

Public Forum/Speak Out

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!

Okeechobee football

• Not many programs at OHS reload; they are forced to rebuild. Wrestling has been the most consistent over the last five years. By the way, thank you Coach Jahner for coming out of retirement to help the program you built into a power. It's a shame others don't appreciate what you have accomplished with wrestling. Hopefully, you will be able to turn the program over to someone as dedicated as you are to your sport. Football, softball, and baseball all have gone through rebuilding periods and had peaks and valleys along the way. It all goes in waves, period. If you don't agree you need to start paying more attention to high school sports, here and across the area.

• All OHS players are homegrown. They do not have the urgency to find a way out of town. Pride and egos get in the way of too many of OHS athletes and their parents. If things are going bad, too many choose to quit instead of finishing what is started. Parents are to blame for this: not the 15-18 year old making the decision. Too many excuses, too many other people to blame, too easy to give someone else the credit for shortcomings. Coach Jackson will be fine. Don't think for one second this man doesn't have a plan to build this program into a winner. Everything he has done to this point convinces me he is on the right track. The next couple of years will be fun to watch.

• Kids should want to graduate and get out of this small town, and see what is out there because come five years after you graduate no one cares about what you did in high school. This town reminds me of the town in the TV show Friday Night Lights where all the parents grew up in the town, and no one wants to leave the town.

• All places have their flaws and Okeechobee is not any different. But most people would want to live in a place where they can go to the store and not get worried if they don't lock their doors. People are free to leave Okeechobee—no one is holding them back. It is a choice.

Imports from China

• I know everyone has heard the stuff from China has some form of poison in it -- the toys, meds, drywall, etc. Are you aware some of the juices we are buying came from China? I have to read ingredients of everything due to an allergy my daughter has and discovered some popular brands of juice say the juice is coming from China! If they are poisoning us with other things we don't eat, can you imagine what they are doing to food and drink that comes from there?

• Buy American.
• Do you know how much is actually made here any more? If you know of a place to find all American, do share!

• It is important for consumers to read the labels. The State of Florida requires country of origin labeling on food. With the exception of things that cannot be grown here for climate reasons, I do not buy any foods grown outside the United States. Some other countries allow the use of pesticides that are banned in the United States. I will not take the risk of buying vegetables or fruit from outside of the United States because I am concerned about contamination. It may cost a little more, but my family's health is worth it.

Halloween festival

• I am not sure who does the Halloween festival but I read that they want it to grow every year. I have a few suggestions; Halloween karaoke contest -- with appropriate songs of course. The teens love to sing karaoke so this might be something for them. Haunted maze -- borrow some hale bales and stack them up in the center the arena. Maybe a youth group would volunteer to do the haunting.

• Why is it at the ag center? Why not downtown in the park?

• The first year they moved it from downtown to the Ag center. This was done at the last minute because it was pouring rain on Halloween. That was a recurring problem with the event in the park -- some years it was cut short due to the weather. I think that is why they hold it at the ag center now -- at least it is under cover. But with so many people attending, more activities would make it better.

• I say bring back the traditional Halloween. Trick or Treating, people used to take pride in decoration, and providing the best treats on the block. Now people even if home turn out their lights so they won't be bothered. Now I have to drive my kids to go Trick or Treating, when before we would just walk on our block and hit plenty of houses. It is a shame that people have forgotten what it is to be neighborly.

• A lot of people stopped trick or treating after the hurricanes in 2004 and 2005 because there was so much debris it was not safe for the kids to be walking around in the dark. The party downtown, and then later at the ag center, provided a safe alternative.

• I have taken the kids to the Halloween Festival every year since Hurricane Wilma ruined Halloween. Main Street does a great job and it has grown every year. Last year they had two haunted houses in the barn area, a great costume contest, plenty of game booths and tons of candy for the kids! They even offered a reasonably priced meal and drinks. It is a great festival for our kids and it is supported by the Sheriff, the Chief of Police and the Commissioners. This is a free event for the kids and is only meant to be an alternative to trick or treating so it is your choice to take your children there. I like taking mine because it is safe. They get to trick or treat rain or shine. The kids get plenty of candy and have fun.

Consolidate the fire departments

• I say keep the workers we have and consolidate both depts into one! Most of them seem to have worked with each other anyways. Our city departments are a waste of taxpayer's monies at this point in time. Why not put all the eggs in one basket and have all the funding we need for law enforcement and EMS?

• I suggest that the county donate the EMS/fire equipment, employees, and building to the city. The city can operate the service. I live in the country and this service is of no benefit to me. If I was to ever call send me a bill.

• I'm willing to privatize the EMS/fire service, it can't be any worse than what I got right now; nothing.

• Consolidating the fire departments would only save money if the city residents were willing to keep paying their current city taxes toward fire service in addition to paying county taxes. Right now it's the city residents who pay city taxes in order to have their own fire and police departments. If they consolidated, I doubt the city residents would be willing to keep paying those extra taxes. So the reduction in taxes would eat up any savings. Consolidation might save money for the city residents but would probably wind up costing those who live outside the city limits more.

USA upset over losing Olympic bid?

• I seem to be missing something here.... WHY are we supposed to be upset over losing out on hosting the Olympic Games? I should think we might cheer this as a win as the amount it would have cost the nation to prepare Chicago to host this event would be phenomenal. Then there is the cost of National Security. Followed by a list longer than your arm of other expenses.

• A poll showed 45 percent of the people in Chicago did not even want the Olympics there. Not everyone is upset.

• The Olympic Games are an honor to host, because it is a chance for our athletes to win on their own turf and to showcase our nation to the entire world. So much time and attention is spent on war and politics, and here we have a chance to compete with other countries on a completely different playing field, and to be able to host that celebration of sportsmanship and athleticism invokes those same feelings of pride as when you see our athletes on the podium. The selection of a host city is a huge two year process, a competition in itself, which grabs the attention and headlines of the entire world. The 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta created an estimated 80,000 jobs. Tourists spent an estimated \$14.7 billion during that year, mostly outside of the Olympic period.



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

To Reach Us

Address: 107 S.W. 17th Street, Suite D
Okeechobee, FL 34974

Website: www.newszap.com

To Submit News

The Okeechobee News welcomes submissions from its readers. Opinions, calendar items, stories and photographs are welcome. Call (863) 763-3134 to reach our newsroom. Items may be mailed, faxed or e-mailed.

E-Mail: okeenews@newszap.com
Speakout: (863) 467-2033

To Place A Display Ad

Phone: 863-763-3134
E-Mail: okeeadsales@newszap.com

To Place A Classified Ad

Call 877-353-2424 to place a classified advertisement from home.

Fax: 877-354-2424

E-Mail: classads@newszap.com

Billing Department

E-Mail: billteam@newszap.com

To Start or Stop A Paper

Phone: (800) 282-8586
E-mail: readerservices@newszap.com
The Okeechobee News is available three times a week via home delivery and is on sale at rack and store locations throughout Okeechobee County. Call the office to find out if your home is within our present home-distribution boundaries.

Call 800-282-8586 to report a missed newspaper or poor delivery.

Additional copies of the newspaper are available for 50 cents Wednesday and Friday and 75 cents for Sunday at the office. Home delivery subscriptions are available at \$18.00 for three months.

Okeechobee News

USPS 406-160

Published 3 times a week: Sunday, Wednesday and Friday by Independent Newspapers, Inc.

107 S.W. 17th Street, Suite D • Okeechobee, FL 34974
Periodicals Postage Paid at Okeechobee, FL 34974
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Okeechobee News
Circulation Administration
PO Box 7011 • Dover, DE 19903

Staff

Advertising Director: Judy Kasten
Editor: Katrina Elskan
Circulation Manager: Janet Madray
Publisher: Tom Byrd

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 the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.

MEMBER
OF:

