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SOUTHERN NEWS

WWW.THESOUTHERNNEWS.ORG | APRIL 9, 2025 | VOL. 63 — ISSUE 21

Donors for 'Day of Caring' reach new heights

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

In a display of community spirit, the 10th annual Day of Caring surpassed all expectations, by setting a new record with 2,001 contributors.

"We raised $866,761–our second-highest total to date!" Interim President Dwayne Smith said in an announcement.

Among the 2,001 donors, Smith highlighted that 261 student-scholars contributed an impressive $9,018, setting a new all-time high for student participation.

To enhance donations from students, Smith ignited a competition between students with his "Dr. D Class Challenge."

With the junior class coming out on top, Smith donated $15,000 to support the programs and campus resources they selected.

"Congratulations to the Class of 2026, who excelled with the most donors and earned $5,000 to put toward the fund of their choice," Smith said. "You've set an inspiring example for your peers!"

From first-year students to alumni, the university community came together with a sense of passion and generosity on April 3 for the Day of Caring, giving back to support and uplift one another.

Kristen Welton, associate director for Annual Giving, shared her experience of organizing the university's largest fundraising event.

"We got the word out a little early this year, so people are ready," Welton said. "So, we started getting donations a little earlier this year than usual."

With the community raising more $911,000 last year during the Day of Caring, Welton said the more money that is raised can better support a student's education and overall well-being.

"We have four priority funds, which is the Southern Fund and the Southern Scholarship Fund," Welton said. "Then we have two student support programs, SOAR and the SOS program.

Welton emphasized that the main program for SOS (Support Our Students) is the campus food pantry while SOAR (Support, Opportunites, Access, and Resilience), prioirtizes helping and offering resources to current and potential students in need.

According to the university website, the money raised from last year helped support financial aid for internships, funded research projects, enhanced teaching technology, athletic equipment and increased scholarship opportunities by over $100,000.

Welton said what started as an event to raise money for the School of Business, evolved into a community wide movement.

She particularly highlighted how this shift became evident in 2020, when students were attending remotely and needed access to technology and the internet.

"They kind of shifted and made it Day of Caring, because it was really still an event where people needed help more than ever," Welton said. "It was kind of building from there and seeing where the greatest need was for the student population."

Since this is Welton's first year celebrating the Day of Caring event, she said she is excited to celebrate.

A festival to celebrate Day of Caring on Thursday, students were able to come out and enjoy carnival foods.

"It's a fun day to really put that all in the spotlight. All of the great things that the students do here," Welton said.

Welton said she is also looking forward to witnessing the continued impact it has on the community, as well as inspire both staff and students to deepen their commitment to supporting one another.

"I hope staff remember why they're here and that they're here to teach students and to help them grow and learn and go on to their professions," Welton said.

Welton also shared her hope that the event would leave a memorable mark on everyone involved.

"I hope it's something that they remember from Southern," Welton said. "That it was a fun day but also showed that the whole campus community supported them and supported Southern and what a big part of that Southern is to this whole area and for faculty and staff."



PHOTOS | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

Students celebrating Day of Caring at the festival on the first floor of the Adanti Student Center on April 3.



Business administration major Winston Ware, a junior and business administration major Kathren Ekberg, a senior, running a booth at the festival.

Students visit correctional institution

By Victoria Cruz
Contributor

Students of the sociology department recently visited York Correctional Institution with the Fredrick Douglas Project. Students spent the first half of the visit touring the facilities including the dorms and commissary.

The second half of the day students each spoke with one or two incarcerated women. Led by Venezia Michalsen, a professor of sociology and criminology, the trip gave the students the rare opportunity to directly engage with the realities of incarceration.

"This was unique because we got to see parts of the facility you don't usually get to see," Michalsen said.

Kristina Cooper, a senior psychology major described the trip as "an incredible opportunity" that she is grateful to have been part of.

"The experience was profoundly eye-opening and transformative. It provided invaluable insight into the realities of incarceration and the power of human connection," Cooper said. "It was a life-changing experience that deepened my understanding of rehabilitation and justice and I greatly appreciated the chance to have been involved in such an extraordinary project."

Sociology major Karina Ayanna, a junior, shared a similar sentiment.

"Overall, it was truly a life-changing experience," Ayanna said. "It was inspiring to see such ingenuity and ambition in the women there."



PHOTO | VICTORIA CRUZ

Sociology professor Venezia Michalsen, sociology major Karina Ayanna, a junior, psychology major Kristina Cooper, a senior and sociology professor Kalilah Waite.

Ayanna also said the experience fostered a sense of empathy and connection for those behind bars.

"There is nothing further from the truth than the fact that they genuinely are people just like us—they are our neighbors and our community. It could've been either one of us on the other side of the table," Ayanna said. "We laughed together more than anything, with the conversation flowing so naturally as if we were at brunch."

It is easy to think of inmates as the worst of us, but it is not always the case.

Students have seen a lot of media surrounding prisons and it is important for future criminology and sociology students to see it for themselves and make their own judgments.

Prison shows up in our media constantly and it is not always accurate. Michalsen stressed the importance of experiential learning for college students.

"You really should supplement your classroom learning with direct experiences with the people who are experiencing what we are learning about," Michalsen said. "Reading and consuming media is one thing, but experiencing it is different."

The sociology department plans to host these trips multiple times a semester.

Michalsen believes these experiences to be crucial in the education process of incoming sociology and criminology majors.

"There is nothing like having a conversation with someone who's in a different life circumstance than you are," Michalsen said.

Any student interested in attending a future trip is encouraged to reach out to professor Michalsen directly.

Whether you are studying sociology, criminology or simply want to broaden your perspective, the opportunity is open to all.

"Criminology is here," Michalsen said. "We have opportunities at SCSU and we are working towards maximizing our ability to give students experiences in the community."

No spring concert

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

This year, the university community will notice a significant change in the usual spring semester schedule.

Following the Student Government Association (SGA) weekly meeting, members concluded that reallocating funds would be the better decision.

"Shifting money over to the next year to get more options for artists," Jonathan De Los Santos, SGA's board of student experience, a junior, said.

While the funds saved, along with the additional money allocated, will create more opportunities to book a wider range of artists, many students have expressed disappointment with the decision.

Business major Juwell Clay, a sophomore, said that during her time at the university she has not had the opportunity to attend a spring concert.

"It's not fair that I don't get to experience a spring concert," Clay said. "The last real spring concert they had, I was still in high school."

Nursing major Kalangi Pedro, a junior, said that taking the spring concert is a loss for students like her who rely on such events to provide relief from their busy schedules and heavy workload.

"Events like the spring concert aren't just about entertainment — they're about balance, community and mental wellness," Pedro said. "It's a chance to step away from the pressure, reconnect with our peers and feel like we're part of something bigger than just the classroom."

In Spring 2023, the university welcomed rap duo Rae Sremmurd and in Fall 2022, Fivio Foreign performed. In Spring 2024, the Wild N' Out crew took Lyman Stage for an interactive comedy session with students.

As a result, the majority of students have not experienced a traditional spring concert.

Clay also said that the spring concert is something that many students look forward to going to, especially if it would be their first time.

"The spring concert definitely would've felt fun and exciting, especially starting the spring and the temperature getting warmer," Clay said.

Neighboring universities, such as University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University feature a lineup of performers for their spring concerts each year. This has left many students wondering why this university does not offer the same experience.

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