

Career Academy students compete in “Photostory” contest  
By: Corine Burgess

It’s been a busy year for the Career Academy’s Environmental Science classes housed at the South Florida Community College. These high school students have been learning about the natural environment with class room instruction and field, “hands on” experience. Erin McCarta, Lakes Management Assistant and Corine Burgess, Natural Resources Specialist of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) have been working with the students to teach them about the natural resources in the area.

Subjects that have been covered during the year included littoral zones, composting, exotic plants and animals, careers in the environmental field, water quality and scientific method. To wrap up the school year, students were tasked with producing a “photostory” of an endangered species in Highlands County.

The three classes were split into seven groups and each came up with a production of the endangered species of their choice. The judges for the contest were Mike McMillian of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Jimmy Wohl, Rancher and Board Supervisor for the HSWCD, Gregg Hartt, citrus grower and Board Supervisor for the HSWCD and Carlos Torres, District Conservationist for the Sebring Field Office Natural Resource Conservation Service.

After viewing each photo story, the judges voted and when the scores were tallied, the winners were: First place – Victor Felix, Astride Michelin, Diana Villagomez and Dominique Morales, who chose the Florida Panther. Second place winners were Brian Cornine, Harmony Kackley and Rachel Reintz for their production on the Eastern Indigo Snake. The third place winners were Anthony Butler, William Elliott, Eleazar Dominguez and Marcus Pagoria who chose the Bald Eagle. Congratulations to all participants for putting forth the effort and time to create these productions.

All of the stories were interesting and many were very creative and well done. The first and second place winners were only three points apart.

Chet Maxcy, instructor for the Environmental Science classes, along with Erin and Corine were delighted that the students not only utilized their creative skills, but learned so much about the species they chose.

Many thanks to Subway, Pizza Hut, Game Stop and The Sports Fan for furnishing prizes for the winners.

We, at HSWCD, have truly enjoyed the opportunity to work with these students. It is our sincere hope that they not only enjoyed the experience, but have learned to appreciate their natural environment. We also learned a lot from the students and hope to do it again next year. After all, these young adults are the future and it is our hope that they will treat the earth well and that their children will learn good habits from them.