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THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025 - VOLUME 39, NO. 19 - 28 PAGES

FREE



CONTRIBUTED

A CFK electrical apprentice checks an electrical panel in class on the Upper Keys Center.

College to discuss construction apprenticeships on May 14

FLORIDA KEYS — The College of the Florida Keys (CFK) invites prospective students to learn about its apprenticeships in construction technologies at a virtual information event at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 14. CFK is offering the electrical program in Key West and the Upper Keys during the fall semester, which begins Aug. 19. The deadline to apply is July 1.

The virtual information session will help prospective students learn about the trade professions, career outlooks and CFK's tuition-free "earn-while-you-learn" programs. CFK's apprenticeship programs provide education and training in all aspects of the respective trades — from conceptual to practical skills. Students are employed and paid full-time with a sponsoring employer that is partnered with CFK. They attend classes, which are

tuition-free, while developing their skills through on-the-job training with their sponsor. As apprentice students advance through the program, their progress is rewarded with periodic wage increases.

Upon successful program completion, an apprentice will receive a four-level certification by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) as well as a nationally recognized Completion of Apprenticeship certificate by the State of Florida.

Attendees of the virtual information event will receive a code to waive the \$30 application fee. Registration for the event is required.

Visit the college's website at cfk.edu/apprenticeships to learn more and to register. To schedule a personal information session, contact Marissa Owens at recruiter@cfk.edu or call 305-809-3207.

KEY WEST WEEKLY

May 8, 2025

'EARN WHILE YOU LEARN' IS TOPIC OF CFK EVENT

Construction apprenticeship programs include free tuition, paid employment



An apprentice checks an electrical panel in class at the Upper Keys Center. CONTRIBUTED

The College of the Florida Keys invites prospective students to learn about its apprenticeships in construction technologies at a virtual information event on Wednesday, May 14 at 5:30 p.m. The college is offering the electrical program in Key West and the Upper Keys this upcoming fall semester, which begins Aug. 19. The deadline to apply is July 1.

The virtual information session will help prospective students learn about the trade professions, career outlooks, and the tuition-free "earn while you learn" programs. Attendees will receive a code to waive the \$30 application fee. Registration for the event is required. More information is at cfk.edu/apprenticeships. To schedule a personal information session, contact Marissa Owens at recruiter@cfk.edu or call 305-809-3207.

The apprenticeships in construction technologies offer opportunities to help individuals train and advance

in high-wage, high-demand construction careers throughout the Florida Keys. In collaboration with local construction businesses, the apprenticeship programs provide education and training in all aspects of the respective trades — from conceptual to practical skills.

Students are employed and paid full-time with a sponsoring employer that is partnered with the college. They attend classes, which are tuition-free, while developing their skills through on-the-job training with their sponsor. As apprentice students advance through the program, their progress is rewarded with periodic raises.

Upon successful program completion, an apprentice will receive a four-level certification by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) as well as a nationally recognized completion-of-apprenticeship certificate by the state of Florida.

— Contributed

CADETS GRADUATE FROM ACADEMY

CFK holds ceremony; nine grads have jobs with MCSO



Cadets in CFK's Basic Law Enforcement Academy No. 92. CONTRIBUTED

The College of the Florida Keys (CFK) held a graduation ceremony for Basic Law Enforcement Academy No. 92 on April 30 at the Key West Campus.

Nine cadets successfully completed the 770-hour training program and, upon passing the state officer certification exam, each will be eligible to become a Florida law enforcement officer.

Through partnerships with the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, all graduates have already secured employment. During the ceremony, Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay swore in the nine cadets, inducting them into their new professions.

Cathy Torres, director of the CFK Institute for Public Safety, recognized top performing graduates. The leadership award was given to class captain Darlene Pointer while Preston O'Neill-Cottle was recognized for his academic achievement. The "Top Gun"

shooting skills award went to Victor Herrera. Gary Leo received the Physical Fitness award. The "PIG" award, which recognizes pride, integrity and guts, went to Stanley Jean Baptiste.

CFK's law enforcement vocational program satisfies the training requirements of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. CFK is accepting applications for one upcoming training academy at the Upper Keys Center. Applications are due on July 11 for Basic Law Enforcement Academy No. 95, starting in August 2025 and ending in June 2026.

More information is available by scanning the QR code.



— Contributed

UPPER KEYS WEEKLY

May 8, 2025

UPPER KEYS WEEKLY / MAY 8, 2025

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— Contributed

LADY CONCHS TROUNCE COLLIER, ADVANCE TO STATE SEMIFINALS — B1 **\$3.00**

Friday

May 9, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 92 • 16 pages

BUILDING A FUTURE



PHOTO PROVIDED

CFK apprentice Jean Rony Desire uses a saw in class on the Key West campus last year.

College to discuss construction apprenticeships on May 14

SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN

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The virtual information session will help prospective students learn about the trade professions, career outlooks and CFK's tuition-free "earn-while-you-learn" programs. CFK's apprenticeship



A CFK electrical apprentice checks an electrical panel in class on the Upper Keys Center.

More COLLEGE | A8

College/^{from A1}

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training with their sponsor.

As apprentice students advance through the program, their progress is rewarded with periodic wage increases.

Upon successful program completion, an apprentice will receive a four-level certification by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), as well as a nationally recognized Completion of

Apprenticeship certificate by the State of Florida.

Attendees of the virtual information event will receive a code to waive the \$30 application fee. Registration for the event is required.

Visit cfk.edu/apprenticeships for information and to register.

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HAPPY *Mother's* DAY

KeysNews.com

KEYS CITIZEN

Many Islands  One Voice

Weekend Edition

May 10-11, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 93 • 64 pages

\$3.00



PHOTO PROVIDED
A CFK electrical apprentice checks an electrical panel in class on the Upper Keys Center.

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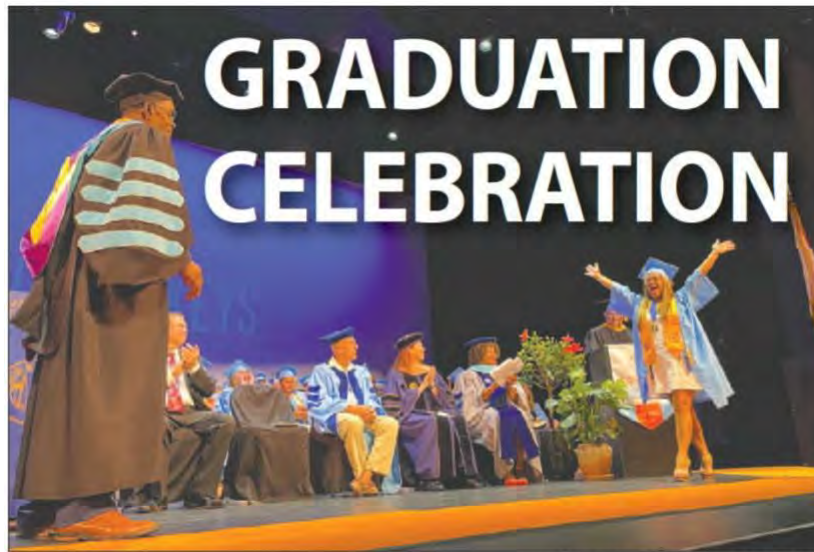
Justice Lee Isom Ian Newton



NEWTON WINS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP FOR CONCHS, LEE ISOM SCORES 3 MEDALS — B1 \$3.00

Tuesday

May 13, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 94 • 16 pages



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE OF THE FLORIDA KEYS

Graduate Tiffany Wohlers celebrates on her way to receive her diploma for an Associate in Science in Nursing degree as The College of the Florida Keys held its 70th commencement exercises on Thursday, May 8, in the Tennessee Williams Theatre.

The College of the Florida Keys graduates 70th class

SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN

The College of the Florida Keys held its 70th commencement exercises for the spring Class of 2025 on Thursday, May, 8 in the Tennessee Williams Theatre on the Key West campus.

Donning blue and orange graduation attire to receive their respective diplomas for bachelor's degrees, associate degrees and certificates were 115 students, of which 16 were dual enrollment students, earning associate's degrees prior to their high school diplomas.

Calista Ayala, who earned a Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management, opened the ceremony with the student address and presented the Instructor of the Year award to



The College of the Florida Keys graduate Calista Ayala presents the student address to her fellow graduates.

English instructor Dr. April Allen. The college bestowed the 2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award to Dr. Jack Stein Grove, a marine scientist, researcher, and adventurer who graduated in 1972.

The Honorable Edwin A.

Scales III, the Chief Judge-Elect of Florida's Third District Court of Appeal and former chair of CFK's Board of Trustees, delivered the keynote address.

More GRADUATES | A3



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The College of the Florida Keys graduated one of its largest classes on Thursday, May 8.

Graduates/ from A1

Graduates of the Associate of Science in Nursing recited the Florence Nightingale Nursing Oath, a tradition dedicating graduate nurses to their new profession. Upon passing the NCLEX-RN, the national nursing licensure exam, each will become a registered nurse. CFK's 2024 NCLEX-RN pass rate is 98%.

The full commencement ceremony can be viewed on the college's Facebook page at facebook.com/TheCollegeoftheFloridaKeys.

Also during the ceremony, the college inducted founding members into the new chapter of Sigma Beta Delta, an international business honor society.

CFK's summer semester begins May 16 and the fall semester begins Aug. 19. Information about academic programs, steps to become a student and ways to pay for college can be found at CFK.edu.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CFK

The College of the Florida Keys President and CEO Dr. Jonathan Guevera presents marine scientist Dr. Jack Stein Grove, who earned an associate's degree in 1972, with the Distinguished Alumnus Award.



KEYS CITIZEN

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Stream Scene —
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KeysNews.com

**YOUR GUIDE TO FLORIDA KEYS ENTERTAINMENT
— INSIDE AND ONLINE**

Thursday

May 15, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 96 • 32 pages

\$3.00

FLORIDA KEYS

Choral concert Saturday

Keys Choral Arts Jr., a project sponsored by Keys Choral Arts, will present its inaugural concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, May 17, at Key West United Methodist Church, 600 Eaton St. The concert is free, with donations accepted and welcomed.

KCA Jr. is the brainchild of KCA chorus member Lela Griffin, who is a graduating senior at The College of the Florida Keys' CFK Academy and a member of the KCA adult chorus.

Directed by Jordan Sommer, Music Director at Key West United Methodist Church, accompaniment provided by Tim Peterson, Music Director at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Artistic Director of Keys Choral Arts.

Seating is limited. Reservations can be made at keyschoralarts.org and KCA Jr on Facebook.

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THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025 - VOLUME 39, NO. 20 - 28 PAGES

FREE

county & state news

CFK scholarships available for fall semester

FLORIDA KEYS — The College of the Florida Keys is reminding future and current students to apply for scholarships for the fall semester.

More than 30 different scholarship opportunities are available and more will be added as they are developed. Criteria for scholarships range widely to accommodate and assist a variety of students. Scholarship descriptions and criteria as well as applications can be accessed on the scholarship section of the college's website at cfk.academicworks.com. Individuals must be admitted

to the college to be eligible to apply for scholarships. The deadline for submitting applications for most scholarships is June 1. There is no limit to the number of scholarships for which a student may apply.

For more scholarship information and guidance, contact the Shania Duarte-Vera at foundation@cfk.edu or 305-809-3153. Additional resources and information to help students pay for college, such as federal aid and tuition payment plans, can be found on CFK's website at cfk.edu/paying-for-college.



FILE PHOTO

The College of the Florida Keys has an Upper Keys location, above, as well as a main campus on Stock Island.

Paradise

PARADISE



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CFK

CFK's Spring Class of 2025 nursing school graduates pose with Shel the Tuga before the commencement ceremony Thursday, May 8, at the Tennessee Williams Theater.

Paparazzi is a look at the people of our island community enjoying all it has to offer.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The Hon. Edwin A. Scales III delivered the keynote speech at this year's The College of the Florida Keys commencement ceremony with a stirring three-point program for them to follow after graduation.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The College of the Florida Keys President and CEO Dr. Jonathan Guerverra changes the graduating class of 2025 Spring with the instruction 'Do something!'



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The student address was delivered by Callista Mia Ayala, who received her Bachelor of Applied Science, Supervision and Management degree. At CFK, Callista served as a mentor in the project ACCESS program for Students with intellectual disabilities. She has already earned her associate's degree and a Certificate in Entrepreneurship.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

Key West Business Guild President Paul Murray raffles off the prizes at the recent Kaftans and Cocktails fundraiser party at the Gardens Hotel. Money raised helps support a Key West presence at the upcoming World AIDS Day celebration in Washington, D.C.



PANTHERS ROUT MAPLE LEAFS FOR 3-2 SEMIFINALS LEAD — B1 \$3.00

Friday

May 16, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 97 • 16 pages

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Seating is limited. Reservations can be made at keyschoralarts.org and KCA Jr on Facebook.



Weekend Edition

May 17-18, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 98 • 64 pages

\$3.00

FLORIDA KEYS

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College recognizes outstanding employees

The College of the Florida Keys recognized exemplary employees at its annual employee appreciation events on April 24-25.

The individuals honored with Employee of the Year awards were nominated by their fellow CFK employees in recognition of their work with students and employees to foster a quality learning environment and to support college committees and initiatives.

Paul Ciber, CFK interim maintenance operator, received the Employee of the Year award in the Career Service employee category. Dan Brooke, CFK director of sciences and nursing, was honored with the same award in the Administrative and Professional employee category.

David LaValley, who teaches comparative religions and basic scuba diving, was named Adjunct Instructor of the Year.

The Instructor of the Year award, an honor bestowed by the students, was presented to English instructor April Allen at the commencement ceremony on May 8.



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SCENE

Stream Scene —
Inside and online

KeysNews.com

KEYS CITIZEN

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YOUR GUIDE TO FLORIDA KEYS ENTERTAINMENT
— INSIDE AND ONLINE

Thursday

May 22, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 101 • 32 pages

\$3.00

FLORIDA KEYS

PHOTO
PROVIDED
Cadets
in CFK's
Basic Law
Enforcement
Academy
No. 92.



CFK graduates Basic Law Enforcement Academy No. 92

The College of the Florida Keys recently held a graduation ceremony for Basic Law Enforcement Academy No. 92 at the Key West campus. Nine cadets successfully completed the 770-hour training program and, upon passing the State Officer Certification Exam, each will be eligible to become a Florida Law Enforcement Officer.

Through partnerships with the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, all graduates have already secured employment. During the ceremony, Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay swore in nine cadets inducting

them into their new professions.

Cathy Torres, CFK Director of the Institute for Public Safety, recognized top performing graduates with accolades. The leadership award was given to class captain Darlene Pointer while Preston O'Neill-Cottle was recognized for his academic achievement. The "Top Gun" shooting skills award went to Victor Herrera and Gary Leo received the Physical Fitness award. The "PIG" award, which recognizes pride, integrity, and guts, went to Stanley Jean Baptiste.

CFK scholarships available for fall semester

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There are more than 30 different opportunities available and more will be added as they are developed. Criteria for scholarships range widely to accommodate and assist a variety of students. Scholarship descriptions and criteria as well as applications can be

accessed on the scholarship section at cfk.academicworks.com.

Individuals must be admitted to the college to be eligible to apply for scholarships. The deadline for submitting applications for most scholarships is June 1.

For information, contact the Shania Duarte-Vera, Coordinator of Scholarships and Donor Relations, at foundation@cfk.edu or [305-809-3153](tel:305-809-3153).

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THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025 - VOLUME 39, NO. 21 - 28 PAGES

FREE

College graduates 70th class

STOCK ISLAND — The College of the Florida Keys held its 70th commencement exercises for the spring Class of 2025 on Thursday, May 8, in the Tennessee Williams Theatre on the main college campus.

Donning blue and orange graduation attire to receive their respective diplomas for bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees and certificates were 115 students, of which 16 were dual enrollment students, earning associate's degrees prior to their high school diplomas.

Calista Ayala, who earned a bachelor of applied science in supervision and management, opened the ceremony with the student address and presented the Instructor of the Year award to English instructor April Allen. The college bestowed the 2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award to Jack Stein Grove, a marine scientist, researcher and adventurer from Tavernier who graduated in 1972.

The Honorable Edwin A. Scales III, chief judge-elect of Florida's 3rd District Court of Appeal and former chair of CFK's Board of Trustees, delivered the keynote address.

Graduates of the associate of science in nursing program recited the Florence Nightingale Nursing Oath, a tradition dedicating graduate nurses



PETER ARNOW/CONTRIBUTED

The College of the Florida Keys graduated one of its largest classes on Thursday, May 8.



CFK/CONTRIBUTED

The College of the Florida Keys graduate Calista Ayala presents the student address to her fellow graduates.

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CFK/CONTRIBUTED

Graduate Tiffany Wohlers celebrates on her way to receive her diploma for an associate in science in nursing degree as the College of the Florida Keys held its 70th commencement exercises on Thursday, May 8, in the Tennessee Williams Theatre.

The full commencement ceremony can be viewed on the college's Facebook

page at facebook.com/TheCollegeoftheFloridaKeys.



PRINCIPAL
DR. JA-RONIKA
VELDHEER

Congratulations

COLLEGE OF THE FLORIDA KEYS ACADEMY

INAUGURAL CLASS OF 2025

Dear Graduating Class of 2025,

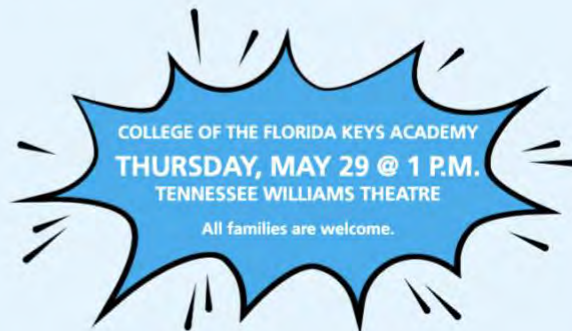
Congratulations! Today is a momentous occasion, not only for each of you but for The College of the Florida Keys Academy as a whole. As the inaugural graduating class, you stand as pioneers— setting the foundation for generations of students who will follow in your footsteps. Your hard work, dedication, and commitment have brought you to this milestone, and you should be immensely proud

Your journey has been one of perseverance and passion. You have embraced challenges, discovered new possibilities, and shaped a legacy that will be remembered for years to come. Your achievements are a testament to the bright future that lies ahead, and I have no doubt that you will go on to make a profound impact on your chosen paths.

As you embark on your next adventures, whether pursuing higher education, beginning careers, or exploring new horizons, carry with you the lessons learned, the friendships made, and the values instilled during your time at The College of the Florida Keys Academy. You are leaders, innovators, and trailblazers, and the world is waiting for all that you will accomplish.

Congratulations once again, Class of 2025! May your future be filled with success, fulfillment, and boundless opportunities.

Dr. Ja-Ronika Veldheer
Principal, The College of the Florida Keys Academy





Lela Jeanette Griffin



Charlotte Johnson



Sophia Knowles



Wesley Kulaga



Jadyn Elisabeth Ray



Wyatt C Rhodes



Michael Vincent Salata



Noah Edward Schneider



Ronan Shea



Nina Simone Ward

KONK Life

The little network with a BIG VOICE.

CFK PRESIDENT GUEVERRA: MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE OF SERVICE MEMBERS, LATE U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS SERGEANT FRANK TOPPINO

KONK LIFE EDITOR — MAY 24, 2025

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CFK President Gueverra: Memorial Day Remembrance of Service Members, late U.S. Army Air Corps Sergeant Frank Toppino

KEY WEST, FL, May 22, 2025— The College of the Florida Keys honors veterans and military service men and women each Memorial Day and Veterans Day through a "salute" from CFK President and CEO Dr. Jonathan Gueverra.

CFK President Dr. Jonathan Gueverra's 2025 Memorial Day Salute

"As we prepare to usher in the unofficial start of summer with backyard barbecues, boating, and fireworks, I ask the community to join the CFK Family to reflect on why this day is important. Memorial Day is a time to honor the memories of those who died for our country. It is a time for heroes, both those who have fallen and those who are still living. We thank our military, as well as law enforcement officers, healthcare professionals, and other first responders for working tirelessly to protect American lives.

CFK is grateful to all service men and women and their families for their commitment and sacrifices, and for their continued service to protect our lives and our freedom. Over the years, the College has benefitted from the contributions of many veterans. Each one deserves special recognition. This Memorial Day, I salute the late local legend "Mister Frank" Toppino— the former president of Charley Toppino and Sons, former member of the College's Board of Trustees, and Chair Emeritus of the CFK Foundation, among many other titles. But before Frank became an integral member of the CFK Family and Keys' community, he served in the United States Army Air Corps for four years during World War II. Although he wanted to be a pilot, he fondly recalled his time as a Technical Sergeant stationed in Kunming, China.

BBAS ARE BACK BUBBAS ARE BACK BUBBAS ARE BACK
NOMINATE NOMINATE NOMINATE NOMINATE
ARE BACK BUBBAS ARE BACK BUBBAS ARE BACK

NOMINATIONS **MAY 29**
UNDERWAY **JUNE 15**

SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITES ►



He deployed with 13,000 other military members, unknowing of their destination, on a ship that routed through Australia and India before arriving in China. Frank supervised a team of six people that worked on radio communications and data collection in an area that included two weather stations in Tibet and Siberia. If it were not for his family business responsibilities at home in Key West, Frank says that he would have continued his military service beyond the conclusion of the war. Since then, Frank contributed to society in many other ways, particularly through his service at the College as well as the Military Affairs Committee of Key West, Key West Chamber of Commerce, the Housing Authority of Key West, Florida Transportation Builders Association, and the Florida Keys Children's Shelter.

In 1980, Frank was appointed to the College's Board of Trustees and served for nearly a decade including two stints as the chair. Approximately half-way through his tenure on the College's governing board, he followed in the footsteps of his brother Philip and joined the CFK Foundation Board of Directors. As the College's direct-support organization, the CFK Foundation cultivates funds for student scholarships and programs. Frank served as the Chair of the CFK Foundation multiple times. In recognition of decades of dedicated leadership as well as financial contributions to support student success, Frank was presented the first and only "FKCC Legacy Award" in 2011 and was named Chair Emeritus of the CFK Foundation in 2014, upon his retirement from the board.

KEYS WEEKLY

COLLEGE OF THE FLORIDA KEYS PRESIDENT OFFERS MEMORIAL DAY MESSAGE SALUTING THE-LATE FRANK TOPPINO

By **Contributed** - May 26, 2025



Editor's note: The following is a Memorial Day message from College of the Florida Keys President Jonathan Gueverra

As we prepare to usher in the unofficial start of summer with backyard barbecues, boating, and fireworks, I ask the community to join the CFK Family to reflect on why this day is important. Memorial Day is a time to honor the memories of those who died for our country. It is a time for heroes, both those who have fallen and those who are still living. We thank our military, as well as law enforcement officers, healthcare professionals, and other first responders for working tirelessly to protect American lives.



KEYS CITIZEN

Many Islands  One Voice



Stream Scene —
Inside and online

KeysNews.com

**YOUR GUIDE TO FLORIDA KEYS ENTERTAINMENT
— INSIDE AND ONLINE**

Thursday

May 29, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 106 • 32 pages

\$3.00

Florida Keys Academy CLASS OF 2025



Lola Jeanette Griffin



Tristan Hill



Charlotte Johnson



Sophia Knowles



Wesley Kulaga



Jady Elisabeth Ray



Wyatt C Rhodes



Michael Vincent Salata



Noah Edward Schneider



Nina Simone Ward



Ronan Shea



Evan Sipe

Graduation Photos supplied by the school.



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Florida Keys Academy **CLASS OF 2025**



Graduation Photos supplied by the school.



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YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO FLORIDA KEYS SPORTS — INSIDE AND ONLINE

The 2025 All-Monroe County Lacrosse Players of the Year
 PAGES 10-13
 Key West's **Bearina Mercler** Coral Shores' **Brock Bynum**
 Also Inside:
 All County Lacrosse Teams
 Girls: page 14 | Boys: page 15

Weekend Edition

May 31-June 1, 2025 • Vol. 149 No. 108 • 64 pages

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FLORIDA KEYS

CFK recognizes outstanding employees

The College of the Florida Keys recently recognized exemplary employees at its annual employee appreciation events.

The individuals honored were nominated by their fellow CFK employees in recognition of their work with students and employees to foster a quality learning environment and to support college committees and initiatives.

Paul Ciber, CFK Interim Maintenance Operator, received the “Employee of the Year” award in the Career Service

employee category. Dan Brooke, CFK Director of Sciences and Nursing, was honored with the same award in the Administrative and Professional employee category. CFK Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Monekka Munroe presented the “Adjunct Instructor of the Year” to Dr. David LaValley, who teaches Comparative Religions and Basic Scuba Diving.

The “Instructor of the Year” award, an honor selected by the students, was presented to CFK English instructor Dr. April Allen.



THE WEEK TO COME

Mermaids, one-milers, and more set to join CFK's Swim Around Key West on June 14

SCORE STAFF

Solo swimmers, relay teams and even “mermaids” can embark on a one-of-a-kind in-water adventure Saturday, June 14 — a 12.5-mile open-water swimming race in both Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean waters — on a course that circles the island of Key West.

Entrants in The College of the Florida Keys’ annual Swim Around Key West can register as solo competitors or in relay teams of two to six swimmers with or without fins. The race also is open to swimmers with monofins or mermaid tails.

Participants vie for awards in age categories ranging from 12 and younger to 70 and older.

Sanctioned by the World Open Water Swimming Association, the 2025 swim will include an 8:30 a.m. final check-in and 9 a.m. start at Higgs Beach, at 1000 Atlantic

Blvd. on the Atlantic Ocean.

The 12.5-mile clockwise route around Key West takes participants past island landmarks that include Mallory Square, the Southernmost Point bouy and Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park. Competitors will end where they began at Higgs Beach.

Each swimmer or team must provide a support crew and a kayak or boat to accompany them around the island. Lifeguards and kayaks will be positioned throughout the course for the safety of participants.

Swimmers who prefer a shorter challenge can participate in 800-yard, 1-mile, 2-mile and 6.2-mile (10K) competitions in the Atlantic waters off Higgs Beach. Following courses marked with poles or buoys, the shorter races start at 9 a.m. Saturday.

A variety of events

are planned beginning on Friday, June 13, with a packet pick up and a chance to watch mermaids as well as get a chance to transform into a mermaid/merman. On Sunday, June 15, there is a USA-sanctioned swim meet at the CFK Aquatic Center.

All participants must register by Friday, June 15. The entry fee for the 12.5-mile race is \$170 per solo swimmer and \$260 to \$620 per relay team, depending on the number of team members. Participants with a monofin or mermaid tail pay \$170 per person. Entry fee for the 6.2-mile race is \$100 per person, and each shorter race is \$45 per person. Discounts on solo swimmers’ fees are available for United States Masters Swimming and USA Swimming members.

For event information and registration, visit <http://swimaroundkeywest.org> or call [305-809-3562](tel:305-809-3562).



Graduate Tiffany Wohlers celebrates on her way to receive her diploma for an associate in science in nursing degree as The College of the Florida Keys held its 70th commencement exercises on Thursday, May 8, in the Tennessee Williams Theatre.

Photo provided by The College of the Florida Keys

KEYS WEEKLY

UPPER KEYS BPW DOLES OUT SCHOLARSHIPS, GIVES \$10,000 TO DOMESTIC ABUSE SHELTER

By **Contributed** - June 3, 2025



Share



BPW president Patricia Milian, left, and Jill Kuehnert, right, present a \$10,000 check to Domestic Abuse Shelter CEO Sheryl Schwab.

More than 50 Upper Keys Business and Professional Women (BPW) members and guests gathered at the Crooked Palm Cabana in Tavernier on May 21 for the organization's annual meeting and installation of its 2025-26 board of directors.

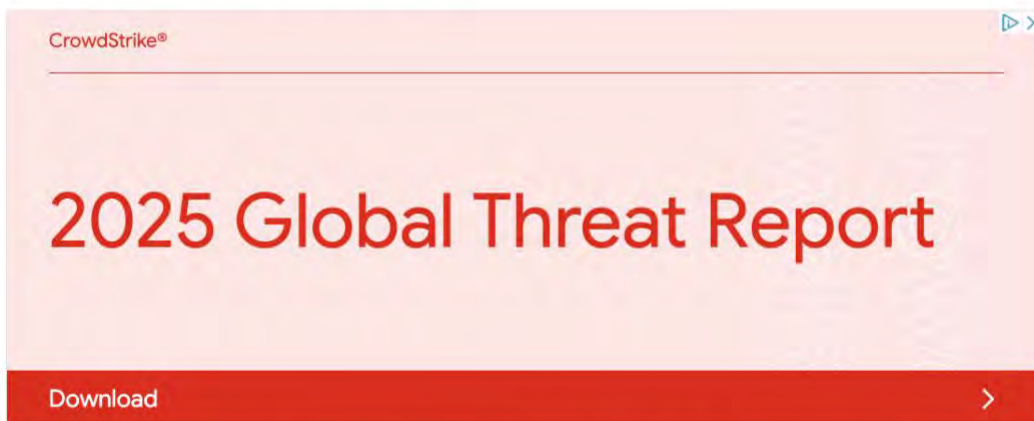
During the event, the local women's organization also awarded close to \$6,000 in scholarships to local working women and presented a \$10,000 donation to the Monroe County Domestic Abuse Shelter in support of its new emergency shelter project.

...

In addition, three adult women's scholarships were awarded to:

- Insurance professional Mary Houston, to pursue an associate in insurance account management designation from the Florida Association of Insurance Agents.
- Renee Parker, to assist in transitioning to a new career as a certified X-ray technologist through a program at Miami-Dade College.
- Firefighter and paramedic Mia Ruiz, to pursue an associate degree in emergency medical services at the College of the Florida Keys.

"We received so many strong applications this spring," said Christina Teasley, Upper Keys BPW scholarship chair. "Fortunately, thanks to our endowment fund at the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys, we had almost twice as much money to award this time than ever before. It's an honor to be able to empower so many local women to achieve their career goals."



The new Upper Keys Business and Professional Women board of directors.

BPW donation to sponsor business center at new DAS shelter



CFK'S Weekley receives scholar award

CITIZEN STAFF

Dr. Emily Schulten Weekley, an English professor at The College of the Florida Keys, has received a Fulbright U.S.



Weekley

Scholar Program award in Literature and Creative Writing for the 2025-2026 academic year from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

Weekley's project will encompass teaching and research in Hungary during the spring 2026 semester. Weekley will teach two courses on bachelor's and master's degree levels, a seminar on creative writing focusing on poetry and another titled Teaching Literature and American Children's Literature, in the Department of Literatures and Cultures within the Institute of English Studies, University of Pécs, Hungary. The research project

More WEEKLEY | A3

Weekley/*from A1*

Weekley will pursue centers on Hungarian folk and fairy tales and their adaptation in the tradition of generational narrative.

Weekley, who was named the 2024 Key West Poet Laureate, is a nationally recognized poet and author of three collections of poetry. Her work has been published widely in prominent literary journals. Her accolades include the 2024 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship, the 2023 White Pine Press Poetry Prize, and the 2023 Geri DiGiorno Prize.

"This competitive award is a life-changing honor recognizing Dr. Weekley's remarkable talent and accomplishments as a poet, writer and educator. She is committed to nurturing future generations of writers," said Dr. Jonathan Gueverra, CFK President and CEO. "She is an exemplary faculty member and will represent The College of the Florida Keys well in Hungary."

Fulbright U.S. Scholars are faculty, researchers, administrators, and

established professionals teaching or conducting research in affiliation with institutes abroad. Fulbright Scholars engage in cutting-edge research and expand their professional networks, often continuing research collaborations started abroad and laying the groundwork for forging future partnerships between institutions. Upon returning to their home countries, institutions, labs, and classrooms, they share their stories and often become active supporters of international exchange, inviting foreign scholars to campus and encouraging colleagues and students to go abroad.

Since 1946, the Fulbright Program has provided more than 400,000 talented and accomplished students, scholars, teachers, artists and professionals of all backgrounds with the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research abroad. Fulbrighters exchange ideas, build people-to-people connections, and work to address complex global challenges. Notable Fulbrighters include 62 Nobel Laureates, 90 Pulitzer Prize winners, 82 MacArthur Fellows, 41 heads of state or

government and thousands of leaders across the private, public and non-profit sectors.

More than 800 individuals teach or conduct research abroad through the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program annually. In addition, more than 2,000 Fulbright U.S. Student Program participants — recent college graduates, graduate students and early career professionals — participate in study/research exchanges or as English teaching assistants in local schools abroad each year.

Fulbright is a program of the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. government. Participating governments and host institutions, corporations and foundations around the world also provide direct and indirect support to the program, which operates in more than 160 countries worldwide.

In the United States, the Institute of International Education implements the Fulbright U.S. Student and U.S. Scholar Programs on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. For information about the Fulbright Program, visit fulbrightprogram.org.

KEY WEST WEEKLY

June 5, 2025

CFK ACADEMY GRADUATES INAUGURAL CLASS

10 seniors receive diplomas;
4 also leave with associate's degree



The College of the Florida Keys celebrated the first graduation of the CFK Academy on May 29 in the Tennessee Williams Theatre on the Key West campus. The event was a milestone for the college's tuition-free public charter high school, which opened in August 2023 and earned an "A" grade from the Department of Education in its first year.

Ten graduates donned blue gowns to receive high school diplomas in the ceremony presided over by CFK Academy Principal Ja-Ronika Veldheer, who is also the college's vice president of secondary education. Four high school graduates had already received associate in arts degrees at the college's May 8 commencement ceremony.

Salutatorian Lela Griffin and valedictorian Wesley Kulaga addressed their fellow graduates with memories of their shared high school experience and inspiration for their futures. Graduate Wyatt Rhodes gave the student reflection and presented the Teacher of the Year award to Kelly Hughes, who teaches math and digital media. Wendy McPherson, founding CFK Academy principal, delivered the keynote address.

The CFK Academy focuses on college and career readiness with curriculum centered on science, technology,

1. CFK Academy Principal Ja-Ronika Veldheer and college President Jonathan Gueverra congratulate the graduates after they turn their tassels.

2. Valedictorian Wesley Kulaga addresses his fellow graduates.

3. CFK Academy Principal Ja-Ronika Veldheer, left, and graduate Wyatt Rhodes, right, present Kelly Hughes, center, with the Teacher of the Year award.

4. From left, founding CFK Academy Principal Wendy McPherson congratulates graduate Ninasimone Ward along with current Principal Ja-Ronika Veldheer and college President Jonathan Gueverra. CONTRIBUTED

engineering, and math and career technical education. Through the college's dual enrollment program, students can graduate with a high school diploma as well as an associate degree, certificate and/or industry certification.

A waitlist is available for grades nine through 12 for the 2025-26 school year. More information is at cfk.edu/cfkacademy.

— Contributed

Paradise

PARADISE



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The College of the Florida Keys President and CEO Dr. Jonathan Guevera addresses the first graduating class of the CFK Academy on the stage of the Tennessee Williams Theater.

Paparazzi is a look at the people of our island community enjoying all it has to offer.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW
Dr. Ja-Ronika Veldhoera is the principal of the CFK Academy.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

From left, George Fernandez, one of the driving forces behind Summer Fringe; Rebecca Tomlinson, Fringe's Managing Artistic Director, with Renne Marie (aka Ervin Tumms), who is the choreographer for 'Beehive' and the creator of the Aqua Benefit Drag Show fundraiser, are seen with Aramis Ikatu the director of 'Beehive, the '60s Musical.'



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

Members of the Key West High School Band were treated recently to see the Broadway tour of 'Stomp,' thanks to the generosity of Keys children arts booster George Fernandez. The fantastic performance closed the successful season of the Tennessee Williams Theatre.



PHOTO BY PETER ARNOW

The 10 graduating members of the inaugural Class of 2025 of the CFK Academy pose on the steps of their new building on the campus of The College of the Florida Keys.

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business news

BPW awards local scholarships

TAVERNIER — Upper Keys Business and Professional Women presented local scholarships on May 21 during the organization's annual meeting and board installation.

Five scholarships ranging from \$775 to \$1,500 each were presented to Upper Keys working women. Two of the five recipients qualified for a BPW's new Empowered Woman Scholarship, which requires a course of study that supports the BPW public policy platform. The platform's three planks encompass economic equity, access to healthcare and equitable voting rights for women.

The Empowered Woman Scholarships were awarded to financial advisor Alissa Reckard, who is pursuing a Behavioral Financial Advisor designation to better understand how emotions and behavioral patterns impact her clients' financial decisions, and registered nurse Kerry Biondoletti, who is seeking a Family Nurse Practitioner specialization to expand healthcare options for local families.

In addition, Adult Women's Scholarships were awarded to insurance professional Mary Houston, who is seeking an Associate in Insurance Account Management designation from the Florida Association of Insurance Agents; Renee Parker, who is transitioning to a new career as a certified X-ray technologist through a program at Miami-Dade College; and firefighter/paramedic Mia Ruiz, who is pursuing an associate's degree in Emergency Medical Services at the College of the Florida Keys.

"We received so many strong applications



CONTRIBUTED

From left, Patricia Milian, Upper Keys BPW president; Christina Teasley, Upper Keys BPW scholarship chair; scholarship recipients Kerry Biondoletti, Alissa Reckard and Mia Ruiz; and Jill Kuehnert, Upper Keys BPW immediate past president.

this spring," said Christina Teasley, Upper Keys BPW scholarship chair. "Fortunately, thanks to our endowment fund at the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys, we had almost twice as much money to award this time than ever before. It's an honor to be able to empower so many local women to achieve their career goals."

Also at the event, the organization installed its 2025-2026 board of directors. The new officers are President Patricia Milian of Key

Largo, President-Elect Bonnie Barnes of Key Largo, Treasurer Ilja Chapman of Key Largo, Secretary Elizabeth Brown of Tavernier, Vice President of Hospitality Bernice Dionne of Tavernier, Vice President of Membership Violet Wahba of Key Largo, Vice President of Programs Lauren Zelt of Key Largo, Director Victoria Leonard of Key Largo and Director Amy Young of Key Largo.

To learn more about the organization's mission and programs, visit upperkeywbpw.org.



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**YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO FLORIDA
KEYS SPORTS — INSIDE AND ONLINE**

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Professor named a Fulbright Scholar

Emily Schulten Weekley, an English professor at The College of the Florida Keys, has received a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award in Literature and Creative Writing for the 2025-2026 academic year from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.



Weekley

Weekley's project will encompass teaching and research in Hungary during the spring 2026 semester. Weekley will teach two courses on bachelor's and master's degree levels, a seminar on creative writing focusing on poetry and another titled "Teaching Literature and American Children's Literature" in the Department of Literatures and Cultures within the Institute of English

Studies, University of Pécs, Hungary. The research project she will pursue centers on Hungarian folk and fairy tales and their adaptation in the tradition of generational narrative. Weekley, who was named the 2024 Key West Poet Laureate, is a nationally recognized poet and author of three collections of poetry. Her accolades include the 2024 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship, the 2023 White Pine Press Poetry Prize and the 2023 Geri DiGiorno Prize. Since 1946, the Fulbright Program has provided more than 400,000 students, scholars, teachers, artists and professionals with the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research abroad. For more information about the Fulbright Program, visit <https://fulbrightprogram.org>.

PICTURES OF THE WEEK



PHOTOS BY J.W. COOKE/SCORE
A young swimmer works to perfect her breaststroke at The College of the Florida Keys Aquatic Center.



One of the most physically intensive strokes is the butterfly, shown here by members of the Bone Island Swim Club during an intrasquad meet at The College of the Florida Keys pool. In conjunction with the 29th annual College of the Florida Keys Swim Around Key West, which will be held on Saturday, June 14, Bone Island will host its annual USSSA Swim Meet on Sunday, June 15, at the Aquatic Center on the CFK campus.



The 12U members of the Bone Island Swim team take to the lanes during during the backstroke as part of an intrasquad meet at The College of the Florida Keys pool. It is in preparation for the June 15 USSSA Swim Meet hosted the day after the CFK Swim Around Key West.



J.W. COOKE/SCORE

Young swimmers make their way through the 'tunnel' of older swimmers and family members following a Bone Island Meet at The College of the Florida Keys Aquatic Center. Bone Island will host its annual USSA meet on Sunday, June 15, which is part of the CFK Swim Around Key West two-day event starting on Saturday, June 14, which is the main event.

