A PLAN TAKES FLIGHT

TODD LEVASSEUR CONNECTS TO NATURE.
The number of potted geraniums and SunPatiens adorning the stage every year at commencement.

WELCOME COMMITTEE. The Staff Advisory Committee to the President will be getting some new blood on July 1, when the newly elected representatives, including one temporary staff member, will take office. The new divisional representatives will be Shannon McKenzie for academic affairs, Kimberly Gertner for business affairs, Rudy Alisaukas for institutional advancement and Diane Cumbie for student affairs. The new at-large representatives will be Walter Brown from the Grounds Crew and Cicely McCray from the Graduate School. SAC is here to ensure that the staff’s voice is heard, so speak up and make your thoughts known: Visit sac.cofc.edu and click on Suggestion Form or simply email sac@cofc.edu.

RETURN TO SENDER. This spring, mail rates went down for letters, large envelopes/flats and postcards. First-class stamps went from $0.49 to $0.47, first-class metered 1-ounce letters from $0.485 to $0.465 and postcards from $0.35 to $0.34. This is one change that gets the stamp of approval.

LAZY BONES ON SUMMER DAYS. When the kids get weary of the same old same old, summer break can drag on for eternity. Time for something new – something that will capture their attention and prompt their curiosity and imagination. Something like the 13-foot-tall, 41-foot-long cast of Bucky, the adolescent T. rex spending the year in the atrium of the Sciences and Mathematics Building. With the company of the pteranodon family that took up residence in the atrium in 2012 – and with the Mace Brown Museum of Natural History right upstairs – Bucky can certainly help pass the time. Sure, it’s been 66 million years since he was alive, but – come on – dinosaurs never get old.

GET FIT, BY GEORGE. Want to get in shape? No sweat. The George Street Fitness Center offers faculty and staff full access to the cardio equipment, machines, weights, benches, lockers and showers any time during open recreation hours. To sign up, go to campusrec.cofc.edu, follow the Marketplace link to Facility Memberships and purchase a GSFC employee pass for $50/period. The next period runs Monday, May 2–Friday, August 19.

The number of water tubes keeping the greenery collected from Dixie Plantation for the commencement stage fresh throughout the ceremonies.
NEWS BRIEFS

APPLAUSE

The National Endowment for the Arts gave a $40,000 Art Works award to the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art for a major 2017 multimedia exhibition co-curated by Halsey director Mark Sloan and political science professor Mark Long.


The Department of Religious Studies was awarded a $30,000 grant from the Wabash Center to enhance the student academic experience.

The S.C. State Library named the Avery Messenger, the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture’s newsletter, a recipient of the Notable State Document Award.

Terry Peterson, a senior fellow in the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, was named a Champion of Children at the 2016 Beyond School Hours National Education Conference.

Anne Gutshall, associate professor of teacher education, was selected for the Delta Gamma Foundation’s 2016 Outstanding Faculty Award.

MEMOS

The Work Order Request Portal has replaced SchoolDude and WOOL for work order/repair requests. Links to the portal and the detailed help guide can be found under the Employee tab in MyCharleston.

Kaspersky is now the antivirus software the College provides for employees’ personal computers. The Symantec license expires in June. Visit promo.kaspersky.com/cofcemployees to download Kaspersky Internet Security for free, and then uninstall any existing antivirus software before installing the Kaspersky software.

Yammer training workshops are held every Tuesday, 2-3 p.m., in the BellSouth Building, room 500.

PERKS

Employees may download their free Office 365 ProPlus 2016 software on up to five personal devices from portal.office.com using their CoC email and password credentials.

Employees receive a 10% discount on any of the College’s sailing camps and classes this summer, including regular youth sailing camps and STEM youth sailing camps for ages 8-14 and adult non-credit classes in basic keelboating, introductory sailing, introductory small-boat sailing and advanced spinnaker/keelboat sailing. For more information, visit sailing.cofc.edu and click on Learn to Sail, or contact Greg Fisher, 410.212.4916 or fishergv@cofc.edu.

To get 20% off the price of admission at the South Carolina Aquarium, use the promo code cofc16 when purchasing tickets online or present the promo code at the aquarium’s ticket window.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

JUNE 3

SPIRIT DAY

BROWN BAG PICNIC

Pack your lunch, put on your maroon and white and join the Portico staff and the Staff Advisory Committee to the President to kick the summer off right!

12-1 p.m.
Rivers Green
Info: theportico@cofc.edu

JUNE 15

STAFF APPRECIATION BRUNCH

Eat, win door prizes and celebrate the nominees for Permanent Staff Employee of the Year, Temporary Staff Employee of Year and Outstanding Staff Member Presidential Service Award.

10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Awards at 12 p.m.
TD Arena, Hospitality Suite
Info: Susan Hallatt, 3.5614
hallatts@cofc.edu

August 17

ANNUAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL PICNIC

Ring in another academic year with your colleagues and celebrate those being recognized for their 10, 20 and 30 years of service.

11:45 a.m.-1 p.m.
TD Arena
Info: Alexa Thacker, 3.6673
thackera@cofc.edu
The Doorway to Wisdom

They say a closed door means another one is opening; that it won’t open unless you knock; that it can be the sincerest invitation. They say a lot about closed doors. Still, add up all the “closed door” quotes out there, and they have nothing on all the quotes on the closed door to room 245 in the Robert Scott Small Building.

The dozen or so quotes that Lisa Christian ’09 has posted there offer a little encouragement for visitors and passersby. She can’t always be in her office to give words of encouragement, but her motivating messages can be.

As a counselor to students with mild intellectual and developmental disabilities who are at the College through the REACH Program, Christian teaches upperclassmen to manage their finances and prepare for life after college, including how to apply for jobs and start a career. With Christian’s guidance, graduating REACH students prepare a portfolio and résumé before beginning their job hunt. And all that planning and preparation has paid off: Of the REACH students who’ve earned a CofC degree since the program’s first graduating class in 2014, a whopping 75 percent have found jobs.

The graduates’ success is due largely in part to the dedication and hard work that Christian and the rest of the REACH staff have put into creating a “real, comprehensive approach of support.”

That does not mean coddling or sugarcoating. That would be a disservice. Instead, the program works to teach self-reliance and to boost self-confidence — and this comes through in the sometimes sharp-edged advice Christian has shared on her door.

Christian definitely tells it like it is. If it’s tough love you need, look no further than RSS 245. Even if Christian isn’t there, her perspective will greet you at the door.

“If I’m a meet-you-where-you’re-at person. I’m not projecting where you should be,” says the Queens, N.Y., native, who previously worked as a detention officer at the Charleston County Detention Center, where she established great rapport with the inmates because she always left judgment to the other parts of the legal system. Now that she’s in the College’s REACH office, she is all about finding future solutions for REACH students and not dwelling on past or present problems.
“I’m the person who says, ‘What can we do about that?’ I’m the solution-focused person,” she says. “If we all sit around and commiserate, no one is moving forward.”

Most roadblocks are temporary, she notes, and sometimes people just need to gain some perspective to regain momentum.

So, next time you need a little jumpstart, stop by RSS 245 and open up some doors. 🙌
"WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER."
For Todd LeVasseur ’97, that experience hits close to home. He points to this thoughtless act — of striking a butterfly when he was 12 or 13 years old — as a life-changing moment for him.

“Yes, I killed a butterfly,” says LeVasseur, a visiting assistant professor of religious studies and director of the Environmental Studies Program. “I acted stupidly, greedily — and, as it was dying in my hands, I asked myself, What right do I have to take this beautiful life for no reason, for my own selfishness?”

For the first time, LeVasseur could see how his actions impacted other lifeforms and how connected he was to the world around him.

“I realized, if I care about this little creature, I should care about everything,” he says. “And then I started questioning everything — and my role in it.”

Academics call this a peak transformational experience, a moment that stops people dead in their tracks, opens their eyes to new possibility and changes their behavior. And LeVasseur is hoping the College’s quality enhancement plan (QEP) for its 2017 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission On Colleges reaffirmation will have that effect on campus.

Over the winter, the College selected sustainability literacy as its big project and LeVasseur as the QEP interim director. Since then, faculty and staff from across campus have been busy establishing definitions, goals and assessment strategies for the plan, which is set for a fall 2017 implementation.

“Higher education is shifting in how it does business and recognizing the importance of sustainability,” LeVasseur says. “Through our planning process, the entire campus is and will be involved in new systems thinking. Basically, we at the College need to figure out how our individual and collective work — whatever area on campus we may be in — measures up against what is known in sustainability parlance as the triple bottom line, which has economic, social and environmental implications. Our QEP will allow the entire College community to walk the talk on sustainability.”

An integrated, campuswide effort will build on existing strengths and empower faculty and staff to see how their day-to-day operations fit into a greater framework of sustainability.

“We are all in this together because we all play a role in sustainability,” LeVasseur says. “And, most important, the QEP will help our students to develop a better understanding of what sustainability is. We’ll do it through coursework, research grants, volunteer work, campus speakers, study-abroad trips, just to name a few. By developing our students’ sustainability literacy, we will empower them to change the world.”

LeVasseur hopes that this kind of butterfly effect — from the small, thoughtful, everyday choices to more sweeping, programmatic initiatives — together, will have a far-reaching and long-lasting impact on the College, and thus, the world.
Everybody likes a good find. Something about coming across the rare, the overlooked, the bargain: It just makes us feel lucky. But there’s more to it than luck; you can be in the right place at the right time and not know there’s treasure in that chest. You’ve got to recognize value – either intrinsic or potential – and sometimes you’ve got to get creative to uncover it.

So, what really makes a good find? How can you make sure your so-thought treasure isn’t really trash? And where do you even start looking? For a little direction in the matter, we turned to Ashley Earnhart, administrative assistant in the development office and half of the décor-discovering duo who launched Our Farmhouse Finds, a home-décor business featuring repurposed farmhouse-inspired items. An expert in hunting down great finds, seeing hidden potential and giving new life to old objects, Earnhart turns out to be a treasure trove of tips.

Q: A little background, please: How did you discover the thrill of the hunt?
A: I have always been passionate about home décor and am fascinated about how just a few unique pieces can really transform a space. I also have a passion for history (I hold a bachelor’s and master’s in the subject), and there is something really special about finding and reusing items that have a story behind them.

When my boyfriend and I purchased our first home last summer, we began searching the Charleston area for rustic and simple pieces that could add some charm to our home. We had so much fun collecting that we launched the website for Our Farmhouse Finds in January, and we hope to one day have a brick-and-mortar storefront.

Q: Where are the best places to uncover hidden gems?
A: We’re looking for unique items that are either from farms or would very much fit into the farmhouse lifestyle, so we search in antique stores, salvage yards, estate sales and even Craigslist – you would be surprised what you can find there! We also buy things from individuals, which gives us the opportunity to find pieces we may never come across otherwise.

Q: How do you know a treasure when you see it?
A: The biggest thing we look for is how individuals can really incorporate a piece into their home. We consider things like the room/space an item could go in and the many ways it could be utilized. A real treasure can be repurposed pretty easily – such as the cool galvanized funnel we found in Summerville that, once flipped upside down, becomes a decorative vase for floral stems, or the large galvanized bucket we got from New Hampshire that can be used for planting your favorite flowers or, with the addition of a simple cushion, becomes a charming footstool.

Q: Any advice on negotiating a good bargain?
A: Always start off by asking if the prices are negotiable. If they are, always offer a lower amount right off the bat – but know that you may have to reach the seller in the middle.

Q: What’s the best find you’ve ever made?
A: I would have to say the Land O’ Lakes cheese boxes that we got from Meredith, N.H. These small wood boxes would make such a great centerpiece on a dining table or the cutest flowerboxes on a porch. I just love the simplicity of them – but, at the same time, they have so much character!

THE THREE TIPS FOR HAPPY HUNTING

1) Plan your trip/picking ahead. You don’t want to waste time finding locations the day of. Unless, of course, your adventures lead you somewhere new – then, go with it!

2) Ask questions. Word of mouth is one of the best ways to find things that are off the beaten path, so don’t be afraid to ask people you meet along the way for suggestions of other people you should talk to and places you should go.

3) Avoid rash purchases. Take the time to spot a special piece. Think about how you’ll use an item. If it’s not a good fit, leave it. And remember, it’s OK to walk away empty handed.
Start your treasure hunt on OurFarmhouseFinds.com.
Kenyatta Grimmage had every reason to think the deck was stacked against him.

His father died when he was just a toddler, leaving his mother – who struggled with alcoholism – to work two and three jobs to keep him and his siblings fed. Two of his older brothers got sucked into the life of gangs and crime that flourished where he grew up on the west side of Charlotte, N.C., and ended up in prison.

From where he was standing, he knew early on that kids like him didn’t make it.

But Grimmage saw how hard his mother worked for the family, how sad she was when his brothers were sent away, and he couldn’t bear to disappoint her. He had to make her proud. And so he directed his energy toward church, sports and doing his best in school.

He was going to make his mom happy. He was going to beat the odds. He was going to make it.

And then, at age 13, he was diagnosed with cancer. He had cancerous tumors all over his body. It was another devastating blow.

“All I knew about cancer was that it meant death,” he says of learning in 1995 that he had lymphoma. All he knew was, kids like him didn’t make it.

Still, his mother was always there. She wasn’t giving up on him, and Grimmage knew he couldn’t give up either.

Drawing strength from his mother and the neighbors, coaches, teachers and church leaders he came to call his “village,” Grimmage vowed to beat the odds. And, after a grueling year of chemotherapy, Grimmage’s cancer was in remission. He was going to make it.

Then, during his senior year of high school, Grimmage’s mother died. It was enough to convince him that the world was against him. It was enough to make him turn around and head down the path his older brothers had taken.

But Grimmage couldn’t give up now. He’d already beaten the odds. He’d already proven that kids like him do make it.

And – as an assistant director for admissions who focuses on access initiatives and pre-college programs and travels all over South Carolina recruiting minority students to the College – that’s exactly the message he has for all the kids like him out there.
“I tell these students, ‘I’m from the same type of neighborhood as you and have had the same experiences you have had in life. I was you at one point,’” says Grimmage, who, after becoming the first member of his family to graduate from college, went on to earn a master’s degree in education from Columbia College, eventually landing a position in the Upward Bound program at Trident Technical College and then, in 2008, at the College of Charleston, before moving into his current role with admissions.

In this position, Grimmage’s main purpose is to diversify recruitment, something that allows him to go into rural and urban communities and use his gift for connecting with students – with kids like him.

Now a married father of three, Grimmage is often asked the same question by prospective students: “Will I be supported if I attend the College of Charleston?”

Supported: It’s a word Grimmage understands well. He understands that it takes a village. He understands that – without the support of that long list of people who loved, encouraged and mentored him throughout his life, especially his mother – he may not have beaten the odds.

And that’s what he’s here to tell the students he talks to: With the right support in place, anyone can make it – even kids like him.
It’s hard enough to talk about the birds and the bees in your own language. Imagine trying to give “the talk” in a language that doesn’t even have a word for some anatomy because such things aren’t even discussed.

“You have to get real creative,” says Trish Hutchison ’88, campus physician in Student Health Services and cofounder of the Girlology and Guyology sex-ed programs, who last February traveled to the LAMB Institute in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to help Suzy McCall ’79 set up an educational program for the girls in the safe house and the children in the group home and local school there.

Not to worry, though: Hutchison always finds a way to get the message across, even if it means breaking out the vulva puppet and the uterus pillow.

“Whatever it takes to open up the conversation,” shrugs Hutchison, who has been known to launch bras out into the crowd (“There! Mom, she has her first bra – getting her the second one will be easy!”) and shove her entire arm into a condom (“Sorry, guys, you are not too ‘big’ to wear a condom!”). “I really do wish I had a Go-Pro to record some of those faces I get sometimes – it’s priceless.”

Just as priceless, though, is what young people are taking away from the experience: medical facts about their emerging sexuality, confidence in their changing bodies and in their decision-making skills and a renewed trust in their relationships with their families.

When Girlology started 14 years ago, it was a simple program meant to open discussions about puberty between young girls and their mothers.

“We just help them start that conversation by delivering it in a cringe-free way – it isn’t over when they leave the room,” says Hutchison, explaining that mothers have been required to attend the puberty talks with their daughters from the beginning. “What we noticed was that they always start out kind of awkward and stiff, and then you’d see them gradually leaning into each other. And we realized it was a bonding experience for them. We learned so much from that first group.”

And, as those girls aged up, so did the Girlology programming, which was broadened into a sex-ed curriculum taught in hospitals, schools, churches and community centers. And then there were the books: a total of five of them, some printed in five different languages, including Russian, Romanian and Hungarian. And if the message wasn’t out there then – it certainly is now.

With the addition of the Guyology programs for boys, curricula that’s trained and in practice nationwide, a speakers bureau of 20 physicians and partnerships with Proctor & Gamble, Fruit of the Loom and about 20 other corporate, hospital, community and educational organizations, Girlology is recognized as the go-to expert on how to talk about sex.

“We’ve just kept evolving. There’s always a better way to do things, and so we learn it;” says Hutchison. “It’s been an interesting journey.”

And now that that journey is going global, it won’t be long before everybody’s talking. Even if it is using the vulva puppet.
A LOT OF GROWTH. You couldn’t find a better spot, so go ahead: Park it! With inviting benches in its outdoor classroom, the Warren Place Lot garden is as much relaxing as it is energizing. When Lexa Keane ‘14, now in the Office of Sustainability, was tasked with creating a program to involve students in composting and vegetable gardening, the young graduate ran with it – organizing a garden-variety community flash-mob to give the parking lot a sustainable makeover. Built on the philosophy of permaculture and the foundation of sheet mulching, this little community garden is so much more than parking-lot landscaping – it’s an opportunity to get down and dirty, digging into agricultural techniques and investing in a healthy environment.

RACQUET UP! Feel like hitting something? Get a grip! Head over to the Johnson Center Gym, grab a paddle and let off some steam with pickleball, racquetball, badminton and ping-pong. All faculty and staff are invited – no matter their athletic ability – to Racquet Sports Wednesdays from 12 to 1 p.m. Come out and see what all the racquet’s about!

GET OVER IT. Leading 30 or so participants to their peak performance in the Bridge Run, Campus Recreation Services’ inaugural Bridge Run Training Program really took off this year. Open to staff, faculty and students, the free, eight-week program customizes participants’ training plans according to their goals, fitness levels and running experience – so, whether you’re a beginner, an occasional runner or a marathoner, it’ll step you up. Look out for announcements about the 2017 program early next year, or contact Bucky Buchanan at lbuchana@cofc.edu or 3.3898.

FAMILY GETAWAY. It’s easier than ever for nursing mothers and their babies to get away from the campus commotion for some quiet feeding time. Not only does the College now have an employee lactation policy (policy.cofc.edu/documents/9.3.8.pdf), but there are now two lactation rooms reserved for nursing: Stern Center, room 207A (behind multipurpose room, room 205) and Addlestone Library, room 204A (off the employee lounge, room 204, on the south side of the building). Nursing mothers may access the rooms by obtaining an electronic keypad code from Priscilla Hayes, hayespw@cofc.edu or 3.5512.

NO BUTTERFLIES WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS PORTICO.
Test Your Yammer Game

WITH CHANGE COMES YAMMER. And so it came as no surprise that people lamented the College’s switch from Listservs to Yammer last year. It’s understandable. We all get nostalgic about the good old days every now and then: sifting through the 300+ emails exchanged every day, deciding what to delete to free up enough space to send email again, replying to everyone on campus and not being able to take it back. (If it’s any comfort, not everyone saw it: Only 60 percent of CofC employees actually subscribed to the Faculty and Staff Listserv.) But technology doesn’t stop for nostalgia – it just keeps on going. And, eventually, we do, too. Need a little help moving on? Joining Yammer gives you access to Office Pro 2016, which you can download for free on up to five personal devices! And, if that’s not enough, try this:

★ LOG INTO YAMMER – or, if you haven’t already joined, do so at yammer.cofc.edu or through MyCharleston. Then, join the Portico group and use the clues below to navigate your way through Yammer and hunt down the answers. The first 10 people to complete at least three of the tasks and submit answers to theportico@cofc.edu will win a Portico mug.

Whoever completes the most (or the first person to complete all 10) tasks by May 13, wins two tickets to the Cougars baseball game of their choice, lunch for two at Marty’s Place and a Portico mug!

1 From your Yammer homepage, go to the App Directory. Name one of the featured apps.

2 In your profile, follow the Edit Profile link and click on Org Chart. What is one thing you can add there?

3 Go to Alan Parker’s profile. In the Search field, enter the last word of the name of his department. Name one user listed in the results page.

4 Name one of Joe License’s listed interests.

5 What is one of the topics that Portia Stafford follows?

6 Name one person who reports to John Schroeder on Yammer.

7 Follow Portia Stafford and use the … link to add a topic to the last post she made.

8 Search for the word discussion. In the results, which group says it’s a place to share opinions?

9 Share something in the Yammer Sandbox group. What did you share?

10 Create a new private group with the name of your favorite hobby (or anything you like). Add Portia Stafford as a group member and unclick “List in Group Directory” under Private. What is the name of your group? (You may delete the group as soon as you receive verification via email.)

YAMMER: WHAT’S NOT TO LOVE?

• You’re in charge: Join only the groups relevant to you and you’ll only get the notifications that matter to you. You can still look at other notifications and posts by exploring individual group feeds – and the Yammer home feed has all the highlights.

• One and done: Subscribe by email to the groups you want to hear from via email, and you don’t have to go onto Yammer ever again.

• Stay informed: Download and customize the Windows Desktop Notifier, and the desktop notifications will keep you in the loop even when Yammer is not open.

• Undo, cancel and delete: Comments and posts that you make in haste can easily be removed.

• No attachment: Your email server will be happy now that big attachments are a thing of the past. Your Yammer messaging has unlimited storage.

• Keep it personal: Create groups for whatever you want: adoptable pets, great recipes, gardening tips, heavy metal fans, whatever! Public groups like these can serve as blogs, and private groups are perfect for collaborating with colleagues on projects or communicating with committee members.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ROBERT HOGAN, assistant professor in the accounting department, whose name was drawn at random from those who correctly guessed that the image was the sculpture outside the Office of Human Resources in the Lightsey Center basement. The piece is by junior Emma Dingler, a studio art major who this semester made a series of works that serve as body ornaments.

IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT THE OBJECT in the above photo is and where it can be found, send your guess to theportico@cofc.edu by Friday, May 20. The names of those who submit the correct answer will be entered into a drawing for a free T-shirt from the College of Charleston Bookstore. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff.