Florida Counseling Association
“Serving the Needs of All Counselors”
A Branch of the American Counseling Association

GUIDELINES

In the wake of the disaster in Japan, FCA expresses its deepest sympathy and heartfelt prayers to those in Japan and all those affected by this tragedy. If you’d like to make a donation to the American Red Cross, a disaster mental health partner of ACA, please do so on the American Red Cross Website. As always, thank you for your compassion and support for those near and across the world.

A Bounty of Opportunities This Spring…
A Few Words from FCA’s President, Candy Hertsch

On Saturday, February 12, 2011 FCA leaders from all over the state converged to share their ideas and hopes for the year. As President, I conducted the Winter FCA Board meeting on Valentine’s weekend, and believe, me I felt the LOVE from your Division Presidents and Leadership team. I witnessed the passion and dedication they have for the profession and the Association. I learned of innovative strategies pertaining to delivering the message of unification, purpose and pride to counselors. We engaged in respectful and informative discussions about the new Florida Legislation, worked on establishing the 2011 convention in Orlando and finalized the Leadership Development Conference.

I now introduce you to the March 2011 Edition of FCA’s award-winning newsletter, Guidelines. I invite you to read about all the outstanding past events that your neighbors and fellow FCA members have created and participated in. I encourage you to take advantage of all of our professional development opportunities that are coming up in the next few months including the SCF “Resilience-Focused Counseling” workshop, our Leadership Development Weekend and many more. Within these pages lies many way to better yourself, as an individual, and professional counselor. I look forward to seeing you soon!

I wish you a beautiful spring,

Candy Hertsch
Florida Counseling Association’s
Leadership Development Conference

“Conducting Elements of Sound Leadership”

We are all Counselors and becoming a leader can be a challenge. This Leadership Development weekend allows members of the counseling community to gain strategies and ideas for working effectively as leaders, provides structured time for developing an annual calendar and opportunities to network and harmonize. Association, Division, and Chapter incoming boards, along with individuals aspiring for leadership positions are invited and welcome to attend.

Topics Include:
- Becoming a Counselor Leader
- Building a Solid Counseling Association
- Goal Setting and Creating Action Plans
- Advocacy and Legislature Pertinent to Counselors
- Networking…….plus many more ….

Dates: Friday, June 17th and Saturday, June 18, 2011

Location: Embassy Suites in Lake Buena Vista, FL
8100 Lake Street, Orlando, Florida, United States 32836
Tel: 1-407-239-1144

Join us at the luxurious Embassy Suites in June for LDC!

Check the FCA website for registration and additional information:
www.FLAcounseling.org
SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 13-16, 2011

FLORIDA COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

62ND ANNUAL CONVENTION

EMBASSY SUITES
ORLANDO / LAKE BUENA VISTA
WWW.FLACOUNSELING.ORG
Are you interested in learning how to build resiliency in children and their families? Want to learn effective strategies to help students to deal with tough times?

The School Counselors of Florida (SCF) cordially invite you to their Spring 2011 Professional Development Workshop at Devry University in Orlando, Florida.

Resilience-Focused Counseling

*Presented by William G. Nicoll, Ph.D.*
Professor of Counseling, Florida Atlantic University and Director, ATI, Inc.

Dr. Nicoll is known for his work in Brief Counseling as well as the characteristics of effective families, effective schools, and student learning and adjustment problems. Formerly the national trainer in Brief Counseling for the American Counseling Association, Dr. Nicoll has been a special education teacher and school counselor in both US public and International Schools. He has also provided counseling services in private practice, agency and correctional settings. He’s been a consultant and staff development trainer for schools and mental health organizations on five continents around the world.

**Session 1: 9:30 am – 12:00 pm / 2.5 CEC’s**
Resilience-Focused Counseling: Children, Adolescents & Families

Participants will learn to:

- Employ a step by step Resilience-Focused Brief Counseling approach with child/adolescent and family issues
- Identify key family dynamics and child/adolescent social-emotional competencies that serve to maintain the presenting problems
- Develop skills in focusing interventions on improving overall family functioning and child/adolescent competencies

**Lunch: 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm**
Included on site, sponsored by DEVRY UNIVERSITY

**Session 2: 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm / 2.5 CEC’s**
Counseling Interventions with School Related Problems: A resilience-focused approach

Participants will learn to:

- Conceptualize school related problems from a systemic and resilience focused paradigm including school, classroom, family and child factors involved in problem maintenance
- Develop evidence based intervention strategies for dealing with problems of bullying, social aggression, drop-outs, truancy and low student motivation/achievement

For More Information and To Register, please go to [www.FLAcounseling.org](http://www.FLAcounseling.org)
The Florida Association for Counselor Education and Supervision hopes that each of you are having a successful and exciting new year. With the new year starting the hope for our organization is to have our FACES website up and running as soon as possible. With that said if any members would like to assist with the development of the website please contact me at FACESPresident@gmail.com. Feel free to share interesting articles you have read; websites and other resources you have used and want to share with others; anything and everything that you think would help to build a strong and supportive division website.

FACES is proud to be teaming up with Argosy University for their 7th Annual Traumatology Symposium taking place on May 6th & 7th, 2011 at the Argosy Campus in beautiful Sarasota, FL. Please take a look at the flyer and registration form in this newsletter for more information. We hope to see you all there! J

~ Kristina Chattey, Ed.S.
FACES President 2010-2011
ARGOSY UNIVERSITY
Sarasota Campus

7th Annual Traumatology Symposium: Global Issues, Local Perspectives
May 6th and 7th, 2011
REGISTRATION FORM

Name ____________________________________________
Title __________________________ Organization __________________________
Address __________________________________________________ [ ] Home [ ] Work
City __________________________ State ______ Zip __________
Phone __________________________ Cell __________________________
Email __________
License/Certification __________________________ State __________________________

How did you hear about the symposium? __________________________________________

Full Registration fee includes: All sessions, breakfast & lunch (Sat), and Friday evening dinner/keynote address.

[ ] Red Cross Mental Health Counseling Disaster Training $100.00
[ ] Full Registration
  • Concurrent sessions Friday and Saturday
  • Breakfast and lunch Saturday
  • Dinner/Key Note Friday evening
[ ] Key Note Address only Friday dinner and Key Note $45.00
[ ] CEU’s Up to and including all sessions $25.00

TOTAL $__________

Payment Method
[ ] Check or money order payable to Argosy University
Credit Card: [ ] Visa [ ] MasterCard [ ] Discover [ ] American Express

Name ____________________________________________ Amount charged $__________ Exp. Date__________
Card Number __________________________ Authorized Signature __________________________

Send to: Argosy University College of Psychology
Attn: Jean Rambo
5250 17th Street
Sarasota, FL 34235

Confirmations will be emailed.
For information please contact: Jean Rambo at rrambo@argosy.edu or 1-800-331-6996

Special conference rates are available at Hampton Inn and Suites/Sarasota Bradenton Airport, 941-355-8140
Are you wondering about the employment trends for college students? The new economy is impacting the future of our graduating college seniors. Many students are considering graduate and professional school as a way to ride out the new economy, despite increased admission standards due to the increase in applications. However, there are indicators the job outlook for the class of 2011 is improving. According to the National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook Fall Preview report for 2011, the job market is off to a positive start. NACE states that "employers . . . reported plans to hire 13.5% more new bachelor’s graduates from the Class of 2011 than they did from the Class of 2010." Regionally, employers in the Southeast reported that they expect to increase college hiring by 8.3% (NACE, 2011). According to NACE (2011), employers across all industries report positive hiring projections and employers from only two industries (finance and government) indicated they do not expect to hire more bachelor’s level graduate during this year. Retail industries and wholesale firms indicate especially high increases in college hiring for the Class of 2011 (NACE, 2011). Finally, the top five undergraduate majors for employers in the Southeast were: Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science, Accounting, and Finance (NACE, 2011).

The hiring projections indicate that college recruiting is on the upswing and will be more positive for those students graduating this year or in the next few years. Research indicates that students are most successful in reaching their career goals, whether through full-time employment or admission to graduate school, when they engage early in college with their career centers. If you are working with students in K-12, it is important to emphasize using their career services office early on and with frequency once they are in undergraduate school to maximize their opportunities.

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Dr. Lauren Pasquarella Daley, LMHC
FCDA President

FACMC
Florida Association for Multi-Cultural Counseling and Development

The Florida Counseling Association proudly introduces FACMC’s 2011-2012 President, Kathryn Williams!
Katie enthusiastically joins the leadership team for FCA!
Osceola Counseling Association

Inaugural Counseling Conference a Huge Success

Melissa Cooper, President, Osceola Counseling Association

On Monday, January 24, 2011 the Osceola Counseling Association sponsored the very first counseling conference for school counselors in the district. This daylong event was quite a success. 53 people were in attendance with 14 presenters giving 10 professional development sessions on various topics Kindergarten through Grade 12 and beyond. The OCA Elected Officers were honored to have the opportunity to put together something for our counselors. Below are the comments by the officers of the Osceola Counseling Association.

“"The OCA Conference was an incredible success that exceeded my expectations. It was encouraging and inspiring to see counselors and district representatives from all levels come together and share their expertise with their colleagues in this format. I was overwhelmed with pride at the positive feedback that we received from the counselors who attended, and would venture to say that no counseling association has ever put on such a successful event the first time around. DeVry University went above and beyond in their partnership for the event as well, providing both breakfast and lunch for the attendees, as well as appropriate technology and space for all the sessions. To offer this as a free event to our counselors was fabulous. It just goes to show that when we all work together, beautiful things can be accomplished."~ Karen Leininger, OCA Vice-President

"Being a co-coordinator for the first annual OCA Conference was an exciting and rewarding experience for me. It felt wonderful to be a part of this initiative to bring more professional development opportunities to our counselors and to see our county counselors from all levels come together and learn from each other. I feel truly blessed to have received so much support from DeVry, our district office and from our counselors. Without a team effort by everyone involved, it could not have been as successful as it was. Feedback from those who attended has been extremely positive and I feel certain that this event will continue to be an annual event for the Osceola Counseling Association." ~ Michele Reed, OCA Secretary

"I had the pleasure working with three amazing and talented OCA officers to put on an incredible conference, the 1st Annual Osceola Counseling Association Conference. All three officers were an inspiration to work with and I learned a tremendous amount of knowledge of what goes into planning such an event. The positive feedback from the attendees was remarkable. DeVry went above and beyond by providing their facility, technology, food, and refreshments. The amount of attendees from the county was phenomenal especially considering their busy schedules at the end of a semester. My only hope is that next year the conference is bigger and better and the amount of presentations and attendees surpass our numbers this year." ~ Jennifer Barnes, OCA Treasurer.

The most overwhelming outcome of the conference was the support and participation by our colleagues. We could not have asked for a better turn out for our first time. The positive comments and incredible support was immeasurable. Although this was a great start the work is not finished. We need to reach out to all mental health professionals in Osceola County, expand our focus to include all areas of mental health and boost our interaction and communication with each other. I feel truly grateful having been a part of such a wonderful event. A great big thanks to DeVry University, all of the counselors of Osceola County, and support from FCA. Without all of them this event would not have been so successful. It takes great people working together to make something special. The OCA Conference was truly something special!
Dade Counseling Association Highlights of 2010-2011
By Ana Ondar-Koufopoulos, President, Dade Counseling Association

* Attended Opening of Schools Fair Expo at Aventura Mall
* Participated in “Out of the Darkness Walk” for Suicide Prevention at the University of Miami
* Participated in several parenting workshops with the Division of Student Services Crisis Team
* Volunteered for “Voices for Children” by wrapping Christmas presents
* Volunteered for the Woman’s Club of Hialeah during the holidays
* Multicultural Dinner at Shortys
* Student Services Awards Breakfast with more than 300 attendees
* Raised money for the Haiti relief at the Student Services Breakfast
* Donated school supplies to homeless students in Miami Dade
* Added a legislative and resources section to the DCA website
* Attended Job Title meetings (Elementary, Middle, High School, and TRUST)
* Hosted a wellness workshop for the holidays for counselors and friends

A Student’s First Time View: ACA Convention 2011

David Spellman, Stetson University Graduate student MHC, MCFC, Chi Sigma Iota Alpha Omicron, Chapter President 2011

The American Counseling Association’s (ACA) 2011 conference was an experience that bridged the academic, professional, and social landscapes; set in the cultural haven that is New Orleans, ACA attendees were provided with an experience of both education and fun. From the people of New Orleans who graciously welcomed us, the beautiful Convention Center, the wonderful ACA employees and volunteers, and everyone, and everything else, that contributed to the Convention, everything was conducive and consistent with making ACA a great experience. In short, ACA was a combination of Great people, a Great location, and Great food.

There were many outstanding presentations that spanned a wide range of topics and current issues ranging from the use of Martial arts (Brazilian Capoeira) for addressing Adolescent aggression to the role of stress in inhibiting the immunological response; clinical topics ranged from the importance of conductance of Disaster Mental Health to issues in integrating spirituality into one’s private practice. For myself, I particularly enjoyed Presentations by Dr. Gerald Corey (California State University), Dr. Kathryn Z. Douthit (University of Rochester), and Michelle Zeilman (University of Missouri).

Dr. Gerald Corey is a favorite among Stetson Students, such as myself, and it was a privilege to attend his presentation titled Finding a Meaningful Life After Graduate School. In the presentation Dr. Corey discussed his life-approach to counseling and the lessons he learned through experience and time. In the presentation Dr. Corey spent a large amount of time answering our questions of which he did a phenomenal job of normalizing graduate student concerns about post graduate life and reframing the concerns into positive and motivating ambitions for our respective and collective post graduate lives.

In sum, ACA was an enjoyable experience for me; I was able to attend great presentations, meet interesting people (including getting photographs with most of my textbooks’ authors), represent my school at the convention and at Chi Sigma Iota, and have a great time. As said earlier, ACA was a combination of Great people, a Great location, and Great food.
A NEW COUNSELING DEFINITION
UPDATE ON THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
20/20: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COUNSELING
by Dr. Adriana McEachern, ACA Southern Region 20/20 Representative

The ACA 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling is comprised of representatives from 31 organizations under the ACA umbrella who have been meeting and collaborating for the past six years on issues related to the future of the counseling profession. The Committee delegates identified seven principles critical to the future of the counseling profession. These were

- Sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors.
- Presenting ourselves as a unified profession has multiple benefits.
- Working together to improve the public perception of counseling and to advocate for professional issues will strengthen the profession.
- Creating a portability system for licensure will benefit counselors and strengthen the counseling profession.
- Expanding and promoting our research base is essential to the efficacy of professional counselors and to the public perception of the profession.
- Focusing on students and prospective students is necessary to ensure the ongoing health of the counseling profession.
- Promoting client welfare and advocating for the populations we serve is a primary focus of the counseling profession.

At the 2010 ACA Conference, 29 of the delegates agreed on a counseling definition after a series of possible definitions went through the Delphi process. The new counseling definition, which has been endorsed by 27 organizations, is:

*Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.*

The definition is a basic framework and every organization is able to add additional wording that best fits their area of focus and specialization. ACA is currently working on a plan to disseminate the definition to the public.

The 20/20 Vision delegates have now been asked to look at licensure portability and have been identifying ideas and concepts that can be used by states and jurisdictions for a national licensure title, scope of practice, and education requirements for obtaining licensure. When the delegates meet in New Orleans at the ACA Conference, discussions will continue around the issue of licensure portability. If you have any interest in providing feedback to me as the ACA Southern Region representative regarding licensure portability, please email me at mceacher@fiu.edu.
Jacksonville, Fla. – Today, Governor Rick Scott signed Senate Bill 736, the Student Success Act, into law at the charter school, KIPP Impact Middle School in Jacksonville. The historic bill puts in place part of the Governor’s 7-7-7 Plan by requiring merit pay for Florida’s public educators based on student achievement.

“I am proud that the first bill I sign is this important legislation that will give Florida the best educated workforce to compete in the 21st century economy,” Governor Scott said. “We must recruit and retain the best people to make sure every classroom in Florida has a highly effective teacher.”

Sponsored by Senator Stephen Wise and Representative Erik Fresen, the legislation changes how teacher performance is evaluated, including the following:

- Teachers will be evaluated using a scale of four levels for performance (highly effective, effective, needs improvement and unsatisfactory), instead of being evaluated as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In 2009, 99.7 percent of teachers earned a satisfactory evaluation.
- At least half of an educator’s evaluation will be based on student learning gains for classroom teachers, 30 percent for non-classroom personnel and 40 percent for school administrators, instead of 100 percent of the evaluation being based on principal or peer review.
- Teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas, like math and science, will earn more money, instead of paying all teachers – regardless of subject taught – using the same scale.
- After July 1 of this year, new teachers will work on annual contracts, instead of receiving tenure after three years of satisfactory evaluations, which is essentially an employment contract for life.

What People Are Saying About the Student Success Act:

“This landmark bill recognizes that teachers are the most important factor in schools when determining a child’s success,” said StudentsFirst Founder and CEO Michelle Rhee. “We applaud Florida for its adoption of bold and comprehensive education measures that put students first.”

“The action taken today recognizes that quality teachers are the fundamental component of a first-rate education,” said CFO Jeff Atwater. “Exceptional teachers will now be distinguished, celebrated and rewarded for their dedication and skill to impart knowledge that inspires our students.”

“The passage of Senate Bill 736, ‘The Student Success Act,’ would not have been a success without the months of collaborative committee work and public input from teachers, administrators and parents,” Senator Stephen Wise said. “I’m thankful for the cooperation from the many groups and individuals who contributed to the discussion on instructional quality, along with the dedicated committee members. Our teachers are incredibly influential and important to the success of our children and our future as a State. I believe this bill will attract top-quality educators to Florida and foster a student-centered, world-class education system.”

“This is a momentous occasion for our state’s education system,” Representative Erik Fresen said. “Excellent teachers are the driving force behind student success and this bill provides for a system that recognizes those highly effective educators and rewards them appropriately.”

Stay up-to-date with current legislative issues:
www.FLAcounseling.com
Partnering With Parents
The School Counselor’s Role in Building Collaborative Relationships With These Important Stakeholders

By Melissa Mariani, M.Ed.
School Counselor-Diocese of Palm Beach; Doctoral Student-Florida Atlantic University
marianimelissa@yahoo.com

As school counselors we are taught to value relationships—relationships with our students, teachers, and administrators. These are the people we think of most often mainly because they are the ones we spend most of our time with on a daily basis. However, there is another important group of stakeholders for school counselors to consider that should not be overlooked—our PARENTS. Parental involvement is a critical component to school success. Parents can be a wealth of information and support to school counselors. First and foremost, parents know their children best. They can provide insight and background into family dynamics, discipline practices, and learning styles of their children. This information can assist a school counselor in advocating more easily for the services the student may need. Providing teachers with these integral facts may also change the tone of the working relationship between the teacher/student and teacher/parent to help them work more effectively with one another. Additionally, given that student academic achievement relies not only on cognitive/learning skills, but also personal/social, and self-management skills, parents often provide the first line of defense in teaching these needed skill sets to their children. In working collaboratively with parents, inviting them in to our schools and facilitating their investment in their child’s learning and success, we, as school counselors are doing our part in advocating for our profession. Parents can be powerful allies for school counselors. If you can show the impact you had on one student, one parent, and/or one family through the direct services you offer (classroom guidance, individual and small group counseling, and consultation) these important stakeholders may be willing to advocate for why you are a crucial piece of the puzzle in your school.

ACES Convention

You may have already heard that the 2011 ACES Convention "Helping the Leaders, Helping the Helpers, Shaping the Future" will be held October 26 – 30, 2011 at the Gaylord Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

This dynamic conference is relevant for clinical supervisors, counselor educators, students, and many other counseling professionals, so please feel free to disseminate this email to your membership so that they may ‘Save the Date’ now.

The 2011 Convention will have content sessions, a research-mentor pre-conference, and lots more. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the ACES Convention in the Music City!

For more information about the Convention, please visit http://www.acesonline.net/conference/.

Also, please visit the Gaylord’s website to learn more about this wonderful environment: www.gaylordhotels.com/gaylord-opryland

We hope to see you there!
Cognitive Changes after Childbirth: Visuospatial Memory, Spatial Reasoning, and Processing Speed in Mothers
Melissa Santiago, M.S., Irene M. Bravo, Ph.D., Niurka Santana, Ph.D., Psy.D.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of childbirth on women’s cognition, specifically in visuospatial memory, spatial reasoning, and processing speed. According to the literature collected, women in addition to experiencing gestational physical, hormonal, emotional and social changes; women experience cognitive changes that have been of much interest to scientists for several years (Ellison, 2005). The term “baby brain”, which was adopted from the belief that mothers experience cognitive decline during and after pregnancy, is being reviewed in a more objective matter (DeAngelis, 2008). Brain structures and cognitive performances examined during and after pregnancy have opened many new areas of research (Henry & Rendell, 2007; Oatridge, et al., 2002). However, so far, human studies’ results have been mixed and conflicting (Henry & Rendell, 2007). Some researchers have found decline in cognitive performance (Buckwalter et al., 1999; De Groot, Hornstra, Roozendaal, & Jolles, 2003; Parsons et al., 2004; Sharp, Brindel, Brown, & Turner, 1993), whereas others have reported cognitive improvements (Christensen, Poyser, Pollitt & Cubis, 1999). Furthermore, some researchers have failed to support any impairment or enhancements (Casey, 2000; Dennison & Carter, 2003). Human studies’ difficulties in controlling psychological, hormonal and environmental factors, resulted in the use of animal studies’ results, to clarify some of these mixed findings. Animal research using mother rats have shown significant brain changes and neural plasticity and enhanced abilities in visual spatial learning, memory, and speed (Kinsley, 2008). The hippocampus is sensitive to the hormones during pregnancy and the changes that occur in the maternal brain are permanent and promote long term advantages (Gatewood et al., 2005; Love et al., 2005). Having better spatial ability, processing speed and visual memory may help mothers monitor and track their child more efficiently and therefore enhance the survival of their young. Structural changes, such as the brain not returning to its normal size until six months postpartum may contribute to some of the initial memory loss during pregnancy, yet it is believed that cognitive enhancements may occur one to two years postpartum (Brizendine, 2006; Delisle, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to assess possible enhanced abilities in women within this period. The main goal of this cross-sectional design is to explore positive cognitive changes after childbirth in female humans such as those found in animal studies. The present study is among the first to evaluate and compare changes and possible enhancements in visuospatial memory, spatial reasoning, and processing speed in human mothers, while comparing them to childless never pregnant women of similar cognitive status.

This is an ongoing study, and data is now being collected. A sample of 70 women within 20 to 39 years of age who are fluent in English with at least 12 years of education are being recruited for this study. Participants consist of 35 first time mothers within 10 to 24 months postpartum who had low-risk pregnancy; and a control sample of 35 childless never pregnant women. Participants are being tested individually and assessed in the areas of verbal intelligence, visuospatial memory, spatial reasoning, and processing speed. It is expected that women 10 to 24 months postpartum will obtain higher scores, on visuospatial memory, spatial reasoning and processing speed, as measured by the Brief Visuospatial Memory Test-R, Symbol Search and Matrix Reasoning; than childless never pregnant women of the same age, education, socioeconomic status, and verbal intelligence. The results of this study will augment and clarify existing research and will provide more evidence about women’s cognitive capacities, especially in the areas of visuospatial memory, spatial reasoning, and processing speed. If the findings of this study are in the hypothesized direction, they will be useful in supporting the notion that neuroplasticity and neuropsychological changes occur after childbirth. The study will also promote a positive aspect for mothers and reflect that women after having children may enhance in certain abilities.

This is an ongoing study and mother participates are currently being recruited. If you or someone you know meet the criteria and would like to participate in a face-to-face 45 minutes study please contact Melissa Santiago, M.S. at 305-318-8255.
News and Information

Last Minute Tax Filing Tips

By, Bob Milstead, FCA Treasurer

As the income tax filing date approaches, here, for your consideration, are some tips regarding ways to save money on your return.

Can you file for free? The IRS sponsors free filing for anyone who earns less than $58,000. A list of preparers is available at www.irs.gov/efile.

Need some free advice? Those who earn less than $49,000 can get free advice from IRS-certified volunteers through a program called VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) by calling 1-800-906-9887. People over 60 can get help from the Tax Counseling for the Elderly program run by AARP. Call 1-800-829-1040. H&R Block also offers free preparation and filing of 1040EZ forms for people of all ages and income levels.

Refunds. Rather than considering a “refund anticipation loan, have your refund directly deposited to your checking account. If you file electronically, the refund should be there in three weeks or less.

Should you fund your retirement account? You have until April 18 this year and still count it as a 2010 contribution. You might be able to create a tax break but you will save later on with a ROTH account. The limit for 2010 contributions is $5,000, plus an extra 1,000 if you are 50 or older. If you have a high-deductible health plan, you also have until April 18 to put money into your health savings account. That money is tax deductible and, if later spent on healthcare, it is spent tax free.


Should you itemize your deductions? This is a complicated area, but if you are in the 15% tax bracket, for every $1,000 in itemized deductions, you reduce your tax liability by $150. See Publication 150: Withholding and Estimated Tax at http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html. If you are an employee, you can deduct unreimbursed business expenses if you itemize on Schedule A. Total employee business expenses must be more than 2% of your adjusted gross income to be deductible. Common business expenses are: business liability or malpractice insurance premiums; business use of home expenses if part of your home is used exclusively for business and such use is required for the convenience of your employer; rent paid for business space or equipment; dues to professional societies; subscriptions to professional journals; certain job search expenses, even if you don’t find one; licenses, regulatory fees and occupational taxes; certain travel expenses.

Information for this article came from the following websites: www.irs.gov and www.hrblock.com.
The White House Council on Women and Girls was created in 2009 by President Obama "to enhance, support and co-ordinate the efforts of exiting programs for women and girls".

This report, produced by the council, provides a snapshot of how women are doing in five critical areas: demographic and family changes, education, employment, health, and crime and violence. It utilizes the expertise of many government agencies for the data, and evaluates the impact of these areas on women, and the family as a whole.

On interesting fact is that in the area of education, where women are receiving more of the degrees, there is a huge lack in the areas of science and technology. I heard a neuroscientist on NPR yesterday stating that the interest in science and technology must be developed in elementary school, otherwise it may be too late.

Published this month, March 2011, it is hot off the press! Although it is 97 pages long, it is well designed with lots of visuals, making it easy to access the information which is of most interest to you, the reader.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/Women_in_America.pdf

On Wednesday, April 27th, the Florida Department of Education, in partnership with Florida Virtual School and Elluminate Technology, will host the Second Annual Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Virtual Career Fair. This one-day event is open to all Florida middle and high school students, and will feature speakers who will give students a first-hand account of what it takes to be successful in STEM-related careers.

**Agenda**

**9:30 a.m.** – Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith and Florida Virtual School President and CEO Julie Young will kick off the event with remarks about the virtual fair and encourage students to pursue careers in STEM areas.

**9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.** – Dr. Cubitt – Moffitt Cancer Center [www.moffitt.org](http://www.moffitt.org)

**10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.** – Craig Kronenberger, Edelman Digital [www.edelman.com](http://www.edelman.com)

**10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.** – Shauna Cordis, Programmer/Analyst, Sandia National Laboratories [www.sandia.gov](http://www.sandia.gov)

**12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.** – Heather Ohm Rodriguez, Principal Engineer, Cordis Corporation, a Johnson & Johnson Company [www.cordis.com](http://www.cordis.com)

**12:45 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.** – Katharine Nicolaisen, Senior Manatee Research Trainer at Mote Marine Laboratory [www.mote.org](http://www.mote.org)

**2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.** – Chris Byrd, Senior Clinical Research Associate, Abbott Laboratories [www.abbott.com](http://www.abbott.com)

**3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.** – Amy Havig, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), Collier Anesthesia [www.collieranesthesia.com](http://www.collieranesthesia.com)

To participate in the STEM Virtual Career Fair go to [http://www.tinyurl.com/FLVScounselors](http://www.tinyurl.com/FLVScounselors) on April 27th. Prior to the Fair date, be sure to check your connection and ensure that you have the proper software to view the presentations. Elluminate Technology has provided some instructions to ensure your computers are prepared to run the event.
A Few Final Thoughts…

The Weird and Unknown…

Did you know that there are specific colleges that focus on students with learning differences?

Beacon College (Leesburg, FL) serves students with ADD/ADHD, Auditory and visual processing differences, Dyslexia, Expressive/receptive language deficits, Language-based learning disabilities, Reading/writing disabilities and Math disabilities.

Landmark College (Putney, Vermont) also focuses on students with dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), or other specific learning disabilities.

Are you interested in submitting an article for FCA’s awarding winning newsletter, Guidelines? If so, please email Anne Flenner at the NEW Guidelines email address: fcaguidelines@gmail.com

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