College to give 4-year degrees
SCF graduates first baccalaureates in nursing program

By SARA KENNEDY

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MANATEE — Kalaivani Muhundan was a nurse at Manatee Memorial Hospital who wanted to return to college but found it discouraging that she had to drive to Tampa to do it.

That changed when State College of Florida added a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at its local campuses, its first baccalaureate degree.

“I heard about the BSN program at SCF’s campus in Bradenton,” recalled Muhundan, 47, a native of Sri Lanka, who graduated in 2006 with a two-year degree in nursing from SCF.

She signed up to pursue the baccalaureate, or fouryear degree, attending classes in Bradenton one day a week for 18 months.

Saturday, she plans to attend graduation ceremonies at the college’s Bradenton campus. College officials said 38 students had earned BSN degrees.

It will be a relief to simply go to work again instead of having to study in her offhours as well, she said.

“I’m glad it’s over,” said Muhundan, who juggled 12-hour work days as an R.N., plus the needs of a husband and family — yes, even delegating housework — in order to reach graduation day.

“It’s over now, so I have to get back to my housework,” she said, noting that her husband and two teenagers pitched in to help while she was taking classes.

Another student graduating Saturday is Marie Borsellino, of Sarasota, an R.N. at Sarasota Memorial Hospital Healthcare System. She has worked 24 years primarily in the field of oncology.

“This program was at the right time,” she said. “It gave me the opportunity to go for it. It was a wonderful experience, and I feel like I’ve gained tools that will help me in my current role and the rest of my career, enhancing my professional practice.”

She’s planning to continue higher education: She has been accepted for a doctoral program in nursing by Florida State University, she said.

FSU’s Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at SCF’s Lakewood Ranch campus is open to anyone eligible, and has been available now for a year, said Jessica Klipa, a spokeswoman for SCF.

“We will add the FSU master’s in nursing degree this fall, which will give an opportunity for local residents to take advantage of the full continuum of nursing education at SCF, starting with the A.S. in Nursing and B.S. in Nursing from SCF, and the master’s and doctor’s from FSU, offered at SCF,” Klipa said.

Borsellino is looking forward to beginning her doctoral coursework, but first, she will enjoy a couple of months of relative relaxation.

She appreciates the convenience of having such rich academic fare so close.

“It’s right here for us, the location helped me get it done,” Borsellino said.

If she were asked for advice, she would tell people to “go for it” because they would be pleasantly surprised by the support that’s out there, she added.
“It was a very good decision,” said Borsellino of her return to school. She also credited her family for helping her accomplish her goals.

Asked what she would be doing to celebrate, she replied, “I can’t really tell you. I’m just relieved. I will be able to take nice naps, it’ll be great.”

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Registered nurse Marie Borsellino, photographed outside the Waldemere Medical Plaza at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, was among the first students to take advantage of the State College of Florida’s new Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She’ll be graduating this Saturday.