BUSTED!

Hip-hop artist may perform for homeless benefit

Candidates put advocacy center stage

As the Feb. 17-19 SGA presidential election approaches, the five candidate slates show their views on the role they would play with administrators and the Board of Trustees, and sound off on solutions to improve SGA.

CARY GRAYSON
STAFF WRITER

If the five slates of candidates seeking to lead the Student Government Association agree on anything, it is that representing the student body is their most important task.

All the candidates have vowed to take a more active role than past SGA administrations is providing student concerns to the most powerful entities on campus—UCF’s administrators and the Board of Trustees.

President Talakala believes that the student body president needs to take a firmer stand on issues that are debated in trustee meetings, particularly if those issues are important to students. He cited current presidential candidates Marco Pala’s abstention on particularly controversial issues—such as granting President John Hitt a $32,000 raise—as an example.

PAM PHILLIPS
ON 6

PART TWO IN A SERIES

DEA agents discover Ecstasy lab in UCF student’s apartment

Krista Zilzzi
STAFF WRITER

Authorities arrested two UCF students early Thursday after they discovered an Ecstasy lab within their Waterford Lakes apartment.

Drug Enforcement Administration agents raided the apartment in The Fountain complex on Lake Underhill Road around 2 a.m. after a neighbor called Orange County Fire Rescue to report a chemical odor emanating from the apartment.

DEA agents found an Ecstasy lab set up in a bathroom and a closet along with chemicals and devices used to make Ecstasy in Robert Crespo’s apartment. Crespo, 21, a communication major, lived in the complex for almost two years. Authorities also arrested Robert Duplan, 23, a business and legal studies major who is not a resident of the apartment, but was visiting Williams at the time.

Ecstasy labs are commonly found in apartments and homes and can be sold as a pill, a tablet or in a gelatin capsule.

The lab was discovered by family friend, Teresa Williams, 21, a communication major and Duplan’s neighbor.

"It was a shock," Williams said. "I never thought we would have a lab in our apartment."
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Students find secret fees tacked on tuition

DANIELLE DEPARI
Staff Writer

On the sixth week of classes, freshman Josh Scholfield decided to update personal information on his PeopleSoft account. After completing the task, he submitted the recorded word and received this error message: Pezzled, knowing he had puffed the full amount at the beginning of the semester, Scholfield found a $4.2 fee for a physics class.

Scholfield is not alone. Many students do not know about these fees, which are assessed from the beginning of courses, particularly those held in computer labs, art and science courses.

Students dislike such fees that seem to arbitrarily appear on their invoices. "I couldn't understand how the fee had just gotten there," Scholfield, 18, said. "I paid the full amount for my classes initially and hadn't even received notice that I owed something further to the school. Then, I found out it had something to do with the fact that the class was linked.

Lee Chow, assistant chairman of the Physics Department, explained that in fall 2001, the department decided to link labs with classes. The department did so because labs and classes often ran on completely different schedules with completely different material.

The system worked properly until the installation of PeopleSoft last spring. After this, the program allowed students to enroll in completely different labs and classes. Then, last fall, the department decided to create a "dummy" class to combat the problem.

"We created a fake course and closed the real course. This combined students that needed to be in the lab and class into one class," Chow said.

After it was ensured that students were in the combined class, the department manually took students out and put them in the separate lab. Following this, the program charged students a $6 lab fee that should have been charged all along.

"I told the computer people to build the lab fee into the dummy course, because the same thing had happened in fall and students didn't know about the fee," Chow said.

Though Chow knew that the potential for the problem was certainly there again, the professors did not know and so did not communicate the information to students.

The fee issue affects students in a broad spectrum of fields, and some express anger at the unforeseen fee. Freshman Chris Hipier, 18, thinks UCF should have informed him that he owed money.

"I had no idea I had been charged anything additional to my account until a friend told me a couple days ago," Hipier said. "I have not been on PeopleSoft in the longest time and I never had reason to check it. I thought all the fees were charged at the end of the term.

The consequences of not paying a fee he did not know he owed bothered Hipier. "I heared if I don't pay the fee they drop me from the class, and that scares me because if my friend hadn't told me, I would have been dropped," Hipier said.

He added, "I think the school definitely should have sent out an e-mail or something." Chow said that because the problem is not supposed to occur there is no one responsible for communicating the information to students.

However, lab fee anger is not outstanding now to the campus. According to the Journalism Department, labs fees are charged across campuses not only to a class in one or several classes, but also to students enrolled in any class located in a computer lab. Various departments use these fees for computer repair and maintenance.

Expect Ecstasy crackdown here

PAGE 3

had planned to produce Ecstasy but told officers that Duplan did not know Williams was operating an Ecstasy lab in the room, DEA Agent Michael Spall stated in the affidavit. Duplan had agreed to rent the room in his name for Williams.

Two months later, a DEA agent in San Jose, Calif., discovered four shipments of base Ecstasy — a chemical used to produce the designer drug — shipped to Duplan, the affidavit stated. Duplan also ordered several chemicals and laboratory equipment through eBay and paid for them with a credit card and through a PayPal Internet account.

DEA agents say the Ecstasy lab is the first they've discovered inside an apartment in Florida. Law officials say the situation is unusual because Ecstasy is rarely used in the United States, but is usually produced in the Netherlands or Belgium and smuggled in from other countries such as Canada, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

It is much more difficult to produce Ecstasy in the United States because DEA officials are constantly monitoring purchases for chemicals used to make Ecstasy.

Duplan and Williams are both being held at Seminole County Jail without bond and will appear in federal court Friday morning in Orlando.

Officials say the Ecstasy bust Tuesday is an example of the growing epidemic of the synthetic drug Ecstasy and all over the nation.

"The drug is very popular all the way from middle school, to high school, to college, in all different racial and economic backgrounds," said David Spall, an Orange County narcotics agent.

Last year, law enforcement officials seized 25,000 Ecstasy pills — in nearly half a million dollars on the street — in Orange County, Spall said.

Ecstasy, a stimulant and hallucinogenic, usually sells for $300 a pill.

"The reason [Ecstasy] is so popular is people enjoy the effects — it enhances feelings towards others, enhances touch and taste sensations," Spall said. "People call it 'the feeling.'"

But while the drug is wildly popular, it can also be dangerous.

"The problem is you never know what ingredients are in it — it can be anything from drain cleaner to anti-freeze," he said. "The ingredient list of this drug varies widely and that's what often causes people to overdose.

In long-term use, there is evidence that Ecstasy can cause deleterious levels in the brain, which can often cause depression and sleep disorders. People who use the drug wears off, he said.

"People need to understand this isn't a nice drug," Spall said.

MTV CASTING CALL

Katie Rayt (CQ)

Kodi Hunter, 18, poses while a member of an MTV crew snaps her photo to go with her application to qualify for various Spring Break reality TV shows, MTV held casting call on campus Feb. 6.

Proceeds will benefit The Ripple Effect

Picture Page 2

homeless himself, making him the ideal choice to perform and subsequently speak on the matter.

If the expenses are approved, it would be the first allocation this semester year from the SESA Speakers Fund.

Last semester $21,000 was allotted to The Progressive Council to bring activist and filmmaker Michael Moore to UCF. However, Moore ultimately said he had never agreed to the show, and had to decline the invitation after the money was approved. SESA and local officials have no other resources to tap into the Speakers Fund, which currently has $62,000.

Hip-Hop Week will include multiple opportunities for students to help the homeless. Crespo said the event will feature local artists during the week.

This year's 'hip-hop week is to help the homeless,' Crespo said. "It's a change admission for the connect because the money comes out of SESA fund; however we will take funds from the endowment. I think we'll also have some pots up in the Student Union so that people can bring their donations."

The funds and goods raised by the event will aid the homeless through the group The Ripple Effect, an Orlando-based charity that provides the homeless with food and clothing every Saturday at Lake Eola Park. The Elements group has assisted with the organization on many occasions.

"Elements, a hip-hop club, tries to promote more positive aspects of the hip-hop culture," the group's director gives its name from different aspects, or elements, of the hip-hop culture including rhyming, break dancing and graffiti art.

"We're not about the stuff you see on TV — the naked girls, the drugs, all that," he said. "We're about bringing people together as a culture."

Crespo said.

THE central Florida future

February 13, 2003 • Vol 35, Issue 43 • Page 1

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UCF takes lead in recognizing faculty union

Only one other state university has approved United Faculty of Florida to represent its faculty

Joel Addington

When the leaders of UCF's faculty union collected faculty signatures last semester, they did not know what to expect from the administration.

As it turned out, they encountered fewer problems than their counterparts across the state.

On Jan. 25, UCF's Board of Trustees, in accordance with President John Hitt's recommendation, voted to voluntarily recognize United Faculty of Florida (UFF) as the bargaining agent to represent about 1,000 faculty members in collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is the process by which the faculty, represented by UFF, negotiates its contract with UCF. The contract stipulates terms of tenure, sabbaticals and numerous other faculty concerns.

In 2001, the Florida Legislature passed revisions that recognized Florida's education system, from kindergarten through college. Then last November, Floridians voted for more changes with the passage of Amendment 11, which created a statewide Board of Governors to oversee the higher education system. These changes caused much uncertainty about the future of Florida's public universities.

As part of the ongoing changes, Florida's public universities became, in effect, private corporations instead of state-run institutions. In turn, the faculty became "public employees" instead of "state employees."

The adoption of Amendment 11 caused other changes. Now, each university must create a "personnel program" and must legitimize collective bargaining with any unions certified to represent a university's employees by the Public Employees Relations Commission.

The certification process with PERC can take a significant amount of time. First, the union initiates a card drive. Cards are distributed and signed by faculty members, attesting that they want to be represented by a specific union. Fifty percent of the faculty signs the cards, then logically the union can be submitted to PERC for certification. However, if the union usually gets 50 percent or more before the cards are taken to PERC, once certified, PERC calls for an election. If the union gets a majority of the vote, then they become the bargaining agent.

UFF-CFY obtained signatures from 70 percent of faculty members. After finding out that 70 percent had signed the cards, Hitt recommended that the Board of Trustees recognize the union.

The board's decision effectively ended the red tape, skipping the certification process and paving the way for UFF to begin bargaining as soon as possible.

According to Jon Reiskind, president of the UFF chapter of the University of Florida, Hitt probably recommended the voluntary recognition here because UCF is growing at such a fantastic pace that it cannot afford to drag its feet on the bargaining issue. UFF, on the other hand, faces the same kind of growth problems, but has handled them much differently.

Last August and again in December, Reiskind said that the Gainesville faculty union sought a similar voluntary recognition. The UFF administration responded by insisting on an election to let the faculty decide for itself even though more than 70 percent of UFF's faculty had signed the cards saying they want to be represented by the union.

Like UCF, UFF also needs the bargaining situation settled before it can move forward with strategic planning, Reiskind said.

Elements of the plan that affect terms and conditions of employment, such as instituting untenured faculty positions for example, cannot go forward until a contract is negotiated, he said.

He also said that elections have not yet been scheduled, and might even be delayed until next fall. Reiskind called Hitt's recommendation a "pragmatic solution."

At the University of West Florida in Pensacola, UFF Chapter President Nicholas Fiorito said the Board of Trustees there also refused to voluntarily recognize the union and wanted to wait for elections to take place.

Fiorito said that many of the board members are, like the rest of the Panhandle region, very conservative and anti-union.

A few weeks ago, the UFF chapter at Florida State University requested voluntary recognition via a letter to President T.K. Wetherell, said FSU faculty union President Jack Fiorito. In response, Fiorito received a letter that said:

"We are committed to respecting the rights of faculty to vote in an open election on the issue of collective bargaining. We made this commitment to our faculty and intend to honor it. This should in no way harm our current or future relationship with the UFF as I am sure you would agree that it is important that we honor the faculty right to vote."

In other words, FSU has not taken any action.

Fiorito described the frustrating circumstances that the union has faced at FSU.

"We have been prevented from communicating directly with our Board of Trustees. I attended their meeting in May 2002 after being assured by the provost that he would arrange for me to have a few minutes on their agenda."

"Fiorito said "When I arrived at the meeting, the provost said that [the chairman]..."
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Finding out there's an internship for people like you: priceless
example of student representation. "This is a very powerful position which most of the time our president has not utilized," Talakala said.

If elected, Talakala plans to take the representative position of fellow riders through the Board of Trustees, and wants to pursue communication between SGA and the administrative body to ease cooperation between the two. Brian Battles wants to protect programs such as Bright Futures, which helps many UCF students pay their tuition, and wants to urge trustees to create a broader base of academic curriculum.

Battles also wants to ensure student participation on key UCF committees, such as the parking and traffic committee, the budget committee, and the university master planning committee, all of which receive final approval from the Board of Trustees.

"Then we actually have two students fighting for something instead of just one on the board," Battles said.

Andrew Houchins also believes it's important for the student body to participate more aggressively in trustee meetings and votes.

Talakala's two sides to every issue, but we think [the president] should take a strong stand and vote on the Student Officers' opinions," Houchins said.

And Houchins doesn't just want to vote based on his own ideas — he wants to know student concerns so that he can take them directly to trustees.

Houchins also plans to hold open forums for the students to share their ideas so that he can go into every trustee meeting with a personalized agenda.

Jeff Stepp's agenda is somewhat different — he would like to work with other students to reduce textbook prices for students by allowing outside vendors to sell books on campus.

"There's two guarantees when you go to UCF — you'll have to pay tuition and you'll have to pay for textbooks," Stepp said.

Brian Kirlew wants to work with trustees on two major issues — implementing a parking and traffic plan to stagger the traffic coming from Research Park through the campus and creating a comprehensive and extensive health insurance plan for students.

Finally, Kirlew wants to open up communication so that SGA and the administration can work together more effectively.

"With the way we've structured the processes so that as the university is changing its policies, ours will change with that, so that we won't have that gap," Kirlew said.

The candidates also recognize the importance of open and up front communication between SGA and the student body.

Talakala and his running mate, Constance Katsafanas, want to make SGA more accessible to students by publishing where SGA allocates money from student activity and service fees. Talakala also intends to create published office hours for the entire cabinet, and a weekly "Meet Your President," where students can voice their concerns and ask questions.

"We want to be accessible, and we want to incorporate everybody to let them know that student administration really cares about what they think and what they want," Katsafanas said.

Battles and his running mate, Joe Macellini, believe outside perspective offers the most effective solutions for improvements and want to create walk-on committees within the executive branch where students can offer valid concerns and effective solutions.

Battles and Macellini also want to implement an open-door policy and publicize their hours of availability so they can meet with students who have concerns about SGA.

The team of Houchins and Nathan Mitchell also recognize the importance of consistent office hours to ensure efficient communication between students and SGA officials, but aren't sure how they would accomplish that.

"We would try to make them have their office hours and keep them, but they seem sensitive to the SGA Senate... there's not really anything we could do to make them be there, other than making it more palatable that they aren't doing their job," Mitchell said.

Stepp and his running mate, Anson Cleve, will rely on frequent polls to help them assess what issues are most important to students.

They also intend to create volunteer positions to prepare students for cabinet positions to ultimately attract more inexperienced students to join SGA.

"We want to open up positions that aren't paid where people can gain experience and then step up to the next level," Stepp said.

Stepp and Cleve also believe maintaining an open-door policy is crucial so that students can express their opinions to them personally.

Speaking for the ticket of Kirlew and Kevin Ortiz, Kirlew said they plan to set office hours for the entire SGA staff centers to increase accessibility and want to reform the SGA Web site to offer students more current and complete information about events and involvement.

Kirlew also will promote and publicize the senate's open forum process that allows any student to speak for two minutes on any topic. He hopes more students will take advantage of that opportunity to voice their concerns.

Finally, the candidates have a wide range of ideas for new programs and solutions to fix existing programs that are ineffective.

Talakala and Katsafanas want to initiate a number of programs to include branch campuses in activities such as Homecoming by providing transportation to bus students to the main campus. They will push for a comprehensive recycling program on campus and will use the money earned from recycling kickbacks to restore free printing in campus computer labs.

Talakala and Katsafanas also want to improve Safe Ride, expanding the service to include shuttles that can carry more campus to popular destinations, such as expert venues and clubs.

Battles and Macellini will direct their attention to scholarships and grants.

"In the past, a lot of times that money wasn't allocated," said Battles. "We need to make sure every year that the entire budget that is allocated towards scholarships is used.

They also want to offer scholarships to students for participation at sporting events and reward them for outstanding examples of leadership.

"We want to make sure that we're rewarding students that are making a difference," Battles said.

Other programs Battles and Macellini hope to implement include a student-run parking and traffic committee, a textbook exchange to make books more affordable, a recycling program to fund free printing, and a student-wide job fair that will bring more companies to UCF for job recruitment.

Houchins and Mitchell want to overhaul the existing Safe Ride program by presenting students from across the service and negotiating better contracts with transportation companies.

Houchins and Mitchell also want to expand scholarship programs such as those around "War at UCF" who, as well as ment-based and leadership scholarship.

Stepp and Cleve want to make sure that the Late Knight program, an alcohol-free campus event held once a month, continues next year.

They also plan to eliminate duplicated programs within SGA and other student organizations.

"There's room for us to look at what kind of coordination is out there, what student government should be in the business of doing.
Other unions envious of UCF faculty’s power

FROM PAGE 4

told him there wasn’t time for UFF on the agenda and the trustees had already been introduced to the UFF. "I can only speculate as to why the FSU trustees have chosen not to grant voluntary recognition despite a strong majority of the faculty signing cards clearly indicating that they want UFF representation," Fiorito said.

Fiorito hopes FSU’s delay in recognizing the faculty union has resulted from ignorance of faculty members’ intentions. "I’d like to think that President Wayne, the trustees, and other top administrators were simply unaware that the authorization court signed by the faculty specifically requests UFF representation," Fiorito said.

"Perhaps their members do not change when they think about what the faculty wants as indicated in their signatures!"

Fiorito envies the bargaining power that UCF-UFF now possesses and warns that further delays would be costly for all interested parties.

"Like the faculty at UCF, we would like to get on with negotiating a contract tailored to our university’s and faculty’s needs," Fiorito said. "We know we can win a representation election, and a protracted campaign is simply going to delay, at considerable expense to taxpayers, FSU, and UCF!"

At the University of North Florida, UFF Chapter President Reese Fortado said he also requested voluntary recognition. The issue was discussed at the January board of trustees meeting, but Fortado said, "the subject was tabled."

After the administration paid a neutral third party to inspect the cards to verify exactly what they read and that 40 percent of the faculty had signed, the neutral party reported 61.8 percent of the bargaining unit signed cards, Fortado said.

The UFF headquarters is located in Tallahassee.

Statewide UFF President Tom Auxter, whose organization is responsible for 9,000 faculty members across Florida, said UNF President A. Herb Clevenger and two subcommittees urged the board of trustees there to voluntarily recognize the local union chapter at the trustees next meeting on Feb. 20.

"This is a telephone conference call meeting," Fortado said, "This means we will not be able to speak as we would in a face-to-face meeting." He also said there was a stipulation to the voluntary recognition recommendation: some faculty, like physicians and counselors, would have to be removed from the bargaining unit (or the group covered under the contract).

Fiorito expressed frustration at the strings attached to voluntary recognition. However, Auxter said, "I don’t doubt for a minute [the UNF-UFF’s campaign to begin] will go forward."

Auxter said that last year, dues-paying membership in UFF grew from 5,000 to 4,000. For 15 years, he said, growth was flat. The goal for next year is 6,000. It’s rational for a university to voluntarily recognize a union, said Auxter. If no nothing else, recruitment and retention purposes and the faculty’s peace of mind.

Besides UCF, the only other public university in Florida to voluntarily recognize UFF was New College of Florida. On Saturday, that school’s board of trustees voted unanimously to recognize UFF as the bargaining agent for New College faculty.

UFF-UFF Vice President and former UFF state President Reino Jools said having a collectively bargained faculty contract creates an atmosphere where everybody knows the rules. "UFF has a very positive working relationship with the [UCF] administration," Jools said.

Floridians pay the cost with bargaining of public employees in the southern United States, according to Jools. However, she said, some northern states, such as Ohio, have more favorable laws toward unionizing than Florida. Florida’s laws create an “unfair playing field.”

Bargaining between UFF and the administration will begin in a matter of weeks at UCF. "I think of this as a bridge," Jools said of UFF’s Board of Trustees vote on Jan. 25. "We have agreed to cross it together."

Candidates want free printing back in labs

FROM PAGE 6

...and what student government should be in the business of supporting," Clevenger said.

"We need a free copy service," Clevenger also said. "We want to make it as easy as possible to have students rent out their older textbooks for credit and then pick up new ones that have been recycled from other students. They also hope to restore free printing in campus computer labs.

Clevenger’s main objectives include lobbying Congress for student loan improvements after graduation and improving campus security to prevent students who live on campus.

"Students in the dorms are not safe; they’re having problems with break-ins, fights, drugs and with cops messing with them," Clevenger said.

Clevenger also acknowledges that Safe Ride, a program implemented last semester by the current SGU administration, in which he serves as student body vice president, needs improvements.

"Safe Ride worked wonderfully last term," he said. "The problem is, we have to have Safe Ride if we have individuals who are professors or staff who are changing the way the program was designed to operate in other ways."
GM Bets $2 Billion On Smaller Lineup

General Motors Corp. is spending $2 billion to bring out a string of new or reconfigured compact cars and trucks over the next few years. GM believes that the smartly designed new models will boost its market share among upscale, strapped younger buyers.

Outpaced by European and Japanese competitors and under­­ priced by South Korean rivals, GM is facing an "inventory level" crisis. In the U.S., it has generated losses of as much as $1 billion a year in recent years. GM also needs the smaller vehicles because their lower gas mileage can help offset the lower mileage of its thirstier but more-profitable large cars and trucks. The government sets fuel-economy standards for the average mileage of a company's entire fleet.

GM will upgrade its dated lineup of small cars and pickups with more-stylish vehicles offering zippy engines, better rides and classier interiors that GM hopes will charge up GM's stock. GM hopes also to fill gaps in the hot-selling segments of small SUVs and hatchbacks, along the lines of its new Chrysler's popular PT Cruiser.

Revenue Crisis Hits State, City Workers

Tens of thousands of workers in state and city governments will soon find themselves out of a job. More than 40 states and count­­ less local governments are con­­fronting the worst budget crisis since World War II, primarily due to a drop in tax revenue from activity levels of the stock market plunge. Many are warning that jobs will be cut un­­vailed to close gaping budget gaps.

Budgets are still winding their way through legislatures and city councils, so many governments haven't settled on a final number. According to a survey by the Den­­ver-based National Conference of State Legislatures, which said state budget gaps were growing at an alarming rate, eight states have initiated layoffs this year.

Connecticut, for example, has issued about 3,000 layoff notices, and could send out some 850 more by the end of June. Florida Gov. Jeb Bush has proposed cutting nearly 3,000 posi­­tions in his state. California has said it will eliminate 10,000 vacant positions and lay off 1,500 workers with more layoffs to come.

Up to 160,000 state and local em­­­ployees could lose their jobs over the next several years, or roughly 19% of the 1.5 million such workers added since 1993, estimates the Reason Public Policy Institute, a think tank. The number of state and municipal employees grew by nearly 30% during the flush 1990s.

Job Market Grows

But Lacks Vigor

While public payrolls are suffer­­­ing, the overall job picture may be improving. A surprising growth in jobs and a drop in the unemploy­­ment rate suggests demand for labor may be strengthening somewhat, though not enough to broaden the job market.

The unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage point in January to a three-month low of 5.7%, the Labor Department reported. Meanwhile, national payroll employment in­­creased by 140,000 last month, which reversed the 100,000 decline in jobs in December.

According to the Fed, consum­­er forecasts of the Blue Chip survey of economic analysis, the unem­­ployment rate is expected to rise slightly and stick at 6% through the middle of the year.

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Anyone who bought recorded music from 1995 through 2000 is en­­titled to a $20 payment as part of a class-action lawsuit settlement. The sign-up form is available on­­line at multicÛrrental.com. To get a paper form call 1-877-975-0732.

The deadline for signing up is March 3. Checks will be sent out sometime later this year, depending on possible court delays.

Recorded music products in­­clude compact discs, cassettes, and LPs. You need to have purchased products to get your check. Please turn to Next Page

What's News

In Business and Finance

GM Bets $2 Billion On Smaller Lineup

GM's proposed cutting nearly 3,000 workers, with California has said it will eliminate 10,000 positions by the end of June. Florida Gov. Jeb Bush has proposed cutting nearly 3,000 positions in his state. California has said it will eliminate 10,000 vacant positions and lay off 1,500 workers with more layoffs to come.

Up to 160,000 state and local em­­­loyees could lose their jobs over the next several years, or roughly 19% of the 1.5 million such workers added since 1993, estimates the Reason Public Policy Institute, a think tank. The number of state and municipal employees grew by nearly 30% during the flush 1990s.

Job Market Grows

But Lacks Vigor

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The Deluxe Semester Abroad

Overseas Study Is Up, Using Plush Programs To Draw Students

By Elizabeth Brandeis

A­­lready Hanna recently en­­joyed a week in the French Alps, skiing by day and dancing in trendy nightclubs after­­dark. The best part: It’s i­­cluded in her semester abroad at Boston College. "It felt like a five­­night vacation," says the 26-year-old junior.

For cutting back these days, a surprising number of col­­lege students are taking study-abroad pro­­grams to a whole new level of high­­end learning. From Stanford to Michigan State, schools are adding courses, expanding the destina­­tions and, in some cases, catering to students with resort-style extras. One school is even offering wine tastings in France.

All of this may seem perfect­­ly given today’s economy and the mounting worries about terrorism and war. But schools say interest in these programs only keeps grow­­ing, with enrollment up 10% nationally since 1991 and 55% in five years. That kind of demand has in­­creased the competition and re­­quiring pressure for colleges, which have already built fancy dorms and adjoining gourmet cooking facilities. There’s a feeling of entitlement," says Clemson. "It requires a 3.2 grade-point average to be included in her program," adds a five­­year-old student.

Programs were fairly low-key until a few years ago. Students could study ecology in New Zealand or engineering in Hungary. Since 2000, two dozen new exchange programs run in next year.

One of course, not all study-abroad programs are being revamped, and there’s still plenty of academics in even the most upscale programs. Boston College, for example, re­­quires a 3.2 grade-point average.

What’s News

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What’s News

What’s News
EBay Finds New Niche: Used Cars

By Nick Wingfield
and Karen Lindergaard

The online auction giant has kicked the tires on a new business venture.

EBay, the world's largest online auction site, is entering the car market. The company's new program, called eBay Motors, allows car sellers to list their vehicles on the site, and buyers can search and bid on used cars.

"We're looking at a market that has been neglected," said John Donahoe, eBay's chief executive. "We think there's a lot of potential here." 

EBay Motors has been in beta testing for several months, and the company said it had received more than 300,000 listings from car sellers. The listings include everything from new cars to classic models, and buyers can search by make, model, year, and price.

"The car market is huge, and it's a natural fit for our business," said Donahoe. "We're excited to see how this new venture will develop." 

EBay Motors is expected to be available to the public in the near future, and the company said it would be offering a variety of tools and resources to help sellers list and sell their vehicles.

"We're committed to providing a marketplace that is easy to use and that works for both buyers and sellers," said Donahoe. "We believe we can offer a better experience than the traditional car market." 

EBay Motors is just the latest in a series of new ventures for eBay, which has been exploring new markets and expanding its services in recent years.

"We're always looking for new opportunities to grow our business," said Donahoe. "We believe that by offering new services, we can continue to be a leader in the online auction space."
Ectasy bust sign of things to come

OUR STANCE:
Embracing unions improves faculty relations

Last month, UCF's Board of Trustees, at the urging of President John Hitt, acted in a progressive manner by recognizing the United Faculty of Florida as a legitimate union for UCF's faculty members. In doing so, UCF became the first of Florida's 11 state universities to approve the local chapter of the United Faculty of Florida.

The Board of Trustees and UCF deserve praise for working with, rather than against, the faculty here to forge a new relationship that will hopefully lead to improved working conditions, including more job security, and better pay for UCF faculty members. By exercising its power in partnership, the administration opened the door to improved relations between UCF faculty members and administration.

Sadly, only one other state university, New College of Florida, has followed UCF's lead on this issue. The administrations and boards of trustees at the state's other nine universities continue to drag their feet.

Currently, faculty members at those nine universities cannot bargain collectively with their bosses. By taking their time, those administrations create an environment in which their faculties may feel anger, resentment and even insecurity regarding their relationships with administrations.

Those nine administrations, which still have not recognized their faculty unions and continue to play hardball with them, breed ill will among their faculty unions.

Like the chapter at UCF, the faculty unions at the other universities went through the laborious process of collecting signatures from a majority of the faculty members. By doing so, those chapters demonstrated to their respective administrations that they do indeed represent faculty.

The relevance of these administrations to rightfully reward the efforts of the unions by officially recognizing them is a step in the face to the faculty members who want and deserve union representation.

Those faculty members, like those at UCF, should have the opportunity to collectively bargain. As unions have demonstrated for at least a century, when co-workers band together, they can more effectively bring about positive changes.

The administrations and boards of trustees at the University of Florida, Florida State University, Florida Atlantic University, University of North Florida, University of West Florida, Florida A&M University, South Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University and Florida International University should recognize the faculty unions immediately.

Those unions have proven that they represent their respective faculties. It is only right for the universities to formally approve those unions and give them the bargaining power they deserve.

As a result, UCF's action not only advances the cause of faculty recognition, but also provides a model for other universities in the state to follow.

OUR STANCE:

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

—RUDYARD KIPLING

Letters to the Editor

Women make their mark in technology field

This letter is in response to Lisa Peters' article, "Girls Allowed?", published in the Jan. 31, 2001, and many traditionally male-dominated fields are seeing many women. The world is changing, and women are stepping up to the plate to make a difference. It is no longer a women's issue, but a gender-related issue. Women are making strides in many different areas of life.

Women are making their mark in technology fields. In the past, women have been excluded from certain areas, but now they are making their presence felt. Women are taking on leadership roles in technology companies and are proving that they are just as capable as men.

Women are changing the face of technology. They are breaking down barriers and proving that they can succeed in this male-dominated field. Women are making strides in many different areas of technology, and their contributions are invaluable.

—MORGAN HENDERSON

Greek funding a long-debated issue on many campuses

Solving the Greek system is long-debated issue that needs to be addressed. As a student body, we need to take a stand and make changes. The Greek system is outdated and needs to be reformed. The university needs to take a stance and make changes in order to improve the Greek system.

Greek organizations are not just for fraternities and sororities. They are for all students who want to be involved in campus life. The Greek system needs to be reformed in order to make it more inclusive and open to all students.

—ANONYMOUS
America's thirst for oil

INSIDIOUS THOUGHTS
ADAM SHIVER
STAFF WRITER

War in the past had little meaning for me.

It was, in my mind, what the government did to defend our nation, others across the globe, from those who wished to harm. It was the only way to protect the democracy we hold so dear.

As I learned more about history, became aware of everyday current events and watched my best friend go off to war, I realized war had a lot of meaning for me.

President Bush claims that we are being pulled into a war with Iraq because of the threat of weapons of mass destruction. He asserts that Saddam Hussein is aiding al-Qaeda terrorists and gearing up to launch a war against the United States.

In reality, though, Bush has his own, very different reasons for his pre-emptive attack on Iraq.

The first, and most trivial, of his reasons is to finish what his father began with the Gulf War. A scary thought, but not one that is too hard to figure out. He wants to do it bigger and better than his daddy.

Another reason why Bush is pushing so desperately for this war with Iraq is that the United States has gone as far as it can with the search for Osama bin Laden and his organization and has no new leads. The Bush administration is transferring the attention from the hunt for al-Qaeda to the hunt for the supposed weapons of mass destruction that Bush says Iraq is harboring.

Bush huffs long and hard to get United Nations inspectors into Iraq to search for such weapons, but began planning a war before inspectors ever came close to wrapping up their search. He only went to the United Nations because he assumed they would not be able to send inspectors back to Iraq and hoped that would justify a reason for a pre-emptive strike.

The main motivation behind Bush's desire for war though, can be spelled out in one simple word — oil.

Oil is the make or break for Bush in all he does. He wanted to lighten environmental policies in order to extend the Alaskan pipeline and increase drilling across the nation. He also tried to allow for more drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico off the Florida and its oil supply through force.

This war is almost solely based on oil and this administration's thirst for it.

American citizens who favor this war need to analyze the reasons why they support the president's decision to pre-emptively attack Iraq. Can I guarantee those in favor of a war do not have family or friends being deployed in fight on the front lines.

If they did, they would this war, this pre-emptive attack, back the president's plans.

Gubernatorial Adam Shiver can be reached at shiver@tampabay.com.

Affirmative action in the NFL?

I THINK IT'S KICKIN' IN

STEPHEN HIRST
STAFF WRITER

This month the Detroit Lions hired Steve Mariucci as their new head coach. Though his San Francisco 49ers were recently eliminated in the first round of the playoffs, Mariucci is a proven coach with a record. He has taken the 49ers into the playoffs four times in his six seasons as head coach. He was born and raised in iron City, Mich., so he has roots in the area.

Unfortunately, many of the reactions to this move have been positive. Though the notable exception — acclaimed sports analyst and football expert, the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The NFL has come under fire in recent months for its hiring policies. Earlier in January, high-profile lawyer Cochran would criticize the NFL, teams are black. Only two coaches of the NFL, teams are black. — Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis Colts, and Hermann Edwards of the New York Jets. When you consider that about 65 percent of the league's players are black, this seems a little suspect.

Jackson makes a good point that there are qualified black candidates clamoring for a shot at a coaching position.

But is it really necessary to demand thatMariucci be penalized because Mariucci is white? The team's owners made a management decision to improve their team. Who is Jackson to question what they believe to be the right thing to do? If some lawyers decided to sue the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, it would be a crazy idea. This case is different, though. We have no legal standing to sue the NFL.

However, if we consider the president's decision to pre-emptively attack Iraq, we can make a reasonable case for this hiring decision. It is the same case: There are black coaches in the league, but they declined to appear, no matter what reason they gave.

Decisions like this and similar cases are valid. A question of qualifications and penalties for some vague violations. Decisions like this and similar questions are valid.

Detroit team be penalized because Mariucci is white? The team's owners made a management decision to improve their team. Who is Jackson to question what they believe to be the right thing to do? If some lawyers decided to sue the NFL, they would have to come from within. Teams can't beshafted with penalties or fines for some vague violations. Decisions like this and similar questions are valid. A question of qualifications and penalties for some vague violations. Decisions like this and similar questions are valid.

Steve Mariucci was born and raised in iron City, Mich., so he has roots in the area.

Of course, if you want to take over a whole country and its oil supply through force...
Knights need to take last games one at a time

Kristy Shonka
Staff Writer

Heading into this week's road games against Jacksonville and Presbyterian, it might be easy for UCF's men's basketball team to look ahead at next week's games against Troy State and Mercer. The Knights easily beat the Dolphins and the Hatters back in January, while the Trojans currently lead the Atlantic Sun Conference and UCF sits in a tie for second in the South Division with Mercer.

Sure Jacksonville has lost its past two games by a combined 28 points and Presbyterian has only won four games all year. But the

Please See Troy on 15

Knights face final North Division foes

Chris Bernhardt
Staff Writer

A month ago things didn't look too good for UCF's women's basketball team. After ending their non-conference schedule with a 27-9 loss to Florida State, the Golden Knights stood at 4-7 but with hopes that the conference schedule would breathe new life into their floundering season.

Thus far, it has. They've gone 7-2 since that point, and have won five of their last six games to improve to 11-9. Recently, UCF has played a stretch of games against members of the Atlantic Sun's North Division. Already 5-1 during that span, the Golden Knights will end it this week with games against two of the div-

Please See Freshmen on 15
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Young but talented at defensive back

Kristy Shonka - Staff Writer

If you thought last season’s defensive backs were young, think again.

That group had two seniors in starting cornerback Ananie Samuel and reserve Carlos Thompson. This year there will be just one, backup free safety Patrick Holliday.

But the Knights do have some experience coming back. Samuel is the only starter they lose and sophomore Alastair Bigby and Peter Sands both saw time as freshmen two years before starting their sophomore seasons. Sands finished second on the team in both interceptions (5) and tackles (10) for a career-high 101 yards.

"They are all run. If I can get them running in the right direction, we’ll be O.K.,” said Beckton, back coach John Fuentes of his recruits.

"You know we throw the football a lot for our first-year. Fuentes said. Parkes is also accomplished in the classroom. He is an Academic All-American and four-year scholar athlete who has already earned college credit. He chose to be a Knight over Ole Miss, Stanford and Southern Miss.

Cornerback Sheldon Shakespeare is another player who could compete for playing time next season. The 5-foot-10, 180-pound Jacksonvillian native was a three-year starter at First Coast High School. Shakespeare recorded nine interceptions, five fumble recoveries, and 10 forced fumbles. He was also a member of the National Honor Society and a mentor for middle school students. 

Edgewood’s Troy Washington was

Beckton looks for Marshall to emerge as leader

FROM PAGE 12

leadership.

LutherHughams will help his classmates lead this group of receivers that will feature two sopho­
rines, one redshirt freshman and four newcomers. Beckton said they need one or two of the newcomers from the 2003 recruiting class to come in and play right away.

"Maybe only in a limited role, it depends on how fast they come in here and pick up that system,” Beckton said.

Kruczek was pleased at the amount of talent in his newest receivers.

"This is how we throw the football around a little bit, and I’ve got to say as a whole, I don’t think we’ve ever signed this kind of quality at wide receiver,” Kruczek said.

Beckton said that physically, Edgewood’s Mike Walker and Deerfield Beach High School’s Brooks Turner have the best chances of the four to come in and play right away. Alas, Bigby Winter Park quarterback Steven Moffett, who also coached Gabriel, said Walker is further along than Gabriel was at the end of last season. Turner is a 6-foot, 185-pound explosive receiver who runs like a running back after he catches the ball. He made 44 receptions for 500 yards and 11 touchdowns his senior season. He also recorded touchdowns running passing and on punt return. He earned MVP honors at the Howard-Stark Al-Star game.

Beckton said that Chris Narsesian, a 6-foot-4, 180-pound wide receiver from Lake Howell, has already told the coaches he wants to redshirt his first season. Narsesian is noted for his speed and great hands. He was the first commitment of Beckton’s recruiting class after committing only to Hillsborough.

The Knights’ final recruit at wide receiver is Sompo Joshiam from North Miami High School. At 6-foot-4, 190 pounds, Joshiam has great height and speed and run help the Knights spread the field. He was a late commitment who chose the Knights over Syracuse and Kansas State.

If Walker and Turner do play next season, they will be competing with seniors Brandon Marshall and Al Peterson, and redshirt freshmen Andre Sumpter and playing time.

Beckton said Peterson should be a role player in the receiving corps next year, while Sumpter is an explosive receiver.

Marshall is the only other returning receiver that recorded catches last season. As a true freshman, the 6-foot-5, 185-pounder caught two passes for 18 yards. He also saw time on special teams.

Beckton said Marshall had trouble adjusting to new system last season, but gaining through practice this spring should help his game.

"He’s going to get acclimated to what we do here at UCF, I think he’s going to be a phenomenal receiver,” Beckton said.

Whatever it may be, the Knights will need players to step up and fill the holes left by the speedy Gabriel and the steady Fuentes.
**FROM PAGE 12**

**Troy State-Mercer game won't mean a thing if they don't win**

The Lady Camels come off a slightly better challenge than Gardner-Webb, but not by much. They have just a 2-13 overall record and 3-6 conference record.

Fresnedale, a junior forward, is a double-double player on the court, the guard/forward Alexis McMillan, winning record, but they had been home 85-63. Both Warren and Sheppard have played an unusually well.

**FROM PAGE 14**

UCF Coach Mike Kruczek announced Monday the hiring of Joe Robinson as defensive coordinator. Robinson replaces Charles Hall who was reassigned after the BWW season and will assist defensive coordinator Bill D'Ottavo in coaching the line.

The Knights hope he will be a late qualifier.

Robinson comes to UCF after a one-year stint at Houston where he was special teams coordinator. "They'll play Gardner-Webb on the Thursday of the week," UCF's Mike Kruczek said.

"They'll all compete for the ball. They all know how to win. They've all come from winning programs and I think that's important. They know what a championship is, what it takes to win a championship."
What to do with a Technical Major

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
What To Do With a Technical Major
February 18 (2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.)
Student Union - Key West Room 218 D

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Careers For Arts & Science Majors
March 5, 2003 (10:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
Student Union - Cape Florida Rooms C & D

COLLEGE OF HEALTH & PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Careers in Health & Public Service
April 1, 2003 (9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Workshops in Key West Atrium of COPHA Building I and II - Career Fair

SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY
Careers in Hospitality
April 2, 2003 (2:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.)
Student Union - Cape Florida Room 316C

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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A Valentine's Day to forget

**RACHEL ZAZL**

**STAFF WRITER**

As Valentine's Day approaches, junior Rebekah Lane, 20, recalls a previous Valentine's Day that ended in disaster.

"It was so perfect," Lane said. "We had been seeing each other only for a few weeks. He said he was going to stop by and drop off my gift, so he came to the door and he had a dozen roses in his hand. They were beautiful, but the card didn't have my name."

After he apologized, she walked him to his car, where she noticed another bouquet of the same flowers with her name on it. She soon found out that he had been sneaking around for the past few days with another girl.

"I ended the relationship a few days later," Lane said. "It was not worth it to set myself up for heartbreak."

It is that time of year again that single people dread and couples plan weeks ahead of time. But even though most people are reminded of heart-shaped balloons, chocolate and flowers, some are reminded of times when this day was anything but perfect. Valentine's Day is supposed to be a day of laughter, joy, lots of chocolate and spending the day with loved ones, yet there are still ways people manage to mess it up.

Freshman Madison Brown, 18, received a card from her boyfriend last year with nothing written in it. "He said that he did not know what to write."

"He said that he did not know what to write."

Madison Brown

On receiving a card from her boyfriend and year with nothing on it.

**5 ways to get a last-minute date**

"Play dumb at the gym. Pick up a wrong locker room by accident. Or pretend not to know how to use the equipment and ask a hot girl or guy to show you how. It's obvious that they already work out a lot, ask them to spot you while you bench press."

-Jen Miller

Communications

"Try laying out naked at the pool or just leave your bikini top up and go off the diving board. Scram when you come up topless and yell. Can someone help me? My bathing suit is at the bottom of the pool. The guys will be fighting over who gets to dive down and get it."

-Erica Weisbrod

Organizational communications

"Go into the lake Gator bathroom and wait until a cute girl comes in to move her stuff from the washer to the dryer. Wait until she leaves, and then put your Pringles in with her clothes. When she comes back to get her stuff and pull your underwear out of the dryer, jump up and say, 'Hey, that's mine,' and look confused. You'll definitely have company that night."

-American Jones

Psychology

"Sit down next to a booth in the health center waiting area and pretend to be sick with the same thing they have. This will form a fake bond, but hey, it's a conversation topic. Also, since they won't realize you're hitting on them right away, they'll be more likely to share stuff with you, like their phone number."

-Mike Thompson

Art

"Dude, I've picked up so many chicks at real places. Just go through the buffet line behind them and get the exact same thing they're getting, then sit down at their table and act surprised that someone else likes hamburgers with ranch dressing or whatever. It works. In the CD room on campus, one — just start talking about whatever (Oh they're buying)."

-Chris Lator

Business
A fondness for fondue

Libby Bailey Staff Writer

For those who love fondue, such as sophomore Stevie Mathews and senior Stephen Illsley, fondue makes it at home in a delicious treat.

Mathews, 19, and Illsley, 20, both tried making cheese fondue for the first time at home. The ingredients included five cups of shredded cheese, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, garlic powder, a can of light beer, apple, carrots, and French bread, which cost about $10 altogether.

Fondue is a method of cooking that uses long forks and a variety of foods, which the diners cook in a pot over a heating element. The word fondue comes from the French word "fondre," or to melt. Modern fondue came from Kofun der Euromos, developed by the Swiss and consisting of melted Emmenthaler and Gruyere cheeses with garlic, light wine, and kirsch, or cherry brandy.

First Illsley lit the fondue burner and poured in the beer while Mathews chopped carrots, apples, and bread into bite-sized chunks. While the beer simmered, they added four cups of shredded Cheddar cheese and beer to the fondue pot, according to Chef Emeril Lagasse’s Web site. Even a candle under a shallow ceramic bowl will keep a chocolate fondue warm enough to eat.

Specially fondue pots are available for as low as $38 in stores such as Target, but a plain saucepan will work as well. Mathews enjoyed the French bread cubes covered in the gooey cheese mixture.

“Everyone should have an inside-out grilled cheese on a stick. What’s not to enjoy about an inside-out grilled cheese on a stick?” Illsley said.

However, Illsley preferred aplicación with the cheese fondue.

“It’s an interesting contrast of tastes, with the sweet apple and the tart cheese.”

Cheese fondue, while high in fat, is a delicious food served with sliced carrots, apples, French bread and any other vegetables that the individual may desire.

Although Mathews enjoyed the fondue, she said the next time she has it will probably be at a restaurant since making it at home was too much work.

Illsley and Mathews next tried making chocolate fondue.

Chocolate fondue is also often mixed with dessert liqueurs for added flavor. While cheesecake, pound cake and marshmallows are great with chocolate fondue, they are served with strawberries and bananas make for healthier options.

“I love chocolate fondue, but we wanted to try making the cheese first because it can function as a meal by itself,” Illsley said.

They bought pound cake, strawberries, Soft Batch cookies, chocolate chips, caramel sauce and milk to make it. While Illsley set up the fondue set, Mathews dipped the pound cake into one-inch-square chunks. Illsley poured in a quarter-cup of milk, while Mathews microwaved a quarter-cup of chocolate chips for two minutes. The recipe also called for strong liquor, but because they weren’t legally able to buy it, they had to leave it out of the recipe.

“I wish we had had it to flambé it because I think I would have liked it better,” Illsley said.

Mathews then stirred the milk and Illsley cut the tops off of the strawberries. When the chocolate was smooth, Illsley added about a half-cup of caramel sauce. The chocolate fondue was then ready for them to dip the bite-sized chunks into the gooey chocolate and enjoy.

“I like the cookies,” Illsley said. “That’s not good.”

But Mathews preferred the strawberries.

“I love strawberries. I could eat them all day,” she said.

Although the chocolate wasn’t as luscious as the cheese, it was much less work to make, but not as enjoyable.

“The chocolate wasn’t nearly as hard to clean up as the cheese was,” Illsley said.

“Too much chocolate makes you sick after a while I guess,” Mathews said. “You can never overdose on cheese.”

Making fondue at home can be a relatively simple process with the right equipment and simple enough recipes.

“IT’s a lot cheaper than going out to restaurants and you can control all the details and customize your meal a lot better,” Illsley said.

Mathews had other reasons for enjoying fondue at home.

“It’s a great way to have a different kind of fun with your friends.”

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Cheese fondue

Ingredients:
- 4 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon mustard powder
- 2 cups light beer/wine
- Apples, carrots, french bread, etc.

Directions:
1. Add the best to the heated fondue pot.
2. Add the Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder and mustard powder.
3. Stir in the cheese one handful at a time, stirring constantly.
4. When the cheese is the consistency of honey, it’s ready, but keep stirring periodically until desired burns at the bottom.

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Bad gifts, bad Valentine's and worse memories

From Page 17

her male roommate.

"A sort of sent me on a bit of a downsward spiral for a little while," Arnold said.

Freshman Heather White, 18, once received a pair of socks from her boyfriend for Valentine’s Day. "I was just like, ‘Oh thanks.’ I didn’t give too much of a reaction because it was not too exciting."

Junior Laura Paz, 21, had a bad Valentine’s Day one year when her boyfriend broke up with her just a few days before. "Luckily, I was fortunate enough to have my good friend JJ bring me roses and it definitely helped make my day much better."

Freshman Kat Sier, 19, was not as lucky. Fenton hoped for a nice romantic night with her boyfriend and planned an amazing Valentine’s Day dinner last year for them. "Everything was going perfectly until his ex-girlfriend showed up at the door as we were sitting down to eat. She was begging for him back, refused to leave until she got an answer and instead of telling her back, he invited her in to eat our romantic dinner."

However, not all Valentine’s Days are horror stories. Despite Arnold’s breakup with his high school sweetheart, he will be spending this Valentine’s Day with his fiancee.

"It’s all about how you rationalize it to yourself," Arnold said. "You either say OK, I can’t believe that the first person I ever really felt like I loved could do that to me or say OK, from now on, be a little more cautious and guarded about things." It surely does suck, but you’re not dead and your family is still OK, so just learn, deal and move on."

Jennifer Stoff Peters and Katrina Cameron contributed to this article.

Valentine’s activities for those without dates (by those without dates)

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Live, breathe and die monster trucks — the rest of Florida does

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

"And here comes the Reptoid's opponent," Steele decla red, as a big black monster truck bumped-bumped its way ominously toward the Reptoid.

"Gravedigger!" This announcement was met by hysteria as fans jumped to their feet and cheered. Some held up "B-I-A-M-I-E-E-E-G-O-G-E-E-N" poster boards, others classified — and I gradually realized how much some people love, breathe and die monster trucks.

"Gravedigger is driven by Randy Brown," Steele yelled, provoking more applause. Randy Brown — my dad's name! I joined in the cheering, feeling immediately partial to Gravedigger.

The two mammoth monsters lined up side-by-side, facing each other. Glow-worms — the waving, wrangier-wearing country singer security personnel, my friends in my car and drove off.

After all, there's nothing like a monster truck to bring out a girl's testosterone. So last Saturday, I piled four of my friends in my car and drove off to the 7:30 p.m. show. We left home at 6:00 p.m. — along with every other monster truck fan in Florida. After being stuck in stadium traffic for two hours, there was no parking for miles — so we had to park at a school and zoomed around the track, until the mission was accomplished.

As we headed for home, I couldn't help but feel insignificant in my average, four-door Ford Taurus. However, I must admit that city life is more my style — where the Confederate flag and bush batters are a lot less common.

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For Dr. Jenkins

Your last name was the world to me! Be MINE! Happy Valentine's Day! I love you.

For David

I love you. I have been there when my heart was broken.

For Jamie

My dear Vicka,

Happy Valentine's Day. Have a great day.

For Jennifer

To my dearest Ericha,

This was the day you were born.

For Diane

3 years ago is just like yesterday.

For Kathy

I love you. We would have a lifetime together.

For Ericha

This was the day you were born.

For Robs

The best gift anyone could give me was the simple fact that you are in my life.

For Krista

Happy Valentine's Day! Have a great day.

For Victoria Babun,

You have brought so much to my life. Love and happiness.

For Brian

I wish you were always there.

For Tony

You are the reason I love so-o-o-o-o.

For Jenifer,

You are the reason I love Is do.

For Jared

MINE!

For Kimbrley

Happy Valentine's Day. Have a great day.

For Daryn:

I love you, my best friend, everyday you take my breath away.

For Dany

I will love you forever and always. Tatum.

For Jen

I always be there for you.

For Rob

I love you.

For Heather

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