



WRAC meetings may return in some form

By Katrina Elsken
Lake Okeechobee News

WEST PAM BEACH — Since 2001, a group of stakeholders representing all of the interests of those who live in the counties encompassed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) have met monthly for a lively roundtable discussion of the water quality and quantity issues faced by their communities.

WRAC originally stood for Water Resources Advisory Commission and more recently has been called Water Resources Analysis Coalition, and included representatives from South Florida businesses, water supply utilities,

agriculture, public interest groups, local government and environmental organizations.

Since Gov. Ron DeSantis took office, all of the WRAC meetings have been canceled, leaving some stakeholders concerned that their views will no longer be considered by SFWMD officials.

At the April 11 SFWMD Governing Board meeting, some governing board members expressed a desire to bring WRAC back in some form. They also agreed that the WRAC Recreation (WRAC-Rec) group, a public forum for anyone interested in recreation on the public lands in the district,

See WRAC — Page 8

Miccosukee Tribe to fight reservoir plan

By Katrina Elsken
Lake Okeechobee News

Discussion of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir took some unexpected twists at the April 11 meeting of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board. Based on the information provided at the meeting, the lease on the land won't delay construction of the reservoir, but other issues could.

An explanation of the lease on the state-owned land that is the future site for the reservoir and stormwater treatment area (STA) was on the agenda for Thursday's meeting.

On Wednesday, SFWMD received a letter from Florida Crystals volunteering to let SFWMD terminate the lease early if the

corps was ready to start construction before Dec. 1, 2020. (For the letter, see Page 4.)

Board member Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch was skeptical about the letter from Alfonso Fanjul and J. Pepe Fanjul. "It's all about what's in the contract. It's all about what's written. A verbal offer means nothing," she said.

SFWMD Executive Director Drew Bartlett said the letter (which is in writing) "opens the door" for discussion.

Under the terms of the lease, Florida Crystals pays the state an annual rent \$1,615,800 on the 16,158-acre property. In addition, they pay property taxes to Palm Beach County, and are responsible for maintaining the land to prevent

See LEASE — Page 9



Lake Okeechobee News/Cathy Womble

Woman tries to save tree

An Okeechobee woman's effort to save a tree was just in time for Earth Day. Although they aren't her trees, 62-year-old Mary Kay Rios loves the trees in the Lakeside North RV Park, where she has lived for the last two and a half years. When the new owner, who lives in Delaware, purchased the park and said he was going to cut them all down and plant palm trees instead, she was horrified. "He says palm trees provide shade and are safer during hurricanes," Ms Rios said, "but that's not true at all. They just draw roaches and rats." She said the tree by her trailer was home to a family of doves, "and they mate for life," she explained. "In one of the trees, they just moved the nest, but now the mother will never find her babies." Ms. Rios said she plans to stay up in the tree until they agree not to cut it down. "Maybe they will leave at least this one," she said. The park manager had no comment. For more Earth Day stories, see Pages 14 and 15.



3 Lake watershed plan meeting Thursday



19 Glades Central beats Glades Day

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'Fire tax' discussion emphasizes need in Glades County

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

MOORE HAVEN — The Glades County Board of Commissioners is poised at a fork on a rural road, a yes-or-no decision point. Three votes lean one way; two votes stand firm the other way.

There's a turnoff ahead, a side road that leads to potentially a much safer population, with better and timelier fire and emergency response protection for the county's few thousand residents. (Glades is the third-least-populated county in Florida, with around 4,900 households.) The change would involve some considerable cost to everyone, but commissioners could select from a range of prices to at least get the ball rolling. Commissioners Donna Storter Long and Donald Strenth want to go that way.

But the majority seem to want to keep going straight on the road the county's

been following for years, relying on the two-person crew that Glades County employs and on volunteer fire departments that are quite a few shy of the bodies they need to provide 24/7/365 protection. Those three — Board Chairman Tim Stanley, Vice Chairman Weston Pryor and Commissioner John Ahern — so far have indicated they probably would vote to deny the county this chance to set up a different, possibly fairer way of taxation. And if anything is to be done, time is growing short for this year, because deadlines must be met, by law, to proceed in a different direction.

The change would be to the method referred to as a "fire tax." In government-speak, it's an MSBU, for Municipal Services Benefit Unit, and would mean an assessment depending on what kind of property you own. If the commissioners stay the course, it would perpetuate Glades



Lake Okeechobee News/Chris Felker

Public Safety Director Bob Jones explains a point to (from left) Commissioners Donna Storter Long, Weston Pryor, Tim Stanley, John Ahern and Donald Strenth.

Lake Okeechobee Weather Forecast

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Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 84. Light and variable wind becoming east 5 to 10 mph in the morning.

Wednesday night: Mostly clear, with a low

around 64. East wind 5 to 10 mph becoming light east-southeast after midnight.

Thursday: A slight chance of showers, then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 1 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 87. East wind 5 to 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 30%.

Thursday night: A 20% chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a low around 72. South-southeast wind around 10 mph.

Friday: A chance of showers and thunderstorms, then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm after noon. Partly sunny, with a high near 85. Windy, with a south

wind 10 to 20 mph and gusts as high as 30 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%.

Friday night: A chance of showers and thunderstorms before midnight, then a slight chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 58. West wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40%.

Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 78. West wind around 10 mph.

Saturday night: Mostly clear, with a low around 54. Northwest wind around 5 mph.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 80. Northeast wind around 5 mph.

Sunday night: Clear, with a low around 59. East-northeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 81. North-northeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

Monday night: Clear, cool with the temperature approaching the record low of 53 set in 2009. Winds ENE 4 to 7 mph.

Tuesday: Sunny, with a high near 80. Northeast winds 6 mph with 18 mph gusts.

Tuesday night: Clear, with a low of 63. Northeast winds 7 mph with 20-mph gusts.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 80. East-northeast winds 5 mph with 16 mph gusts. Chance of precipitation 10%.

County residents' uncertainty about how long they'd have to wait for help — and what kind would come — if, heaven forbid, they have to call 911.

Some residents think that's a dangerous path, and not surprisingly they live in the far-flung parts of the county where response time might be 20-30 minutes or more. If someone responds. As Public Safety Director Bob Jones has warned, with such a paltry staff of firefighters and EMTs, anybody's emergency might be life-threatening to them if those first responders are tied up on other calls, transporting another patient, or fighting another fire.

A discussion of Glades County's possible options took place during a workshop Tuesday, April 9, after commissioners' last regular meeting. Public Safety Director Jones showed a PowerPoint presentation giving information from a needs assessment done in 2014, with some updates he was able to do and new numbers crunched by Sandy Walker of Government Services Group, the firm that did the earlier study. The county could hire it again to update the information for a few thousand dollars, but at their March 25 meeting, commissioners rejected 3-2 a motion from Commissioner Storter Long to do just that. Only Mr. Strenth joined her in supporting it.

Several citizens spoke at the end of the session to give their views. David Heflin said: "I'm a longtime volunteer firefighter with Glades County. I'm also a Glades County EMS employee. I live in Ortona. We have about four firefighters on a perfect

day," he stated, adding: "I wholeheartedly support the idea of a full-time fire department in Glades County."

He said he believes there's a fairness issue involved in the funding debate. "One of the important issues for me is that if I pay the same thing for services as other residents of Glades County, then I expect and demand the same service." Money used for fire and EMS now comes only from Glades County property taxes and state financing.

After Director Jones gave his presentation at the workshop, discussion went on for a couple of hours, into early afternoon. But, no official action could be taken at the workshop, and the talks will probably continue at 6 on Monday evening, April 22.

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Fire at business ties up a dozen agencies at once

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

MOORE HAVEN — What happens when there's a potentially major fire in Glades County? Everyone found out a day after the county commissioners and Public Safety Department staff last week discussed ways to establish better fire/rescue and emergency response.

A dozen first-responder agencies mobilized quickly, including six volunteer fire departments from Glades and Hendry

counties plus other local and state law enforcement and public safety agencies.

A wildfire broke out at a business on U.S. 27 on Wednesday, April 10, a few miles south of the courthouse. According to a news release from Angela Snow-Colegrove, Glades County director of emergency management: "Glades County fire crews and mutual aid responders were on scene at the Oldcastle Lawn & Garden, 30075 U.S. Highway 27 in Moore Haven. The fire started in one of the brush piles located at the back

of the complex, and spread to multiple piles of debris." Wind caused the blaze to jump a fire line and continue to catch new piles on fire, the news release went on. Wednesday evening, they reported, "At this time the fires are contained and firefighters along with Oldcastle staff will be staying throughout the night to monitor conditions."

Responding to the call were the Glades County Central District Volunteer Fire Department, East District Volunteer Fire Department, West District Volunteer Fire Department, Glades County Sheriff's Office, Emergency Medical Services' Medic One and Glades County Emergency Management. Mutual Aid departments responding were the Clewiston Fire Department, LaBelle Volunteer Fire Department, Pioneer Volunteer Fire

Department, Montura Volunteer Fire Department, Florida Forest Service (which brought in its plow equipment) and the Florida Highway Patrol.

The next day, officials reported that volunteers from the county's east and central districts had stayed at the scene all Wednesday night.

According to a follow-up release Thursday afternoon, April 11: "The fire is still burning underneath the piles of debris that are located on the backside of Old Castle's property. Glades County Fire Department was on scene throughout the day putting water on the debris piles to try and keep the fire contained to the piles that were already burning."

Staff at Oldcastle moved debris that was close to the fire and planned to stay indefinitely.

Watershed protection meeting planned for Thursday

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — A Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan public stakeholder meeting is planned for Thursday, April 18, at 11 a.m. in the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Okeechobee Service Center, 316 N.W. Fifth St., Okeechobee.

In accordance with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, beginning March 1, 2020, and every five years thereafter, the South Florida Water Management District is required to update the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan.

The protection plan is comprised of two

major components, the Lake Okeechobee Construction Project and the Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program. SFWMD will present the approach to updating the protection plan components.

The meeting will also be webcast.

When it's time, start or join the WebEx meeting from:

<https://webmeeting.sfwmd.gov/orion/joinmeeting.do?MTID=2bcf85e12d5b-4c44ef41b3c1a490899c>

Meeting Number is 999 414 485. This meeting does not require a password.

For more information, go online to sfwmd.gov or contact Ximena Pernet at xpernett@sfwmd.gov.



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Pulse of the Community

Lease will not delay work on EAA reservoir

Editor's note: The following letter was sent to Drew Bartlett, executive director South Florida Water Management District, on April 10.

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

Congratulations on your appointment as executive director of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

As a landowner and stakeholder in South Florida, Florida Crystals shares the same goal as the State of Florida and your agency to preserve and protect Florida's waterways and environment.

Florida Crystals made a firm commitment 25 years ago to the public-private partnership that has resulted in remarkable success achieving one of the world's largest and most ambitious environmental restoration efforts, and we remain as resolute today to the success of Everglades restoration.

We have a documented track record as proponents of science-based restoration plans, including the Everglades Forever Act, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration

Plan, the Central Everglades Planning Project and Everglades Restoration Strategies. We supported them and advocated for their passage. We have also worked closely with the SFWMD to transition tracts of our privately owned farmland as well as leased land to the agency in a timely manner to construct restoration projects, including the A-1 FEB and the current STA-1W expansion. It was in this same spirit and with the knowledge and expertise of how our public-private partnership has worked in the past that we negotiated a transitional lease for land in the EAA reservoir site. The terms of the lease executed in November 2018 show it was designed to accelerate the project by giving the SFWMD early access to 560 acres of land, allowing the agency to begin site work and transportation of aggregate at any time.

The lease was also written to ensure that land will be available as needed and without delay for the EAA reservoir's construction. Florida Crystals is fully committed to ensuring the same timely and

cooperative transition of the 16,158 acres of leased land for the EAA reservoir as was achieved with the A-1 FEB and the STA-1W expansion. To this end, we have cooperated with every request by the SFWMD and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to access and use land we are currently farming to perform geological investigations as part of the EAA reservoir's design work, including allowing the excavation of multiple test pits within our active farming operations.

Furthermore, to be clear, as we have communicated to the current administration as well as to the prior administration, you have our commitment that, if construction of the reservoir is accelerated, we will transition land covered by this lease as needed by the SFWMD for construction of the EAA reservoir project.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the Everglades Forever Act, we commend the professionals of the SFWMD for their accomplishments in making the bold vision set by the State of Florida for the Everglades a reality.

We look forward to working with you and your staff as you continue to implement Everglades restoration projects.

Sincerely,

Alfonso Fanjul

**Chief executive officer,
chairman of the board**

J. Pepe Fanjul

**President, chief operating officer,
vice chairman of the board
Florida Crystals**

Speak Out

Speak Out is a reader response column. Comments may be posted on the newspaper's website or Facebook pages, emailed to okeeneews@newszap.com or mailed to the newspaper office, 107 S.W. 17th St., Suite D, Okeechobee, FL 34974.

Lake conditions

• "Heard that the workers that spray the lake had been laid off; but, they are going back to work and back to spraying. What happened to no spraying for a while? Burn. Don't spray. We have to lower the lake so we can burn." — Sue

• "Everyone complains about low water, but it is necessary for every lake in Florida. It's not written in the heavens that you need to run a 200+ horsepower outboard out there." — Hayden Watt

• "With the lake level below 12 feet,

the grass is starting to grow on the bottom, which is great. But we need to keep FWC from sending the aquatic spraying boats in there to kill it. And we also need to keep the lake at least around 11 feet because if it goes too low, the area where the eelgrass is growing now will dry up and the new aquatic vegetation will die." — S. Jones

• "If they raise the water too high, there will be no hydrilla, eelgrass, peppergrass etc. ... but you have to quit spraying the lake. I remember when I was a kid, duck season would come around and airboats and mud motors would make trails and open areas of fishing, not just flat-out spraying every week." — Bobby Adams

• "Polluted water is polluted water. It pollutes habitat wherever you send it. Eventually, everything will be polluted with polluted water. It's time to stop polluting

the water in the first place. Address and resolve ROOT causes ... we cannot continue to just mitigate." — John Hitchcock

• "A layman's opinion on what to do about the lake — stop spraying poison in it and let the aquatic vegetation grow. The plants clean the water. We should have plants a mile out from shore all the way to the shoreline, with paths cut through for navigation, cut through the plants by aquatic harvesting. Take the money we have been spending on spraying and spend it on aquatic harvesting instead. Spraying herbicide into the lake is just making the problem worse. We should have 150,000 acres of marsh around that lake. We have 5,000 acres left. It seems to me that the State of Florida is trying to kill Lake Okeechobee. We have to fight back. We have to save our lake." — K. Smith

Meet for Gospel sing-a-long

OKEECHOBEE — Come out to a gospel sing-a-long on Saturdays from 5 to 7 p.m. at the little white church across from Eli's, 912 N.W. Park St. Whether you sing, play an instrument or just want to listen, all are welcome. For information, call 863-610-0330.

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- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions
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- To treat people with courtesy, respect, and compassion

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Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

KOA veterans help others

OKEECHOBEE — The City of Okeechobee presented Certificates of Appreciation to seven winter visitors at KOA for their years of raising funds to benefit local veterans. The presentation was made at KOA by City Councilwoman Monica Clark and Mayor Dowling Watford. Left to right: Gilbert Solly, Councilwoman Clark, Jim Espinosa, John Grant, Larry Sanders, Mike Beaugard, Roger Havens, and Mayor Watford. Not pictured is Tim Fritchen.



Veterans News

Around the Lake

VFW Post 9528 host events

BUCKHEAD RIDGE — The VFW Post 9528, 29012 State Road 78 East in Buckhead Ridge will host the following events: The VFW Auxiliary will serve a fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, and dessert dinner on Wednesday, **April 17**, at 5 p.m. The post will serve dinner on Friday, **April 19**, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Menu includes grilled boneless ribeye steak, grilled pork tenderloin, fried fish and shrimp, baked and french fried potatoes, baked sweet potatoes, fried onion rings, salad and dessert. Music by Mike and Cheryl from 6 to 10 p.m.

The VFW Riders will serve a full breakfast from 8:30 to 11 a.m. and wings at 4 p.m. on Saturday, **April 20**. Proceeds benefit veteran services. For information, call 863-467-2882.

VFW Post 44423 hosts events

OKEECHOBEE — VFW Post 4423, 300 N.W. 34th St., will host the following events: On Wednesday, **April 17**, there will be an eight-ball pool tournament at 7:30 p.m. and the grill opens at 5 p.m. On Friday, **April 19**, bingo will start at 1 p.m.,

the grill will open at 5 p.m., and there will be Karaoke by Doug and Brenda from 7 to 10 p.m.

On Saturday, **April 20**, bingo starts at 1 p.m. On Sunday, **April 21**, there will be an Easter dinner of ham, green beans, potato salad and rolls from 1 to 3 p.m.

American Legion Post #64

OKEECHOBEE — The American Legion Post #64, 501 S.E. Second St., will host the following events: Thirsty Thursday, **April 18**, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Lunch and dinner will be served.

Karaoke/Fish Fry Friday night, **April 19**, Fish Fry dinner from 5 to 8 p.m. Choice of Fish, Shrimp or Chicken in a basket or on a salad. Music by "Sax Man" Glenn Meyer from 6 to 9 p.m. College game day on Saturday, **April 20**, Come tailgate with us! There will be \$9 buckets of domestic beer. Sunday evening bingo, **April 21**, at 6 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. Kitchen open from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Five card bingo will be held on Monday, **April 22**, from 1 to 3 p.m. with lunch served at 12:30 p.m. Meeting Day will be held on Tuesday, **April 23**. Food will be available all day. For information, call 863-763-5309.

Post #64
501 SE 2nd St
Okeechobee
763-5309

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS



MUSIC 3-6 JAY

TACO WEDNESDAY 11-6

Margarita Special



4-17

Register for a \$20 bar tab

THIRSTY THURSDAY

Food 11-6



4-18

FRIDAY: \$6 Bargain Basket Dinner 5-8PM
 Choice of fish, shrimp, or chicken in a basket or on a salad for \$7.
 Music by SAX MAN 5-8PM

4-19

SATURDAY:
College game day
Come tailgate with us!



Bucket of Beer \$9

4-20

SUNDAY: Bingo ~Doors Open 5PM
Starts 6:30 PM Kitchen 5:30 - 7:30PM

4-21

MONDAY: 5 Card Bingo 1-3PM
LUNCH served at 12:30 PM

4-22

TUESDAY: Meeting Day

Food Available All Day



Bloody Marys \$1.50

4-23

First Glades Co. Habitat home buyer approved

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

MOORE HAVEN — Habitat for Humanity has selected the first recipient-to-be of a home constructed with its help in Glades County.

At the April 9 County Board meeting, SHIP Coordinator Cindy Ricker appeared to

ask the board to encumber State Housing Initiative Partnership funds for Dana Steele for a house being constructed on Avenue M. “She is the first recipient of a Habitat for Humanity home, and this is for down-payment assistance. She’s in a moderate range, and the amount is \$15,000.”

Commissioner Weston Pryor moved to

approve the request, Commissioner Donna Storter Long seconded, and it passed 5-0.

Commissioner John Ahern noted that “on those SHIP homes — you know that they’re building two out there — they’re coming along real good.”

Ms. Ricker echoed him. “Oh, they are. In fact, the one that is over here in town should be (certified for occupancy) this week. I expect and I hope that we can all

get together and do a walk-through.”

Commissioner Long asked why the address was still to be determined. Ms. Ricker said, “Well, it’s on M, but I’m not sure exactly which house or what one, so that’s why.”

The Charlotte County-based HH organization requested and received permission from the county last year to expand its operations into the area.

Jimmy McMillan Memorial Tourney to be held May 11

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

BELLE GLADE — The Jimmy McMillan Memorial Bass Tournament will take place on Saturday, May 11, from safe light until 3 p.m., ending with the weigh-in at Torry Island Campground & Marina. There is a guaranteed \$2,000 prize for first place. The field is limited to 250 boats and the entry fee is \$60. The second Big Bass takes a \$100 gift card donated by Okeechobee Fishing Headquarters; the highest finishing team wearing their current shirt will receive a \$50 gift card. Call 954-543-2337 for more information.



Jimmy McMillan

The late Mr. McMillan owned a grocery store in Belle Glade and was robbed and murdered on Jan. 2, 2012. Proceeds from this and other fundraisers goes to a special fund, said Connie McMillan Deaton.

“Fishing was his life, and so we started the tournament as a way of remembering him and bringing people together. We established a scholarship in his name at the high school that he graduated from, Glades Day School ... There’s an essay that they write and we’ve given almost \$30,000 in scholarships over seven years.”

Obituaries

Obituaries should be submitted to the Lake Okeechobee News by emailing obits@newszap.com. Customers may also request photos and links to online guestbooks. A link to the obituaries is available at lakeokeechobeenews.com.

James Roy ‘J.R.’ Graves, 93

OKEECHOBEE — James Roy “J.R.” Graves passed peacefully into the arms of Jesus April 15, 2019. He was born July 14, 1925, in Monroe, Mich. to Will and August (Finley) Graves. He proudly served our country in the United States Navy. A resident of Okeechobee since 1959, he was a member of The Gathering.



J.R. was a kind and compassionate man who loved his family. He had a passion for bass fishing and, in their younger days, he and his wife spent many hours on Lake O.

Having grown up in Tennessee, J.R. moved his young family to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in 1949, where he worked for J.N. McArthur Dairy. The family relocated to Okeechobee in 1959, when J.R. was assigned the job of foreman to oversee construction of the first “Big Mac” dairy barn north of town. He later worked for Charles McArthur Dairies and Life Services. After retirement he and his wife lived in Lakeport, Florida for a time where J.R. became a fishing guide.

J.R. was predeceased by his parents; his wife of 62 years, Georgia; brother and sister-in-law, John and Carolyn Graves; sisters, Margaret Dinkins and Helen Alecia.

He is survived by his three children, Anna (David) King and Billy (Yvonne) Graves, all of Okeechobee, and Phyllis (Danny) Pursell, of Georgia; five grandchildren, Brian (Denise) Pursell, Christie Pursell, Kimmy (Jason) Tucker, Rosanna (John) Schachtele, and Jimmy King; nine great grandchildren; one great great grandchild; and sisters, Kate Tanner and Dorothy Henry.

Graveside services will be 10 a.m., Thursday, April 18, 2019 at Evergreen Cemetery.

Those wishing to leave a message of condolence may sign the register book at www.OkeechobeeFuneralHome.com

All arrangements are entrusted to the direction and care of the Buxton & Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home, 400 North Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34972.

Hunter Lee Peterson, 20

OKEECHOBEE — Hunter Lee Peterson passed away April 10, 2019 in Okeechobee.

He was born July 22, 1998 in Fort Myers, to Greg and Brenda Lee (Ramsey) Peterson.

Survivors include mother, Brenda Lee (Ramsey) Peterson; father, Greg (Carrie) Peterson; five brother, Gregory Austin Peterson, Dustin Lee Peterson, Bradley Guthrie, Blaine Weaver and Cody Weaver; sister, Hailey Peterson.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. at his Aunt & Uncles home on Tuckahoe Road, Alva.

Arrangements by Akin-Davis Funeral Home - Fort Myers.

Ocean ‘Tater’ McCay Tyner, 25

OKEECHOBEE — Ocean “Tater” McCay Tyner died April 12, 2019. He was born Dec. 4, 1993 in Avon Park to Durwan and Lisa Tyner. A resident of Okeechobee most of his life, he enjoyed everything military related. He had a great sense of humor and always had a smile on his face. He liked caring for his bearded dragons, music, and art.



Mr. Tyner was preceded in death by his cousin, Michael Coker; great grandparents, Rita and Dowe Tyner; and great uncle, Dellon Tyner.

He is survived by his parents, Durwan Tyner (Anita) and Lisa Tyner; grandparents, Durwan and Pat Tyner, and Billy and Carleen Ray, all of Okeechobee; uncle, Rooter Tyner (Amanda); aunt, Cindy Pearce (Jason) and aunt, Teresa McCloskey; great uncle and aunt, Gary and Dorinda Mixon; aunt, Sharon Tyner; cousins, John Pearce, Josie Pearce, Dylan McCloskey, and Dustin McCloskey; and a host of other family and friends.

The family will receive friends 10 a.m. until services at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 20, 2019 at Buxton & Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home. Interment will follow at Basinger Cemetery.

Those wishing to leave a message of condolence may sign the register book at www.OkeechobeeFuneralHome.com

All arrangements are entrusted to the direction and care of the Buxton & Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home, 400 North Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida, 34972.

Easter Sunrise Service to be held at Scott Driver pavilion

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — The annual community Easter Sunrise Service, sponsored by the Okeechobee Ministerial Association (OMA), will be held at 6:30 a.m. Easter morning, April 21, at a new location this year, Scott-Driver boat ramps pavilion on the north side of State Road 78 West, across from the entrance to Okee-Tantie.

Pastor Cary McKee of More2Life Ministries will be bringing the message,

the community choir and soloists will be singing, and other OMA members will be participating. Please bring a lawn chair as there are a limited number of folding chairs available. Paved area for wheelchair seating will be available and a love offering will be taken.

Come and worship with your friends and neighbors in this unique setting, praising the Son while watching the Sun rise on Easter morning!

YOUR Government WATCH

WEEK OF APRIL 22

These upcoming meetings of local elected officials, scheduled during the next week, are open to the public.

Glades County Glades County Board of Commissioners

Monday, April 22, 6 p.m.
Glades County Courthouse, 500 Ave. J S.W., Moore Haven
Agenda online at myglades.com

Hendry County Hendry County Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, April 23, 5 p.m.
Hendry County Courthouse, 25 E. Hickpochee Ave., LaBelle
Online at facebook.com/hendrycounty/

Okeechobee County Okeechobee County Board of Commissioners

Thursday, April 25, 9 a.m.
Historic Okeechobee Courthouse, 304 N.W. Second St.
Online at www.co.okeechobee.fl.us/

Your COMMUNITY NEWS



Okeechobee County

Democrats to meet April 17

OKEECHOBEE — Democrats will hold a meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, **April 17**, in the banquet room at Beef O'Brady's, 608 S. Parrott Avenue.

Businesswomen's meeting set

OKEECHOBEE — Whether a businesswoman, an entrepreneur, a job-seeker or would-be volunteer, you will benefit from attending the Okeechobee Businesswomen's Referral Network, on Friday, **April 19**, 11:30 a.m., at Lakeside Grille, 1111 S. Parrott Ave. Please bring a small exchange gift, curiosity and enthusiasm. For information, call Raye at 863-467-2557.

Fish Fry will be April 19

OKEECHOBEE — The Pregnancy Center of Okeechobee will hold a Fish Fry on Friday, **April 19**, at 11 a.m. at Flagler Park, Park #3. Includes fried fish, hush puppies, coleslaw, cheese grits and a cookie. Delivery available for orders of five or more. There will be a Bake Sale with an assortment of baked goods. Proceeds benefit the Pregnancy Center. For information, call 863-467-8748.

Spring Fling staged April 19

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee Church of the Nazarene, 425 S.W. 28th St., will hold a Spring Fling on Friday, **April 19**, from 4 to 8 p.m.

Stations of the Cross in park

OKEECHOBEE — The Church of Our Saviour (Episcopal) invites the public to Stations of the Cross in the Park on Good Friday, **April 19**, at 1:30 p.m., at the gazebo located at Flagler Park #4.

Easter egg hunt to be held

OKEECHOBEE — First Baptist Church of Okeechobee is hosting an Easter Egg Hunt for children up to grade five. It will be open to the public on Saturday, **April 20**, at 10:30 a.m. at the Recreation Outreach Center, 310 S.W. Fifth Ave.

Library closed April 20

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee County Library, will be closed on Saturday, **April 20**, in observance of the Easter holiday. They will reopen on Monday with regular hours.

Pop Warner sign-up begins

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee Bulls Youth Athletic League is a brand new local Pop Warner league in need of players. Early sign-ups are Saturday, **April 20**, and Saturday, May 18, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily, at the Sports Complex baseball fields, 580 N.W. 27th Lane. If you sign up on one of those dates the cost is \$80 per child and \$65 per each additional child. Sign-ups after that will be \$100 per child and \$85 per additional child. Sign up deadline is July 31. Children must be between the ages of five through fourteen and bring a copy of birth certificate. Teams will compete with surrounding cities and practices will take place locally. Rest assured that safety will be a priority and all staff and coaches will undergo training and background checks.

Glades County

Lions Club meeting set

MOORE HAVEN — The Moore Haven Lions Club will hold a meeting on Thursday, **April 18**, at 5:30 p.m. in the offices of the Sheriff's Department of Glades County, 1297 S.R. 78. Plans are to be finalized for the Easter Sunrise Sausage and Pancake Breakfast; there is no charge, donations only, for the benefit of the Ronald McDonald Homes. All Lions, former Lions and all other interested persons are urged to attend. For information, Kirby Sullivan-863-946-2556.

Easter Breakfast to be held

MOORE HAVEN — The Moore Haven Lions Club will sponsor the annual Easter Sunrise Sausage and Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, **April 21**, at Moore Haven Elementary School lunch room, 401 Terrier Pride Dr. S.W., from 7:30 to 9 a.m. There is no charge but donations will be accepted for the benefit of Ronald McDonald Homes. All are welcome.

Waste cleanup available

MOORE HAVEN — You may help protect the environment by gathering up household wastes and participate in the Glades Country Hazardous Waste Clean-Up on Saturday, **April 27**, from 8 a.m. to noon. Bring up to 60 pounds of waste to the Glades County Doyle Conner Building, 900 U.S. 27.

Hendry County

Library learning event set

CLEWISTON — U.S. Sugar will be celebrating the month of science by hosting an event at Florida B. Thomas Library, 1010 J. Harlem Academy Ave., on Thursday, **April 18**, from 4 to 5 p.m. Learn about how sweet or sour water, lemon juice, OJ, soda, or sugarcane juice is. Science equipment and tools will be on display.

Lodge to celebrate anniversary

CLEWISTON — The Sugarland Masonic Lodge No. 281, 520 E. Sugarland Highway, invites the public to celebrate their 70th anniversary on Saturday, **April 20**. A barbecue chicken and ribs lunch will be served at 1 p.m., followed by a birthday cake. Please RSVP as soon as possible by calling or texting Marsh at 863-234-5565, or e-mail at Sugarlandlodge281@gmail.com.

Spring party will be thrown

LaBELLE — Swing into Spring on Saturday, April 27, at RiverBend Motorcoach Resort, 5800 W. S.R. 80, from 5 to 8 p.m. There will be music, games, great food, a live auction and a silent auction.

Palm Beach County

Financial training set April 4

BELLE GLADE — The Glades Initiative, 141 S.E. Ave. C, presents Money Matters Financial Literacy Training in Spanish. Sessions held on Thursday, **April 18**, from 10 a.m. to noon. For information, call or email Jose at 561-996-3310 or jzaragoza@gladesinitiative.org.

Church to host special event

BELLE GLADE — Reverend Dr. Robert Rease will host The Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross event featuring seven guest speakers on Friday, **April 19**, at 6:45 p.m. at St. John First Missionary Baptist Church, 600 S.W. Eighth St. Refreshments will be served after the service.

Easter egg hunt to be held

SOUTH BAY — New Beginnings Outreach Ministry and KTM Foundation are hosting the second annual Community Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, **April 20**, on the northwest corner field on Tenth Avenue, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Social Saturday to be held

BELLE GLADE — Community Connections for Life, CMHC, will offer a psycho-social rehabilitation (social skills enhancement) group on Saturday, **April 27**, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 555 S.W. 16th St. There will be individual, family, and group therapy. Breakfast and transportation will be provided. For more information, call 561-983-8717.

Designer Bags and Bingo set

BELLE GLADE — The public is invited to play bingo and have a chance to win designer bags and accessories from Michael Kors, Coach, Steve Madden, Nine West, and more on Saturday, **April 27**, from 5 to 9 p.m. at A Touch of Class Event Hall, 816 W. Canal St. S. Proceeds will benefit scholarships for Glades Area students and service projects for residents of the Glades. For information, call 561-281-5532.

Black Business Expo set

BELLE GLADE — Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. Mu Rho Omega chapter will sponsor a Black Business Expo on Thursday, **April 28**, from 3:08 to 6:08 p.m. at Lomax Harrelle Pavilion, 5000 W. Canal St. Free admission. For information, call 772-985-1246, or email TinaRumph@gmail.com.

Food Festival scheduled

BELLE GLADE — An International Food Festival will be held at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Church, 710 S. Main St., on Sunday, **April 28**, at 10 a.m. Event features family fun, food, music, games and more. For information, call 561-996-3870.

Church offers free counseling

BELLE GLADE — The Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, 1424 W. Canal St. S., is offering free counseling sessions - marriage, family, rehabilitation, etc. Please contact Pastor Burden at 352-214-7988 to schedule an appointment.

AA meetings set

PAHOKEE — Regular Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are held three times a week at First United Methodist Church, 491 E. Main St., on **Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays** at 7 p.m. For more information, call 561-924-7241.

WRAC

Continued From Page 1

should resume quarterly meetings. WRAC-Rec meets quarterly. The group last met in December.

Doug Brown, of SFWMD, explained the Water Resources Advisory Commission was established in 2001 and “sunsetting” in 2017. At that time, it was replaced by the Water Resources Analysis Coalition. Neither WRAC had any power to change or make policy. Both WRACs has similar goals, to provide input to the SFWMD governing from the various stakeholder groups. The main difference is the first WRAC was governed by the Florida Sunshine Laws and the second WRAC was not.

WRAC members were chosen by the SFWMD Governing Board, with some added to balance out all of the various groups of stakeholders. Both forms of WRAC were publicly noticed and open to the public. Both had periods for public comment. Meetings were livestreamed online. Minutes were taken. A member of the governing board served as the chair or the facilitator.

During the public comment period, a Loxahatchee man said he frequently attended WRAC-Rec and went to WRAC as often as he could.

“I appreciate the opportunity as a person who uses SFWMD lands,” he said. He noted that WRAC improved government transparency, and allowed everyone to hear both sides of the discussion. He said the public comment period at the SFWMD workshops and meetings is not conducive to public discussion of the issues. “I run a small business,” he said. “It’s hard to sit through an all-day meeting to talk for 2 minutes.” He said most of the people in the audience at the SFWMD Governing Board meeting are “either retired, or paid to be here.” He said WRAC allowed the public a chance to learn about and discuss the issues. He added that the “beautiful roundtable discussion brings a lot of value to this board.”

Nyla Pipes of One Florida Foundation said the big difference between the advisory and analysis coalition is the analysis coalition is not under the Sunshine Laws. Florida Government in the Sunshine Laws prohibited board members from discussing the issues outside the meeting.

“This is not a one-day-a-month discussion,” she said. “This is a constant lifestyle.” She said WRAC is one of the most trans-

parent things about the SFWMD.

Celeste DePalma of Audubon Florida said as a member of WRAC she did not think her comments carried enough weight when the monthly report was written for the governing board. She said she does not want WRAC reinstated.

Another WRAC member, Newton Cook of United Waterfowlers of Florida, said when WRAC was set up as an advisory group governed by the Sunshine Law, it made it difficult to talk to others he interacts with about water issues outside of meetings. “I was under Sunshine in two of the committees and I couldn’t hardly talk to my wife,” he said. “I couldn’t talk to Audubon.”

Mr. Cook said the WRAC meetings were inclusive of all of the stakeholder groups.

“You’re going to get people from utilities, people from the west coast, Martin County, people who shoot ducks like me, Audubon. You’re going to get the public comments on that. It is the most important thing in this place for you guys.”

“I am one of the biggest stakeholders on Lake Okeechobee,” said Mary Ann Martin, another WRAC member and the owner of Roland Martin Marina in Clewiston. “You have someone today say we have a lot of things to fix,” she said. “A great way to cure a lot of those problems is to use the WRAC. You have so many diversified people on the WRAC, government people, talented people. You can get a lot of ideas and advice just by listening to what they are doing. These people will make your life a lot easier. We are all together.”

Mike Collins, a WRAC member who represented Florida Keys and Florida Bay, said before WRAC was established, “the board would have 100 people show up and 50 of them would have torches and pitchforks and say ‘if you don’t do A, B and C we’re going to sue you,’ and the other 50 people would say ‘if you do A, B and C, we’re going to sue.’”

“If you stick them in a room and make them talk to each other, they might come up with option D,” he said. “Get them in a room, educate them, show them what the district can do, what the district can’t do. People sit down, they come up with solutions,” he said.

“I can tell you there is nothing like putting all of the recreational users in the room and working out the differences,” said Bishop Wright of the Florida Airboat Association.

“The issues are complex,” said Beth Lewis of the Nature Conservancy, who

was also a WRAC member. She said the stakeholders coming together at the WRAC meetings provided input in a way that the public comment periods at board meetings could not.

WRAC meetings allowed people to come together and actually understand each other, she explained. “It is very difficult for people do that,” she said.

Chairman Chauncey Goss said he supports the idea of WRAC, but wants to explore the current structure.

“Board member Jay Steinle said WRAC “is an avenue we need for stakeholder input.

“There are only so many hours in a day and we can’t talk about all of the issues at SFWMD governing board meetings,” he said.

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Code of Conduct Review Committee Meeting

The Okeechobee County School District announces the next Code of Conduct Review Committee meeting.

The meeting will be held Tuesday, April 23, 2019, from 4:00-6:00 pm in Room 303, (Board Room) of the School Board Administration Building, 700 SW 2nd Avenue.

The public is invited to attend.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A public auction for County owned surplus equipment and vehicles will be held Saturday, April 27, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. by DeMott Auction Co., Inc. at the Okeechobee Cattleman’s Association Arena, 1885 Hwy 441 North, Okeechobee, Florida 34972.

All county owned surplus items, equipment and vehicles will be auctioned “As Is” to the highest bidder. All county owned surplus items, equipment and vehicles will be paid in full prior to successful bidder(s) removing any items, equipment or vehicles from auction site.

For information concerning viewing surplus equipment or vehicles, bidder requirements, terms and condition of auction/bidding process and payment requirements, please contact DeMott Auction at demottauction.com or call 800-985-5699. For information concerning county owned surplus items, equipment or vehicles, please contact Russell Rowland, Assistant to County Administrator at 863-763-1811.

Terry Burroughs, Chairman
 Board of County Commissioners
 Okeechobee County, Florida

Sharon Robertson, Clerk
 Board of County Commissioners
 Okeechobee County, Florida

Publish: April 17, 2019
 April 21, 2019
 Okeechobee News

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LEASE

Continued From Page 1

infestation of invasive plants. The lease is for eight years, but the state can terminate it on a field-by-field basis after 20 months, with four months' notice. The lease was signed in November 2018, so some of the initial 24 months have already passed. If the previous governing board had not negotiated the lease extension, the original lease would have expired this month. Senate Bill 10, which authorizes the EAA reservoir, requires the land be kept in agricultural use until construction starts on the project.

Vice Chairman Scott Wagner questioned the short summary provided by SFWMD staff about the lease conditions. He speculated that Florida Crystals could use conditions in the lease to delay turning over the land to the state.

Col. Andrew Kelly of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District said design and engineering of the massive reservoir — the largest CERP project to date — will take about three years. He said work to increase water conveyance and the stormwater treatment area (STA) could start sooner. He estimated the permits will take about 19 months.

That projected schedule would not be delayed by the existing lease, even without the voluntary help from the Fanjuls. The earliest work could start under the lease is Dec. 1, 2020 — about 19 months away.

Bigger stumbling blocks to the progress of the EAA reservoir could come from the federal government.

Col. Kelly said once the project is designed, it must go through the federal permitting process.

"Everybody's got a dog in the fight," he said. "We're all looking at it through a different prism."

"It's going to be 37 feet in the air," the colonel continued. He said the massive dike is a huge safety risk and analysis has to be done. "We're going to do what the corps has always done," he said. "We are going to be very careful."

John Mitnik, SFWMD chief engineer, said that within the next 40 to 60 days they will have a conceptional layout for the stormwater treatment areas. The Army Corps of Engineers will be part of that project.

Col. Kelly said funding could also be an issue. There is currently no funding for the EAA reservoir project in the 2020 federal budget, he explained. (They do have some funding in the 2019 budget.)

"Perhaps in this case if we get far enough along the line in design, if we don't have the budget at that point, perhaps there is some funding that could happen," he said.

"Nothing can start breaking ground until we have the federal permits," said Mr. Bartlett.

The federal government cannot act on issuing the permit until the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is done, making sure it is in the federal interest and meets environmental compliance for the action.

A NEPA analysis includes review of how the project would affect things such as tribal lands and endangered species.

Each federal agency has to sign off on the NEPA analysis if it affects their area.

Each of these has to conduct hearings for public comment. The corps has to receive and address the comments.

Gene Duncan, water resources director for the Miccosukee Tribe, said the tribe will oppose the EAA reservoir project until conveyance for more water is opened up under the Tamiami Trail.

Mr. Duncan said the modeling shows the EAA reservoir and STA will mean the water that drains onto the Miccosukee tribal lands will increase by 43 percent. The tribe's land is already often flooded, he said, which is harmful to the tree islands.

"The Miccosukee Tribe is ready to fight you on this," he said.

"The federal government has a responsibility to protect tribal lands," he said.

The water stacks up north of the Tamiami Trail because there is limited conveyance under the roadway, and because for much of the year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service blocks flow under the roadway to protect the nesting grounds of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow.

"We need a lot of discharge under the Tamiami Trail," he said. "We want restoration to the Everglades."

"We have no choice but to fight to protect our own lands."

Mr. Duncan said even if the water was cleaned to the 10 parts per billion (ppb) required for flow to Everglades National Park, the sheer volume of water is still a problem.

"The tree islands are already getting drowned out," he said. "With 43 percent more water, and no way to move that water under the Tamiami Trail, it's going to get worse."

A representative from the Seminole Tribe of Florida said the Seminoles do not own

any property in the EAA area, but did retain some rights to property the Seminole Tribe sold to the state as part of the Seminole Water Compact. The Seminole Tribe has a cultural interest in the tree islands, he said. Impacts to the tree islands as a result of flooding is an issue that concerns the Seminoles.

The Native Americans have had issues with SFWMD projects in the past. During construction of what is now STA 5.6, construction crews dug up remains of about 50 of the tribe's ancestors, he said. The negotiated solution was to berm an area so the bodies could be reburied and that area is kept dry with a berm and a solar-powered pump. That kind of solution is not going to occur in a 25-foot-deep reservoir, he said.

During the public comment period, Nyla Pipes of One Florida Foundation said when the water stacks up, the tree islands "just disintegrate." She reminded the board that the original Everglades starts near Orlando.

The EAA reservoir project is a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) project that fits together with other CERP projects to restore a more natural flow to the Everglades and reduce the need for harmful freshwater discharges to the coastal estuaries, she said.

"This reservoir has been sold (to the public) by certain organizations as the solution to the discharges," she said.

"It will help. Every bit of storage will help," she said, "but it will not solve the problem."

"If we don't start cleaning north of the lake, we are never going to get the water quality we want south of the lake," she said.

Medical and Dental Clinics Soon Under One Roof at Lakeside Medical Center

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Help letter carriers to Stamp Out Hunger May 11

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

Saturday is usually a quiet day — certainly not the day when you'd expect the biggest mail delivery in the world to happen. But Saturday, May 11, your mail carrier is going to be super busy. The 27th annual Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive happens all across the United States, delivering cards to remind you to place food out and the bags to place them in. In addition to delivering your regular letters and mail, USPS letter carriers will be collecting bags of nonperishable foods donated by citizens across the country in America's largest one-day food drive.

The whole family can get involved and help. On May 11, place a bag (or bags) of nonperishable foods in or by your mailbox. That's it. Really. Your letter carrier will do the rest of the work, picking up your donation. It will then be delivered to local food pantries. It's so simple, you might even say,

"It's all in the bag." And everyone can get involved, from the tallest to the smallest in the family; everyone can help fill a bag of non-perishable foods to share with others.

Last year, over 70 million pounds of food was collected to help feed families throughout the United States, and every pound collected in St. Lucie County stays right here in St. Lucie County and is distributed through emergency food pantries like the ones at Mustard Seed Ministries and probably your own local church. It's simple, pain-free, and helps feed millions of people. In fact, it's so simple, it's easier than licking a stamp to help Stamp Out Hunger, and every can of soup or jar of peanut butter helps. Spread the word using #StampOutHunger, and please join the National Association of Letter Carriers and all of your family, friends and neighbors on Saturday, May 11, as we all share a little to help feed our community.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/NALC

Join the National Association of Letter Carriers and your family, friends and neighbors Saturday, May 11, as we all share a little to help feed our community.

Things to Do ...

Thursday, April 18

• Dance Composition Recital,

Wynne Black Box Theatre, Building R, Indian River State College, 3209 Virginia Ave., Fort Pierce, 7 to 8 p.m. Student choreographers present their final projects for the Dance Composition class. For all ages. For information, visit irsc.edu/calendar.

• Trapper Nelson Interpretive

Tour, Jonathan Dickinson State Park, 16450 S.E. Federal Highway, Hobe Sound,

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more details about boat tours, call 561-746-1466. For information, call 772-546-2771 or 561-745-5551 or visit floridastateparks.org.

Friday, April 19

• Live music by **John Frinzi**, The Shanty at Okeechobee, KOA, 4276 U.S. 441 S., Okeechobee, 6 to 10 p.m.

• **Guided Nature Hike**, Jonathan Dickinson State Park, Ranger Station, 16450 S.E. Federal Highway, Hobe Sound, 2 to

3:30 p.m. Take a stroll through the scrubby flatwoods and river floodplain. The walk may go through muddy or wet terrain.

Saturday, April 20

• Live music by **John Frinzi**, The Shanty at Okeechobee, KOA, 4276 U.S. 441 S., Okeechobee, 6 to 10 p.m. The public is welcome.

• **Adult Easter Egg Hunt**, Summer Crush Winery, 4200 Johnston Road, Fort Pierce, 1 to 4 p.m. Why should kids have

all the fun. This egg hunt is for adults. There will also be a crazy Easter Hat contest. Post-hunt music will be by the Bittersweet Band. For more information, go online to summercrushwine.com.

• **Downtown Farmers Market**, Marina Square, 1 Ave. A, Fort Pierce, 8 a.m. to noon, rain or shine. There are over 70 friendly vendors that offer a selection of foods, exotic plants, savory spices, and more. There is always great music, great food. Visit fortpiercefarmersmarket.com.



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Dr. Eugene-Dauphin is a Board Certified Clinician with over 20 years of experience. She received her medical degree from National University of Haiti School of Medicine and completed her residency at Albert Einstein School of Medicine and Bronx Lebanon Hospital. Dr. Eugene-Dauphin went on to complete her Infectious Disease Fellowship training at New York Medical College. As a licensed Infectious Disease Clinician, Dr. Eugene-Dauphin specializes in patient education, preventive healthcare and chronic condition management.

Dr. Eugene-Dauphin is looking forward to bringing her experience to the Pahoee Center and is committed to providing high-quality, comprehensive primary and preventive healthcare to all patients.

Dr. Eugene - Dauphin will be at the Pahoee Center Thursday & Friday.

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Man arrested after making 911 calls

By Cathy Womble
Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — A man was arrested April 12 after calling 911 to report a man with a gun in a gas station. Curtis Dwayne Strahlman, 58, Northeast Ninth Avenue, reportedly told dispatch he was hiding in the bathroom of the gas station and could hear the suspect cock the gun. Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office Deputies Tyler Ott, Ben Vuleta, Jose Garcia and Stephen Paladino responded to the call and made contact with the store clerk who appeared calm and said no one else was in the store and she never saw a gun. Deputy Garcia approached the first locked door and announced, "sheriff's office." A white male, later identified as Strahlman opened the door and came out with his phone to his ear.

Strahlman had reportedly called in

a complaint earlier the same morning around 6 a.m. using the telephone in the lobby of the Okeechobee County Jail. In that complaint, he stated that he was being pestered by a man named Paul Allen Davis. He said Davis kept jumping into the back of his truck when he was at gas stations and everywhere he went. He also said Davis pointed a gun at him at his job site in St. Lucie County and claimed he had reported it to law enforcement. At that time, Deputy Ott reported he did not see anyone near Strahlman's truck.

At approximately 6:30 a.m., Strahlman again called to complain of harassment by Davis, but after receiving permission to look inside the vehicle, Deputy Ott reported he did not see any sign inside or out of Davis. Deputy Ott asked Strahlman several questions to check to see if his mental status seemed to be altered, and he was

reportedly able to answer them without any problem.

No one inside the store matched the description given by Strahlman. The store manager arrived and after looking at camera footage, they reported seeing no one of that description. Strahlman was seen walking into the store, looking around in what seemed to be a nervous manner and then grabbing a coke from the cooler, walking around the store and then going into the closet. No one else was observed coming or going until the arrival of the deputies.

Strahlman willingly gave permission for the deputies to enter his truck according to the report, and Deputy Ben Vuleta found two meth pipes which yielded positive for methamphetamines. Strahlman was arrested and charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Bond was set at \$10,500.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OCSO is seeking the identity of unknown person

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office is seeking the identity of the subject in the photo. If you know the identity of this subject, contact Detective Javier Gonzalez at 863-763-3117, ext. 5106, in reference to Case #19S08869. Or you can remain anonymous and contact Crime Stoppers at 800-273-8477.

Glades County sheriff wants teens to join the Explorers

MOORE HAVEN — Sheriff David Hardin is always looking for ways to offer greater opportunities to the youth of Glades County. Sheriff Hardin is considering starting a Florida Sheriff's Explorers' Chapter, the Explorers will be trained in law enforcement techniques, traffic control, basic law and principles along with firearms training. If anyone between the ages of 14 and 18 is interested, please contact Leslie Smith at 863-946-1600 ext. 2100 and let her know of your interest.

Motorcycle rider and passenger killed

Special to Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — A motorcycle driver and his passenger were killed on Saturday, April 13, at approximately 1 p.m. when for unknown reasons, the driver lost control of the motorcycle.

Christopher Biedenkapp, 43, of Northport was traveling westbound on

State Road 70 when he lost control. The motorcycle traveled across the median and both eastbound lanes of traffic. Both Mr. Biedenkapp and his passenger, 41-year-old Belinda Biedenkapp, were thrown from the motorcycle as it began to overturn and both passed away at Raulerson Hospital.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.



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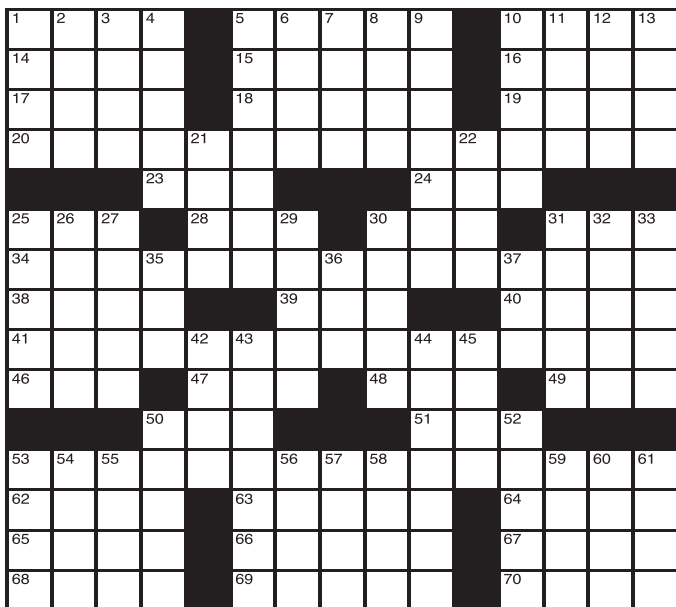
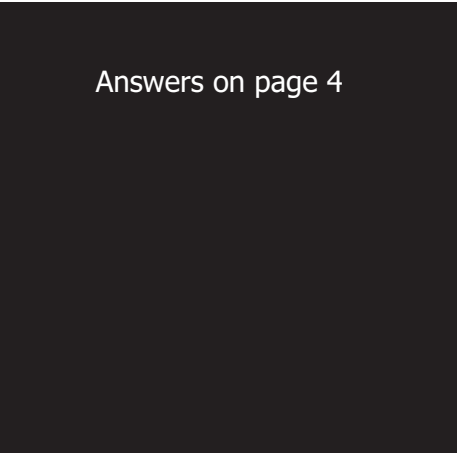
Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS

- 1 Soft ball
- 5 Berkshire Hathaway headquarters city
- 10 Greenish-yellow pear
- 14 Mine, in Montréal
- 15 Chicano rock band Los ___
- 16 "Enchanted" girl in a 2004 film
- 17 Hors d'oeuvre cracker
- 18 Lose tautness
- 19 Logician's error, maybe
- 20 2011 Steve Carell romcom
- 23 Slangy affirmative
- 24 Light beam
- 25 Poseidon's realm
- 28 Lav, in Bath
- 30 Zero in
- 31 Federal bldgs. with mailboxes
- 34 Rickety abode
- 38 Diva's time to shine
- 39 Savings plan inits.
- 40 Fair-haired sci-fi race
- 41 "Stop whining!"
- 46 Chinese menu surname
- 47 Put away
- 48 Pine-__: cleaning brand
- 49 Old Nintendo game console: Abbr.
- 50 UFO pilots, supposedly
- 51 Nintendo game console
- 53 Neither 20-, 34- nor 41-Across has any
- 62 Similar in nature
- 63 Online biz
- 64 Compete for the America's Cup
- 65 Fish catchers
- 66 Art class subjects
- 67 Stubborn sort
- 68 Aussie greeting
- 69 Part of LED
- 70 Marked for deletion

- 3 Duty roster
- 4 Like soda pop
- 5 Part of a comfort simile
- 6 Mad Magazine cartoonist
- 7 Leigh Hunt's "___ Ben Adhem"
- 8 Earring style
- 9 "Take two ___ and call me ..."
- 10 Kind of dancer
- 11 Breakfast spread
- 12 Balkan native
- 13 Superman accessory
- 21 Holler
- 22 Beaver creations
- 25 Town, in Germany
- 26 Irish banknotes
- 27 Protein-building acid
- 29 Poet with dedication?
- 30 Military plane acronym
- 31 McCain's running mate
- 32 "___, all ye faithful ..."
- 33 Decides not to attend

- 35 Baseball club
- 36 Tulsa sch. named for an evangelist
- 37 Use an axe on
- 42 Test version
- 43 London area that includes Canary Wharf
- 44 "Is there another way?"
- 45 Landed
- 50 Itty
- 52 Answer at the door
- 53 Pealed
- 54 Scratched (out)
- 55 Pocket bread
- 56 Small decorative case
- 57 Carpentry groove
- 58 Wasn't honest
- 59 French waters
- 60 Stir up
- 61 Malamute's burden



By Roland Huget
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DOWN

- 1 DEA operative
- 2 House of Saud bigwig

The annual community Easter Sunrise Service



Sponsored by the Okeechobee Ministerial Association

Will be held 6:30 am **Easter Sunday** at a new location this year. **Scott-Driver Pavilion** on the north side Hwy 78W, across from the entrance to Okee-Tanti.

Pastor Cary McKee of More2Life Ministries will be bringing the message, the community choir and soloists will be singing, and other OMA members will be participating.

Come and worship with your friends and neighbors in this unique setting, praising the Son while watching the Sunrise on Easter morn!

Please bring a lawn chair as there are a limited number of folding chairs available.

Paved area for wheelchair seating will be available and a love offering will be taken.



9th Annual Avon Park Rotary Bluegrass & Blueberry Festival

Saturday, April 27th

10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Donaldson Park - Downtown Avon Park

For more information visit our website at www.avonparkrotaryblueberryfestival.com

- Live bluegrass entertainment by Highway 41 South 11 AM - 3 PM
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- Kids Zone
- Original Arts & Crafts Vendors



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Upcycling possibilities are only limited by imagination

By Cathy Womble
Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — “Upcycling” and “recycling” are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are not actually the same. According to UpcycleThat.com, upcycling is defined as “The act of taking something no longer in use and giving it a second life and new function. In doing so, the finished product often becomes more practical, valuable and beautiful than what it previously was.” On the other hand, a recycled product is completely broken down and made into something new, often a lesser-quality product. However, both of these alternatives are preferable to having an item end up in the local landfill.

Habitat for Humanity ReStores are great sources for those who enjoy searching for treasures they can change into a work of art. Rachel O’Neil is a frequent shopper at the ReStores. “Sometimes it can be as simple as a coat of paint. It is amazing how just a different color of paint will really bring the piece out,” she said.

Goodwill, Faith Farm, yard sales, thrift stores and grandma’s attic are all sources for

things that can be upcycled. Several years ago when televisions went from being huge monsters in wall units, to being flat screens that hung on walls, many people got rid of their entertainment centers. Every thrift store in town was over run with them, and suddenly upcyclers had an idea. They turned them into kitchens for little girls, and they were beautiful. The spot where the television used to be became the sink with a window behind it, and the cabinet where all your DVDs used to be became the refrigerator.

When people stopped using coffee tables, upcyclers were there again to save the day. “I know what this can be,” someone said. “It’s a Lego table. All it needs is a hole cut into it and a bag sewn on to catch the Legos.”

Upcycling isn’t new, says Hipcycle.com. Grandma did it in the 1930s and ’40s. Back then they used everything over and over again. Charlotte Delagall spoke recently about her mother making her dresses from flour sacks when she was a girl, and Beedie Mae Thomas said the same thing. It used to be very common to reuse the things you had because back then they did not have the resources to just go out and buy new things

any time they pleased, and sometimes there was nowhere to go to buy those things anyway. If you lived in the middle of nowhere, you learned to make your own clothes. “You made do,” as Ms. Thomas said.

Hipcycle offers a multitude of suggestions for upcycling:

- Use a wine rack as a towel holder.
- Aluminum cans spray painted make nice pencil holders.
- Glass jars covered with fabric can be used as vases.
- Old vinyl records are turned into clocks;

old frying pans can be.

- An old dresser can become a little girl’s dress up closet.
- A bookcase can be turned into a doll-house.
- A tool bench for a child can be made from an old nightstand.

The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. A lack of imagination doesn’t have to hold you back because in this day and age, you can jump on the internet and borrow someone else’s imagination if you need to.

4-H Club plans annual lake cleanup project

By Katrina Elsen
Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee County 4-H Sharpshooters Club will join forces with the Lake Okeechobee Airboat Association on Saturday, April 20, for their annual Lake Okeechobee cleanup project.

The annual event is held in honor of Earth Day. Airboaters and 4-Hers spend the day cleaning trash out of Lake Okeechobee.

The group will meet at the Okee-Tantie recreation area at 8:30 a.m. to assign boats and captains, and go over the rules for the project. They plan to be on the water by 9:30 a.m.

The cleanup project includes some

good-natured competitions with prizes for categories such as most total garbage collected and best “treasure” found during the clean up.

“This is our club’s biggest community service event for the year, and it’s the most fun, too!” said Carrie Muldoon, 4-H program assistant.

Those who plan to participate should contact Mrs. Muldoon at the Okeechobee County Extension Office by Wednesday, April 17. The phone number is 863-763-6469.

Participants are encouraged to bring earmuffs, life vests, camp chairs, bug spray, sun screen and garbage gloves.

Contamination remains a recycling issue in Florida

By Richard Marion
Lake Okeechobee News

Recycling in the State of Florida has made vast strides since the first Earth Day was announced back in 1970. But 49 years later, one of the biggest problems facing recycling facilities continues to be contamination.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) estimates that the state currently has about a 30% contamination rate among recyclables.

Contaminating occurs when recycling bins are mistakenly filled with things that can’t be recycled at curbside, such as plastic bags, greasy pizza boxes, thin plastic packaging, and more. When a recycling facility receives bins that have items mixed in that are not actually recyclable, it ruins items that otherwise could be recycled, and can result in sometimes shutting down processing plants for hours at a time.

FDEP refers to this as “wish-cycling”—well-intentioned recycling that ends up creating more problems than solutions.

So what can and can’t you recycle right here around Lake Okeechobee?

Currently in Okeechobee, Clewiston, Pahokee and Belle Glade, you’re able to recycle paper (including newspaper, phone books, magazines, junk mail and office or school papers), plastics (with recycling code numbers 1 – 7 only), cardboard, glass and aluminum and metal cans.

Items you shouldn’t be placing in your recycle bins are things such as mirrors, windows, pots, pans, toasters, light bulbs, ceramics or porcelain, plastic bags, styrofoam, clothes hangers, electric items or electronics and PVC type items or garden hoses.

Also, make sure cans, bottles and jugs,

and cardboard boxes are clean and dry before going into your curbside recycling bin, as that can also contaminate a load of otherwise recyclable items.

So with all these rules to remember, is it all worth it? Why not just throw everything into the trash and forget about it?

Well, not only is recycling good for the environment — in the sense that we are using old and waste products which are of no use and then converting them back to some new products, saving resources and are sending less trash to the landfills — but it’s also beneficial to the economy.

In 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the Recycling Economic Information Study, which showed significant findings on the economic benefits of the recycling industry.

The EPA found that recycling in the United States created 757,000 jobs and \$36.6 billion in wages including \$6.7 billion in tax revenues.

Recycling also strengthens economic security by tapping a domestic source of materials and conserves other U.S. natural resources such as timber, water and minerals.

FDEP announced a statewide public education campaign in 2017 called “Reset. Rethink. Recycle.” that is dedicated to increasing Florida’s recycling rate to 75 percent by 2020 and decreasing curbside contamination by helping Floridians rethink what they recycle and to reset their behavior to focus just on the basics.

If successful, they estimate the state could save \$100 million in recycling costs in one year if residents are able to eliminate contaminated materials in curbside recycling bins.

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Earth Day observations planned

By Chris Felker
Lake Okeechobee News

Several events are scheduled around Lake Okeechobee this week to mark Earth Day 2019. At the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation south of Clewiston, the Seminole Tribe of Florida will host its Earth Day Celebration on Monday, April 22, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Earth Day program provides a perfect opportunity for visitors to discover more about the importance of the Everglades to the Seminole people and to learn about taking care of our planet. Friends and family can come together to explore Seminole traditions and enjoy a full-day of immersive and hands-on activities.

Visitors can start the morning with yoga in the peaceful setting of the museum’s boardwalk and explore the Everglades with a boardwalk scavenger hunt. Learn about Seminole hunting traditions by meeting Daniel Tommie in the hunting camp; try your hand at archery with Jake Osceola; or watch a canoe carving demonstration firsthand with Pedro Zepeda. Guests can also be inspired to make Earth-friendly changes at home by learning about composting and do-it-yourself home and beauty products. Raffles with Earth-friendly products and other craft activities will round out the day.

Earth Day Celebration activities are included in the cost of admission. Visit the museum’s website, ahtaththiki.com/programs/, for the most up-to-date information or call Education Coordinator Alyssa Boge at 863-902-1113, ext. 12225.

In Belle Glade, Ellen Smith, the “Green School” contact at Gove Elementary, said they’ll be doing their second-ever “Color Walk” this week and that teachers are encouraging students at all grade levels to complete an Earth-friendly “Green” project in observance of the annual celebration of the planet’s environment.

Ms. Smith is Gove’s STEAM coordinator (that stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math), and she also works with the Brain Gym kids.

In Pahokee, the Chamber of Commerce is participating on Saturday, April 27, with a city-wide cleanup event — The Great American Cleanup — for Earth Day. The event will begin at 8 a.m., with registration at the Chamber of Commerce building, 115 E. Main St. (Mel Tillis Way). There, everyone participating will be supplied with T-shirts, gloves, trash bags and recycling bags.

At about noon, said chamber Executive Director Regina Bohlen, they’ll have a brown-bag lunch for participants — “under the shade tree at the old city hall location. We encourage everyone to come out and help clean the earth of unwanted trash on our ‘Earth Day,’” she said.

For more information on getting registered to participate, contact Sheryl at 561-924-7832 or Regina at 561-924-5579.



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FWC reports panther deaths

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has updated its “Panther Pulse” page with depredation information through April 9.

The agency reported that there had been eight documented deaths of panthers, all but two known to be victims of car collisions, so far in 2019. The cause of one death was unknown, and the other was a male that died in Hendry County due to “interspecific aggression.”

On Monday, April 15, the FWC issued an

update because of another death over the weekend. “The remains of Florida panther UCFP353, a 1.5 year-old uncollared female, were collected on April 14 in Collier County. The suspected cause of death is a vehicle collision. The carcass was recovered on County Road 846, 2 miles west of County Line Road: UTM easting 469494, northing 2922442,” the release said.

“Biologists gain valuable information by examining panther remains. Report injured or dead panthers to the FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).”

FWC enforcement blotter

By the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

These actions were reported by the FWC between March 8 and March 21.

HENDRY COUNTY

• Officer Keen was patrolling a private ranch south of LaBelle when he noticed a buggy dropping subjects off for opening day of spring turkey season. A little after noon, Officer Keen heard a gunshot and begin investigating the area of the shot. While investigating, Officer Keen came across a subject turkey hunting. After a search of the surrounding area, no turkey was found, only a game feeder with feed present on the ground. The game feeder was approximately 54 yards from where the subject was hunting. The subject was issued a notice to appear (citation) for attempting to take a turkey within 100 yards of a feeder.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

• Officers Padgett, Dial and Zenoniani responded to a report from the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office of two subjects being lost near Kissimmee Prairie State Park. A sheriff’s deputy who initially responded detained two subjects camped on the Kissimmee River Public Use Area (PUA). The subjects stated they got lost on the way to Lake Placid and cut the chain on two gates. They said their truck ran out of gas and they had been walking in the middle of the night when they called for help.

Lieutenant Strenth and Officers Allen and Crosby arrived. After questioning the two subjects and following the vehicle tracks, it was found that the two men had cut the chain to a gate to get into the Kissimmee River public use area (PUA), then cut the chain on another gate to get into the adjacent private property. They entered the property, then cut the fence

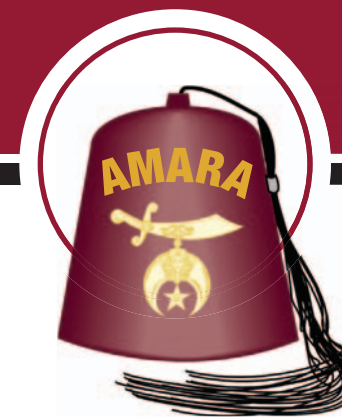
of the property boundary with the PUA. The truck was found in the private property. One of the subjects had numerous credit cards in another people’s names and an endorsed cashier’s check. There were numerous other items in the vehicle believed to have obtained from a theft. Both men were booked into the Okeechobee County Jail for two counts of felony breaking and injuring a gate or fence with livestock inside. They were also cited for illegally camping and having a fire without a fire ring in the Kissimmee River PUA.

• Officers Partelow and Davis received a call from dispatch about a reported alligator bite. Officer Partelow contacted the victim to investigate the incident. The subject tried to remove a 5-foot alligator from the middle of State Road 70 and place it over a nearby cattle fence. In doing so, the alligator bit the victim in the left thumb, causing a small laceration. The victim of the bite was instructed not to try to remove alligators in the future.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

• Officer Loach was on patrol at Slim’s Fish Camp, Belle Glade, when he saw two subjects at the fish cleaning station. He noticed that the subjects appeared to be cleaning animals, not fish. Officer Loach contacted the subjects to conduct a resource inspection and saw a large number of rabbits the subjects were cleaning.

Officer Loach counted 51 rabbits on the fish cleaning station. The possession limit of rabbit is 24. Officer Loach then searched the subjects’ truck and discovered an additional 111 rabbits hidden in coolers. Both subjects admitted hunting without a license and being in possession of 162 rabbits. The subjects received a misdemeanor citation for being over the allowed possession limit of rabbit, and infraction citations for hunting without a license.



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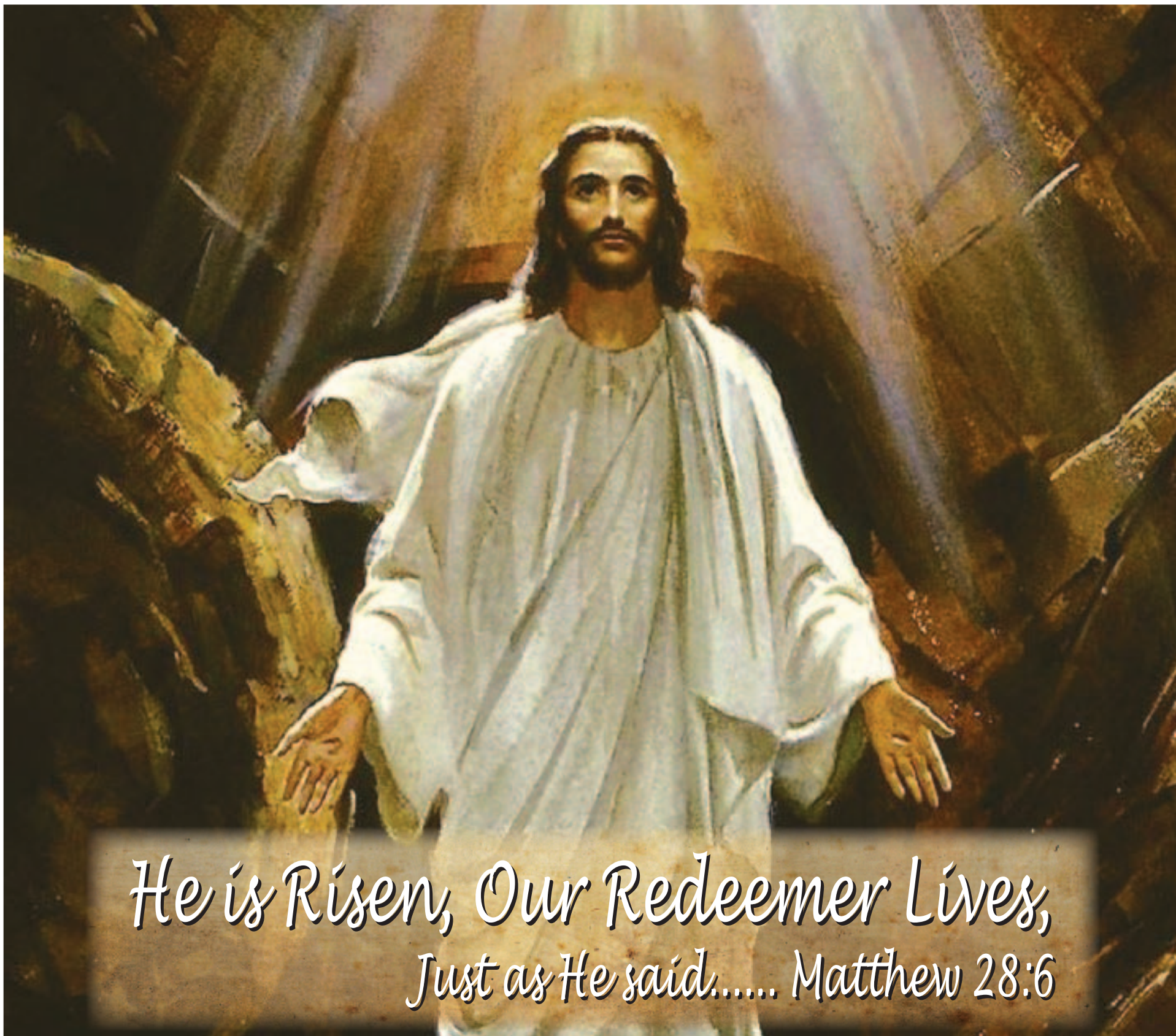


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Big Lake Athletes of the Week: Jessie Krall and Shaniya Davis



By Richard Marion
Lake Okeechobee News

Osceola Middle School's Jessie Krall and Shaniya Davis are this week's Big Lake Athletes of the Week for their performance in the Lady Warriors softball games over the last month.

Krall and Davis both hit home runs in separate games for the Lady Warriors, Krall against Moore Haven and Davis against crosstown rival Yearling Middle School.

Hitting a home run is a significant achievement for any player, whether in softball or baseball, but it's even more impressive that Krall and Davis were able to do so both are only in the sixth grade.

OMS softball coach Karen Cotton says both girls have had the opportunity to play travel ball, which has been essential in helping them develop as players.

Travel teams play softball for much of the year, playing in multiple leagues and tournaments around the area. Travel teams typically recruit players and hold tryouts, as opposed to recreational leagues which usually let anyone play as long as there is roster space.

"They both play travel ball, so they're serious about their softball," said Cotton of Krall and Davis.

"And now those kids who couldn't play travel ball will be able to play softball in middle school to help the transition to high school."

Cotton was referring to the fact that

this marks the first year that both Yearling and Osceola have fielded a softball team, something she thinks will eventually go on to benefit the Lady Brahmans at Okeechobee High School.

"I think one of the biggest reasons these middle school teams came about was because there was no feeder program for the high school softball team," explained Cotton.

Krall's home run came against Moore Haven in a game the Lady Warriors would go on to win.

And although Davis hit her home run against a Yearling team that the Lady Warriors were leading all game, the Lady Bulls were able to outlast Osceola and pull off a wild 22-21 comeback victory.

Late-game comebacks seem to be a theme with Yearling this year, as the team pulled off something similar when they came back to defeat Oslo 4-2 on April 4.

The Lady Warriors won't have to wait long to get another chance at the comeback-prone Lady Bulls, as the two teams will meet again on April 30 at OHS. The game was originally scheduled to take place on April 9, but had to be rescheduled due to inclement weather.

Cotton says the girls on both teams are friends but it is a rivalry and the Lady Warriors are excited to play the Lady Bulls again.



Special to the Okeechobee News/OMS Shaniya Davis plays first base for the Lady Warriors and hit a home run while facing crosstown rival Yearling Middle School.

Special to the Okeechobee News/OMS Jessie Krall's time playing travel ball helped her hit a home run while the Lady Warriors were on the road in Moore Haven facing the Lady Terriers.

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Glades Central sweeps Glades Day for first time

By Richard Marion
Lake Okeechobee News

The Glades Central Raiders varsity baseball team has swept their rival, Glades Day Gators, for the first time in school history.

The Raiders held on to get the 5-4 win over the Gators on April 10, completing the sweep following their 9-6 win back on March 5.

Glades Central head coach Rene Leon says even though his team had already beaten the Gators earlier in the season, he didn't take this game for granted.

"I knew it was going to be a tough game," said Leon. "Every time I go into a rivalry game I know the other team is going to come out competing so we're going to have to go out and perform. I knew they were going to be better because we were seeing them later in the season, and they were. But we came out on top."

During that first match-up GCHS senior David Gonzalez and sophomore Franky Reyes led the Raiders in hits with two each, while Reyes and junior Venanza Verdeen each were able to bring in two RBIs.

Gonzalez also led the team in RBIs during the second game, bringing in one run, while Gonzalez was tied in hits with junior Cristian Rodriguez with each having two.

The momentum swung back and forth for much of the game, with both teams trading scores early until things were all knotted up at 3-3 in the bottom

of the fourth inning. That's how things remained until the sixth inning, when the Raiders added two more runs to take the 5-3 lead. And although the Gators were able to add a run of their own in the bottom of the sixth, that's as close as they could get.

"I knew the game was going to come down to who played better in the last two innings," said Leon. "And we were able to win the game because we came away with no errors in those last two innings."

GCHS sophomore Franky Reyes gets the win on the mound for the Raiders, pitching six and a half innings and allowing four hits, four runs and throwing four strikeouts. Freshman Miguel Perez closed things out for Glades Central, allowing no hits and no runs.

"I felt comfortable at the end with my freshman pitcher coming in," said Leon of the left-handed Perez. "I trusted my defense with his pitching."

Senior Eric Leon, coach Rene Leon's younger brother, also had a good game at catcher for the Raiders, throwing out two Glades Day runners to preserve the Glades Central lead.

Eric had actually transferred to Glades Central from Glades Day when his older brother Rene took up coaching duties for the Raiders varsity team. Coach Leon said his younger brother had a little extra motivation to get the season sweep over his old school.

Now the Raiders are preparing to play the last few games of their regular season, with two games against Pahokee, one against Moore Haven and another against powerhouse LaBelle.

"We want to be able to compete with a team like LaBelle," said Leon.

"We want to look at every team we're playing from here on out as a great team. Because we don't want to get complacent going into districts. We're going to go out there, have fun and play Raider baseball the way it's supposed to be played."

Glades Central will host the Pahokee Blue Devils at 6:30 p.m. on April 18.



Special to the Okeechobee News/GCHS
Glades Central head coach Rene Leon holds a meeting at the mound during the sixth inning of the Raiders' game against the Glades Central Gators on April 10. From left to right: Eric Leon, Franky Reyes and Rene Leon.



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Some 800 and 900 telephone numbers may require an extra charge, as well as long distance toll costs. We will do our best to alert our reader of these charges in the ads, but occasionally we may not be aware of the charges. Therefore, if you call a number out of your area, use caution.

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**INVITATION TO BID
SAND AND GRIT REMOVAL AT THE PORT LABELLE UTILITY
SYSTEM WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT,
HENRY COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**Bid No. 2019-14
OPENING DATE AND TIME: MAY 8, 2019 at 2:00 P.M.**

Sealed Bids will be received by the Board of County Commissioners of Henry County, Florida, for "Sand and Grit Removal at the Port LaBelle Utility System Wastewater Treatment Plant, Henry County, Florida". In order to be considered, bids must be received by the Board of County Commissioners, c/o the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Attn: Barbara Butler, at the C.E. Hall Building, Room A-226, Henry County Courthouse Complex, 25 E. Hickpochee Avenue, LaBelle, Florida by **May 8, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.**, at which time all responses to this request will be recorded in the presence of one or more witnesses.

A copy of the Instructions and Bid Documents can be obtained online at www.hendryfla.net under the Public Information tab, or from the Henry County Engineering Department, located at 99 E. Cowboy Way, LaBelle, Florida (for pickup), or by calling (863) 675-5222.

The solicitation does not commit Henry County to award any contracts, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this ITB, or to contract for any services. The County reserves the right to reject any or all submittals received as a result of this solicitation, or to cancel in part or in its entirety this ITB, if it is in the best interest of the County to do so. The County may re-procure at the discretion of the Board.

Henry County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete que hable español para participar en esta reunión, por favor póngase en contacto con Veronica Gonzalez al (863) 675-5324.

330249 CN 4/17/24/5/1 CB 4/18/25/2/2019

**REQUEST FOR BID (RFB) NO. 600000955
CATTLE GRAZING, MARTIN COUNTY, FL**

The Procurement Bureau of the South Florida Water Management District, B-1 Building, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406, will receive sealed bids up to the **2:30 p.m.** opening time on **May 10, 2019**, for a land lease for approximately 403.22 acres more or less, for the purpose of cattle grazing located in:

- Section 18 and 19, Township 40 South, Range 42 East, Martin County, Florida
- Section 13, Township 40 South, Range 41 East, Martin County, Florida

An **OPTIONAL SITE VISIT** will be held on April 24, 2019, at 10:00 a.m. Interested bidders will meet at the following location:

The property is accessed from I-95 or Florida Turnpike to Indiantown Road (SR706). Head west 2.5 miles on Indiantown Road to Gulf Stream Citrus. Head north 2 miles on Gulf Stream Citrus. After crossing Cypress Creek head east .25 miles to an access road through existing cattle grazing lease and head north 1 mile on the access road and through the tunnel under the Florida Turnpike and I-95 (see enclosed access map).

Transportation will be the responsibility of interested attendees.

All bids must conform to the instructions in the RFB. Interested respondents may obtain a copy of the complete RFB (1) at the above address; (2) by downloading the solicitation from our website at www.sfwmd.gov/procurement; (3) by calling 561-682-2011 or (4) by calling the 24-hour **BID HOTLINE 800-472-5290**. The public is invited to attend the bid opening. **Further information on the status of this solicitation can be obtained on our website - www.sfwmd.gov.**

329273 ON 04/10, 17, 24/2019; CB & IB 04/11, 18, 25/2019

Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc.
"Neighbors Working for Neighbors"

January 1, 2019

STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc. is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utility Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1975, as amended; Executive Order 11246, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, disability or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's non-discrimination compliance efforts is Jeffrey R. Brewington, General Manager of Glades Electric Cooperative. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization, or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utility Services, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

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330446 LO 4/17 CB 4/18/2019

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**South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406
permits@sfwmd.gov
NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, that the application(s) for permit described below have been received for project(s) in Glades County. The application(s) and future additional application documents can be obtained by any of the following methods: 1) Accessing the District's website (www.sfwmd.gov) and clicking on Application/Permit Search on the ePermitting page; 2) Submitting a written request to the South Florida Water Management District, Attn: Regulation Division, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406; or 3) Submitting an electronic request at permits@sfwmd.gov.

Langetree Properties LLC (Langetree Borrow Pit) PO Box 1589, LaBelle, FL 33975, has submitted Application 190315-16 for renewal of Water Use Permit 22-00344-W to dewater on undeveloped lands. The water will be withdrawn from the water table aquifer and the project is located in Section 32, Township 42 South, Range 30 East.

Shaawe Shack Inc (Patrick Osceola) 1652 Cypress Avenue, LaBelle, FL 33935, has submitted Application 190322-10 for renewal of Water Use Permit 22-00306-W to irrigate 9.7 acres of agricultural lands. The water will be withdrawn from Sandstone aquifer and the project is located in Sections 4,9, Township 42 South, Range 28 East.

330016 GCD 04/17/19

**NOTICE OF RESCHEDULED APRIL 2019 REGULAR MEETING
OKEECHOBEE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD/
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS AND APPEALS**

NOTICE: The Okeechobee County Planning Board/Board of Adjustments and Appeals will hold a regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 30, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. The April 23, 2019 regular meeting is canceled and is rescheduled to April 30, 2019. The meeting location remains the Okeechobee County Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida. In the event that all items scheduled before the Board at this meeting are not heard, the meeting shall be continued to Wednesday, May 1, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Okeechobee County Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida.

Members of the public shall have the opportunity to be heard at public meetings. Any person desiring to appeal any decision by the Planning Board/Board of Adjustments and Appeals with respect to any matter considered at a meeting or hearing will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made and that the record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal will be based. Community Development Department tapes are for the sole purpose of backup for official records of the Department.

For further information on the meeting schedule or a particular meeting, contact the Community Development Department at 863-763-5548.

Okeechobee County Community Development Department: 1700 NW 9th Avenue, Suite A; Okeechobee, Florida 34972
331330 ON 4/17/2019

**HENDRY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Notice is hereby given that the Hendry County Board of County Commissioners will hold Public Hearings on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, at 5:00 P.M., in the Commission Chambers, Hendry County Courthouse, 25 East Hickpochee Avenue, LaBelle, Florida, to review the terms of the interlocal agreements with the City of LaBelle and the City of Clewiston for distribution of local option fuel tax revenues.

The meeting is open to the public. If a person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he/she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he/she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Any questions pertaining to this matter should be directed to Hendry County Administration, by phone (863-675-5220), email (tracy.nobles@hendryfla.net), U.S. mail (P.O. Box 519, Moore Haven, FL 33471) or by fax (863-674-4194).

If you have a disability that will require special assistance or accommodation for your attendance at any meeting, please contact Hendry County Administration at (863) 675-5220; Hearing Impaired: Florida Relay 7-1-1; or e-mail tracy.nobles@hendryfla.net.

Hendry County is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete que hable español para participar en esta reunión, por favor póngase en contacto con Myra Johnson al (863) 675-5240.
330642 LO 4/17 CB 4/18/2019

Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc.
"Neighbors Working for Neighbors"

January 1, 2019

IMPORTANT NOTICE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATEMENT

Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an Affirmative Action organization and will continue to meet its non-discrimination and affirmative action obligations by insisting that all contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and others who do business with the Cooperative also adhere to strict non-discriminatory and affirmative action practices.

Additionally, Glades Electric Cooperative will continue to insist on full compliance of its Affirmative Action Plan in its hiring, promotion and other employment practices. The Cooperative invites and encourages all minority individuals and groups to participate in all its membership activities, to be active in the vending of materials and supplies, and to enter bids on **contracts for services needed by the Cooperative.**

Any minority individual or minority group interested in participation in any of these activities and needing more information about equal opportunities at the Cooperative may contact Jeffrey R. Brewington, CEO and Affirmative Action Compliance Officer, Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc., by writing to him at Glades Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 519, Moore Haven, FL 33471, or by calling him at (863) 946-6200.

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SUDOKU

2								7
		6	9			1	5	8
	5			8				
		9	3					6
				9	8	7		
6		7	2		1		9	
4		3	8		9	6		5
1	9	8			2		7	3

Level: Beginner

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8	7	4	2	9	9	8	6	1
6	8	2	3	1	4	5	9	7
5	9	6	7	8	3	2	4	1
4	6	8	1	5	7	3	9	6
3	1	8	7	9	6	2	4	5
2	6	5	7	4	3	6	1	8
4	2	6	8	9	7	8	6	3
8	1	5	8	2	4	1	5	8
7	9	6	9	3	5	8	4	2

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News from the Glades County Property Appraiser

To our senior citizens

To those of you who have recently applied for the Limited Income Senior Citizen Exemption, the 2019 adjusted household income limit is \$30,174.

Please keep in mind that the last day to submit your proof of income to my office is June 3, 2019. (June 1 falls on a Saturday)

- If you file a federal income tax return, I will need a copy of your 2018 return.
- If you are not required to file a federal income tax return, then I will need a copy of all income that you receive.

Help me spread the word to our senior citizens about this additional property tax exemption.

Lorie Ward, C.F.A.

Glades County property appraiser
863-946-6025

500 Ave J, Room 202, second floor,
courthouse

LorieWard@GladesFLPA.com



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
Glades County loves its senior citizens. Left to right are Mrs. Muriel Green and Glades County Property Appraiser Lorie Ward.

Church offers free counseling sessions

BELLE GLADE — The Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, 1424 W. Canal St. S., is offering free counseling sessions - marriage, family, rehabilitation, etc. Please contact Pastor Burden at 352-214-7988 to schedule an appointment.

City Hall to be closed

OKEECHOBEE — City Hall offices will be closed on Friday, **April 19**, in observance of Good Friday. Offices will reopen on Monday, April 22, at 8 a.m. The website, cityofokeechobee.com, allows 24/7 access.



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Submit your favorite Easter photos
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*limited availability. Prize winners determined by newspaper staff.

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Submit your
photos by
noon April 30



**Lake Okeechobee
News**

Dentists to treat low-income adults April 24

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

LAKE WORTH — Many adults in our community cannot afford basic dental treatment, and for the fifth year in a row, the organizers of Free Dentistry Day will do something about it.

On Wednesday, April 24, dentists affiliated with Atlantic Coast Dental Research Clinic, aided by Palm Beach State Dental Health students, will treat adults, 18 and older, at the Dental Health building located on the Lake Worth campus, 4200 Congress Ave. Adults who need, but cannot afford, fillings or extractions will be seen at no charge on a first-come, first-served basis and should be at the site before the doors open at 6 a.m. Treatment will begin at 8 a.m. A total of 50 patients will be seen for the day. While several dentists will be available, patients should be prepared to wait.

The treatment will be limited to fillings and extractions. The dentists will not perform dental check-ups, cleanings or advanced dental work, such as crowns and bridges.

By focusing on fillings and extractions, the dentists will be able to do the most good for adults who cannot afford these services. Patients who cannot be treated will be given a list of options.

Dentists licensed to practice in Florida will perform the treatments. The dentists are taking time away from their practices to volunteer for this event. Students enrolled in Palm Beach State's Dental Assisting program will assist the dentists chairside, and PBSC Dental Hygiene students will conduct pre-exam interviews and patient education.

Slow the Flow rally today

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — Anglers for Lake Okeechobee (AFLO) will host an outdoor rally in Waller Park in the Florida State Capitol today, April 17 at 10 a.m.

Elected leaders, business owners, college students and activists from communities on the shores of Lake Okeechobee will gather on the steps of Florida's Capitol to voice their support for slowing the flow of discharges from the lake from the north and cleaning the water before it goes into Lake Okeechobee.

The Florida Senate has proposed \$50 million for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project.

AFLO is a community fishing group dedicated to protecting Lake Okeechobee, the liquid heart of Florida. The organization includes anglers (professional and recreational), marina owners, boat owners and fishing guides. They want to see Lake Okeechobee cared for and the estuary crisis fixed. They are committed to focusing on the science and a long-term effort in the halls of Tallahassee and Washington to ensure that becomes a priority.

For more information, visit Anglersfor-LakeO.org or follow them on Facebook and Twitter via [@AnglersForLakeO](https://twitter.com/AnglersForLakeO).

Free Dentistry Day is an outgrowth of the longtime partnership between Atlantic Coast Dental Research Clinic and Palm Beach State's Dental Health Services Department. ACDRC uses the college's dental clinic to provide Dental Assisting students with the required clinical experience, as well as community dentists with continuing education.

"The students, faculty and staff of Dental Health Services at Palm Beach State College are very excited to host our Fifth Annual Free Dentistry Day event," said Colleen Bradshaw, associate professor and

Dental Assisting Department chairwoman.

"Supported by the outstanding dentists from the Atlantic Coast Dental Research Clinic, we have provided relief for patients in pain who cannot afford dental treatment. It's a humbling experience every year, and we feel honored to be able to serve the community in this way."

No appointments will be taken, but for additional information, call 561-868-3747.

To learn more about PBSC's Dental Health programs, visit palmbeachstate.edu/programs/DentalHealth.

For more information about ACDRC,

visit AtlanticCoastDentalResearchClinic.org.

Directions: Enter at Congress Ave. entrance (at traffic light between Sixth Ave. South and Lake Worth Road). Once on the campus, take the first left. At the stop sign, turn right.

The Dental Health (DH) building is the one-story building on the right. Park in the Copper parking lot directly across from the building.

The address is 4200 Congress Ave., Lake Worth, FL 33461.

For a campus map, please go to palmbeachstate.edu/LakeWorth.

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For the *Health* of it!

Tobacco Free Florida Week spotlights vaping epidemic

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — The federal government declared youth vaping, or e-cigarette use, a nationwide epidemic. In light of these concerns and the misinformation surrounding this topic, the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida is helping educate parents, educators, pediatricians and partners on what they need to know about vaping and youth. This year's Tobacco Free Florida Week, April 22–28, is themed **E-Epidemic: Vaping and Youth**.

The most popular e-cigarette brand is JUUL, a device shaped like a USB drive that is available in a variety of flavors and easy to conceal. In fact, youth are using JUUL devices inside school bathrooms and classrooms.

Here are the facts:

- Youth vaping has increased dramatically across the country and in Florida. In 2018, about 25% of Florida high school students reported current use of electronic vaping – a 58% increase compared to 2017.

- Youth are vaping at much higher rates compared to adults. One in four Florida high school students are vaping. Only about 4% of Florida adults are vaping.

- The long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are still unknown. E-cigarette devices heat a liquid — usually containing nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals — and produce an aerosol. This aerosol, aka “vapor,” is NOT water. Some of the ingredients in e-cigarette aerosol could also be harmful to the lungs in the long term, according to the CDC. For example, some e-cigarette flavorings may be safe to eat but not to inhale because the gut can process more substances than the lungs.

- E-cigarettes, including JUUL, typically contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. Youth may be more sensitive to nicotine and feel dependent on nicotine sooner compared to adults. According to the manufacturer, a single JUUL pod (the “liquid” refill) contains as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes. JUUL uses nicotine salts, which can allow high

levels of nicotine to be inhaled more easily and with less irritation.

- The brain continues to develop until the early to mid-20s and the developing brain is more vulnerable to the negative effects of nicotine. The effects include reduced impulse control, deficits in attention and cognition, and mood disorders. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.

- Evidence suggests that youth who use e-cigarettes may be at greater risk of starting to smoke regular cigarettes.

“Florida has always been at the forefront of tobacco prevention and has seen steady declines in youth cigarette smoking, but dramatic increases in vaping among youth threaten to reverse that trend,” said Laura Corbin, bureau chief of Tobacco Free Florida.

“We must protect future generations from a lifetime of nicotine addiction, which is critical to ending tobacco use overall. Tobacco Free Florida is your trusted source for credible and substantiated information about e-cigarettes.”

Parents and educators should advise youth of the dangers of nicotine; discour-

age youth tobacco use in any form, including e-cigarettes; and set a positive example by being tobacco free themselves. Tobacco Free Florida is taking steps to educate Floridians about this troubling epidemic through social media campaigns and an educational blog post, which can be found at tobaccofreeflorida.com/eepidemic.

Health Literacy Workshop Series scheduled in May

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — Health literacy is the ability a person has that helps them find, manage, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Learn about:

- Local health care and human resources services;
- Health insurance and other programs;
- Support health and wellness;
- Getting the most out of your doctor visits;
- Using medications and prescriptions;

- Healthy living: good nutrition and healthy eating.

Workshops are three, weekly sessions May 6, 13, 20 and June 3, 10, 17 at the Okeechobee Library, 206 S.W. 16th St., from 4 to 5 p.m.

Each workshop will have up to 15 participants.

Healthy snacks, giveaways and certificates of completion are included.

Sponsored by the Health Council of Southeast Florida and Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network Inc.

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Health News

Diabetes workshops planned

OKEECHOBEE — There will be a six-week Diabetes Self-Management Workshop for adults and seniors with Type 2 Diabetes at Our Village Okeechobee, 1703 S.W. Second Ave. The workshop will meet for 2.5 hours once a week for six weeks. The workshops will be on Wednesdays, April 16, 23, 30, and Wednesdays, May 7, 14, and 21, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Plan to attend at least four of the six meetings. To register, visit www.lorhn.org, or call 888-880-8242, or email info@lorhn.org.

Diabetes workshops open

CLEWISTON — There will be a Diabetes Self-Management Workshop at the Florida B. Thomas Library in Harlem, 1010 Harlem

Academy Ave. The workshop will meet for 2.5 hours once a week on Wednesdays, **April 17**, and Wednesdays, May 1, 8, and 15. Plan to attend at least four of the meetings. To register, visit www.lorhn.org, or call 888-880-8242, or email info@lorhn.org.

Rid cabinet of drugs

CLEWISTON — K&M Drugs, 340 E. Sugarland Highway, will host Operation Medicine Cabinet on Saturday, **May 11**, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Advocate for your child

OKEECHOBEE – Bring the kids and join the Okeechobee Children’s Mental Health System of Care at IRSC for Family Night at the Williamson Education Center at Indian

River State College in Okeechobee on **April 23** from 6 to 7:30 p.m.. The free event will include a light meal and activities for children ages 3 and up. The discussion topic for the night will be: How to advocate for your child and yourself.

Blood pressure checks free

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee County Fire/Rescue offers free blood pressure checks from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at:

- Fire Station #1, 504 N.W. Sixth St.,
 - Fire Station #2, 3511 S.E. 38th Ave., and,
 - Fire Station #4, 1199 N.E. 168th St.
- Understand that if you stop by a station and there is no staff there, they are out on an emergency call. Please stop back later.

Hepatitis A is not curable but preventable

By Cathy Womble

Lake Okeechobee News

Okeechobee has now joined the ranks along with several other Florida counties reporting cases of hepatitis A in 2019. Okeechobee has reported two cases this year. Saint Lucie also reported two. Martin has reported 16, and Palm Beach has reported six this year. A community is considered high-risk after five cases have been reported, which means Palm Beach and Martin counties are both now considered high risk for hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine preventable, communicable, viral liver disease and is spread through contaminated food or water. According to the Florida Department of Health, it is spread primarily by ingesting something contaminated by the fecal matter of someone who has the virus. To put it into perspective, you can come into contact with it if someone does not thoroughly wash his hands after going to the restroom and then he prepares your sandwich at the diner, or he picks lettuce out in the field and you don’t wash it carefully before you eat it,

or he goes to the grocery store and uses the grocery cart before you use it, and then you bite your fingernails.

Back in December, a study in England found fecal bacteria on every touch screen kiosk in McDonald’s in the UK, despite claims that the kiosks were cleaned daily. Just the thought of fecal bacteria on a McDonald’s touch screen kiosk is nauseating, but imagine what would happen if that same bacteria were infected with the hepatitis A bacteria.

Hepatitis A is also spread through sexual contact with a person infected with it. According to the Florida Department of Health, “Symptoms usually start weeks after infection and last less than two months. Some people can be sick for up to six months. You can have hepatitis A for up to two weeks without feeling sick, but during that time, you can spread it to others.” Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not effective against hepatitis A germs.

Symptoms of hepatitis A are the following:

- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting

- Jaundice
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Joint pain
- Pale or clay colored stool
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dark-colored urine

There is no cure for hepatitis A, but if you experience the symptoms listed, the Florida Department of Health recommends you seek medical care immediately. Although most people who contract hepatitis A do recover, 80% of those who have contracted it in Florida this year have required hospitalization, and three have died. The Florida Department of Health strongly urges vaccination against hepatitis A, especially if you are in close contact, care for or live with someone who has hepatitis A, use injection or non-injection drugs, are homeless or in temporary housing, have recently been incarcerated, are men who have had sex with other men, have recently visited a country where hepatitis A is common or are having sex with someone who has hepatitis A.



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Sweet Life in Hendry County

Big Cypress Celebration to feature Gary Allan



BIG CYPRESS SEMINOLE RESERVATION — Country music singer Gary Allan will headline the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Big Cypress Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, May 11, at the Junior Cypress Rodeo and Entertainment Complex.

Tickets for the event (which will include Native American Dancers and alligator show) and the concert are priced at \$40 per person and are on sale now at bccelebration.com. They will also be available at the Junior Cypress Rodeo and Entertainment Complex the day of the event. Parking is \$5, and gates will open at noon.

With the allure of a modern-day outlaw, Mr. Allan has won over fans, peers and critics with his signature blend of smoldering vocals, rebellious lyrics and raucous live performances.

His most recent album, *Set You Free*, topped the Billboard 200 (Pop Chart), a career first. The album also made its debut at the top of the Billboard Country Album chart and produced his fifth No. 1 country

radio chart topper with "Every Storm Runs Out Of Rain."

The California native released his first album, *Used Heart for Sale*, in 1996 and since then has released eight additional studio albums, selling over 7 million albums, been certified platinum on three back-to-back albums and been certified gold five times. In addition to his five No. 1 hits, he's collected 14 top 10 hits and amassed over 270 million total streams.

Joining Mr. Allan in the performer lineup at the 124th anniversary of the Big Cypress Celebration will be fellow country artists Jimmie Allen, High Valley, Corey Smith and John Conlee.

Mr. Allen, who auditioned for both America's Got Talent and American Idol, released his first official single — "Best Shot" — early last year. The week of its release, it was the second most added song to the country music radio playlists. The song reached the No. 1 position on Country Airplay in November, making him the first African-American artist to send his debut single to the top of that chart.

With their flavorful blend of bluegrass-tinted country pop, Brad and Curtis Rempel comprise the critically acclaimed Canadian-born, Nashville-bred duo High Valley. The brothers have received praise from Rolling Stone, Pandora and more for soaring harmonies and memorable songs influenced by artists such as Ricky Skaggs,

Diamond Rio and the Everly Brothers.

Their international appeal has already earned them more than 175 million streams across the U.S. and Canada alone. The duo's debut Atlantic Records/Warner Music Nashville single "Make You Mine" has been certified gold, and their most recent hit "She's With Me" became their first Top 10 at country radio. In addition to their multiple CCMA Awards wins and Juno Awards nods, they are currently nominated for ACM New Duo of the Year for their second consecutive year.

With their lauded major label debut album *Dear Life* under their belt, High Valley continues to make waves as a breakout act in country music. In addition to appearances on *Live with Kelly and Ryan*, *TODAY* and *CBS This Morning*, the rising duo has brought their music to fans across the world alongside the likes of Shania Twain, Brad Paisley, Keith Urban, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill.

SiriusXM Presents: The Highway Finds Tour marked their first U.S. headlining run and they recently joined Old Dominion's Happy Endings World Tour. High Valley spent the winter on the road with Paul Brandt and are currently in the studio working on their upcoming project.

Mr. Smith, a Georgia-based singer/songwriter, has sold over 1 million concert

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
Country music singer Gary Allan will headline the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Big Cypress Anniversary Celebration on May 11.

U.S. Sugar provides support for playground

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

At the Monday, April 8, Clewiston City of Commission Meeting, U.S. Sugar Community Relations Manager Jennifer Black presented a \$50,000 check to assist the city with the construction of a new playground for community children and the Trinidad neighborhood in Clewiston. The support comes as part of a multi-year commitment from U.S. Sugar to help improve area parks and recreation in and around the Clewiston community.

"We are so proud to support parks and

recreation in 'America's Sweetest Town,' providing area children with another safe and modern place to play," said Black.

"In addition to growing sugarcane, citrus and fresh produce, U.S. Sugar also has an interest in helping our community's children grow up in a nurturing and fun environment."

The check was presented to Mayor Mali Gardner and fellow Clewiston City Commissioners Michael Atkinson, Kristine Petersen, Melanie McGhee and Interim City Manager Shari Howell.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
U.S. Sugar Community Relations Manager Jennifer Black presented a \$50,000 check to assist the city with the construction of a new playground.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

SR 80 paving under way in earnest

FDOT crews continue paving State Road 80 in western Hendry County on Thursday, April 4, between Dalton Lane and County Road 833.

Bridge work at Airglades costs double the estimate

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — Hendry County commissioners approved a Thomas Marine contract after receiving just one bid on a scour remediation project on the Airglades Boulevard bridge over Cessna Canal near the airport.

According to the staff report from Public Works Director Shane Parker: “An invitation to bid was issued for the remediation construction services for Airglades Boulevard over Cessna Canal on Jan. 23, 2019. One firm submitted, which was Thomas Marine Construction, Inc. The bid was for \$175,928.17.

“The county received a deficiency letter from the Florida Department of Transportation on June 14, 2018, stating both abutment caps are undermined exposing the bottoms of the approach slabs, which put the approach slabs at risk of structural failure or settlement and could eventually impact the approach roadways. As a result of the deficiency letter, the county approved Supplemental Task Authorization No. 5 with Kisinger Campo & Associates, Corp. (KCA) on June 25, 2018, to identify deficiencies related to the channel scour at Abutments 1 and 4 and prepare rehabilitation plans.

“The single bidder is 115.4% higher than the engineer’s estimate for this project. Thomas Marine’s bid included unit prices for four pay items which were over three times the estimated unit prices. These items include clearing and grubbing, embankment, sandcement riprap and reinforcing

steel for riprap. All of these items involved in-water work.

“The installation of fill material in a saturated environment may lead to some amount of lost fill. Factors were added within the original project quantities to account for some loss, but it is recommended that the embankment be closely monitored during construction.

“Other factors which are likely to have affected contractor’s bid and willingness to bid on this project are the Flaghole Water Management District’s restriction of no dewatering within the channel. Contractor’s would anticipate higher costs of in-water work as surface supplied oxygen would likely be required to complete the construction tasks under the bridge.

“The engineer’s estimate from KCA was \$81,675.00 and Thomas Marine Construction, Inc. was \$94,250.17 above the engineer’s estimate. Many of the unit prices are quite higher than the statewide FOOT average, but this may be due to the location of the project and the working conditions.”

Also under bids: The Hendry County Board authorized a contract with the low bidder, Oak, for work on Rodeo Drive; bids were opened April 3.

In other business, several items were approved under the consent agenda:

- An amendment to the interlocal agreement between Hendry County and the State of Florida Department of Health Relating to Building Modifications at the Hendry County Health Department, to add generators and a window-hardening project to the work. According to the staff report: “Staff

applied for and received a grant award from the Florida Department of Emergency Management, Mitigation Bureau, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), for a Wind Retrofit and Permanent Generator Project for the Health Department buildings located in Clewiston and LaBelle. Hurricane Irma did extensive damage to the Health Department building in LaBelle, and the FDEM provides funding for mitigation projects that would help reduce storm-related damages in the future. This project will provide roll-down hurricane shutters for both facilities and a permanently fixed generator. The 20% matching requirement will be provided by a state-funded grant from the Department of Health to replace the windows at the LaBelle facility with impact resistant material. This project will eliminate the need for staff to physically attach storm shutters to the windows at both facilities, and have a dedicated power source at times when the power is out due to storms or other hazards. The agreement has been reviewed and approved by the county attorney for signature.” Commissioner Karson Turner questioned whether costs might have been underestimated on the generator installations and asked County Administrator Jennifer Davis to come back with further information and County Attorney Mark Lapp to modify the amendment as needed. The grant is for \$260,059.

- A request from Supervisor of Elections Brenda Hoots for an appropriation of \$1,226.81 to provide matching funds for a Federal Election Activities Fund grant of \$8,178.74, for purchase of state-approved or

certified, emerging or enhancing software or hardware technology for sufficient equipment for casting and counting ballots for the next scheduled general election in 2020.

- A Hendry County Tourism Development Council sponsorship of the nonprofit Florida Junior High School Rodeo Association — Wrangler Division LaBelle Rodeo in the amount of \$5,000. The event took place March 29-31.

- A Boaters Improvement Fund of \$27,361 to be handled by the Recreation Board for boat ramp and public dock facilities improvements in the county.

- A supplemental task authorization for professional services for Planning and Zoning Department support, for a not-to-exceed amount of \$25,000 with Waldrop Engineering P.A., for the scope of services for the Hendry County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code amendments. The firm was selected in the request-for-proposals process the board approved in December.

- Two sales of surplus properties by the county attorney, 1055 and 1146 Della Tobias Ave. in Harlem.

Also, a federally funded sub-grant agreement with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Mitigation Bureau, for the health department records in Clewiston and LaBelle and a resolution to rename the Harlem Civic Center to the Harlem Civic and Cultural Center were removed from the consent agenda for later, separate discussion.

Chris Felker can be reached at cfelker@newszap.com.

Swindle announces run for Hendry schools chief

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — The audience and his fellow members of the Hendry County Board, meeting Tuesday, April 9, witnessed a bombshell announcement from Commissioner Michael Swindle and expressed its pleasure with a loud ovation.

During the commissioners’ comments, Mr. Swindle said, “I want to take this opportunity to make a few statements and wrap

CYPRESS

Continued From Page 1

tickets and digital singles, as well as more than 220,00 albums. His top singles include “Twenty-One,” “If I Could Do It Again” and “I Love Everyone.”

A Kentucky native, Mr. Conlee had 32 singles on the Billboard Hot Country Songs charts and he recorded 11 studio albums between 1978 and 2004. His singles include seven number one hits — “Lady Lay Down,” “Backside of Thirty,” “Common Man,” “I’m Only in it for the Love,” “In My Eyes,” “As Long As I’m Rockin’ with You,” and “Got My Heart Set on You.”

For more information about the Big Cypress Anniversary Celebration, visit bccelebration.com.

it up with a nice announcement, hopefully. I started five-and-a-half years ago on my path of a Hendry County commissioner. It’s been a phenomenal journey.”

He said he’d enjoyed having “the ability to watch this county come out of an economic time that was trying for America and the state. I think that we’re flourishing today, head and shoulders above where we were. As I talk to our fellow colleagues around the state and the commission, it’s obvious to me that we have a unique board and we don’t always agree ... but we always shake hands and hug and say ‘I love you. I’ll see you in two weeks.’ And I think that that’s pretty special, and the ability to work for the constituents of Hendry County has really shown, I believe.

“We wouldn’t be where we are if we didn’t have the great staff that we have. The staff in Hendry County is phenomenal, second to none. I’ve been honored to work with, learn from, be a part of (them), and I hope that the footprint that I’ve brought to the table ... has been positive.

“Tonight, I’d like to inform the public and my fellow board members that as of November 2020, I’ll be resigning from the commission, so that gives me about 18 or so months to stay in your presence and continue the legacy of whatever we leave. It’s been a phenomenal opportunity and I’ve learned from it, and I look forward to continuing.

“And I am pleased to announce, and I’m giving plenty of resignation time to allow (Elections Supervisor) Brenda Hoots and her staff to do whatever legally has to happen. That’s two years short on the election cycle, so that gives time for Ms. Hoots and the elections process to figure out, will this position be on the election-cycle ballot? Will it be a gubernatorial appointee?

“I’m very excited to announce that the reason for the resignation is because effectively immediately, I’m going to be (running for) superintendent for Hendry County schools. My love and passion, my training and education (are) as a teacher. I’ve been involved with education system for north of 20 years now. The footprint I’ve brought to workforce development has grown and hopefully serves as an example of ... what can happen when proactive, positive leadership takes hold. I look forward to being a formidable candidate.”

Commission Chairman Mitchell Wills was first to react. “I can tell you it’s been an honor and a pleasure to serve with you on the board; I have learned a lot from you. Your professionalism and the excellence with which you do things has been a pleasure to be a witness to. I think you’ll make an amazing superintendent. God bless you.”

Commissioner Karson Turner said, “I look forward to aggravating the fool out of you.” He meant “continuing” to do so, Mr.

Swindle responded. “Let the data drive the discussion,” Mr. Turner finished.

Commissioner Darrell Harris said in a serious tone with an eyebrow-cocked kind of wink, “I’ll talk to you privately.”

“Oh, boy,” Mr. Swindle replied.

Commissioner Emma Byrd said: “I’m looking forward to continuing to work with you. You’ve been a great asset to me, so I appreciate you and I’m going to appreciate you even more.”

On another matter, the commissioners OK’d a proclamation to honor the life and community services performed by the late Florida B. Thomas. After all the “Whereas” clauses that extolled her lifetime achievements, including being the first black librarian in the integrated school system and winning the Hendry County Golden Apple Heritage Award in 2019, the proclamation concludes: “Florida Bryant Thomas is hereby accorded this memorial of the board’s great respect, esteem and appreciation for her lifetime of contributions to the citizens of Harlem and Hendry County and hereby acknowledges the extraordinary commitment, dedication and involvement that Florida Bryant Thomas brought to her community and the positive impact she had with everything with which she was involved.”

It also issues the board’s sincere condolences and sympathy to her family.

Clewiston FYI

Special to the Lake Okechobee News

Dates to remember

- April 18: Golf Course Advisory Board meeting
- April 18: Library Advisory Board meeting
- April 19: Good Friday – City offices closed

Staff reports

Community Development

Director Travis Reese reports

- Three new houses were permitted for Orchard Park. All are three bedroom, two bath. Average square footage is approximately 1,500 square feet.
- AutoZone received its Certificate of Occupancy and is finalizing everything to be able to open soon.

Library Director Natasha Hayes reports

- Library Amnesty Week was a success as many patrons were able to eliminate their fines/fees that had accumulated on their library accounts. We would like to remind everyone that the last day for this opportunity was April 13.
- The High School Art Reception was held April 11 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. This was a great event as the community was able to come in and speak directly with the artists who were demonstrating their skills. Each artist displayed their artwork for all to marvel at, all the while engaging personally with the patrons in attendance. Art teacher, Mrs. Harn along with the help of Mr. Harn, provided tall art display racks throughout the library which held a variety of artwork from cheese cloth masks to drawings and paintings by Clewiston High School students. The library raffled off a desktop computer as well. Light refreshments and smooth jazz music was enjoyed by all. We cannot thank the artists enough and we look forward to the future as they continue to master their craft. The library will continue to display the Clewiston High School student's artwork for the next month. Make sure to stop in and even take home a piece of artwork for a small donation. All proceeds from these donations will directly go to the Clewiston High Art Club. Thank you to the artists, Kalina Mesa, Nicole Blanco, Michael Swaby, Gabriel Garcia, Margaret Gacula and Abenamar Perez for such a great evening.
- The Medicare 101 Information Session was well attended on Wednesday. The presenter mentioned that this event was the highest attended session to date.
- The Family Coloring Event was enjoyed by many on Wednesday, April 10. Library staff provided all the supplies needed.
- Storytime was held twice last week as an outreach program. Due to GoodWheels no longer being able to transport two daycare/preschool centers to the library for this event, our Children's Library Aide went to them.
- Once again, the Lego Club was a success as we had new families and children in attendance. Make sure to stop in for the

fun on Thursdays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. each week.

- Tutoring was held on Monday, April 8, for first through fifth grades from 4 to 6 p.m. There are still spaces available for this free tutoring program. As the school year is coming to an end, please stop in the library and sign your student up for this opportunity. With Florida certified teachers assisting your students, this can help give your child the additional assistance needed at this time as state testing is occurring.
- Upcoming events:
 - Free tutoring weekly for first through fifth grades will be held every Monday from 4 to 6 p.m.
 - Lego Club will be held on Thursdays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
 - New Scrabble Club will be held on Tuesday, April 16 and 30, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
 - Library Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, April 18, at 5 p.m.
 - Family Movie Night with popcorn will be held on Thursday, April 18, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
 - Closed for Good Friday on Friday, April 19 and April 20.
 - Family Board Game Day will be held on Wednesday, April 24, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
 - Adult Book Club will be held on Thursday, April 25, at 5:30 p.m.
 - Remember you can get your e-books free at www.hendrylibraries.org.
- For information regarding any of our programs, please call the library at 863-983-1493 and remember to visit hendrylibraries.org. Like us at facebook.com/clewistonpubliclibrary.

Code Enforcement Officer Debbie McNeil reports

The Community Improvement staff attended training April 1 through April 4 on Field Safety and Interpersonal Skills. There were both class work and practical self-defense skills with a final practical and written exam to obtain certification from Florida Association of Code Enforcement Level IV.

- Code cases opened: 11
- Case re-inspections: 24
- Notice of Violations: 10
- Notice of Hearings: 3
- Code cases resolved: 11
- Code lien search requests completed: 5
- Rental Inspections completed: 7
- Next Scheduled Magistrate Hearing: May 14, 2019

We received 37 Delinquent Business Tax Receipt invoices from Community Development last week. We are conducting the final courtesy contacts this week prior to sending out Notice of Violations beginning April 22. All businesses are encouraged to check their Business Tax Receipt to make sure it is current.

Call to action

We are asking that everyone take a look into their backyards beyond the fence line ... is the rear easement adjoining your property free and clear from overgrown grass and landscape?

City of Clewiston Ordinance:
Section 102-118 Landscape Maintenance

(b) Maintenance of sidewalk areas as public right-of-way.

- (1) It shall be the responsibility of all property owners to maintain grass and landscaping which exists in street right-of-way swales and easements adjoining their properties. Grass in such areas shall not be allowed to exceed eight inches in height.
 - (2) Grass and landscaping which exist near or around sidewalk areas shall be maintained by adjoining property owners. Sidewalks shall be kept free of grass and weeds and shall be cleaned of sand, dirt and trash.
- (Code 1999, § 102-129; Ord. No. 2005-13, pt. 2, 12-19-2005).
Operation Rear Easement Check-Up is ongoing.
Thank you for your response

Public Works Director Sean Scheffler reports

- If you have any recreational needs or questions, please drop by city hall from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or call 863-983-1484.
- NOTICE: Running is not allowed in the pool or splash pad area. Slip and fall accidents could happen. Parents should be involved with their children while using this facility to ensure their safety.
- Mosquito Control: Trap counts: Golf Course 175; Okechobee Blvd. 10; Sports Complex 43; Saginaw 6; Harlem 5.
- Paving Projects: Nothing new to report. Expected to have contractor's signed contract back by the end of the week.
- Country Club Roof: All paper work is to be finished. "Notice to Proceed" issued. Work is scheduled to start this week.
- Trinidad Park FRDAP Grant: The picnic pavilion is finished. The new picnic table and park bench will be installed on Friday.
- Street Division: (1) The second phase of sidewalk in Trinidad Park has been poured. (2) Pot holes, mowing and sign maintenance was the target on Friday this week. (3) Five loads of top soil were delivered to the Trinidad Park bathroom. This will be used to set the finish grade around the bathroom.
- Sports Complex: Nothing to report last week.
- Facility Maintenance: (1) Plumbing problems in the ladies room at the Pro Shop were corrected last week. Waiting for parts to fix aged fixtures was the hold up. (2) Sean has made contact with the High School Art Class asking for them to do a "Special Community Project." He is asking for them to paint the mural on the Splash Pad and the Tiger on Stalls Field. (3) More holes were repaired in the old fence at the Sikes Park. (4) The relocation of the double gate and walk through gate on the soccer field at Trinidad is completed. (5) New "No Running" signs have been ordered for the Pool and Splash Pad. The new signs will be larger, in both English and Spanish, and have the universal sign for no running on it.
- NOTE from Public Works: Hurricane season is around the corner. May is Tree Trimming Amnesty Month. You must call the office at 863-983-1471 and get pre-approved to get the "Special Pick-up" fee waived.

Golf Course Director Robbie Rush reports

- The Annual Horse Race Tournament was held on Friday, April 5. Steve Conrad won the tournament for the first time. The final four were Steve Conrad, Pablo Sanchez, Sam Todd and Steve Seal. Congratulations!
- The Moore Haven Terrier Boosters Fundraiser Tournament was held on Saturday, April 13. The golf course was closed for regular play until 2 p.m.
- The Lakeport Garden Club will have their annual tournament here at the Clewiston Golf Course on May 4.
- The Clewiston Tiger Booster Spring Fling Golf Scramble Tournament is scheduled for May 11.
- All merchandise has been marked down in our end-of-the-season sale.
- Summer memberships start May 1.

Utilities Director Danny Williams reports

Electric Crew Activities

- disconnected service on Mississippi Street for contractor repairs;
- disconnected service for contractor to replace service pole at high school;
- repaired and replaced street lights throughout town;
- repaired electric meter at Clewiston Christian School;
- installed guy wires on poles along Sonora Street;
- relocated pole from a future bus wash site at Central Elementary School;
- changed a damaged transformer in Harlem Gardens Community that was struck by a car;
- installed a new transformer on Alverdez Street to distribute load;
- removed vegetation from power lines.

Water Sewer crew activities

Contractor USSI crews will return soon to install inflow dishes in all our manholes. Other activities reported by our water/sewer department include:

- Restored power to lift stations at San Benito and First Bank of Clewiston locations;
 - repaired two water line breaks.
- Did you know your Customer Service Department offers several bill paying options?
- ONLINE bill pay is available on our website at www.clewiston-fl.gov or municipalonlinepayments.com/clewistonfl.
 - AUTOPAY is also available; come visit our office and complete an application, choose a payment date (5, 15 or 25) and your bill will be deducted from your checking, savings or major credit card account.
 - Of course, payment by cash, check, money order or credit card (MasterCard, Visa, Discover, and American Express) is always welcomed.

If you are considering replacing your air conditioner or insulation, remember the city offers a rebate program for those items. Most local contractors participate in the program and can give you information. You can also visit our website atclewiston-fl.gov or call our office.

Letter to the Editor

To our dear friends, family and hometown community of Clewiston

Today, an estimated 47 million people across the world are living with dementia. This number is set to skyrocket to 75 million by 2030. In the United States alone, more than 15 million caregivers generously dedicate themselves to those with Alzheimer's and dementia. Being of service is such an important aspect to living a truly fulfilled life, caregiving is a gift. A change is needed in how today's generation perceives and accepts the disease.

Wilbur Postell was born and raised right here in Clewiston. He married and raised his three children in Americas Sweetest Town and was a successful business owner for over 25 years of Postell's Country Meats located on East Ventura. He was diagnosed with Vascular Dementia in 2012 and received his ultimate healing on June 7, 2016 but is not defined by his diagnosis. Rather, he is defined as a husband, father, granddaddy, brother, son, friend and United States Navy Veteran. It is dear to our heart that we never mistake the person he is from the condition that tried to take that away. It is so very important to grasp the importance of understanding the disease. Early detectable signs, support groups, first time caregiving tips, therapy, hospice, and

preparation for yourself and your loved one during and after transition.

Last summer was our second time participating in The Longest Day raising money for The Alzheimer's Association. Wilbur's UnFOREgettable Golf Classic was truly unforgettable and because of this town's generosity we raised a total of \$6,450 towards The Alzheimer's Association! The year before we held Wilbur's Country Cookout and raised \$4,232. We are so blessed to have been able to raise over \$10,000 towards research for a disease that is so well deserving to be cured. This year you can catch us on the back green because "Wilbur's UnFOREgettable Golf Classic" will be held this summer on June 1 in our hometown of Clewiston. We are reaching for the stars in hopes his story touches other lives and families across the country. The devil tried for years to defeat him with daily reminders of what his life was no longer. But our God of restoration revealed what his new life through Him had to offer. That is a story so deserving to be spread.

To help us make this event a success straight from the heart here is how you



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

Wilbur Postell, is the passion behind this special event and the reason the Postell family raises money to find a cure.

can help. If you are local, please support by participating — create a four-person team for the 18-hole tournament. The four-person scramble will be held at the Clewiston Golf Course; registration begins at 8 a.m. with a 9 a.m. shotgun start. You may register for the tournament by e-mailing your interest to wilburgolfclassic@gmail.com. Please include all of the following: full name of all three participants and handicap's. A sign up sheet is also available at The Clewiston Golf Course. There will be no same-day sign up for the tournament, must register before May 24 in order to be eligible to play. A \$400 team fee includes: Four-person scramble, 18-hole golf game, green fees and cart, food and beverages provided, prizes and a goodie bag.

If you are not local or unable to attend the day of, you can sponsor a hole for \$50 and/or make a special donation through the event page act.alz.org/goto/Wilbur-UnFOREgettableGolfClassic2019. Sharing this link via email and social media to your friends and family will help spread the word pushing us closer to our goal of \$8,000.

Spreading his story is our passion. If you

are interested in becoming more educated on Alzheimer's please visit alz.org. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, we cherish you for loving him as much as we do and for opening your hearts to making a difference!

This event is dedicated to every family who has experienced or is currently experiencing the sudden life-altering change the disease of Alzheimer's has put on your life story. Wilbur embodied his faith, family and community and we are honored to use his special story as a platform in spreading awareness and ultimately finding a cure. This day is not just for him, it is for all of you.

We are forever thankful to God for his consistency and unconditional faithfulness. We know whole heartedly June 7 wasn't the end, but only the beginning for Wilbur. God's message brings a fresh beginning, unshakable joy, unexplainable peace, eternal significance, meaning and purpose to life. He brought us to it and surely brought us through this season of our lives, together, as a family.

Crystal Postell

Wilbur's UnFOREgettable Golf Classic 2019



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
Wilbur Postell's immediate family, from left: Mark Postell, Ann Postell, Crystal Postell and Andy Postell.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
Jennifer Siesel, the Alzheimer's Association's development manager for The Longest Day from The Southeast Chapter in West Palm Beach, visited Clewiston for the 2018 fundraiser. Left to right: Ann Postell, Jennifer Siesel, Crystal Postell, Mark Postell and Andy Postell.

Clewiston goes blue to show support for autism

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — With April comes World Autism Month, the time of year when people around the world pledge to go blue to increase the global understanding and acceptance of those with autism. April 2 marked the day that anyone willing to help could either wear blue, share blue or light blue in support of this worthy cause, and many of the homes and local businesses in Hendry County took the opportunity to shine blue light on their place of work, front porch or elsewhere to heighten awareness throughout the community.

Not only did this act further this important mission, but it also proved encouraging for fundraising efforts in support of the Education Foundation of Hendry County. U.S. Sugar inspired others to join the cause on social media by posting a picture of its business “going blue” and offering information regarding where people could purchase blue light bulbs of their very own. The comment section was quickly overwhelmed with positive feedback from those expressing their gratitude towards the local company’s recognition of and participation in such a praiseworthy effort. This initiated a veritable ripple effect as more and more people began to “share blue” on social media, and the campaign quickly spread like wildfire across countless Facebook accounts.

Sales from blue light bulbs purchased through the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce benefited the Hendry County Public

Schools Foundation and will provide educational resources to those affected by autism. The Clewiston Chamber of Commerce also contributed by “sharing blue” on social media and posting their own content encouraging others to help cover Hendry County in a blue glow. They began their fundraising efforts on March 18, announcing that every \$10 donation went directly into the county’s public school foundation.

Support like this from the families and businesses in Hendry County is extremely impactful not just to our local area, but the entire world. With every house that participates in World Autism Month by lighting up blue comes increased visibility for those suffering from the condition around the world, especially when large companies and businesses, such as U.S. Sugar, take the lead.

Thank you to everyone who took part in World Autism Month by wearing blue, sharing blue and lighting blue. Hendry County shone proudly along with the hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses that stand together in acknowledgment of those living with autism.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News
U.S. Sugar inspired others to join the cause on social media by posting a picture of their business “going blue” and offering information regarding where people could purchase blue lightbulbs of their very own.

Terriers raise money for athletic program

CLEWISTON — On Saturday, April 13, Moore Haven Terrier Boosters held their annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser. They had 107 players compete and raise money for their athletic program.

Tournament results

- 1st Place: Rick Throop, W. Dilliard and P. Qwenlin, Topher Score 61
- 2nd Place: Bab Toms, Randy Smith, Skip Fricke and Bill Brinager
- 3rd Place: J. Guery, J. Gates, M. Konerans and Tony Grout

- Long Drive Women: Jodi Rush
- Long Drive Men: Kale Knaack

Closest-To-Pin

- #2 Glenn Baxter 4’6
- #9 Mayon McMullen 12’1
- #13 Joseph Palladino 7’8
- #15 Ronnie White 5 feet




Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/Clewiston Golf Club
A total of 107 players competed in the Moore Haven Terrier Boosters annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser.



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/Helen Mead

Kiwanis hosts special guest speaker

LABELLE — LaBelle Kiwanis Past President Nikki Yeager, pictured at right, and Kiwanis members welcomed Ken and Molly Baader, asset liquidators, at the LaBelle Kiwanis meeting on Tuesday, April 2. Mr. Baader is pictured on the left.



Welcomes
New Members

Jackman FL Wagyu Beef, LLC
Racks-R-US

Hendry Public Schools Foundation

A walk in the past: The Calusa Indians

By Butch Wilson

Clewiston Museum director

The islands of intertwining mangrove forest encircled the large, calm bay that shimmered like a mirror under the hot afternoon's sunny gaze. Images of fleecy white clouds reflected across the bay's surface, creating fleeting mirages that faded quickly as the drifting clouds floated across the velvet blue sky.

A large school of mullet formed a dark shadow just beneath the surface that moved lazily along the islands, creating thousands of small slivery ripples that disrupted the bay's serenity. The shadow changed shapes, flexing like a contortionist as mullet swam and fed among the small channels that crisscrossed the bay.

The calm, bay water erupted and confusion prevailed when the school of mullet struck the floating net that stretched across their path, forming an impassable barrier. The twisting black shadow dissolved into thousands of fleeing mullet, attempting to escape the tentacles of the net that held thrashing fish captive in its deadly clutches.

The fear spread as paddles struck the surface, echoing sounds of mayhem to the depths below, sending panic stricken mullet leaping and dancing like ballerinas across the water's turquoise surface. Others dove deep: striking the net hard, driving their

heads into the invisible net that entangled their gills in its webbing. Their black, torpedo shaped bodies, with glistening pearl white bellies, hung suspended like insects in a watery, spider web, spun by the Calusa Indians.

This fictitious yarn story reflects the Calusa Indian fishing culture which grew to a complex society. Who were the Calusa? Where did they live?

Christopher Columbus discovered the New World in 1492. He was searching for the East Indies Spice Islands, which refers to the South East Asian countries (Malaysia, Philippines, etc.) that supplied overland caravans with many exotic spices, which were destined for Europe. The Spice caravans traveled through many lands and hands, which made the spices very expensive. Their cost was so prohibitive that only the wealthy could afford them. Some of the exotic spices that we take for granted today were: black pepper, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Columbus's maritime expedition was to find the East Indies Spice Islands, purchase spices, and return to Spain with ships laden with spices worth a king's ransom.

When Columbus sighted the Bahamas on his first trip, he saw brown skinned people that had Asiatic features. The people living in the Bahamas were called the Arawaks, a friendly people that were very peaceful. He named them Indians because

he thought they were natives of the East Indies. The word "Indian" became a name synonymous with all indigenous people living in North America, Central America and South America.

The Spanish explorers, following in Columbus's wake, conquered and settled the many Caribbean Islands, making slaves of the peaceful Arawak Indians and the warlike Carib Indians that the Caribbean Sea is named after. Some of those conquered islands are known today as Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba. The vast wealth of silver and gold plundered by Cortez, when he conquered the Aztec empire, prompted other ambitious men to cast their eyes to new horizons on the North American Continent.

Ponce De Leon received a commission from the king of Spain to form an expedition and explore the North American coast. In 1513, he sailed along the Florida coast as far north as present day St. Augustine, returned south and then sailed northwest as far as Charlotte Harbor, where he encountered the Calusa Indians. The warlike Calusa attacked the ships with approximately 80 canoes. The battle lasted all day until Ponce De Leon withdrew from the area. He made two important discoveries on this voyage: La Florida and the Gulf Stream.

In 1521, he formed a second expedition and sailed to the Charlotte Harbor vicinity

to establish a Spanish colony. The Calusa attacked, forcing Ponce De Leon and the colony to flee to the ships. Ponce De Leon was wounded and died in Cuba as a result of his injuries.

The Calusa Indians were a fierce, warlike people living on the southwest coast of Florida. Their warring nature dominated the neighboring Indian nations. These nations paid the Calusa tribute, usually in hides and food. This later changed to gold and silver, when the Spanish started shipping huge loads of these precious metals from the Indian empires they had conquered.

The Spanish ships sailing from Mexico to Spain followed the Gulf Stream, which flows along the present Gulf Coast states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. The ships stopped first in Havana, Cuba for repairs and provisions before continuing their voyage to Spain. They sailed from Havana to Spain, following a northerly route that required the ships to sail through the treacherous Florida Straits and follow the Gulf Stream along the east coast of Florida as far north as North Carolina, where they turned east across the Atlantic to Spain. Many Spanish ships that followed these routes were lost or wrecked by storms on the east and west coast of Florida.

The shipwrecked survivors on the southwest coast of Florida were enslaved and sometimes sacrificed by the Calusa.

CCA congratulates 3rd term honor roll students

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — The Clewiston Christian Academy (CCA) would like to congratulate its honor roll students for the third term. They are as follows:

A Honor Roll

Kindergarten: Reese Beck, Sebastian Ehrenhauser, Kolten Kettner, Havana Kurtz, Jenson Moss, Myla Rives and Boone Sergent.

First grade: Brantley Alston, Jovan Drummond, Kinley Garcia, Tyler Holcomb and Rainer Robbins.

Second grade: Piper Beck, Brayden Casique, Zaihaley Cepeda and Katherine Pitts.

Third grade: Ruby Keith, Hendrix Kurtz, Bristol Rives, Brooklyn Sergent, Sophia Valdez and Jeshua Yongco.

Fourth grade: Rebekah Reyes, Ansley Story and Riley Sutton.

Fifth grade: Yara Ramadan.

Sixth grade: Zachary Alston, Hilary Byers, Imani Greaves, Hatton Kurtz, Sofia Miranda, Abby Keith, Ada Keith and Sara Rodriguez.

A/B Honor Roll

Kindergarten: Penelope Cisneros, Cormac Duffy, Sophia Espinosa, Case Hammock, Jensen Harn, Kingston Hill, Aalaysia Melton and Thomas Suggs.

First grade: Dagim Assefa, Malena Garcia,

Brinley Harris, Case Herring, Branson Jackman, Kyden Johnson and Karson Kline.

Second grade: Paisley Bellew, Aundres Gonzalez, Easton Henry, Austin Jones, Jillian Mathis, Alexis Pridgen, Kali Runkles, Mikaela Vallejo and Trent Whitehurst.

Third grade: Quanteria Arnold, Chloe Branaman, Liliana Cobb, Aniyah Gonzalez, Aylee Harn, Noah Harrelson, Lydia Lee, Wildes Redish and Lailah Simon.

Fourth grade: Nathan Assefa, Landon Bellew, J'Lyne Billie, Brittney Casique, Cohen Espinosa, Breana Holcomb, Caleb Pitts, Isabella Planitario and Sergio Veg.

Fifth grade: Kaden Langston, AngelLuis

Lopez, Haden Patel and Jace Vallejo.

Sixth grade: Abigail Domingo, Justin Fonseca, Jada Ifill, Madeline Jackson, Walter McKown, Daylen Moss, Harrison Polhill, Aundrea Sanchez, Tucker Sergeant, Sadler Soles, Mckenna Chancey, Aidan Katryan, Hunter Lee, Ayden Llossas, Amelia Martin, Maya Mendez, Alyssa Murray, Phoebe Stowe and Prestyn Torres.

The school would also like to congratulate its most improved students: Boone Sergent (K), Kyden Johnson (first), Trent Whitehursts (second), Wildes Redish (third), Aundrea Sanchez (sixth) and Alyssa Murray (sixth).

Eastside Elementary announces honor roll students

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — Eastside Elementary School (EES) would like to congratulate its honor roll students:

A Honor Roll

Kindergarten: Blake Ball, Balon Mckenna, Evelyn Espinoza, Tanya Espinoza, AnnAleah Gonzalez, Daniel Granados, Mackenzie Grimes, Sa'Jah Hamin, Joseph Jackson, Alexia Longoria, David Love, Byron Martinez, Marley Mcghie, Marvin Mendez, Angel Perez, Yoana Ramirez, Joaquin Roquett and Cor'Mello Ward.

First grade: Kaleb Myers, Izabella Cardenas, Diego Bonilla, Reylit Garcia, Isandra Hurtado, Khalif Jones, Isabella Parodi-Castro and Adleigh Sullivan.

Second grade: Szhani Wheeler, Juan Cordova, Elijah Massey, Gavin Smith, Fariha

Emran, Aaron Zetino, Kinsli Williams, Carolina Garcia, Damien Norby and Jamar Sawyer.

Third grade: Obody Garcia, Valeria Hernandez, Aviana Johnson, Brayden McNeil, Beridiana Morales, Yulien Reyes, Ezdri Sanchez and Cor'Dell Ward.

Fourth grade: Isiah Cardenas, Janelle Castro, Shelby Danielson, Farhan Emran andrea Hardy, Enrique Puentes and Emily Sanchez.

A/B Honor Roll

Kindergarten: Anthony Adams, Braylon Butler, Josselyn Cruz, Jesus Garcia, Christian Gil, Marah Hardy, Bryson Molina, Tyree Moody, Ayrianna Moore, Jeremiah Murphy, Maria Palomares Martinez, Jasmin Ramzanhuer, Jayson Rivera, Jaimarelis Semino, Evelio Torres and Alexavier Zavala.

First grade: Angel Borrell, Emerson Diaz-Domingo, Arturo Gomez, Iyannic

Grase, Emma Mergott, Lillie Miranda, Lenora Pearson, Alexavier Roman, Landon Brown, Logan Gutierrez, Tiana Maldonado and Princeton McCray.

Second grade: Jennifer Braulio-Mendez, Beaitofi Davis, Ayannie Thomas, Aubrey Burgess, Jaden Harnipaul, Mia Hawkins, Enrique Leon, Trenton Pagan, Samantha Ruiz-Granado, Aviana Salgado, Jordan Valdez, Johnquavius Rivers, Gustavo Ramirez and Aaliyah Odoms.

Third grade: Jaleeyah Brown, Bella Byrd, Samuel Contreras, Zaira Derr, Adrian Eastmond, Liomar Echevarria, Chanel Hunter, Yesenia Esparza, Kaleb Ford, Alain Forteza, Jose Garcia, Obday Garcia, Dejah Henry, Valeria Hernandez, Kristian Johnson, Leah Lowman, Leo Madrigal, Rocco Mann, Arion Martin, Jamari Mills, Damarcus Odoms, Quintero Santiago, Murad Ramadan,

Raymond Spooner, De'Andra Taylor, Denise Valdes and Raquel Williams.

Fourth grade: Neftali Euceda, Leo Guerra, Manny Guerra, Jeanette Hernandez, Jayla Holland, Angie Jasso, Jae'lin Johnson, Leylani Leon, Esmeralda Lopez, Jackson Mann, Christopher Martinez, Nathan Medrano, Kadence Mergott, Jacob Porth, Janyiah Pugh, Christian Santacruz, Jayden Smith, Frederick Small, Gage Tate and Larryounna Willis.

Fifth grade: Alyssa Acosta, Yadira Martinez, Kaylynn Armstrong, Alejandro Betancourt, Jan-Carlos Braulio-Mendez, Joshua Brown, Paige Dixon, Fahima Emran, Ryleigh Frotten, Daniel Hernandez, Anthony Hernandez-Rivera, Saifan Hoque, Jamaría Humprey, Tyreek McCray, Jiroimi Morales, Kaylee Ramos, Magali Ramzahuer-Casas, Naomi Salinas and Clayton Sparks.

Mary Ann Martin reflects on Lake Okeechobee

Part two

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — Here are some further excerpts from our interview with 2019 Sugar Festival honoree Mary Ann Martin during a Lake Okeechobee excursion aboard Martin Marine Center sales manager Koby Kreiger's bass boat on March 11.

Ms. Martin was talking about the lake's appearance and her perceptions back when she and her husband, Roland, first established the marine center and resort in the 1980s, compared with its conditions today, for both wildlife and sportsmen.

"This lake was like, just clear. It had that tannic stain in it. You'd take your boat out, and I'd wanna go fishing. And I dropped my anchor, and I looked out, and I was watching all the little shiners, and all the little fish, so I just sat there, and I had the best time, not fishing, but just watching the bottom. It was clear; it looked like iced tea. And it was a sight to behold. You'd just see all these fish running around; a turtle'd come up. I even saw a bass and it had swallowed a crappie and it was lodged in its throat and it was trying to throw it out, and I was trying to rescue the fish, to help pull it out. Oh, it was a mess, but he finally got it out. But you know, if you stopped here, or you'd get over there by those four islands, used to, the birds were so loud, you couldn't hardly talk. You go over there now, you don't hear a bird. Not one. We've lost our migrating birds. We've lost our ducks for our duck hunters. And that means a lot to us. It means that the lake's not healthy. If the birds won't come and stay, why? It's the habitat. There's nothing for them to eat. Coot Bay is over here; there used to be 5,000 coots in this bay. You're lucky if you see one. They're all gone."

Why is that, do you think?

"It was mainly the pesticides," Mr. Kreiger said.

"Pesticides, absolutely. All those chemicals," Ms. Martin said. "What they need to do is drop this lake temporarily down to 10-and-a-half feet. Let that bottom up around Moonshine, Monkey Box, which would go down, let it dry out and set it on fire. We will never, ever be able to dredge this lake because of the cost. And you'd have to have a suction dredge. You can't go down there with a scoop because it would just ooze out. You have to have a vacuum cleaner, to suck it all out. And then you have to haul it somewhere, put it out on a parking lot, and let it dry."

She noted that some people are making fertilizer out of such biowastes these days, and making money at it."

Doesn't dropping it that low raise the risk of wildfires in the exposed muck?

Mr. Kreiger: "Yeah, but back when the lake caught on fire (during the past decade

or 15 years), that was when they also scraped from the Kissimmee River all the way to the Indian Prairie Canal. I mean they went in there, and (took out) all the silt and dead vegetation for however many years that had built up. They'd basically do like they used to do on Lake Toho; about every five or six years they'd do a drawdown on Lake Toho and go and scrape, get down to the original bottom, and then the proper vegetation grows back after the fact ... so it's been 20 years since they've really done anything environmentally good for this lake. That was when it got really low, down to 9 or 8-and-three-quarters feet. That's terrible for business, for navigation; you can't even cross the lake at that. But it's good for the lake."

Ms. Martin agreed, saying she favors letting the lake go low every few years but prefers that it be done respectfully of the lake's natural cycles rather than through more engineering.

"We need storage north, I've always said that. There's plenty of land up there. They've got to quit selling that land off, and hold it; have an area where, when that river comes down, that you've got an area to clean that water before it comes back into the lake."

Won't the Kissimmee River unstraightening project, which is nearing completion, help with that?

Yes, she answered, but: "That's the worst thing they ever did. God puts oxbows and curves in your rivers so the water is cleaned, so it runs over sand and it cleans it before it comes into the lakes. They made a mistake, they spent millions and millions of dollars, now they're spending millions and millions of dollars to try to get it back. Those people need to be fired."

Do you see any evidence of improvement?

"Sure, but how long's it going to take?" she answered.

Said Mr. Kreiger: "You have to remember it was that way for 50 years. The damage has been done, and it takes twice as long to fix it."

Do you believe the brief interruption in spraying that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission implemented will help?

Ms. Martin responded: "I haven't seen the trucks (to indicate any spraying is still going on). I understand we need to have some spraying. But it needs to be selective spraying. You can't kill the good stuff. That's why we're asking for GoPros, these cameras, in these spray boats. I've had so many customers come up to me, madder than hell, coming off the lake. ... And then one guy told me, I saw the guy spraying, looked at his watch, took his chemical box and dumped it all in the water. But they'll call you a liar. Oh, that didn't happen."

Mr. Kreiger: "The problem is the public doesn't know the process of spraying. I

don't know the process of spraying. If they made all that stuff a lot more transparent for the public..."

But the companies that do the spraying have lobbied the FWC intensely to continue doing it, haven't they?

Ms. Martin replied, citing the FWC's meeting Feb. 20-21 in Gainesville: "The spray guys took up all the seats. They took up 80 percent of the chairs. They had four or five transport buses bring their sprayers up there and all their employees. They filled that whole conference room, and I would say 80 percent of 'em couldn't even speak English. They were told to sit there, and that's what they did. There were people speaking in support. The guys that own Applied Aquatics got up and spoke about how important it was to spray."

FWC officials in presenting information about their spraying practices to local government bodies have stated that they have a plan for all of the various spraying programs done statewide.

Mr. Kreiger said: "And they may (have a plan) ... but if the public doesn't know about it, you would think that the spraying people would want to educate people to the best of their ability, just like we want to educate the public about the vegetation in the lake and what good it does. And if we all work together instead of fighting and butting heads ... like Mary Ann said, we're not against spraying, we'd just like it to be a little bit more controlled."

Ms. Martin: "It needs to be more selective and regulated — or just selective. Have a little bit better regulation on it, I guess."

"They've got this scare tactic. Well, if we don't spray that hyacinth, it's going to grow

to 6 to 8 feet tall. Have you all ever seen a 6- or 8-foot-tall hyacinth? I have never. They've got some old pictures from the '40s when there was a lot of blockage from those hyacinths when they were trying to make this canal going across the lake ... but I haven't seen any hyacinths. I've been here for 40 years and I haven't seen any even 4-foot-tall hyacinths.

"The reason that they're spraying, and someplace it's written, is that the Okeechobee Waterway has got to be clean; it's got to be cleared. You can't have blockage on the waterway since the corps did all of this. And that was the only reason they were supposed to spray, to keep the Okeechobee Waterway open. And guess what. They got carried away."

"You just eliminate more and more habitat. My proposal when I was at the commission meeting up in Gainesville, I proposed (they should) put some weirs on some of these canals such as Fisheating Creek. Have it way up, and have these weirs catching these hyacinths. Indian Prairie, some of these canals, you take it, you dump it out on the ground. You might have a 10-foot-deep heap of hyacinths, but the next day they're only going to be a foot deep because they're all water. To me, that's the way ... I mean, pretty soon, aren't you going to get rid of the hyacinths if you keep catching them? I don't even see any hyacinths now."

Part One of this series ran in the March 27 Sweet Life in Hendry section and may be viewed online at lakeokeechobeenews.com. Chris Felker can be reached at cfelker@newszap.com.



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Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

Relay for Life event was a success

LABELLE — Smiling faces abounded in LaBelle on Saturday, March 30, as people from across Hendry County arrived at Barron Park for the annual Relay for Life event. Various local companies and organizations sponsored the event, which took place from 12 p.m. until 9 p.m. A total of eight sponsored teams participated, raising more than \$58,000 and almost doubling the initial goal of \$30,000. Team U.S. Sugar led the pack, easily surpassing their company's initial sponsorship goal of \$1,000 to reach a final total of \$25,207. In the picture at far left are members of the U.S. Sugar team: Brooklyn A. Dejongh, Cheshire Cat (left) and Sarah Miller, Alice. Pictured in the middle is the Mad Hatters BBQ team, who were among the participants in the Relay for Life. Lastly, in the picture to the right, Sarah Miller (dressed as Alice) poses with a support team of Mad Hatters. Sarah Miller (Alice) is pictured with a support team of Mad Hatters.

May 10 named Henry Co. Provider Appreciation Day

By Chris Felker

Lake Okeechobee News

CLEWISTON — Hendry County commissioners approved a proclamation declaring May 10, 2019, as Provider Appreciation Day at their meeting here Tuesday, April 9.

Susan Block from the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida appeared to speak on behalf of the resolution before the board.

"We are proud to serve Hendry County," she said, and later posed for a photo with the board.

The resolution reads: "Whereas, the future of our state depends on the quality of early childhood experiences provided to our young children; and whereas, of the 1.3 million children under the age of 4 in Florida, approximately two-thirds of them are in some form of child care at least part-time; and whereas, quality child care facilities and providers help ensure the well-being and success of young children throughout Florida; and whereas, the 2019 observance of Provider Appreciation Day calls attention to the importance of high quality child care services while honoring providers for their dedication to our children. Now ... we do hereby proclaim May 10, 2019, as Provider Appreciation Day, and encourage all Hendry County residents to recognize the positive impact of quality child care services in the development of young children in Hendry County."

Chairman Mitchell Wills added, "We do appreciate all that you do for our children — that is our future — and they are overlooked so much, so we do appreciate

all this put into our children every day. If we can reach them when they're young, we can really make a big difference in their life."

Commissioner Karson Turner said: "Miss Block and I worked hand-in-glove together with a number of other business leaders and civic-minded people in the community on the Education Improvement Task Force. The Early Learning Coalition had provided us some numbers that I vehemently disagreed with regards to our 4-year-old, or VPK population, being engaged at the percentage thereof and throughout the population of the county."

He said she asked him on what basis he was challenging the numbers, "and I explained how I backed into it. ... Miss Block took it upon herself to check the numbers that I provided and came back at the next meeting, said 'Commissioner, you were right ... but I'm going to make a commitment to you that we're going to work with Hendry County and the providers and we're going to increase these numbers.'

And Miss Block, you've stood by that. You've done that. It's been impressive to work with you. You don't make any excuses; you say, 'We have a problem; we're going to address it' ... and you say, 'We have to roll up our sleeves and get to work!' So I appreciate you for doing that," he finished, to a roomful of applause.

Chris Felker can be reached at cfelker@newszap.com.

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