

Flagler

College Magazine



SUMMER
2026

HISTORIC CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SAINTS

Flagler's men's tennis wins first
NCAA DII national championship

OUR TEAM

JOHN A. DELANEY
President

CAROL BRANSON
*Vice President for Marketing
and Communications*

BRIAN THOMPSON, '95
*Director of Publications
and Magazine Editor*

MASON MUSHINSKI, '19
Freelance Art Director

CONTRIBUTORS
Gabby Alfveby, '24
Danielle Berke
Holly Hearn, '27
Sara Orr, '26
Lauren Piskothy, '20
Becky Short, '15
Beth Sweeny, '05
Zach Thomas, '00

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74 KING ST.
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
32085-1027

NEWS@FLAGLER.EDU

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A RESTORATION EXPERT WORKING ON THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF THE DINING HALL PHOTO BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

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ON THE COVER

PHOTO BY JARED HOLMES

In a historic season, men's tennis
won Flagler's first national title of
the College's NCAA era.

Letter FROM THE PRESIDENT



DEAR FLAGLER FRIENDS,

It has been 35 years since a Flagler College Athletics team won a national championship, but this year, men's tennis brought the first NCAA Div. II National Tournament title back to St. Augustine in what we fully expect will be the first of many.

Just how big a deal was this championship? Flagler has won a total of seven previous tennis national titles, all in the NAIA era. Men's tennis claimed national titles in 1977 and 1986, and the women took 5 titles in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991.

The men's tennis team had come close to ending that drought after making the NCAA national tournament for the first time in 2022, and then finished runners-up in 2024 at their first national title match.

This season there was no stopping them, and their success has brought a feeling of pride all over campus.

It has been an exciting year for Flagler Athletics. This past spring, women's lacrosse made it to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Div. II National Championship. Men's Lacrosse not only made their national tournament, but also notched their first tournament win. In track and field, Kaleb Hollins qualified in the 800 meters for the men's national championship. Last fall, men's and women's cross country also qualified for nationals.

This outstanding end to the year makes our other huge Athletics announcement even more exciting: Beginning in 2027, our teams will begin competing in the Sunshine State Conference, one of Div. II's premier conferences. The success we have shown this year shows that our

student-athletes are more than ready to raise the level of competition among Florida's top colleges and universities.

It's a wonderful time to be a Flagler Saint. We are wrapping up a historic \$65 million capital campaign that has moved the College forward on many important fronts, from facilities to student scholarships. We continue to be ranked among top liberal arts schools in the Southeast and consistently make lists of most beautiful colleges. We've launched important new majors like biology, and our students, faculty, staff, and alumni continue to do critical research, win important honors, land in top graduate programs, and launch successful careers.

None of this would be possible without alumni, parents, donors, and other friends of the College like you, and we're thankful for your support year after year. As we saw with men's tennis, Flagler is capable of doing incredible things, and this is just the beginning.

SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John A. Delaney'.

President John A. Delaney

FLAGLER ATHLETICS TO JOIN THE

Sunshine State Conference in 2027-28



Flagler College Athletics will begin a new era in 2027-28 when its teams start competing in the Sunshine State Conference now that the College is joining one of NCAA Division II's premier conferences. The move strengthens Flagler's presence across the state of Florida while aligning the Saints with fellow private institutions known for academic and athletic excellence.

For Flagler leadership, the announcement represents both an exciting opportunity and a natural progression for the College's athletics program. Director of Athletics Jud Damon said the institution is grateful for the invitation and eager to begin competing in one of Division II's most respected leagues.

"We are indeed grateful to the Sunshine State Conference, President Dr. James Annarelli, and Commissioner Chris Graham for extending this opportunity to us. It is an honor to be joining such a strong and prestigious conference, and to be affiliated with all the fine SSC member institutions," he said.

The announcement follows unanimous support from conference leadership during the membership approval process, underscoring Flagler's growing reputation in both academics and athletics, and the enthusiasm surrounding its addition to the conference.

"There was unanimous and enthusiastic support on the SSC Presidents Council to approve Flagler's application for conference membership, and my Council colleagues and I are excited to welcome Flagler to the SSC family," said Annarelli, President of Eckerd College and current President of the SSC Presidents Council. "The addition of Flagler – a private, Florida institution with strong traditions of athletic success and academic achievement – to the 'Conference of National Champions' is a natural development in the evolution of both Flagler College and the Sunshine State Conference."

For Flagler President John Delaney, the transition reflects the College's broader momentum and continued rise in reputation, opportunity, and statewide influence. He said the timing is right for Flagler to align with institutions that share its commitment to excellence.

"This is a strategic moment in the continued evolution of Flagler College. As our institution grows in academic reputation, student opportunity, and statewide impact, the time is right to align with a conference that reflects those same standards of excellence," Delaney said. "Joining the Sunshine State Conference places Flagler among distinguished peer institutions and positions our student-athletes to compete at the highest level while advancing the values of scholarship, leadership, and service that define this College."

Conference officials also pointed to the practical benefits of the move, noting that Flagler's addition strengthens scheduling balance across the league while adding another accomplished athletics department to an already elite conference lineup.

"Flagler's sport sponsorship corresponds very well with our championship offerings, and moving to 12 member institutions aids all institutions with balanced scheduling while filling contest needs," said SSC Commissioner Chris Graham. "The Saints field competitive, nationally-recognized athletic and academic programs, and



FLAGLER MAKES APPEARANCES IN

Three NCAA National Tournaments

Women's lacrosse had a historic season, making it to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Division II National Championship while ranked No. 1. The team lost their first match of the season to No. 2 Florida Southern College in the quarterfinal round and finished with a 20-1 record.

This is the first 20-win season the Saints have put together since their inception in 2022. Before this season they had only defeated one top 10 opponent, but won five of those matchups this year. Flagler also won the Gulf South Conference Tournament.

They weren't the only Flagler team to make national tournaments. Men's Lacrosse also made the NCAA Division II National Tournament, notching the program's first NCAA tournament win before falling in the next round to No. 2 University of Tampa and finishing the season with a 12-6 record. The second round match in the tournament was the furthest the program had ever advanced.

In Men's Tennis, the Saints also advanced to the National Tournament, winning the national championship in a historic win. (See story page 8)

Kaleb Hollins of the men's track & field team also qualified for the 800 meter at the NCAA Division II National Championship. Hollins won gold in the 800 meter and the 1500 meter at the Peach Belt Conference Championship in early May.



will add even greater depth to the strongest conference lineup in NCAA Division II."

Membership in the SSC creates a strong strategic fit for Flagler academically, athletically, and geographically. The conference includes respected Florida institutions such as University of Tampa, Rollins College, Eckerd College, Florida Southern College, Barry University, and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Regional matchups, including Flagler's

rivalry with Embry-Riddle, are expected to enhance school spirit and community engagement.

Flagler will join the SSC after 17 years as a member of the Peach Belt Conference, which the College entered on July 1, 2009. During that time, the Saints built one of the league's most successful all-around programs.

Flagler won three Peach Belt Conference Commissioner's Cups, including three of the last six awarded, earned the PBC Institution of the Year Sportsmanship Award eight times, and received 39 Peach Belt Conference Team Sportsmanship Awards. The Saints also captured 69 conference championships, made 111 NCAA Division II Tournament appearances, and claimed seven NCAA Division II Regional Championships.

The College also excelled academically during its time in the Peach Belt, earning the NCAA President's Award for Academic Excellence 11 times.

Flagler leaders also served in conference leadership roles, with Delaney serving as vice chair of the Peach Belt Conference Presidents Council since 2022 and Damon previously serving two terms as chair of the Peach Belt Conference athletics directors group.

Flagler extended gratitude to Commissioner Diana Kling, former commissioner David Brunk, and all Peach Belt Conference member institutions for nearly two decades of partnership and shared success.

Additional details regarding schedules, championship competition, and the transition to Sunshine State Conference membership will be announced at a later date.



DIVING INTO CORAL REEFS

Flagler Science and Cinematic Arts Students Explore Bermuda's Thriving Coral Reefs

BY SARA ORR, '26

Beneath the surface of the ocean, scuba divers confront an otherworldly environment that behaves differently – where colors vanish with depth and the brain slows its processing. Each summer, Flagler students have been diving headfirst into this challenge as they joined Dr. Terri Seron, professor of Natural Sciences, for research trips to Bermuda's vibrant coral reefs.

For Seron, the trip is about far more than scientific research. "It is such a confidence builder for students," she said. "When someone asks, 'What are you?' they can say, 'I'm a scuba diver.'"

The Coastal Environmental

Science (CES) program at Flagler College is a hands-on department that focuses in marine biology, ecology and oceanography. While most science students have to wait until graduate school to get hands-on research opportunities, Flagler's CES program prides itself on the out-of-the-classroom experiences it provides its students.

Seron's "Shipwreck Ecology" research course in Bermuda is an example of a hands-on learning experience, and in the summer of 2025, they were joined by Cinematic Arts students who were creating documentaries on the Bermuda tourism industry and the health of the reefs. Featuring underwater camera work, interviews with locals and more, this documentary will showcase not only the beautiful Bermuda ecosystems, but also the research being done by Flagler students.

Bermuda is one of the few



places left with a healthy and thriving coral reef ecosystem. While reefs in Florida and much of the Caribbean have been devastated by warming waters, sediment runoff and coral disease, Bermuda remains virtually untouched. "Bermuda is a unique experimental island," Seron said. "It's free-standing in the ocean with fresh currents and colder temperatures that create more durable corals."

The island's commitment to environmental stewardship also plays a major role in this habitat preservation with their strict pollution and development regulations that help care for the reefs. "The Bermudian people love their island so much," Seron said.

Since 2014, Seron has brought Flagler students to the island to conduct research in partnership with the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo – a relationship created by donor Jim Babcock and one that continues to deepen. The course title, "Shipwreck Ecology," gets its name from the "artificial reefs" that have grown on the sunken shipwrecks over the years. This gives students the opportunity to compare natural reefs to the artificial reefs

found in some of Bermuda's 300 wreck sites.

"The shipwreck aspect is something very unique that we don't usually do in sciences," Seron said. "Corals beg you to talk about history; knowing the age of the shipwrecks helps us understand the timeline of coral growth and the age of the coral."

For senior coastal environmental science major Rachel Vanepole, the shipwreck dives were unforgettable. "I had never done a shipwreck dive, and we did a different one every day," she said. "It was so interesting to see how the coral and fish changed at each site. ... All you hear about are dying reefs. It was so awesome to see a healthy one in real life."

The addition of cinematic arts students added a new dimension to this experience. While researchers recorded observations underwater on clipboards, film students swam beside them operating massive camera rigs.

Spring 2026 graduate Chloe Smith was part of this underwater film crew. "I was intimidated and a bit nervous when I realized I'd be taking all kinds of unfamiliar equipment with me underwater

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Flagler Awarded \$1.25 Million Lilly Endowment Grant to Launch Welcome Works

Flagler College is launching a new four-year project, Welcome Works: Creating Liturgical Interventions of Welcome, thanks to a \$1.25 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. Beginning in 2026, the project will help faith communities across the United States reimagine worship as a space of belonging for children who have experienced significant trauma.

The Lilly Endowment made the grant through its Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, a national initiative designed to help Christian congregations more fully and intentionally engage children in intergenerational corporate worship and prayer practices.

Drawing on interdisciplinary expertise in theology, child development, and trauma-informed care, Welcome Works will empower faith leaders to design "liturgical interventions of welcome" that make worship more inclusive and supportive. At the heart of the initiative is the conviction that faith communities can and must make corporate worship work for kids with "Big Hurts."

"This project grows out of our conviction that faith communities must not only talk about welcoming vulnerable children, but tangibly embody it in worship," said Dr. Justin Forbes, Assistant Professor of Religion and Director of the Center for Religion and Culture at Flagler College. "Our hope is that these practices will not only benefit children from traumatic backgrounds, but will enrich the worship experience for all."

Welcome Works builds on Flagler's longstanding commitment to youth ministry and its emerging Center for Religion and Culture, which fosters meaningful dialogue, community engagement, and unique student opportunities that explore the intersection of religion, culture, and contemporary issues. With support from Lilly Endowment, Flagler is poised to help congregations nationwide deepen their capacity for hospitality, belonging, and faithful formation.

For more information, visit www.flagler.edu/crc



while diving in new territory," says Smith. "But once I got used to it, it was no doubt one of the coolest experiences of my life."

Seron said in a time when reefs are under unprecedented stress, Bermuda offers hope. "We are the ocean planet," she tells her students. "If you're not exploring the ocean, you're missing most of our Earth."



FC GRAD STORIES

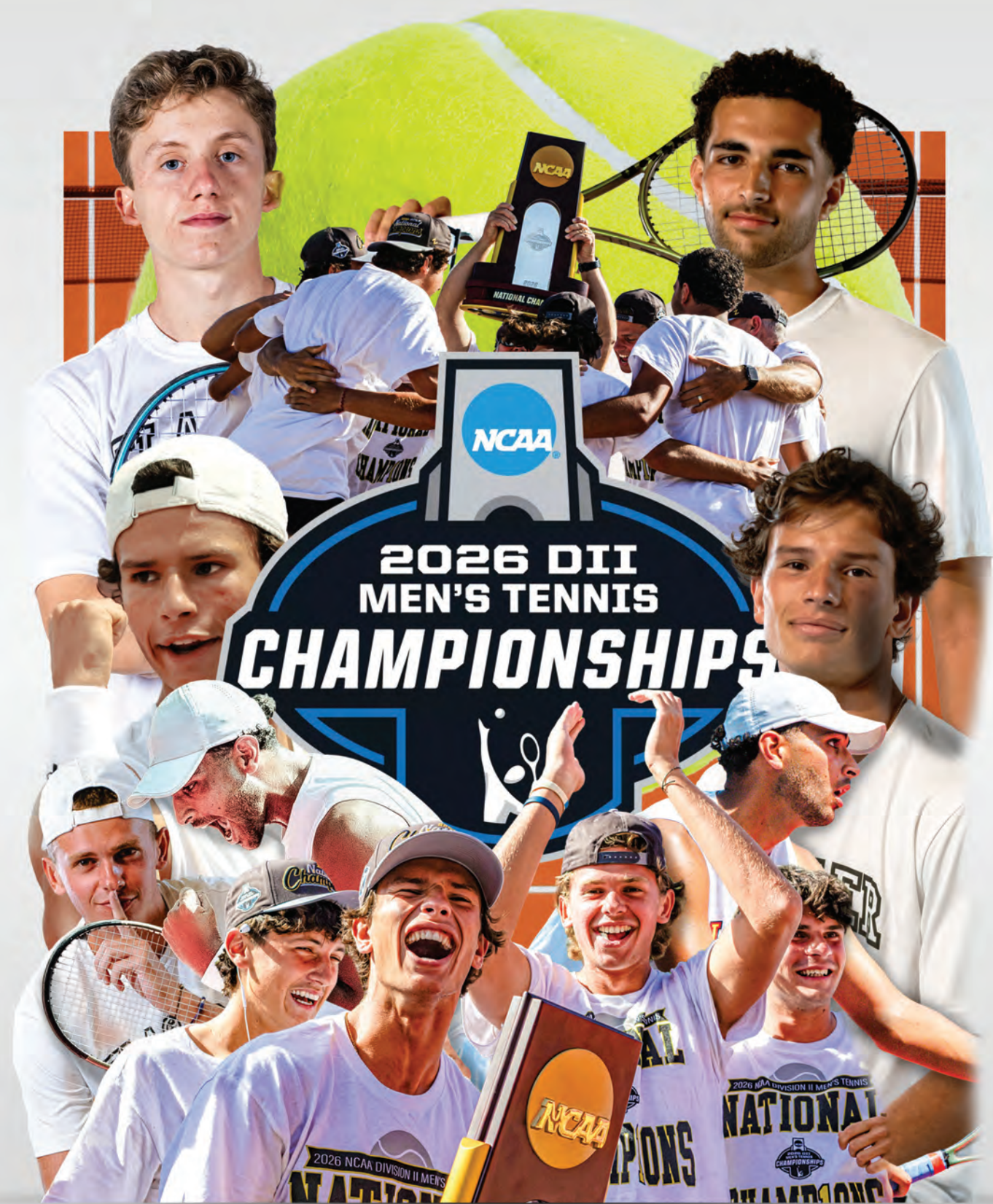
Meet the New Class of 2026

More than 580 graduates crossed the stage at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre on May 9 during Flagler College's Spring Commencement Ceremony. The Class of 2026 represented 34 states and 21 international students, bringing together a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and ambitions.

AMONG THE GRADUATES WERE 16 MILITARY VETERANS, 91 STUDENT-ATHLETES, 26 HONORS PROGRAM STUDENTS, AND GRADUATES RANGING IN AGE FROM 19 TO 59 YEARS OLD. IN TOTAL, FLAGLER AWARDED 693 DEGREES, INCLUDING BACHELOR OF ARTS, BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, MASTER OF ARTS, AND MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEGREES.

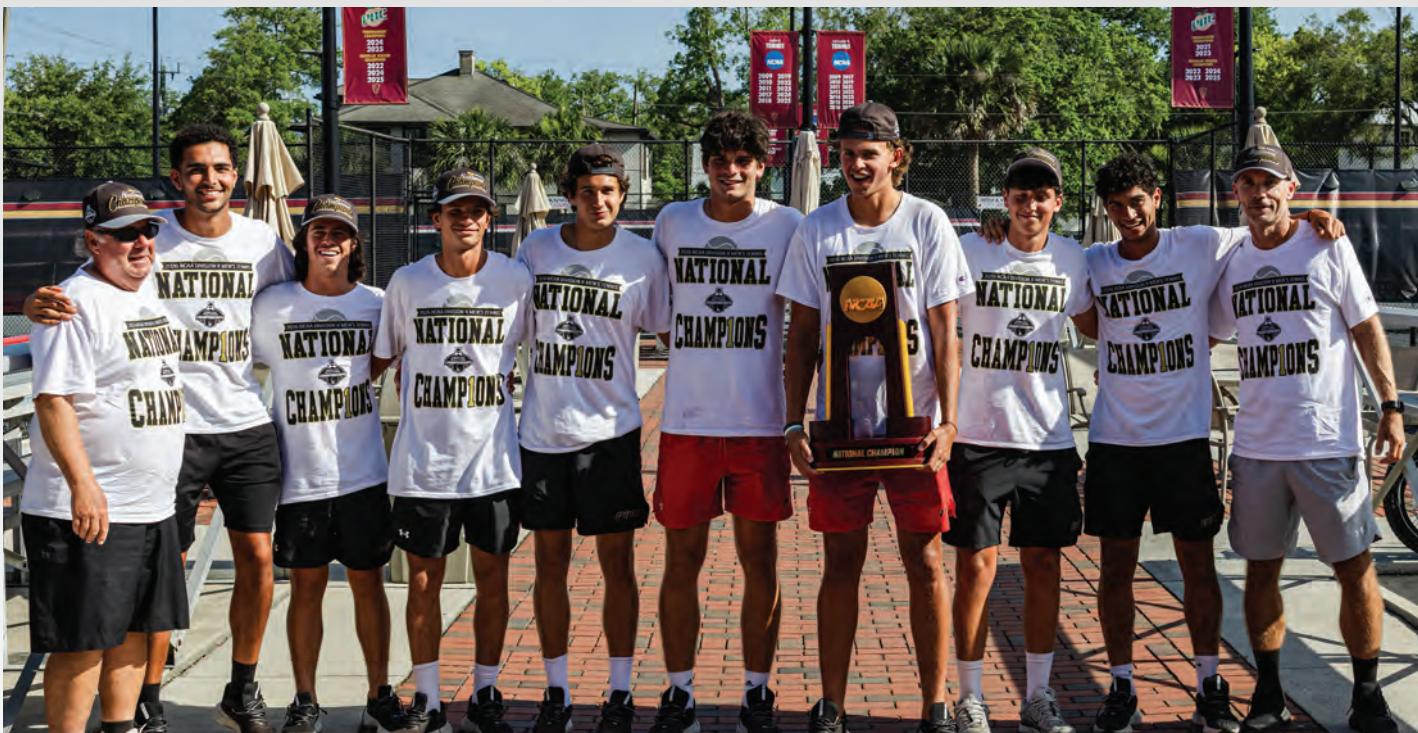
READ ABOUT SOME OF OUR EXCEPTIONAL GRADUATES AT WWW.FLAGLER.EDU/GRADSTORIES





HISTORIC CHAMPIONSHIP FOR SAINTS

FLAGLER MEN'S TENNIS WINS COLLEGE'S FIRST NCAA DIV. II NATIONAL TITLE



In a historic win this May, the Flagler College men's tennis team won the program's third national title at the 2026 NCAA Division II National Tournament in Surprise, Arizona. It was not only the program's first NCAA national championship, but also the first for any team at Flagler since the College joined the NCAA in 2006.

To do it, the men's tennis team had to beat previously undefeated Barry University in a hard-fought 4-3 victory.

While the Saints were the national runners-up in 2024 in their first NCAA national title match, the last time they had won championships were 1986 and 1977, back when Flagler was still competing in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Flagler won NAIA titles in 1977 and 1986.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," said head coach Jonas Piibor. "All of the credit goes to the team as they deserve to be awarded for the hard work they put in every day. As a coaching staff, we have challenged them about being willing to put in more work and endure more pain in order to achieve this."

Flagler had been ranked No. 4 in the nation and was the No. 6 seed heading into the tournament. They finished the season with a 24-4 record, and defeated the nation's No. 1 and No. 2 ranked teams on back-to-back days to take the title.

The championship came down to a final match won by No. 4 singles and No. 73-ranked Aly El Rafiem.

"We are very fortunate to work with so many great people here at Flagler College," added Piibor. "It is very special to share this title with everyone as so many of you played a part in making this possible." 🏆

Breaking Out of the Box

Math Department Chair
Dr. Carrie Grant Brings
Students from the
Classroom to the Farm

BY SARA ORR, '26
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

"I feel like I don't fit in a box. Sometimes I feel like I have the 'math professor' label stuck on me, but I know I'm so much more than that."

Dr. Carrie Grant is the chair of the Math Department at Flagler College. Despite her expertise in the mathematics field, her passion for sustainability, organic foods, and supporting local farmers has led to her creation of the Farm-To-Table local FlagSHIP (Flagler Sophomore High Impact Practice) course where students are given hands-on opportunities to learn from local farmers about our food systems.



THE Features



Q&A

with Dr. Carrie Grant

Q | What is the framework of your Farm-to-Table FlagSHIP course?

Farm-to-Table is a nine-day local FlagSHIP. We spent the first day in the classroom doing some pre-work. We discuss regenerative farming, food scarcity, food deserts, and organic food. The other seven days are spent working in the field. My goal is to have students not learn through a textbook, but to learn hands-on. Most of these students have never dug in the dirt before, and this first-person experience helps them understand what truly goes into making the food that they eat. We visit a diverse number of places including composting sites, commercial farms, organic farms, cattle feed farms, aquaponic and hydroponic farms. Every night, the students' assignment was to write a thank you note to whoever we worked with that day. Not only does this allow them to reflect on their day, but show gratitude. As much labor as we did at the farms, the students also shared many farm-to-table meals together at the places we visited.



Q | In a world where farming is so commercialized, how do you approach the topic of organic sustainable and organic food with your students?

One of the farms that we visit is Ben Wells' farm, which is the largest producer of Lays Potato Chips, and located only 20 minutes west of the College. They are a multigenerational farming family who has seen the industry change drastically. The bread-and-butter of their farm is the potatoes that they grow for Lays, but they have another section of the farm that is dedicated to organic produce. It's interesting to hear Ben talk about how the non-invasive fertilizer is actually more efficient than the commercial fertilizer, and he has begun using it on the fields with his potatoes. He has a deep understanding of where farming started, where the practice became so commercialized, and where he wants to go with his farm. He's not going to give up his Lays Potato Chips, but he is incorporating amazing, sustainable practices into his farm overall.



Q | What drew you, as the chair of the Math Department, to lead a FlagSHIP on farming, food systems, and sustainability?

I always thought I had to do something with math, but I know that math is not the only passion in my life. One day I asked myself: what are the passions in my life beyond teaching mathematics? Fitness is super important to me, vegetarianism is very important to me, and ecotourism and sustainability is important to me. Every Saturday morning, I go to the farmers market and I buy my produce for the week. I actually came up with the idea for this FlagSHIP through the vendors I know at the farmers market. They made me want to expose students to something they might not otherwise experience. I know that I'm not the expert, but through this course, I can bring students to the experts.



Q | Food insecurity is an issue facing many people nationwide. Many people who live in impoverished areas only have access to over-processed food, which also creates a fresh-food disparity. How do you weave these social and health issues into your teaching in the FlagSHIP?

There are plenty of community gardens in our area, which not only provides free and fresh produce, but also builds a community, which I think is amazing. We also meet with Epicure, which is a non-profit in our area that takes food that would otherwise be thrown out and distributes it to people in St. Johns County that are experiencing food insecurity. This past year, I added a project on gleaning, which is another way that Epicure acquires their food. Gleaning is when people go into fields and pick produce that was not picked by the machinery. This past year, we went to the University of Florida Agricultural Center. When the students were doing the gleaning project, I saw them connect the most. Not only were they learning about the people who the food was going to, food deserts, and food insecurity, but they were also providing hands-on community service to help with those issues. That day, the students distributed somewhere between 3,000-4,000 potatoes, all of which were distributed to people by that afternoon. It made them realize "true, I might not be living in a \$10 million mansion, but we are truly privileged compared to many people."

Q | How did you incorporate pillars of the FlagSHIP program like community-based partnerships and immersive learning into the course?

I did not want students to be in a classroom. Many FlagSHIPS involve traveling, and I didn't want there to be a disjoint between those who travel and those who don't. Just because a student can't afford to go abroad doesn't mean they should be stuck in a classroom, and the hands-on experience that students get through this FlagSHIP is just as transformative.

Frogsong Organic is one of the places I take students during this FlagSHIP. The owners, John and Amy, sponsor people from Mexico to work for them and live on their farm. They serve lunch to their team once a week, eat with them, and get to know them, and we have always gone for these meals. John is fluent in Spanish, so the students can see the connections and community that they have built their workers. Another place we visit is the North Florida School for Students with Disabilities. They have a bee farm, aquaponic and hydroponic farms called Berry Good Farms where the students are taught through these systems to have real-world, livable skills. It's so interesting to see these students boss my students around because they are the experts, not us. My students let me know how moved they were by this experience and the one at Frogsong. It goes back to the pillars of FlagSHIP overall – they got to learn about a totally different community and culture, all while staying within an hour of the college.

Q | The Farm-to-Table FlagSHIP puts students in hands-on situations while they work on farms and see how food is grown. What do you hope students take away from that experience beyond the FlagSHIP?

I hope that students are more cautious of their food waste and understand that their food choices make a huge impact on the world. I also hope that they realize the issue of food scarcity. You and I can easily drive to a grocery store, but there are some people who can't. I hope that they make an effort to purchase locally. If you're buying potatoes from Idaho when we have huge potato farms 15 minutes away, that makes no sense. Then, you are also contributing to the emissions of the truck that brought those Idaho potatoes down to Florida.

On top of all of that, I hope that they grow a stronger appreciation for the farmers. They are doing an amazing job, and often go forgotten. If there were no farmers, we would have no food. Since this FlagSHIP focuses on St. Johns County farmers, I have seen my students change through this course. Do you know how many of my former students I see at the farmers market now? I never even took them there! Since it's focused on our local ecosystem, that makes action more attainable. ♥

HOW SOIL IS INFORMING HURRICANE SCIENCE

Flagler student explores hurricane science through research internship at UT Austin

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

For Flagler College junior Pasquale “Puck” Arnone, a 2025 summer research internship at the University of Texas at Austin offered a transformative opportunity to combine his passions for environmental science and technology.

A Rhode Island native and transfer student, Arnone came to Flagler to pursue environmental studies with a minor in data science. “Going into college, I wanted to find a way to blend the environmental field with technology,” Arnone said. “I grew up around the ocean, and I am passionate about the coast and the environment.”

Outside the classroom, Arnone is also a member of the Flagler College Men’s Lacrosse Team, which he credits with helping him find community and balance. “Coach Duncan, Coach King, and my teammates have been really supportive,” Arnone said. “Being part of the team has made Flagler feel like home.”

Through the National Science Foundation’s summer research program, Arnone worked at UT Austin’s Jackson School of Geosciences, where he studied the connection between soil moisture and hurricane tracks. His research focused on Hurricane Helene, analyzing soil data from Northern Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky to explore how soil moisture might influence storm paths.

“As our climate becomes more suitable for hurricanes, typhoons, and cyclones, these storms increase in strength, speed, and frequency,”



Arnone said. “By investigating the correlation between soil moisture and hurricane track, and potentially proving that there is a connection, hurricane forecasting systems can be more accurate.”

Arnone’s findings revealed intriguing soil moisture patterns that may inform future storm prediction models. “What I found was that in Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, the soil moisture values were below the 10-year average, with Kentucky being significantly lower,” Arnone said.

Under the mentorship of Dr. Hassan Dashtian, a research professor at UT Austin, Arnone worked independently on his project while participating in a cohort of 20 students from across the country. “Dr. Dashtian was able to share the tools to complete the project without doing it for me,” Arnone said. “By allowing me to work independently on my research, I gained a greater understanding of the process and the tools.”

The program also included professional development opportunities and mini-courses in Python, Remote Sensing, and Data Visualization. “The condensed courses that I took directly benefited my research, specifically with Python and Data Visualization,” Arnone said.

Beyond technical skills, Arnone said the experience provided valuable insight into preparing for graduate school. “UT did a fantastic job helping us visualize and prioritize our future,” Arnone said. “We would routinely have distinguished guest speakers and career panels to get a glimpse into the field and learn from experts.”

Reflecting on his experience, Arnone said, “The research experience was valuable in ways I never expected. The most rewarding part was being part of a cohort of really interesting and motivated students from around the country.”

He also credits his Flagler courses and professors for giving him a strong foundation. “The courses that I took before my research project gave me the foundation to succeed in my internship,” Arnone said. “I had the opportunity to work with R Studio, another coding language, which was valuable as an introduction to coding. My professors were also very helpful in writing recommendations for my applications.”

Looking ahead, Arnone hopes to continue developing his research skills and exploring opportunities that merge environmental science and data analysis. “After this opportunity, I know the steps I need to take to set myself up for success moving forward,” Arnone said. 🍀





Preserving the PONCE

Take a look inside the renovation of historic Hotel Ponce de Leon

Ponce Hall fully reopened in the fall of 2025 for students after renovations of the West Wing residence halls were completed, wrapping up the second phase of this major College project. The National Historic Landmark had been undergoing a multimillion-dollar renovation over the past couple of years through the generous support of donors through the Flagler Forward capital campaign and the State of Florida.

Restoring the Ponce to its original grandeur included interior renovations, a total roof replacement, a new HVAC system, and other work to modernize the building while preserving its rich history.

The College also unveiled a series of interactive exhibits inside the Rotunda and Courtyard of the former Hotel Ponce de Leon, designed to immerse guests in the art, architecture, and stories of Henry Flagler's Gilded Age masterpiece.

Funded by a grant from the State of Florida, Division of Historic Resources, the project

blends multimedia technology with tactile, hands-on experiences. The result is a richer experience for student-led tours, casual visitors, and members of the Flagler community alike. Working with Quatrefoil Associates, Flagler College developed exhibits that range from digital storytelling to historically-inspired recreations.

Among the highlights are student tour guides illuminating historic photographs with lantern projectors; rotunda exhibit discovery drawers beneath the grand staircase filled with artifacts; a stained glass design kiosk that allows visitors to create Tiffany-inspired stained glass; and a recreated guestroom with original furnishings and reproductions depicting President Harding's family's 1921 stay.

In addition, the College has completed a new documentary that gives a behind-the-scenes look at the Ponce's multi-million dollar renovation and restoration project.

To view the documentary, visit www.pbs.org/show/preserving-the-ponce ♥



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT SMITH, '04;
PHOTO OF RESTORATION BY ZACH THOMAS, '00



BEYOND THE RUINS

*An Award-Winning Documentary
by Alumnus Brady Bigalke*

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

We grow up believing that everything we are taught and told is the truth, until we start exploring and asking questions. That was the position Flagler College alumnus Brady (Bigalke) Skye, '10, found himself in when he learned that the Yucatecan Maya culture is still alive today.

Even more than asking questions, it inspired him to make a documentary, "Beyond the Ruins," that has been recognized at film festivals and is now streaming on Prime Video.

The film earned Best Documentary Feature at the Orlando Film Festival, a Silver Anthem Award from the International Academy of Digital Arts & Sciences, Best Director Award of Merit from the World Class Film Awards, and three distribution deals.

Skye, whose real last name is Bigalke, began the long process of creating his documentary in January 2022. But his

journey began before that when he traveled to Belize and Guatemala to explore Maya ruins and doing what he loves most: making travel films for his YouTube channel, which is his outlet for his art.

At that time, he didn't know that it would lead him to a much bigger story.

"With this story, I felt very lucky," Skye said. "It's like I was searching for more adventure and exotic locations and less populated areas, and not so much working with the indigenous."

He said the story found him ultimately because of that reason.

"I was looking for answers in all the wrong places," he said. "I was making travel films, and an older man [Lance Hastings] found me, found my film that I did in Belize, and saw that the way that I was traveling kind of reminded him of himself when he was my age."

Skye's story began with his love of traveling and video production, which has allowed him to express his passion for storytelling. He got



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into video production while in high school, which then carried into college at Flagler.

"My passion for storytelling began, ever since I can remember," he said. "I think that the medium [has] kind of changed over time, but the core of what I enjoy doing and immersing myself into is different worlds and characters, whether it was through music or painting. My focus just slowly shifted ... into more of the moving pictures with sound."

Skye grew up in Orlando, but has lived in St. Augustine since 2006 when he started attending school at Flagler.

Professionally, he has worked as a television producer for the PGA Tour, as well as other large media companies like ESPN, Paramount, Nickelodeon and NBC Sports, or doing television commercials for national brands.

He has created over 2,000 videos in his 20 years of experience, that have been featured across many national networks and platforms.

At Flagler, he studied communications,

video production and photography, and it led him to an internship with an Orlando production company.

His talents and hard work did not go unnoticed, and his professors encouraged him to keep doing what he loves: storytelling and making art.

"I started doing as much as I could when I was in college outside of the university, to go above and beyond what was being assigned and pushing myself to try to do music videos and commercials," Skye said. "My professors encouraged me to keep doing it, and so I got a lot of inspiration and encouragement from them. You never really stop learning [in film]."

But it was Hastings, his co-producer, who helped him chart a new path by opening his eyes to the indigenous Maya, which had impacted Hastings significantly.

"He reached out to me, and he thought that I might be interested in hearing about what he was doing with the indigenous Maya and Yucatecan, because





I was going to Maya and ruins,” Skye said. “But I wasn’t really learning much about the Maya, other than just kind of visiting the ruins. It was mesmerizing, but I just wasn’t really learning much about the culture.”

Skye said Hastings wanted to take him to Mexico to meet the people and better understand the rich customs and heritage.

When he arrived in Mexico, Skye said he still didn’t think that this trip was going to turn into a film and might just make a cool YouTube video. But then he started realizing there was so much more to the Maya culture that isn’t widely known. It was then that he realized there was a much bigger story that needed to be told in a documentary film.

Hastings and Skye then spent roughly a year working together, writing and communicating with the Maya in Mexico as they built trust and more knowledge on the subject.

“This is a story that has never been told before,” he said. “With the limited communication, we had to confirm that we were telling their story properly and that we were making sense of everything with the way that they think, in the

way that they live, and their philosophies and their mindset and mentality.”

Skye said it was critically important to them that the film got everything right, and that the Maya approved.

While making the documentary Skye was part of a three-man crew with very little funding, and all while doing his everyday job. He edited the documentary himself, spending 18 weeks on the first edit alone.

“When you dive into philosophy ... and mysticism and Maya spirituality, you’re just opening up a whole new door, and it’s going to take years, if not a lifetime, to really fully wrap your head around it,” he said. “So that’s what we ended up doing.”

They spent around three to four months finishing the editing process after the first cut, but Skye said the long process was all worth it for him.

“It was mostly exciting, because I was learning so much that was not only new information on a very intriguing subject for me, like spirituality and philosophy and Western versus Eastern living,” he said.

“IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE GREATEST FORM OF HOPE WITHIN THE MAYA WORLD WAS NOT TIED TO RESISTANCE, BUT TO PRESERVATION”

On top of that, it became a story about different mentalities, different walks of life, and maybe most of all, “clearing up a lot of misconceptions that I was educated on, or thought I was educated on, but that was actually completely inaccurate.

“You almost feel like there’s been a curtain put over you for a long time, because I was led to believe that the Maya were like an ancient civilization, and they mysteriously disappeared, and there were these human sacrifices,” he said. “And as I’m learning that all this is not true, you go through a lot of different emotions.”

Since its release, the film has been submitted to numerous film festivals where it has won a number of awards, including at the 29th Red Nation International Film Festival in Los Angeles.

But Skye said it wasn’t about the recognition or awards for him.

“I don’t do it for the awards,” he said. “I hope that it does its job and educates people on the Maya and helps this marginalized civilization

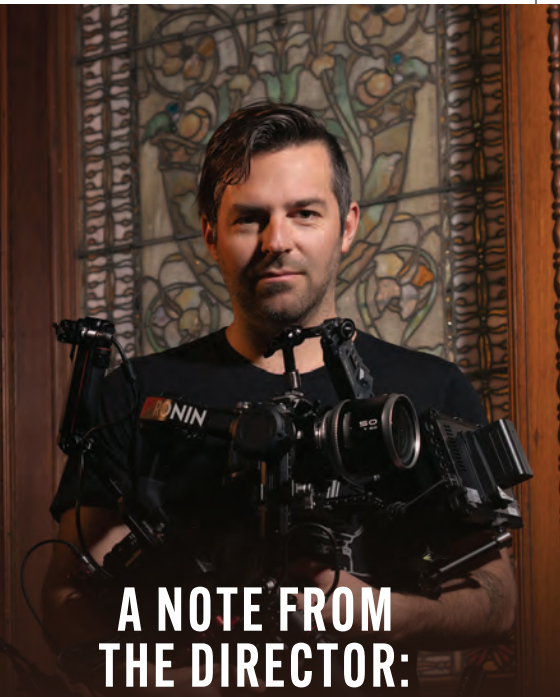
and community, because they’re so marginalized and there’s so much corruption and just everybody’s so misled on the subject.”

For Skye, he has found success through following his passion, and that’s the advice he gives to young filmmakers and media professionals.

“The biggest advice is to try to follow your heart,” he said. “You won’t necessarily know where that’s going to go or where that’s going to take you, especially till you get a little bit older and you have more life experience.”

What’s next for Skye is his screenplay, “Beneath the Dust,” that is in development with a production company in New York City. His goal is to start filming in 2028 the coming-of-age thriller that has been nominated for Best Feature Screenplay at the Burbank International Film Festival and Utah International Film Festival. ♥

WATCH “BEYOND THE RUINS” ON AMAZON’S PRIME VIDEO



Throughout the process, I was frequently encouraged, both implicitly and explicitly, to frame the Maya experience through the lens of conflict or injustice. This pressure did not come from the community itself, but from the conventions of documentary storytelling, where hardship is often treated as the primary engine of engagement.

What surprised me most was the Maya community’s resistance to that approach. While their history includes exploitation and marginalization, they consistently redirected conversations away from grievance and toward continuity, family, ritual, stewardship of the land, and gratitude for what remains. Publicly dwelling on suffering, they explained, risks re-centering harm rather than life.

Choosing to honor this perspective required a degree of restraint that was, at times, uncomfortable. It meant trusting that an audience could be moved without being provoked, and that dignity could be more compelling than despair. It also meant accepting that some viewers might mistake quiet for avoidance, or humility for omission.

Over the course of five years, across Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala, and through repeated visits to ruins and living communities, it became clear that the greatest form of hope within the Maya world was not tied to resistance, but to preservation. The film did not give them hope. It bore witness to it. In doing so, it also challenged my own assumptions about storytelling, success, and the legacy we leave behind. ♥

BSK

ALUMNI WEEKEND 2026



FLAGLER CELEBRATES DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AT 25TH ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARDS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZACH THOMAS, '00

Flagler College celebrated alumni achievement, leadership and service at Alumni Weekend in May by recognizing alumni who have made lasting impacts on their professions, communities, and Flagler itself

THE PRIDE OF FLAGLER AWARD Janet Wiseman English, '23

The afternoon's highest honor, the Pride of Flagler Award was presented to Janet Wiseman English in recognition of her lifelong commitment to Flagler College and decades of alumni leadership and service.

A member of Flagler's early student body, English helped shape student life during the College's formative years while serving in student leadership roles and later helping organize the Alumni Association in the 1980s. She served on the Alumni Board of Directors during its first decade and has remained an active supporter of the College for more than 50 years through volunteerism, alumni engagement, and philanthropy.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD Anila Lahiri, '21

The Flagler College Community Service Award was presented to Anila Lahiri for her dedication to civic engagement and community education throughout St. Johns County.

Since graduating, Lahiri has become deeply involved in local government initiatives, community organizing, and educational outreach. In addition to serving on local boards and attending county commission meetings, she also teaches part time and remains active in her church community.

Lahiri credited Flagler faculty and mentors for helping shape her passion for service and education.

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD Laura Moody, '99

The Professional Achievement Award was presented to Laura Moody, a judge on Florida's Eighteenth Judicial Circuit Court, in recognition of her distinguished legal career and professional accomplishments.

Moody reflected on her time as a Flagler student and the role the College played in shaping both her personal and professional life. "The things that I've been able to do in my career started here with the education that I got here," Moody said. "It truly matters because there is somebody in one of your classes who will ultimately decide that they want to be judges, they want to be senators."



DIXSON, COHEN AND MUNDY INDUCTED INTO ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Donna (Hicks) Cohen, '79, Sanford Dixon, '81, and Corey Mundy, '15 were inducted as the 21st class of the Flagler College Athletics Hall of Fame on May 14 at Alumni Weekend. Flagler's Director of Golf, Santiago Cavanagh, will be inducted at a separate ceremony in December.

The Flagler College Athletics Hall of Fame was established in 2004 to honor student-athletes and administrators who made a major contribution to the intercollegiate sports programs while at Flagler, as well as a significant impact in their community after graduating, and since then, 79 people and one team have been inducted, including this year's class.

Cohen was a starter on the basketball (1975-79) and slow-pitch softball (1976-80) teams at Flagler. She helped the Saints win a FAIAW State title in 1976, 1977, and 1979 in basketball and two state titles in softball. Flagler would play schools like the University of Florida, Florida State University, Jacksonville University, the University of Miami, the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida, Florida A&M University, and Bethune-Cookman University. A solid leadoff hitter with speed, she is best remembered for sliding into home plate safely to beat Florida State to win a state title.

Dixon competed in the early years for the Flagler cross country program (1977-81) for coaches Ed Walkawitz and Dr. Thomas Graham.

He was selected as the team's most valuable player all four years (1977-78, 1978-79, 1979-80, and 1980-81) in his career. Dixon won three consecutive races in 1977 and nearly missed out on a fourth when he finished in second place. He finished first in the 10,000-meter run at Florida Technical University (now UCF), with a time of 35:18. Dixon took first place in the four-mile run at Jacksonville with a time of 22:04. He won a second race at Jacksonville, at a distance of 20 kilometers, with a time of 1:10:31. Dixon qualified for the NAIA district and national meets during his time at Flagler.

Mundy starred on the cross country team for four seasons (2011-14). He had a decorated career as he was a three-time NCAA Division II All-Southeast Region runner, was the Peach Belt Conference Runner of the Year in 2014, the PBC Freshman of the Year, and was a four-time all-conference selection. He was the individual champion at the 2013 PBC Championship and that time (24:29) is currently the 10th-fastest time ran at the PBC Championship. Not only was Mundy a star on the course, but he also excelled in the classroom. He was a three-time academic all-conference honoree, a four-time PBC Presidential Honor Roll scholar, and was a two-time recipient of the D2 ADA award. Mundy was a two-time USTFCCCA All-Academic Team as well. He competed on the inaugural men's indoor track & field team in 2014-15.



CAPTURING THE STORM HUGH SHAW MEMORIAL SURF CLASSIC

More than 40 surfers took part in the 41st annual Hugh Shaw Memorial Surf Classic this May at Alumni Weekend.

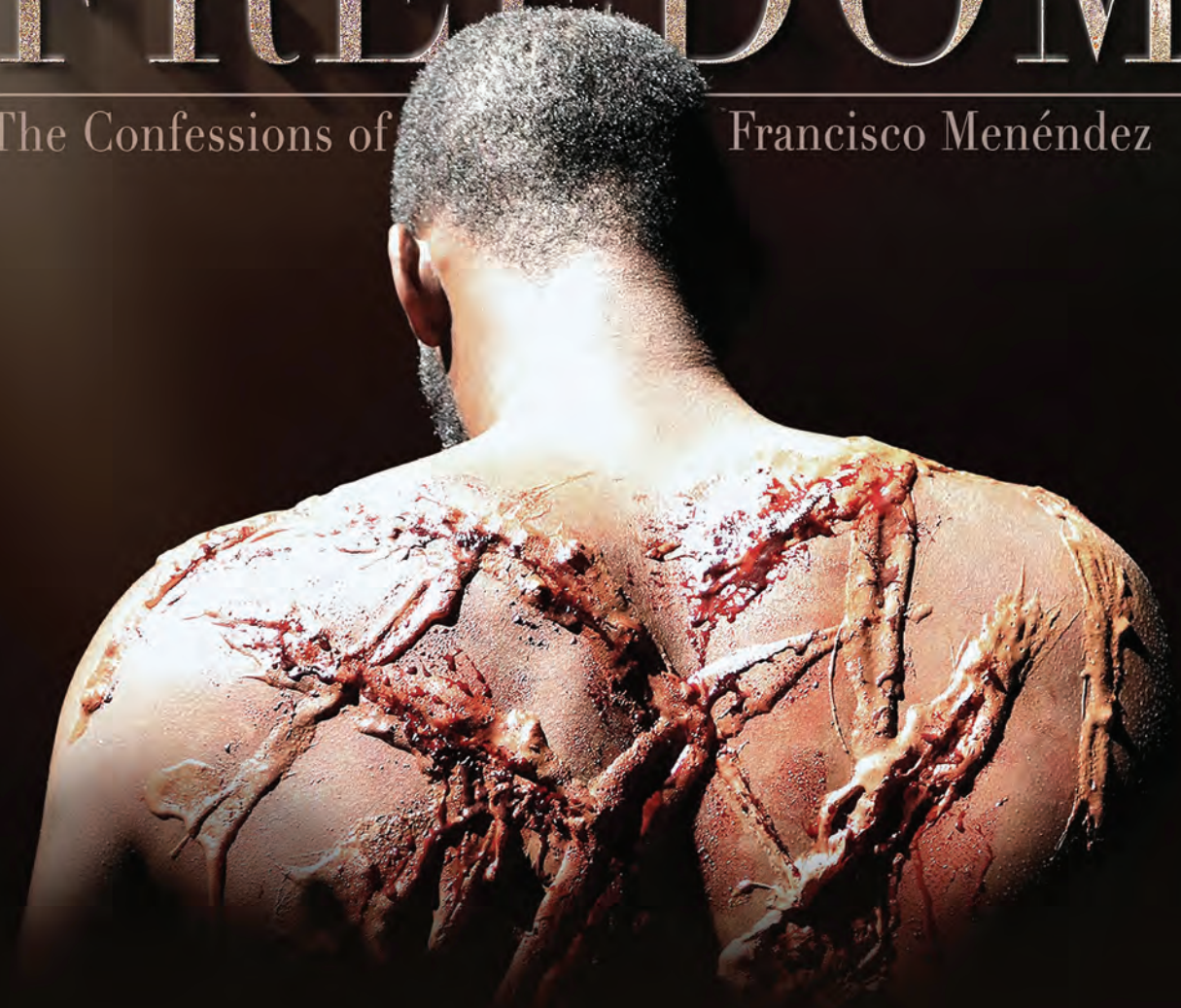
Shaw was just weeks away from graduating in 1983 when he was tragically killed by a drunk driver. In the years that followed, his friends organized the surf contest in his honor and it has continued for more than 40 years as alumni, family, students, community members and other participants gather to celebrate his life and legacy.

Shaw's story will also be told in an upcoming feature-length documentary. "What Hugh Knew" explores how a tragic loss evolved into a healing ritual. The film is in post-production, and includes footage from last year's 40th Memorial Classic. For more information or to support the film's completion, visit whathughknew.com.



A BOOK OF FREEDOM

The Confessions of Francisco Menéndez



Flagler Cinematic Arts Students Learn Beyond The Classroom Through 'A Book Of Freedom'

BY HOLLY HEARN, '27

Flagler College added the Cinematic Arts major three years ago, and since then they have developed a new way of teaching through their film project "A Book of Freedom: The Confessions of Francisco Menéndez."

Led by Communications Professor and Coordinator of Cinematic Arts Tracy Halcomb, PhD., and Visiting Filmmaker and Director Jim Gilmore, students in the program were able to get both class and IMDB credits through this hands-on experience. It has even been recognized with the Award of Excellence in the Faculty Mixed/

Pedagogical Category at the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts competition.

By telling the story of Francisco Menéndez, a former slave who escaped to Spanish Florida in 1724, students created a docudrama that showed how Menéndez led the first free-black settlement in what is now the United States at Fort Mose, providing freedom in exchange for military defense on the outskirts of St. Augustine.

"The whole purpose of the film project was to replicate a real movie set for the students and teach them set etiquette, to teach our students about all the different jobs and how they fit together," Halcomb said.

The film has always been student-focused. Pre-production began in summer 2023 with heavy research for historical accuracy and eight students creating an outline and beginning of the script. This would become the project focus for cinematic arts students for many semesters to come.

Junior Izzy Swyt began working on the "A Book of Freedom" in the middle of her freshman year.

"Having the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with professional equipment gave my skills a major jump start and provided a strong foundation for my future classes and projects,"

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she said.

Flagler gave the film a budget of \$50,000 to span the three-year period, allocating less than \$17,000 per year.

"That's everything. All the travel, that's props, costumes, makeup, trying to feed the crew when there's 30 people there," Halcomb said. "It's all dependent on students figuring out how to do more with very little. The students were excellent with that."

Staying within this amount throughout all the production stages was a lesson in itself.

"It taught me strong problem-solving skills and the importance of perseverance," Swyt said. "When challenges or unforeseen circumstances came up, we had to find solutions ourselves and keep pushing forward. Learning how to adapt and stay determined is one of the most important parts of working on a film."

With a creative opportunity such as this, students from Flagler's cinematic arts and theater programs alike were able to be pushed beyond their normal short film or stage production and develop skills through a story they could all connect with on some level or another.

"I thought this particular project was right on par, especially being a black male myself and getting to tell the story about a black male hero in a city that I live in. I think that just kind of added a value to my senior semesters that I couldn't really get anywhere else," said Flagler alumnus Zeus Xavier Scott, who played Francisco Menéndez.

The cinematic arts program began

strongly and became an example for giving students first-hand experience in their career path and pushing them outside of what they were familiar with.

Gilmore stressed the need for students to understand and appreciate each role on the set, a life lesson that many can forget in the film world.

"There is no unimportant role in set life. There's different roles and different responsibilities," he said. "Obviously, some people get more praise than others because cinematographers often get more fame than grips. But it doesn't happen without the grips."

This teaching mindset ended up being invaluable to the students throughout the production.

"Knowing that my professors trusted me enough to allow me to operate the camera, work with props and more, helped me strive to work hard every day," Swyt said. "It immediately immersed me in the type of work I love and helped me gain real experience much earlier than I expected. It also gave me a lot more confidence moving forward in my program because I had already been exposed to the collaborative and technical aspects of filmmaking."

Awards aside, the student crew recognized that the connection to the project after putting in lots of time and effort meant so much.

"You begin to develop a genuine love and passion for the film, which makes the final result even more rewarding. Seeing everything come together after so much hard work was incredibly fulfilling," Swyt said. ♥



FLAGLER FACULTY EARN INTERNATIONAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR FILM

Flagler College faculty members Dr. Tracy Halcomb and Visiting Filmmaker Jim Gilmore have earned an Award of Excellence in the Faculty Mixed/Pedagogical Category at the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts for their faculty-led film, "A Book of Freedom: The Confessions of Francisco Menéndez."

The BEA Festival of Media Arts is an international refereed exhibition of faculty creative activities and a national showcase for student work. This year's competition included more than 2,350 combined faculty and student entries from over 300 participating schools. In 2026, BEA recognized 48 faculty winners, with the faculty competition posting an overall acceptance rate of 21.81 percent.

Halcomb believes this is the first time a Flagler College student or faculty member has been recognized by the Broadcast Education Association in the Media Arts competition.

"I've been a professor at Flagler College since 2000 and almost every year since my arrival students and faculty have been entering the festival with no results, so this year's announcement that 'A Book of Freedom' was recognized with an Award of Excellence was so gratifying," Halcomb said. ♥

Pollard Tennis Center Dedicated as Flagler Enters New Era of Championship Excellence

BY
BECKY SHORT, '15



Flagler College's tennis program has long been defined by success and athletic excellence. Last October, that legacy gained a home worthy of its history – and its future.

On Oct. 22, 2025, the College hosted a dedication ceremony to honor Lewis “Punch” Pollard, who provided the lead gift toward the renovated facility that now bears his name: the Pollard Tennis Center. The evening marked the culmination of three years of upgrades and expansion while celebrating a program that has consistently performed at the highest level of NCAA Division II athletics.

“This gift was about supporting young people and giving them the resources to succeed,” Pollard said. “Athletics teaches discipline, resilience and leadership in ways that last a lifetime. Flagler College has built something truly special with its tennis program, and I wanted to contribute to a facility that reflects and elevates that merit.”

The Center stands as a bold investment in quality training and the continued rise of Flagler athletics. Arriving on the heels of a six-court resurfacing and the installation of energy-efficient LED lighting, the latest expansion added coaches’ offices, modern locker rooms, and study spaces, dramatically enhancing the student-athlete experience and bringing new life to a complex that had not undergone significant renovation since the 1980s.

“We have a facility that matches the caliber of its players,” said Jud Damon, Director of Athletics. “This Center sends a powerful message to prospective students, recruits,



alumni and friends about who we are and where we are headed. We are deeply grateful to Punch and our community of donors for their vision and generosity in helping make this possible.”

Flagler tennis enters this new era with a championship legacy already firmly established. The program won seven national titles — five on the women's side and two on the men's side — during its time competing at the NAIA level. Since transitioning to NCAA Division II and the Peach Belt Conference, the Saints have captured seven regular-season league titles and four conference tournament championships. The Flagler women have earned 13 NCAA Division II tournament appearances, advancing to the Elite Eight once and to the Final Four twice, while the men have made 11 tournament appearances, with one trip to the Elite Eight, one to the Final Four, and two appearances in the Finals. Their most recent Finals appearance in 2026 resulted in the Saints winning the College's first NCAA Division II National Championship.

For recruits stepping onto campus, the message is immediate and unmistakable: Flagler tennis is a premier program that prioritizes its people. Beyond providing an outstanding home venue for competition, the Pollard Tennis Center provides state-of-the-art training resources and an environment where student-athletes can build camaraderie while enjoying a first-class collegiate experience.

“This facility changes everything for us,” said head women's tennis coach, Rodrigo Puebla. “Top-tier amenities are essential to attracting talent; when recruits visit campus now and see the Center, they'll immediately understand the level of commitment Flagler College has to its student-athletes. It positions us to continue building championship-worthy teams for years to come.”

Head men's coach, Jonas Piibor, reinforced this reaction: “The new locker rooms and coaches’ offices are the icing on the cake,” he said. “We are truly grateful for the strong support from Flagler College, our fans and our donors.”

As the next generations of Saints step onto the courts at the Pollard Tennis Center, they do so within a standard of excellence forged through decades of hard work and community belief. More than a facility, the Center reflects the power of Flagler College's culture of philanthropy, where transformational generosity expands opportunity, elevates performance, and constantly redefines what is possible.

For Flagler tennis, the future has never looked brighter. ♥



Inspired by Memories and Mentors: The Birdcage and Endowed Scholarships

BY DANIELLE BERKE

For many who have seen it, “The Birdcage” remains one of the most memorable architectural features inside Flagler College's Ponce de Leon Residence Hall. Now, thanks to alumni donors Bryan, '07, and Shauna Kessler, the historic space will continue to inspire future generations of students. The couple recently pledged \$75,000 in support of Historic Renovation to Ponce Hall, choosing to preserve the feature's longtime nickname rather than rename it after themselves.

“The Birdcage is the most beautiful part of the building,” Bryan said. “For us, preservation is key when modernizing historic buildings because alumni want future generations of students to have the opportunity to enjoy the aesthetic experience of Flagler as much as or more than we did.”

Reopened in Spring 2024 after extensive renovations, the space now serves as a study area featuring a distinctive cupola bench. Historically, however, it played a functional architectural role in the original Hotel Ponce de Leon.

Research by alumnus and St. Augustine Historical Society member Andrew McRae, '80, uncovered a historic photograph showing the fourth-floor solarium and the feature's original purpose: allowing light to filter from the lantern atop the dome through the Birdcage and into the Rotunda below.

For the Kesslers, supporting preservation efforts reflects their lasting connection to Flagler. Bryan's relationship with the College began after mentors Beverly and Daniel Stinecipher encouraged him to pursue higher education and introduced him to St. Augustine.



After visiting campus, he immediately applied to Flagler. In 2021, Bryan and Shauna established the Beverly and Daniel Stinecipher Memorial Endowed Scholarship in their honor.

Today, Bryan continues to serve as an Alumni Board member and active donor. He and Shauna hope their philanthropy honors those who invested in them while helping preserve the Flagler experience for future students. ♥



Circular balustrade surrounding the oculus opening in the middle of the floor of the Solarium, circa 1906.

PHOTO CREDIT: The St. Augustine Historical Society



Building the Future Now: Bryant Vasquez's Belief in Giving Before it's Expected

BY BECKY SHORT, '15

Philanthropy is often associated with longtime careers and financial success, but for Bryant Vasquez, '17, making a difference doesn't have to wait. As one of Flagler College's youngest alumni to establish a scholarship, he believes giving back is about purpose, not age.

As a student, Vasquez received a scholarship that eased financial burdens and reminded him of the impact generosity can have on a person's future. After graduation, while working as a Senior Financial Analyst at Rulon International, he was encouraged by the company's owner to practice generosity now rather than wait for greater financial security later.

Inspired by that perspective, Vasquez established the Bryant Vasquez Endowed Scholarship for Business Administration. Having earned his degree in Accounting and volunteered with entrepreneurial programs like Lion's Cage, supporting business students felt like a natural fit. He hopes the scholarship encourages students who may still be discovering their path to stay curious, committed and open to opportunity.

Vasquez also wants recipients to feel personally supported. He views generosity as a tool for instilling confidence and creating a ripple effect that extends through families, communities and future generations. ♥

As one of Flagler's youngest alumni donors, Vasquez hopes his story changes how students and young alumni view philanthropy. “Giving to the College is an investment in the future,” he said. “If you can help even one person experience the same support you received, that investment can change a life.”



FROM THE PROCTOR LIBRARY ARCHIVES
TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

Alumni Presleigh Johnson's Internship with the White House Historical Association

BY SARA ORR, '26

Presleigh Johnson, a 2023 Flagler graduate, let her passion for Public History lead her to pursue her Masters and Doctorate at the University of Alabama. In 2025, she became the only student from her masters program that was selected for a White House Historical Association internship.

During this six-week internship in our nation's capitol, Johnson focused on producing a research article and social media content on the Hoover-era White House.

Her interest in Hoover isn't new - in fact, it began at Flagler during her senior seminar, where she focused on First Lady Loo Hoover. "The internship let me choose my own topic for the research, and I think they were shocked when I proposed to focus on President Hoover. He's not one that many people choose," said Johnson. "Flagler and University of Alabama are very supportive of my niche interests, and I'm glad the White House Historical Association was, too."

"I conducted research in the Library of Congress and got to access State Department documents, which was surreal," she said. During this research, she dealt with historic and personal documents pertaining to the Hoovers, including personal diaries, and even the President's health logs. "There was a log detailing what the President ate, when he exercised, and when he slept. I can't imagine having that level of surveillance!"

During her time at Flagler, Johnson was an intern with the Flagler Proctor Library Archives Special Collections, which she believes prepared her for her time at graduate school and this internship.

"Flagler was the only college I applied to for my undergraduate degree," she said. "I had a passion for Public History from a young age, and when I visited St. Augustine as a teenager, I knew this was the place for me."

"Going to Flagler prepared me for where I am today. The smaller class sizes gave me the agency to find internships I was passionate about, write columns in the school paper and do projects to further my experience." With the help of her professors, Johnson was able to find the University of Alabama graduate program, which allows her to marry her passions of English and Public History.

Though unconventional, Johnson finds power in sharing the story of a man whose reputation is clouded by the circumstances of his time. Though the Great Depression began a year after his presidency, he was remarkable for his ambitious, socially-engaged White House diplomacy and hospitality. "Many people view the Hoover presidency as a failure, and it's special to be able to share Hoover's legacy beyond the Great Depression."

You can imagine that Washington, D.C. is a place that any public historian would flock to. "I've never worked on something so big or nationally-focused. Making all of this information palatable to the public feels so rewarding."

With this under her belt, Johnson looks forward to completing her Ph.D., with long-term goals of staying in the world of academia as a professor. "I want to be a community-focused professor. Wherever I end up I want to do research for the public." ♥

ALUMNI NOTES

1974

KATHRYN (WASHKEVICH) SWEENEY attended Flagler back in the day when they had single suites and private baths – the life of luxury! Kathryn attended Flagler for 3 years and ended up getting her B.A. in California. She is now a Realtor. Kathryn has written over 15 poems for The New York Times metropolitan diary. Flagler laid the groundwork for writing and reading – pre-computer, just pen to paper!

1980



ANDREW MCRAE is enjoying retirement to the fullest – adventures so far this year include the Boston Alumni gathering at Pier 6 in Charlestown in February, Alumni Weekend in May, 10 days exploring the Swiss Alps by train in June with **ADELE PRAIRIE, '81**, lots of New England road trips, and back in St. Augustine in September. Like the shirt says: Life is Good! Andrew also met up for breakfast with **JERRY MCLAUGHLIN, '77**, **KAREN DOHERTY (BOSTON), '78** and **RON SUMMERS, '77** when he was recently back in town. 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, WI.

1982



BRIAN WASHBURN was named the 2025 Assistant Coach of the Year for the Southeast Region of ITA – Intercollegiate Tennis Association – for Flagler College men's tennis. This is the second time he was honored -- he was also the 2023 Assistant Coach of the Year for the Southeast Region. Brian began his 14th season with the Flagler Men's Tennis team this fall, and helped coach them to their first NCAA national title.

1984

JOHN WALLACE is a Family Law Attorney in Orlando. He is a big fan of philosophy professor Doug Taylor.

1988



Mark Gannaway and **ERIKA ROTHMAN, '17**, became parents to Brooks Jay Gannaway, born Nov. 3, 2024. DPop and Gigi (Dennis Johnston and **ROBIN ROTHMAN, '88**) are extremely proud to welcome their little Australian/American man.

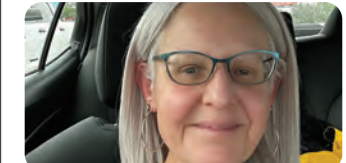


GISELA (CINTRON) SWIFT lives in Charlottesville, Va., and has owned a graphic design business for over 25 years, a degree she received from Flagler! Charlottesville picked her design for a city bus wrap that sends the message of a greener Charlottesville to encourage the community to consider public transit.

1989

On election night 2024, **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 then began campaigning for the position. He is excited to start this new chapter of his life helping the children of Glades County.

1991



LISA (CURZIO) BLAKE 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, NC area.



CINDY (NELSON) WEISS is celebrating little things: her 17th wedding anniversary to husband David; her daughter getting a driving permit and starting sophomore year at the local arts school; and a new outdoor kitchen at her home in Jacksonville. After almost two decades at Mayo Clinic, Cindy is now a Senior Content

Specialist at Wounded Warrior Project where she focuses on writing, engaging content around veteran, mental health and suicide awareness.

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

1992



Artist **ANGELA T. HELLMAN** shares her love of flowers in "All Kinds of Flower Rhymes," a playful children's book that teaches flower names through simple rhymes and colorful art. Designed to inspire curiosity in kids, it's available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



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

1993



In November of 2024, **CHRISTOPHER BROCATO** was elected as a family court judge in Suffolk County, New York.

1995

KELLY (PERSONS) BATTLES is a high school English teacher in Spotsylvania County Public Schools (Virginia). Kelly earned her MBA in January 2023 and is now working

toward her Ed.D. online through South College in Knoxville.

DR. CARLA MCCOOK earned her Master's of Divinity from Virginia Theological Seminary and was ordained an Episcopal deacon in May 2004. Carla was ordained a priest on Nov 30, 2004, St Andrew's Day. She took the position of Canon to the Ordinary for the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia on June 1, 2025.

1996

TRACY GALLIPO has been named 2026 Vermont School Counselor of the Year by the Vermont School Counselor Association. Gallipo is a dedicated School Counselor at Poultney High School in Poultney, Vt. With more than 25 years of experience, she continues to strengthen and inspire school counseling across the state and will be celebrated on the national stage in Washington, D.C. next January at the American School Counselor Association's School Counselor of the Year Gala.

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

1998



JULIANNE DIBLASI just finished her new book, an Illustrated St. Augustine Journal & Sketch Book. Two hundred pages of illustrations, trivia, fun facts, and quotes about St. Augustine, Florida, laid out in graph, lined, and blank areas for your notes and memories. Readers can test their trivia knowledge about historical figures, local street names, famous residents, and city origins. The book is available on Amazon.com.

1999

MISCHELE "GIGI" MILLER developed a love for whales and dolphins, which inspired her children's book "Riley the Right Whale and His Friend, Kyle." The story follows a baby right whale and a boy working together to save his mother from fishing net entanglement, raising awareness about endangered North Atlantic Right Whales. Illustrated by Linda Brandt and Melia Baker, the book draws from the true story of a whale named Snow Cone and aims to educate children about whale conservation. Gigi is also involved with the Riley the Right Whale Foundation, which promotes reporting whale sightings and supports conservation efforts. A portion of the book's sales is donated to organizations like The

Right Whale Festival, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, and the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve.



Florida Gov. DeSantis announced **LAURA (SAWDY) MOODY** as Judge on the 18th Judicial Circuit Court. Moody served as the Chief Legal Counsel for the Brevard County Sheriff's Office since 2019. Previously, she served as an Assistant State Attorney for the 18th Judicial Circuit, and was appointed in 2022 by the governor as a Trustee on the Eastern Florida State College Board of Trustees. Photo includes **LIA FERRANTE, '99, AMBER (PADGETT) TIBBLE, '99, MOLLY (REITMEYER) GREENWALD, '99, LAURA (SAWDY) MOODY, '99, JENNIFER (LEGGETT) GOODRICH, '99, and TIFFANY (ZIEGLER) ZINK, '99.**



After 24 years with AT&T, **REBECCA (CROSS) MORRI** has switched careers and is now working for Space Dynamics Laboratory. They support systems that enhance, reinforce, or execute commands to meet the needs and directives of the military intelligence community. 2024 was a big year, as her husband and celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary AND sent their oldest off to college.



In August, **MARY (PORTER) SCINE** was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. denomination. This comes after completing a Master of Divinity through Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Mary now serves as a Hospice Chaplain in the greater St. Augustine area.

2000



These 9 "Flaglergirlz" got together in January 2025 for a mini reunion. They met in Ponce East in Fall 1996 and 8 of the 9 were on the small hall. Four of them married other Flagler alumni and one currently has a daughter enrolled at Flagler. Pictured from left to right: **JORDAN (SYKES) WHEELER, '00, LINDSEY CHAPMAN, '01, KORA (MERCADO) STOLL, '01, LAURA (NORMAN) GREAVIER, '00, MEGAN (DALRYMPLE) D'ANDREA, '00, NICOLE (ARSENEAULT) BRIELL, '00, SARAH (BOYD) CHESTER, '00, JOELLEN WOOTEN, '01, and NICOLE (PEPITONE) HEISE, '00.**



SAMANTHA (BILLINGSLEY) GALLAGHER had a solo art show "The Little Things That Matter" at the Heller Nature Center in Highland Park, Illinois, from March 1- April 30, 2024. This show featured drawings of local insects and native plants and their importance in the ecosystem. She had additional works on display from April 27- Aug. 4, 2024, at the Lake County Forest Preserves' Dunn Museum in Illinois for the Periodical Cicada Emergence exhibit.

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



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

2001



DR. MARK BUKOWSKI was named Vice-President of Student Services at South Florida State College. He lives with his wife of 22 years,

RAEGANN (FUSH) BUKOWSKI, '02, along with his daughter Hannah, a high school senior, and his son Trenton, a high school freshman in Sebring, Fla.

2003



ANDREW GAY was recently appointed the Dean of the Belcher College of Fine & Performing Arts at Western Carolina University.



MEGAN (JONES) RICHARDSON has been promoted to President at Dynamic Corporate Solutions, Inc. (DCSI), a Florida-based Human Resources consulting firm. Megan brings over 20 years of HR experience and has been with DCSI for more than 12 years, most recently serving as Senior Vice President. She has led projects across the public, private and nonprofit sectors, partnering with organizations from family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 companies. Megan assumes day-to-day leadership of the firm.



After five years of running her own graphic design and marketing business, Sarah's Domain, **SARAH SAUNDERS** wanted to expand beyond the digital realm. That desire led her to create The Felting Box — a subscription box and digital experience that introduces people to the joy of needle felting. Each box includes materials, tools and step-by-step instruction to help makers turn "fluff into something fantastic." You can learn more at thefeltingbox.com.

2004



ANGELA (HARN) HOAGLIN, '04 married **JON HOAGLIN, '02** on July 6, 2024 in Frostproof, Fla. and both are Flagler Alumni!

1up Counseling Services is a practice based in St Augustine, utilizing confidential telehealth services. The 1up team is comprised of two experienced Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Jessica Hobgood and **BILL ADAMS.**



SAMANTHA PEACOCK PALMER has been named Chair of the Florida Attractions Association. With more than 20 years of leadership in the attractions industry, Sam continues to make an impact close to home as she oversees Brand Experience at Flagler College.

In the spring of 2025, **NATHAN WERTHEIMER** graduated with his Ph.D. in Christian Counseling from International College of Ministry. His dissertation focused on counseling the homeless population in Orlando, Florida. He continues to serve the Lord and be active in ministry in Central Florida.



SAM WIDERSCHIEIN has been a mental health/substance use RN for more than 16 years. Sam also owns and operates Aun Loon Gwan Kung Fu and Tai Chi School in Louisville, Ken. They use Chinese Martial Arts for improved physical, mental and emotional health, and have been open for almost 7 years.

2005

DENISE DENNIS is a 2005 dual major Elementary and Exceptional Education graduate from the Tallahassee campus who graduated in May 2024 from Florida State University with a Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction/ Special Education.



JENNIFER PAGE, '05, and **TIM PAGE, '05,** 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



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.



JEFF GARRISON, '06, and **MICHAEL BANACH, '09,** attended the bachelor party of **JACOB FIEDLER, '09.** The three celebrated by getting a suite at a Baltimore Orioles game.

2007



GREGORY BARROW currently works for Barnes & Noble, a job that he has had since attending Flagler, and celebrated a 20-year anniversary with the company in April. Gregory has been able to connect readers with their favorite authors through their community events. In his time with B&N, he has had the pleasure of working with authors such as Jodi Benson (voice of the Little Mermaid), Max Brallier (the Last Kids on Earth series), and Lynn Painter (NYT bestselling author of YA and adult romances), to name a few. In September, Gregory hosted an event with NYTimes bestselling author **MADELINE MARTIN,** who is also a Flagler College graduate!

SEAN COSTIGAN was named the Manager of Audit and Taxation of MaineHealth. MaineHealth is the largest private, nonprofit employer in the State of Maine.



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

ELIZABETH (KEITH-OLSEN) FILLINGAME was appointed as a Family Court Commissioner in the state of Delaware in June 2025. Elizabeth was nominated for this position by Governor Matthew Meyer and confirmed by the Delaware Senate. She was sworn in on July 11, 2025 and will serve a four-year term, with subsequent terms of six years upon reappointment. Family Court Commissioners hear cases related to protection from abuse in domestic matters, child support and misdemeanor criminal matters. Elizabeth is so grateful for her time at Flagler College and especially for the mentorship of Judge Poland and Professor Vanden Houten, which set her on a path to a career in law.



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 is known for their warm and generous hospitality.

2009

ROSALIE COCCI and **KATIE VIDAN, '13,** have established Two Girls One Market, a monthly community flea market focusing on Vintage treasures and sustainable living. Started in 2003, this market is hosted in the West Augustine area of St. Johns County and draws vendors and shoppers from all over the Northeast Florida region. These two alums have made a splash in the local community with their "Mini Flea" and are excited to see what the future will bring!

BRIAN RUSSO recently co-chaired the Planning Committee for the Development & Membership Community Symposium of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA). More than 100 professionals gathered in Tucson, AZ this past January for the three-day event discussing trends and best practices in philanthropy and fee-based membership programs. In addition to planning, he presented on outreach to underrepresented groups in the local community, membership pricing strategy, and managing a hybrid staff. He is currently serving as a member on the Program



GAGE VOORHEES' DREAM COMES TRUE

Joining the Savannah Bananas

BY GABBY ALFVEBY, '24

As a kid, it was always former Flagler College pitcher Gage Voorhees' dream to play professional baseball in the MLB. What he didn't know is he would find himself taking a different route to professional baseball by playing for the Savannah Bananas.

The 2023 grad's signing with the Savannah Bananas began in 2022 when his Flagler pitching coach, Jeff Pelkey, received a phone call. After throwing 95 innings, Voorhees wasn't planning on playing summer ball between his junior and senior season at Flagler so he could get some rest.

"But Pelkey gave me a call and said, 'hey, the Bananas called me asking about you and wanted to see if you'd want to come play for them,'" Voorhees said, adding that the once in a lifetime opportunity changed everything for him.

"I remember having that conversation with my mom. She said, 'you're never going to get the chance to do this again. I say you go for it.' So I ended up doing it," he said.

Voorhees is passionate about baseball and enjoys playing an uplifting and interactive form of the sport while traveling. The Bananas were founded in 2016 and play at the Historic Grayson Stadium in Savannah. In 2018, they fostered their "Banana Ball" format born out of the idea making baseball more fast-paced, entertaining, and fun. Players often break out into dance and the Bananas have sellout crowds wherever they go.

"Last year, I got to play in Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park, two of the biggest, most well-known stadiums that every young baseball player aspires to play in," Voorhees said.

But just as important to him is the opportunity to meet so many people, and especially have a positive impact on kids.

"We've created a space where people can come and watch a game for two hours, be entertained the entire time," he said. "I don't really think I've ever met somebody who said they didn't have fun."

One of the most common questions Voorhees gets asked is what practices are like. He said that he usually spends four or five hours a day at the field. "We still go out there, and we still have to practice. We take batting practice, we still throw bullpens, fielding practice, everything...," he said.

He shared that dance choreography and theatrics are usually learned 30 minutes before each game. "We have to somehow remember what to do ... but it's really just been a journey of learning to be comfortable with being uncomfortable," he said.

Most recently he was drafted to the Indianapolis Clowns, part of the newly announced Banana Ball Championship League (BBCL) where teams will travel across 45 different states to entertain fans. 🍌



**FIGHTING TO PROTECT
ENDANGERED WILDLIFE**

Alumna Olivia Lockett Documents South African Anti-Poaching Unit Through Pulitzer Fellowship

BY LAUREN PISKOTHY, '20

Pulitzer Reporting Fellow and recent Flagler alumna Olivia Lockett, '25, spent 15 days during the summer of 2025 in South Africa documenting the remarkable work of an all-female anti-poaching unit and their Bush Babies Environmental Program. This experience left her feeling deeply inspired.

When Lockett learned she'd be traveling to South Africa, she was in complete shock. "I really didn't think I was going to be chosen for it," she said. "But once the shock settled in, I was just really excited and wanted to go right away."

Initially, she hadn't planned to take the "Global Issues and the Pulitzer Center" course, already balancing a heavy class schedule. But Dr. Chapman, Assistant Professor and Communication Department Chair, insisted it was the perfect fit for her final semester—and that she was meant to be there. "She told me, 'There's this class, it's only one credit, you meet once a week, and you have to do it.'"

Lockett signed up. Months later, she found herself in South Africa as a Pulitzer Fellow, reporting in the wild among leopards, elephants, and giraffes.

Flagler College has been a participant in the Pulitzer Center's Campus Consortium since 2017. The Pulitzer course offers students an opportunity to enhance their engagement with important world affairs, encouraging them to report on underreported challenges facing our world. The course was taught by Dr. Tracey Eaton, who retired at the end of the 2024 academic year and is now being taught by Professor and Flagler alumnus Brian Thompson, '95, who also serves as Flagler's Director of Publications.

Each semester, one student is awarded a prestigious \$3,000 reporting grant to produce their project as a Pulitzer Fellow, based on submitted proposals. Lockett's passion for environmentalism and feminism inspired her search for a topic and ultimately secured her the grant.

She was thrilled to get to explore South Africa and encounter the incredible work of the Black Mambas up close, a group she had become enamored with since discovering them while researching underreported subjects.

"The hardest part about finding my topic was that it had to be underreported, because how do you find something that hasn't been reported on yet?" Lockett said.

She typed in keywords to the Google search bar, such as "Environmental, female women activism, animals, endangered species," and jumped to page five. Lockett knew she wanted to find a topic she was passionate about, so when she discovered the Black Mambas, she knew she'd found the perfect topic.

According to Helping Rhinos, a foundation dedicated to protecting Rhinos and a longtime supporter of the Black Mambas. This dedicated team of young African women patrols 20,000 hectares within South Africa's Greater Kruger National Park, an area that supports the largest population of rhinos globally, but also faces significant poaching threats."

Lockett was especially interested in learning about the Black Mamba Bush Babies Environmental Education Program, which focuses on educating the local youth about wildlife conservation, focusing on growing vegetables and animal welfare, and also provides food for the children in the program, according to Transfrontier Africa. ♥

ALUMNI NOTES

Committee for the May 2025 American Museum Membership Conference (AMMC). Brian also was promoted to Director of Guest Relations & Development Operations at Naples Botanical Garden in May 2025 overseeing the Membership, Visitor Services and Development Operations teams and was selected as co-chair of the 2026 American Museum Membership Conference (AMMC) Program Committee.

2010



BETHANY BRUNO was named the winner of The Saturday Evening Post's Great American Fiction Contest Award for 2026. Bethany's winning story is set in St. Augustine, Fla., and is centered around the historic 1964 Monson Motor Lodge protest, a significant event in the Civil Rights Movement. The official announcement can be viewed on the Post's website.



AMANDA INMAN got engaged to Ryan Mattern, a registered nurse, in December 2024.



In 2024, **PATRICK LAMB** returned to St. Augustine and joined fellow Flagler College alumnus Alan Bratic as a Financial Advisor at Thompson Baker Financial. Patrick previously pursued a career playing professional golf (2012-2018) before entering the financial services industry in 2018. He spent time at two large firms prior to teaming with Thompson Baker Financial as an independent advisor.

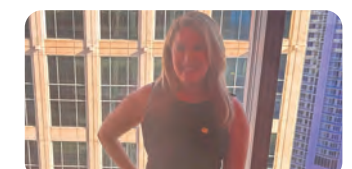
2011



MONTANA (SMITH) COLEMAN, '11, and **HUNTER COLEMAN, '12**, welcomed Lane Coleman on Feb. 12, 2024 in Winter Park, Fla.



MARY (PRITCHARD) RATHMAN married Jason Rathman on Nov. 8, 2025. Mary is also celebrating 13 years of work at Fanatics as of February 2026 and was promoted to Manager of Continuous Improvement.

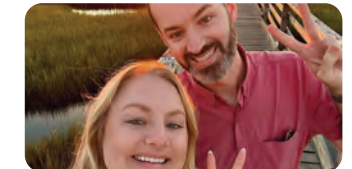


STEPHANIE SELTZER has begun a new career with Fifth Third as their Vice President, Regional Marketing Manager in South Florida.



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.

2012



JAY KELLY and **SIERRA AITKEN, '17**, are engaged! Jay popped the question during a romantic Labor Day getaway to Cape Cod. The two first met while working at Flagler College and have been inseparable ever since. They now live in Boston, Mass., with their very outgoing cat, Cosmo, who is already shopping for a tux. Jay and Sierra look forward to tying the knot back where their story began, in St. Augustine!



A lot has happened in the last year for **ALEISA MILLER**. She moved back to Florida from Texas, got engaged, married in October 2024 and in the process, she also became a bonus mommy to an amazing little girl. Aleisa also recently got promoted to

Customer Success Strategy Director, Marketing & Operations at Obility, where she has been working since 2021.



After spending eight years on a Hawaii Island exploring tropical agroforestry and native culture, while fundraising for local nonprofits, **LAUREN RUOTOLO** moved back to her hometown in coastal Connecticut, where she serves on her town's Conservation and Environment Commission. She is also the Director of Development for an international nonprofit, The Wildlife Society, which provides professional and leadership development to support recruitment and retention in wildlife conservation science, management and education.

LAUREN (STREETT) 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



MERIKA CHILDERS and **JAYCOB AMMERMAN** are thrilled to announce the arrival of their little girl, Kya Dallas Ammerman, who was born on Aug. 12, 2025. As a Leo, she's already embracing the "saint life."



SHANNON ROSE GREENE was named Editor-in-Chief of the National Culinary Review, the flagship publication of the American Culinary Federation, in February. Her passion for food storytelling began at Flagler College and evolved through a diverse media career that included roles with WJCT, J.Crew, and the Florida Theatre. Shannon's appointment reflects how her education and broad professional

experience uniquely positioned her to lead a national culinary publication.

MATTHEW HARRIS graduated in December 2024 with a Master's in Public Administration from Florida State University.



On March 2, 2024, **LAUREN (LUNA) MARTINEZ** got married at the Orlando Science Center.

2014



In July 2025, **RACHEL CLARK** was promoted to Assistant Dean of Community Living & Standards at the Flagler College.



MADELEINE KELMAN owns Homestead's Hot Sauce, a healthy sauce and seasoning company on the rise in NYC! Madeleine has recently signed a contract with the factory Bronx River Bottling, which works closely with many big brands featured on Hot Ones and Iron Chef! Madeleine has also been 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. Madeleine will be competing as a Flagler alumna and small business owner!



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

Remembering



EDWIN "TED" EGGLESTON SAGE III, '72, passed away suddenly on Oct. 29, 2024, with his wife and son by his side. Born April 10, 1947, in Hartford, Conn., Ted moved to St. Augustine in 1970 to attend Flagler College, proudly becoming its first male graduate. A longtime performer in "Cross and Sword" and supporter of local theater, Ted also worked at Marineland, WFOY/WUVU radio, and spent 23 years as a beloved tour guide with Old Town Trolleys, where he shared his passion for St. Augustine's history. He was a skier, car enthusiast, and animal lover, known for his humor and compassion. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Rebloom Center, supporting Parkinson's patients in St. Augustine.



LEIGH (CONNELLY) SKAT, '86, passed away peacefully at her home in Sanford, Fla., on Nov. 24, surrounded by her family and pets. Leigh remained connected with her close friends from Flagler, with several visiting her during her courageous battle with cancer. She was married to Michael Skat for 34 years, raising three amazing children, Michael, Cooper and Sloan, '22. She had a deep love for Flagler and her time spent there, including her reign as Homecoming Queen. Leigh had a very successful professional career, both as the CFO for multiple companies and as a finance instructor at several universities. Leigh and her family enjoyed many days and nights in St. Augustine, always with a visit to Gypsy Cab Company. A Celebration of Life was held with many Flagler friends in attendance and hosted by her sister Leslie (Connelly) Connell, '91.

2015



On May 23, 2023, **JUSTIN COUSART, '13**, and **NICOLE (KEYSER) COUSART, '15**, welcomed their first child, Quinn Apple!



On a recent trip to visit family in Puerto Rico, **CHRISTIAN GRIFFIN** proposed to his boyfriend (now fiancé!), Emmanuel Quiñones! Wedding planning will start in earnest in 2026 with an eye on St. Augustine for part of the festivities!



Ansbacher Law has announced the promotion of Attorney **HANNAH RULLO** to Partner. Attorney Rullo's dedication and legal acumen earned her recognition from SuperLawyers and a spot in the

2025 edition of The Best Lawyers® in America: Ones to Watch™ for Real Estate Litigation.

2016



One month before race day, **JAVIER CAPPAS** signed up for his first triathlon — no endurance background, no coach, just AI-driven training built from his performance data. The plan evolved week by week as Javier did. At the 2026 Alpha Win Sarasota Triathlon, Javier won 1st place in his age group. More than a win, it proved how data, discipline and AI can unlock unexpected performance — on the racecourse and in the workplace.



SORANDA LOUIS, a Nashville-based author originally from Fort Pierce, Florida, holds an MFA in Writing from the Savannah College of Art and Design and a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Flagler College. Raised by her grandmother, who taught her to read and write at age three, Soranda was inspired to write "Church with Grandma" to share the profound impact her grandmother's kindness

and faith had on her life. The book, the first in the Adventures with Grandma series, follows young Amanda as she reluctantly joins her grandma at church for the first time, learning valuable lessons in obedience, patience, courage, and sharing.

2017

JOSH RICHARDSON married Callie Wade on April 13, 2024 at the St. Augustine Yacht Club. They met while he attended Flagler and have been together since graduation.

2018



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



KATE (KNOX) PORTER and her husband William Porter welcomed their first baby boy, Miles Porter in August 2025. Kate has started a new job in investment banking! She has also started a local mom group in town "Salt Moms Social." Where they "meet

up weekly and support local mom owned businesses in St. Augustine."



JESSICA REULBACH co-founded and runs a women-owned small art business specializing in murals based in the Lehigh Valley area of Pennsylvania, Rescue Murals Co. Along with being an elementary art teacher, they make custom art for businesses and homes.



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

2019



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

EMILY LEMP is an arts educator teaching Advanced Digital Design and Animation working at Gramercy Arts High School in Union Square in New York City. Recently one of her students was selected as one of 50 out of 74,000 portfolios for the AP Art and Design Exhibition.

2020



EMILY (STACEY) CAMP and **NOAH CAMP, '20**, got married March 24, 2024 in Nashville, Tenn.



This year, **JENNA DAVENPORT** got engaged to her best friend, Patrick Wine, she received a promotion to Associate Creative Director at the University of Maine, and added another furry son to their family!



MARA (MAZAR) HICKOX and her husband, Ryan, have had their first baby, Cosette Hickox.

EMMA (BRINSON) HURSH married Wyatt Hursh on Saturday, April 12, 2025.



CARY ELLIS KEENER has traveled to 12 countries in one month and hopes to continue traveling even further. Even traveling to an island close to the North Pole, Svalbard!



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.



REV. HANNA HALLECK RICHARDS graduated from Flagler, Princeton Seminary and is now a pastor in residence at First Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Dr. Justin Forbes, '02, preached at her ordination service on Oct. 11, 2025.



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.

TAYLOR STEVENS moved to Madrid, Spain to pursue a Master's degree in Spanish with Middlebury College! Taylor has spent weekends traveling around Spain and Europe, with hopes to move there permanently soon. The professors in Flagler's Spanish program really helped make this possible for Taylor by guiding her in what now has turned into a lifelong language-learning journey. Forever a Flagler Saint!



JENNIFER VOJT and her husband Lukas Kyc welcomed a baby boy in August 2025, Kasper Kyc.

2021



DANI CREAR was a recipient of the Governor's Excellence in Service Award (State of Tennessee). In June, Danie received notification from Gov. Bill Lee that she had been nominated by her department's leadership team and selected. In August, Dani celebrated with a wonderful luncheon hosted by the Governor and First Lady at their beautiful residence. Dani has been working for the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development to promote Tennessee to visitors.

LEWNA (MILO) DAILY has been married to her husband for 1 year in November 2025. She has three stepsons and manages their remote law firm based out of Florida.

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. If you turn on News4Jax in the morning, you might just see his work.

2023



After graduating in December of 2022 with a Bachelor's in Criminology and before walking the stage for the graduation ceremony in May of 2023, **ALEXIS D'AMICO** had the opportunity to begin her career at 21 years old. She recently hit one year at her current job with the State of Florida as a Financial Crime Investigator. Even more recently, Alexis was accepted into the Master's of Science Criminal Justice program at Florida State University.

JOSH SIMMONS (B.S. in Costal Environmental Science) received his Master of Science degree in Environmental Science from the University of West Florida in May 2025.

2024

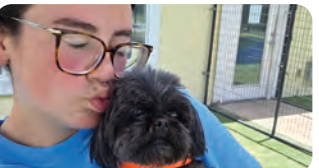


BAILEY KAISER is excited to announce that, after a highly competitive application and interview process, followed by seven weeks of intensive training in Atlanta, Ga., she has officially earned her wings as a Flight Attendant with Delta Air Lines. It is an honor for Bailey to join one of the world's leading airlines and serve as a safety professional, committed to ensuring the well-being of passengers. She is eager to explore the world from 35,000 feet in the air, meeting individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

2025



At the end of September, **JACK CLEARY** was assigned to a TaskForce team to help transition the management of the Hilton Daytona Beachfront Resort from a previous owner to the management company he works for. During his 2-week stay, Jack met with multiple company executives, VPS, owners, General Managers and various staff who were on site to aid in the transition.



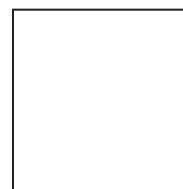
KENDALL GRECO got a job at Pet Paradise Jacksonville Airport doing social media. Kendall runs the social media and writes up doggy report cards to let parents know how their pet did. She loves working at Pet Paradise, using all of her knowledge and skills in digital media production/Journalism that Flagler has equipped her with.

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904.823.3378
legacy@flagler.edu



*Congratulations graduates and families!
Flagler College's spring 2026 commencement
ceremony celebrated the hard work, talent,
and achievements of our new graduates.*

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