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Georgia Southern University to host 2021 Active Minds Send Silence Packing® Exhibit

October 7, 2021



The Send Silence Packing traveling exhibit will be on display on the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses Oct. 12 and 13.

The Counseling Center at Georgia Southern University has partnered with Active Minds' acclaimed [Send Silence Packing](#)® exhibit in an effort to end the silence that surrounds mental health and suicide and connect visitors with resources for support and action.

The 2021 exhibit will be at Sweetheart Circle on the Statesboro Campus on Tuesday, Oct. 12, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and at the Residential Plaza on the Armstrong Campus in Savannah Wednesday, Oct. 13, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The all-day exhibit will include backpacks featuring stories from individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide. These backpacks, many of which were donated by families, are designed to raise awareness about the impact of suicide, connect individuals to mental health resources and inspire action for suicide prevention.

Passersby are invited to walk among the Send Silence Packing backpacks to see the photographs and read the stories attached to them. Staff from the Counseling Center will be on hand at the exhibits on both campuses to offer support, resources and answer questions throughout the day.

Georgia Southern's Counseling Center has two full-time suicide prevention coordinators. Jade Humphries and Arty Allen, who work on the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses, respectively, help coordinate events like Send Silence Packing to increase awareness among faculty, staff and students.

Since its inaugural display on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 2008, Send Silence Packing has reached more than a million visitors and counting with messages of hope and help. Evaluation data attests to the exhibit's impact — most visitors leave wanting to learn more about mental health and the majority tell three or more people about the exhibit and may reach out to a friend in need or seek help for themselves as a result of experiencing it.

To address changing needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Active Minds launched a new companion exhibit designed to complement the in-person program – [Send Silence Packing: Behind the Backpacks](#). This virtual, immersive experience gives users an in-depth look at the impact of suicide through personal stories, stigma reduction techniques and visual components such as videos, photos, and audio. Visitors to Send Silence Packing will have a chance to learn more about Behind the Backpacks and easily share this program with friends, family and their communities.

“I founded Active Minds as a freshman in college following the death of my brother, Brian, to suicide in order to end the stigma around mental health. Stigma is shame, shame causes silence and silence hurts us all,” said Alison Malmon, founder and executive director of Active Mind. “Send Silence Packing is a highly visible way to combat that stigma, increase openness and inspire action for suicide prevention. Thank you, Georgia Southern, for bringing the 2021 exhibit to your community to help continue to spread awareness and inspire action around mental health and suicide prevention efforts.”

The 2021 Send Silence Packing tour is sponsored by Humble Bundle.

Send Silence Packing: Beyond the Backpacks was made possible by a donation from the RSM US Foundation.

More information about Send Silence Packing or Behind the Backpacks can be found at activeminds.org/sendsilencepacking.

About Active Minds: Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. Active Minds has a presence at more than 800 campuses, schools, communities, and workplaces nationwide, and is powered by a robust Chapter Network, the nationally acclaimed Send Silence Packing® exhibit, inspiring Active Minds Speakers, and our tailored Active Minds @Work initiative. The organization is dedicated to ending the silence and changing the conversation about mental health for everyone. To learn more, visit www.activeminds.org.

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Checo Colón-Gaud receives inaugural Leadership Award from Society for Freshwater Science

October 7, 2021



Biology professor Checo Colón-Gaud, Ph.D., poses with his students.

Biology professor and Associate Dean of the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies Checo Colón-Gaud, Ph.D., has received the inaugural Leadership Award from the Society for Freshwater Science (SFS) for his commitment and ongoing work to improve and expand diversity, equity and inclusion within the SFS community.

Colón-Gaud has been a faculty member at Georgia Southern since 2010 and considers this one of his proudest achievements in his time here.

“This was an incredible honor,” he said. “I’ve been a member of the SFS for close to 20 years — since I was a graduate student — and the Society has played an important role in my development as a scientist and an academic. My involvement in different aspects of the SFS has always been a natural part of my work, of maintaining my network of collaborators and a

mechanism for recruiting new students into my lab at GS. The SFS has been my home for the majority of my time in this field of study and I look forward to continuing my involvement with it and to developing my students through this important network.”

In 2011, Colón-Gaud led a grassroots effort within SFS to start Instars, a mentoring program that provides opportunities for networking among graduate students, faculty and professionals hoping to encourage diversity in the freshwater discipline. In the ten years since its initiation, the Instars Program has become an official and celebrated part of the annual SFS meeting program, and Colón-Gaud’s mentorship has created a true love for the SFS community among former Instars Fellows and mentors.

“My goal with this work is to not only open the doors to more underrepresented minorities in freshwater science including undergraduate and graduate students but also early career professionals,” Colón-Gaud said. “In addition, once they come through these doors, I also want to make sure they can see themselves in the profession by filling the room with other Society members who look like them and have similar experiences.”

Colón-Gaud’s ability to enthusiastically engage, patiently train, and see and appreciate the work and energy of young scientists is seen as a pivotal role in leading SFS toward a more inclusive scientific society. The Instars program, which also received a National Science Foundation award, continues to grow under the direction of Colón-Gaud and other members, and has expanded to “Emerge,” which is SFS’s official mentoring program for undergraduate students from under-represented groups interested in freshwater science.

“Increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in any field, but particularly in science, is important for the overall growth and advancement of the field itself and for the continued development of innovative ideas,” he said. “In general, diversity is such an important aspect of my work as an ecologist and we value the importance of diversity in the overall functioning of ecosystems. However, we have a way to go in embracing that same interest and enthusiasm for the value of diversity in our profession and our workforce.

“Furthermore, being an underrepresented minority in any field of STEM can be challenging and often isolating when there are few minorities in the profession and particularly in leadership roles,” he continued. “The SFS allowed me this very important platform to increase and promote diversity initiatives in our professional society and our science in general. More importantly, they gave me all the resources I needed to succeed in this endeavor.”

The SFS Leadership Award recognizes early or mid-career SFS members for extraordinary work on behalf of the society. The SFS considers nominees who have had a positive and demonstrable impact on some aspect of SFS and further its mission, especially by expanding the impact of our scientific society and of freshwater science. For more information about the award, [click here](#).

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