



Crossroads program to end after 30 years

The displaced homemaker program that has served 4,000 people through the years will close its doors Aug. 30. State funding for the program was vetoed.

(Lake Worth, Fla. - June 24, 2013) A state-funded program at Palm Beach State College that has helped thousands of displaced homemakers in Palm Beach County get prepared to enter the workforce is closing its doors after 30 years.

The [Crossroads program](#), which began on the Lake Worth campus in 1983, will end Aug. 30. It is among 19 such initiatives in the state that are funded through grants from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (formerly Agency for Workforce Innovation). However, \$1.8 million in funding for the state's Displaced Homemaker Program, administered by the DEO, was among \$368 million vetoed by Gov. Rick Scott before he signed the state's \$74.1 billion budget.

"It is a loss for the state of Florida and the county," said Rebecca Johnson, coordinator of the Crossroads program, who has worked with Palm Beach State's program for 10 years, including almost four years at the helm.

The Displaced Homemaker Program was established by the Florida Legislature in 1976 to help people 35 and older needing to go to work after years of relying on someone else's income or receiving public assistance. Many of the participants are single women who are divorced or widowed. Funding for the program is provided through the Displaced Homemaker Trust Fund which receives revenue generated from fees on marriage license applications and dissolution of marriage filings.

Dr. Peter Barbatis, vice president of student services and enrollment management at Palm Beach State, said he was saddened to learn that the funding was eliminated. With a budget stretched to the limit and the College not raising tuition in order to keep student costs down, the College does not have the funds to continue the Crossroads program. The College has received yearly grants of as much as \$150,000 to support Crossroads personnel costs.

Two full-time positions, including Johnson's, are being eliminated. Those employees can be considered for other open positions at the College.

The 133 current Crossroads program participants, most of whom are women, will continue to be provided academic support through such programs as [Student Support Services](#) and [Educational Opportunity Centers](#), which are both federally funded TRIO programs at the College. They also will be referred to Workforce Alliance for job placement and training services. Dr. Barbatis assured the Crossroads participants and advisory council that the College is committed to the success of the current participants and future students who meet the criteria. The Palm Beach State College Foundation will continue to seek and provide scholarships to these students via a scholarship fund created for this purpose.

Crossroads helped 4,000 women through the years with assessment and testing services, career/life planning seminars, career and personal development, job search and placement assistance, resume assistance, interviewing skills and other services.

Serving 49,000 students annually, Palm Beach State College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, professional certificates, career training and lifelong learning. Established in 1933 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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