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USF, YWCA brings day care facility to St. Pete's Family Village

Community members including St. Petersburg Mayor David Fischer, YWCA Executive Director Peggy Sanchez Mills, USF President Betty Castor, Pinellas County Commissioner Sally Parks, USF St. Petersburg student Patty Wilson, Liz Lazzara, St. Petersburg campus Dean Bill Heller, Anite Treiwer, Hunter Lindenberg and Seth Hunter-Lindenberg were all on hand to applaud the opening of the USF/YWCA Family Village day care center.

"These are special times to be at the university," by Heather L. Hicks

Enrollment, interest and impact were three main focus points during President Betty Castor’s “State of the University” address Sept. 3.

Castor highlighted the role USF has played in several community ventures, as well as the attention the university is now receiving, thanks in part to the pending reclassification of USF as a state research I university.

USF ranks second only to the University of Florida in several rankings, Castor stressed.

The designation is something to be proud of, as well as a jumping-off point to future goals.

"We can’t afford to settle for being second best, or even for being state champs, in a state which has never had a national leader among universities," Castor said.

"We must look beyond the borders of Florida and compare ourselves with the best research universities."

The president discussed the importance of the increase in first-time college students, showing the university’s ability to draw in the next generation of USF grads.

"We are winning the battle to persuade students to think of USF as their university of choice," Castor said. "Despite strong competition from the private sector, as well as our sister state institutions, we grew impressively in this key category."

Enrollment of honors students is up by more than 7 percent, Castor explained.

Even so, transfer enrollment from community colleges is lower than previous years, a fact which Castor attributed to the lower graduation rates at these institutions.

"We have taken two very important and strategic steps to help our local community colleges, and more important, their students," said Castor. "We will be offering USF upper-division courses on more community college campuses in the years ahead."

Castor cited the success of a future venture with Pasco-Hernando Community College and its Port Richey campus.

She also mentioned a plan with St. Petersburg Junior College, where SPC students can now take their classes at the USF St. Petersburg campus, and still receive the benefits that come with being on the bayside campus.

The future looks bright for the facility, staff and students of a university built on growth, research, progress and involvement, Castor said.

"By emphasizing research, we make clear how important it is for students to educate themselves, and not expect to receive education passively, as if it were medicine or food," Castor said. "Our faculty are here to guide them and advise them, not to amuse them or hand them an education on a cafeteria tray.

When the YWCA/USF Family Village opened on campus this fall, it gave students at USF St. Petersburg a double opportunity.

Student parents benefit by having affordable and convenient day care available for their kids while they’re in class. Students interning at Family Village gain by getting hands-on experience in their chosen field.

That’s an unbeatable combination, said USF St. Petersburg Dean Bill Heller.

"Our partnership with the YWCA is a win-win situation," he said. "Our students have long needed access to day care they can trust, and now they have it."

USF St. Petersburg students majoring in early childhood, which specializes in children ages 3 to third-graders, are placed at Family Village as interns. Steve Micklo, associate professor of early childhood education, said, each student spends up to six hours a week interning at the center.

Previously, all students had to travel to private preschools and local Headstart programs for their internships.

Now, many of the students will be able to obtain much of their experience while on campus. It’s a major step forward, said Micklo.

"Our students get to observe and interact with young children, focusing on developmental learning and behavior," Micklo said.

Since a component of the Village is its housing for homeless families, they and other disadvantaged children also use the day care facility.

The diverse population will create a "little United Nations" at the village, according to YWCA Executive Director Peggy Sanchez Mills. The day care facility mirrors what the future teachers will face in public schools.

"This gives our students the chance to learn how to deal with students from all backgrounds, especially backgrounds different from what they themselves experienced growing up," Micklo said.

Although the Family Village is new to the campus, its twin goals of providing day care and housing follow a long tradition of YWCA service.

by Deborah Kerrolik

"It’s been 24 years since George died from a massive heart attack, leaving Maggie alone in the world after 37 years of marriage.

Today, she’s a spunky 84-year-old who has survived her own heart attack. She’s a music lover, with a constant stream of Big Band tunes coming from her house at all hours. And she loves to dance, even if her only partner is her dog, Barney.

It was while Maggie was in the hospital recovering from her heart attack that she first heard about Telephone LifeLine, a United Way-funded program at Crisis Center of Hillsborough County. With no living family, she was a perfect candidate to receive a friendly and possibly life-saving phone call every day.

"USF kicks off its own 1998 Community Campaign for United Way on Oct. 5. The campaign goal for this year will be announced then. USF faculty, staff and students have always proved to be a vital, contributing member of the Tampa Bay community, donating 600,000 hours of community work each year. Last year, university members gave about $280,000 to the United Way campaign.

"Charity begins at home," said Charles Mohan, the USF Community Campaign chair, and dean of Public Health. "And United Way is the best way to help the most people."

United Way of Hillsborough County is a partner agency with roughly 50 organizations in the area, including the American Cancer Society; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay, Inc.; The Center for Women; Child Abuse Council, Inc.; Meals on Wheels of Plant City, Inc.; Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind; Tampa Marine Institute, Inc.; and United Cerebral Palsy of Tampa Bay.

Each department will have a United Way representative to contact about donations. Those representatives will be listed in a future issue of Inside USF.

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