

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 101 No. 65

Sunday, May 30, 2010

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Students Working Against Tobacco try to change attitudes



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Softball team honored at banquet ... Page 12

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Sex offender accused of molesting girl

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

A registered sex offender living in Okeechobee County has been accused of re-offending after he allegedly molested a 12-year-old girl.

Billy Wayne Webb, 37, South Parrott Ave., was arrested Thursday, May 27, on a charge of lewd and lascivious molesta-

tion - victim 12-16 years of age and of fender over 18. He was booked into the Okeechobee County Jail where he is being held without bond.

According to an arrest report by Detective Rosemary Farless of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) Webb went to the victim's home with another man on Sunday, May 23, where he fondled the young girl. She got away

from him and went to the bathroom, but Webb followed her, stated the report. He tried to follow her into the bathroom but the child locked the door, the detective's report stated.

Later the child and another woman went into a bedroom where they talked with the girl's father while Webb was re-



Billy Wayne Webb

See WEBB — Page 2

Commissioners oppose reservoir in lake idea

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

At their meeting on Thursday, May 27 Okeechobee County Commissioners strongly expressed disapproval of a water storage proposal.

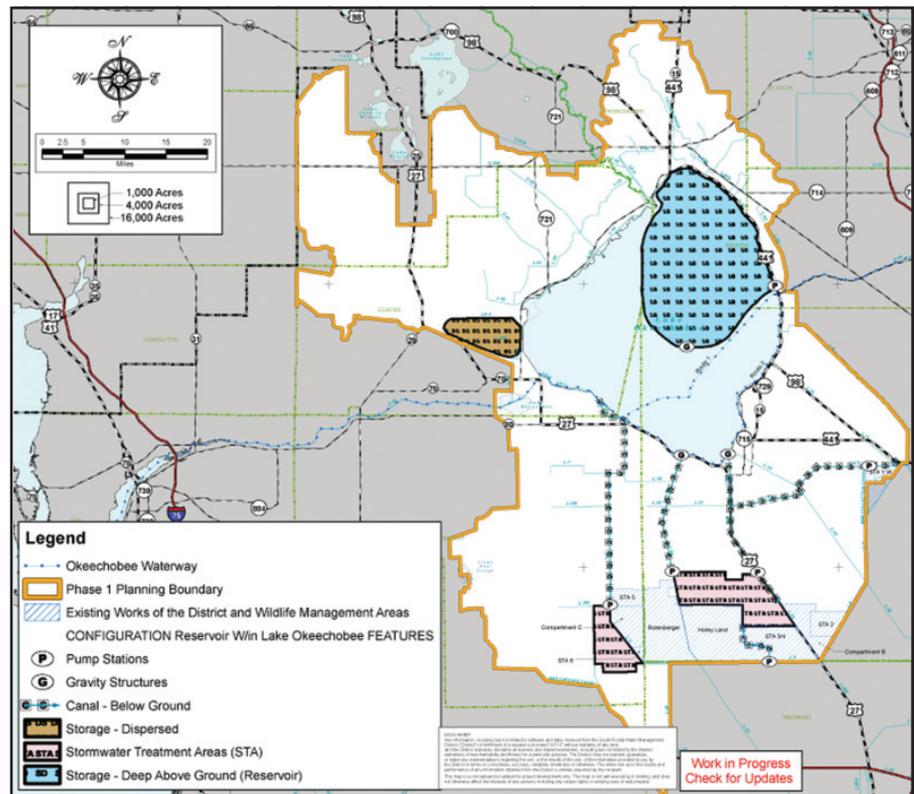
Commissioner Noel Chandler informed his fellow commissioners of plans for a proposed reservoir within the northeastern part of Lake Okeechobee that would cover all of Okeechobee County's lake frontage. He said it would be 15 to 20 feet deep. Commissioner Chandler said that with the reservoir at that depth, the entire southern part of the county would be either wet or underwater. He noted that the city council wrote a letter to South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) opposing the plan as well as the Tourist Development Commission and Okeechobee Main Street. Earlier in the meeting, during the public comment period, Tara Minton, of the Economic Council, stated that her organization was also opposed to the project.

"Okeechobee County is a red headed stepchild," said Commissioner Chandler. He felt the project was not as publicized as it should be.

"We can't allow this to happen." Commissioner Chandler said. "They are using Okeechobee and Okeechobee County to clean up the water south of us."

"For the record, it is not a SFWMD position," said Gary Ritter, director of SFWMD's Okeechobee Service Center. He said the proposal was part of a process that started back in 2008 when the public was asked to come up with possible configurations that would create 1.2 to 1.4 million acre feet of water storage to help prevent discharges to the east and west. He said the reservoir within the lake was one of nine options

See LAKE — Page 5



Special to the Okeechobee News/SFWMD
This graphic provided by the South Florida Water Management District, shows the area of northern Lake Okeechobee proposed for a reservoir within the dike. This plan, authored by Tom MacVicker, Kevin McCarthy, Rebecca Elliot, Linda McCarthy and Scott McCaleb, is one of nine ideas proposed to store excess water.

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WEBB

Continued From Page 1

portedly sitting in the living room. When the girl told her father what had happened, he immediately went to the living room to confront Webb, but he was now gone.

The girl's father went up and down his street looking for Webb. He was reportedly told by some men that they saw a man matching Webb's description running down the road. The man then cut through a yard and jumped into a canal and swam to the other side, indicated the detective's report.

Webb was taken into custody Thursday. A background check shows that Webb has an extensive criminal history that ap-

parently began in 1995. He was first sent to prison in 1996 after being convicted of grand theft-motor vehicle, state Department of Corrections (DOC) records.

In 1999 Webb was arrested in Suwanee County and convicted on three counts of lewd and lascivious assault on a child under 16. On Aug. 13, 1999, he was sentenced to serve 18 months in prison. DOC records show that Webb was released 14 months later.

He was again sent to prison on May 3, 2005, after being convicted for cocaine possession. He was released June 10, 2006, DOC records show.

On June 30, 2006, he was arrested in Broward County for failing to register as a sex offender and was sentenced to a year and a day in prison. DOC records show that he

was released March 1, 2008.

Webb first registered with the OCSO on March 30, 2009. However, he did not stay in Okeechobee County long.

Records at the Glades County Sheriff's Office show that Webb was arrested there on April 14, 2009, for failing to register. He served eight months in the county jail there and was released on Jan. 7, 2010.

On Jan. 14, 2010, he registered with the

Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office where records show that he was listed as being homeless.

OCSO officials explained that it was not against the law for him to be registered as a 'transient' because he was not on probation. If Webb had been on probation, he would have been required to have a permanent address.



Special to the Okeechobee News

Students Working Against Tobacco

Thursday, May 13, the Kiwanis meeting featured a presentation about SWAT. In the photo left to right are: Whitley Burch, Okeechobee County Health Department Tobacco advisor; Derek Borroto, president of Students Working Against Tobacco (S.W.A.T.) at Okeechobee High School as well as S.W.A.T. president of the Okeechobee County chapter; Kimberly Mullin, president of S.W.A.T. at Osceola Middle School as well as vice president of the Okeechobee County S.W.A.T. chapter; and Jim Vensel, president of the Kiwanis Club.



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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!

Memorial Day

It is the VETERAN, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the VETERAN, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the VETERAN, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the VETERAN, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to assemble.

It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the VETERAN, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the VETERAN who salutes the flag.

It is the VETERAN who serves under the flag.

We can be very proud of our young men and women in the service no matter where they serve.

- There is a tradition of the president to lay a wreath on the tomb of the unknown soldier. It is a show of respect and gratitude. It should not be the VP who is doing this. In my opinion he might just as well spit on the tomb as to send Biden to do his job. Guess a vacation is much more important than anything else to him.

- Why is it a big deal that Obama won't be at Arlington for Memorial Day? Other presidents have let someone else do the official Memorial Day ceremony there. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan was at a summit meeting in Virginia. In 1992, President George H.W. Bush was in Maine for Memorial Day. In 2002, President George H. Bush was in Normandy for Memorial Day services. While it is true that none of them just took the weekend and went home on vacation, they weren't at the memorial in Arlington. Does it really matter where the president observes Memorial Day?

- Instead of going to Chicago for the weekend, I think Obama needs to get down to the gulf and put some pressure on BP.

Reflections

- Every week you have Reflections from the Pulpit written by someone from a Christian Church. Why doesn't the newspaper run columns written by a Jewish rabbi or a leader of another religion? *Editor's note: The Reflections from the Pulpit column comes from the Okeechobee Ministerial Association, and various members of that organization take turns writing it. However, if another religious leader who is not a member of that group would like to submit a column, we would certainly give it consideration for publication. We also welcome letters to the editor from any community member on any topic of general local interest.*

Dogs loose

- Folks, you all know when garbage day is in your neighborhood. Have a little courtesy and do not let your dogs run loose on garbage day. If you are in the habit of just opening the door and letting the dog out in the morning to "do his business," at least on garbage day make a little effort and go outside with the dog to make sure he does not run next door or down the street to tear up the garbage. This week I plan to be ready with a camera and take pictures so I can prove whose dog is doing this. So, you are warned.



Bypass

- The DOT plan for a bypass does not make a lot of sense to me. It looks like they are going to just make things worse by having the loop go right through an area that is already pretty busy. They need to route the bypass as far north as they can. The county commission's original suggestion that it should come out north of Cemetery Road make sense to me.

Football

- I see in the paper that the football team is working hard to get ready for the fall season. They should take heart. At least they can't do any worse than the team did this year. There is no where to go from here but up.

Reflections from the Pulpit

Remember when ...

By Rev. Lois Moranville

Pastor, Okeechobee Church of the Nazarene

Quite often families gather for special occasions, and if your family is like mine we aren't in the same room long before we begin to reminisce. We remember significant times that were funny. We share memories of sad times. We recall times of joy such as births of our children, weddings, graduations, and other fun filled times.

This weekend, we pause to remember our veterans who lost their lives in the fight for freedom for this great country. Each battle that was fought in the history of our nation marks an historical event in the life of America. Every soldier who gave his or her life to make this nation what it is today is honored and remembered.

Joshua reminds us in Joshua chapter 4 verses 4-7 that memorials are important. Memorials serve to take us back to a significant event and they afford us the opportunity to pass on the memory to future generations. Here is what Joshua said to the Israelites. "So Joshua called together the 12 men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, "What do these stones mean?" tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

Why did God want Joshua to have the Israelites make a memorial? I think God not only wanted the Israelites and future generations to remember the crossing of the Jordan but I think God wanted to be remembered. It was God who parted the waters so the Israelites could cross on dry ground. It was God who saved them. So building a memorial from the stones would give an opportunity for the Israelites to continue to share the miracle of what God did with future generations. This memorial serves as a "remember when God miraculously stopped the waters of the Jordan and we crossed on dry land- or remember when God saved us!"

It was God's intent that the people did not forget what He had done for them. He wants to be remembered. God has not changed. If we fast-forward from the time of Joshua to the time of Jesus we find that Jesus asked the disciples to remember him. He was eating the Passover meal with his disciples and according to Luke's account he took the bread, blessed it and instructed the disciples to "do this in remembrance of me." Jesus, the Son of God wants to be remembered.

I hope this weekend you will take time from your schedule and remember God. Remember what He did for the Israelites. Remember what God has offered for you— forgiveness and salvation through His only Son Jesus. Do you have a memorial stone of salvation you can talk about to future generations?

Okeechobee Forecast

Local Forecast

Today: A 50 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 11 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 87. East southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Tonight: A 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before midnight. Partly cloudy, with a low around 68. South-east wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Extended Forecast

Memorial Day: A 40 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 1 p.m. Partly cloudy, with a high near 89. Southeast wind around 5 mph.

Monday night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 70. Calm wind becoming south southeast around 5 mph.

Tuesday: A 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a high near 92. South southeast wind around 5 mph becoming calm.

Tuesday night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms.

Lotteries

Florida Lottery — Here are the numbers selected Thursday in the Florida Lottery: **Cash 3:** 0-7-9; **Play 4:** 2-3-6-7; **Fantasy 5:** 14-23-27-29-32; **Mega Money:** 15-17-31-32 MB 11; **Florida Lotto:** 2-3-25-30-35-40 X 4; **Powerball:** 1-6-10-13-20 PB32 x4. Numbers drawn Friday, **Cash 3:** 4-5-9; **Play 4:** 3-8-4-2.

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

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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:



Reservoir within the lake just one of 9 proposals

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

The Reservoir Within Lake Okeechobee, which has caused so much concern among the Okeechobee City Council and the Okeechobee County Commission is actually one of nine proposals under consideration by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to increase water storage capacity and eliminate the need for large discharges to the estuaries. The other eight plans include water storage to the north, east or south of the lake.

Gary Ritter, director of SFWMD's Okeechobee Service Center told the Okeechobee County Commissioners at their May 27 meeting that the process began in 2008 when groups of citizens were tasked with coming up with proposed plans that would provide 1.2 to 1.4 million acre feet of water storage.

A check of the SFWMD website reveals that all nine proposals were on the agenda for each of SFWMD's water resources advisory commission monthly meetings from May through September of 2009. The May and June meeting agenda contained maps of all nine proposals. The June meeting was held at John Boy Auditorium in Clewiston. The other meetings were held in West Palm Beach. In a telephone interview, Okeechobee County Commissioner Noel Chandler stated the meetings were not properly advertised and that the public was not aware of the plan until recently.

• The Reservoir Within Lake Okeecho-

bee proposes construction of a reservoir in the northeastern part of Lake Okeechobee that would enclose 158,000 acres to a depth of 8 feet, providing 1,200,000 acre feet of storage. A gravity structure on the southern end of the reservoir would allow for water release into the lake. There would be two gravity structures on the south end of the lake admitting water into canals leading to a stormwater treatment area (STA). In addition, Nicodemus Slough, on the eastern side of the lake in Glades County, would be used to store 30,000 acre feet of water on 18,000 acres. Under the proposal, the Kissimmee River would not flow into the reservoir. This proposal was authored by Tom MacVicar, Kevin McCarthy, Linda McCarthy, Rebecca Elliot and Scott McCaleb.

• The Everglades River of Grass Northern Expansion proposal would use natural, vegetated flow-ways at the southern end of the lake that would mimic historic sheet flow as much as possible. These flow ways would be wet year round. The proposal would provide storage north of Lake Okeechobee and provide STAs at Lake Hicpochee and Disston Island to improve water quality in the Caloosahatchee River. Bret Hauquitz and Drew Martin are responsible for this plan.

• The Florida Crystals proposal would also use a 45,000 acre flow-way at the southern end of the lake. This flow way would be seasonal and would be dry during certain times of the year. In addition, the proposal calls for 500,000 acres of distributed storage north of the lake, a 32,000 acre STA south of the lake and a 1,400 acre effective treatment

area east of the lake. Florida Crystals, Sam Poole, Burns & McDonnell and Galen Miller came up with this plan.

• The Estuary Driven Everglades Restoration proposal uses performance charts to achieve large reductions in discharges to the estuaries while maximizing storage north of the lake and maximizing storage and conveyance features south of the lake. Pete Quasias, Mark Perry, RaeAnn Wessel, George Jones, Ted Guy, Paul Millar and Rob Loflin are the authors of this plan.

• Restoration Plus Employment would use 22,500 acres north of the lake for storage at a depth of 15 feet. South of the lake, the proposal calls for 83,000 acres of storage at a depth of 12 feet and an 18,000 acre STA with a depth ranging from one half to four feet. Joan Davis and Bevin Beaudet came up with this plan.

• The Chain of Lakes proposal uses above ground water storage and treatment features to mimic a natural setting. There would be vegetated variable sided slopes. These water storage features would also be used for recreational purposes such as hiking, fishing, birding and hunting. The plan calls for storage north of the lake to reduce lake discharges to the east as well as storage at Disston Island to reduce discharges to the Caloosahatchee River. Forest Michael is the author of this proposal.

• The Performance proposal uses 200,000 acre feet of storage north of the lake, at 18 foot deep, a 75,900 acre reservoir south of the lake and a 15,600 acre STA east of the lake. The authors of this plan are Tom Van

Lent, Paul Grey, Mark Oncavage, Cynthia Plockelman, Maggy Hurchalia, Joanne Davis, Lisa Interlandi, Jennifer Nelson and Karl Wickstrom.

• Performance - Cost would be focused on meeting standards derived from performance maps. It calls for roughly 300,000 acre-feet of storage north of the lake and roughly 550,000 acre-feet of storage south of the lake. The storage south of the lake would be divided between shallow and deep storage. Kevin Henderson is the author of Performance - Cost.

• The Marshall Plan Element 6 seeks to establish a flow-way at the south end of the lake that would be wet year round. There would also be 36,400 acres of water storage to a depth of 18 feet south of the lake. The plan calls for 650,000 acre feet of water storage north of the lake. This plan is authored by Martha Musgrove, Joel Van Arman, John Marshall, Deborah Nichols and Tom Poulson.

All of these nine proposals will have to go through a process of public hearings before a final decision is made by SFWMD. However, a May 20 announcement on the SFWMD website states that "due to restraints" the public workshop process has been temporarily deferred and will resume in the future. It is not known when they will resume. The message urges readers to check back for new details.

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

LAKE

Continued From Page 1

developed. He added that the review and assessment process has been going on since 2008 and that there have been presentations of the proposals.

"I'm not sure why people don't feel they are not informed," Mr. Ritter said. He added that the proposal has been pretty much discarded.

"It does present a body of opinions on the configuration," Mr. Ritter said. "That is why we have this process going on."

While he stated he did not know any of the particulars, Mr. Ritter said the idea of a reservoir within the lake has been around since the early 1980s.

"This whole idea is not even in the realm of possibility," stated Commissioner Joey Hoover. He said he opposed construction of any internal reservoir because of environmental and economic concerns.

The board decided to write a letter to SFWMD opposing the reservoir.

On May 19 Commissioner Chandler sent his own letter to SFWMD opposing the project. The letter states in part: "Okeechobee County has been drastically affected by the poor economic conditions that exist. This proposed reservoir would damage our economic growth even further."

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

Florida unemployment levels decline

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Economic news improved a bit this week as the state revealed unemployment rates fell more than one point in Okeechobee County during April.

The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Labor Market Statistics Center reported there were 2,230 people out of work in Okeechobee County in April, a reduction of 200 residents from the March report. There were 12.1 percent out of work in April and 13.2 percent in March, 2010.

The report said Glades County had a 7/10th of a point decline during April to 10.8 percent. 485 residents were out of work in April, and 525 in March.

The rates were still sharply higher than April, 2009. Okeechobee had 10.2 percent

unemployment last April while Glades County had 7.5 percent unemployment.

The state unemployment rate stood at 11.2 percent in April down close to 1 percent from March.

The nation's jobless rate also declined

from 10.2 to 9.5 percent.

Around the area St. Lucie had 13.7 percent, Highlands 11.1 percent, Hendry 13.3 percent, and Martin County 11.8 percent. All of those counties reported declines in the unemployment rate in April.

Blood Centers send out the Big Red Bus

The Florida Blood Centers needs you this Memorial Day Weekend! The Big Red Bus will be at The Clock Restaurant on Sunday from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. and on Monday, Memorial Day the JROTC Cadets will be assisting the Big Red Bus at the Memorial Day gathering in the park downtown from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Celebrate Memorial Day by giving blood.

Blood drives will also be held: Wednesday, June 2 at Publix from noon to 2:30 p.m. and at Beef O'Brady's from 4- 7 p.m.; Monday, June 7 at U-Save from 1-7 p.m.; Thursday, June 10 at Ancient Oaks Park from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. and at Publix from 1-3 p.m.; Friday, June 11 at Lincare, S.W. 17th St. from noon - 5 p.m.; and, Saturday, June 12 at Arnold's Wildlife Center from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.



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Community Events

Memorial Day services set

The American Legion Post 64 of Okeechobee invites the public to join in celebrating Memorial Day at Veterans Park on **May 31** at 10 a.m. Our guest speaker will be City Commissioner Clif Betts, Jr. and the New Ground Quartet will perform. All veterans and their families are encouraged to attend to honor our country's veterans past and present. Please bring your own lawn chairs.

Hospice hosts yard sale

Hospice of Okeechobee, 411 S.E. Fourth Street) will hold a Gigantic Yard Sale on Thursday, **June 3** and Friday, **June 4**, from 8 a.m. until noon. Specialty Items this sale: lots of children's school clothes. Funds raised will benefit patient care, including services at The Hamrick Home. For information call 863-467-2321.

Obituaries

Obituaries should be submitted to the Okeechobee News by e-mailing obits@newszap.com. Customers may also request photos and links to online guest books. A link to the obituaries is available at www.newszap.com.

Retha Marie D'Agostina, 90

OKEECHOBEE — Retha Marie D'Agostina, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family, on Thursday, May 27, 2010.

Retha was born, August 15, 1919 in Okeechobee, Florida to the late Robert and Elizann Upthegrove. She was a lifetime resident of Okeechobee and enjoyed her orange groves, sewing, cooking and all her family.

She is predeceased by her husband, Paul D'Agostina and grandson, Paul Keith.

She is survived by her daughter, Paula Baker of Okeechobee; son, Paul Chris D'Agostina of North Carolina, sister, Larue Williams of Vero Beach. In addition she was Nanny to Grandchildren; Megan, Denise, Lori, Lisa, Chrissy, Chandel, Johnnie, Christopher, Nicholas, Steve, great grandchildren, Justan, Zachary, Shyla, and a host of nieces and nephews. In addition she is survived by many friends and her beloved pets Frosty and Peanut.

Services will be held on Sunday, May 30, 2010 at 2 p.m. in the Buxton Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Cary McKee officiating. Interment will follow in Evergreen Cemetery. In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to the Human Society Pet Rescue, P.O. Box 233, Okeechobee, FL 34973

All arrangements are entrusted to the loving care of Buxton Funeral Home and Crematory, 110 NE 5th Street, Okeechobee. On-line condolences may be made at www.buxtonfuneralhome.com.

Main Street plans mixer

Okeechobee Main Street's June Mixer will be held on Thursday, **June 10**, hosted by Seacoast National Bank at their 500 North Parrott Avenue Office from 5-7 p.m. Main Street Mixers are a great networking opportunity for the businesses and residents of our area. Main Street Mixers are open to the public, whether you have an established or new business, new to our area or just want to know more about Okeechobee Main Street you're invited to join us for networking, refreshments, door prizes and a chance at the yearly Mega 50-50. For more information call 863-357-MAIN (6246).

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Maurice Nast

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You were gone before we knew it
and only God knows why.

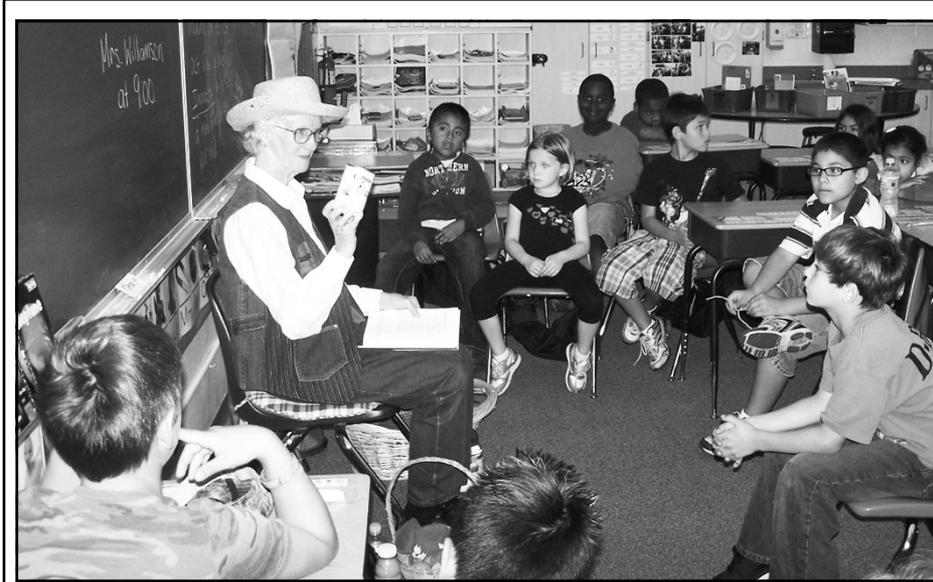
A million times we cried
If love alone could
have saved you,
you never would have died

In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still
In our hearts you had a special place
That no one else could fill

It broke our hearts to lose you
But you didn't go along,
For part of us went with you
The day God took you home.

We love and miss you

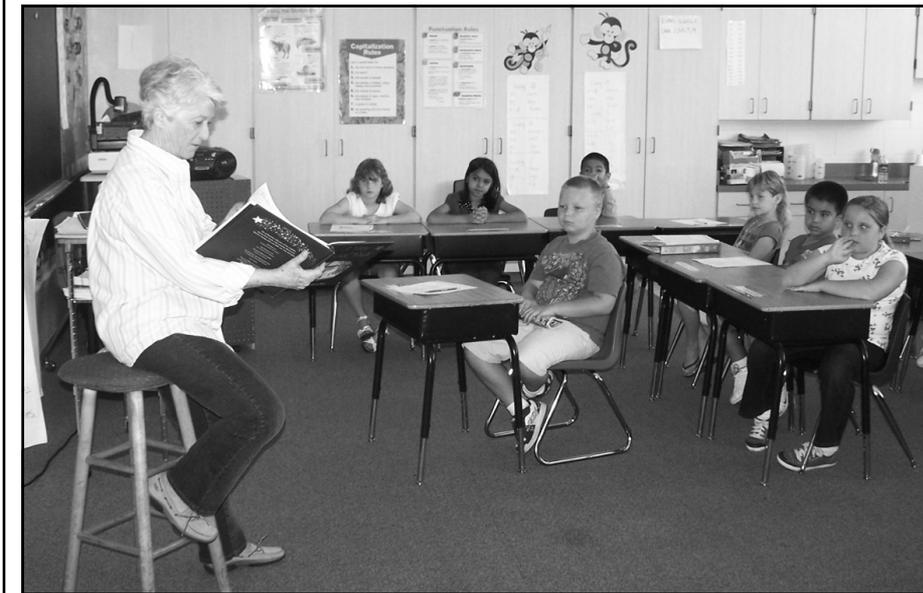
Your Loving Wife Margaret; Children: Cheryl, Maurice, Cindy, R. Bruce, Mike & Tommy, 18 grandchildren & 3 great grandchildren



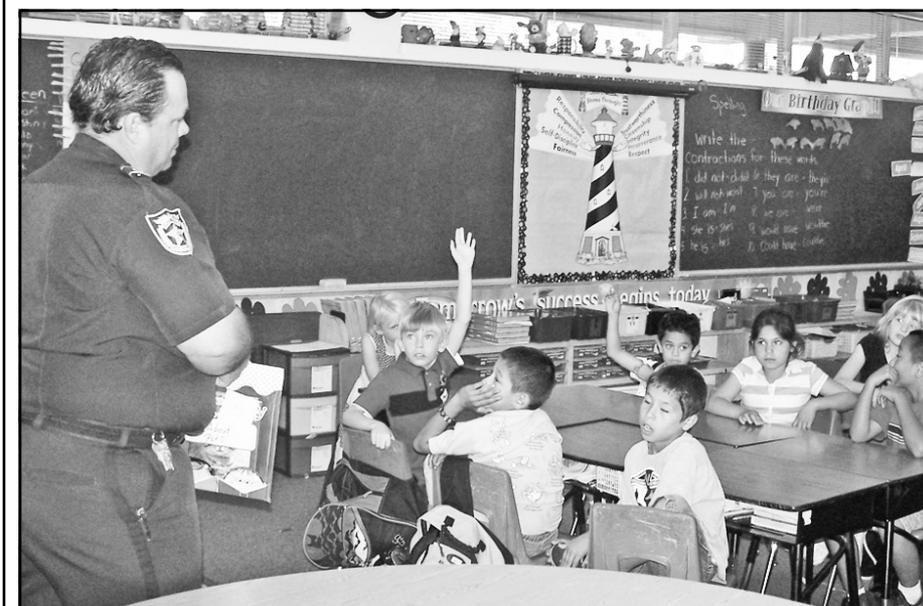
Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

School welcomes guest readers

Betty Williamson was one of the guest readers at Guest Reader Day at Central Elementary School. She used canned fruit and other items to illustrate the book she was reading to the students about fruit.



Guest Reader School Board Member Gay Carlton read to a class.



After he finished reading his assigned book on Guest Reader Day at Central Elementary School, Major Noel Stephen of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office answered questions from the students.

SWAT students honored for efforts to change attitudes

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Students from the middle schools, freshman campus and Okeechobee High School who volunteered their time to help Students Working against Tobacco were honored at a special ceremony Thursday at the Okeechobee School Board offices.

Angela Kelly with the Okeechobee County Health Department told the group that their voices are stronger now than they will ever be. She said while membership in SWAT declined this year, the quality of those students improved.

"I believe your efforts are taking root in this community," she said. "It is challenging, but we've come a long way."

The state shifted from education to policy change for SWAT groups this year. She said the transition has been slow but the kids did attend a number of public meetings and will continue to encourage bans on smoking in public places like the Sports Complex and parks.

She also thanked the Health Department for their assistance.

Among the students honored were Kimberly Mullin, President of the Osceola Middle School SWAT program, Alfonso Portocarrero, Vice President of the OMS SWAT, Derrick Borroto, President of the Okeechobee High School SWAT and Benjamin Kielbasa, Vice President of the Okeechobee High School Swat.

Kimberly Mullin was also honored for being among 12 students state wide who took part in the Youth Advocacy Board for the State Organization.

Derrick Borroto said he thinks students are beginning to change their attitudes about smoking.

"It has grown a lot in the past five years," he said. "In middle school we had almost 100 students but few of them were committed. We expected more of a turnout in high school and you still see smoking around the school and stuff. We'll just go on and advocate more. You'll see more students involved."

The OHS group had an active year as they attended the annual Health and Safety Expo in January at the Agri-Civic Center. They placed 88 crosses at their exhibit to show people how deadly cigarette and tobacco smoke can be. They also planted the crosses in front of the high school as part of an anti tobacco event this winter. The group also

hosted an inspirational speaker to educate students and the public about the dangers of tobacco.

Advisor Rick Kielbasa said it was a real good year for his group. He praised the kids for their hard work.

Each of the students received certificates

for their work this year. Ken and Deanna Kielbasa, advisor for the Osceola Middle School group, also were honored for their assistance this year.

Whitley Burch and Candace Pope of the Health Department also received awards.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Kimberly Mullin was honored by Osceola SWAT advisor Deanna Kielbasa.



Derrick Borroto was president of the OHS SWAT this year. He received an honor from SWAT advisor Rick Kielbasa.



Kimberly Mullin of Osceola Middle School (left) worked on the State Youth Advocacy Board for SWAT this year. She received an honor from Whitley Burch of the Okeechobee County Health Department.



Benjamin Kielbasa, vice president of the Okeechobee High School SWAT, was honored by his dad and SWAT Advisor Rick Kielsbasa.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Alfonso Portocarrero was honored by SWAT advisor Deanna Kielbasa.



Local authors mother-daughter Alevne Lantz and Elaine Lantz-Davis are pleased to announce the publishing of their books. They will be also holding a book signing at the Okeechobee Bank of America June 2, 2010 9:00 am till 2 pm.

There will be 2 books at this event: "Bring Back Simplicity" and Alevne's first book "A Four Year Old and a Prayer".



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Okeechobee News/Diana Whitehall

Outdoor meeting

The Thursday, May 20, a Kiwanis Club meeting was held at the Sports Complex in Okeechobee. The Okeechobee High School Key Club along with club member Lonnie Kirsch was invited to speak on the importance of belonging to a service club providing service to the local community. (In the photo below) Kiwanis Club members also hosted Yearling Middle School Builders Club with Principal Andy Brewer and Sylvia Bandi, sponsor of the Builders Club (not present). Dr. Patricia Cooper, superintendent of Okeechobee County Schools, gave an outstanding speech emphasizing the importance of belonging to a service club and then everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs.

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<p>Weekday Lunch Specials</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bistro Ham 'N Cheese 2. Patty Melt \$5.89 3. Jr. Super Salad 4. Grilled Chicken Sandwich 5. Turkey 'n Swiss Melt \$5.99 6. Soup & 1/2 Sandwich 	<p>Buy your beverage for 99 cents</p> <p>All You Can Eat Fish or Shrimp \$9.99</p> <p>Shrimp Fest \$9.99 Land 'N Sea \$7.99 Shrimp Scampi \$7.99 Shrimp Ceasar Salad \$7.99 Sweet 'N Sour Shrimp \$7.99 Sweet Alfredo \$7.99</p>	<p>2 Dinners - Your Choice For the Price of one!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. N.Y. Strip Steak \$18.59 2. Chicken and Shrimp 3. Grilled Tilapia 4. Shrimp Ceasar Salad 5. Country Fried Steak 6. Grilled Pork Chops <p><small>All Special served with 2 sides. Soup or Salad, and complimentary pudding or ice cream</small></p>
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Free saltwater fishing weekends announced

Gov. Charlie Crist has announced two free fishing weekends to help draw visitors to the beautiful Sunshine State. Both residents and nonresidents in Florida can fish for saltwater species around the state without a license during Memorial Day weekend, May 29 to May 31, and the weekend of June 5 and 6, which is the first weekend after Florida's popular red snapper season opens in the Gulf on June 1. All other fishing rules apply. "Florida is the fishing capital of the world," Gov. Crist declared, "and our beaches are clean, the fish are biting, and we invite our friends to enjoy some Florida hospitality."

Chairman Rodney Barreto of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) applauded the governor's decision. "Gov. Crist's actions to offer free fishing this weekend and next will do wonders for our business communities that have been suffering cancellations since the oil spill started," Barreto said. "We aren't experiencing any oil impacts here, and the fact remains that Florida is open for business."

The FWC will continue to monitor all of the potential impacts of the oil spill on Florida's fish and wildlife and continue to be involved with many aspects of the oil spill response, Barreto added. In addition, the FWC has consulted with key representatives from several fishing organizations in Florida who are very concerned about inaccurate public perceptions regarding the condition of Florida's fisheries and the state's marine environment. There has been strong agree-

ment from these stakeholders that the fishing business in Florida is "as usual" and that fishing remains a safe and viable recreation-

al and commercial activity.

Go to MyFWC.com/Fishing to learn about fishing regulations in Florida.



Special to the Okeechobee News/OKMS

The first of four

This "Welcome to Okeechobee" sign seen in front of Home Depot is the first of four signs that will be erected by Okeechobee Main Street. On the left is the Okeechobee Main Street logo and on the right is the City of Okeechobee logo.

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Girls track team honored at awards banquet

By Charles M. Murphy

Okeechobee News

Keighly Stewart won the Brahman award and Essence Williams took home the most valuable player award at Wednesday's Okeechobee High School Girls Track Team banquet held at the Freshman Campus auditorium.

Several of the girls reached the regional meet this year in what was a successful year for the Lady Brahmans. There are a number of seniors who will graduate next month which will leave a lot of open positions on next year's squad.

Track Coach Julie Bohannon, Derek Stewart and Jenna Shook said goodbye to eight girls who will graduate next month.

Bohannon said she felt the team really accomplished a lot this year.

"We had an incredible year as our 4 by 100 team made regional along with several individuals," she said. "It was a really successful season and I was very proud of them."

She said the team will need to find more sprinters next year with the graduation of Monica Koger and Markeisha Youmans. She said she expected her returning runners to encourage their friends to come out and run next year. "We are not lacking in talent just in numbers. It will be interesting next year because we have room to grow. A lot of new people came out this year and I'm working

on getting younger runners this summer."

Bohannon said she will rely heavily on younger girls next year.

Williams said she plans to work hard in the off season to prepare her for another year of track and basketball. She said she intends to attend a training camp in Jacksonville to improve her strength and speed this summer.

"I think I'll be even faster next year because I'll be working out. I'm glad we made the regional this year in the 4x100. I felt we deserved it," she added.

Williams also competed in the 100 meters, the 200 meters and the long jump. She said at first she really wasn't into it, but really started to enjoy the sport toward the end of the season.

"I was surprised I got the MVP but I'm really glad about it. At the beginning of the season I really wasn't focused. Toward the middle of the season that all changed and I was really good at the end," she added.

Calandra Youmans was a scholar athlete and earned a two-year letter. Gabby Rodriguez earned a three-year letter and was also a scholar athlete. Graciela Varela earned a three-year letter and was a scholar athlete. Markeisha Youmans and Janezka Koger earned four-year letters. Monica Koger earned a four-year letter and was a scholar athlete.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Essence Williams received her MVP award from Coach Derek Stewart.

Fun shoot fundraiser

Okeechobee Christian Academy will host a 100 target fun shoot at Pine Creek Sporting Club on **June 12**. Registration begins at 8 a.m., the course opens at 8:30 a.m. The last shooter must take the course by 10 a.m. Lunch will be provided and there will be raffle prizes and a live auction. If you are interested in being a part of this event please contact Okeechobee Christian Academy at 863 763-3072 to register in advance. Don't miss this exclusive opportunity to shoot at Pine Creek Sporting Club and show your support for Okeechobee Christian Academy!

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Girls softball team honored at awards banquet

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Samantha Harrell set a new school record for strikeouts in a season and was named the most valuable player of the Okeechobee High School Lady Brahmans Softball Team at their awards banquet Thursday.

Harrell won 14 games and struck out 203 batters in just 143 innings this year. She pitched to an unheard of earned run average of 0.68. Okeechobee finished 21-7 and reached the regional semifinals in Class 4A. They also claimed the District 14-4A Title.

Harrell said she was surprised she won the award despite the huge success she had this year, "It felt really good but there were certainly a lot of people who should have got it besides me."

A key for Harrell's success this year was her control. She walked only 29 batters and allowed just 57 hits. She praised Coach Heather Gillis and her father Wayne Harrell for their assistance in making her a great pitcher.

"I want to do better next year. We had some improvement this year but we hope to progress as we go on. We are a state title contender, absolutely," she added.

Courtney Wilson won the Brahman award. She provided steady offense and defense this year. She led the team in runs batted in with 18. Wilson agreed that Okeechobee can talk about a state title in softball without it being a pipe dream. "I have definitely improved and I feel very confident in

my ability. I feel next year will be even better. I definitely feel that we can win a state title. I feel we should have won it this year. I know we'll come out next year with a bang."

Taylor Kinman won the rising star award, Frances Bosworth won the team player award, Jaryaca Baker won a special coaches award for potential, Ashtyn Brown took home the Gold Glove Award, and LeAnna Cotton won the Purple Bat Award for the highest batting average. LeAnna hit .324 and drove home 11 runs this year.

First year letter winners included Erena Billie, Jaryaca Baker, and Sarah Davis. Two year letter winners included Taylor Kinman, Victoria Blevins, Samantha Harrell and Frances Bosworth. Three year letter winners included Naomi Stevens, LeAnna Cotton, Ashtyn Brown, Courtney Wilson, Taylor Douglas, and Emily McCullough.

Megan Clements was the only four year letter winner.

Students who earned a 3.5 grade point average or higher during softball season to earn Scholar Athlete Awards included Frances Bosworth, Kayla Harrison, Megan Clements, LeAnna Cotton, Taylor Fulford, Ashtyn Brown, Courtney Wilson and Taylor Douglas.

Parents and volunteers who assisted with score keeping, the public address announcing, and the concession stand included Lisa Clements, Brad Farris, Katrina Bosworth, and Kim Blevins. Bill Farris was given a special commendation for this support and other volunteers were also honored.

Brahman Coach Kim Hargraves said she was very excited about the future of the program. She said the team had more drama than it needed to but stuck together through some tough times. "It was a great season. We didn't want it to end on a sad note. Red (Heather Gillis) and I put our hearts and soul into this program. We have a good group of corps players and we have a lot of hungry freshman coming in next year."

Hargraves admitted that the off season softball program has a huge impact on their success. She noted it's also nice to have only one high school in town because that means the best softball players are all on one team. "If the girls continue to dedicate themselves in the off season it will pay off. I can't wait for next season to get started."

JV Coaches Tyrone Smith and Darryl Allen guided the JV to a strong 11-4 season this year. They issued certificates to their players.

Coaches challenged the JV players to continue to improve because there will be jobs open on the varsity next year.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Courtney Wilson won the Brahman award for the girls softball team. She is flanked by softball coaches Heather Gillis (right) and Kim Hargraves (left).



Samantha Harrell set a school record for strikeouts this season. She received her trophy from Brahman coaches Kim Hargraves (left) and Heather Gillis (right).



Taylor Kinman took home the Rising Star Award at the May 27 banquet from coaches Kim Hargraves (left) and Heather Gillis (right).

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Fire injures woman on Thursday

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

A 91 year old Okeechobee woman was treated for smoke inhalation Wednesday after a fire at 1332 N.E. 14th Avenue, Okeechobee County Fire Rescue said.

Sheriff Deputies said Mary Dennis was treated at Raulerson Hospital after being rescued from the home by bystanders.

County Fire Rescue Lt. Everette Wooten said approximately \$45,000 in property damage was done in the fire. Firemen arrived at about 7:50 p.m. and found heavy smoke and a large crowd of bystanders. Several good

Samaritans had grabbed their garden hoses to help put out the flames.

The fire report said the cause was a lit cigarette that had been left burning in the living room on some upholstery. Damage was confined to the south end of the home.

Five units and nine firemen from Okeechobee County and the Okeechobee City Fire Department responded to the blaze. About 250 gallons of water was used to put out the flames.

The American Red Cross was also on the scene to assist firemen and the family in their time of need.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy

Softball award banquet

LeAnna Cotton took home the offensive player of the year award that includes a purple Brahman bat. She had the highest batting average on the team this year. Also in the photo are softball coaches Heather Gillis (right) and Kim Hargraves (left).

Third graders fare well on FCAT

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee County schools had 77 percent reach state averages in math and 65 percent score average or above in the third grade FCAT tests this year.

Glades County schools had 78 percent score at or above grade level in reading and 92 percent score at that level in math.

Twenty-one students in Okeechobee were at risk of being retained for their reading scores. Glades had 13 students score at the lowest reading level according to a

report released by the Florida Department of Education on Thursday.

Central Elementary had 62 percent score at grade level in reading. South Elementary had 72 percent, North Elementary 71 percent, Everglades 66 percent, and Seminole 58 percent. Seminole had 30 students score at the lowest level and Everglades 22 students.

Central had 83 percent score at grade level in math, South had 76 percent, North had 89 percent, Everglades 69 percent and Seminole 70 percent.

KOA to host charity Putt-Putt tourney

The Seventh Annual Putt-Putt Tournament will be held at the KOA on Memorial Day, **May 31**. Sign ups will be held at Good Spirits from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Players must be 21 to play and be signed up by no later than 12:30 p.m. Tee off time at KOA is 2 p.m. Entry is \$8 for two-man scramble - blind draw. All proceeds from the game will benefit KOA Care Camps - reaching out to kids with cancer.

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ANTIQUE CHANDELIER - Beautiful antique chandelier with crystals, grapes/leaves & 6 lights. \$299.00/firm. (863)467-6079

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Memorial Day



Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former sailors and soldiers. On May 5, 1868, Logan declared in General Order No. 11 that:

The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

This 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances of the day in several towns throughout America that had taken place in the three years since the Civil War. In fact, several Northern and Southern cities claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day, including Columbus, Miss.; Macon, Ga.; Richmond, Va.; Boalsburg, Pa.; and Carbondale, Ill.

In 1966, the federal government, under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson, declared Waterloo, N.Y., the official birthplace of Memorial Day. They chose Waterloo—which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—because the town had made Memorial Day an annual, community-wide event during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

By the late 1800s, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate Memorial Day and, after World War I, observances also began to honor those who had died in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May.

Today, Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. Also, it is customary for the president or vice-president to give a speech honoring the contributions of the dead and lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. About 5,000 people attend the ceremony annually.

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