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For newsletter submissions, please contact Angela Walters at awalters13@hccfl.edu. The Raptor is published on the third week of each month.
SGA Happenings

By Anabeatriz Fuentes

A new semester means even better events! This year SGA has added a lot of new events for students such as the Welcome Back Bash, Club Rush, Food Trucks and Movie Night.

We kicked off the semester with the Welcome Back Bash and Club Rush. A live DJ played at the bash while clubs recruited members and SGA gave away goodie bags that included coffee mugs so students can enjoy the free coffee all semester long. Students also got the opportunity to get caricatures, grab some lunch and my favorite, ice cream!

Next, food trucks will be on campus twice a month - our first food trucks came by on Wednesday, September 4th and students got to choose from American and Indian cuisines along with a Teaki bar.

SGA hosted its first movie night on Thursday, August 22nd. On this lovely evening, students got to enjoy watching The Hangover Part III. The next movie nights will be hosted by different clubs to help fundraise to bring even more events for students.

This past September 11th, SGA decorated the Hawk’s Nest with flags, timelines and photos from September 11, 2001 as well as information from the 9/11 memorial. This program had a quiz for prizes from the actual 9/11 memorial that the SGA Executive Board purchased when they went to visit the memorial during a recent leadership conference to NYC.

There’s so much more going on around campus - SGA has really stepped it up this semester! Coming up, we have a trip to the Southern Florida and Holocaust Museums, a trip to the Book of Mormon, more food trucks and the next Movie Night hosted by LASA, Monsters University will be playing.
Cockroach Bay Excursions

By Sean Nordquist

As I maneuver the boat at idle speed into the channel leaving Cockroach Bay, the questions from my passengers are already flying fast and furious.

“Are we going to see any sharks?” Answer: “If we’re lucky!”

“What if I fall in the water?” Answer: “You have a life jacket, but you could probably stand up.”

“What’s that bird over there?” Answer: “That’s a cormorant.”

I grin and hit the accelerator, bringing the Limulus up onto a plane and heading out into Tampa Bay. I hear the shrieks of laughter and excitement as the brackish water sprays up from the front-mounted Yamaha engine. I am only doing about ten knots (roughly 11-12 miles per hour), but it feels like flying. The day is beautiful and sunny, and the sea air is refreshing even in the heat of the extended summer. I turn out of the channel and cut the engine. The looks on the faces of the 6th graders from Alafia Elementary school range from excited anticipation to an uncertain wariness.

Pete Rossi, Program Biologist from the Institute of Florida Studies, gets the kids’ attention and the program begins. The “otter trawl” is deployed by the kids – with direction and guidance from Pete – and we ask them some questions of our own?

“Who can tell me where we are?”

The answers are always varied. Some students know right away. “We’re in Tampa Bay!” Others make some good guesses. “Cockroach Bay?” Close, but we left Cockroach Bay behind us. Then there are the wild shots in the dark. “Atlantic Ocean?” “Pacific Ocean?” We look around and can make out the skylines of St. Petersburg and downtown Tampa. They begin to form an idea of where they are.

“What kind of water do you think this is in Tampa Bay?”

Again, we get the full range… Salt… Fresh… and then the right answer “Brackish!”

These students have been prepared well by their teacher using the guides and pre-tests supplied by the Institute. They know some of their fish. They identify the propagule of the red mangrove. They know Cockroach Bay is an estuary, and that an estuary is a nursery for sea life. Today, we have caught a striped burrfish, a decent-sized blue crab, and a lot of sea lettuce and sea grass. While the fish are always the most exciting to the kids, they soon begin to understand the importance of the marine plants as habitat and food for the animals they love. I can see the spark of scientific interest and understanding in their eye. And that is what it is all about.

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Excursions (cont)

Since 1975, the Institute of Florida Studies at HCC has been taking students on field expeditions out of our facility at Cockroach Bay. Using seines, sieves, and the otter trawl, this trek into the natural Florida environment is one of a kind in Tampa Bay. Students learn not only about the flora and fauna of the estuary, but of its importance in the larger picture of ocean health, and the impact local issues surrounding water, pollution, and industry all have on the complex web of life.

In addition to the Cockroach Bay field expedition, the Institute also does programs at the HCC property at English Creek (near Plant City), Upper Tampa Bay Park (a Hillsborough County park), and at the Nature’s Classroom facility. All of the programs are designed to foster scientific and ocean literacy, a hands on approach to learning, and excitement about the natural world and a better understanding of the students’ place in it.

The idea of a “Nature Deficit Disorder” has been well documented. Numerous studies have shown that students who spend even a little bit of time outside perform better academically, have less behavior issues, and fewer health concerns. One thing we hear on every expedition, no matter which location we are at, is “I have never spent this much time outside!” I have had numerous teachers tell me at the beginning of a trip “We’ll need to keep an eye on Johnny there. He is a real handful.” And almost every time, Johnny is the most engaged of all of the students, and is typically the one to show the best retention on the post-tests.

As I begin to bring the boat back towards the beach at the end of the day, some of the students are huddled over the collection buckets looking at the critters. Others are pointing out a few pelicans that are floating nearby. I am being regaled with stories of “…and this one time, I saw a dolphin and a manatee!” The students are engaged. They are excited. They are having fun. They have learned new things today. And they have had an experience that they will always remember.

And isn’t that what it is all about?

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