



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 100 No. 2

Sunday, January 4, 2009

75¢ Plus tax

Briefs

Hollywood musicals at Library

Ian Nairnsey, Okeechobee's own authority on musicals, will present four programs in January at the library at 6 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: Tues., Jan. 6-George and Ira Gershwin in Hollywood; Tues., Jan. 13-Cole Porter in Hollywood; Tues., Jan. 20-Rodgers and Hart in Hollywood; Tues., Jan. 27-Irving Berlin in Hollywood. For more information call Jan Day (Fehrman) at 863-357-9980.

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 percent 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.

Library Co-op to host open house

The Glades County Public Library has recently become a part of Heartland Cooperative (Glades, Highlands, Desoto, Hardee and Okeechobee Counties). They will be celebrating A New Chapter with an open house on Jan. 20, from 2 to 7 p.m. Featured at this open house, Kirby Sullivan will describe his recent trip to Thailand. This will be at 3 p.m. There will be a program for children and items for display as well as refreshments. Everyone is welcome to attend and also get a new library card.

Drought Index

Current: 629
Source: Florida Division of Forestry
Local Burn Ban: None

Lake Levels

13.97 feet
Last Year: 10.28 feet

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

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Bicyclist robbed: two charged

OCSO detective says suspects are gang members

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

Two purported gang members were arrested Thursday evening in connection with a strong arm robbery in the 3600 block of N.W. Sixth St.

Jonathan D. Hunt, 20, N.W. First St., and Jose Guadalupe Romero, 17, N.W. 36th St., were

both arrested Jan. 1 on a charge of robbery. Romero was also arrested on a misdemeanor charge of possession of marijuana.

Both were booked into the Okeechobee County Jail. Following that process, Romero was taken to the Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Center in Fort Pierce.

Miguel A. Sanchez, 18, N.W. Fourth St., was arrested on a charge of possession of cocaine. Although he was arrested along with Hunt and Romero, he was not charged with the alleged robbery.

Bond for Hunt and Sanchez had not been set as of newspaper deadline.

Deputy Raul Marrero of the

Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) indicated that the three men were arrested at a home on N.W. Seventh St. His arrest report indicated that a fourth man, Fernando Seca, 20, N.W. Seventh St., was arrested along with the other three. Seca was taken into custody on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with violation of probation - battery and violation of probation - criminal mischief.

He was booked into the county jail under a bond of \$10,000.

OCSO Detective Sergeant Brad

Stark, who heads up his department's gang unit, said both Hunt and Romero are documented gang members. Because of their alleged affiliation, Sgt. Stark said he has contacted the judge who will be presiding over their first-appearance hearing.

"I left a note for the judge because this is a gang-related crime and I asked the judge to set the bond," said Sgt. Stark.

When asked if the two would receive a high bond, Sgt. Stark said "I'm hoping for it."

See Robbery — Page 5



Jonathan D. Hunt



Jose Guadalupe Romero

Anastasini Big Top: officially opens Jan. 9



Local children participated in the 2008 circus act tug of war where the "strongest man" of the circus (the center little guy) allowed two boys (left to right) Luis Rodriguez, 8, Blas Aguilar, 9, and two girls Rebecca Brashears, 7, and Lindsey Sampson, 10, to pull on the rope as he held on with all his strength. The Anastasini European Big Top Extravaganza Circus shows will be on Friday, Jan. 9, at 7:30 p.m. Additional showings have been added this year as follows: Saturday, Jan. 10, 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan. 11, at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

Circus is coming to town

By Chauna Aguilar
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce has brought the Anastasini Big Top Extravaganza Circus Spectacular back to Okeechobee for the third year.

The Big Top will open officially open Friday, Jan. 9.

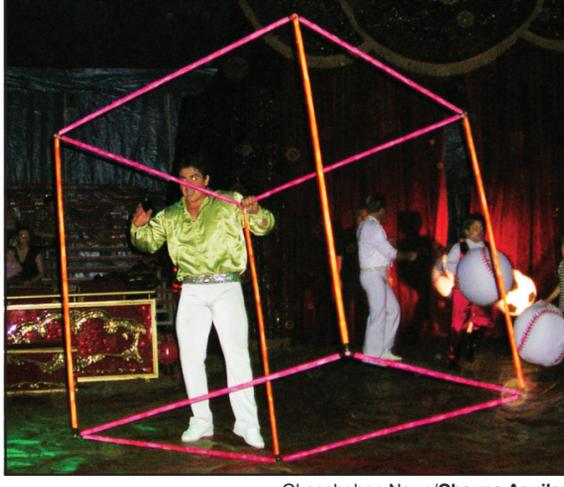
The show includes aerial fantasy, balancing, clowns, world champion jugglers, aerial rocket stars, a comedy show, outdoor show, dog show, magic show and thrill show.

The dogs used in the dog show are trained by the Anastasini family and all were saved from animal shelters.

The show is being held at the American Legion Fairgrounds, 501 S.E. Second St., behind the Okeechobee City Fire Department.

The Anastasini family has been performing and presenting the European circus for

See Circus — Page 5



Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

Juggling and balancing performances range from the smallest balls to very large steel bar cubes which this Anastasini performer twisted and turned around his body last year. Come see the exciting skills that are on display for the new 2009 Anastasini European Big Top Extravaganza Circus.

Prayers, songs will honor Dr. King

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

The hope, equality and solidarity promoted by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will once again be honored by residents of Okeechobee.

The celebration always falls on the Monday following Dr. King's birthday, Jan. 15. This year it will be observed on Jan. 19.

As always, there will be a march from Douglas Brown Community Center to downtown Okeechobee beginning at 9 a.m., with a parade to follow at 10 a.m. The parade will follow the traditional route from

the U-Save Supermarket north to Park Street, then west along the north side of Flagler Park.

In the past the event has been marked by speeches, prayers, songs and other performances at the gazebo in Flagler Park. However, this year's events will take place at Douglas Brown Community Center. Plans call for various booths to be set up at the community center on Jan. 19.

Festivities will begin with a banquet at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 17, at the community center. The banquet speaker will be Okeechobee resident Willie

See Dr. King — Page 5

Speckled Perch Pageant deadline nears

By Chauna Aguilar
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce 41st annual Speckled Perch Festival will be held on Saturday, Jan. 17, at the KOA Kampground Convention Center.

The final deadline for applications and fees is Monday, Jan. 5, 2009. Applications can

be picked up at the Chamber office, 55 South Parrott Ave.

There are now six categories for girls: Tiny Miss, 2 to 3 year olds; Little Miss, 4 to 6 year olds; Princess, 6 to 8 years old; Junior Miss 9 through 12 years old; and Teen Miss 13 to 15 and Miss Speckled Perch, 16 to 19 years old. The age groups have

See Pageant — Page 5

BBQ cookoff starts Jan. 7

By Chauna Aguilar
Okeechobee News

Time is wasting for Okeechobee barbecue cooks, as Okeechobee Main Street's seventh annual Top of the Lake BBQ Affair is just around the corner.

This year will be the second year for the Jack Daniel's World Championship qualifier contest and cook spots are filling up rapidly.

The deadline to enter the contest has been extended to Wednesday, Jan. 7.

This cook-off, slated for Friday, Jan. 23, and Saturday, Jan. 24, at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center, is set to draw cooks

from across the nation due to the Jack Daniel's Qualifier status. Competitors will compete for prize monies along with trophies for each category.

Local cooks will also be eligible to compete in the new Amateur Backyard Cook-off category. Trophies will be given to the grand champion and the reserve champion. Additionally, there will be a trophy given out for the most improved Home-Boy cook team.

Prizes range from \$25 to \$400. Categories include chicken, pork ribs, pork and brisket. Each of these categories cost \$75 to enter. If all four catego-

ries are entered, which qualifies the team for the grand and reserve champion awards, the early entry fee is discounted to \$260 if paid in full by Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Entries will be accepted after Wednesday, Jan. 7, for the full price per category only if space is available.

Friday's events include several competitions for sauce, apple pie, anything butt and beer can chicken. These events cost \$25 to enter. There is also the ever popular People's Choice category that will be held on Saturday, Jan. 24.

See BBQ — Page 5



File photo/OKMS

BBQ will be ready for the taking at the Okeechobee Main Street seventh annual Top of the Lake BBQ Affair and Jack Daniel's World Championship qualifier contest on Friday, Jan. 23, and Saturday, Jan. 24. Kelly Owens (left) and Rene Mims (right) seemed to enjoy tasting the barbecue last year.

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Submitted photo/Maria Cisneros

Christmas wishes

East Coast Migrant Head Start Project-OKEE II Center would like to thank "Puro Lujo Car Club", Rhonda Underwood, Lisa Kent and Martina Rodriguez for donating toys and making a Christmas wish come true for the children at our center. In the top row are: Aurelio Almazán, Jose Ayala Middle row: Susan Underwood, Martina Rodriguez, Francine Shaw, Félix Pineda (Santa) Elidad Santibáñez, María Medrano. Preschool children are: Maria A., María H., Briseida, Gabriel, Sindy, Reyna, Guadalupe, Roselyn, Ruby, Alexander, Salvador, Rodrigo, Carlos, Tifani, Magalie, Esmeralda, Brendon.



Submitted photo/Anton Silva III

Incredible Choir

The 62 members of the Okeechobee Community Choir representing 19 local churches recently presented their 10th annual Christmas Cantata, "One Incredible Moment," at the United Methodist Church. From light to right in the front row (seated): Glenda Fulwider, Arleen Fanter, Marlene Burns, Annemay Kelso, Joy Kidwell, Elsie Landers, and Sydney Thacker. In the second row (standing) are: Nicolle Wood (Narrator), Michael Hayes (Accompanist), Sandy Perry (Director), Patty Cook, Jane Frey, Faye Haverlock, Ann Edwards, Les Snider, Katelin Johnson, Dr. Trini Garcia, and Rev. Loy Mershimer, guest soloist. In the third row are: Chris Sufficool, Wynnefred Shephard, Erin Ellinger, George Clement, Lister Goble, Betty Clement, Becky Fleegeer, Laura Mae Evans, and Betsy Cheney. In the fourth row are: Deanie Burke, Beverly Rowland, Kathryn Wilkinson, Steve Walker, Justin Allen, Cecile Doyle, Becky Williamson, and JoAnne Snelling. In fifth row are: Victoria Williams, Dale Bryant, Christine Jones, Mike Brooks, John Olsen, Kevin Kinnaird, Carolyn Burrell, and Marty Grondin. In the sixth row are: Anton Silva III, Kenny Resmondo, Sharon Suits, John Burrell, Keith Abbott, Norma Entry, and Diana Heil. In the back row are: Reid Ellinger, Michael Hutchison, Rahl Wilkinson, John Sufficool, John Koepke, Willard Suits, Mike Zerden, Chris Askeland, Dave Fanter, & Andy McKillop (original poem). Not pictured: Jane Dowling, Louise Dowling, Floyd Driggers, Lonnie Kirsch, Natalie Moody, Donna Williams and Rev. Steve Wegmann.

Arnold's Wildlife gets new ride

OKEECHOBEE—An Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center donor, who prefers to be known only as "Chuck," delivered an immaculate 1995 Chevrolet Suburban to the center the Sunday before Christmas.

Chuck's been contributing to Arnold's Wildlife for a couple of years in memory of his wife Linda, who loved animals. "One of her favorite sayings was "blessed be the animals," he said. "She would be so pleased to know we are helping the wildlife center."

Sue Arnold, who owns the center, had no idea that all of Arnold's volunteers met up with Chuck and the truck at the end of her road at noon that day. The Suburban was decorated with a big red bow on the grille and another big red and white bow on the dashboard. The volunteers drove into the center, with Chuck and the truck at the rear of the caravan.

The Suburban was front and center as Arnold came out of the animal hospital, greeted by a hearty chorus of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," sung by Chuck and Arnold's volunteers, and Joey's Pizza showed up right on time to deliver six extra large pizzas for the event.

"I knew Chuck was going to donate the truck to the center," Sue Arnold said. "But I hadn't a clue when, and I certainly didn't expect such a celebration with our volunteers. This was just wonderful."

Sue Arnold's husband, Clarence, said, "I'm proud for her. That old truck she's been using all these years has had the engine replaced and just about everything else."

The Suburban will be used to transport animals to and from veterinary appointments, as well as educational programs at schools, parks and other centers.

Chuck - and Linda's - past



Pic 32

Submitted photo
Chuck affixes the Arnold's Wildlife signs to the Suburban.

contributions to the wildlife center include an anesthesia machine and a generator for the animal hospital.

Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit, educational-based wildlife care facility that operates solely on donations. The Center is dedicated to bringing people and

wildlife together to develop community awareness of the value of Florida wildlife.

Its ultimate goal is to rescue, rehabilitate and return recovered animals to their natural habitat. Animals unable to return to the wild are provided a permanent home at the Center.

At Your Service

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Tickets: Adults - \$5.50 • Children 12 & under - \$4.50
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MONDAY NIGHT is \$1.00 per person @ 7:00 PM

Weather

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 81. Calm wind becoming southeast around 5 mph.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 57. Calm wind becoming northwest around 5 mph.

Extended Forecast

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 81. North wind around 5 mph becoming calm.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 57. Calm wind becoming south around 5 mph.

Tuesday: A 10 percent chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a high near 82. South wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 60. South wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Wednesday: A 40 percent chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 77. South wind 10 to 15 mph becoming west. Winds could gust as high as 25 mph.

Wednesday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a low around 49. West northwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Lotteries

The Florida Lotto - Numbers selected Thursday are: **Cash 3:** 2-0-7; **Play 4:** 0-5-6-7; **Fantasy 5:** 6-7-16-24-29. Numbers selected Friday are: **Cash 3:** x-x-x; **Play 4:** x-x-x-x.

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NTSB: doomed airplane was overweight

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

The National Transportation and Safety Board said a pilot's failure to maintain an adequate air speed while maneuvering at low altitude contributed to a fatal plane crash on March 13.

Four people died in that crash in western Martin County.

The NTSB final report released Monday said the plane also carried too much weight, and that an inoperative stall warning horn failed to alert the pilot in the final moments before the plane crashed into a cow pasture killing the pilot and three others.

The report stated the plane carried 862 pounds in fuel, pas-

sengers and baggage during the doomed flight.

Killed in the crash was the pilot, Jeffrey Rozelle, 36 -- the co-owner of Kemper Aviation in Lantana Airport.

A group of researchers from Florida Atlantic University were also killed. They were Gareth Akerman, 33, of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and FAU students Phil

Heidemann, 43, and Damion Marx, 35.

The plane had taken off from the Okeechobee County Airport on the morning of the crash. The group, aboard a Cessna 172 S, departed the airport just after 8 a.m. and crashed about one hour later. They were doing research on wading birds in the Lake Okeechobee area.

The NTSB said in flights like this the stall warning horn is an important mechanism that warns the pilot if he is flying too slowly. The safety board found that the device had fractured internal parts and corrosion which was in contrast to the plane's maintenance records that claimed the device was working properly.

The last recorded speed of the

plane was 53 mph which was not fast enough for the wings to maintain life. The plane dropped 300 feet to the ground in a matter of seconds, the report added.

The families of the crash victims have filed wrongful death lawsuits against the owners of the plane.

County jail inmate arrested trying to escape

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

A Miami man in the Okeechobee County Jail on burglary and grand theft charges was arrested again after he reportedly tried to escape his confines.

Alejandro Perez, 45, N.W. 12th Terrace, was arrested Thursday, Jan. 1, on felony charges of attempted escape and criminal mischief over \$1,000. His bond has been set at \$15,000.

Perez was being held in the

county jail on \$46,000 bond after being arrested Dec. 16 by Sgt. Cliff Gill of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO).

Perez was charged with burglary of an occupied dwelling, grand theft and possession of burglary tools. He was also charged with the misdemeanor of loitering and



Alejandro Perez

prowling.

Officer Belen Reyna of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD) arrested Perez on Thursday after the inmate reportedly tried to break out a window and escape from the jail, stated the officer's arrest report.

The officer's report states that he was sent to the jail around 12:33 p.m. after being contacted by a correctional officer. The report goes on to state that pictures and video surveillance showed Perez trying to break out the win-

dow.

Perez was arrested Dec. 16 after he reportedly broke into a home on Eagle Bay Drive and took an estimated \$1,200 in jewelry.

OCSO Detective Rick Durfee said the man apparently gained entrance to the home by prying open a window at the back of the house.

Not long after he entered the home, said the detective, the young couple who live there returned home to eat lunch. Detec-

tive Durfee said as the couple entered through a back door, Perez left via the front door.

Shortly after sitting down to eat lunch they discovered their bedroom had been ransacked and some jewelry was missing, the detective continued. Perez also broke into a locked closet, added the OCSO investigator.

After OCSO deputies had responded to the home a neighbor

told the deputies they had seen a man throw a bag to the ground. The bag, containing a hammer, was found a short time later.

Detective Durfee said a pair of gloves, apparently dropped by Perez, was also found.

Perez was later found hiding behind some houses across the street and was placed under arrest by Sgt. Gill without further incident.

Law Enforcement Calls

Law Enforcement Calls

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office received the following calls from Wednesday, Dec. 24, through Thursday, Jan. 1:

- Dec. 24
- assault in the 11000 block of N.E. 51st Court
- larceny in the 3200 block of S.E. 18th Court
- Dec. 25
- assault in the 4600 block of N.W. 11th Drive
- larceny in the 10000 block of S.R. 78 W.
- burglary in the 2700 block of N.E. 11th Court
- rape on N.W. First Ave.
- Dec. 26
- theft in the 6000 block of U.S. 441 S.E.
- burglary in the 1200 block of N.E. 70th Ave.
- theft in the 3500 block of N.W. 12th Ave.
- Dec. 27
- burglary in the 900 block of N.E. 28th Ave.
- burglary in the 2800 block of N.E. Fifth Trail
- vandalism in the 4200 block of S.E. 23rd Court

- fraud in the 3000 block of N.E. Seventh Lane
- Dec. 28
- burglary of a vehicle in the 9200 block of S.R. 78 W.
- burglary of a vehicle in the 9200 block of S.R. 78 W.
- burglary of a vehicle in the 9200 block of S.R. 78 W.
- burglary in the 3700 block of U.S. 441 S.E.
- sexual battery on U.S. 441 N.
- burglary in the 3300 block of N.W. Fourth St.
- burglary in the 200 block of N.W. Eighth Ave.
- theft in the 1500 block of S.R. 70 E.
- Dec. 29
- fraud in the 2900 block of S.E. 39th Lane
- fraud in the 3300 block of S.W. 18th St.
- larceny in the 4200 block of S.E. 28th St.
- burglary in the 1800 block of S.E. 29th St.
- burglary in the 2100 block of S.E. 27th St.
- identity theft in the 800 block of U.S. 441 S.E.

- Dec. 30
- burglary in the 2800 block of N.E. Fifth Trail
- larceny in the 2700 block of N.E. 64th Drive
- burglary in the 5600 block of N.E. Third Lane
- larceny in the 3400 block of N.W. 24th Ave.
- fraud in the 1200 block of N.E. 14th Ave.
- burglary in the 1900 block of U.S. 441 N.
- larceny in the 2400 block of N.E. Sixth St.
- fraud in the 2800 block of U.S. 441 S.
- vandalism in the 4100 block of U.S. 441 S.
- burglary in the 500 block of N.E. 17th Ave.
- Dec. 31
- vandalism in the 500 block of N.W. 23rd Lane
- vandalism in the 2900 block of N.W. 10th Terrace
- theft in the 900 block of N.E. 15th Ave.
- assault in the 3000 block of U.S. 98 N.
- Jan. 1
- larceny in the 14000 block of

- N.W. 252nd St.
 - larceny in the 4000 block of U.S. 441 S.E.
 - burglary in the 7400 block of N.W. 87th Court
- Editor's Note: Only calls dealing with either a felony or a potential felony are entered into this column.*

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Okeechobee's Most Wanted

The following five people are among Okeechobee's Most Wanted persons. There are active warrants for each of them. The criteria for making Okeechobee's Most Wanted top five is based on the severity of the crime in conjunction with the age of the warrant.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of any of Okeechobee's Most Wanted you can call the Treasure Coast Crime Stoppers at 1 (800) 273-TIPS (8477). If you call Treasure Coast

Joe Luis Garza
Crimes Stoppers, you have the option of remaining anonymous. You can also receive a reward if the information results in an arrest.

Joe Luis Garza, 30 DOB 11/10/1978. Contracting W/O A License, Grand Theft.

Estavan Villegas-Urbina, 21, Robbery.

Angie Borjas, aka Stevenson
Poss. of Methamphetamines, Poss. of Drug Paraphernalia.

Wilbert Perez-Borja, 25, H/M, Poss Cannabis more than 20 Grams; possession with intent to sell.

Jason Hormuth, 28, DOB: 02/27/1980, VOP - Dealing in stolen property.

Sexual Predator Notice

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office is disclosing this information to the public in order to enhance public safety, awareness, and protection. This information is not intended to increase fear; rather it is this agency's belief that an informed public is a safer public.

This bulletin should be used only for information purposes. Citizen abuse of the information to threaten, intimidate, or harass offenders will not be tolerated, in any manner. The individuals who appear in this bulletin have served the sentence imposed on them by

the courts. They are NOT wanted by the police at this time.

Sex offenders have always lived in the communities. The only change is the public is now better informed.

Stevan Suarez, 41, of 3603 S.E. 24 Terrace, Okeechobee, is a Hispanic male. He is 5 feet, 5 inches tall and weighs 135 pounds. He has black hair and brown eyes. He was convicted on four counts-

Sexual Battery on Child-Familial or Custodial on Jan. 14, 2000, in Okeechobee County. Victims were minors.

If you have any questions regarding this bulletin, contact Michele or Connie, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office, 863-763-3117.

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-DEPENDENCY
-PROPERTY SETTLEMENT
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CIVIL LITIGATION
-GENERAL LITIGATION
-EVICITIONS
-FORECLOSURES
-QUIET TITLE
-CONTRACTS
-SUBROGATIONS

CRIMINAL DEFENSE
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T.A. Aliapoulos, D.D.S.
License #DN1847
Graduate University of New Hampshire in Zoology and Temple University Dental School. US Air Force Medical Corp. Served as Chair of Council on Dental Health. Formerly of West Palm Beach, he has merged his practice with Dr. Harrouff.

Wade B. Harrouff, D.D.S.
License #DN10761
Graduate University of Tennessee 1977. Author, lecturer who has appeared on TV, radio and print (WPBF/ABC, Palm Beach Illustrated and more) as the authority on implants as well as general dentistry. Member of International Congress of Oral Implantology. American Association of Implant Dentistry & Misch Institute of Advanced Implantology.

Jonathan M. Royal, D.M.D.
License #DN12061
Graduate of Louisville School of Dentistry in 1989. Practiced privately in Boca Raton and has recently joined Dr. Harrouff's group. Past Vice President of South Palm Beach County Dental Association.

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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!

OBAMA: This is about Obama I see where he wants to take away our Amendment rights, take away our gun rights. If you remember back in 1936 when they said "we will take away the guns from our people and we will have a much safer nation. "That was Adolf Hitler and they had a much safer nation didn't they? And in England they banned all of the guns and the crime rate tripled in stabbings. So if they take away our guns will it make them feel better to be beat to death, stabbed or run over by a car? Will it make them all feel better? How many people are killed by drunk drivers every year? Or killed by drunk drivers and guns. If they want to ban something, ban alcohol. It doesn't matter what you ban, you can always find a way to kill a person.

HOMES: I was wondering how many homes in Okeechobee had Christmas lights and decorations stowed away, but could not afford to put them out? Is there any way the FP&L could offer these people a Christmas discount so that Okeechobee could really light up?

OBAMA: This is about Obama, they keep calling him the first African American president. Well what about his white side? Isn't he 50/50? His father was black. His mother was white.

FIRE TRUCKS: How can the city justify having their fire trucks just driving around through the community wasting gas, taking Santa around through the neighborhoods. We are in a recession, we need to be saving money. And we justify a 3 percent pay raise for the county employees. We are wasting money this way. I think someone needs to come up with how to justify wasting money this way.

POST: There was an article in a paper from the coast about a water increase of up to \$30 in Jupiter, the people there are irate. My water bill is over \$60 per month and I live by myself in Okeechobee. Has anyone pointed out the problems with our utility system?

MERRY CHRISTMAS: I was wanting to know what happened to everybody saying Merry Christmas to everybody. Now it's Happy Holidays. Ain't that a wonderful thing, taking Christ out of Christmas and replacing him with a fat man in a red suit.

SCHOOL SYSTEM: This is in reference to the school system and the sports department. In my opinion, teams in Okeechobee should not be playing teams on the coast. They should be playing teams like Lake Placid, Sebring, Avon Park, possibly Wachuha. This is the conference they ought to be in. They shouldn't be playing teams on the coast that have high schools three times as big as Okeechobee. They play all year round, there is no competition there, they are lucky to win one game at any sport. So why doesn't somebody who can take control here, get Okeechobee in the right conference to play sports so they will not be humiliated and disappointed at almost every game they play, especially at the Middle School levels.

LAKE LEVEL: I see where people are again complaining about the lake level and that the water managers are letting the lake go down. Don't people understand that it is normal for the lake to go up and down? This is not a lake like you have up north. It has its own ecosystem that needs high and low water levels. When the water is low, the areas around the lake dry out and seed banks germinate. Then the vegetation start to grow. When the vegetation is growing well, then the lake needs slightly higher levels to flood these zones, so that the fish can now use this submerged vegetation as spawning habitat. The key is that the water should not be so high that it completely covers the vegetation as then the vegetation will die. The submerged plants still need sunlight. If the lake is kept at the same level year round, the fisheries will die.

FOOTBALL LEAGUE: Okeechobee is going to start a new league. It's going to be called The Okeechobee Parental Whiners and Criers League, that's for all the parents that cry and whine about the league their child has to play in and the distance they have to travel and the rest of the things some of these parents complain about. The only ones I don't hear complaining are the children - they go out and play the best they can. Some parents need to get a life.

COUNTY: Is there a good reason the county is so slow in re-filling the vital position vacated by Mr. Gray - the last really excellent airport head administrator. They have applications, which at least one was by a potentially new county resident with vast experience in administration and industrial development. Okeechobee - a great place for families.

TIPS: Thank you for the Christmas tips in S.W. Treasure Island, Four Seasons, Dixie Ranch, Basinger, Hillbilly and Rick. Thank you from Waste Management.

SURVIVING: Surviving right now it is tough. I have a job, working 60 hours a week, but since I'm paid by commission and sales are very slow I have been late on rent, and have come very close to becoming homeless. This month's rent will be late again, and actually have no idea when I will get it. Christmas came from the Dollar Tree. I eat very cheap. Make a pot of chile or a meatloaf and eat it all week. One meal a day. I could qualify for assistance, but pride keeps me from applying. These are tough times, but what does not kill us makes us stronger. We just have to hang in there, and hope for change to come soon.

PAY CHECK: I wonder how you will feel come hurricane season and those same underpaid employees are the ones you are calling to help you? I hate to tell you this but county work is not that big of a pay check on a good day! Yes, I work for a county government - not Okeechobee but near enough to feel their pain. We didn't get a cost of living increase this year. Next year doesn't look any better. Yeah we get paid soooo very much that I qualify for food stamps on my full pay check. So before you go casting these guys out as greedy, perhaps you should cash that check yourself? We work long dangerous shifts in the storm season for that same pay check -not a penny more. We don't come in, we show up. We are the cops that you call when you are afraid in the night. We are the firemen you call when your loved one is in danger. You really should reconsider your opinion.

JAIL: This is so true. Try working in a jail when it loses all power, high risk cells are wide open because the generator just failed and you are just stuck. You have to go to all manual locks, which means going into every cell and locking it yourself. Meanwhile, you are leaving the dorm wide open for hostile takeover. Underpaid? That is an understatement. No water, no lights except for flashlights, and no power also means no communications. The county should have given a bonus just for having to deal with that situation and not losing the jail. Which goes to further show what an exceptional staff this county does have. Obviously their interpersonal skills go above and beyond. But they do not deserve a better raise? And we need to rush right into preserving the old courthouse. How much money have they already spent there? We need to support our county workers. They are the grease on the wheels that churn this county, and they do an excellent job.

COMMISSIONER WHERRELL: Who will be his replacement? Who do you think will throw their hat into the ring? I won't mention a name but someone I know was considering it today. How will it be decided, by special election or appointment?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The replacement will be picked by Governor Crist from a list of applicants.

MARVIN WHERRELL: When I found out about this, I felt like I had been hit in the stomach. I loved talking to this man. He had a great sense of humor, had a passionate heart for Okeechobee and loved sports. I will miss you man.

Guest Commentary

Medicaid Reform: Yet another barrier to care

By Toni Waters Woods

On Thanksgiving Day 2006, my father, James "Buzz" Waters, was waiting to be disenrolled from the Medicaid reform pilot program in Duval County so that a high-risk cardiologist in Alachua County would see him.

Jacksonville cardiologists referred my father to the Alachua doctor because apparently there was not a high-risk cardiologist in the Duval County Medicaid reform program. This wait proved to be fatal.

Before Medicaid reform my father would have been able to immediately make an appointment and be seen by the cardiologist in Alachua county.

Two years ago the state introduced a pilot program to North Florida and Broward county that required more Medicaid recipients to join Medicaid HMOs. Proponents of the pilot claimed that Medicaid Reform would result in increased choices of health plans and providers. But by forcing more Medicaid patients into Medicaid HMOs it has instead created new barriers to care. In fact, patients are now unable to access specialists who accept Medicaid but are outside reform plan networks without experiencing unnecessary and sometimes fatal delays. Because the specialist

my father needed to see was not part of Duval County's Medicaid reform network, he had to waste precious time going through the disenrollment process before he could even make an appointment with the out of network high risk cardiologist. New Medicaid plan enrollments only start at the beginning of the month. As a result, the time frame for effectuating disenrollment from a plan is a frustrating and ludicrous obstacle for high-risk patients who have immediate needs that cannot wait. My father didn't make it to Dec. 1. He died on that Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 23.

Examples like my father's highlight the problems with forcing more high-risk Medicaid patients into Medicaid HMOs. Which is why I'm concerned when I hear the state is considering expanding the pilot program to the entire state. Medicaid reform in the state of Florida is not working for many patients. "Reform" has not only failed to solve the old problems, but it's created a slew of new ones. The reform program's limited provider networks put people with complex illnesses at risk.

There are many documented stories like my father's about patients stuck in a spiral of red tape and rules that have led to further medical complications. Reading these stories is heartbreaking at times. A letter sent last year to the Florida Medicaid director from Florida CHAIN and Florida Legal Services highlighted many of the

problems patients were having. A woman with diabetes was denied coverage for her insulin, goes into diabetic shock and almost dies; a man with severe mental illness ended up in the hospital because of coverage denied for his medications; a child with disabilities was unable to access critical therapies because of a lack of providers.

There are many policy arguments on all sides of the Medicaid reform issue. But we should listen closest to those who must navigate the complex maze of rules that Medicaid reform has put into place: the patients.

In a report from the Agency on Health Care Administration, it says Medicaid reform "seeks to improve the value of the Medicaid delivery system." I do not believe that happened in my father's case and I do not believe that the value has been improved for many of Florida's citizens, whether patients or taxpayers.

Managed care companies require profits and increasing amounts of reimbursement from

the state. These needs are difficult to reconcile with the health care needs of high-risk and very sick Medicaid patients.

Notably, in recent months managed care companies threatened to leave the program but changed their minds only when the state gave in to their demands to reduce proposed cuts from 5 percent to 3 percent. Decent health care should be not be judged by the balance sheet, but by the health of its patients.

One step in the right direction would be to permit emergency disenrollment procedures for Medicaid patients needing to access care not available through reform plans. Those protections were not in place for my father. Florida certainly should seek greater choices, access and flexibility for its Medicaid patients, but it should do so by reworking the fatally flawed reform program first, not by expanding it.

Woods is a resident of Duval County.

Community Calendar

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 Savior, 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.

Monday, Jan. 5

Just for Today Club of Okeechobee, 101 N.W. Fifth Street, Okeechobee, (Behind Napa Auto Parts) **N.A.** Sickest Of The Sick Open Discussion at 7 p.m. The Just for Today Club of Okeechobee is not affiliated with any 12 step fellowships.

A.A. meeting will be held from noon to 1 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 200 N.W. Second St. This will be an open meeting.

Okeechobee Model Airplane Club will meet at the Peace Lutheran Church, 750 N.W. 23rd Lane at 7 p.m. For information, contact Robert Rosada at 863-467-5440.

Okeechobee Senior Singers meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Okeechobee Presbyterian Church, 312 North Parrott Ave. Everyone who enjoys singing is invited. For information or to schedule an appearance for your organization or group, contact Marge Skinner at 863-532-0449.

Artful Appliquers is a recently formed chapter in Okeechobee. This chapter meets at the Turtle Cove Clubhouse, 10 Linda Road, Okeechobee on Mondays from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Turn left at the Moose lodge and go around the curve just past the church. Bring a lunch and join us for a fun day of applique. Everyone is welcome. For more information please contact Karen Graves at 863-763-6952.

Tuesday, Jan. 6

Rotary Club of Okeechobee meets each Tuesday at noon at Golden Corral Restaurant, 700 S. Parrott Ave. The meetings are open to the public. For information, contact Maureen Budjinski at 863-484-0110.

Just for Today Club of Okeechobee, 101 N.W. Fifth Street, Okeechobee, (Behind Napa Auto Parts) **N.A.** Nowhere Left To Go Group Open Discussion at noon. **N.A.** Sickest Of The Sick Group Open Discussion. The Just for Today Club of Okeechobee is not affiliated with any 12 step fellowships.

New A.A. Meeting in Basinger: There is now an A.A. meeting in Basinger on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in the Basinger Christian Brethren Church on 700-A, north off U.S. 98. Beginners are welcome.

New Beginning's meeting of **Narcotics Anonymous** will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at Believers Fellowship Church, 300 S.W. Fifth Ave. It will be an open discussion meeting. For more information call Monika Allen at 863-801-3244.

Al-Ateen - meeting will be held at the Church of Our Saviour, 200 N.W. Third St., at 7 p.m. For more information, please call Amy at 863-763-8531 or Dan 561-662-2799.

Al-Anon meeting will be held at the Church of Our Saviour, 200 N.W. Third St., at 8 p.m.

A.A. Closed discussion meeting from 8 until 9 p.m. at the Church of Our Savior, 200 N.W. Third St.

Family History Center meets from 1 until 5 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 310 S.W. Sixth St. Anyone interested in finding who your ancestors are is welcome to attend. There is Census, IGI (International Genealogical Index), Social Security Death Index and military information available. For information, call The Family History Center at 863-763-6510 or Richard Smith at 863-261-5706 for special appointments.

Gospel Sing every Tuesday beginning at 7 p.m. The public is invited to participate with vocal and/or instrumental music. For information, contact Douglas Chiropractic Center at 863-763-4320.

Widows and Widowers support group meets at 7:30 - 8 a.m. at the Clock Restaurant, 1111 S. Parrott Ave., for breakfast. For information, June Scheer at 863-634-8276

The Gathering Church Overcomers Group meets at 7:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall, 1735 S.W. 24th Ave. This is a men's only meeting. For information, call Earl at 863-763-0139.

The Okeechobee Lions Club meets at 7 p.m. at the Golden Corral Restaurant, 700 S. Parrott Ave. Anyone interested in becoming a member is welcome. For information, contact Elder Sumner at 863-763-6076.

Bible study at the Living Word of Faith Church, 1902 S. Parrott Ave., at 7 p.m. Informal and informative discussions bring many Bible truths to life. The public is invited.

Grief and Loss Support Group meets every Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the Hospice Building, 411 S.E. Fourth St. Everyone is welcome. For information, contact Brenda Nicholson at 863-467-2321.

Community Country Gospel will meet at 7 p.m. at the church next to Douglas Clinic on North Park St. Any individual or group that enjoys old time gospel music is invited to participate. For information, contact Dr. Edward Douglas at 863-763-4320.

A.A. meeting will be held from noon to 1 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 200 N.W. Second St. This will be an open meeting. The First United Methodist Church, 200 N.W. Second St., will be hosting **God's Time** -- a morning of free organized Christian activities that includes play, instruction and interaction for parents and their pre-school children. The event will be held each Tuesday from 9:30 a.m. until noon. Child care will be provided for infants during the class. For information, call 863-763-4021.

Haven of Rest Church, 2947 S.W. Third Terr., holds meetings for persons with alcohol and drug related problems at 6 p.m. For information call 863-357-3053.

Compulsive overeaters are invited to a weekly meeting, **Overeaters Anonymous** (OA) meets at the Okeechobee Presbyterian Church, 312 N. Parrott Avenue on Tuesdays, 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.

The Lighthouse Refuge Support Group is for women who are hurting, homeless or been abused. They meet on the first and third Tuesday of every month from noon until 2 p.m. at First Baptist Church, 401 S.W. Fourth St., and on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month from 6:30 until 8:30 p.m. at the Red Cross, 323 N. Parrott Ave. For more information call Donna Dean at 863-801-9201 or 863-357-2106.

Counseling Corner

Helping reduce the trauma of a family move

By the American Counseling Association

Summer is usually the busiest time of the year for family relocations, an event that's bound to bring high levels of stress for your children.

For children, moving can mean a real sense of loss related to friends and all the familiar places being left, as well as a great deal of anxiety about the unknowns of that new home.

You can start minimizing such issues by explaining why you're moving. Simply repeating that they'll "love the new house" won't mean much, but explaining that the move will mean being closer to family or giving you a great new job helps them understand why this is happening.

You also want to acknowledge your child's feelings of loss. They can include the loss of "best friends" (a major issue for most youngsters), sports and teams they've grown accustomed to, or the end of a teen's romantic relationship. While you want to reassure your children that there will be new friends and activities to discover, you also want them to know you understand their feelings and you care about the loss they're experiencing. Expect a lot of tears and plan on giving lots of hugs and reassurance.

A little pre- and post-move planning can also make things easier. Start by sharing information about the new town so it isn't all a great unknown. Chamber of

commerce brochures, pictures of your new house, and a town map with your house as well as schools, parks, malls and movie theaters all marked can help kids feel less anxious about what is coming. At the new house, first open boxes you specially marked when packing that contain some of your children's favorite things. Having familiar posters, photos and toys in their new rooms will make them feel at home faster.

A new pet for the new house can also be a great distraction with a real settling effect, even if it's just a goldfish.

Making unpacking low stress also helps. Keeping yourself and your children relaxed and enjoying the new experience is more important than how quickly boxes are emptied. Take time with the kids to explore your new neighborhood, to go by the new school and to locate things to make life enjoyable (where is the pizza joint and ice cream shop?).

Moving to a new home is never easy, but with a little planning, understanding and support you can make it a much less stressful experience for your children.

"The Counseling Corner" is provided as a public service by the American Counseling Association, the nation's largest organization of counseling professionals. Learn more about the counseling profession at the ACA web site, www.counseling.org.

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

Robbery

Continued From Page 1

Normally, he said, bonds are suggested by the arresting officer and are determined by a bond schedule provided by the state.

According to Deputy Marrero's arrest report, Hunt and Romero apparently grabbed a man who was riding a bicycle in the 3600 block of N.W. Sixth St. around 9:50 p.m. The report states the two young men also pulled the victim into some nearby woods and robbed him of \$160 cash.

The report states that Romero straddled the victim's neck and "punched him viciously several times in the face."

Deputy Marrero went on to state that Hunt was telling

Romero to punch the victim and that while the victim was being beaten Hunt took the money, all in \$20 bills, from the victim.

The victim then took the deputy to the house on N.W. Seventh St. where Deputy Marrero found the four young men.

None of the money was found, the report added.

Sanchez was charged with cocaine possession after Deputy Marrero saw a plastic bag containing a residue on the arm of a chair in which Sanchez was sitting. The deputy said the residue was field tested and indicated a positive result for the presence of cocaine.

The report goes on to state that while the deputy was searching Romero he found a clear plastic bag containing a green leafy sub-

stance. The substance, when field tested, indicated a positive result for the presence of marijuana.

According to court records Hunt, who is also known by the moniker of Brother, went before Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Mirman on Nov. 20, 2008, and entered a plea of no contest to a charge of burglary of a structure with assault or battery.

Judge Mirman adjudicated him guilty and sentenced him to one year, eight months and 23 days in the county jail. However, after being credited with the time he'd already served, Hunt was released.

Circus

Continued From Page 1

generations. They have been in the United States for 27 years but are originally from Milan, Italy.

They currently reside in Englewood. They travel all over the United States bringing their European Circus to entertain the citizens of many towns along the way.

This year's show is an all new performance with new routines sure to wow the audience as it did in years past.

Some of the performances at the circus include hula-hoop tricks with multiple hula-hoops, and a Chinese version of juggling involving a double cone shaped prop called a diabolo which consists of a spool that is whirled and tossed on a string tied to two sticks held one in each hand. Multiple diabolos can be spun on a single string which makes a huge variety of tricks possible using the sticks, string and various body parts.

They also use the Chiffon, which is a long piece of material that the performer climbs and does various aerial stunts by wrapping the material around

their arms or legs.

The Anastasini European Big Top Extravaganza Circus Spectacular has all the makings for an exciting show for all ages.

Opening night is Friday, Jan. 9, at 7:30 p.m. Additional showings have been added this year as follows: Saturday, Jan. 10, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan. 11, at 2 and 6 p.m.

Tickets are on sale at the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce, 55 S. Parrott Ave.

Ringside box seats are available for \$25 for adults and \$15 for children under 12, with 80 ringside seats available per show; Mezzanine Family Tickets, two adult and two children, for \$25; general admission seating is available for \$12 for adults and \$7 for children under 12.

There is no charge for infants or very small children who do not take a seat.

There are \$2 coupons available that can be applied to all tickets except the ringside box seats.

Tickets are available through the Chamber of Commerce or at the door on a first-come, first-served basis.

For information, call the Chamber of Commerce at 863-763-6464.



Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar
This Anastasini European Big Top Extravaganza Circus performer balanced on three cylinders during their circus event last year. Come see what he has in store for this year!

Dr. King

Continued From Page 1



File photo
In 2007 this man came to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day wearing a T-shirt bearing the likeness of the day's honoree.

Welch. Other details will be publicized as they become available.

According to Mrs. Bertha Boswell, of the Okeechobee Im-

provement Association, there is still one more planning meeting to be held to finalize details.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Dr. King, (Jan. 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968) was a clergyman, activist and prominent leader in the American civil rights movements.

In 1964, Dr. King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end racial segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent means.

In 1983, then-President Ronald Reagan signed a bill creating a federal holiday to honor Dr. King. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. Reporter Pete Gauda can be reached at pgauda@newszap.com.

BBQ

Continued From Page 1

The Jack Daniel's World Championship Invitational Barbecue held in Lynchburg, Tenn., is a by-invitation-only event with U.S. competitors limited to the following criteria: there is no entry fee for the competitors; invitations are sent only to the grand champion of qualifying contests; no "pass downs" are allowed; every U.S. team invited must earn its way in the competition; inter-

national teams are encouraged to compete but may not include U.S. members; an orientation is held for international teams; and, experienced barbecue cooks and ambassadors are on site throughout the week preceding the contest to answer any questions.

Friday's local events include several competitions from 6 until 7:30 p.m. for sauce, apple pie, anything butt and beer can chicken.

Entertainment will be provided on both Friday night and Saturday. Okeechobee Main Street will be serving beverages for all ages.

On Friday night beginning at

7 p.m. and Saturday at noon, the cook teams will be vending their foods. There will be a variety of foods available that will include a variety of foods such as roasted corn.

On Saturday, Jan. 19, at 11 a.m. the people's choice tent will be open where individuals can pay \$5 to taste as much as they desire from each team that enters that category. They must then select the best pork butt and the respective cook will win that event.

For information about the event, call Toni Doyle at 863-357-MAIN.

Pageant

Continued From Page 1

changed this year and separated the categories to narrow the age groups.

Categories for boys are Tiny Mister for 3 year olds and Little Mister for 4 and 5 year olds.

Admission fee for the pageant is \$5 for 12 year olds and up. The parents of the contestants will receive free admission.

The Chamber is also accepting applications for the Speckled Perch Parade. The parade will be held on Saturday, Feb. 9 at 10 am. Applications are available at the Chamber office.

The 40th annual Speckled Perch Festival will be held Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 9-10.

Applications are also avail-

able for the 40th Annual Speckled Perch Festival. The Chamber welcomes all non-profit arts and crafts vendors and retail businesses to join them for their event in Flagler Park. A reservation fee of \$75 for non-profit arts & crafts booths and can include bake sale items.

The fee for non-profit food booths is \$171.20. A reservation fee of \$100 is required for retail booths for promotion of sale of retail items. The fee for commercial food vendors is \$267.50. This fee is collected at the time your reservation is made. Rules do apply and are available at the Chamber office.

With the 2008 festival being the 40th anniversary of the Speckled Perch Festival there are new events and activities in the works to make this year a monumental

event. While being held in a different month and without the support of the rodeo goers will be new territory, the chamber is prepared to do additional promotional advertising in order to make the event a success for the chamber and for the other local businesses and vendors involved.

For more information about the Speckled Perch Pageant, Speckled Perch Parade or the Speckled Perch Festival contact the Chamber at (863) 763-6464. Remember to have your applications and money turned in to the Chamber for the pageant by Tuesday, Jan. 8.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com.

Reporter Chauna Aguilar may be reached at caguilar@newszap.com.

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U.S. Peace Corps needs good teachers

Peace Corps is recruiting qualified teachers for numerous university assignments around the globe. Currently, there is a high demand for skilled teachers with classroom and teacher training experience in China and Mongolia. Peace Corps education volunteers placed in China and Mongolia will introduce innovative teaching methods and encourage critical thinking in a variety of classroom settings throughout the country. They may also work in curricula or materials development, and train teachers in conversational English, academic subjects, or instruction methodologies.

Patrick Sansbury, of Spartanburg, SC, has been serving in China for four months. He said, "The opportunity to teach here is an amazing one and I would advise any teacher to apply for Peace Corps in China. You get to work with highly motivated students who want to improve their English to obtain a good job and to support their families."

As part of its on-going effort to bring more skilled and experienced volunteers to the field, the Peace Corps is reaching out to mid-career and retiring teachers who are considering new alternatives to traditional retirement.

"For my Chinese students, one of my primary goals is instilling confidence in them," said Megan Smith, of Taylor, S.C., who previously taught primary school in Iowa and South Carolina. "Most of them have the tools and knowledge necessary to speak English, but many are still quite terrified of doing it."

The most competitive candidates have: a minimum of three years of classroom experience; advanced degrees in teaching, education, TEFL, English, primary or secondary education, or linguistics; or teacher trainer experience. Other relevant experience includes working with adult literacy programs or writing for literary magazines or newspapers.

Countrywide, China has a shortage of 500,000 English teachers. In 1993 the first group of eighteen Peace Corps Volunteers were sent at the request of the Chinese government. Volunteers participated in a pilot project engaged in English education at the university level. Fourteen years have passed and English education continues to be the top priority for the universities in China.

Currently 114 Volunteers are teaching English in more than 62 universities, including five medical colleges and four vocational colleges. Peace Corps Volunteers are known as "U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers" to their students and colleagues. Volunteers teach English at colleges and universities within four regions of Western China: Sichuan, Guizhou, Gansu, and Chongqing.

The Peace Corps/Mongolia program began with an English education project in 1991 and has expanded to include Volunteers working in numerous sectors directly relevant to national development priorities. In July 2005, President Nambaryn Enkhbayar and Prime Minister Tsakhiagiyn Elbegdorj both expressed their desire for increased numbers of Peace Corps Volunteers in Mongolia.

Since 1961, over 190,000 Volunteers have helped promote a better understanding between Americans and the people of the 139 countries where Volunteers have served. Peace Corps Volunteers must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. There is no upper age limit.



Okeechobee News/Selena Eubanks

12 days of Christmas

Mr. Stanley's 4th grade class of North Elementary presented "...And a Groundhog in a Pear Tree" on Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 6 p.m. Mr. Stanley is very proud of all his students for all their hard work, working so well together and for doing a fabulous job. Characters included: Fish - April Fool's Day, Tee Nine - Feb. 29, N.Y.D. - New Year's Day, Calia - Valentine's Day, Whistle - Groundhog Day, June - Father's Day, The Junettes - June's hench-chicks and finally 12 Agents - One for each of the 12 days of Christmas. Settings: Hallway in Calendar Castle and The Grand Ballroom. The play was a lot of fun with great humor. The students were very excited to perform for their parents, teachers and classmates. Mr. Stanley would like to thank following people, who helped to make the play possible: Bonnie Roehm, Glenna Rucks, Elizabeth Stanley, Debbie Raulerson, Holly Sizemore, Jackie Hilyer, Kacey Hackett, Alicia Walker and everyone else involved in making the program a huge success. Congratulations to all of the students for a performance well done.

SES winter carnival a success!

South Elementary's Winter Carnival was a great success! The students enjoyed the booths, the adults enjoyed the Silent Auction and everyone enjoyed the delicious food. This week the PTO of South Elementary would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their support of the Silent Auction: Staffords, Y Drive Thru, Communities in Schools, Hungry Howies, Bealls Outlet, Marble Slab, Accardi-Milrot Dodge, National City, Linda Cotton, Gloria's Sween n Bloom, Shoe Box, Mary Paulson, Freida Stiles, Aaron's Furniture, Okeechobee Feed, Home Depot, Double G Enterprises, Trends Tanning and Hair, Flower Petals, Eli's Western Wear, Joe's Barbershop, Rustic Ranch, Plaster Play Time, Gilbert's Chevrolet, Superior Muffler, The Tropics, Custom Graphics and Design, Sandra Pearce Photography, Everglades Farm Equipment, Pahokee Palms, Tractor Supply, Soaps and Scents, Badcock, Don's Appliances, Cowgirl Diva, Daniels Plumbing, Okeechobee Office Supply, ARS Power Sports, Car Quest, The UPS Store, Maximum Tanning, Suzie's Hallmark, Countryside Florist, Curves, Garrad Bait and Tackle, Dianne Litteral, Okeechobee County Extension Office, and Dorothy Rucks. The PTO will list all those who donated food or volunteered their time in next the next South Elementary article.

Williams Homegrown Giving program. South Elementary was awarded this grant to purchase document readers and projectors for classroom use. Yamileth Duetcher served as liaison between our SAC and Gulfstream Natural Gas. Her husband, Shawn Duetcher, sponsored our grant application.

The students who were recognized as Student of the Week for the week ending Dec. 19, included: Alex Walker, Drina Aguilar, Tristan Sweat, Jay Krall, Jadene Garcia, Josie Carter, Shelby Warren, Cole Carpenter, Jesus Denova, Haley Land, Austyn Scruggs, Tracy Bronson, Daniel Arellano, Matthew Huddleston, Naimah Campbell, Selena Tagle, Jesus Gomez, Nelly Almanza, Taylor Hammack, Jessica Delgado, Justin Hunter, and Dakoda Garelick.

The Students of the Month for December included, Aliany Garcia, Xander Blackwood, Yesenia Leon, Jay Krall, Matthew Arnall, Josie Carter, Dillon Hill, Janixza Lopez, Jesus Denova, Anselmo Garcia, Logan Etherton, Rainne Kasik, Noah Torres, Cristian Rios, Jennifer Center, Bailie Shurley, Brittany Snow, Nathan Center, Maricela Bucio, and Caitlan Seffield.

Teachers return from Winter Break on Jan. 5. Students return on Jan. 6. Friday, Jan. 9, is Tie Day for Spirit Day. Students can wear any type of tie to show their school spirit!

Gulfstream Natural Gas System provides grants through their Wil-



Submitted photo/South Elementary

Students of the Week

The students who were recognized as Student of the Week for the week ending Dec. 19, included: Alex Walker, Drina Aguilar, Tristan Sweat, Jay Krall, Jadene Garcia, Josie Carter, Shelby Warren, Cole Carpenter, Jesus Denova, Haley Land, Austyn Scruggs, Tracy Bronson, Daniel Arellano, Matthew Huddleston, Naimah Campbell, Selena Tagle, Jesus Gomez, Nelly Almanza, Taylor Hammack, Jessica Delgado, Justin Hunter, and Dakoda Garelick.

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For individual and business e-File, 2008 is a record breaker

WASHINGTON — Individual taxpayers e-filed almost 90 million tax returns during 2008, an increase of more than 12 percent over the prior year. Of the 155 million tax returns filed, about 58 percent were filed electronically. "More people with home computers and businesses embraced electronic filing this year," said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman. "Every year, more people realize that electronic filing is the safe, accurate way for taxpayers to complete their taxes and get faster refunds."

Tax returns filed by individuals

While the total number of returns has increased by 23 percent during the past decade, the number filed electronically has increased by 206 percent.

Year	Total Returns e-Filed	Percent of total e-filed
1999	125,900,000	23.31%
2000	128,430,000	

Year	Total Returns	Percent of total e-filed
2001	130,965,000	27.57%
2002	131,728,000	30.73%
2003	131,557,000	35.60%
2004	132,200,000	40.24%
2005	133,933,000	46.53%
2006	136,071,000	51.13%
2007	140,188,000	53.84%
2008	155,490,000	57.05%

This year, almost 27 million returns were filed by individuals from their home computers, up from 22.6 million last year a 19 percent increase. Filings from home computers accounted for 30 percent of all returns e-filed by individuals. Even though individual tax filings were spurred to unprecedented levels by the economic stimulus payments, the percentage of those e-filed increased to 58 percent.

Free File

During 2008, taxpayers with an adjusted gross income of \$54,000 or less, or about 70 percent of individual taxpayers, had the option of choosing to e-file for free through IRS Free File, a partnership between the IRS and some software manufacturers. Almost 4.8 million tax returns were filed through Free File, an increase of 24 percent over last year's total of almost 3.9 million returns.

Refunds: Direct Deposit and IRS.gov Set Records

More taxpayers chose to receive their refunds through direct deposit during 2008. The agency made 66 million direct deposit payments in 2008, up 8 percent from 61 million payments at the same time in 2007. Overall, the IRS issued 107 million tax refund payments in 2008, up almost 2 percent from 105 million refund payments for the same time in 2007. As of Oct. 31,

the average refund for 2008 was \$2,400, up 4 percent from \$2,309 at the same time in 2007.

IRS.gov

The IRS Internet site, IRS.gov, continues to be a convenient source of federal tax information that consumers can trust, and the site's popularity continues to increase. As of Oct. 18, IRS.gov had been visited 329,367,883 times.

Tax Returns e-Filed by Businesses

Businesses also broke e-file records during 2008 by filing almost 2 million corporate and partnership income tax returns, an increase of more than 50 percent over the prior year. Partnership e-filings saw the steepest increase. Large partnerships, those with more than 100 partners, e-filed more than 27,000 returns during 2008, up 156 percent compared to the prior year's total. Corporations and partnerships e-filed 1,944,421 tax returns during 2008, up 50 percent from last

year's total of 1,294,475. The total number for e-filed returns that were not filed by individuals was 3,365,757, up 65 percent from last year's total of 2,172,753. This number includes forms e-filed by exempt organizations.

[Filing Season Statistics, below:]

2008 FILING SEASON STATISTICS			
Cumulative through the weeks ending 11/02/07 and 10/31/08			
Individual Income Tax Returns	2007	2008	%
Total Receipts	139,272,000	155,490,000	11.6
Total Processed	138,647,000	154,241,000	11.3
E-filing Receipts:			
TOTAL	79,979,000	89,886,000	12.4
Tax Professionals			

57,420,000	62,959,000
9.6	
Self-prepared	22,559,000
26,927,000	19.4
Free File	3,853,813
4,774,894	23.9
Web Usage:	
Visits to IRS.gov	198,049,375
329,367,883	19.7
Total Refunds:	
Number	105,147,000
106,780,000	1.6
Amount (\$Bil)	242.805
256.264	5.5
Average refund-\$2,309	
\$2,400	3.9
Direct Deposit Refunds:	
Number-61,444,000	
66,338,000	8.0
Amount (\$Bil)	165.759
180.498	8.9
Average refund\$ 2,698	
\$2,721	0.9

Mortgage changes give retirees silver lining

You have to look hard to find good news in today's economic outlook, but for retirees, changes to the Federally-Insured Reverse Mortgage are making this holiday season brighter.

of the downturn in our economy, which is especially true for retirees who are vulnerable to the impact on their retirement income. In a recent poll of Americans 60 and over, 92 percent classify the current state of the economy

as "headed for" or "in the midst of" a downturn, and 53 percent feel the current economic conditions are the worse they have ever experienced.

may charge to \$6,000, which will put more money in the pocket of senior homeowners.

Local paralegals become registered through Fla. Bar

Okeechobee: The Accident Law Offices of Philip DeBerard is proud to announce that Bonnie Kinchen, CP,CFP,RP and Rosanna Schachtele, RP, paralegals at the law firm have become Florida Registered Paralegals upon the completion of The Florida Bar Association's Registered Paralegal program's educational, training, and work experience requirement program.



Rosanna Schachtele
da Registered Paralegals.

Bonnie Kinchen
da Registered Paralegals.

Chamber Chatter

The Christmas Festival and lighted parade held in Flagler park was a success. I would like to thank the City Council for making this possible. Also Mr. Donnie Robertson and his crew for being so helpful. Thank you to the City Police and Lt. Donald Hagan for all your help at the parade and Jenny Pung at Waste Management for the spot lights and trash cans. Sheriff Paul May, I appreciate all the help that you provide for the clean up after the festivals. Also, Okeechobee News thank you for getting our information out to the public. Finally thank you to all the vendors that participated in our event. Putting on a festival is a lot of hard work, I could not have done it without your help. Our Christmas parade was awesome! I have received so many compliments from the spectators on how wonderful the floats were. I know first hand how much time it takes to make a float and we had some of the best! I was told that our parade was far better than the coast. Next year we will judge the floats, so we can give recognition

to the ones that really made an effort.

I would also like to add that my very own "Santa's Angel Network" was a success! We were able to provide gifts for 53 families. Thank you to Jeanette and Craig Miller with "Blake's Toy Caper," Rim Ditch Toy & Poker Run, Dollar Tree, Dollar General and all of the individuals that donated gifts for the families. Okeechobee may have grown but we still have a tight knit community when it comes to generosity. Our next event is our Third Annual Anastasini Under the Big Top Circus. This family-owned circus provides a first rate class act that children and adults enjoy. Each year the Anastasini family adds something different to the circus. This year they will have four elephants and boxing kangaroos in their act. I hope you all attend this event. Also kids are invited on Thursday, Jan. 8, at 11 a.m. to watch the elephants eat Domino Pizza for free! It is going to be great! We hope you all have a safe and Happy New Year!

As many as 87 percent of respondents to the MetLife Mature Market Institute poll indicated that they are curtailing their spending, with 70 percent cutting back on essentials such as food and transportation.

As families gather together to celebrate the holidays, there is an opportunity to ease much of the fear and stress related to financial concerns for senior members.

New regulations under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA) have made great improvements to the Federally-Insured Reverse Mortgage.

A reverse mortgage enables homeowners 62 and older to convert the equity in their home into cash for any purpose. The best part is that there is no repayment for as long as the homeowners live in their home. Credit and income are not used to qualify, and Social Security and Medicare benefits are not affected.

On Nov. 6, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) increased a single national loan limit for reverse mortgages to \$417,000, up from the previous limits ranging by county from \$200,160 to \$362,790. This new higher loan limit is expected to increase the number of retirees who qualify for a reverse mortgage, and to enable existing reverse mortgage borrowers to refinance their reverse mortgage to receive more money from their home.

In addition, HUD has capped the fee reverse mortgage lenders

Retirees who now lease a home and would like to become a homeowner, on Jan. 1, 2009, HUD will allow the use of a reverse mortgage to buy a home. This includes the purchase of existing one-to-four-unit properties. Retirees could purchase a duplex or four-unit property, live in one, and rent out the other units to supplement their retirement income.

"There is no doubt that retirees are being adversely affected by today's economic conditions," Steven Brooks, Senior Loan Officer at First Liberty Mortgage said. "We are able to structure the reverse mortgage so that it best serves the needs of our senior client by receiving a lump sum up front for immediate needs, monthly payments to cover ongoing expenses, and a line-of-credit to draw from for unexpected or larger expenses."

For many retirees who previously did not qualify for a reverse mortgage because their existing mortgage balance was too high or they were renting a home, you may now be able to qualify.

To learn more about reverse mortgages and how the new regulations affect you, contact First Liberty Mortgage. They provide a free reverse mortgage informational package and confidential estimate by calling them toll-free at 800-642-3188 or by visiting www.mytreasurecoastloan.com.



Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

Communities in Schools

Sharon Vinson (right) accepted a check on behalf of Jill Rogers (not pictured) and the Communities in Schools from the United Way's Terelle Peterson (left) and Melody Hodges (center) to help them continue their services in Okeechobee County.

Mary Helen and her husband, Dean, at the beach in 1934.

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—JuDeane Garrett
Daughter of Mary Helen

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4001-M Buckhead Ridge lake access Mobile home with attached screened room. Nice and **\$98,000** MLS# 201911

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5037-H 3/2 CBS home w/ attached garage located in Basswood. Well taken care split bedroom plan, new water system and pave driveway, appliances included. **MLS# 201827**

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- Big "O" RV Park vacant lot or with home. **5+/- acres @ NE 24th St. MLS# 201364**
- 5+/- acres Sunset Strip Airpark @ SW 13th St. **MLS# 201396**
- Basswood lots from **\$15,000-\$33,000**
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- Dark Hammock 2 10+/- acre parcels with MH or without your choice

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Community Events

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, 2009 at the Doyle Conner Center at 7 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

BHR VFD Winterfest 2009

Winterfest 2009 in Buckhead Ridge will be held on Jan. 31. There will be catfish, cotton candy, popcorn, crafts, music and

Reflections from the Pulpit

By Rev. Ed Skiba
Chaplain, Big Lake Hospice
Pray Without Ceasing
When I sit down to write about theological issues, I always pray and ask for God's perspective and not mine. Doctrine and dogma can be catalysts or can be points of division within the church. What seems readily obvious to one segment of the church can seem vague and uncertain to another segment. Many times differences of opinion are formed around what we want scripture to say rather than what it actually says.

Some of us choose one version of the Holy Bible as the only inerrant version. Some of us choose to see the same Holy Bible as a little more than a "guideline" by which we should live. Some have even changed the wording to fit their perspectives. God has given us His divine revelation in these sacred texts and we use them to manipulate and distort His will for our lives. He has generously revealed Himself to us and we try to tell Him who He is.
How do we know what is right and what is wrong about our spiritual understanding and perspective? If we attempt to determine our spiritual direction by intellectualizing God's Word, we will be able to form a secularly comfortable perspective that we can neatly fit into a prefabricated corner of our lives. It won't interfere with what we really want to do, and we can pull it out and use it for reference whenever we feel like it ... or not!
If, on the other hand, we listen to Paul's admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 which states "...pray without ceasing" we will find ourselves in a place where God's will for our lives, and His intentions in His scriptures, become a clear and integral part of who we are. We all lead busy lives in which we can't be constantly on our knees in prayer. What Paul was saying is that we should have such an intimate relationship with God that allows Him to know our thoughts and needs before we even ask, which He does anyway. More importantly, by that relationship, we should know God's desire for our lives without even having to think or ask about it.

I believe we, as people, put too much emphasis on the appearance of spirituality and not enough on the practice of it. There is a great difference between religion and relationship. It's the difference between intellectualizing God's Word and internalizing it. God wants us to be so open and receptive to His will that it doesn't matter what version of the Bible we read, the Holy Ghost's inspiration of God's will in the scripture's words will reach to the center of our being and we will understand God's perfect will for our lives. Understanding God's will for us and accepting it are two separate issues. We'll talk about our acceptance of God's will next time I write.
Have a blessed New Year. Know that God loves you and so do I.

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.

Chamber announces Speckled Perch dates

Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce has 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

DAR to meet

The National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution has changed its regular meeting place from the Oakview Baptist Church to the Okeechobee Coun-

ty 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.

Raulerson Hospital presents "Ladies Health Day."

On Jan. 20, from noon until 1 p.m., a "Ladies Health Day" luncheon will take place at Indian River State College in the Raulerson Hospital Auditorium. The Raulerson Hospital Auditorium is located in the new Williamson Conference and Education Center at 2229 N.W. Ninth Avenue at IRSC. The guest Raulerson Hospital staff physicians will be James Bradford M.D., Board Certified Gynecologist, Albert Bravo M.D., Board Certified Gastroenterologist and Internal Medicine, and Philip Moyer M.D., board Certified General/Vascular Surgeon and Diplomate American Board of General Surgery. The seminar will cover many of the new gynecology and health care services that are now being offered for women of all ages and the new "State of the Art" surgical procedures that are opening up regularly at the hospital. Reservations are required. Please R.S.V.P. to Bill Casian at 863-824-2702. Only 100 seats are available for this event.

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 three-day, first 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.

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.

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. 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.



Okeechobee Livestock Market
U.S. 98 North, Okeechobee (863) 763-3127

Sales:
Monday at 12 p.m.
Tuesday at 11 a.m.

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Board Certified Radiation Oncologists

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Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

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One Child & Adult



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

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✓ Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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

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• Private parties only
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Full Time 0205

Employment
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Special Notice 0155

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* Key West 1/1 Furnished Cottage - Dade County Pine Hardwood
Floors - adorable wrap around porch on Taylor Creek
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Wheeler, lots of upgraded
parts, also have spare parts.
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Robert**

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Important Information: Please
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ed. We will not be responsible
for more than 1 incorrect re-
insertion, or for more than the
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ueless by such errors.
Advertiser assumes responsi-
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assumes responsibility for any
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Newspapers. All advertising
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reject any or all copy, and to
insert above the copy the word
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approval. All ads must conform
to Independent Newspapers'
style and are restricted to their
proper classifications. Some
classified categories
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These classifications are
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Independent Newspapers will
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advertisement that is illegal or
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cases of questionable value,
such as promises of guaran-
teed 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 pre-
vious complaints.

**Employment
200**
Employment - Full Time 205
Employment - Medical 210
Employment - Part-Time 215
Employment - Wanted 220
Job Information 225
Job Training 227
Sales 230

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RINGER WASHER - Antique, in
working order. \$100 Firm
(863)467-4449
Appliances 0515
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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

Public Notice 5005
Public Notice 5005
NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE
COQUINA WATER CONTROL DISTRICT
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS FOR COQUINA WATER CONTROL DISTRICT WILL
HOLD A MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009 AT 9:00 A.M. AT THE CO-
QUINA WATER CONTROL DISTRICT'S FIELD OFFICE, 17429 NW 242ND STREET,
OKEECHOBEE, FL. A COPY OF THE PROPOSED AGENDA MAY BE OBTAINED UPON
REQUEST FROM THE UNDERSIGNED. IF ANY PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL ANY
DECISION BY THE BOARD WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT
SUCH MEETING, THAT PERSON WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
AND FOR SUCH PURPOSES THAT PERSON MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBA-
L RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, WHICH INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND
EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS TO BE BASED, IS MADE. ANY PERSON
WISHING TO SPEAK AT THE MEETING MUST HAVE THEIR NAME AND TOPIC
PLACED ON THE AGENDA ONE WEEK BEFORE THE DATE OF THE MEETING. ALL
PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN THE DISTRICT ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, PERSONS
NEEDING A SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION OR AN INTERPRETER TO PARTICIPATE IN
THE PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE DISTRICT'S OFFICES BY CALLING
(863)763-4601 AT LEAST TWO (2) DAYS PRIOR TO THE DATE OF THE MEETING.
NOTICE: COQUINA WATER CONTROL DISTRICT HAS AN ONGOING AQUATIC
SPRAYING PROGRAM, DISTRICT WIDE.
WILLARD M. BYARS
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
17429 NW 242ND STREET
OKEECHOBEE, FL 34972
(863)763-4601 OR (863)634-3166
305312 ON 1/4/09

Automobiles 4005
Auto's 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
Sport Trucks 4050
Pickup Trucks 4055
Tractor Trailers 4060
Utility Trailers 4065
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DOG - female, black, vic. of 98
& 70, near Speck Restaurant
on Christmas Day. Call to
describe (863)697-8656

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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.
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Financial 300
Business Opportunities 305
Money Lenders 310
Tax Preparation 315

Merchandise 500
Air Conditioners 505
Antiques 510
Appliances 515
Appliance Parts 520
Beauty Supplies 525
Bicycles 530
Books & Magazines 535
Building Materials 540
Business Equipment 545
Carpets/Rugs 550
Children's Items 555
China, Glassware, Etc. 560
Clothing 565
Coins/Stamps 570
Collectibles 575
Computer/Video 580
Crafts/Supplies 585
Cruises 590
Drapes, Linens & Fabrics 595
Fireplace Fixture 600
Firewood 605
Furniture 610
Furs 615

Collectibles 0575
THREE MCDONALDS Train
Sets, Still in boxes, asking
\$150. Also 20 Piece Teapot
collection \$250
(863)763-5501
Furniture 0610
NEW FURNITURE
FOR LESS !!
DRIVE A LITTLE
SAVE A LOT
Lamps \$17, 100 Barstools
\$39 up, 50 Desks \$97 up,
3Pc Dropleaf Dinette \$197,
50 Table and 4 Chairs \$397
up, 200 Recliners \$297 up,
50 2pc Sofa & Loveseat
sets \$687 up, 50 TV Ent.
Centers \$167 up, 2 Pc
Queen Bed set \$297 up, 50
4Pc Bedroom sets \$387 up,
3Pc Livingroom tables
\$97up, 100 headboards
\$79 up.

Apartment 0905
IN TOWN - 2/2 very clean,
w/d, lawn maint included,
\$800 + \$300 sec
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kit, use of deck/boat house
for small boat, heated pool,
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Gated Community
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Appliances 515
Appliance Parts 520
Beauty Supplies 525
Bicycles 530
Books & Magazines 535
Building Materials 540
Business Equipment 545
Carpets/Rugs 550
Children's Items 555
China, Glassware, Etc. 560
Clothing 565
Coins/Stamps 570
Collectibles 575
Computer/Video 580
Crafts/Supplies 585
Cruises 590
Drapes, Linens & Fabrics 595
Fireplace Fixture 600
Firewood 605
Furniture 610
Furs 615

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4Pc Bedroom sets \$387 up,
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Okeechobee
Indian Hammock
3/2 House
Gated Community
1800 sq. ft., 2.5
acres. Includes barn
w/2 horse stalls,
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unfurnished
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Business Opportunities 305
Money Lenders 310
Tax Preparation 315

Merchandise 500
Air Conditioners 505
Antiques 510
Appliances 515
Appliance Parts 520
Beauty Supplies 525
Bicycles 530
Books & Magazines 535
Building Materials 540
Business Equipment 545
Carpets/Rugs 550
Children's Items 555
China, Glassware, Etc. 560
Clothing 565
Coins/Stamps 570
Collectibles 575
Computer/Video 580
Crafts/Supplies 585
Cruises 590
Drapes, Linens & Fabrics 595
Fireplace Fixture 600
Firewood 605
Furniture 610
Furs 615

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collection \$250
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Furniture 0610
NEW FURNITURE
FOR LESS !!
DRIVE A LITTLE
SAVE A LOT
Lamps \$17, 100 Barstools
\$39 up, 50 Desks \$97 up,
3Pc Dropleaf Dinette \$197,
50 Table and 4 Chairs \$397
up, 200 Recliners \$297 up,
50 2pc Sofa & Loveseat
sets \$687 up, 50 TV Ent.
Centers \$167 up, 2 Pc
Queen Bed set \$297 up, 50
4Pc Bedroom sets \$387 up,
3Pc Livingroom tables
\$97up, 100 headboards
\$79 up.

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China, Glassware, Etc. 560
Clothing 565
Coins/Stamps 570
Collectibles 575
Computer/Video 580
Crafts/Supplies 585
Cruises 590
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March of Dimes: Premature births at crisis level

The United States is failing hundreds of thousands of its youngest citizens on the day they are born, according to the March of Dimes. Florida faces a crisis level of premature births that is driving up health care costs and special education budgets; preventive action is needed starting now.

In the first of what will be an annual Premature Birth Report Card, the nation received a "D" and not a single state earned an "A," when the March of Dimes compared actual preterm birth rates to the national Healthy People 2010 objective. The grade of F indicates how far Florida, with a preterm birth rate of 13.8 percent, is from the Healthy People 2010 objective of 7.6 percent of all live births. Latest available data (2005) show that the national preterm birth rate is 12.7 percent.

The only state to earn a "B" was Vermont. Eight states earned a "C," 23 states earned a "D," and 18 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia got failing grades of "F."

"It is unacceptable that our nation is failing so many preterm babies," said Jennifer L. Howse, PhD,

president of the March of Dimes. "We are determined to find and implement solutions to prevent preterm birth, based on research, best clinical practices, and improved education for moms."

In addition to providing state rankings, the March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card analyzes contributing factors and prevention opportunities, including rates of late preterm birth, smoking, and uninsured women of childbearing age. In Florida, the rate of late preterm births is 9.8 percent, the rate of women smoking is 19.7 percent and the rate of uninsured women is 27 percent.

"The Report Card illustrates the importance of ensuring every pregnant woman in Florida has access to health coverage, and it further stresses the value of smoking prevention and cessation," said Charles Mahan, MD, March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign Chair. "Specifically regarding the uninsured, next year, the March of Dimes will be advocating against proposed cuts to Medicaid income eligibility for pregnant women from 185% to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (from

\$39,220 to \$31,800 for a family of four)." In addition to these issues, the March of Dimes will continue to include the protection of newborn screening and birth defect surveillance programs amongst its advocacy priorities."

The Report Card also calls for:

- Expanded federal support for prematurity-related research to uncover the causes of premature birth and lead not only to strategies for prevention, but also improved care and outcomes for preterm infants.
- Hospital leaders to voluntarily review all Cesarean-section births and inductions of labor that occur before 39 weeks gestation, in an effort to reverse America's rising preterm birth rate. The review should ensure that all c-sections and inductions meet established professional guidelines.
- Policymakers to improve access to health coverage for women of childbearing age and to support smoking cessation programs as part of maternity care.
- Businesses to create workplaces that support maternal and infant health, such as providing private areas to pump breast milk,

access to flextime, and information about how to have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth.

Nov. 12, marks the nation's Sixth Annual Prematurity Awareness Day, a time when the March of Dimes mobilizes volunteers and parents to draw attention to premature birth (birth before 37 weeks gestation), which affects more than 530,000 babies each year in the United States. Premature birth is the leading cause of newborn death and a major cause of lifelong disability.

In this election year, the March of Dimes invites all Americans to help send a message to our new President and to federal and state lawmakers by signing the 2008 Petition for Premies at marchofdimes.com/petition.

The purpose of the Petition and the Report Card is to raise public awareness of the growing crisis of preterm birth so elected and appointed officials will commit more resources to address this problem and policymakers will support development of strategies that benefit mothers and babies.

The Report Card also is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, the National Business Group on Health, the American Benefits Council and dozens of other businesses and maternal and infant health organizations.

The March of Dimes says that in 2009, Report Card grades will reflect state actions taken that have the potential to reduce preterm birth rates in future years.

Preterm birth is the leading cause of death in the first month of life in the United States. The preterm birth rate has increased more than 20 percent since 1990 and costs the nation more than \$26 billion a year, according to the Institute of Medicine report issued in July 2006.

Babies who survive a premature birth face the risk of serious life-long health problems including learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, blindness, hearing loss, and

other chronic conditions including asthma. Even infants born just a few weeks too soon have a greater risk of breathing problems, feeding difficulties, temperature instability (hypothermia), jaundice and delayed brain development.

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. Its mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org.

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Okeechobee News/Chauna Aguilar

United Way helps My Aunt's House

Judy Watts (center-left) and her husband Wendy Watts (left) accepted a check for My Aunt's House from the United Way's Roslin Brown (center-left) and Terelle Peterson (left) to help them continue their services in Okeechobee County of providing clothing to needy families as well as school supplies and Christmas gifts.




Submitted photo/Okee Substance Abuse Coalition

Above left, Sheriff Paul May (center) donated \$1,500 to the Okeechobee Substance Abuse Coalition to further their work in the community. John Glenn (left) and Jim Vensel (right) accepted the donation on behalf of the OSAC. Above right, Jeri Wilson (center) donated \$100 to the Okeechobee Substance Abuse Coalition to further their work in the community. John Glenn (left) and Jim Vensel (right) accepted the donation on behalf of the OSAC which meets the second Tuesday of each month at the United Methodist Church, 103 N.W. Fifth St. Visit www.okeechobeehope.org for more information or call 863-357-HOPE (4673).



File photo

Okeechobee County Firemedics performed demonstrations at 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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