

**COLLEGE RELATIONS AND MARKETING**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**



Coming in 2010 – Palm Beach State College

## **Retired Belle Glade resident donates life savings to endow PBCC scholarship**

(Belle Glade, Fla. – Nov. 18, 2009) When Dr. Victor Guzman arrived at the agricultural research station established by the University of Florida just south of Belle Glade, he was given a simple edict—help solve the problems of the local farmers. He was determined to stay in the area until he believed he had done everything he could to improve the crop production of the local farmers.

That was in 1951.

For nearly 60 years, Guzman developed chemicals for weed control as well as virus and root-rot resistant strains of lettuce that thrive in rich, organic soil surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Guzman put down roots of his own in Belle Glade. He raised a family of five children with his wife Ruth, a teacher and librarian for 25 years at Gove Elementary School. And through the years he put a few dollars away every week into a savings account.

Last year, Guzman read a local newspaper article reporting on the plight of young African-American men living in the county's western communities. The story cited low graduation rates, high incarceration rates, low wages, high health-care expenses and few employment prospects in the area for African-American males.

The story moved Guzman to establish the Lake Okeechobee Muck Rat Nation Scholarship Fund. He donated most of his life savings--\$100,000—to establish the scholarship fund with the Palm Beach Community College Foundation.

The “Muck Rat Nation” Guzman says refers to all the people who make their living in the rich soil within the Everglades Agricultural Area.

“The scholarship is only a drop of water in a vast ocean of need,” said Guzman. “But we have to start somewhere. It is my hope that it will become a vast river of hope.”

Applicants for the scholarship must be accepted at PBCC and enrolled for a minimum of 12 credit hours per term, be a resident of Palm Beach County attending the Belle Glade campus and demonstrate financial need by completing an application for federal student aid. Two \$500 scholarships will be available for eligible students per semester.

“Dr. Guzman’s gift to the Western communities is truly inspirational,” said Suellen Mann, executive director of the PBCC Foundation. “He understands the benefits of higher education and demonstrates that each and every one of us can make a difference in the world.”

A reception to honor Dr. Guzman’s donation will be held at the Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center from 5 to 7 p.m. Dec. 1.

For more information on the Lake Okeechobee Muck Rat Nation Scholarship Fund, contact the PBCC Foundation office at (561) 868-3450.

*Palm Beach Community College will become Palm Beach State College in 2010. Serving more than 49,000 students annually, it is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing the bachelor’s degree, associate degrees, professional certificates, career training and lifelong learning. Established as Florida’s first public community college, it offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens and Belle Glade.*

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