



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 100 No. 1

Friday, January 2, 2009

50¢ Plus tax

Briefs

Boy Scouts selling discount cards

The Boy Scout Troop 964 are selling Scout Honor Discount cards. For only \$20 you can get savings of up to 50% from over 200,000 locations across the United States.

Some locations here in Okeechobee that offer the discounts are: Big Lake Eye Care, The UPS Store, Beltone, Roto Rooter Plumbers, and more.

For more information or to purchase one of these discount cards call Alison Hudson at 863-634-8628.

Chamber announces Pageant dates

Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce have announced the dates for the Annual Speckled Perch event and Beauty Pageant. The pageant will be held **Jan. 17** at the K.O.A. Convention Center.

Applications are available at the Chamber of Commerce. Deadline for entry is **Jan. 5**.

Applicants must be residents of Okeechobee. A \$75 non-refundable fee will be required with each applicant.

New divisions for this year's pageant are:

- Tiny Mr. & Tiny Miss Speckled Perch - Ages - 2-3
- Little Mr. & Little Miss Speckled Perch - Ages 4-6
- Speckled Perch Prince - Ages - 6-8
- Jr. Miss Speckled Perch - Ages - 9-12
- Teen Miss Speckled Perch - Ages 13-15
- Miss Speckled Perch - Ages 16-19.

Drought Index

Current: 624
Source: Florida Division of Forestry
Local Burn Ban: None

Lake Levels

14.1 feet
 Last Year: 10.28 feet

Sponsored By:

 Pogey's Family Restaurant
 1759 S. Parrott Ave.
 763-7222

Source: South Florida Water Management District. Depth given in feet above sea level

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See Page 2 for information about how to contact the newspaper.

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Drug conviction overturned

By Eric Kopp
 Okeechobee News

The 4th District Court of Appeals (DCA) has overturned the 2005 drug conviction of an Okeechobee man and ordered that his probation be reinstated.

The appeals court ruled Dec. 19 that Jeremy Lee Smith's "... free will was negated by the coercive conduct ..." of a deputy with the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO).

Despite that ruling, Smith is still in the Okeechobee County

Jail where he is waiting trial on a charge of first-degree murder. Jail records indicate Smith, 29, is being held without bond.



Jeremy Lee Smith

Smith's 2005 drug arrest came about after the car in which he was a passenger was stopped by OCSO Deputy Donald Ellis due to a non-functioning headlight. In his arrest report,

Deputy Ellis stated that he asked the driver of the 1993 Pontiac, Charles Booker, to get out of the car. He also asked Smith and some other passengers to get out of the vehicle.

While performing a pat down search on Booker, Deputy Ellis stated in his report that he found two pipes, which are the type normally used to smoke crack cocaine, on the vehicle's driver. Deputy Ellis also had his K-9 Ruby perform a free air sniff of the vehicle but Ruby did not alert to the vehicle.

By this time, OCSO Deputy Raul Marrero had arrived on scene as back up.

According to DCA records, Smith and the other passengers were standing in a line next to each other while Booker was being searched. DCA records state that Deputy Marrero told Smith and the other passengers that "you know you all are about to be searched, do you have anything on you?"

At this point, Smith gave the deputy a pill bottle containing methadone, alprazolam and

oxycodone.

Because Deputy Marrero had to leave, Smith was arrested by Deputy Ellis.

Smith was then taken to the Okeechobee County Jail where he was found to be in possession of several pieces of crack cocaine, as well as a small amount of powder cocaine. At that point he was charged with possession of methadone, possession of alprazolam, possession of percoct (oxycodone) and possession

See Drug — Page 9

OHCF: Art show & calendar project



Leona Albritton, 97, was recognized as the Okeechobee Health Care Facility Senior Artist and the Most Prolific Artist as she completed 25 paintings during '08. The calendars are available for purchase with the OHCF receptionist for \$20, with all monies returned to the art program.



Sandy Gage, 86, shown with her paintings at the Okeechobee Health Care Facility Resident Art Show, displaying the painting selected for December in the annual Resident Art Calendar.



Catherine Neswick, 80, with her painting, which was selected as the Calendar Cover Painting for the annual Okeechobee Health Care Facility Resident Art Calendar, an honor Miss Catherine has won numerous years.

Teen anglers are at it again

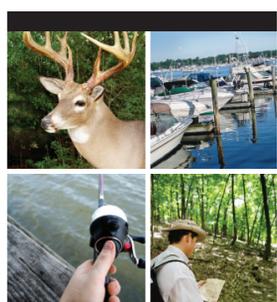
By Teresa Mataushek
 Okeechobee News

The Big O' Teen Anglers Inc., held their November tournament on Nov. 22, 2008 at Lock 7 and a rather good day.

In the 11-14 division Ryan Edwards placed first with a total fish weight of 2.09 lbs. He also took the Big Fish award with a fish weighing in at 2.09 lbs.; Ryan Folsom came in second place with a total fish weight of 1.76 lbs. There was not a third place awarded in this division.

In the 15-18 division Mike Cornell took first place with a total weight of 6.48 lbs.; Luke Joles trailed him in second place with 5.41 lbs.; Third place went to Chris Eaton with 3.93 lbs. The big fish award went to Mike Cornell with a big fish weight of 3.93 lbs.

As always, the Big O' Teen Anglers Inc., would like to give a big thanks to their boat captains for coming out and help-



Outdoors

Share your news and photos for this column by email to okeenews@newszap.com

ing the anglers. Those captains this tournament were: Kenny Farmer, Ernie Johnson, Dave Straight, Hooker Browning, Leroy Bauer, and Mike Zubncky. Freedom Outreach ministries held their December tour-

ney on Saturday, Dec. 28, 2008 and had a great turn out.

If by some chance you were not able to participate in the last tournament, don't fret, there will be another tournament held on Jan. 25, at the Sportsman Canal (Hwy 78 ramp.)

Entry fee is \$70 per boat, \$10 big fish pot and \$5 towards the Classic. (70 percent payback.)

For more information or to get a registration form, call 863-532-1718 or 863-634-3790. For a list of rules please log on to www.newszap.com and look on the Okeechobee Public Issues Forum.

Don't forget, Oakview Baptist Church sponsors their Christian Team Trails fishing tournaments on the first Saturday of every month. This month's tournament will be held on Saturday, Jan. 3.

See Anglers — Page 11

City, county dealing with less revenue

By Pete Gawda
 Okeechobee News

The City of Okeechobee and Okeechobee County governments both face the same major problem in 2009 - using declining revenues to maintain an acceptable level of service while avoiding layoffs. Revenues for the city and the county are down because sales and property taxes are down.

However, during the building boom two or three years ago, neither the city nor the county rapidly expanded governmental services or dramatically in-



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda
This is a recently poured section of concrete sidewalk on S.W. Fifth Avenue.

creased spending as some adjoining local governments did.

See Revenue — Page 9

Plans set for Health, Safety Expo

By Chauna Aguilar
 Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee County Health Department, Shared Services Network of Okeechobee, Okeechobee County Fire Rescue and the Children's Services Council are coming together once again with other local agencies and vendors for the second annual Okeecho-

bee Family Health and Safety Expo.

The Health and Safety Expo will be held at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center, 4200 S.R. 70 E., on Saturday, Jan. 17, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners will be in attendance. See Expo — Page 9



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

Party animals

These alpacas, who appeared in the Okeechobee Christmas Parade, are now ready to celebrate the New Year and attend tailgate parties. One of them is wearing a head-dress reading "Happy New Year," while the other two are wearing Florida Gator jerseys in anticipation of the national championship game. The alpacas are owned by Lorraine Loperido and Chuck Domm from Lorida.

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Theatre seeks children and African-American performers

The Okeechobee Community Theatre will hold auditions next week for its spring performance, with a special need for children and African-Americans to fill the available acting roles.

The organization continues the celebration of its 30th birthday season with a production of the stage adaptation of Harper Lee's classic novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird," scheduled for March.

Audition sessions for adults will be on Monday and Tuesday evenings, Jan. 5 and 6 at 7 p.m., at the theatre on S.W. Second Ave. at Seventh Street, in the block behind Golden Corral restaurant. Child try-outs will be on Thursday, Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. in the same location. No previous acting experience is necessary.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" is con-

sidered one of the greatest books of the twentieth century, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Literature for its author. The movie took the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1961, and won Best Actor honors for Gregory Peck in the leading role of Atticus Finch.

The story looks at the injustices of racial prejudice through the eyes of a young southern girl during the depression years of the 1930s. It contains healthy doses of action, comedy, and mystery, addressing its serious subject without ever becoming heavy handed.

The show requires a larger than usual number of men in both speaking and non-speaking roles, along with the need for children and African-Americans.

Available roles for children call

for young people who either are, or appear to be of elementary school age. Auditioners must be outgoing, and capable of memorizing and confidently performing lines for a live audience. There is also a need for a girl in her mid to late teens or early to mid 20s who can appear to be about 19.

African-American roles are for performers in their late teens to 70s. They include both speaking and non-speaking parts. Among the major characters to be cast are Tom Robinson, a strong but gen-

tle man who appears to be 25-35 years of age. Reverend Sykes can be described as a dignified and caring minister of anywhere from 40-70 years of age. Calpurnia, a housekeeper in the home of a widowed father with two young children is attractive, intelligent, efficient and firm but loving. She should be 25-50 years of age.

In addition, African-American non-speaking parts are available for three to five women who briefly sing a hymn or spiritual, and for a number of men who will appear

in the courtroom scene to watch the trial of Tom Robinson.

The audition process is simple and non-threatening, according to OCT Coordinator/Director, Ron Hayes. Auditioners will read a short passage to demonstrate their suitability for the roles to be filled.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" is the second in a season of three productions for the all volunteer community theatre group's 30th season of producing live Broadway-style shows for local audi-

ences. Performances are scheduled for March 6, 7, 13, and 14 at 8 p.m. each evening. Reserved seat tickets are \$12 each, and will be on sale at the Okeechobee County Chamber of Commerce after Feb. 9.

Anyone wishing more information on the auditions, or any other phase of the Okeechobee Community Theatre's programs, may call Ron or Jaque Hayes at 863-763-1307.



Submitted photo

Breakfast group meets

On December 11, 2008 the Breakfast Group Showcased Egretta Wells' beautiful home along with many others. Realtors from Left to Right: Hellen Miner, Exit Realty; Barb Yates-Glover, Exit Realty; Lori Mixon, Tucker Group; Marcia Barber, Preferred Properties; Velva Cannon, Exit Realty; Vicki Anderson, Goolsby Realty; Kathy Godwin, Preferred Properties; Elbert Batton, Exit Realty; Pat Goolsby, Goolsby Realty; Gail Brown, Pristine Properties; Sheryl Byrd, Preferred Properties; Kathy Lancaster, Pristine Properties; Amy Davis, Pristine Properties; Bob Brakke, Preferred Properties; Eric Anderson (taking picture) Goolsby Realty.

Okeechobee Forecast

Friday: Mostly cloudy with a high near 75. Winds will be from the southeast between 5 and 10 mph.

Friday night: Mostly cloudy with a low around 55. Winds will be calm.

Extended Forecast

Saturday: Partly sunny with a high near 77. Winds will be calm becoming east southeast around 5 mph.

Saturday night: Partly cloudy with a low around 55. Winds will be from the east southeast around 5 mph.

Lottery

The Florida Lotto - Numbers selected Tuesday in the Florida Lotto are: **Cash 3:** 1-7-0; **Play 4:** 3-6-0-1; **Fantasy 5:** 5-10-17-18-27; **Mega Money:** 7-24-25-39; **Mega Ball:** 4. Numbers selected Wednesday are: **Cash 3:** 6-2-2; **Play 4:** 3-6-3-7.

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<p>'07 FORD FOCUS SE \$12,495 BURGUNDY, AUTO., 27.5K MILES, ALL POWER, CD & MORE! #P3391</p>	<p>'05 FORD RANGER SC XLT \$13,895 3.0L V6 AUTO., 30K MILES, HUGE VALUE! #P3363</p>	<p>'04 FORD MUSTANG GT \$14,695 CONVERTIBLE, SHADOW GRAY, AUTO., 32K LOW MILES, SHARP! #9064A</p>	<p>'06 FORD F-150 REG CAB \$15,695 4.6L V8 AUTO., DARK STONE MET., LTHR. SPLIT BENCH, SPORT PKG., ALLOYS, 31K MI., #8636A1</p>
<p>'06 FORD MUSTANG \$16,395 PERFORMANCE WHITE, LEATHER, AUTO., 4.0L V6, 25 MPG HIGHWAY, #81051A</p>	<p>'06 FORD FUSION SEL \$16,495 BLACK CLEARCOAT, CAMEL INTERIOR, V6 AUTO., CLIMATE CONTROL, 29 MPG HIGHWAY, #P3358A2</p>	<p>'04 FORD EXPEDITION E.B. \$16,995 WHITE, TAN LEATHER, MOONROOF, NAVIGATION, DVD, 5.4L V8, 40K MILES, #8756A2</p>	<p>'04 FORD F-150 FX4 CREW \$16,995 FULL POWER, GRAY, 60K MILES, OFF ROAD READY! #81172</p>
<p>'06 FORD RANGER SC XLT \$17,395 4X4, 4.0L V6 AUTO., CLEAN, 39K MILES, 19 MPG HIGHWAY, HARD TO FIND! #P3379</p>	<p>JUST ARRIVED! \$18,995 MOONROOF, TAN LEATHER, V6, AUTO., NAVIGATION, 11K MILES, #R7777</p>	<p>'07 FORD FUSION SEL \$18,995 DARK AMETHYST METALLIC, SHALE CLOTH UPHOLSTERY, 3.0L 6 CYL., 28 MPG HWY., #81067A</p>	<p>'08 FORD EDGE LTD \$24,995 LIGHT BLUE, MOONROOF, LEATHER, 11K MILES, AFFORDABLE LUXURY, #R3374</p>

<p>NEW 2008 FORD RANGER FROM \$14,115</p>		<p>19 AVAILABLE #81140</p>
<p>NEW 2009 FORD FOCUS FROM \$14,725</p>		<p>33 AVAILABLE #9148</p>
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<p>NEW 2009 FORD ESCAPE FROM \$21,488</p>		<p>23 AVAILABLE #9053</p>
<p>NEW 2008 FORD EXPLORER FROM \$21,500</p>		<p>12 AVAILABLE #8378</p>
<p>NEW 2008 FORD EDGE FROM \$21,837</p>		<p>17 AVAILABLE #8639</p>
<p>NEW 2009 FORD FLEX FROM \$25,790</p>		<p>14 AVAILABLE #9005</p>

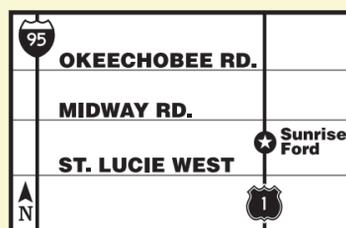
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Service Club Briefs

The American Legion Post 64

501 S.E. Second Street, Okeechobee
Office 863-763-2950 - Lounge 863-763-5309

We can accommodate meetings, weddings and parties of any size. The public is always welcome unless it's a members only event.

Our kitchen is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and 1 to 8 p.m. on Sunday.

Sunday: Open 1 to 8 p.m. - Regular Bingo from 6:30 p.m.

Monday: Open 11-8 p.m. - Social Bingo 1 PM

Tuesday: Open 11-8 p.m.

Wednesday: Open 11-8 p.m. - "Taco Day" 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tacos - \$1.50

Music with Jim Elders 2-6

Thursday: Open 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. - Social Bingo 6 p.m.

SAL Steak Dinner third Sunday each month \$12 donation.

Legion and Auxiliary meet the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

The fourth Tuesday meeting includes a carry in dinner at 6 p.m.

SAL Meet the third Tuesday at 7 p.m.

- Friday night dinners resume on Nov. 7.
- Christmas Basket Drawing to be held - tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. New Years Eve Party tickets on sale now! \$20 per couple, \$10 per single "buy now to avoid the rush" Members - Guest only.

- Every Tuesday bingo at 1 p.m. Food will be available for a donation.
- Wednesdays: bar bingo starting at 4 p.m. Food will be available.
- Every Thursday: washer toss at 1 p.m.
- First and third Thursday: Auxiliary at 6 p.m.; Aeries at 7 p.m.
- Fridays: steak night (16-oz.) starting at 5 p.m. for a \$12 donation. Music will be by Jimmy Harper.
- Saturdays and Sundays: music at 7 p.m.
- First and third Sunday: breakfast cooked to order from 9 until 11 a.m. for \$5 donation.

- Wednesdays: Bingo and food, food served at 5 p.m. and bingo starts at 6 p.m.
- Wednesday: Dec. 31 from 7 p.m. until ? New Years Party with party favors, hors d'oeuvres and breakfast at 1 a.m. Music by Burs and County Line Band. Seating limited so get your tickets early. \$20 each or \$30 per couple.
- Tuesday: Dec. 16, Moose Membership meeting at 8 p.m. with enrollment of new prospective members.
- Thursdays: dinner will be served from 5 until 7 p.m. Call the Lodge for the menu.
- Thursdays: Music for dancing at 7:30 p.m. Call to see who is playing.
- Thursday: 5-Card Bingo at 6 p.m. food available at 5 p.m.
- Thursday: Dec. 25 from noon until 6 p.m. Christmas dinner of ham and turkey with all the trimmings. Bring the family and enjoy a good meal.
- Fridays: dinner served from 5 until 7:30 p.m. Music for dancing at 7:30 p.m. Call to see who is playing.
- Saturdays: dinner starting at 6 p.m.
- Saturdays: Prime Rib Dinner served from 6 until 8 p.m. the first Saturday of the month.
- Saturday: Dec. 13 Large benefit for Jean Murphy starting at noon. Music all day, food will be roast pork or chicken quarter, baked beans and slaw for \$6 donation. Activities including a cake walk, wheel raffle, silent auction, straw drawing and 50/50. Auction starts at 3:30 p.m.

- Saturday night diner and dance each week.
- Officers meetings first and third Tuesday at 7 p.m.
- Women's meeting second and fourth Tuesday at 7 p.m.
- Men's meetings, second and fourth Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.
- Moose Legion meetings third Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

VFW Post #4423

The VFW North Post #4423 is located at 300 N.W. 34 St. The Post phone number is 863-763-0818.

Happy hour Monday through Thursday 4 until 6 p.m.

Mondays: 50-cent hot dogs.

Tuesdays: Washer toss at 1 p.m.

Wednesdays: Pizza and Grill 5 until 7 p.m.

Fridays: Bingo at 1 p.m. Pizza and Grill 6 until 9 p.m. Karaoke 7 until 11 p.m.

Saturdays: Bar Bingo at 1 p.m. Karaoke 7 until 11 p.m.

Sundays: Dinner 2 until 4 p.m.

Post and Ladies Auxiliary meetings third Sunday of every month at 11 a.m.

Men's Auxiliary Meeting 3 Monday of every month 7 p.m.

- Jan. 4: Members and friends are welcome to come sing, dance or just listen to the music by "The Saxman" from 5 until 9 p.m.
- Membership for 2009 is overdue. Annual members are asked to please pay their dues.

Big Screen TV and Pool Table

VFW Post #9528

The VFW Post 9528 is located at 29012 E. State Road 78 in Buckhead Ridge. For information call 863-467-2882. Post opens at 11 a.m., Monday through Sunday.

We are taking applications for men or women who would like to join the VFW, Ladies Auxiliary, the Men's Auxiliary, AmVets or the Ladies AmVets Auxiliary.

- Wednesdays: Dinner by Ladies Auxiliary, Mens Auxiliary, or AmVet Ladies Auxiliary at 5:30 p.m. Music will be available.
- Thursdays: Bar Bingo at 1 p.m. Lunch will be available.
- Fridays: 16 ounce steak dinner with baked potato, salad and rolls will be served

Okeechobee Masonic Lodge #237

The Okeechobee Masonic Lodge is located at 107 N.W. Fifth Ave. For information about the club and events, call Jose Verano at 863-634-2071.

- The Masonic Lodge holds their meetings on the second and fourth Monday of each month starting at 7:30 p.m.

Order of the Eastern Star - Chapter #128

The Order of the Eastern Star has many fun activities planned on the first and third Tuesday of each month. For upcoming activities, contact Mary Ann Holt at 863-634-8087.

B.H.R. Moose Lodge

The lodge is located on U.S. 78 W. in Buckhead Ridge. The Lodge's phone number is 863-763-2250.

- Sundays: breakfast buffet from 9 until 11 a.m. With many items to choose from.
- Sunday: Dec. 14 from noon until 4 p.m. there will be a childrens Christmas party for children up to age 16 years old of Buckhead Ridge Moose members and guest. Please sign-up your children so we will not miss anyone sign-up by Dec. 10; Dec. 21 at 9 a.m. there will be a W.O.T.M. fund raiser bake sale. Please bring baked goods for this sale.
- Mondays: WOTM Chapter meeting the first and third Mondays of every month 7:30 p.m.

Moose Family Center #1753

The Moose Family Center #1753 is located at 156 N.W. 36th St. in Okeechobee. Please call the Lodge at 863-763-4954 for further information, sudden changes and menus. Guests are invited to enjoy the activities and consider membership.

- Open mic karaoke - Thursday 7-10 p.m. and Sunday 4-8 p.m.
- Horseshoes - Sunday and Thursday at 2 p.m.
- Every Monday pool tournament at 7 p.m. (food served)
- Legion BINGO - Thursday at 1 p.m. (food served)
- LOOM BINGO Friday - at 6:30 p.m. (food served)

Am-Vets #2001

Am-Vets No. 2001 will hold a regular informational meeting on the first Saturday of the month at the Buckhead Ridge VFW Post #9528, 2002 U.S. 78 W., at 10 a.m. Applications for new members are available. Call Helen James at 863-824-7644 or Lou Eder at 863-357-0467.

Am-Vets Ladies Auxiliary meetings are the first Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. Contact the Post at 467-2882 for information.

Eagles Aeries #4137

Eagles Aeries #4137 is located at 9983 U.S. 441 N. For information on events, call 863-763-2552.

Shrine Club

The Okeechobee Shrine Club, S.R. 78 W., members will meet the first and third Thursday of each month at 8 p.m. The club is also available for weddings and parties. For information call the club at (863) 763-3378.

- They are now open three days a week.

Weekly specials are:

- Tuesdays: Noon until 9 p.m.: Spaghetti dinner - donations only, music from 6 until 9 p.m.; happy hour 3-6 p.m.
- Thursdays: Noon until 9 p.m.: Fried Shrimp dinner or clams \$7 donation; happy hour 3-6 p.m.; shrimp skewers 2 for \$3.
- Fridays: Noon until 9 p.m.: Catfish dinner \$7 donation; happy hour 3-6 p.m.
- New Year party, tickets \$30 each. Happy Hour at 6 p.m. Steak or peppered chicken dinner will be served at 7 p.m. There will be a live country band for entertainment. Make reservations early. For reservations call the club or Max Simpson at 863-763-8650.

VFW Post #10539

Post hours are 10 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 p.m. on Sunday. Closing times are discretionary and dependent on the number of patrons but usually not before 8 p.m. on weekdays and 11 p.m. on weekends.

- Happy hours: 10 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Noon to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.
- Monday: Card Bingo at 6 p.m.
- Tuesday: Ladies Auxiliary all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner \$5 donation beginning at 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday: Bar Bingo at 12:45 p.m. Lunch by Ladies Auxiliary, Kitchen open from 5 until 8 p.m. Evening music.
- Thursday: Music, kitchen open from 5 until 8 p.m.
- Friday: Music, kitchen open from 5 until 8 p.m.
- Saturday: Noon, dollar hotdogs, \$1.50 Polish Sausage, both with Chili and all the fixings. Card bingo at 5 p.m. Music and dancing at 7 p.m. \$50 gas card giveaway.
- Scheduled meetings: VFW First Sunday at noon, Ladies Auxiliary second Monday at 7 p.m., Men's Auxiliary second Wednesday at 7 p.m.
- Do you have a family member serving overseas? We send packages of urgently needed supplies to them. We accept donations for this worth cause. Contact Cheryl Beniot at 863-697-2930. For further information call 863-763-2308.

Cypress Hut Eagles #4509

The Cypress Hut Fraternal Order of Eagles post #4509 located at 4701 U.S. 441 S.E. is now open to members Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m., Sundays from 1 to 10 p.m. Information can be found by visiting www.foe4509.com, or calling 863-467-1154.

- Food is served several evenings a week.
- Aerie meetings are at 7 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of each month at the old Cypress Hut flea market restaurant.
- FOE Auxiliary meetings are at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month.
- Friday night: 16 oz. rib eye steak dinner with the trimmings beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Editor's note: To add listings or make changes to the service club news, please email okeeneews@newszap.com.

Teen charged with burglary, theft

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

A 16-year-old juvenile has been released into his mother's custody following his felony arrest Saturday, Dec. 27.

Dillon Garcia, N.W. Sixth St., was arrested on a felony charge of burglary as well as a misdemeanor charge of theft. After being booked into the Okeechobee County Jail he was released on his own recognizance and into his mother's custody.

Garcia was arrested after he allegedly broke into a 1998 GMC sport utility vehicle parked at a residence on S.E. 27th St.

An Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) arrest report states that the teenager is charged

with taking \$5 in change and a key ring that held three keys. Included on that key ring was an ignition key to the SUV, continued the report.

The OCSO report states that a deputy was sent to S.E. 27th St. in reference to a suspicious person wearing dark clothing. The deputy saw a juvenile, later identified as Garcia, wearing a black sweatshirt with a hood, black pants and black shoes.

While the deputy asked the teen if he had any narcotics or weapons, Garcia emptied his



Dillon Garcia

pockets without being asked. In his pocket was a key ring that held three keys. But, because there was no reason to hold the teenager the deputy let him go.

Shortly thereafter the deputy was approached by a man who lives in the area. The man reportedly told the deputy that his dog began barking and when he went outside he saw someone in the door of his SUV. That person then ran from the scene.

The deputy and the alleged victim then found Garcia.

According to the report when the teen produced the keys, the man identified them as belonging to him.

The \$5 was not recovered, added the arrest report.

Woman held on charge of burglary

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

A 23-year old Okeechobee woman was held in the Highlands County Jail last week after being arrested on a charge of burglary.

The investigation involved the Highlands County Sheriff's Office and the Okeechobee City Police Department.

Tiffany Sweeting was charged with burglary to an unoccupied dwelling and grand theft for the July 21 incident at a home on S.R. 70 W.

The victim stated that close to \$7,500 in items were taken from the home sometime between July 1 and July 21, state reports.

The items alleged to have been stolen include jewelry, cameras and an Xbox 360 video game console.

Lawmen said Sweeting had pawned many of the reported stolen items at pawnshops in Okeechobee, as well as items that were not previously known to have been stolen.

Sweeting apparently had been at the victim's residence while some contractors made some home improvements to the property. Authorities said Sweeting returned to the residence at a later date and stole the items.

When the victim identified the stolen items at a local pawn shop she also noticed other familiar items in the store, state arrest records. She was able to positively identify those items as having been stolen as well, investigators said.

Sweeting was arrested in Martin County in November and was booked into the Highlands County Jail on Dec. 23.

Teen arrested on drug, gun charges

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

A 17-year-old Okeechobee teen was arrested on a felony drug charge following his reported involvement in a traffic crash on S. Parrott Ave.

Ethan Lynn Gopher, N. Tucker Ridge Road, was arrested Friday, Dec. 26, on felony charges of possession of a controlled substance, resisting a law enforcement officer with violence and persons engaged in a criminal offense having weapons. He was also charged with the misdemeanor of leaving the scene of a traffic crash with property damage.

After he was booked into the Okeechobee County Jail, Gopher was taken to the Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Center in Fort Pierce by Officer Chad Troutman of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD). Of-

ficer Troutman was also the arresting officer.

An arrest report by Officer Troutman states that Gopher was involved in a hit-and-run traffic crash in the 1700 block of S. Parrott Ave. around noon on Dec. 26. The report states he struck a second vehicle in the back with the Ford F-250 pickup truck he was driving.

Then, following the crash, he reportedly left the scene. He was later found in the Wal-mart parking lot.

As Officer Troutman and OCPD Sergeant Russell Cale attempted to arrest the teenager, he reportedly fought them, and was eventually subdued after being struck with a taser.



Ethan Lynn Gopher

Once Gopher was handcuffed, the truck he was driving was searched. During that search the officers found a fully-loaded 9mm assault pistol on the floor of the truck and within easy reach of the driver, stated Officer Troutman's report. The magazine of the gun was loaded with 15 rounds, but there were no rounds found in the chamber, the officer added.

The report goes on to state that a box containing 16 more 9mm rounds was found lying next to the gun.

During a search of Gopher's person, Officer Troutman said a small container was found in the teen's pocket. Inside that container were eight yellow pills that were later identified as a generic brand of xanax, continued the OCPD report.

Officer Troutman went on to state that the search failed to turn up a prescription for the pills.

Fired teacher charged with phone harassment

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

An Okeechobee woman was released on \$15,000 bond Monday after she was charged with making several harassing phone calls to a Fort Pierce woman.

Tiffany Shepherd, 30, of N.W. 24th Drive, earned national fame earlier this year when she was fired from her teaching job at Port St. Lucie High School.

She claimed in national and local interviews that she was fired

because she had a part time job serving drinks on Smokin' Em Charters, which offers trips with bikini-clad and topless women.

The St. Lucie County School Board said Shepherd was fired because she had more than 30 unexcused absences during the 2007-08 school year.

The arrest report from Officer Salvador Garcia of the Fort Pierce Police Department said Shepherd made five phone calls and four text messages to the cell phone of a 22-year-old Fort Pierce woman

on Nov. 30.

Police listened to the phone messages and learned Shepherd had challenged the victim to a fight on two occasions, the report stated.

The victim reported she is currently living with Shepherd's for-

mer boyfriend.

Shepherd reportedly had a restraining order against the man and in one of the voice mail messages she allegedly threatened to claim that the victim called her, which is a violation of the restraining order.

Driver distraction blamed for crash

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

The Florida Highway Patrol said no citations will be issued against an Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) deputy who wrecked his cruiser at Lock 7 on Dec. 22.

FHP Trooper W.D. Scheetz's crash report said OCSO Deputy Steven McKinley, 28, was actively searching and scanning the waterway to his east prior to the traffic crash occurring.

Deputy McKinley had been dispatched to help find a missing boater on Lake Okeechobee. He was entering a curve in the road that leads to the boat ramp when he failed to negotiate the

curve, left the road, entered the grass shoulder and struck several palm trees, the report added.

The deputy suffered a laceration when the laptop computer in the car was knocked loose and struck him in the head, said OCSO Road Patrol Captain Bud Slay. He was treated and released at Raulerson Hospital after seven staples were used to close the wound.

The crash report said Deputy McKinley was properly buckled in, and was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the crash.

An estimated \$18,000 in property damage was done in the crash.

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Speak Out/Public Forum

Speak Out has moved online, where it is quicker and easier to share your ideas and converse with others. Go to www.newszap.com, click on the community name and your local or state Public Forum. There, you can create new topics or comment on existing topics. What follows is a sampling of some of the discussions currently taking place.

Thanks for participating!

RACISM: It doesn't bother me so much when I run into racism when dealing with an older person because I think well, that is just how they were raised. They grew up in a time when white people and black people didn't even drink from the same water fountain. So when a person who is in their 80s or 90s makes a remark that sounds a little racist, I let it slide. But it really upsets me when I hear young people in their 20s or even 30s making racist remarks. They are young people to know better. And I am talking about people of all races -- there is racism to be found in any ethnic group. So what will it take to change how people think?

NO KILL SHELTER: I am very pleased to hear that someone is starting a no-kill animal shelter in Okeechobee. We have needed that for a long time. But to really solve the problem of all the stray dogs and cats, we need two other things. First, we need a low-cost spay and neutering program. Then we need better enforcement against the dumping of unwanted animals. We need some laws on the books so that they could levy extremely heavy fines on anyone caught dumping an animal in this county, and we need those fines publicized. That might keep the people from the coast from coming here to dump their unwanted pets.

CONGRESS: Members of Congress will be receiving a \$4,700 pay increase this year, even though more than two million of their constituents have lost their jobs. Congress has set up a structure where they automatically receive a cost-of-living adjustment or pay raise every year unless they act to stop it. Lawmakers would be wise to put a freeze on their salary until the unemployment rate drops.

FAIR: I have a suggestion for the county fair. If they want local people to go, they should offer a special pass for local residents where you can pay once and go as many days as you want to. The vendors would be happier if there were more people there, but if you have to pay to get in every day in addition to paying to go on the rides, people are probably only going to go one time. If you let local people have a pass to go as many days as they want to without having to pay every time to get through the gate, people might go more than once.

FIRES: This is in regard to the story about the controlled burn re-igniting and burning four cabins. I don't think they should allow any controlled burns this time of year because we get so little rain in this season. They don't need to be burning brush this time of year. It is too dry and it is too easy for a fire to get away from you.

PETS: I see in the paper where there are animals that need homes. But then the adoption fee is more than \$100. I would be happy to take in an animal and take care of it and feed it. But \$100 is more than I can afford. Why can't they reduce that adoption fee so more of these animals could find new homes? It seems they would rather just put them to sleep than to let poor people give them a home.

DEBT: Do you realize this nation is already trillions of dollars in debt. Do you have any conception how much a trillion dollars is? We can't just keep spending more than we have. That is how the country and how so many people got into such a bad jam. It's time to start tightening the belt and doing without, rather than spending more than you have.

GARDENS: I was glad to see in the newspaper that the Extension Office has classes and help to teach people how to garden and grow their own food. I think it is going to come to that soon. People will need to grow their own food just as they did in the Great Depression. If you have an acre or more, you can put in a pretty nice garden and harvest your own vegetables and fruits. It can help stretch the food dollars.

PROPERTY TAXES: I hope the people who voted for the change in the homestead exemption are happy. Due to the loss of property taxes, the county is having a hard time even funding basic services. So I hope you have your own fire extinguishers in case your house catches fire. And I hope you have a gun to protect yourself. And you better use that money you saved on property taxes to buy more homeowners' insurance because you probably will need it as should anything happen, the county won't have the resources to help you.

GRANDPARENTS: I know a lot of grandparents are now raising their grandchildren between their deadbeat kids refuse to grow up and be real parents. And sometimes you wonder how the grandkids will turn out. But grandparents should take heart because they can do a good job raising their grandchildren. President-elect Obama was raised by his grandparents and look how well he turned out.

REAL ESTATE: I think the blame for the Real Estate boom and bust has to be placed in part on the bankers and the realtors who talked people into taking out loans they could not afford to repay in order to buy these big houses. They have people convinced they need these big houses. But you can get by on a lot less. You do not need a bedroom for each child. It does not hurt two or three kids to share a room. While it is nice to have several bathrooms, you really only need one to survive. All these extras are not necessities. If people would live within their means, this country would be in much better shape and people would not be losing their homes.

HOLIDAYS: Now that the holidays are over, I hope the community does not forget the needy. Sure they got some Christmas presents and maybe they had a nice dinner, but they aren't just needy on Christmas. Every week the local food pantries run low on supplies because there are so many needy families in our area. If you can spare a can of food or some spare change, please do what you can to help. There are hungry people in our own community.

COURTHOUSE: The county commission is struggling with the budget. They even considered taking back the 3 percent raise they had promised the employees. Even with the 3 percent raise, many county employees will be making less in 2009 than they did in 2008 because instead of giving raises for the 2007-2008 budget year, these employees were given bonuses. Then they did not give the bonuses this year. So the employees still wind up with a smaller paycheck even though they allegedly received what the county called a raise. What I don't understand is how the county can justify spending all this money to fix up the old courthouse, when they say they are so short of money.

DOGS: If you own a dog, it is your responsibility to keep it on your property. If it gets off your property, you are in the wrong. I am so sick and tired of people just opening the door and letting their dogs run around the neighborhood. It is against the law to do that. We need better enforcement of the leash laws and we need dog catchers to just pick up all dogs that are running around loose. Kids cannot even walk to the bus stop without having to deal with dogs bothering them.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE: I am really concerned about the health of Lake Okeechobee. Several fishermen I know say there are just not many fish out there anymore. Between the drought and then the quick rise in water from the floods, the lake did not have a chance to really recover. The water came up too fast. If the fisheries do not recover, what will happen to local tourism?

TRAINS: I hope the city can find a way to fix up the train station and get more trains stopping in Okeechobee. Americans should go back to riding the trains. It is much more efficient than each person driving their own car. And we need to save money any way we can in this economy.

WATER: How quickly we forget. I am surprised and ashamed to see Okeechobee residents wasting water again. Last week I saw a sprinkler watering the sidewalk and street. I often see sprinklers going in the heat of the day. Last year this time we were desperate for water. How can people have already forgotten that? We need to conserve water year round. Just because there is enough water in the lake right now does not mean it will be there next month. The only way we will survive is to conserve water year round.

COUNTY EXPENSES: The county commission says they can't afford to give the employees decent pay but they always seem to have money to throw down the black hole that is the money pit known as the Agri-Civic Center. I just don't understand it. How can they justify spending more and more money out there. They keep saying it will eventually bring in money. But I just don't see how.

Letters to the Editor

Parade help appreciated

South Side Riderz car and bicycle club would like to extend special thanks and appreciation to some very special people who helped make our float in the Christmas parade a wonderful sight. We would like to thank Dave and Nila McCormick and the hospice of Okeechobee volunteers for the donation of the Christmas lights. We would also like to thank

ARS sport, especially Debbie Dunahoe and Bill Conner for towing our float. Lastly we want to thank Candice Burke of the Chamber of Commerce for making our opportunity to present ourselves to the community possible. We had an outstanding time preparing for the Christmas parade with the excitement of the season. This was our third presentation of our club. We first presented ourselves at the gang-free rally where we met Detective Stark (thanks go to you also for taking the time to meet

with us as a new club). We then took part in the Majestics car club Toys-for-Tots car show in Kissimmee in early December.

We would like to present ourselves to the community, not as "just another car club" but as the gang & drug free, family-oriented club that we are. Our members are of all ages from 20-50 years of age. We are a "family" with self-respect for each other along with our cars, trucks, and bicycles. We believe that people can have a great time together showing the

vehicles and bicycles without drugs, destruction, nor trouble.

We are proud to be a part of this community and wish the community to be proud of us. If we can be of any service to any organization or fundraisers, please feel free to contact us at: 863-261-3430 or 863-447-5294. We can also be e-mailed at: southsideriderzclub@yahoo.com

Sincerely,
Jeremiah & Lana Johnson
Founders

Guest Commentary

Green Stimulus

By Kathleen Rogers

A massive stimulus package of nearly \$600 billion holds promise for the economy, and could mean more federal spending on infrastructure and energy efficiency projects. An estimated \$400 billion in that bill will repair lots of bridges and roads, but what will they all lead to? Nothing -- unless we first start building bridges and roads between our economic, climate, and education concerns, and start appreciating the way they're all connected.

New policy and stimulus needs to take into account that we're not just trying to save our economy with roads, bridges, and buildings: We're trying to save ourselves.

Few other national topics are as timely as a discussion of how to build a new green economy nationwide. During his campaign Obama promised to create 5 million green jobs. It is this way of thinking that should shape our country's future.

One way we can stimulate the economy while going green is to create new, personal carbon savings accounts. These would be tax-free, interest-bearing green energy savings accounts that could be leveraged to help weatherize or green-up one's home or sold to companies that need carbon credits. It would encourage

energy efficiency while allowing a personal stake in emissions reductions.

At a time when we are poised to make our greatest infrastructure investment since the Great Depression, we need to make sure we do it right. Congress seems focused on shovel-ready jobs to its own detriment. We need to ensure this bailout is green, that the bridges and roads lead us to the future -- instead of another dead-end.

Putting together a new green energy program for the U.S. and other countries will require thousands of green jobs in solar, wind, and other renewable sources of energy.

One plan is based on the fact that investing in energy efficient buildings would go a long way to create jobs and help the economy. The so-called Architecture 2030 plan recommends an investment of \$171.72 billion over two years combining a housing mortgage buy-down and an accelerated-depreciation program for commercial buildings with energy efficiency. This plan could create over 3 million jobs in the building sector and over 4 million indirect jobs plus an additional 350,000 jobs from consumer spending.

The retrofitting and construction of green schools -- the largest construction sector in the United States -- will do the same. Between 2006 and 2008, we spent

\$80 billion on school construction. If we build those buildings green, they cost less than 2 percent more to construct; however, they pay for themselves in a few years. Consequently, municipalities with major school systems are increasingly looking at "green building" and renovation as they work to update school facilities and save the district money in utility bills. A green school can save a school enough money to hire two additional teachers -- all while preventing 585,000 lbs of CO2 from hitting the atmosphere.

Which, at the end of the day, helps solve a bigger problem: The economy is in a crisis, but the impacts of climate change are far greater in the long run. Fortunately though, there's no need to sacrifice one for the other.

Green jobs are in danger of disappearing from the stimulus package, to be replaced with shovel-ready jobs, such as President-elect Obama's recently announced plans to create thousands of jobs by "weatherizing" houses. While weatherizing houses is important, it is a short-term project for employment. It is not the same as creating lasting high-tech work or building infrastructure. Green jobs, however, are solid, necessary jobs which

have a long-term future. What we need now is a firm commitment to include in the stimulus package funds for "green" infrastructure and jobs -- the real way to revitalize the economy and look toward the future.

House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi has touted other projects like investments in new energy technologies and energy-efficient buildings. We need to hold her and the rest of the Congressional leadership to those promises, demanding that they take bold measures to resolve the economic crisis holistically -- by taking into account the challenges of the climate crisis, the health of our children, and the needs of our workforce, which is waiting for green American jobs that can't be exported.

Our government must begin the shift towards a global economy driven by massive job creation from the growth of green technology, construction, transportation, and renewable energy. While the road to a green economy might be long, we need to use this opportunity to build it.

* Rogers is the president of Earth Day Network.



Submitted photo/Humane Society Pet Rescue FL, Inc.

Adopt a Pet

Sunshine is a female Labrador/Rhodesian Ridgeback mix. She is 1 year old and weighs 43 lbs. She has been spayed and her vaccinations are current. She is on heartworm preventative. Sunshine is a very energetic girl with a willingness to learn new commands. She has an easy to care for coat. She is an inside dog who loves to go outside to play fetch, but must be watched carefully until she matures. She needs a good exercise workout every day, to help prevent behavior problems from starting. She would do best with an owner who has had previous experience with obedience training. Her adoption fee is \$135. If you are interested in her please call 863-532-1110.

Okeechobee News

Our Purpose...

The Okeechobee News is published by Independent Newspapers of Florida. Independent is owned by a unique trust that enables this newspaper to pursue a mission of journalistic service to the citizens of the community. Since no dividends are paid, the company is able to thrive on profit margins below industry standards. All after-tax surpluses are reinvested in Independent's mission of journalistic service, commitment to the ideals of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and support of the community's deliberation of public issues.

We Pledge ...

- To operate this newspaper as a public trust
- To help our community become a better place to live and work, through our dedication to conscientious journalism.
- To provide the information citizens need to make their own intelligent decisions about public issues.
- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers.
- To correct our errors and to give each correction to the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.

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For More Information See At Your Service On Page 2



Submitted photo

Party like a diva!

A good time was had by all of the Foxy Divas of Okeechobee at their annual Christmas party held at the Brahma Bull on Dec. 10.

Community Calendar

Friday, Jan. 2

Tops Take off Pounds Sensibly #669 meets at 9 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 200 N.W. Second St. The public is invited. All persons interested in a sensible approach to losing weight and becoming part of a caring group are welcome to come and see what we are all about. For information, contact Ollie Morgret at 800-932-8677.

Highlands Social Dance Club welcomes the public to their dance every Friday, from 7 until 10 p.m. at the Sebring Lions Club on Sebring Parkway, one mile east of U.S. 27 in Sebring. Tickets are \$5 for members and \$6 for guests. For information, call 863-471-0559.

Just for Today Club of Okeechobee, 101 N.W. Fifth Street, Okeechobee, (Behind Napa Auto Parts) **N.A. Sickest Of The Sick - Open Discussion/Speaker** at 8 p.m. The Just for Today Club of Okeechobee is not affiliated with any 12 step fellowships.

A.A. meeting from noon until 1 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church 200 N.W. Second St. This is an open meeting.

A.A. meets from 8 until 9 p.m. at the Church of Our Saviour, 200 N.W. Third St. This is an open speaker meeting.

The Highlands Social Dance Club will begin its 27th season on Sept. 7, hosting ballroom dancing every Friday at the Sebring Lions Club on Sebring Parkway, one mile east of U.S. 27. For information call 863-471-0559 or 863-385-6621.

Compulsive overeaters are invited to a weekly meeting, **Overeaters Anonymous (OA)** meets at the Okeechobee Presbytherian Church, 312 N. Parrott Avenue on Fridays, 6 until 7 p.m. (Use 4th Street entrance.) **Overeaters Anonymous** is not a diet club. There are no dues, fees or weigh-ins. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. For more information call Loretta at 863-763-7165 or 863-697-0206.

Saturday, Jan. 3

A.A. meeting from 8 until 9 p.m. at Grace Christian, 701 S. Parrott Ave. It will be a closed discussion.

Okeechobee Chapter D.A.R. meets the first Saturday of every month October-May at Oakview Baptist Church 677 S.W. 32nd Street at 10 a.m. For information call Kenna Noonan at 863-634-5669.

The Gathering Church will hold its monthly healing service on the first Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. until noon. Anyone desiring to receive personal prayer for healing is welcome to attend. The Gathering is located at 1735 S.W. 24th Ave. For information call Theresa Brown at 863-357-3318.

Just for Today Club of Okeechobee, 101 N.W. Fifth Street, Okeechobee, (Behind Napa Auto Parts) **A.A.** weekend noon Open Discussion meeting; **N.A. Sickest Of The Sick Group** 7 p.m.; **N.A.** No-where Left To Go Group Open Discussion meeting 8 p.m. The Just for Today Club of Okeechobee is not affiliated with any 12 step fellowships.

Sunday, Jan. 4

A.A. meeting from 7:30 until 8:30 p.m. at the Church of Our Saviour, 200 N.W. Third St. It will be an open step meeting.

A.A. open 12 step meeting from 7:30 until 8:30 p.m. at the Church of Our Saviour, 200 N.W. Third St.

Just for Today Club of Okeechobee, 101 N.W. Fifth Street, Okeechobee, (Behind Napa Auto Parts) **A.A.** weekend noon meeting Open Discussion. The Just for Today Club of Okeechobee is not affiliated with any 12 step fellowships.

Take a break from the holiday scene

By Chauna Aguilar
Okeechobee News

If you are looking for some entertainment in and around Okeechobee for the coming months look no further. If your organization or business has some entertaining events coming up please forward them along to caguilar@newszap.com.

The holidays are upon us and there are lots of options for this time of the year for all of your entertainment needs. Take the time to enjoy the season and emanate the Christmas spirit throughout Okeechobee.

If you like gospel Bluegrass music that is fun for the whole family, come to the Okeechobee Shrine Club, S.R. 78 West, on Saturday, Jan. 10, at 7 p.m. where Tomorrow's News will perform. The cost for the concert is \$10 per person, children 12 and under are free. For additional information contact Keith or Darlene Bass at 863-634-5815 or 863-763-1443.

To find out more about Tomorrow's News visit: www.myspace.com/tomorrowsnews07.

Swing your partner dosado. If you already enjoy square dancing or want to learn, beginning Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 6 p.m. will be square dancing lessons from basic to mainstream and even round dancing if interested at the Seminole Cove Clubhouse, 1799 S.W. 35th Circle. Gib Mattson from Vero

Beach is the caller. For more information call Richard or Marilyn Zody at 863-357-0122.

Ian Nairnsey, Okeechobee's own authority on musicals, will present four programs in January at the library at 7 p.m. in the Okeechobee County Library Meeting Room. Ian will talk about the composers and their musicals and play musical selections. These programs are free and open to the public. The dates for the programs are: Friday, Jan. 6-George and Ira Gershwin in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 13-Cole Porter in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 20-Rodgers and Hart in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 27-Informing Berlin in Hollywood. For more information call Jan Day (Fehrman) at 863-357-9980.

BHR VFD Winterfest 2009

Winterfest 2009 will be held on Jan. 31. There will be catfish, cotton candy, popcorn, crafts, music and more. For more information, call 863-532-9015 or John at 863-467-8220.

Anyone interested in renting a booth for Winterfest 2009, please call John at 863-467-8220 or 863-532-9015.

Any time of the season and beyond, if you like to dance, Pier II Resort is your choice for Thursdays or Saturday nights for their premier ladies nights. Live D.J. and ladies drink free until midnight. Come



Your Weekly Entertainment Guide

Share your news and photos for this column by email to caguilar@newszap.com

dance and have fun in at Pier II Resort 2200 U.S. 441 SE, 863-763-8003.

Do you want to see your events posted in the weekly entertainment column? Forward any publicly open events including entertainment such as: dancing, bands, comedians, theatre, special events, special community events, contests, etc to caguilar@newszap.com. Please forward all information about each event including: description of the event; location (address); date; time; cost; age appropriateness; and any other information that fits the specific event. For additional information contact Chauna Aguilar at 863-763-3134 ext. 4242. Your Weekly Entertainment Guide-Share your news and photos for this column by email to caguilar@newszap.com.



Submitted photo/Darlene Bass
Tomorrow's News, a bluegrass group that is sure to be fun for the whole family, will be performing at the Okeechobee Shrine Club, S.R. 78 West, on Saturday, Jan. 10, at 7 p.m.



Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

Rehab Center helped

The Okeechobee County United Way presented Okeechobee Rehabilitation Center with a check to assist them in their work in Okeechobee County. Nancy Zeigler (right) accepted the check along with her team of (left to right) Mary Autrey, Brenda Byrd, Jeannie Bramlett from United Way board members Kevin Folsom and Cathleen Blair.



Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

United Way helps food bank

The Okeechobee County United Way board members Terelle Peterson (left) and Cheryl Sutton (center-left) presented Donna Coggins (center-right) and Debbi McCarthy (right) with a check to assist them in their work in Okeechobee County.

Concert set for Highlands Hammock

By Dorothy L. Harris,
Park Services Specialist

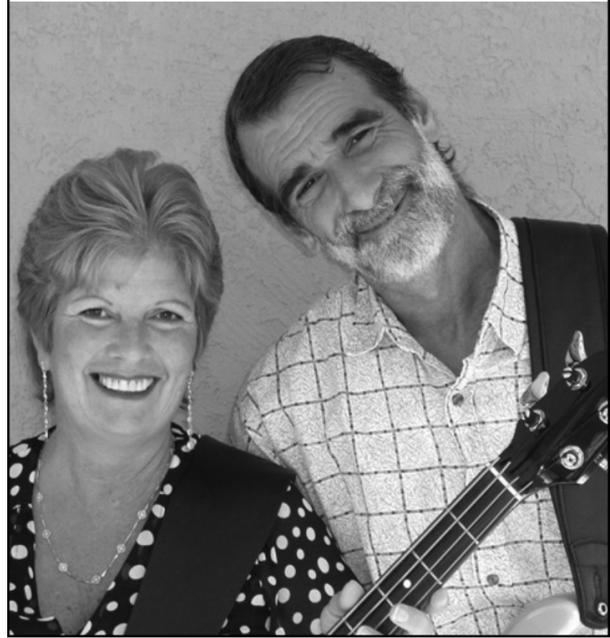
Music in the Park will be held again at Highlands Hammock on Saturday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m. Roger and Penny Decker will play a wide variety of country and classic rock music. This husband and wife team has been married for 25 years and performing together for 24 of those years.

Roger sings lead vocals and plays guitar, while Penny plays bass guitar and keyboards. "I started playing with him so I could see him more as he was always performing," shared Penny. "He was gone so much that I figured if I can't beat him, I'd join him." Penny had played piano at age eight and loved it, so she had some musical background. However, she began playing bass guitar with Roger's band, mostly teaching herself with his help.

Husband Roger has always had a passion for music and began playing acoustic guitar at age four. This couple loves to be together and to perform together.

"We receive lots of compliments on our togetherness after our performances," adds Penny. "We play a really large variety of favorites, from Travis Tritt to Willie Nelson, and from Jimmy Buffet to The Eagles, basically all the country and classic rock favorites from our generation."

The Deckers have played for many events at Highlands Hammock in the past, including the park's CCC Festival which is held on the first Saturday of November every year. It's been a few years since they have played here, but you may have seen them at numerous arts and crafts festivals in downtown Sebring and Avon Park, weddings, parties, chamber events or at race parties. "We play all over Florida," says Penny. "We have played at New Year's Eve



Submitted photo
Roger and Penny Decker will entertain country and classic rock lovers at Highlands Hammock State Park this month.

parties, local restaurants, Tanglewood, Buttonwood Bay and the 12 Hours Race Gala. We have played at most of the RV campsgrounds and retirement communities in the county."

Most recently you may have seen or heard them at a fundraiser at the Caddyshack Bar & Grill or the tri-chamber mixer at the race track. While they are originally from Michigan, the Deckers moved to Florida in 1988 to be closer to their family. "It was the best move we ever made," enthused Penny who admits to an aversion for snow. "We were childhood sweethearts that parted at graduation and then found each other again ten years later. We've been together ever

since, playing music and making people happy. We enjoy our time together."
Why not plan some time for you and your sweetie to enjoy a lovely outdoor concert under the stars? The fireboxes will be crackling and the music will waft through the dark night air as you snuggle up to these popular favorites. Concert admission is just \$5 per person and just in case you can't find a babysitter, accompanied kids age 12 and under are admitted free of charge. Coolers and picnic baskets are welcome and the Hammock Inn will be open too. Park admission is waived after 6 p.m. See you soon out here in the real Florida.

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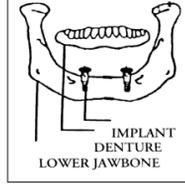
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- Warts • Tattoos • Skin Tags



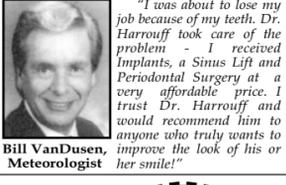
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Bill VanDusen, Meteorologist
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Annual Festival of Trees winners announced

By Chauna Aguilar
Okeechobee News

Despite the economic hardships the 10th annual Festival of Trees received 84 entries this year which raised enough money to provide at least 40 days of patient care in the Hamrick Home.

Southwind Band filled the air with Christmas songs during the Tour of Homes on Dec. 7.

The Festival of Trees relies on the donations of decorated trees, wreaths, centerpieces or

other Christmas items. Individuals, businesses, small groups or organizations submitted items to the festival. They also had several high ticket items that were auctioned that helped raise funds.

The festival raises money for the Hospice of Okeechobee by allowing the public to come view the items donated and hold a silent auction where viewers can bid on items that they wish to have in their own homes. Trees were from two feet to six feet. Decorations were very diverse

including items from the traditional ornaments, butterflies and even all of your favorite country animals.

The entries were judged by Candace Burke, Delores May and Ellen Winkler who all had an extremely hard time trying to choose from the so many lovely and creatively decorated trees.

Creativity is the key to this event which had seven categories that were judged: Best Tree; Most Original; Most Elegant; Best Children's Tree; Most Traditional; Best

Theme; and Most Festive (non tree) Christmas Item.

Best Tree: first place, Victorian Christmas by Woman's Alpha; second place, Old Fashioned Tree by Gayle Butts.

Most Original: first place, Truly "Green" Christmas by Waste Management; second place, Sail Away by Okeechobee Yatchette Club; third place, OHS Rodeo Team Tree.

Most Elegant: first place, Metallic Masterpiece by Xi Nu Omega; second place, Butterfly Tree by

Rhonda Peterman; third place, Pretty in Pink by Carol Elnicki.

Best Children's Tree: first place, Magic Kingdom by Seacoast National Bank; second place, Critter's Christmas by Barnyard Buddies 4-H; third place, The Bear Tree by Timothy Schnieder.

Most Traditional: first place, Christmas Flare by Jeanine Jankowski; second place, Christmas in the Country by Indian River State College; third place, A Jingle Jangle Christmas by First United Methodist Youth Group.

Best Theme: first place, A Very Victorian Christmas by Palm Village Ranch; second place, Mootastic Christmas by 4-H Udder Bunch; third place, Bits and Spurs and Horses.

Most Festive Non-tree Christmas item: first place, Log Cabin Christmas by First Baptist Quilters; second place Country Christmas by Caitlin Knight.

Thank you to all of those who

submitted items to help support the efforts of the Hospice of Okeechobee and the Hamrick Home and also for your continuous support over the years.

In addition a special thanks goes out to Raulerson Hospital for inclusion in the Tour of Homes and the C.O.P. for traffic control during that time as well.

Hospice of Okeechobee is a non-profit organization whose mission is to care for the terminally-ill. Services are provided without regard to ability to pay. The Festival of Trees helps raise funds to provide patient care in Okeechobee, including services at the Hamrick Home. For more information or to donate to the festival call 863-467-2321.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. Reporter Chauna Aguilar can be reached at caguilar@newszap.com.

Community Events

Scrapbooking 'Crop' to be held

The "Croppin' Crew" scrapbookers will hold an all-day crop on Saturday, Jan. 3, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. This month the crop will take place at Peace Lutheran Church, 750 N.W. 23rd Lane. Ann Daniels will be holding a class on how to make a 'tin box scrapbook' at 1 p.m. (Bring glue, cereal box cardboard, 1 and 1/2 yard of 3/8" ribbon and small flower or trim for top of tin.) All levels of scrapbookers are welcome. Please bring a covered dish if you wish to participate in our pot luck luncheon. For more information call Joan at 863-467-0290 or Corry at 863-467-2231.

Red Cross class dates slated

The Okeechobee Branch of the American Red Cross will be holding the following Health & Safety classes in January: * Tuesday, Jan. 6 - First Aid Basics at 6 p.m. * Wednesday, Jan. 14 - Infant/Child CPR/AED at 6 p.m. * Tuesday, Jan. 20 - Adult CPR/AED at 6 p.m. All classes are held at their Branch office located at 323 N. Parrott Ave. To register, or for more information call 863-763-2488.

Glades County officials sworn in

The County Commissioners and newly Re-Elected County Officials of Glades County will hold their Installation Ceremony on Tuesday night, Jan. 6 at the Doyle

Conner Center at 7:00 P.M. County Commissioners Butch Jones; District 1, Paul Beck; District 3, and Bob Giesler; District 5, along with Sheriff Stuart Whiddon, Clerk of Courts Joe Flint, Property Appraiser Larry Luckey, Tax Collector Gail Jones, and Supervisor of Elections Holly Whiddon will be sworn into office. Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

Hollywood Musicals at the Library

Ian Nairney, Okeechobee's own authority on musicals, will present four programs in January at the library at 7 p.m. in the Okeechobee County Library Meeting Room. Ian will talk about the composers and their musicals and play musical selections. These programs are free and open to the public. The dates for the programs are: Fri., Jan. 6-George and Ira Gershwin in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 13-Cole Porter in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 20-Rodgers and Hart in Hollywood; Friday, Jan. 27-Irving Berlin in Hollywood. For more information call Jan Day (Fehrman) at 863-357-9980.

Softball plans tryouts for season

The Okeechobee High School softball program will hold try-outs for 9th thru 12th graders on Jan. 8 and 9 from 3 until 6 p.m. at the OHS softball field. Any interested athletes must have a physical to participate in the try-out. Physical forms can be picked up from the main office at OHS. If you are playing another sport at OHS and would like to try out or have any

questions pertaining to try-outs please contact Coach Kim Hargraves at 863-634-6322 as soon as possible.

Hospice holds yard sale

Hospice of Okeechobee will host a Huge 3 day 1st of the year yard sale at the Blue Volunteer Building, next to The Hamrick Home (411 S.E. 4th Street) on Thursday, Jan. 8 from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. Friday Jan. 9, 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. and Saturday Jan. 10 8 a.m. until noon. Many new items available all monies raised will go towards patient care here in Okeechobee, including services provided at The Hamrick Home. For information, call Cathy at 863-467-2321.

DAR to meet

The National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution has changed it's regular meeting place from the Oakview Baptist Church to the Okeechobee County Public Library. We will normally be meeting on the first Saturday of each month September through May but for the month of January ONLY we will be meeting on Jan. 10, the second Saturday at the library.

Memorial service to be held

A memorial service to celebrate the life of Murray C. Yates, who passed away on Friday, Aug. 29, 2008 at the age of 77, will be held on Saturday, Jan. 10 at the Okeechobee Moose Lodge, 159

N.W. 36th St. It will begin at 2 p.m. Murray was a member of the Loyal Order of the Moose from 1965 until his death. He was a Legionnaire, Past Governor and Fellow within the lodge. Family and friends are invited to attend.

Early Learning Coalition meeting dates set

Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin & Okeechobee Counties, Inc. - Okeechobee County Provider/Advisory Council Meeting Wednesday, Jan. 14, at noon. Location: American Red Cross, 323 North Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee. Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin & Okeechobee Counties, Inc. - Bylaws/Personnel Committee Meeting, Wednesday, Jan. 14, at 2 p.m. Location: American Red Cross, 323 North Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee.

Main Street Mixer planned

Okeechobee Main Street will kick off the New Year with their first monthly mixer of the new year hosted by Raulerson Hospital on Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009. The January mixer will be held at the Raulerson Company Care Office in the blue top building just north of the hospital at 1930 Hwy. 441 North. Main Street Mixers are a night of networking, refreshments, door prizes and a chance for you to win the Mega 50/50 at the end of the year, so invite a friend and join us.

Arnold's Wildlife thanks community

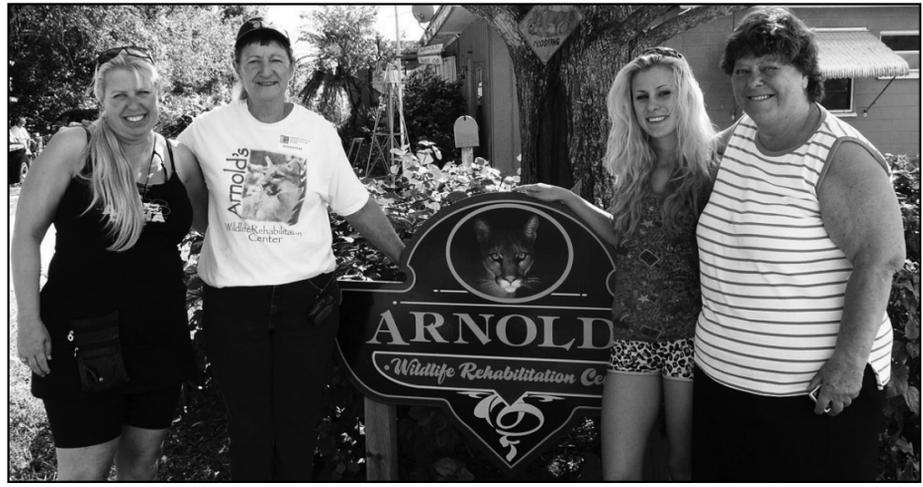
Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Inc. hosted close to 300 adults and children at its Nov. 8 open house fundraiser. "We were amazed at the turnout, especially considering the current state of the economy," said Sue Arnold, owner and curator of the center. "We want to thank everyone for their support."

Visitors came from as near as Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Indian River, Highlands, Palm Beach, Martin and other counties - and as far away as Holland. Jacqueline Petiet of Hoorn, Holland, flew in from Amsterdam with her daughter, Jennifer Jorna, and mother, Margreet Petiet. They rented an RV and camped out at the wildlife center, spending the weekend with Arnold and the critters.

Kowe, a five-month-old, 35-pound female panther, was the star of the show. Volunteer Roger Newson gave panther education presentations to packed audiences throughout the day.

Guests were treated to tours of the half-acre butterfly garden, now in full bloom and full of butterflies; the animal compounds and nature trail; plus they enjoyed free hot dogs, snacks and beverages.

"We truly appreciate the support from the community," Arnold said. "It helps make our wildlife



Submitted photos/Arnold's Wildlife
From Holland to Okeechobee. From left to right are: Jacqueline Petiet, Sue Arnold, Jennifer Jorna and Margreet Petiet.

conservation efforts possible."

The local 4-H Wild Bunch provided creative and educational activities for youngsters. "We've been doing this at the wildlife center open house for about five years," said 4-H Leader Doni Sheffield. "It adds even more fun to the event, especially for the little ones."

Arnold's volunteers were on hand for guided tours of the animal compounds and half-acre

butterfly garden, guest check in, food service and a myriad of other duties to keep things running smoothly. "It's not just our open house events, it's every day of the year," Arnold said. "We have an absolutely super group of people who provide a huge contribution to the center in terms of their time and effort, and we truly appreciate their dedication."

Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center's mission is to rescue,

rehabilitate and return animals to their natural habitat. The center was established 12 years ago and rehabilitates an average 700 animals per year. It is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational facility that relies completely on donations to fund its work.

For more information about the center or directions go to www.arnoldswildlife.org or call 863-763-4630.

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Drug use down overall among Florida teens

TALLAHASSEE—Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp recently announced significant reductions in cigarette smoking and binge drinking among Florida's middle school and high school students since 2000, as reported by the 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey. In contrast to the significant reductions being made each year, the 2008 survey confirms the continuing trend of prescription drug abuse and highlights the need for future prevention efforts. The Florida Office of Drug Control, state agencies, law enforcement, substance abuse prevention coalitions, schools and community stakeholders have partnered to reduce substance abuse across the state.

"Children are Florida's most vulnerable residents, and protecting them from the dangers of substance abuse is tremendously important," said Lt. Governor Kottkamp. "Drug abuse threatens the health and safety of our children and their families. The survey is vital to understanding how to prevent drug use."

According to the survey, which has been administered every year since 2000, drug use among Florida's middle and high school students is down in 10 of 11 areas consistently measured over the history of the survey. From 2007 to 2008, among middle and high school students, past 30-day use of alcohol and binge drinking declined significantly. Long-term

trends documented from 2000 to 2008 include:

- Cigarette smoking is cut in half: The past 30-day use of cigarettes among middle and high schoolers is at 9 percent, down from 18 percent in 2000.
- Binge drinking declines by 4 percentage points since 2000: Binge drinking, defined as having five or more drinks in a row sometime during the previous two weeks, currently stands at 15 percent, down from 19 percent in 2000.
- Use of any illegal drug other than marijuana continues to decline: The percent of students who report using any illegal drug other than marijuana has declined by 24 percent since 2000 and now stands at a historically low 6.6 percent.
- Early initiation continues to decline: Research confirms that if our youth make it to adulthood without experimenting with drugs, they are far less likely to start using later in life. The 2008 survey documents an important decline in the percentage of high school students who first used al-

cohol (by 8.6 percentage points), tobacco (by 19.5 percentage points), and marijuana (by 6.7 percentage points) before the age of 14.

- New question on over-the-counter drugs: For the first time, middle schoolers were asked about their use of over-the-counter drugs – such as cold and cough medications – in order to get high. The lifetime prevalence rate of over-the-counter drug abuse (4.9 percent) is higher than the rate for any illegal drug except marijuana.
- Prescription drugs emerging as a dangerous source of abuse: 4.5 percent of high school seniors report abusing prescription pain relievers in the past 30 days, and 3.8 percent report abusing prescription depressants – more than any other illegal drug (excluding marijuana). Results from the 2002 survey (the first time this question was asked) were nearly identical, indicating a continuing trend in prescription drug abuse.

"The 2008 report suggests major progress in reducing underage drinking," said Office of

Drug Control Director Bill Janes. "Prevalence rates for the vast majority of drugs monitored by the FYSAS have been significantly reduced over the past eight years. This is a testament to the tremendous progress the state has made toward enhancing the prevention infrastructure in the areas of assessment, strategic planning, and implementation of evidence-based programs and policies. Our communities are making a real difference."

"While drug use is down overall, parents need to be acutely alert to the dangers posed by legally accessible substance like inhalants, alcohol, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter medications. Parents need to do their part to keep young people safe by restricting the availability of these substances within their homes and by closely monitoring their children's activities," Janes said.

Florida's Drug Control Strategy acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to ensuring that children, families, and communities are healthy and safe. Florida's diverse communi-

ties must prioritize their needs and select the most effective strategies that will be used to tackle their unique profile of substance abuse problems. The continued support of community anti-drug coalitions is vital to prevention efforts throughout the state. In addition, the dramatic progress the state has made in reducing youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use is a result of the ongoing expansion of our community-based efforts and the support of state agencies.

Florida's youth survey measures youth substance use annually across the state, and alternate years, in each county. The 2008 edition included 91,471 valid returns from sixth through 12th graders in 66 of Florida's 67 counties. (Sarasota County is not included among the counties surveyed because it chose to administer an internal survey that is not comparable to the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey.) The full report is available online at www.dcf.state.fl.us/mentalhealth/publications/fysas/.

Okeechobee Health Department Report

New Year, New Health Changes for Smokers

Angela Kelly, MPH
OCHD Tobacco Prevention Specialist

Every year about this time, people begin thinking about the New Year and the changes it will bring. Some people make New Year's resolutions to lose weight, get a better job, or to make other positive changes in their lives. Millions of Americans will also make



Angela Kelly

a serious health resolution to quit smoking. The United States Surgeon General has said, "Smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to improve the length and quality of their lives." Also in its reports, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated that tobacco is the leading cause of death in the United States; killing more than 400,000 Americans annually, and that another 8,000 Americans suffer from a smoking-caused disease, disability, or other serious health problems such as cancer of the lung, larynx, oral cavity, and others. Smoking is also a contributor in the development of cancers of the bladder, pancreas, uterus, cervix, and kidney. It also causes most cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease also known as COPD, which includes emphy-

sema and chronic bronchitis. To reduce your risks of being faced with these health problems, committing to changing your smoking habit is very important.

Nobody says that making the change to quit smoking will be easy, but you don't have to do it alone. In fact, trying to quit cold turkey without a support network may only set you up for failure. Believing and making a commitment to quit smoking will help you, even if it takes a thousand attempts. Just consider the positive results of making the health change to quit smoking for good, and how it will improve your lifestyle. For example, stress reduction, more money and energy, improvement in circulation, better breathing, decreased risks for heart disease and stroke, better smelling breath and better tasting foods are all benefits of quitting smoking.

The Okeechobee County Health Department Tobacco Prevention and Education program is here to help you with the process to quit smoking and improve your health. Quit Smoking Now Classes are available free of charge, and can provide you with the skills and knowledge to help you quit smoking. Smokers may also call the Florida Quit Line 1-877-822-6669 and receive counseling sessions in English and Spanish, self help materials, and free nicotine replacement while supplies last. For more information about the Tobacco Prevention Program please contact the Health Department at 863-462-5781.

Check out health clubs before joining

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson is urging consumers to take time to check on the background of a health club or gym prior to signing up or buying a membership as a gift. Many people wanting to start the New Year on a healthy note join gyms, but without some investigation they may only lose money.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulates health clubs under the Health Studio Act, which provides some protections for consumers in the event the club closes, moves, or the member cannot use the facilities for medical reasons. Health clubs are required to register with the department, and many are also required to post a bond for member refunds in case the club goes out of business.

"Getting in shape is a great way to kick off 2009," Commissioner Bronson said. "There are rules and regulations that health clubs need to follow, and consumers need to know what they are so they can be sure they are getting their money's worth.

Memberships can be a sizeable investment so it's worth the time to find out about a facility before signing a legal contract. Consumers need to understand they cannot just change their minds weeks or months after joining and stop paying dues."

Currently, there are 2,266 health clubs registered in Florida. During the past year, 369 clubs went out of business.

The law provides consumers with the right to cancel a contract within three days of signing it, exclusive of holidays and weekends, but it must be done in writing. After three days, it is a binding legal obligation. If a person becomes physically unable to use a substantial portion of the services for which they contracted, they can put a hold on the membership until the disability ends. If the health studio goes out of business or moves more than five driving miles away from the original location it must provide, within 30 days, a facility of equal quality located within the five miles or the contract is void.

Commissioner Bronson also recommends consumers follow

these tips:

- Call the department's helpline at 1-800-HELPFLA (1-800-435-7352) or 1-800-FLAYUDA (1-800-352-9832) to make sure that the health studio is registered and to check its complaint history.
- Find out if the studio has posted a bond with the department, as most clubs that collect fees in advance are required to do so.
- Find out about the club's cancellation policy in the event a member moves or becomes physically unable to use the facility.
- Visit the club during the

hours you intend to use it to determine whether the equipment you want will be available at that time.

• Make sure exactly what the membership fee covers. In some cases, amenities such as racquetball and basketball courts, child care, towels, etc., cost extra.

Commissioner Bronson says that, like any legal document, it's important to read contracts thoroughly and make sure that all promises are made in writing. Ask questions to make sure the terms of the membership contract are understood and can be followed.

Osteoporosis and stroke screening is on the way

FLORIDA—Residents living in and around the Okeechobee community can be screened to help prevent a stroke. The complete screening package now includes a new Heart Rhythm screening, checking for irregular heartbeat, which is a major risk factor for stroke.

Life Line Screening, the nation's leading provider of preventative health screenings, will be at the First Missionary Baptist Church on Jan. 28. The site is located at 906 N.W. Ninth Ave. in Okeechobee. Appointments will begin at 9 a.m.

A stroke also known as a "brain attack" is ranked at the third leading cause of death in the United States and often occurs without warning. In fact, four out of five people who suffer a stroke have no apparent warning signs prior

to the stroke. The good news is that with early detections 80% of strokes can be prevented.

Screenings are painless, accurate and affordable. They help identify potential health problems such as blocked arteries and irregular heart rhythm, abdominal aortic aneurysms and hardening of the arteries in the legs, which is a strong predictor of heart disease. A bone density screening to assess osteoporosis risk is also offered and is appropriate for both men and women.

Register for a Wellness Package with Heart Rhythm for \$149. All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please call 1-877-237-1287. Preregistration is required.

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Local families to gain hope for financial peace

Financial Peace University (FPU), the 13-week program taught by Dave Ramsey, has helped more than 650,000 families positively change their financial future. This life-changing program teaches families and individuals how to handle their money through common-sense principles and small group accountability. FPU is available for churches, companies, military bases, financial literacy programs, Spanish speaking organizations and community groups. FPU classes will be held in Okeechobee at:

Peace Lutheran Church located at 750 Northwest 23rd Lane in Okeechobee. The classes will begin Monday, Jan. 12, 2009 at 6 p.m. Contact Drew Achong at 863-763-5042 or PLC_Youth@comcast.net for more information or to register. As they work on a Total Money Makeover, the average family pays off \$5,300 in debt and saves \$2,700 in the first 91 days after beginning FPU and is completely out of debt, except for the mortgage, in 18 to 24 months. "We've actually relieved ourselves of over \$50,000 worth of debt in two

years just from using these principles," said Russ Lee, former FPU participant. Dave Ramsey began teaching FPU classes in 1994 every night around Nashville, Tenn. In 1997, FPU was made available on video across the country with thousands of classes around the nation today. The program is made up of 13 life-changing lessons taught by Dave in a fun and entertaining way. "I like to put the cookies on the shelf where everyone can reach them," says Mr. Ramsey. After each lesson the group meets

to help each other plan budgets, discuss successes and temptations, and support each other in their journey to beat debt and build wealth. Topics covered include: Saving for emergencies Budgeting Relationship and money issues Buying big bargains Getting out of debt Understanding investments Understanding insurance Retirement and college planning Buyer beware

Real estate mortgages Careers and extra jobs Each class participant needs a kit. Special rates are routinely available online at www.daveramsey.com or by calling 888-227-3223. Included in the cost of the kit is a lifetime family membership to FPU, allowing the participant to return to any class at anytime for a refresher course. The kit also includes an FPU workbook, an FPU envelope system, 13 audio lessons, bonus CD, budgeting forms, debit card holders, and Ramsey's best-selling book - Financial Peace.

"FPU classes are changing lives across the country every day," says Louis Falzetti, executive vice president of Financial Peace University. "There is something for everyone in this program whether you are barely making ends meet, just trying to plan for retirement, or seeking to build wealth. No matter what your financial situation, you will find FPU to be the best motivational tool available across the nation to help you attain financial peace." Visit www.daveramsey.com to locate the nearest class.

Mainstreet Clipboard

Welcome new members: Best Western Lake Okeechobee, Owners: Jay and Nina Patel, Manager: Cindy Murphy. 3975 Hwy 441 South, phone: 863-357-7100. David Lee Padgett of Buckhead Ridge Insurance, LLC, 1070 6th Street, 863-763-3883.

Your membership next year could be free! Okeechobee Main Street will kick off the New Year with a Membership Drive Contest. Those who wish to participate will be given Okeechobee Main Street brochure applications. You will stamp your business name on the brochure and give it to patrons who come into your business. When they are returned to the Main Street office by the patron for membership the patron will be given a ticket for a chance to win a monthly drawing for a prize equivalent to \$50, they will also be given a membership decal that has the Main Street logo and the words "MEMBER - I SHOP OKEECHOBEE on it. The Business Member or Member that brings in the most new members will receive the following year's membership free; the free membership prize will be equivalent to the current year's membership. If you would like to participate in our 2009 membership drive please call me so I can get the brochures to you.

One of our members has commercial office space for rent: 1,145 Square feet for \$1500 a month which includes utilities. Call Kathy Godwin for details at 863-634-7728.

Quality A/C located at 5351 SW 16th Avenue has large 18 X 24 office space for rent. Rental includes utilities and taxes at \$125 per week. Go by to see it or call 863-634-3258 for more information.

It's a new year...make it a new you! Physicians Weight Loss Centers is having a New Years Blowout! January 2 and 3 with huge savings! Receive free B-12 shots and 40 percent off your program fees when you join during these two days only. Go by 414 S. Parrott Avenue, Suite B for a free consultation. Financing is also available, call 863-357-9967.

The Okeechobee Service Center of the **American Red Cross will be holding a First Aid Basics Class on Tuesday, Jan. 6, Infant/ Child CPR/AED on Wednesday, Jan. 14 and Adult CPR/AED on Tuesday, Jan. 20.** All classes will begin at 6 p.m. at the Service Center, 323 North Parrott Avenue. Call 863-763-2488 to register or for more information.

The Governing Board of the **South Florida Water Management District will hold a public hearing on proposed year round landscape irrigation conservation measures on Thursday Jan. 15, 9 a.m.** at the District Office on Gun Club Road in West Palm Beach. For more information call 1-800-250-4200, ext. 3019

Have a great week, I hope the New Year brings you loads of happiness and good health!

Borrowers should know the 5 Cs of credit

By Jon Geitner
Senior Vice President
Seacoast National Bank

Of the "5 Cs of Credit" (Character, Collateral, Capacity, Capital, and Condition), the most important of these is Capacity. Capacity is a direct reference to the ability of the borrower to repay the debt. In other words, is there sufficient income (debt service) to allow for not only the repayment of the loan but to also service the customer's other monthly obligations.

An individual's income is analyzed on a monthly basis. For most people, the income they receive is paid, at a bare minimum, once per month. This then allows people to meet fixed obligations, such as mortgages and car payments which also occur monthly. It is important because if a borrower doesn't have enough money to make their payment the fact that they may want to doesn't matter. Without sufficient income, no loan can be properly repaid.

Qualified income can come from many sources. Social Security, salary, interest, dividends, pensions, rental income, child support, alimony, and even lottery winnings, if recurring, can be considered as income. The biggest challenge is usually proving the income claimed. Tax returns, payroll stubs, W-2s, and bank statements are common forms of documentation that lenders will ask borrowers to produce in order to prove the income claimed



on an application. Once annual income is verified it will be broken down into monthly increments. For the purpose of borrower qualification "gross monthly income" or GMI is used, not net. It can be considered either jointly or individually, depending upon how the application is filed. Then, fixed monthly payments, usually in the form of other loan obligations, are calculated. Variable amounts, such as

electric and phone bills, are not included.

Capacity is the one area of lending money that is based entirely upon proven formulas. These formulas are commonly referred to as "debt to income" or DTI. This is simply a ratio of the monthly payments to the monthly income. For illustration, let's say your current fixed monthly payments total \$300 and your gross monthly income is \$1000. Your DTI ratio would be \$300/\$1000 or 30%. This ratio would be acceptable to most lenders. Now let's say the loan you were applying for would increase your fixed monthly payments by \$150 from

\$300 to \$450. Applying the same formula, your new DTI would be \$450/\$1000 or 45%. By most standards your DTI would be too high and your request would be denied.

If you think of it in practical terms you need to consider how much money you have left, after your fixed expenses are paid, to live on. The prudent lender will generally cap their DTI at 40%, although exceptions can be made if you have significant income, leaving you substantially more money, after fixed expenses, to take care of your other living expenditures.



Submitted photo/Teresa Chandler

Counting Change

Seacoast National bank employees count change for the Salvation Army throughout the month of December. All of the money collected remains in Okeechobee to benefit local residents. Thank you to all who donated! Those who helped in the counting were: Kandi Koedam, Hattie Bennett, Kip Gardener and Joseph Marcinek.



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Drug

Continued From Page 1

of cocaine. Booker was charged with possession of marijuana under 20 grams and possession of drug paraphernalia. Both of those charges are misdemeanors. At trial, Circuit Court Judge Sherwood Bauer Jr. found that Deputy Ellis had a valid reason for stopping the car and for asking the passengers to get out of the car. The judge also ruled that Smith's

handing the pill bottle to Deputy Marrero did not constitute an unlawful search since Smith voluntarily gave the pills to the deputy. However, Smith and his appeals attorney argued that the "... production of the pill bottle was not voluntary because Deputy Marrero told Smith that a search was imminent, and the cocaine found at the jail was 'fruit of the poisonous tree.'" The appeals court agreed. "In this case, the trial judge should have granted Smith's motion to suppress because, in examining the totality of the circum-

stances, Smith's act of giving the pill bottle to the police was not voluntary," states DCA records. The court ruled that when Smith saw the other passengers being searched it made his subsequent handing of the pill bottle to the deputy "the product of an imminent pat down and not the result of an independent act of free will." The 4th DCA also ruled that Smith was intimidated by the presence of the K-9. Even though that conviction was overturned, in June of 2008 an Okeechobee County grand jury returned a true bill and indicted

Smith on a charge of first-degree murder. He was also charged with possession of a controlled substance without a prescription. Smith is accused of killing 14-month-old Xavion Leach in 2006. Xavion died Jan. 20, 2006, at St. Mary's Hospital in West Palm Beach after he was taken off life support. He had been kept alive for eight days. According to Detective Betty Taylor of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD) the toddler's official cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head. She stated in her arrest report that

the toddler had a baseball-sized bruise on his brain. The toddler also suffered a fractured skull and spinal cord bruising at the base of his skull, she said. During a Jan. 15, 2006, interview Smith reportedly told Detective Taylor that he found the child lying on the floor as if he had fallen out of bed. Smith was alone with the child for about 30 minutes while Xavion's mother went to get some food. Smith, 6-feet-1 and 220 pounds, told the detective he first started to do cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) but realized that Xavion

wasn't breathing, stated the detective's report. He then shook the baby and placed Xavion on the bed and started "popping" his face and shaking him in an effort to revive the child, the report added. Detective Taylor said Smith began shaking the baby but said "... he saw that lost look in the child's eyes, which he said he had seen before ...". "The massive injuries we saw did not look like the child fell out of the bed," said OCPD Detective Bill Saum. A trial date on Smith's latest charges has not been set.

Expo

Continued From Page 1

ers is covering the cost of the Agri-Civic Center for this event. Last year, over 1,300 participants received information and give-aways from 80 vendors and many volunteers. The expo is organized to be a fun and educational day aimed at educating the community on health and safety issues. The event will have booths aimed at many different age groups from the children to senior citizens. During the event, each participant will also get a ticket for a free hot dog, chips and a drink. Donations of food, snacks, etc. are also greatly appreciated. Please contact Sharon Vinson if you can contribute in any way. Last year there were booths of emergency equipment, such as law enforcement vehicles, fire trucks, ambulances, a helicopter and brush trucks. The Department of Forestry's Smokey Bear was also in attendance promoting fire safety. The Blood Bank will also attend the Expo this year. While some grant funding is expected there will be expenditures for signs, liability insurance and other expenses. The event is set up so that vendors and patrons have a completely free day. There are no charges for attending the event or setting up as a vendor.

Each booth is required to have giveaways such as pens, pencils, stickers, snacks and an item to be given away via a drawing. In addition, each booth will display and/or share health or safety information. Vendors/agencies must provide their own table, chairs and other items necessary for the display. Electricity will not be available. Space is still available, both under the covered roof and outside. Donations for the event are also being accepted. Anyone wishing to donate money, or other needed items, can contact any of the individuals listed below. Participation is not limited to booth participation. There will be scheduled entertainment throughout the event with a different performance every 30 minutes. Last year's entertainment included several competition cheerleading groups and dance groups. If you have any ideas for participating in the entertainment area please contact organizers as soon as possible. If you would like to participate, vendor/agency registration forms can be obtained by contacting: Sharon Vinson at 863-462-5000, ext. 257; Angela Kelly at 863-462-5781; Barbara Godejohn at 863-462-5800; or, Donny Arnold 863-634-6464. The following groups will have a display at the Health and Safety Expo: KidCare; AARP Driver Safety Classes; Air-A-Medics;

American Fire Sprinkler Association; American Red Cross; Area Agency on Aging; Babies "R" Us; Big Lake Hospice; Brennan Eye Care; Children Burn Foundation of Florida; Coalition for Independent Living Options; Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee; Economic Opportunities of IRC Inc. Head Start; EcoQuest International; Okeechobee Health Department (various areas); Indian River State College (various areas); Florida Fire Marshals and Inspections Association; Florida Poison Information Center, Tampa General Hospital; Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida; Healthy Start; Helping People Succeed-Healthy Families; Herbalife; Hibiscus Children's Center; Innovative Treatment Services, Inc.; March of Dimes; Martha's House, Inc.; OCSB Mi-

grant Education; Okeechobee Community Traffic Safety Team; Okeechobee Discount Drugs; Okeechobee Educational Foundation, Inc.; Okeechobee Emergency Management; Okeechobee Juvenile Offender Corrections; Okeechobee Substance Abuse Coalition; Okeechobee Vision Care; Planned Parenthood; PND Inc. Physical Therapy; Professional Respiration Home Care Inc.; Raulerson Hospital; Reach FM; Riverside National Bank; Sandy Pines; Seacoast National Bank; South Florida Water Management District; St. Lucie County Fire District; Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT); Suncoast Medical Equipment; Pentecostals of Okeechobee; Treasure Coast Crime Stoppers; Visiting Nurse Association; and the Welcome House Drop-in Center.

Revenue

Continued From Page 1

These conservation measures are now working in favor of both governmental entities. Mayor Jim Kirk said one of his goals for the new year was to attract industry to the city's industrial park that would provide more jobs. On a positive note, the mayor said the city has started a sidewalk project which he would like to see extended to all the city's streets as funds allow. He added that in some cases, it would only be possible to put a sidewalk on one side of the street. If funding is available the mayor would like to see city hall renovated and the installation of an elevator to make it handicapped accessible. The mayor said keeping the same level of service and retaining all employees would be a major challenge. He said the city would need all the current employees to maintain the same level of service. "It has certainly been an incredible nine months," county administrator Lyndon Bonner said of his first few months in office. He felt like he had done a good job of addressing the priorities given him by the Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners. The county administrator said the county will face a number of challenges in the coming year.

The number one issue he sees is the economy. He plans to monitor the financial situation closely and watch nickels and dimes much more closely than in the past. Mr. Bonner praised the county commissioners for looking to the future while facing the problems of today. He, too, will be struggling to provide what he calls "good services" and retaining employees with dwindling financial resources. *Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszip.com. Reporter Pete Gawda can be reached at pgawda@newszip.com.*



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda
Employees of the City of Okeechobee and Okeechobee Asphalt and Ready Mixed Concrete spent the last day of 2008 pouring a concrete parking area for Central Elementary School. As funds allow in 2009 the city plans to continue the concrete work by putting in more sidewalks.



File photo
The Aeromed helicopter allowed patrons to get aboard to see what it is like to fly in their helicopter during last year's Health and Safety Expo which will be held at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009.

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* Ads will run in the Wednesday Okeechobee News and weekly publications.

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DEADLINES
Wednesday 11 a.m. Tuesday for Wednesday publication
Friday 11 a.m. Thursday for Friday publication
Sunday Friday 10 a.m. for Sunday publication

GUIDELINES FOR PLACING FREE ADS!
• All personal items under \$5,000 ABSOLUTELY FREE!
• Price must be included in ad
• Private parties only
• 2 items per household per issue

Announcements 100

Important Information: Please read your ad carefully the first day it appears. In case of an inadvertent error, please notify us prior to the deadline listed. We will not be responsible for more than 1 incorrect insertion, or for more than the extent of the ad rendered valueless by such errors. Advertiser assumes responsibility for all statements, names and content of an ad, and assumes responsibility for any claims against Independent Newspapers. All advertising is subject to publisher's approval. The publisher reserves the right to accept or reject any or all copy, and to insert above the copy the word "advertisement". All ads accepted are subject to credit approval. All ads must conform to Independent Newspapers' style and are restricted to their proper classifications. Some classified categories require advance payment. These classifications are denoted with an asterisk *. Independent Newspapers will never knowingly accept any advertisement that is illegal or considered fraudulent. In all cases of questionable value, such as promises of guaranteed income from work-at-home programs or other offers to send money in advance for a product or service - we advise you to check with the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Line at 1-800-220-5424, and/or The Better Business Bureau, 800-464-6331 for previous complaints.

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Found 0130

DOG - female, black, vic. of 98 & 70, near Speck Restaurant on Christmas Day. Call to describe (863)697-8656

Time to clean out the attic, basement and/or garage? Advertise your yard sale in the classifieds and make your clean up a breeze!

Lost 0135

TERRIER MIX - male, black, older, green/brown collar w/red rabies tag, vic of SE 8th Ave. (863)467-9272 Family Pet, REWARD

Garage/Yard Sales 0145

OAK PARK - multi family, Sat/Sun 8 am - 2 pm Lot's of misc. 3594 SW 18th St.

Employment 200

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HEALTHCARE SPECIALIST

Lincare, leading national respiratory company seeks Healthcare Specialist. Responsibilities: Disease Management Program, clinical evaluations, equipment set-up & education. Be the doctor's eyes in the home setting. RN, RRT, CRT licensed as applicable. Great personality with strong work ethic needed. Competitive salary, benefits & career paths. Drug Free Workplace, EOE. Please fax resume to Angel, 863-763-5191 or call (863)763-7337

Financial 300

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Business Opportunities 0305

NOTICE
Independent Newspapers will never accept any advertisement that is illegal or considered fraudulent. In all cases of questionable value, such as promises of guaranteed income from work-at-home programs - if it sounds too good to be true, chances are that it is. If you have questions or doubts about any ad on these pages, we advise that before responding or sending money ahead of time, you check with the Better Business Bureau at 772-878-2010 for previous complaints.

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 you may not be aware of the charges. Therefore, if you call a number out of your area, use caution.

Need a few more bucks to purchase something deer? Pick up some extra bucks when you sell your used items in the classifieds.

Services 400

- Babysitting 405
- Child Care Needed 410
- Child Care Offered 415
- Instruction 420
- Services Offered 425
- Insurance 430
- Medical Services 435

Handyman Services

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Cool Sealing, Painting, Carpentry & Much More!
No Job Too Big or Small.
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or (863)261-6425
License # 5638 & #1126



Children's Items 0555

STORKCRAFT ASPEN BABY CRIB - 3 in 1 crib with drawer & mattress \$100 (863)763-7983

THREE MCDONALDS Train Sets, Still in boxes, asking \$150. Also 20 Piece Teapot collection \$250 (863)763-5501

DELL DESKTOP - P4-dvd burner, XP Pro, New *19 LCD, \$299. (239)247-4839 (863)674-0212

LAPTOP - Fast 2.4 ghz XP Pro, Office, wireless, \$299. (239)247-4839 (863)674-0212

BLUE ELECTRIC Recliner lift chair \$350. Great shape. (863)697-0143

WOOLEY SHED - 14 X 22 A/C Auto garage door, paid \$9500 will sell for \$5000 Neg. (863)697-3108

YORKIE - 2 - 12 week old females with papers and shots \$800 Firm, Ready to go! (863)467-0218

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- Antiques 510
- Appliances 515
- Appliance Parts 520
- Beauty Supplies 525
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- Computer/Video 580
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- Cruises 590
- Drapes, Linens & Fabrics 595
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- Furs 615
- Health & Reducing Equipment 620
- Heating Equipment/Supplies 625
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- Medical Items 650
- Miscellaneous 655
- Musical Instruments 660
- Office Supplies/Equipment 665
- Pets/Supplies/Services 670
- Photography 675
- Plumbing Supplies 680
- Pools & Supplies 685
- Restaurant Equipment 690
- Satellite 695
- Sewing Machines 700
- Sporting Goods 705
- Stereo Equipment 710
- Television/Radio 715
- Tickets 720
- Tools 725
- Toys & Games 730
- VCRs 735
- Wanted to Buy 740

Antiques 0510

LARGE ANTIQUE Coffee Table \$250. One small antique end table \$50. (863)763-5501

RINGER WASHER - Antique, in working order. \$100 Firm (863)467-4449

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Children's Items 0555

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Houses - Rent 0930

PRIVATE WATERFRONT RENTALS From \$700 Month

- * Key West 1/1 Furnished Cottage - Dade County Pine Hardwood Floors - adorable wrap around porch on Taylor Creek
- * Gorgeous setting on Taylor Creek, 2bd/1ba, fully furnished, washer dryer. Huge fenced in backyard-Concrete boat ramp.

Rent towards purchase w/10% dn. (863) 467-8683 - (772) 215-1680

Rentals 900

- Apartments 905
- Business Places 910
- Commercial Property 915
- Condos/ Townhouses - Rent 920
- Farm Property - Rent 925
- House - Rent 930
- Land - Rent 935
- Resort Property - Rent 945
- Roommate 950
- Rooms to Rent 955
- Storage Space - Rent 960

Apartments 0905

IN TOWN - 2/2 very clean, w/d, lawn maint included, \$800 + \$300 sec (863)634-3572

SE OKEE- FOR RENT, Adults Only, 1/1 Xtra Lg LR, new kit & dining, pool table room also, fully furn, elect/cable, w/d hook up \$625. mo. (863)467-4449

STUDIO APT - Furn, full bath & kit, use of deck/boat house for small boat, heated pool, incl elect/cable \$850 mo., 1st & sec., suitable for retirees. (863)357-1566 rent month.

VIKING/PRAIRIE Efficiency. Very clean! \$600/mo. Includes utilities. No pets. Call 561-329-8205

CONDOS/TOWNHOUSES RENT 0920
KINGS BAY- 2/2 All Appliances \$800 mo. (836)634-9521

OAK LAKE VILLAS #17- 2/2, lrg bdrms, W&D incl, \$800/mo, 1st, last & \$500 sec. (863)467-5965

TAYLOR CREEK CONDO 1BR/1BA, furnished or unfurnished, pool & tennis, boat dock, very nice. \$700/mo. + sec. deposit. 561-324-4902 or 561-582-8693.

How do you find a job in today's competitive market? In the employment section of the classifieds

Houses - Rent 0930

AFFORDABLE NEW & RENOVATED HOUSES. 3/2/2 & 3/1/1, Bring Pets, Lg yards, 1st month free (561)723-2226

BASSWOOD - 3br, 2ba, 2 car garage, \$950/mo will take Section 8 (772)323-4758

BUCKHEAD RIDGE - 3/2, 2 car garage, W/D, Screened porch w/Hot tub, Pets OK, \$1200/mo (863)634-5236

OKEE: 3/1 on 1/2 ac. Renovated, laundry, C/A/heat, screen porch, carpet. \$925 mo, 1st mo. & dep. Call 305-458-8659

OKEECHOBEE, 3br, 2ba, with garage. C/Air. Lazy 7 area. 1st, last & sec. 863-467-2541

OKEECHOBEE- 4br, 2ba, in city limits, looking for responsible renters w/refs. Reduced \$1000/mo + Dep only needed (863)634-9139

Your next job could be in today's classifieds. Did you look for it?

Waterfront Rentals 0965
WATERFRONT: 2BR, 1 1/2 BA Treasure Island. Fenced yd. \$765 mo. (772) 359-6584 mardelvar@comcast.net.

Houses - Rent 0930

Real Estate 1000

- Business Places - Sale 1005
- Commercial Property - Sale 1010
- Condos/ Townhouses - Sale 1015
- Farms - Sale 1020
- Houses - Sale 1025
- Hunting Property 1030
- Investment Property - Sale 1035
- Land - Sale 1040
- Lots - Sale 1045
- Open House 1050
- Out of State Property - Sale 1055
- Property Inspection 1060
- Real Estate Wanted 1065
- Resort Property - Sale 1070
- Warehouse Space 1075
- Waterfront Property 1080

Houses - Sale 1025

Brand New Construction - 4BR/2BA, Near lake access on Hwy. 441, 2 car garage & storage, big lots w/space for garden, all credit considered, \$149,900. Call (520) 360-1893

Shop from a gift catalog that's updated regularly: the classifieds.

Land - Sale 1040

CROOKED CREEK Corner Lot. 2.2 acres, \$95K OBO Call Cell 772-530-2095 or 863-467-6399

Out of State Property - Sale 1055
SPENCER TENN-3.9 ACRES In Hawk's Bluff Subdivision, Best Bluff lot available lot 154 go to www.visitland.com for more info. \$102,500 (561)743-2093

Real Estate Wanted 1065

WANT TO BUY - Small house with apartment or Duplex. Call (863)467-7996

Mobile Homes 2000

Mobile Home - Lots 2005
Mobile Home - Parts 2010
Mobile Homes - Rent 2015
Mobile Homes - Sale 2020

Lot for Rent- 75 X 110 mobile home lot, 4415 SE 23rd Ct, Okeechobee \$181.90 month (863)763-4892 or (863)763-5419 Anytime

Earn some extra cash. Sell your used items in the classifieds

Mobile Home Rent 2015

BEST VALUE IN TOWN! For Rent: 2/1 apartment. Unit newly remodeled. Located 12 minutes north of Okeechobee on Equestrian Ranch. Monthly water, trash & lawn maintenance included. No Pets! \$495 - Move in special. M-F (863)467-2982

OKEE - 2/2. Very nice w/lot! 9317 SE 57th Dr., \$55K or \$700/mth. 772-597-2098 or 561-234-6470.

Mobile Home Sale 2020
BANK REPO'S MOVE TO YOUR LAND Mobile Home Angels 561-721-2230

OKEE - 2/2. Very nice w/lot! 9317 SE 57th Dr., \$55K or \$700/mth. 772-597-2098 or 561-234-6470.

GMC JIMMY- 1990 Full size 4x4, lift kit, big tires, runs great. \$3000 OBO (863)763-7598

Public Notice 5005

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

MEECORP CAPITAL MARKETS, L.L.C., a New Jersey limited liability company, Plaintiff
vs.
DRY LAKE DEVELOPMENTS, INC., a Florida corporation; 3D DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, L.L.C., a Florida limited liability company; WINSOME JACKSON; M H FUNDING & INVESTMENTS L.L.C., a Florida limited liability company; NEFF RENTAL, INC., a Florida corporation; SOARES DA COSTA COS. L.L.C., a Florida limited liability company; and IRMA RODRIGUEZ, Defendants,
and
L.J. CLARK CONSTRUCTION, INC. a Florida corporation; Third Party Plaintiff
vs.
HOPE P. ANDERSON, GARY PLANGE, and ALICIA N. HAL, (as to Lot 15), RUDOLPH LLOYD DIXON (as to Lot 27), LEE ROUGH (as to Lot 56), ADEEL MUKHTAR, ARIF WAJID, and JAWAD BAIG (as to Lot 60), SALVADOR Y. BORTONE (as to Lot 61), BRUCE GOLDSTEIN and PAMELA GOLDSTEIN (as to Lot 64), VYACHESLAV GINZBUR, YEYENGY GINZBURG, SIRANUSH KHACHATRYAN and PAUL BREYTMAN (as to Lot 65), RAM VENKATESH, LATHA VENKATESH, and NINA VENKATESH (as to Lot 66), LUSIK APKARIA, AVEDIS APKARIAN, KARAPET PARONYAN, and SUREN G. TUMASYAN (as to Lot 67), RKS & SKS PROPERTIES, L.L.C. (as to Lot 68), DANIEL SANOVEI (as to Lot 83), LUC CLEMENT and LUC MARGARET (as to Lot 84), THE OKEECHOBEE GROUP L.L.C., a Florida limited liability company (as to Lot 86), DIAMOND TOUCH, L.L.C., a Florida limited liability company (as to Lot 87), Third-Party Defendants.

NOTICE OF ACTION

TO: Daniel Sanovei
Dwane Shaw, Registered Agent of The Okeechobee Group, LLC
Jawad Baig
Paul Brettman aka Paul Breytman

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a construction lien under Chapter 713, Florida Statutes on the following described property in Okeechobee County, Florida, to-wit:

All of Hudson Lake Ranches, an unrecorded plat, with a street address of 6960 Highway 98 N., Okeechobee County, Florida.

has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defense, if any, to DEVIN R. MAXWELL, Esquire, at 605 NW 3rd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34972, with the original with the Clerk of the above styled Court on or before January 19, 2009 otherwise a judgment may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

WITNESS my hand and the seal of said Court on this 16th day of December, 2008.

SHARON ROBERTSON
Clerk of Circuit Court

By: Linda F. Young
DEPUTY CLERK

304637 ON 12/19/2008 1/2,9/09

Mobile Home Sale 2020

OKEECHOBEE - Db Wide, on canal, elec boat lift, lg attached Util Room, lg Util shed, golf car, furnished, Exc cond., 1307 S Parrot, #40, Riverbend Mob Home Pk, (217)652-1238

ON CANAL - 24x48, 3BR, 2BA 2 Screen rms, 3 sheds, carport, River Bend Park, Lot 37 \$42,500 (863)467-4712

Recreation 3000

- Boats 3005
- Campers/RVs 3010
- Jet Skis 3015
- Marine Accessories 3020
- Marine Miscellaneous 3025
- Motorcycles 3030
- Sport Vehicles/ATVs 3035

Boats 3005
OPEN BOW BOAT, 17 Ft. w/Trailer, \$300 FIRM (863)763-0812

Campers/RVs 3010
MOTORHOME-32 Ft. 1999 Coachman-Gas Generator, Slideout, Good Cond. 21k miles \$28,000 OBO Can be seen at 2347 SE 32nd St. TCI (863)824-6799 or 561-662-6576

Motorcycles 3030

GSX-R 600 - 2003 Black/Chrome frame, 21,100 miles Clean Florida title, \$3000 Call Matt at 954-513-9613

Automobiles 4000

- Automobiles 4005
- Autos Wanted 4010
- Classic Cars 4015
- Commercial Trucks 4020
- Construction Equipment 4025
- Foreign Cars 4030
- Four Wheel Drive 4035
- Heavy Duty Trucks 4040
- Parts - Repairs 4045
- Pickup Trucks 4050
- Sport Utility 4055
- Tractor Trailers 4060
- Utility Trailers 4065
- Vans 4070

EZ GO - Used, Good condition, (863)697-1350

Pickup Trucks 4050
GMC JIMMY- 1990 Full size 4x4, lift kit, big tires, runs great. \$3000 OBO (863)763-7598

Public Notice 5005

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR HENDRY COUNTY CIVIL DIVISION

FIFTH THIRD MORTGAGE COMPANY, Plaintiff
vs.
CASE NO. 08-1114-CA RUBEN FLORES; UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF RUBEN FLORES; ALMA FLORES; UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF ALMA FLORES; IF LIVING, INCLUDING ANY UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF SAID DEFENDANT(S), IF REMARRIED, AND IF DECEASED, THE RESPECTIVE UNKNOWN HEIRS, DEVISEES, CREDITORS, LIENORS, AND TRUSTEES, AND ALL OTHER PERSONS CLAIMING BY THROUGH, UNDER OR AGAINST THE NAMED DEFENDANT(S); COUNTRY VILLAGE PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.; WHETHER DISSOLVED OR PRESENTLY EXISTING, TOGETHER WITH ANY GRANTEE(S), ASSIGNEE(S), CREDITORS, LIENORS, OR TRUSTEES OF SAID DEFENDANT(S) AND ALL OTHER PERSONS CLAIMING BY THROUGH, UNDER OR AGAINST THE NAMED DEFENDANT(S); UNKNOWN TENANT #1; UNKNOWN TENANT #2; Defendant(s)

NOTICE OF ACTION

YOU ARE HEREBY required to file your answer or written defenses, if any, in the above proceeding with the Clerk of this Court, and to serve a copy thereof upon the plaintiff's attorney, Law Offices of Daniel C. Consuegra, 8204 King Palm Drive, Tampa, FL 33619-1328, telephone (813)915-8660, facsimile (813)915-0559, by January 26, 2009 the nature of this proceeding being a suit for foreclosure of mortgage against the following described property, to-wit:

LOT 5, BLOCK 5, PORT LABELLE HOLIDAY PARK UNIT 1 ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGE53 THROUGH 9, INCLUSIVE, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF HENDRY COUNTY, FLORIDA

A/K/A
2007 STEAMBOAT CIR
PORT LA BELLE, FL 33935

If you fail to file your answer or written defenses in the above proceeding, on behalf of the plaintiff's attorney, a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint or Petition.

DATED at HENDRY County this 15th day of December, 2008.

Clerk of the Circuit Court
By: /s/ D. Hammond
Deputy Clerk

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, persons needing a special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the ASA Coordinator no later than seven (7) days prior to the proceedings. If hearing impaired, please call (800) 955-8771 (TDD) or (800)955-8770 (voice), via Florida Relay Service.

304702 ON 12/26/08 1/2/09

Public Notice 5005

CITY COUNCIL MEETING NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Okeechobee will meet in Regular Session on Tuesday, January 6, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, 55 SE 3rd Ave, Rm 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. A copy of the agenda will be available on our website at www.cityofokeechobee.com, or contact City Administration at (863) 763-3372 x 212.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE

Angler

Continued From Page 1

The tournament will begin at first safe light at Okee-Tantie. Cost is \$75 per boat. Registration may take place before the tournament at the church office or the day of the tournament. For more information please call 863-763-1699.

New Gulf grouper, amberjack and triggerfish rules in effect as of Jan. 1

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission advises anglers that new rules to help manage gag and red grouper, greater amberjack and gray triggerfish in Gulf of Mexico waters went into effect on Jan. 1.

The recreational daily bag limit for gag grouper is now two fish per person within the five-grouper aggregate limit in all Gulf waters, and the recreational harvest of gag grouper in all Gulf waters is prohibited from Feb. 1 through March 31.

The recreational daily bag limit for red grouper in Gulf state waters is now two fish per person within the five-grouper aggregate limit. However, the recreational red grouper limit in Gulf federal waters is still one fish per person within the aggregate limit. Florida state waters extend 9 nautical miles offshore in the Gulf, and federal waters extend beyond state waters.

The Feb. 15-March 14, closure to the recreational harvest of red and black grouper in Gulf federal waters is still in effect. This recreational closed season does not apply in Gulf state waters.

In addition, the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack is now 30 inches fork length, and the commercial and recreational minimum size limit

for gray triggerfish is now 14 inches fork length in all Gulf waters.

More information on Gulf grouper, amberjack and triggerfish management is available online at: MyFWC.com/marine/grouper/index.htm and MyFWC.com/marine/AmberjackTriggerfish.htm.

If you would like to share any information with the Okeechobee News about an outdoors event, or if you have a suggestion on something you have seen or would like to see in the outdoors column, please email Teresa Mataushek at tmataushek@newszap.com, call 863-763-3134, fax 863-763-5901 or log on to www.newszap.com and place it on the public issues forum. We welcome all news, comments and tidbits on outdoor activities, nature inspired hobbies and with hunting season here, please send in pictures of your prize kills and with all of the fishermen back, send us a picture of your prize fish. Please include your name, phone number and specific dates of the events. The Outdoor Column runs every Friday, so please be sure to have all information into the office no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday. Please refer all material to Teresa Mataushek.



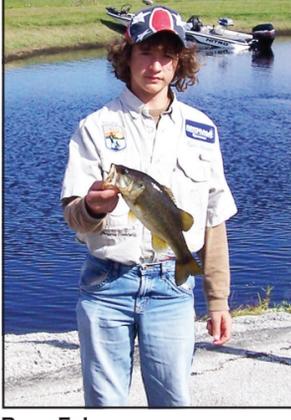
Mike Cornell



Ryan Edwards



Luke Joles



Ryan Folsom



Chris Eaton

Audubon Society hosts bird counts

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Local birders and nature enthusiasts have begun the 109th annual Christmas Bird Count in South Florida.

Local events include the annual count at STA5 near Clewiston which takes place on Saturday, Jan. 3.

A 15 mile area south of Clewiston will be searched.

Margaret England, Director of the Hendry/Glades Audubon Society said there is interest to expand Christmas bird counts at OK Slough and the Seminole Reservation next year.

A group of 51 birders went out last Saturday, Dec. 27 and found 82 different species of birds. The list included two new species, the grasshopper sparrow and sedge wren.

The group also saw 25 Fulvous whistling ducks, over 50 American Wigeon, over 150 white pelicans, over 50 black crowned night heron's, over 50 roseate spoonbill, and over 1,000 long billed dowitcher.

Seldom seen, and uncommon

species spotted in the bird count last week included gadwall, Eurasian wigeon, a couple of dunlin's, a king rail and a white tailed kite.

The count Saturday will be held at C&B Farms also known as Chuck Obern's Organic Farm and restored wetlands.

The results of the count are entered into the annual state of the birds report released by the Audubon Society.

In September, a report from Birdlife International revealed sharp declines in populations of many of the world's most familiar birds. Twenty common birds in the United States more than halved in number over the last 40 years.

There are 176 different bird species currently on Audubon's Watch List in the continental U.S. and Hawaii.

"Audubon compiles these reports because we care about birds and the quality of the environment they share with us," said Tom Bancroft, head of science for the National Audubon Society, "These birds are sending us a clear message that their fate is determined by human activity more than anything else. As we've seen with the Bald Eagle, when we help them through conservation, their chances improve. But when we damage their habitat, convert wetlands and forests, then they are more likely to become rare or extinct."

Bird counts also take place in Martin County before Jan. 5.



Submitted photo

Hole in one!

Robert L. Cain, 79 of Mattoon, Ill., hit a hole-in-one on the 11th hole at the Okeechobee Golf and Country Club on Dec. 17, 2008. The shot was 165 yards and he used a Hybrid #3. The shot was confirmed by golf pro Terry Lanman.

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Local Issues

Post your opinions
online at
www.newszap.com

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