

Rumors soar amidst kitchen staff controversy

By **Burton Hodges**
Opinion Editor

Dave Taylor, director of Pioneer Food Services at Brevard College, began receiving text messages from Dr. Joyce and Dr. D’Anna around 8:30 p.m. Tuesday night, wondering why Darlene Blackstock had been fired that morning. The texts came as a surprise to Taylor, as he was the one who did the firing at Pioneer and he was five hours away on a business trip in northern Kentucky.

According to Donald Meintz, who was the in charge of cafeteria operations on Tuesday morning, “Darlene had been rude to some students and [Pioneer] staff at breakfast and been asked to go home for the rest of Tuesday and all of Wednesday.”

A member of the Brevard College community for five years, Darlene had become something of a campus legend to the many students who frequent Myers Dining Hall each day, and the rumors of her firing began to circulate around campus like the flu.

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Around 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, I was invited along with 163 other students to join a Facebook group, organizing a protest outside of the cafeteria at 9 p.m. Surprised, I walked over to the dining hall to see if I could get any sort of scoop on what had happened to her.

No one around the dining hall seemed to know what was going on, but they also seemed to think that Darlene had been fired and asked me if I could get in touch with her for them.

Students began to converge on the patio of the dining hall around 8:45, and by 9 p.m. there were at least 40 students gathered to cover the entrance to cafeteria in chalk. None of the students seemed to know exactly what had happened, except that Darlene had been yelling at students in line to get food and was fired on the spot.

“She had been telling us for a long time that

she was expecting to get fired,” one student told me. “They have slowly been firing all of the old kitchen staff.”

Caleb Wellborn, who had organized the event on Facebook, said that Darlene had told him over text message that morning that she had been fired.

After a proper chalking, and plenty of “Darlene or bust” and “We want Darlene’s” had been inscribed into the face of Myers Dining Hall, the protesters gathered atop the picnic benches for a photo shoot. I stood in the back, taking in the scenery when my phone began to vibrate.

Darlene had not been fired. The rumors weren’t true. At least, that’s what the stream of emails being exchanged between students and faculty were now saying. I looked around. Several other students were looking at their phones, confused as well.

“Oops.”

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Dave Taylor arrived on Wednesday morning to another headache. On the heels of a catastrophic meltdown with the dishwashing equipment in January, Pioneer had been digging themselves out of a financial hole

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Thea Dunn

Students react with chalk-writing protest Tuesday when rumors spread about the letting go of a well-known and well-loved member of the Myers Dining Hall staff and BC community.