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ONLINE VERSION AT [FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG](http://FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG)

**FLORIDA VENTURE FORUM CONFERENCE & COMPETITION** – Join the Florida Venture Forum for the 11th Annual Florida Early Stage Capital Conference and the 8th Annual Statewide Collegiate Business Plan Competition May 18. The conference is one of the largest gatherings of angel and early stage investors in the Southeast. It features panel discussions, speakers and presentations by some of Florida's fastest growing private companies. Hear from Florida university students competing to win the 2018 Statewide Collegiate Business Plan Competition. Presenting companies that meet designated criteria will compete for the Accelerating Innovation (AI) Award, offered by Space Florida. The AI Award offers two cash prizes totaling \$50,000 to eligible Florida and out-of-state companies seeking to relocate or establish a presence in Florida. The final presenter application deadline is April 18. For event and competition details, go to <https://tinyurl.com/yakzfmnc>.

**TRADE AMERICAS PROGRAM** – The Trade Americas program offers U.S. companies the opportunity to explore six markets in the Caribbean region of 43 million people that in 2016, collectively represented exports of more than \$20 billion of U.S. goods. The Business Opportunities in the Caribbean Region Conference, hosted in Miami from May 6 to 7 by the U.S. Commercial Service, will focus on regional specific sessions, market access, trade financing resources, and pre-arranged one-one-one consultations with U.S. diplomats. The conference is followed by a trade mission from May 8 to 11 to the Dominican Republic, Bahamas, Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago. To learn more, contact Virgil Kimball at [386-248-8048](tel:386-248-8048) or [Vkimball@volusia.org](mailto:Vkimball@volusia.org).

**AQUACULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND MARINE SCIENCE ACADEMY** – The Academy at Atlantic High School provides training crucial to Florida's unique environment through immersion in ecologically significant projects such as water quality testing, marine life sampling, and invasive species eradication. To learn more, contact Academy Director Stacey Bell at [srbell2@volusia.k12.fl.us](mailto:srbell2@volusia.k12.fl.us).

**FLORIDA GRADUATION RATES** – Florida's high school graduation rate has reached a 14-year high according to recent data released by the Florida Department of Education. For the 2016-17 school year, Florida's statewide graduation rate rose to 82.3 percent, an increase of 23.1 percentage points since 2003-04 and 1.6 percentage points over last year. Florida's graduation rates vary by race and ethnicity, but all groups increased their graduation rates over the last year. For more information, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y98aqx4u>.

**SOLAR ENERGY TRENDS** – A new report, Solar in the Southeast 2017 Annual Report, from the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) highlights solar data and trends throughout the region that includes Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. Using the metric "watts per customer," which looks at the amount of installed solar relative to total customers served, SACE offers a unique analysis with detailed information at the regional, state and utility level. The report shows that North Carolina currently has the most solar photovoltaic capacity in the Southeast at 3 gigawatts and second-most in the United States. Florida utilities are on a path to 4 gigawatts by 2021 due to major announcements in 2017 of utility-scale solar development from Florida Power & Light, Duke Energy Florida, Tampa Electric Company and JEA. To review the report, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ybt53w7w>.

**WORKPLACE INJURIES** – As reported, fatal workplace injuries increased nearly 14 percent in Florida during 2016, reaching a high not seen since 2007, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Nationwide, workplace fatalities increased 7 percent in 2016, so Florida had a larger increase than the U.S. as a whole. The government recorded 309 fatalities in Florida in 2016, up from 272 in 2015. Of the 2016 fatalities, 25 percent were in the field of construction, 16 percent in administrative and waste services, 12 percent were in transportation and warehousing, 7 percent in leisure and hospitality, 7 percent in government, and the rest in other industries.

**MOBILE SERVICE SUBSCRIPTIONS RISING IN NORTH AMERICA** – As of June 2017, more than 290 million people subscribed to mobile services in North America, with the U.S. accounting for 90 percent of the regional subscriber market and Canada the remaining 10 percent. The region will reach 300 million subscribers in 2018, and 84 percent penetration of population by the end of the decade, up from 80 percent in 2016. This is according to the Mobile Economy 2018 report released by the GSM Association, a global industry trade group. While mobile service penetration will continue among those under 18 years old, the projected growth will be predominantly driven by new mobile subscribers over 65 years old. For details, visit <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/>.

**SBA PRESENTS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH WEBINAR** – In recognition of Women's History Month, the U.S. Small Business Administration is presenting a free interactive webinar, Small Business Goal Achievement from 6:30 to 8 p.m. March 22. Learn how to overcome obstacles to achieving goals, get insights into the different ways to stay focused, and deal with achievement issues women face today. To register, contact Natalie Hall at [natalie.hall@sba.gov](mailto:natalie.hall@sba.gov).

**NEWS ITEMS WANTED!** – Please send your business news items to Joanne Magley, Volusia County Community Information director, at [jmagley@volusia.org](mailto:jmagley@volusia.org). If you wish to be removed from this weekly broadcast, please let us know.