, McMillan has his students hand-copy a passage from one of the readings into their "surf journal," so they're contemplating the material while they're out on the water.

"When the students paddle back in, they do some more reflection," he said. "How did their time on the waves that day connect with whatever it was they're supposed to be thinking about?"

At the end of the semester, they turn in their surf journal, "telling the story of their time in this course." By combining these practices, McMillan hopes students can uncover their own answers to the guiding question: "What can surfing teach us about living a good life?"



A key reading for the course is William Finnegan's Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir "Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life" which delves into Finnegan's adventures in the surfing counterculture of the 1960s and his reflections on the joys, challenges and spiritual aspects of surfing.

"If the canon of surf literature tells us anything, it's that surfing is nothing if not a spiritual endeavor," McMillan said. "Just look at Jamal Yogi's 'Saltwater Buddha,' Nachum Shifren's 'Surfing Rabbi,' or Steven Kotler's 'West of Jesus'—all works that show how the world of wave-riding allows us to tap into worlds beyond."

Given the mental health crisis students face today, driven by job market pressures and technological alienation, McMillan believes this lesson is incredibly valuable.

McMillan challenges the stereotype of surfers as aimless "bums," a notion popularized by Jeff Spicoli from the 1982 film "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" and his infamous line: "All I need

are some tasty waves and a cool buzz, and I'm fine."

"Spicoli made it easy to laugh at the surfer," McMillan said. "But the whole point of my bringing his character up in class is to have students reconsider the type of laughter they're doing. When we take a deeper dive, examining Spicoli within an expanded cultural and historical context, we can finally begin to laugh with him—taking ourselves less seriously, locating unparalleled pleasure in the natural world, discovering the more in less."

He references books like "Surfing: A History of the Ancient Hawaiian Sport" but includes various works on surfing as a spiritual and philosophical pursuit.

"To the Hawaiians, surfing was no mere recreation," McMillan said. "The refusal of daily tasks for the call of the sea was what created community... So, when Spicoli tells us that he doesn't need to work, that all he needs is the water, he's not voicing anything countercultural at all. He's simply reminding us, following the example of the Hawaiians, that

there's more than work that makes a culture."

Through class discussions, McMillan leads his students to ponder questions like "How does William Finnegan use surfing to live out the dreams of medieval monks?" and "Has Jeff Spicoli actually been reading Thoreau?"

"Weirdly enough, maybe!" McMillan joked about Spicoli's philosophical pursuits.

While we can't say for sure if Spicoli read Thoreau's "Walden," his focus on surfing and the joy it brought him over societal pressures reflects Thoreau's ideals of living in the present and appreciating nature. McMillan also noted that Spicoli's philosophy parallels medieval monks who laid the foundations for the Liberal Arts by abandoning material pursuits to focus on higher contemplation, rediscovering Greek and Roman classics, and shaping our modern education system.

"Flagler exists because these monks, like Spicoli, chose a life of renunciation," he said. ♥



DRIVING ATHLETIC SUCCESS

TRUSTEE AND ALUMNUS MITCH WALK MAKES PLANNED GIFT AND OTHER SUPPORT

Flagler College is thrilled to announce a planned gift of \$75,000 from Board of Trustee member and alumnus Mitch Walk, '79, which will establish an Athletics Operational Endowment to support Flagler's athletic programs. In addition, Walk has contributed \$30,000 towards the renovation of the Tennis Center, including the refurbishment of a tennis court, and \$25,000 for the restoration of a dorm room in the historic Ponce Hall.

Together, these gifts reflect Walk's dedication to enhancing the student experience and preserving the College's treasured campus spaces.

"This extraordinary gift from Mitch Walk will have a lasting impact on our students, athletes and the campus community," said Jud Damon, Director of Athletics at Flagler College. "Mitch's support strengthens

our athletic programs and enriches the campus experience, helping us to sustain high standards in both our facilities and student services."

Reflecting on his commitment to Flagler College, Walk said, "Since my time as a student, Flagler has held a special place in my life. I am honored to give back in a way that supports both the athletic programs that foster growth and resilience, and the historic spaces like Ponce Hall that define Flagler's unique spirit. My hope is that this support helps today's students make memories as meaningful as mine were."

To learn more about how you can contribute to the preservation and enrichment of the Flagler College experience, visit Flagler.edu/flaglerforward. ♥

ALUMNUS DAVID IANNONE MAKES GIFT TO SUPPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Flagler College has received a \$50,000 pledge from alumnus David A. Iannone, '86, to support the College's ongoing efforts in historic preservation. This gift reflects Iannone's deep appreciation for the College's historic legacy and will include the naming of two iconic spaces on campus: the fireplace in the Bird Cage and his former dorm room, located in Ponce Hall's West Wing.

"This gift from David reflects the deep connection so many students feel to their

time spent in the historic spaces of Ponce Hall," said Dr. Andrea Adams-Manning, Dean of Students at Flagler. "His generosity helps ensure that these iconic landmarks continue to inspire and create meaningful memories for future generations of students."

As a dedicated donor since 1992, David Iannone has been a steadfast supporter of the College's mission and its efforts to honor its rich history. His contribution will help sustain the restoration and maintenance of these treasured spaces, ensuring they remain an integral part of the Flagler experience.



"Flagler College holds a special place in my heart, not only for the education I received, but also for the memories made in its historic spaces," Iannone said. "Ponce Hall was central to my college experience, and I'm honored to support its preservation for future students."

To learn more about Flagler College's historic preservation initiatives and how you can contribute, visit Flagler.edu/flagler-forward. ♥

Flagler forward



Fla



Flagler forward

INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT



FLAGLER COLLEGE'S BICKEL SCHOLARSHIP FUND EMPOWERS ASPIRING JOURNALISTS

BY ANNA BOONE

"Since my time as a student, Flagler has held a special place in my life. I am honored to give back in a way that supports both the athletic programs that foster growth and resilience, and the historic spaces like Ponce Hall that define Flagler's unique spirit."

MITCH WALK,
Flagler College Trustee and Alumnus

Established through the will of the late journalist Karl A. Bickel, this scholarship fund is dedicated to supporting students who demonstrate both need and merit in their pursuit of a journalism education.

Overseen by Wells Fargo's Philanthropic Services, this trust provides an annual institutional grant of approximately \$40,000.

The chosen colleges award this grant funding amongst its most deserving journalism students. Nearly all Flagler students depend on financial aid, and scholarship funds like this one give the College a competitive edge in recruiting top scholars globally.

One such scholar, Madison Hope Taylor, a young mother from Pennsylvania, said this scholarship allowed her to attend her "dream school" and invest time in extracurriculars aligned with her passions.

"Without [this scholarship] I would not be able to attend [college at] one of the prettiest campuses in the United States," Taylor said. "I would not be able to work at my dream place, which is Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind."

While completing her degree in Journalism and Documentary Production, Taylor was actively involved in the Deaf Awareness Club and worked part-time at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Post-graduation, she secured a role as FSDB's Social Media Specialist.

Taylor's success story is just one example of the impact of the Bickel Scholarship. This legacy of support and excellence traces back to the remarkable life and career of Karl A. Bickel.

"Bickel was a born newspaper man," a Sarasota public history article reported. "While attending Stanford University, he had a chance to cover his first big story, the San Francisco Earthquake in 1906... Bickel had lived most of his life in close touch with the important happenings of the first half of this century."

Bickel began his illustrious career at the United Press Association in 1907, rising to president by 1935. Under his leadership, the United Press service expanded globally, including pioneering news exchanges with Soviet Russia. ♣

Planning for THE FUTURE

..... flaglergiving.org

Naming Flagler College as a beneficiary of a bequest, estate plan or other planned gift will provide long-lasting support for Flagler College while enjoying financial benefits for yourself.

For more information, contact Nicole Pece, Director of Major and Planned Gifts, at NPece@flagler.edu or 904-819-6406.



1980



ANDREW MCRAE, '80, met up for breakfast with **JERRY MCLAUGHLIN**, '77, **KAREN DOHERTY**, '78 and **RON SUMMERS**, '77 when he was recently back in St. Augustine. These friends have known each other for almost 50 years!

1981

CATHERINE (SMITH) WINDISH started a new high school teaching position at St. Johns Northwestern Military Academies in Delafield, Wis.

1988



Recently, **JOHN FREITAS**, '88, and several classmates got together for a mini Flagler College RA reunion. From left to right: **STELLA TOTTY LUCKEY**, '88, **PAIGE KELLER MCGATH**, '88, **NANCY DEYO HALL**, '89, **STEVE HALL**, '87, **JOE YAPELLO**, '88, **JOHN FREITAS**, '88, and **LARRY RUSSELL LUCKEY**, '89.

Robin Rothman's daughter, **ERIKA ROTHMAN**, '17, and Mark Gannaway became parents to Brooks Jay Gannaway. He was born on Nov. 3, 2024.

1989

On Nov. 5, election night, **LARRY LUCKEY II** was elected as a new School Board member for Glades County Schools. He retired as an educator of 35 years in February and then began campaigning for the position. He is excited to start this new chapter of his life helping the children of Glades County.

1991

KATA (BOROS) WELCH received her Masters in Education with a concentration in literacy from the American College of Education in August.



LISA CURZIO retired after 32 years in the field of education from Pinellas County Schools where she was the Counselor for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. Lisa recently relocated to the Raleigh, N.C. area.

1992



As a professional artist known for her still life and floral paintings, **ANGELA T. HELLMAN** has always found inspiration in flowers. Attaching memories to certain blooms, she can still recall the impact of seeing a sunflower for the first time. Yet, while in discussions about her work, she discovered many adults were not familiar with the names of different kinds of flowers. Motivated to share her passion with future generations, Hellman presents her first children's book, an upbeat read-aloud to cultivate curiosity and a love of learning. "All Kinds of Flower Rhymes" is available for purchase on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

This past June 8, after a year in development, **TOM SLOAN** and his wife Lauri launched their new dive apparel brand, BlueTherapy, at a World Ocean Day cleanup event in St. Petersburg Beach. Prior to starting the business, Tom spent decades in the advertising industry, which culminated in a long battle with severe depression. He and his wife ended up moving back to Florida in 2018 where he would eventually discover scuba diving's positive impact on mental health. It became his therapy and literally saved his life. Tom had found his Zen and it rekindled his love of the ocean. They decided that they had to share that feeling with others, and BlueTherapy was born as a brand dedicated to getting more people in, under and around the water. Their ultimate goal is a non-

profit, sister organization to go alongside the brand and provide opportunities for those who wouldn't necessarily have them to connect with the water. Their online store is bluetherapy.com.

1993



On Nov. 5, 2024, **CHRISTOPHER BROCATO** was elected as a family court judge in Suffolk County New York.

1996

RHONDA (JONES RICARD) SOWERS started a new job in Colorado's St. Vrain School District in Special Education.

2000

DAVID STALVEY has relocated back to St. Augustine from Connecticut and has taken on the role of E-Commerce Sales Director at Bozard Ford Lincoln.

RUDY RICCI joined Binalyze as the VP of WW sales. Binalyze is a cybersecurity organization focused on the automated incident response space.

2002



BRADLEY WALDROP, '02, (pictured on the right) is a local attorney in the First Coast area. On Sept. 18, 2024, Bradley received the Kathy Para Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award from Jacksonville Area Legal Aid

2005

JENNIFER and **TIM PAGE** celebrated their 19th wedding anniversary with a weekend in St. Augustine. They met up with classmate **AMANDA BOUZAKINE**, '04, and her husband, Taras, at the Ice Plant.

2006



JEFF GARRISON and **MICHAEL BANACH**, '08, recently attended the bachelor party of **JACOB FIEDLER**, '09. The three celebrated by getting a suite at a Baltimore Orioles game.

VALETA CAMERON is now the Pro Bono Director for Brevard County Legal Aid after serving as their Staff Attorney for 7 years. She is responsible for managing their pro bono program by assisting the county's most vulnerable citizens who cannot afford legal services.

2007

MEGAN (O'CONNOR) DROSS recently received her Doctor of Education in Education Leadership and Policy from Florida State University.



In August 2024, **ERIN (COFFEY) TELLEZ** celebrated a major milestone with the opening of her third full-service restaurant, Cinco's Cantina, alongside her husband Crescencio, his brother Miguel, and their sister-in-law Asia. Since its founding in 2014, Cinco's Cantina has built a loyal following by honoring the rich culinary traditions of Crescencio and Miguel's hometown, General Cepeda, Mexico. Based in New Hampshire, their restaurant is deeply committed to community building and philanthropy, and it is known for their warm and generous hospitality.

2011



MARY PRITCHARD got engaged to Jason Rathmann, with a wedding date in November 2025!

a

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



FLAGLER ALUMNA DEVON SCHLEGEL ON HOW

Art Therapy Can Help Quiet Our Inner Critic

BY LAUREN PISKOTHY, '20

Devon Schlegel, Flagler alumna and Jacksonville-based art therapist at Indigo Art Therapy Studio, believes the world needs more art.

She also believes that art therapy can be for everyone.

Art therapy hinges on the belief that art making is healing and often relies on imagery to help describe feelings.

After graduating from Flagler in 2010 with a bachelor's degrees in Psychology and Fine Arts, Schlegel went on to get her master's degree in art therapy from Drexel University. While she loved her time in Philadelphia, she ultimately found herself back in Florida.

At her private practice in Jacksonville, she works mostly with teens and adults, and provides a safe space for LGBTQ+ clients. She sees a broad range of clients, ranging from as young as 4 years old to 70, as well as clients with low vision and selective mutism. Although their goals and experience creating art in therapy may vary drastically, they all share in the experience of using art to identify and express their emotions.

"If we think back to a strong memory that we have or a strong emotion, the first thing that's going to come to mind is not a word to describe it. It's going to be like a somatic feeling or an image. And so, I think art really allows that deeper exploration into the human experience," Schlegel said.

When Schlegel first got to Flagler, she had her sights set on becoming a general talk therapist. She intended to major in Psychology and minor in English. Despite having a passion for creating art, she had

no intentions of making a career of it.

Still, art was central to her life and she decided to enroll in a few fine art classes. It was in these classes that she would be reminded of her positive experience in art therapy as a teenager.

"It's hard being a teen girl, man. I spent five or six weeks at an inpatient facility and I hated therapy. I hated group, but we had an art therapy group," Schlegel said. "When I was at Flagler, I was reflecting on that group and how it was really the only thing that resonated for me in terms of not only was it therapeutic just to sit and make art, but also that art could be used as a means of communication. It took the pressure off of saying the right thing or being worried about explaining myself correctly in a therapy session."

After this light bulb moment, Schlegel decided that she would delve into art therapy as a career.

"And the rest is history," Schlegel said.

From there, Schlegel would do an independent study with Fine Art Professor Laura Mongiovi. She also attended Professor Mongiovi's sculpture classes and became her studio assistant.

There are lessons Schlegel learned from her art classes at Flagler that stick with her to this day. Like how Professor Mongiovi taught her to create art with unconventional materials such as scraps from groceries.

"She taught us to gesso the back of cereal boxes instead of canvas, essentially as a surface to paint on. I think about that all the time. I also have had many clients just gesso random surfaces so they can turn it into a canvas. Not only is that a little bit different than a canvas, it's also so much cheaper. I use that still."

Upon reflecting on her time at Flagler, she had another realization. At the time, she didn't consider herself to be a talented illustrator.

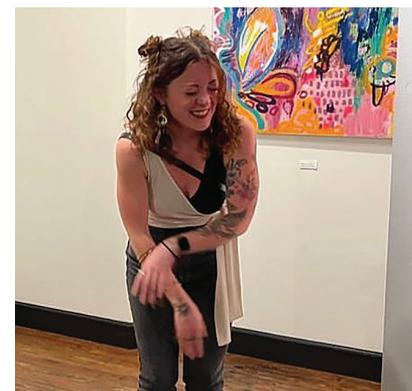
"Oh man, my drawing classes at Flagler ... I was not a good drawer."

But in her experience as an art therapist, she's come to believe the result is not what matters – it's the act of creating it that does.

"So very often we don't take the time to just sit down and doodle. And that's such a freeing kind of exercise. So even just taking an art class, you're sort of going through art," Schlegel said. "I think I would encourage somebody to allow themselves to see these art classes as a learning opportunity, but also to remember that there really isn't a wrong way to make art."

To Schlegel, art is subjective, meant to be interpreted differently by every single person that views it, but what we get out of it is the ability to let go.

"We try so many things and it's OK to not be good at something. I think once we reach adulthood, it's really hard to push through that discomfort of, 'I'm not immediately good at this.' That in itself is such a beneficial thing to be comfortable with. Because then you can apply it to other situations that you don't really have control over."



Identifying this "inner critic" and choosing to focus on the act of making art plays an integral role in Schlegel's role as an art therapist.

"I try to enforce with my clients that it's about the process, not the product." ♥



HELPING HAWAII RECOVER

Flagler Alumnus Matthew Murasko's Non-Profit Working to Regrow Trees Lost in 2023 Wildfires

BY GABBY ALFVEBY, '24

Imagine an area of land stretching from Vilano Beach to Anastasia Island and all that remained standing was the Lightner Museum in downtown St. Augustine. That's what Flagler alumnus Matthew Murasko's, '86, home of Maui, Hawaii, looked like after the life-threatening fires from Hurricane Dora devastated the historic island in 2023.

The fires began when a powerline went down and sparked flames in Upper Lahaina at the same time that Dora was 500 miles south of Maui. Winds kicked up between 60 and 90 mph as they pushed the fire down into the town.

"From what I've read, they were saying that in one minute the fire would travel one mile," Murasko said. "It's just impossible and then one house catches on fire, another house and another house, the embers and with that wind blowing, like it did all day long. There was just no way to stop it."

After the devastating wildfires wiped out homes and businesses, Murasko decided to put his experience with a variety of companies and non-profit organizations to work in helping with recovery efforts. He partnered with others to launch a non-profit called Treecovery Hawaii, which is working to keep the trees in the fire zones alive and grow new trees for residents and businesses that were impacted by the wildfires.

Treecovery currently has 18 grow hubs spanning from Hana in East Maui to Kapalua in West Maui where they have several hundred trees categorized by variety.

"It could be four to five years before the homes are rebuilt and it could be up to 10 years before the commercial area of the town is rebuilt," he said. "So, it's a massive undertaking. It's monumental ... We basically put trees in pots and we grow them that way."

Murasko said the first step was to assess the damage and mark if trees were alive or needed to be cut down.

The final tree count in Lahaina was 21,000 burned trees. In Kula alone, there were more than 300 acres ravaged by the fires.

"A lot of (Kula) was forest. It was invasive trees, a lot of eucalyptus trees. Those trees will be replaced with something else. But imagine you have 300 acres (that were) burned and the amount of silt and run-off that's happened."

The organization was also able to utilize resorts that bring in tourists as plant hubs. The resorts served as shelter for citizens of Lahaina that were displaced, but resort workers still had to go to work after losing everything.

"This idea of partnering with the resorts worked out great because they have the space, they have the staff, they have the water and it's a sense of pride for the resort," Murasko said. "We saw it bring the employees with the management of their resort together because you have someone that was a housekeeper or it was one of the GMs. He [the GM] didn't lose his house but all his trees burned. It made everybody human on the same field whether you are a high-level executive or you were the person that was the landscaper raking the yard at the resorts ... That was really neat to see the resort step up."

Treecovery has had a huge impact on the Maui community as it helped bring people together. The practice of planting is also found to be therapeutic for many people and acted as an outlet to the grief they were facing.

"What we're finding is it is very healing," Murasko said. "There have been people that have come out to our grow hubs, to help plant, pot-



up these trees. And we find out that they're showing up to volunteer on a Saturday. They lost everything and have nothing, but yet they're still coming out to volunteer and they're like 'it's so healing for us to be here to help. We want to be part of this.' It's great to hear that from people."

Murasko has been an active member with companies and non-profit organizations in Hawaii for 25 years, including as founder of lifestyle brand, Maui Life, OluKai Footwear and the nonprofit Marine Institute at Maui Ocean Center. ♡



FLAGLER ALUMNUS TIM FRANTA:

From English Major to Developing Rockets & Making Movies

BY LAUREN PISKOTHY, '20

For Tim Franta, '87, a love of space has also turned into his own launch into the entertainment industry, including producing the Emmy-nominated 2019 documentary, "Woman in Motion," currently on streaming platforms like Paramount+.

The documentary tells the story of how Nichelle Nichols, who played Lt. Uhura in the original "Star Trek," went on to recruit the first women and minority astronauts for NASA in the late 1970s.

Franta is currently Vice President of Development at Starfighters Space based at the Kennedy Space Center. He's also been a liaison to the space industry, NASA and the U.S. Air Force. Starfighters Space uses supersonic jets to air-launch rockets carrying small payloads and experiments into space.

Born on the Space Coast, Franta went from wanting to be an engineer to studying English at Flagler in 1987. And while English and engineering may not seem related, he said there's a significant connection: "The biggest thing I learned at Flagler was how to tell a story."

Franta's ability to tell a story, turned out to be a key factor in his success when he found himself in Washington working for IBM.

"I found out I could translate technical things into English. In the regulatory world, in the banking world, in the tax world, you have to translate things for policymakers to some non-technical form that they can understand," he said.

What launched his career in the space industry was a job offer back in Florida to work on the Florida Space Transportation Act. "What was significant about the Florida Space Transportation Act is that it made space a mode of transportation," Franta said.

This led to funding from the Department of Transportation and the building of launch pads, and Franta went on to become the Chief of Staff at the Florida Space Authority, where he oversaw the building of aircraft hangers at Kennedy Space Center.

He has worked in a variety of capacities, including consulting for Starfighter Space, Boeing, Lockheed and even Energy Florida, a non-profit which develops energy projects.

Coinciding with Franta's career in the space industry was a career in show business and as a storyteller. In 1997, he tried out for a part in the TV series, "From the Earth to the Moon," and was cast by Tom Hanks.



He got his Screen Actors Guild card from his very first job.

"In 1997, I nearly quit my job because in 21 days, the film industry was going wild in Florida," he said. "I made more money in 21 days than I did in my regular job."

Continuing along this trajectory, he would find himself in several other Space-centric films, including "Armageddon."

In 2019, he was given the opportunity to pitch the documentary that would become, "Woman in Motion." The film would first be delayed when the subject of the documentary, Nichelle Nichols, suffered a stroke and needed time to make a full recovery. Then when it was about to be released, COVID hit.

"We had our film debut, unfortunately, during COVID," Franta said.

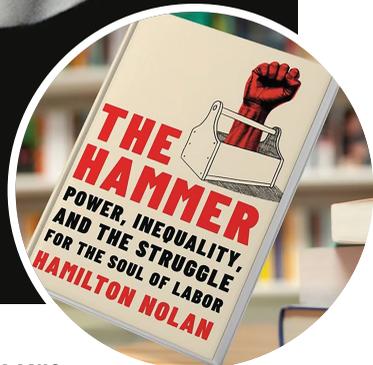
But in a fitting tribute to Nichols and the film, Franta said it was ultimately released in February of 2021 for Black History Month.

"To open Black History Month, it was a great experience," he said. "I did most of the interviews (for the film), and I got to interview Martin Luther King III in his father's church. I got to interview a lot of astronauts, some of which I knew, some of which I didn't. Pharrell is also in the film, and I got to go to the Academy Awards luncheon."

Because of Franta's career in the Space Industry, they got to film at the Kennedy Space Center. One of the greatest achievements of the film is that it was filmed aboard the International Space Station. One of only 600 films to do so. ♡

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



FLAGLER ALUMNUS HAMILTON NOLAN'S

'The Hammer: Power, Inequality, and the Struggle for the Soul of Labor'

BY LONDON COLLINS PUC, '26

For Flagler alumnus and award-winning journalist Hamilton Nolan, '03, a career following and reporting on labor unions has now led to the publishing of his first book, "The Hammer: Power, Inequality, and the Struggle for the Soul of Labor."

"A lot of people in America understand what the problems are," said Nolan about the book released in 2024 that looks at the American labor movement and its critical place in society and politics today. "But they don't quite know exactly what the path is to fixing it."

Nolan writes regularly for In These Times magazine and The Guardian, and he has written about labor, politics and class war for The New York Times, the Washington Post, Gawker, Splinter and other publications.

Nolan has heard, seen and experienced labor unions and unionizers all across the country.

"I'm a labor journalist," he stated. "I've been a journalist for about 20 years... I went through my own union campaign at the place where I was working in 2015. It was called Gawker Media, and we were the first online media company to unionize."

In 2021, while reporting on labor for In These Times, Nolan was covering the "intertwined crises and opportunities" that faced workers in America in the wake of the pandemic. Before that, he had spent five years reporting on labor.

He said those years weighed on him and led him to write the book, which he spent most of 2022 writing as he traveled around the country speaking to workers and union leaders.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Nolan's interest has grown in educating citizens, especially working-class citizens, about unionizing, its benefits and potential.

He said it stemmed from "hearing all the struggles that people went through ... seeing how working people suffered during the pandemic and, in a lot of cases, didn't have a safety net to protect them. Thinking about how unions and the labor movement could be the safety net that people needed."

This ties in to Nolan's idea of shared labor equity, pertaining to lower and working classes, especially. "There was a time in the history of this country when unions were very strong," he said. "Unions created the middle class that gave us a lot of the things we have today ... A lot of people today don't know that they can, in fact, have a different life. They can have different conditions at work. They can have more control over their own lives ... I want people to know they can access a power they don't have right now by unionizing."

Since its release in 2024, the book has been written up in Vanity Fair, The Los Angeles Review of Books and The New York Times. The Times called it "a lively account of the current landscape of American labor organizing ... 'The Hammer' offers an impressive array of scenes from the front lines of the 21st-century economy."

"I really hope that it reaches regular people who might not know that much about the labor movement," said Nolan. "I hope that this book can be an easy way for people that might not have thought a lot about unions to learn about unions, and also to understand the potential they have in their own lives." ♡

ALUMNI NOTES



MONTANA (SMITH) and HUNTER COLEMAN, '12, welcomed Lane "Wilder" Coleman on Feb. 12, 2024 in Winter Park, Fla.

STEPHANIE SELTZER recently began a new career with Fifth Third as their Vice President, Regional Marketing Manager in South Florida.



KAYLA TENNANT started a mobile beach and outdoor rental gear shop in St. Thomas, U.S Virgin Islands (Sapphire Provisioning). They provision beach, outdoor baby gear rentals and even groceries to your vacation rental or chartered boat. Check them out if you are visiting! Let them help make your island vacation a breeze.

2012

LAUREN SWARTEK has accepted a position at the University of Michigan as a Housing Support and Community Responsibility Program Manager. Lauren and her husband Jeff moved to Michigan in December 2023 after living in downtown St. Augustine for 13 years. Lauren earned her Licensed Professional Counselor status for Michigan in December 2023. Lauren and Jeff celebrated their 8th wedding anniversary in August 2024.

2013

MICHAEL DURRETT was selected to be the Reserve Command Senior Enlisted Leader for Coast Guard Sector Jacksonville beginning Oct. 1, 2025. Sector Jacksonville. He will be responsible for the training and deployment readiness of Reservists from King's Bay, Ga. to Port Canaveral, Fla.

2014



MADELEINE KELMAN owns Homestead's Hot Sauce, a healthy sauce and seasoning company on the rise in NYC! Madeleine recently signed a contract with the Bronx River Bottling factory. Her next big achievement was being cast as a competitor on America's next BIG Entrepreneurial Reality TV show called "The Blox." The show will air on Prime Video, or their FREE app called Beta Blox.

JOSHUA TRACY graduated with an MBA (3.9 GPA) from Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi in August 2024.

2017

JOSH RICHARDSON married **CALLIE WADE** on April 13, 2024 at the St. Augustine Yacht Club. They met while they attended Flagler and have been together since graduation.

2018

In May 2024, **YASMEEN ANIS SHAH** graduated from the University of South Florida with her Masters in Library and Information Science. She currently works as the District Elementary Librarian for Grand Haven Area Public Schools in Michigan. In July 2024, Yasmeeen also became a board member for the Cooley's Anemia Foundation!



AMANDA (KOSKI) METZGER married fellow Flagler alumni **CHRISTOPHER METZGER**, '22, in November 2022 and welcomed their first son, Miles, in August 2024.

2019



Alumna **JAYDA VAN ALLEN (NÉE BARNES)** married fellow alumna **RAY VAN ALLEN**, '19, on Sept. 21, 2024 in a beautiful elopement ceremony at Cloudland Canyon State Park.

2020



EMILY (STACEY) and NOAH CAMP got married March 24, 2024 in Nashville, Tenn.



KELLY PURCELL graduated from the University of Central Florida in May 2024 with dual master's degrees in Nonprofit Management and Public Administration. Following graduation, she was promoted to Compliance Coordinator at Community Legal Services, a full-service civil legal aid organization that promotes equal access to justice.

SLOANE STEPHENS has been working in St. Johns County's Coastal Management department as a Project Manager. Coordinating beach restoration projects has been an extremely rewarding task, especially being able to use her Coastal Environmental Science major knowledge on a daily basis!

2022

RORY THOMPSON was promoted to News Producer from Associate Producer at WJXT in Jacksonville, Fla. in February. After learning the ropes of producing on Dayside/Nightside, Rory is moving back

to The Morning Show to produce shows during the week and weekends. So, if you turn on News4Jax in the morning, you might just see Rory's work.

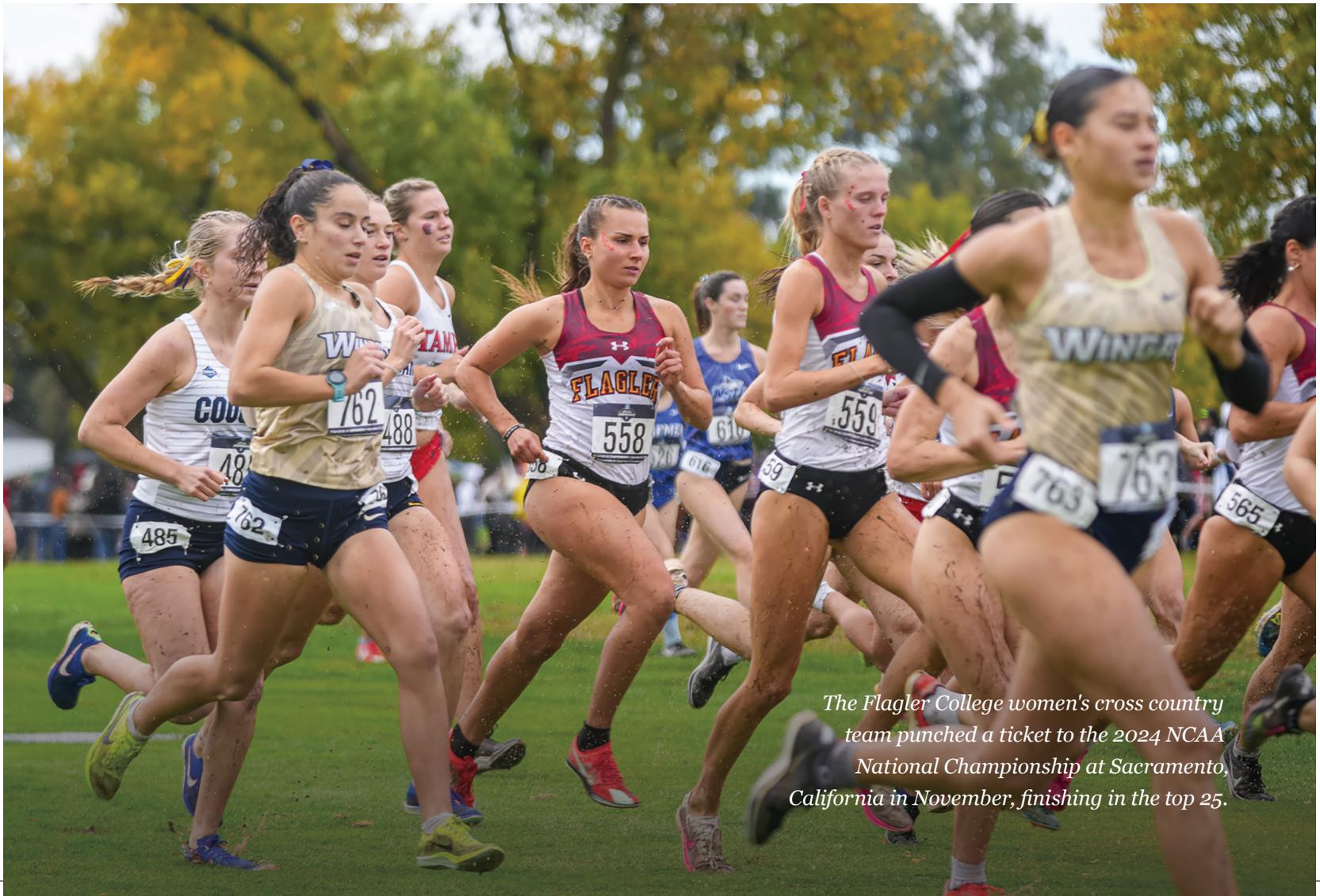
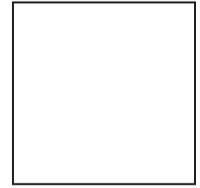
Remembering

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"TED" EDWIN SAGE, '72, passed away suddenly on Oct. 29, 2024 with his wife and son by his side. Ted moved to St. Augustine in 1970 to attend Flagler College and was in the first graduating class of 1972. There were thirty-three graduates in that first class, of which only two were male. Ted called dibs on "first male graduate" and proudly referred to himself as The First Male Graduate of Flagler College.



Shop online at legacy.flagler.edu. Free shipping for purchases over \$50 with coupon code: [magazine](#).

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The Flagler College women's cross country team punched a ticket to the 2024 NCAA National Championship at Sacramento, California in November, finishing in the top 25.