



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 103 No. 3

Friday, January 6, 2012

50¢ Plus tax

School bus driver resigns following arrest
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Business owner accused of buying stolen jewelry... Page 5

Lake Levels

13.55 feet

Last Year: 12.41 feet



Pogey's Family Restaurant
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Source: South Florida Water Management District. Depth given in feet above sea level



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Okeechobee High earns 'B' Grade

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee High School showed solid improvement in reading and science as the school earned a B grade for the first time in seven years according to school grades released for all Florida High Schools on Wednesday.

High School Principal Toni Wiersma said she was thrilled to see the staff's hard work pay off for the 2010-2011 school year. "The B was a result of very hard work by the staff and students. This is a result of teachers working diligently on a common plan, following through with the plan and evaluating the results," she said.

In 2009-2010 30 percent of Okeechobee

students reached grade level in reading. That number jumped to 38-percent in 2010-2011. The number of students at grade level in math rose slightly from 74 to 75 percent. The number of students at grade level in writing dropped from 84 percent in 2009-2010 to 76 percent in 2010-2011.

The Florida Department of Education report found that the number of students at grade level in science rose from 41 to 43 percent.

The report also found that 39 percent of students made reading gains, and 73-percent made learning gains in math. The report also showed that 33 percent of the lowest performing students showed gains in reading, up from

25 percent who improved in 2009-2010. 69-percent of low performing students improved on the FCAT math in 2010-2011 compared to 55-percent who improved in 2009-2010 in math.

Mrs. Wiersma said she was tremendously proud of the efforts of her entire staff.

OHS had a C grade in 2010; C in 2009; D in 2008; D in 2007; D in 2006; D in 2005; C in 2004 and B in 2003.

Moore Haven High School earned a C grade for 2010-2011 with more students at grade level in reading, science and math, but fewer in writing.

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Special to the Okeechobee News/Jean Blitch

The big chill

Okeechobee resident Jean Blitch turned on the sprinklers in an attempt to save her banana trees from the cold temperatures Tuesday night and found her yard covered in ice. Area farmers report most crops survived the cold. For more, see page 13.

City council tackles land use, parking

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

Land use and parking requirements were the main topics of the Tuesday, Jan. 3, meeting of the Okeechobee City Council.

After some discussion, the council approved a parking waiver for CRA Associates for a new VA Clinic at 210 N.W. Fifth St. to allow less than 18 parking spaces. This matter was first brought up at the last city council meeting, but council members did not feel they had enough information at that time to make a decision. The council approved less than the required number of parking spaces after Charles Robbins of CRA Associates explained that the way the clinic would be set up less parking spaces would be required than for the average medical clinic. "The traffic flow is very controlled," Mr. Robbins explained. He said that the clinic would have only one doctor who would see two patients an hour by appointment only. The

clinic will only treat veterans and not their families. Mr. Robbins added that the new VA Clinic is expected to open in May.

The council held the first reading and set Jan. 17 as the date for a final public hearing on an ordinance that would change the zoning on the N.W. Fourth Avenue property owned by the Okeechobee Church of God from residential single family one to commercial professional office. "This seems to be an appropriate change," said Councilman Dowling Watford. He noted that there are several commercial buildings near by. This ordinance would allow the church to open a cafe on the property. In a related matter, the council approved a parking arrangement pertaining to a special exemption request for the proposed cafe. Under the arrangement church parking spaces would be counted toward the required number of parking spaces for the cafe since

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School bus driver resigns following arrest

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News



Judith
Austin

A school bus driver with the Okeechobee County School District has resigned following her arrest after being accused driving a bus after she had been drinking.

Superintendent of Schools Ken Kenworthy said Judith A. Austin handed in her resignation Tuesday, Jan. 3. She had been employed with the school district since Nov. 22, 1994.

"We just received her resignation yesterday and we will accept that resignation," said Mr. Kenworthy on Wednesday, Jan. 4. "We were going to move toward termination, but we will allow her to do that."

Austin was arrested Dec. 22 on a misdemeanor charge of culpable negligence. She

was booked into the Okeechobee County Jail then released on her own recognizance.

Court records indicate that Austin will appear before County Judge Jerald Bryant for arraignment on Tuesday, Jan. 17. She is being represented by the public defender's office.

A report by Deputy Sergeant Mark Roberts, a school resource supervisor with the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), indicated that the incident occurred Thursday, Dec. 8, around 3:10 p.m.

According to that report, Sgt. Roberts was contacted by Dale Barrett, director of operations for the school district, that Austin was "... possibly under the influence of an alcoholic beverage while operating one of the school buses."

The report goes on to state that Austin admitted to Mr. Barrett that she had consumed an alcoholic beverage "... prior to her bus route where she did transport 49 elementary

grade students from Seminole Elementary School ..."

Austin, said Mr. Kenworthy, actually had a dual route. He said the first route is very short and takes about 20 minutes. She then returns to the school to pick up children and then run her second route. He said she had completed her first route when concerns about her were raised.

She was then taken off the bus and did not run that second route.

"No one was hurt or injured," said Mr. Kenworthy. "There's no indication the kids were under any danger, per se. Cameras on the bus did not show any swerving or running of stop lights. The bus was being operated properly."

Sgt. Roberts' report indicated that Austin agreed to take a breath test. The first test was taken at 3:46 p.m. and indicated a blood-alcohol level of .059. A second test was taken at 4:05 p.m. and indicated a blood-alcohol

level of .046.

Both of those readings are well under the legal limit of .08.

Sgt. Roberts then stated that he would get a warrant for Austin's arrest.

Mr. Kenworthy said Austin allegedly admitted to having "had a beer" prior to driving her bus route.

He went on to say that bus drivers are subject to drug testing.

"We do have spot checks," he said, "and random drug testing for anyone who operates a bus with a CDL (commercial license)."

The superintendent added that even though Austin was allowed to resign the arrest will be on her record and if she should want to drive for another school district, that district would then find that there was an issue in their background check.

Community Events

North VFW plans weekend fun

The North VFW 4423, 300 N.W. 34th St. has a weekend filled with food & fun. Friday the grill will be open 5-9 p.m., with karaoke hosted by Steve on a Stick 7-9 p.m. Saturday there will be burgers on the grill noon-2 p.m.; steak dinner at 5 p.m. and karaoke hosted by XXL (Capt. Dennis) 7-9 p.m. On Sunday, Lori is fixin' Fried Chicken 2-4 p.m. and karaoke hosted by Sandoone 6-9 p.m. Proceeds go to Veteran's Assistance Programs

Sign up for youth hoop league

The deadline to register for Parks & Recreation's Youth Basketball League is Friday, Jan. 6. Sign-ups from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. at 640 N.W. 27th Lane. The fee is \$40 per child and will require a birth certificate at registration. For more details, call 863-763-6950.

BHR Moose plans a celebrity server dinner on Jan. 7

The Buckhead Ridge Moose Lodge is having a prime rib dinner being served by local celebrities on Saturday, Jan. 7, from 5-7 p.m. Starting at 7:30 p.m. there will be an auction with proceeds going to Mooseheart and Moosehaven and our chapter.

PhilFiesta 2012 planned

The Philippine-American Cultural Foundation invites you to PhilFiesta 2012! Everyone is welcome to enjoy family fun, Philippine food, music and songs, cultural performances, arts and crafts, exhibits and the Philippine Martial Arts. Join Miss PhilFiesta on Saturday, Jan. 7, from 9 a.m. to sunset. Admission is FREE, parking is \$3 per vehicle. This event will take place at the Philippine Heritage Enrichment Complex and Gardens, 5154 S.W. 16th Ave., Okeechobee. For information, vendors or advertisers contact Dr. Trini Garcia at 863-763-6429, Anje at 772-285-0274, Sid at 863-610-0515, Edwin at (561) 371-0825 or Joel at (954) 449-3494. To join Miss PhilFiesta contact Maria at (786) 281-9800.

CITY

Continued From Page 2

the cafe would not be open at the same time as church services.

In another zoning issue the council approved an ordinance changing the zoning on property at 204 S.E. Seventh St. from residential single family-one to multiple family. This change will allow the applicant to sell the property as a legally conforming two family structure, provided all applicable building codes are met.

The council held the first reading and set Jan. 17 as the date for a final public hearing on a proposed ordinance that would make miscellaneous changes to update the city's land development regulations.

Turning to other business, the council held the first reading and set Jan. 17 as the date for a final public hearing on an ordinance that would grant a non-exclusive franchise to Florida Public Utilities Company for the manufacture, transmission, distribution and sale of gas including natural, manufactured or mixed gas. The council also ratified approval of a police grant application for electronic equipment.

OHS

Continued From Page 1

Florida's high schools increased in the number and percent of schools achieving high marks for the 2010-11 school year, according to results released from the Florida Department of Education. Results show that 78 percent of the state's high schools earned either an "A" or "B" grade, an increase from 71 percent last year. These grades are based on the high school grading formula that was used for the first time in the 2009-10 school year.

Of Florida's 474 graded public high schools (including combination schools serving high school grade levels) earning "A" through "F" grades for the 2010-11 school year:

- 147 earned an "A" (31 percent), compared to 145 schools (31 percent) last year.
- 224 earned a "B" (47 percent), compared to 188 schools (40 percent) last year.
- 72 earned a "C" (15 percent), compared to 69 schools (15 percent) last year.
- 25 earned a "D" (5 percent), compared to 57 schools (12 percent) last year.
- 6 earned an "F" (1 percent), compared to 11 schools (2 percent) last year.

The expanded high school grading system, first used for the 2009-10 school year,

focuses on a broader set of student outcomes, including graduation rates and student participation and performance in advanced coursework. The high school grade is earned based on two major elements: 50 percent from the performance of each school's students on the FCAT, and 50 percent from factors that include the following:

- The school's graduation rate;
- The performance and participation of students in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), and industry certification;
- The postsecondary readiness of high-achieving students as measured by the SAT, ACT, or College Placement Test (CPT); and,
- The high school graduation rate of at-risk students.

School districts have an opportunity to appeal the grade through Feb. 3, 2012. Based on the results from that process, school recognition funds will be determined and will reward schools that have sustained high student performance or demonstrated substantial improvement in student performance.

For detailed information on the 2010-11 high school grades, visit: <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>. An informative press packet, complete with graphic displays of the results is available at: <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/1011/HighSchoolGradesPressPacket.pdf>.

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8 PC. MIXED MEAL

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BREAST DEAL

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- 1 biscuit
- 1 medium drink

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10 BUCK VALUE MEAL

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- 1 large mashed potatoes with gravy
- 3 biscuits

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Value adjustment board denies tax exemptions

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

The four petitioners who challenged Okeechobee County Property Appraiser Bill Sherman's assessment of their properties were unsuccessful in their appeals before the Okeechobee County Value Adjustment Board on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

Robert A. DePalma was represented by property tax attorney Michael Hagen. Mr. DePalma appealed his denial of an agriculture classification on 1.4 acres of property between U.S. 441 S.E. and the Rim Canal. He claimed the property is used in conjunction with his 22 acres across U.S. 441 which has an agriculture exemption.

In 1958 Mr. DePalma said he and his father cleared the land to create grazing land to be used in conjunction with the land across the road. The property was fenced and he claimed it has been used as pasture ever since. He did admit that there are times when there were no cattle on the property.

While he said there are separate herds on both sides of the road he claimed it was all part of one operation. However, he could not tell how many cows were sold off the smaller piece of land. "This is one operation," Mr. DePalma said. "We need every blade of grass. We always have run cows there. We always will run cows there."

Jimmy Payne, who said he has been working for Mr. DePalma since 1974 or 1975, said the property has been used continuously for pasture since that time. He said that typically there are one to three cows on the property.

"The evidence is clear this is a long-time history of use," Mr. Hagan said in conclusion, "not just something that sprung up to save money on property tax."

"Just having animals on the property does not mean it is a bona fide agriculture business," stated Russ Duncan, agricultural appraiser for Mr. Sherman. He went on explain his criteria for denying the agriculture exemption. Mr. Duncan stated that while Mr. DePalma claimed the small parcel was an integral part of his agricultural operation there was no evidence on how this property is essential to the operation. He said Mr. Palma admitted that there were two separate herds on the two parcels. Mr. Duncan claimed, through the use of photographs, that Mr. DePalma has had the same two heifers on the property for the last 15 months, which

he said, indicated this was not a commercial agriculture operation. He went on to say that 1.4 acres is not a practical size for a cattle operation. Prior to 2009 Mr. Duncan said that Mr. DePalma had received agriculture exemptions which he believed were granted in error.

Upon questioning by Bill Dover, citizen member of the board, Mr. Duncan stated that prior to 2009 an agriculture exemption had been granted for the property. In response to another question from Mr. Dover, Mr. Duncan said there were no changes in agriculture exemption laws between 2008 and 2009 that he was aware of. Mr. Duncan said he felt the previous exemptions were granted in error.

After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Dover made a motion to approve the petition. The motion died for lack of a second.

The vote to deny the petition was 4 to 1 with Mr. Dover voting no.

The second petition heard had been tabled at the last board hearing in November when Saba Curren appealed the denial of a tax exempt status for the Okeechobee Golf and Country Club. In the past the golf course had received a 50 percent exemption which was originally granted some years ago by the Okeechobee County Commission. At the November hearing it was determined that, according to current law, to receive a tax exemption it must be documented that over 50 percent of the use must be for charitable purposes. With above 50 percent donations, a prorated exemption could be granted depending on the percentage of use for charitable purposes. The petition was tabled in order for Mrs. Curren to produce documentation.

She felt that the golf course should get a tax exemption because they donated the use of the golf course to the Okeechobee High School Golf Team. She said the club also donates the use of the golf course for fund raising tournaments.

While CPA Mark Barnes, produced previous years' tax records, the records did not clearly indicate the percentage of usage of the golf course that was charitable. Board member David Williams, who represents the school board, said he appreciated the fact that the country club was donating golf rounds to the high school, even though they were operating at a loss. He made a motion to award a 50 percent exemption to the golf

course. His motion died for a lack of a second.

The vote to deny the appeal was 4 to 1 with Mr. Williams voting no. Board chair Commissioner Margaret Garrard Helton suggested that the country club document the charitable use of the golf course next year.

TDC Pine Creek, LLC had two petitions before the board. The company was represented by Ray Salyer who said he was a consultant. The first petition revolved around an interpretation of the law. TDC Pine Creek owns 57 acres of property with 37 acres being in a conservation easement. The law states that 40 acres is the minimum size for a conservation easement to receive a tax exemption. Mr. Salyer said his company's position was that the total amount of property should count toward the 40 acres.

Mickey Bandy of the property appraiser's office said the property appraiser's interpretation of the law was that the 40 acres should include only conservation easement property, not the total acreage. He said if

it were his property he would add 3 more acres to the conservation easement. The board sided with the property appraiser and unanimously voted to deny the petition.

The second petition argued that the conservation easement should reduce the assessed value of the property. Mr. Bandy said the property appraiser's position was that there should be no reduction in value due to a conservation easement. The board unanimously agreed with the property appraiser.

The last petition was brought by Gregory Gozzo who owns a cabin in Pine Creek. While his assessment was based on the value of surrounding property, he felt it should be based on comparable property in other parts of the county. He said the only reason he paid more for the property was so that he would be able to hunt, fish, horseback ride and ride an ATV on the 2,500 acres that are owned by Pine Creek and accessible only to residents.

Mr. Bandy argued that the amenities were the basis for the higher assessment. He said the property was assessed according to the price of surrounding properties and not on comparable property in other parts of the county. The board unanimously agreed.

The value assessment board will convene again on Feb. 7 at 9 a.m. to hear other tax petitions. The hearing will be held in the Commission Chambers of the Okeechobee County Courthouse.

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

Okeechobee Forecast



Today: Sunny, with a high near 72. Calm wind becoming east northeast around 5 mph.

Tonight: Patchy fog after 3am. Otherwise, partly cloudy, with a low around 41. Calm wind.

Extended Forecast

Saturday: Patchy fog before 7am. Otherwise, mostly sunny, with a high near 75. Calm wind becoming southeast around 5 mph.

Saturday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 45. Calm wind.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 77. East wind around 5 mph.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 50. East southeast wind around 5 mph.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 79. East southeast wind around 5 mph.

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THEATRE III: "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4"
Fri., Tues. & Thurs. 7:00 & 9:00, Sat., Sun., & Wed. 2:00, 4:15, 7:00 & 9:00, Mon. 3:00 & 7:00 **PG-13**

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Free Pregnancy tests are available at the Pregnancy Center of Okeechobee. Office located at 500 N.W. Sixth St. and you may call the office at 863-467-8748. Free Parenting Classes available for mothers (and fathers) to be or those already with babies on Tuesday nights at 6 p.m. Call the office at 863-467-8748. Come find out about the Baby Boutique!

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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!

Code violation

• What is wrong with code enforcement here in our town? When someone is in violation of the codes and they refuse to do anything about their property, why aren't the codes enforced?

• There is a difference between city and county regarding the codes. First, you need to determine if you are in the city limits. If not, you need to go through the county code enforcement office. I read about the code violations hearings in the paper so I know they do enforce the codes. But I think they investigate complaints. I don't think they just ride around looking for violations.

Crime

• A couple weeks ago my home was burglarized and ransacked. There were items of value stolen from me along with my peace of mind. In the aftermath I have talked to the police and my neighbors and coworkers and I have discovered that there have been numerous break-ins, robberies, and burglaries from 15A to Basswood Estates and all surrounding areas. Some of the stories I have heard about are just appalling. I had no idea there was so much crime in our little town.

• I suppose that's why I live behind a gate and have biting dogs; it's a hassle to open our gate on rainy, cold days .. but I get a little piece of mind knowing if they get past my dogs they had to play dodge-a-dog for what they took. And if the dogs come out unscathed, they too will be goners!

• We installed a fence a few years ago and adopted two dogs. We had insight, with the economy going sour, crime would increase. A house that is fenced and has dogs is a good deterrent.

• I understand the no trespassing signs need to be placed 100 ft. apart. If they get through my fence and through my dogs ... beware of the owner. And my dogs do not take a vacation. I think if I was a robber, I would pick a house with no fence and no dogs.

• Crime does not go away. It does not have a season. Always lock your car. Always lock your doors. Never leave valuables in your car. That is something to remember year round, no matter where you live. I agree that a fenced yard with dogs is a good deterrent to crime. I have found it quite effective for years, especially since I tend to prefer very large dogs. (And there are some great dogs at Pet Rescue who need homes and would be happy to live with you and protect you.) Unless the bad guys have targeted your house for a specific reason, most of the bad guys will move on to an easier target. But you should be careful to make sure your home is not targeted. Don't let anyone you don't know well into your home. Don't post photos online that show the high value items in your home. Don't advertise that you will be away from home. I see people posting on facebook that they will be on vacation—think what the bad guys can do with that information. Anything posted online can be seen by a lot more people than you might think.

• There is something about a fence that makes a dog more effective. The fence helps define the dog's territory. He knows who belongs inside that fence and who doesn't. He will protect his territory and his family. A fence is also a must for a dog that is allowed outdoors because it keeps the dog from wandering into the street where it might be hit by a car. You should also post 'no trespassing' signs on your fence, just to protect yourself legally in case someone who goes into your yard is bitten by your dogs.

• You should also keep serial numbers of all your items so if a crime does happen it makes it easier to catch the crooks.

• Another way to help decrease crime is to make friends with your neighbors and watch out for each other. If there is a retiree in the neighborhood who is home all day, make friends with that person and give him or her your cell phone number so they can call if they see someone at your house. Also, consider starting a neighborhood watch group. The sheriff's office can help you set that up. There are ways you can be proactive to help keep your neighborhood safer.

Child injured by falling bullet on New Year's Eve

• Every year idiots fire guns into the air to "celebrate" New Year's Eve. What goes up ... comes back down.

• We heard a lot of weapon fire on New Years Eve here in Buckhead, including full auto fire. I'm totally against gun control, and a strong advocate of the second amendment, but these people need to go right to jail, with an additional charge of stupid added to the laws they broke!

• We heard gunfire in our residential neighborhood ... and stayed indoors! Bullets fired into the air can and sometimes do injure innocent people who just happen to be standing in the wrong place. There should be more education on this because many people think that a falling bullet does not have enough velocity to seriously injure or kill someone. But as evidenced by the Hillsborough County young man who is now fighting for his life, a falling bullet can be fatal.

• In Miami this year, they had a public awareness campaign with the slogan, "One bullet kills the party," and asked the public to call the cops if they saw anyone firing a gun. Apparently over the years, there have been many injuries there caused by people firing guns into the air to make noise on New Year's Eve. Maybe we should have that kind of awareness campaign statewide.

• One year we were cleaning leaves and debris off of my father's garage. On top of the roof we found a rather large bullet lodged into it. At the time My younger brother and I thought that it was cool, but looking back I see how if the bullet had landed ten feet ahead it could have gone into a car or person.

Jobs

• I used to be proud to be from Okeechobee. Until now, if an American needed a job or help, someone in the job industry was willing to help. But now, you don't want to help your fellow Americans when we go to apply for a job if we are not bilingual. If we go up for a loan or anything we don't get it. We were born here and you're willing to help someone else before you will help us. Look what happened to our boys and girls who fought in Afghanistan. Why do I have to speak Spanish before I can get a job? Anyone who comes here should learn to speak English.

Election

• What would happen if we outlawed political parties and the Electoral College and counted one vote as the one vote?

• You can't outlaw political parties, but the Electoral College has to go.

Letters to the editor

Politics—here it comes again

Greetings! Just a quick political shout-out. What time is it? What time is it. Elections, Poll ratings, debates, lies, truth, myth, critics commentators. CNN/FOX/Local News/Political blues Democrat/GOP. What happened to the Tea Party? Now what. Election 2012 is on! Watch out here comes negative ads, political circus. Bring it on. Cable, keep things straight—John King/Wolff Blitzer. We have heard of obstruction views what about the working class. If there is no future working class, there will be no middle class so let us not become victims. In 2012 Florida, we can't wait for the Birthers, theories, jokers, smoker ads to lead our country. Sorry! I don't want the nation to be a GOP/Rick Scott example. Hey, as this generation would say, stop hating on Obama. Tell me this is not their alternative—we cannot wait. The time is now! Election 2012—it is on. Keep watching, as well as praying.

Brenda Scott

Born in a manger

He was born in a manger, in a tiny village to a peasant girl. He worked as a carpenter, until He was 30, then He became a traveling preacher. When popular opinion turned against Him, He was nailed to a cross, died and rose again. Now, over two thousand years, later... He is still the central figure for much of the Human Race. Who is the greatest man who ever lived? Jesus, Mary's Baby, God's beloved Son... Savior of the World. All of the armies that ever marched, all the soldiers that ever fought in battle, and all the kings that ever held power, all put together, have not affected mankind, as powerfully as this one, solitary force of mankind, Jesus Christ, the greatest gift to the world!

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Brenda Scott

Hibiscus Children's Center needs foster parents

Hibiscus Children's Center Foster Care Program and Adoption Services recruits, trains and licenses all the traditional Foster Parents on the Treasure Coast. The required 30 hour (MAPP) classes are held one evening a week or on Saturdays and are free. Please call if you are able to open your heart and home for "One child in your community that needs you!" For information about becoming a Foster and/or Adoptive Parent or to register for an upcoming class in Okeechobee, please call:

Janet Steward - Foster Care Recruiter at 772-340-5044 ext. 415 or email - jsteward@hcc4kids.org.

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

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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.

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- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
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Business owner accused of buying stolen jewelry

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

A local business man has been arrested for allegedly acting as a pawnbroker by buying stolen jewelry then selling that jewelry in Miami.



Moutaz A. Yamin

Moutaz Abdulah 'Mike' Yamin, 38, S.E. Sixth Lane, Okeechobee, was arrested Wednesday, Jan. 4, on a felony charge of conducting business as a pawnbroker without a license.

Yamin, the owner of the Azteca 3 Store at 625 N.E. Park St., was booked into the Okeechobee County Jail under a \$5,000 bond. Jail records indicate he has since been released on bond.

In an arrest report Detective M.D. Faulkner, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), stated that Yamin had been warned at least twice to stop buying gold because he was not licensed. "I can't prove that he knew the items were stolen, but he obviously should have known that what he was doing was illegal under state law," said the detective.

Detective Faulkner said he was led to Yamin while working several theft cases, in which pieces of jewelry were taken then apparently sold at the store. He would then take the gold to Miami where it was melted down, the detective added.

When asked how much gold Yamin purchased, Detective Faulkner said it could likely be thousands of dollars worth.

"But, that's still under investigation," said the detective, adding that he's been looking into this case for several months.

The OCSO investigator's report stated that Yamin was first confronted in October about his buying gold without being licensed when he ran an advertisement in the Okeechobee News regarding the Azteca Gold & Pawn Shop. The ad went on to say that he was licensed and insured.

Sometime later, continued the report, Yamin again ran the same advertisement.

"Mike (Yamin) told us that he was not conducting a gold and pawn shop business at the Azteca Store and (he) would stop the advertisement," stated the report.

Then, while working a jewelry theft, Detective Faulkner learned that the alleged stolen items were taken to the Azteca Store and sold for about \$30.

"He failed to maintain records of his purchases, which adds reason that he knew he was buying gold and other items illegally and knew the property must have been stolen," stated the arrest report.

A check with the City of Okeechobee showed that the store is actually licensed as the El Rancho Market and that Yamin is the listed owner of the business, but not the property. He has run the store since May 2009.

The business is licensed as food service and retail, similar to a convenience store, but not as a jewelry store or pawn shop.

Detective Faulkner said this investigation is continuing, and that he and other investigators are watching businesses that are buying and selling gold.

"We're looking at them," he said. "We're looking at all people who buy gold. They have to be licensed and regulated."

This is not the Azteca Store's first brush with the law.

Yamin's brother—Ihap Abdallah 'Tommy' Yamin—recently entered a guilty plea in federal court to charges of fraud and identity theft. While working as a cashier at the store, Tommy Yamin would reportedly swipe a customer's credit or debit card to complete the transaction. He would then swipe it a second time in

another card reader to capture the customer's account and personal identification information, stated the indictment against him.

He would then allegedly use that information to code gift cards and credit cards with magnetic strips to create counterfeit cards.

Tommy Yamin was also accused of mak-

ing and selling false identification documents. Those documents included federal alien resident cards, or green cards, as well as Florida driver's licenses. In exchange for the plea, he was sentenced to five years of supervised release and ordered to surrender a 2002 BMW automobile.

Okeechobee Arrest Report

The following individuals were arrested on felony or driving under the influence (DUI) charges by the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD), the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) or the Department of Corrections (DOC).

- Harry Jerome Murphy, 51, S.E. 43rd St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 3 by Deputy Matthew Hurst on a felony charge of false imprisonment and a misdemeanor charge of battery. His bond was set at \$7,500.

- Jenna Marie McDuffie, 19, Marshall Field Road, LaBelle, was arrested Jan. 3 by Trooper Corporal Thomas White on a charge of possession of marijuana over 20 grams. Her bond was set at \$5,000.

- Troy Lamar Booker, 32, S.E. 32nd Ave., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 3 by Deputy

Brian Cross on a charge of driving while license suspended - habitual offender. His bond was set at \$1,000.

- Gilberto Ramirez, 31, S.E. 22nd Court, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 3 by Deputy Matthew Hurst on Marion County warrants charging him with violation of probation - driving under the influence and violation of probation - no valid driver's license. He is being held without bond.

- Eddie Robert Hulen, 49, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 3 by Deputy Joseph Hall on a Georgia warrant charging him with violation of parole - burglary. He is being held without bond.

- Jose Jesus Arellano Jr., 29, N.W. 26th Ave., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 4 by Deputy Fred Bradley on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with violation of probation - grand theft. He is being held without bond.

- John Leonard Breese, 34, 13th Ave. S.W., Cairo, Ga., was arrested Jan. 4 by Deputy Corporal Aric Majere on a DOC warrant charging him with violation of probation - sexual battery and violation of probation - lewd and lascivious act on a child under 16. He is being held without bond.

- Brandon Valentine Cardenas, 20, S.E. 27th St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 4 by Deputy Sergeant Cliff Gill on a warrant charging him with violation of probation - sale or delivery of marijuana and violation of probation - possession of marijuana with intent to sell. He is being held without bond.

This column lists arrests and not convictions, unless otherwise stated. Anyone listed here who is later found innocent or has had the charges against them dropped is welcome to inform this newspaper. The information will be confirmed and printed.

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Community Events

Have coffee with a county commissioner

Coffee with the Commissioner will be hosted by Commissioner Margaret Helton on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2012, from 10 a.m. to noon, and will be held in Commissioner Helton's office located at the Okeechobee County Courthouse, 304 N.W. Second St., room 261, Okeechobee. Citizens wishing to participate are encouraged to call 863-763-6441 to schedule an appointment.

Masonic Lodge breakfast set

Come and join us at the Masonic Lodge 107 N.W. Fifth St. across from Flagler Park, for Sunday breakfast on Sunday, Jan. 8, from 8-11 a.m. Adults \$6 and kids under 12 just \$3. Breakfast includes eggs, bacon, grits, pancakes, biscuits, gravy, juice and coffee. The public is welcome and carryouts are available. Proceeds from the event will benefit Okeechobee Youth Programs.

Free memory screening

The Alzheimer's Association will hold free memory screenings on Monday, Jan. 9, by appointment. Time: 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Visiting Nurse Association, 208 S.E. Park St.. If you are any age, and concerned about memory loss, call 1-800-861-7826, Ext. 501 and make an appointment.

Amateur Radio Club plans January meeting

The Okeechobee Amateur Radio Club (OARC) will hold its January meeting on Monday, Jan. 9, 2012 at 7 p.m. at the Red Cross Classroom on North Parrott Ave. Dues of \$25 are due for the new year, a \$5 increase from previous dues, brought about in the new By-Laws that were accepted by the membership at the December annual business meeting. New officers will be introduced and installed at this meeting, and several items of new business are on the agenda. Coffee is provided at the meeting, and anyone in the Okeechobee area, who has a current or expired ham license, or anyone interested in learning about ham radio is urged to attend. The OARC is very interested in expanding its membership and getting to know 'seasonal' hams that come to the area during the winter as well. For more information, contact Tom Timmons, President of the OARC at ttimmons@dtimmons.com

Adult sports leagues open

Registration for the Parks & Recreation's adult leagues is now open. Winter sports include adult softball (co-ed) and flag football (men and women). Registration for co-ed softball is \$325 per team. The deadline is Friday, Jan. 27. Fees for flag football are as follows: men-\$350 and women-\$325. The deadline for flag football is Friday, Feb. 3. An organizational meeting will be held for both leagues on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at the Civic Center on 98N.-6:30 p.m. for softball and 7 p.m. for flag football. For more information, call the Parks & Rec. Dept. at 863-763-6950.

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.

Irene M. Conner, 91

OKEECHOBEE — Irene M. Conner, age 91, died Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012, in Ft. Pierce at Lawnwood Medical Center.

She was born in Cuero, Texas, relocated to Florida in 1969 and became a resident of Okeechobee in 1978.

She and her husband greatly enjoyed traveling throughout the United States with the Good Sam Club and also traveled extensively in Canada and Nova Scotia. She enjoyed making jewelry and trying her luck at bingo and casinos.

Irene was preceded in death by her husband, Hubert Emory Conner; and a grandson, Chip Lindsey. She is survived by her daughter, Jenova (Charlie) Hoelscher of Okeechobee; son, Butch (June) Conner of Scurry, Texas; grandchildren, Geneva Perkins of Tampa, Bu-Bu Lofton and Lyn Lofton, both of Florence, Ala., Renee Riggan of Terrell, Texas, Randee Hock and Roddy Conner, both of Scurry, Texas; 13 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; and companion, Gary White of Okeechobee.

There are no services planned at this time.

Friends may send online condolences at www.buxtonseawinds.com.

All arrangements are under the care of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, Florida.

Harold Brown, 93

OKEECHOBEE — Harold Brown, age 93, died Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2012, at the Okeechobee Health Care Facility.

Harold was born in New Jersey. He was a resident of Okeechobee for the past 14 years. Having served his country in the U.S. Military overseas, he was a member of the VFW. He was also a member of the Widows to Widowers group.

Harold was preceded in death by his wife, Ardis Brown. Survivors include his sons, Robert N. (Ronna) Brown of Boca Raton, Fla., Barry H. Brown of Okeechobee; four grandchildren, Kristine, Eric, Robert Jr., and Brett; and a brother, James Brown of Huntsville, Ala.

Friends may send online condolences at www.buxtonseawinds.com.

All arrangements are under the care of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, Florida.



Patricia Dean Dansa, 45

OKEECHOBEE — Patricia Dean Dansa, age 45, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2012. She passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family.

Patricia was born Dec. 18, 1966, in Knoxville, Tenn., to Bill and Norma Price. She lived in Okeechobee for 14 years.

She was preceded in death by her father, Bill Price; and sister, Teresa Bast. She is survived by her loving mother, Norma Price of Okeechobee; son, Brian Dansa of Florida; granddaughter, Addison Dansa of Okeechobee; brothers, Michael (Crystal) Price of Ft. Pierce, Richard (Tracy) Price of Ft. Lauderdale, Steven (Kathy) Price of Okeechobee; aunt, Wilma King of Ft. Lauderdale; and a host of loving cousins, nieces and nephews.

Patty loved family and life in general and will be greatly missed by family and friends.

Visitation will be held at Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home on Monday, Jan. 9, 2012, from 10 a.m. until service time of 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in memory of Patricia be made to Hospice Foundation, c/o Treasure Coast Hospice, 1201 S.E. Indian St., Stuart, FL 34997.

Friends may send online condolences at www.buxtonseawinds.com.

All arrangements are under the care and direction of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, Florida.

Scott M. Kochakian, 47

OKEECHOBEE — Scott M. Kochakian, age 47, died at home on Monday, Jan. 2, 2012.

Originally from Maryland, Scott lived in Okeechobee for the past 35 years. He was an electrician by trade.

Scott survived by his companion, Christine Fisher of Okeechobee; sons, Corry Allen Kochakian of Okeechobee, Christopher J. (Tammy) Waldridge of Clermont, Fla.; daughter, Melisha (Richard) Bolton of Okeechobee; granddaughter, Kimberly Waldridge; brother Stephen (Rita) Kochakian, Jr. of Florida; father, Stephen Kochakian, Sr. of Okeechobee; and many loving friends.

A memorial service will be held at his daughter's home on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2012, at 1 p.m.

Friends may send online condolences at www.buxtonseawinds.com.

All arrangements are under the care of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, Florida.



Linda LeBlanc Bridges, 58

TREASURE ISLAND — Linda LeBlanc Bridges, 58, lost her very courageous 17 month battle with ALS/ Lou Gehrig's disease on Friday morning, Dec. 30, 2011. She passed away peacefully at her Treasure Island home that she shared with her devoted husband, Bud.

Linda was born in Delcambre, La., (Cajun) and moved to Florida when she was a child. For 14 years, she worked at First Union National Bank in Ft. Lauderdale as a loan specialist and series 6/7 investment counselor. In 2000, Linda and Bud, an avid bass fisherman, moved to Okeechobee, and Linda was hired as the branch manager at Big Lake National Bank, Treasure Island. Later in her career, she joined the Penny Saver and Okeechobee News as an advertising consultant. Linda was very involved in community services and was a member of the Rotary Club, American Business Women's Association, Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as other organizations and charities.

In her spare time, Linda loved to draw and paint. In September, one of her drawings was selected as a finalist in the National Examiner. Linda was kind, always had a smile on her face and will be greatly missed by her dear family and friends.

She is survived by her loving husband, Bud; and her two cherished sisters, Debbie Bradford of Key West, Fla., and Joanne Forrester of Largo, Fla.; and a very large extended family.

A private service was held Jan. 4, 2012, at Bass Funeral Home and additional services will be held in Delcambre, La., Key West, Fla., and Perkins Cove, Maine.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Linda's memory to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Association.



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Bull riding, barbecue and music fest planned

Plans are under way for the Eighth Annual PBR Pro Touring Division Bull Riding event including the second Cowboy's Pro BBQ State Championship Competition and "Music Fest Under The Stars."

This year's event is scheduled for Jan. 14 at the St. Lucie County Fair Grounds.

Gates open at noon with professional BBQ competitors, great novelty vendors, live entertainment, a kids' area and much more.

Top BBQ competitions from all over the world will compete, including William Bubba Latimer "Bub-Ba-Q."

The community stage will offer live music featuring Thunder Road and Felix Moss and the Easy People Band. There will be presentations by the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary.

Then at 5:30 p.m. get ready to witness the toughest sport on earth—professional bull riding. The PBR will feature stock from Jeff Robinson, the reigning PBR Stock Contractor of the year and owner of such bulls as "Voodoo Child" AND "Chicken On A Chain."

After the bull riding, enjoy Music Fest Under the Stars" featuring Confederate Railroad and the Kentucky Headhunter.

Last year, the event drew BBQ competitors from as far away as Brazil and Canada and more than 8,000 spectators. With the added entertainment this coming year, organizers are expecting attendance to hit 12,000.

This event is critical for the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary to support their efforts to care for sick, injured, and orphaned Florida wildlife and their work to educate the community about Florida's natural resources. In 2011, the Sanctuary treated over 5,000 animal patients that suffered injuries that ranged from collisions with cars, fishing line entanglement, electrocutions, illegal gunshot wounds, poisonings, and more. Over 100,000 children and adults visited the Sanctuary and participated in the center's educational programs yearly.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Teresa Chandler

B.R.A.T. Club hosts 120 students

B.R.A.T. Club organized a teen dance on Dec. 17, and entertained 120 students! The students enjoyed music by DJ "Dunk," pizza, smoothies, chips, soda and reindeer candy canes. The students also competed in limbo and hula hoop games. Thank you to the volunteers and the following businesses that make this fun activity possible; Ding-A-Ling Deli, Dominos, Gordon & Doner, Okeechobee County School Board, City Police Dept., Okeechobee County Sheriff, WOKC, Okeechobee News, East Coast Signs, Okeechobee Dodge Chrysler Jeep, Waste Management and Beef 'O' Brady's. For more information on the B.R.A.T. Club please call Teresa Chandler at 863-801-4996.



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

Fifteen years' service

At the Tuesday, Jan. 3, Okeechobee City Council meeting Mayor James Kirk, right, honored Major Bob Peterson, left, of the Okeechobee City Police Department for 15 years service to the city. The mayor presented the major with a plaque and a clock.

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Jaguars claim 93-77 road hoop win over Brahmans

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Trewiston Pierce had 34 points in a losing cause as Okeechobee lost to Port St. Lucie 93-77 in boys basketball action Tuesday night at the Brahman gym.

The Jaguars hit 10 three-point field goals as they won a key District 12-7A game. Frank Martin had five 3-point baskets and 25 points to lead Port St. Lucie (6-6, 3-1 in district).

Jonathan Williams added 21 points for Port St. Lucie and Alan Martin had 15 points.

Phillip Jones had 10 points and Sylvester Butler and Daniel Eng added eight points apiece for Okeechobee, (6-7 overall and 0-4 in district).

Port St. Lucie shot very well throughout the game but also got a lot of easy baskets on fast breaks. The Jaguars led 22-17 after the first quarter and 45-33 at the half. Okeechobee got as close at 10 points, 54-44 in the third but couldn't get over the hump. PSL led 68-55 after the third quarter.

Brahman coach Shawn Hays said the team did well on offense but struggled on defense.

"I feel we gave them so many shots without a hand in their face. I don't know if it was conditioning or the two-week layoff. I just felt we didn't compete defensively tonight," he said.

Williams, a senior for PSL, said his team emphasizes their fast break game and likes to get easy baskets, he said they like to attack the post and pass to the outside so their guards can get open jumpers.

"The guards knocked down a couple of shots tonight. It's cold out here so we wanted to put on a showcase and show teams we are ready to play in the second half of the season," he added.

The Brahmans travelled to Moore Haven on Wednesday night to compete with their Glades County neighbors. The next home game for Okeechobee is Tuesday, Jan. 10, against Fort Pierce Central with the JV game at 5:30 p.m., and the varsity to follow.

OHS Sports News in Brief

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee High School Lady Brahman basketball team equaled their win total of last year, six, when they defeated the Lady Blue Streaks of Sebring on Tuesday, 51-38.

Coach Erin Morrow said the team has shown a lot of improvement on and off the court this year. She said the team has a number of home games in January and would like to show off their improvement for their local fans, "I would like to see the girls execute the game plan and perform better at home. I feel we are playing better as a team and gelling a lot better than we did last year."

The team lost Thaddricka Sanders for the season due to an ankle injury at the Sebring game Tuesday. That will put some pressure on the other guards to handle the ball and hit some open shots.

At the Christmas Tournament at Berean Christian High School Carley McCoin and Bethany Stuart won the two ball competition, Ami Edwards won the free throw shooting competition and Sanders won the long distance three-point shot competition. Edwards was also named to the All-Tournament Team.

OHS officials are putting together a committee to continue their search for a new football coach. Community leaders are being contacted to serve on the committee. One source reported more than 40 coaches have expressed interest in the job from around the nation. School officials said a Florida candidate would be preferred due to the knowledge of our state education laws and policies.

The Lady Brahman soccer team fell to Fort Pierce Westwood 3-1 at home on Wednesday. The soccer team did score one goal and had nine other shots on goal as they continue to improve.

Brahman boys basketball got back to the .500 mark (7-7) with an 80-58 win on the road in Moore Haven on Wednesday night. The Brahmans travelled to Fort Pierce on Thursday and will host Martin County on Monday, Jan. 9, at 6 p.m.

The Brahman boys soccer team opened the second half of the year with a 2-1 win at Treasure Coast on Tuesday night. Erick Garcia had two goals for Okeechobee, (12-1-1). Brian Guerrero had an assist while Serafin Espinoza had four saves in the Brahman net. The Brahmans host Fort Pierce Central in a rematch of last year's district final on Friday night at 7 p.m.

Tryouts for the Brahman softball team will be held on Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 9-10, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at OHS. Athletes must have a green card on file and up to date to sign up. Players are advised to bring tennis shoes, cleats and a glove to tryouts. Any athlete currently playing a winter sport should tell coach Christina Bragman that you are interested in playing this year by Jan. 10.

The OHS tennis team will hold an adult tournament fundraiser on Saturday and Sunday, January 28-29, at the Okeechobee Sports Complex. Money raised from the tournament will be used to pay team expenses such as game transportation, uniforms, equipment, and other needs. The fundraising goal for 2012 is \$5,000. Sponsorships are encouraged. For more information call Mairim Rivero at 863-467-0209 or email her at pbparmando@yahoo.com.



(far right) Trewiston Pierce receives instruction from Brahman Coach Shawn Hays during Tuesday's game at OHS.
(at left) Eddie Neal had eight points in a high scoring game against Port St. Lucie on Tuesday. The Brahmans fell 93-77.

Cattlemen host sporting clay fun shoot

Think you can out shoot a CattleWoman? Farm Credit challenges you with a bounty drawing if you can. Join us at the Sporting Clay Fun Shoot at Quail Creek Plantation, Okeechobee on Saturday, **Jan. 7**, at 8:30 a.m. Registration forms on-line at: www.floridacattlemen.org/fcw.html. There will be a drawing for a new Winchester Super X 12 Gauge Pump Shotgun SXP Camp Combo (synthetic stock/28 inches barrel and 18 inches defender barrel/3 chokes) Don't miss your chance to win this shotgun. Only 200 tickets will be sold at just \$10 each. The drawing will be held during the Fun Shoot. Need not be present to win but it is more fun to be there. Drawing for the shotgun is sponsored by Larry and Debbie Swindle. Gun transfer donated by Quail Creek Plantation. (You must be eligible to own a gun in the state of Florida to win the prize). Proceeds benefit Florida Cattle Women educational/youth programs and scholarship fund. For information: Wendy Petteway - 863-781-3986; Melissa Montes De Oca - 863-634-7712 or Melissamdo@earthlink.net; Quail Creek Plantation - 863-763-2529.

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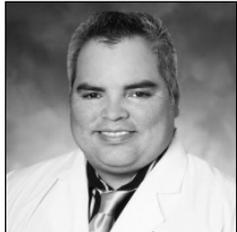
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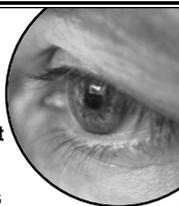
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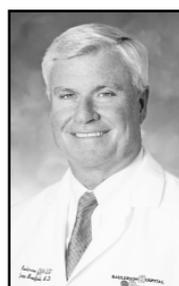


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Consumer confidence jumps in December

GAINESVILLE, Fla.—Consumer confidence among Floridians rose three points to 69 in December, reflecting a cautious optimism in the economy, according to a recent University of Florida survey. Though the latest figure is only one point below the level set in December 2010, it also marks the highest rank in the past nine months.

The index used by UF researchers in the survey is benchmarked to 1966, which means a value of 100 represents the same level of confidence for that year. The lowest index possible is a 2; the highest is 150.

Consumer confidence in December shot up in four of the five indexes used by survey takers, and declined in only one. The index that reveals whether Floridians think their personal finances have improved from a year ago rose one point to 53. Another showed their overall expectations in the soundness of the U.S. economy jumped six points to 59. Confidence in the economy's

performance over the next five years also rose — this time three points to 71. Finally, the overall perception of survey takers that the present is a good time to buy "big ticket" items, such as washing machines and laptops — went up sharply by seven points to 85.

The only index to show dropping confidence was an expectation of a drop in personal finances a year from now, declining two points to 78.

Taken as a whole, the UF survey reflects a changing mood that matches growing confidence across the nation, said Chris McCarty, director of UF's Survey Research Center in the Bureau of Economic and Business Research. In addition, he added, there are factors in the Florida economy that were interpreted as positive by both younger and older respondents. Men were more positive than women by a margin of 71 points to 67.

"Floridians are most likely optimistic

about continued improvement in the employment situation," McCarty said. The decline in unemployment in November was .4 percent to 10 percent. The drop marked the first time in many months that economic sectors other than tourism led the way in employment increases. McCarty noted that employers in trade, transportation and utilities employed 34,800 more workers from October to November. However, he cautioned that many of these new jobs were in retail trade and may only reflect holiday seasonal hiring, which could disappear in early 2012.

McCarty also cited several other reasons for the change in mood. Retailers are offering big seasonal discounts to shoppers and mortgage interest rates are low. Housing prices may have "bottomed out" for a while, he said, hovering about around \$130,100 for a single-family home. Gas prices are down, too. A gallon cost about 15 cents less than it did in November, though prices are expected to rise in 2012.

Stock prices were unsteady but did not sink in the wake of bad economic news coming from Europe, as some economists expected. Media reports about the U.S. Congress' wrangling over debt and spending issues also didn't sour consumer confidence. "Contrary to our prediction, the impasse of the Super Commission regarding deficit reductions came and went with very little concern from consumers," McCarty said.

Overall, the mood for December is modestly upbeat. But McCarty cautioned that Floridians may find it hard to remain optimistic in the coming year, if Congress carries through with \$1.2 trillion in mandatory spending cuts required by the debt ceiling deal in 2011.

The UF survey was conducted between Dec. 11 and Dec. 22, and reflects the responses of 411 individuals statewide.

Seacoast Bank leads in deposits

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Seacoast National Bank maintained a slight lead in market share and deposits for Okeechobee County followed closely by Bank of America in the annual Deposit Market Share report released by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in December.

Total deposits in the county declined from \$447.7 to \$441.1 million in the past year according to the report. Seacoast reported deposits of over \$111.8 million up about \$3.7 million from 2010. Bank of America remained in second place but their total deposits declined from \$105.7 million to \$98.9 million. Suntrust Bank took over third place with \$64.4 million in deposits in 2011. PNC Bank moved from fifth to fourth in the ranking with \$57.2 million in deposits. In 2010 the bank reported \$67 million on deposit in Okeechobee. TD Bank fell from third in 2010 to fifth in 2011. The bank reported \$46.7 in deposits in 2011 and \$76 million in 2010 in Okeechobee. Regions Bank remained in sixth place with a \$44.4 million on deposit in 2011 compared to \$38.5 in 2010. Center State Bank entered

the report for the first time in 2011 with \$27.7 million on deposit to take seventh place. The First Bank and Trust Company of Indiantown saw an increase from \$14.6 million to \$20.9 million from 2010 to 2011 but remained at the bottom of the list.

Seacoast had a market share of 23.7 percent, Bank of America 20.95 percent, Suntrust Bank 13.54 percent, PNC Bank National Association 12.12 percent, TD Bank 9.9 percent, Regions Bank 9.4 percent, Center State 5.87 percent, and First Bank and Trust of Indiantown 4.42 percent.

Seacoast also maintained over a 50-percent market share in Glades County in 2011. The FDIC report showed Seacoast had \$34.2 million in deposits, a market share of 50.41 percent in 2011. First Bank was second with \$18.7 million, a market share of 27.58 percent. Bank of America finished third with \$12.4 million and a market share of 18.23 percent. First Bank and Trust of Indiantown reported \$2.6 million on deposit a market share of 3.78 percent. The report said nearly \$70 million was on deposit in Glades County banks in 2011.

The annual report contains deposits as of June 30, 2011.

Got summer programs? Let us know

Children's Services Council will once again offer creative groups an opportunity to have a quality summer program for children and youth of Okeechobee.

Any agency or group who has always had an idea for a great summer activity, but never had the means to carry it out, can apply to the Children's Services Council for a Special Summer Project. This is our sixth year; last year over 700 children participated in at least one summer activity.

The major goal is to provide a summer program a maximum of nine (9) weeks for children and youth, ages 4-18. These funds are not for one-day events. The project must detail who is going to be served, where the program will be located and the activities the program will be providing. Programs must be for Okeechobee County children and cannot discriminate due to race or religion. If an agency already receives a Children's Services Council grant, the summer project must be written to enhance or expand the existing program. It cannot be the current program.

The project application will be available for dissemination on Friday, Jan. 13, 2012. Call Cathleen Blair or Cheryl Sutton at the CSC office at 462-5000, ext. 255. The completed application must be returned to the Children's Services Council office at 700 S.W. 2nd Avenue, Room 304 by 3 p.m., Monday, Feb. 6, 2012. Decisions will be made for funding at the CSC meeting on Thursday, Feb. 9, 2012.

Okeechobee Upcoming Blood Drives

Over the winter holidays, blood donors are still needed to help provide a safe blood supply for area hospitals. The Big Red Bus bloodmobile will be in Okeechobee on the following dates:

- Friday, Jan. 6 - Blockbuster Video, 2 p.m.-6 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 7 - PhilFiesta Celebration



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Okeechobee spared most freeze damage

The hard freeze predicted for Okeechobee County Tuesday and Wednesday was not as serious as originally projected, and little crop damage was reported, according to the Okeechobee County Extension Office.

There were only a few incidences of frost or freeze damage to crops reported in our area from this week's low temperatures.

"I have not heard of damage to citrus fruit, although some frost was seen in some protected areas," stated Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent Daniel Culbert.

He said he expects pastures to have some slowdown in green forage production, which may have a future impact on livestock operations.

"At a nursery in the northeast part of Okeechobee—west of Fort Pierce, south of Fort Drum—they reported Tuesday evening temperatures in the lower 30s. Tender plants were brought inside; other landscape plants that were left under sprinklers last night did not show cold damage Wednesday morning. There was a particularly attractive azalea bush in full bloom that had suffered no ill effects," Mr. Culbert continued.

One nursery worker reported that temperatures in Indiantown were at 35 Tuesday

night, he said.

Eagle Island Farms in northwestern Okeechobee County has several thousand acres of cabbage, potatoes and sweet onions in the ground. Low temperatures around freezing occurred, but were not sustained, and winds kept frost from forming in most areas. They reported some limited frost damage to potatoes grown at one location near Basinger.

The cold temperatures may be of value in hardening up most crops in preparation for future cold fronts, he said.

Wes Williamson, of Williamson Cattle Company, which has citrus groves, said his groves were spared damage since it was not cold enough for long enough. On Tuesday night the temperature on the property got down to 27 degrees. On Wednesday night he said the temperature dropped an additional degree to 26. His pastures were not so fortunate. He said they will now have to provide supplemental feed for the cattle.

Homeowners whose landscape plants were damaged by the cold are advised to leave the plants alone and wait and see how they do.

The best advice for home landscapes: DO

NOT PRUNE, advised Mr. Culbert. "Pruning brings out new growth that can get hurt in future cold fronts."

Don't fertilize freeze damaged plants, he continued. Fertilizing also encourages new growth, which can be damaged by future cold fronts.

Keep up with watering if the soil is dry, but don't get it too wet.

For more information see the Okeechobee Extension Office web site at <http://okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu/> or call the Extension Office at 863-763-6469.

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FWC offering hunter safety course

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will host a free hunter safety course Jan. 7, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Students will learn about hunting laws, safe gun handling and hunter ethics/responsibility, among other topics, before taking the final test. The course also includes live-firing instruction on a shooting range.

The course is at the Glades County Sheriff's Office Shooting Range near Moore Haven, on Gun Club Road (north of the city barn). From Lakeport, the range is six miles south, on the west side of S.R. 78, near the Fisheating Creek entrance.

You may sign up by calling the FWC's South Region office at 561-625-5122 or going to MyFWC.com/HunterSafety.

People seeking certification must successfully complete the online section of the Hunter Education Course prior to taking the classroom course. In order to receive certification, they must bring a printed copy of the final Web report to the FWC classroom course on Jan. 7. (The web report does not need to be notarized.)

Anyone born on or after June 1, 1975, must pass an approved hunter safety course before purchasing a Florida hunting license. Parents or legal guardians must accompany children under 16 years of age to all classes. To participate in the live-fire exercises, children under 18 years old must present a parental release form signed by a parent or legal guardian.

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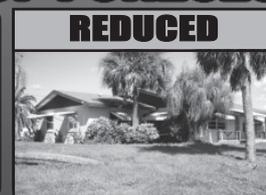
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Lincare, leading national respiratory company seeks Healthcare Specialist. Responsibilities: Disease management programs, clinical evaluations, equipment set up & education. Be the doctor's eyes in the home setting. RN, RRT, CRT licensed as applicable.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

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Apartments

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Guns/Supplies

Condos/Townhouses Rent

Taylor Creek - 1/1 Condo unfurnished on ground floor. Includes utilities and boat ramp and dock. Move in special only \$600 call 863-634-0663.

Taylor Creek Condo - 2/1, On water, Pool, Dock. \$800/mo + 1st & sec. Short term rates also available Call (863)634-8757

Houses - Rent

House For Rent
Basswood 33rd
3 and 2 Bed, Garage,
Fenced. \$1,200, First
and Last month.
No Pets
Call Rafael 561-683-9754

OKEE - 2/1, \$459 mo.
Beautiful ranch setting located 12 miles N.E. of town. Water, Lawn, pest, and trash incl. Pasture avail. Recently remodeled. Mon-Fri. 863-467-9800. No Pets.

OKEECHOBEE 6835 SE 88th Trail. - 2br, 2ba, furn. or unfurn., 1st, last and Sec. Utils not incld. (561)735-6050 or (561)254-0478.

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TREASURE ISLAND - 3/2 CBS, on the water, dock, patio, tile throughout & boat house. \$1100 (561)262-1390.

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Rooms To Rent

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Houses - Sale

Owner Financing - 3 bdrm 2 bath house on 1 acre \$3,500.00 down \$931.42 a month. Call Beverley 863-634-2820

Two Story CBS house on Canal, 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, living room w/fire place. 2 frigs, washer/dryer, 40 ft Car port, Very Clean. \$125,000
Call 863-610-0329

Land - Sale

OKEECHOBEE 5 Acres \$2,000 down. Park your own trailer or house, owner financing \$49,000. 863-763-6358

When doing those chores is doing you in, it's time to look for a helper in the classifieds.

Houses - Rent

OKEE 3/1 Updated Home, central a/c, wood flooring, Tiled Bathroom, w/d, Well Water. \$725 mo. plus security Located by 15-B. Call 786-201-0306

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

Employment Full Time

Manufacturing
Cylinder Handler
Praxair Distribution Southeast, one of North America's leading suppliers of industrial, medical & specialty gases, high-performance coating, and related services and technologies is currently seeking a Cylinder Handler in OKEECHOBEE, FL.

You will be responsible for loading and unloading gas cylinders and/or other products onto and off of route trucks and trailers; rolling cylinders and operating a forklift truck for the movement of cylinders; sorting empty cylinders by type and placing in empty inventory; pulling empty cylinders as needed out of inventory for filling; checking for cylinder quantities, styles and product, and/or assisting with inventory; handling cylinders and performing basic cylinder maintenance such as painting cylinders, labeling cylinders, cleaning of work areas, and completing shipping documents; assisting with customer orders and accompanying paperwork for shipment; completing both routine and non-routine daily and weekly assignments; and applying well-established techniques or procedures within closely prescribed limits. Must be willing to have an established shift of either 6AM to 3PM or noon to 9PM, but able to work either shift as business needs arise, including production needs, covering vacations, etc.

To qualify, you must have a High School diploma and be able to pass a criminal background check and drug screening.

To apply, visit our web site at www.praxair.com
Click on Careers, United States and Search for Admin/Tech/Other Careers Opportunities.
Click on the job title from the complete Job List or search by job number 1101532. EOE

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Lots - Sale

FOR SALE - RESIDENTIAL BUILDING LOT CLOSE TO BLUE HERON IN BRENT WOOD ESTATES. LOT SIZE IS 0.65 ACRES HAS HOUSE PAD IN PLACE TO ACCOMMODATE A 3500 SQ. FT. HOME WATER DEPOSIT PAID READY TO BUILD ON. \$45,000 OR O.B.O. CALL CARL @ 863-634-8617

Mobile Homes
For more listings, go to www.newszap.com

Mobile Home Rent

3/2 Furnished, Mint, Built in 05, Great Neighborhood, City Water. \$950 mo. 3 month minimum No Dogs Call 863-801-1739

Buckhead Ridge - 4/2 with fenced yard and fire place. Move in now \$600 includes lawn service, \$700/mo. Call 863-634-0663.

TREASURE ISLAND - 2/2 new carpet, lg. Fla. rm, w/detached man cave. 2 Sheds. Move in now for \$600. Call (863)634-0663

Mobile Home Sale

24x38 DWMH on Rim Canal. 1BR, large living room w/sleeper sofa, large kitchen, 2bath, attached storage building, carport, boat dock. On double lot, furnished. \$17,000.00 negotiable 727-422-1893

BANK REPO'S Starting at \$15,000 Mobile Home Angels 561-721-2230

OKEECHOBEE- Lg. 3br/2ba DW, w/14x40 addition, metal roof, FP, 11x20 shop, on Canal. Covered dock & slip. Sprinklers, \$75K O.B.O. 772-321-1835 or 772-664-6799.

Palm Harbor Homes New 2012 Models \$15K Off All Homes 800-622-2832 ext 210

SEMINOLE COVE 2BD/2BA, NEW A/C, LAMINATE & CARPET, ISLAND IN KITCHEN, SCREENED PORCH. CALL 863-357-4982

Treasure Island - 75x110 Canal Lot w/ 2br, 1 ba. Single-wide. New drain field, new AC & Fridg. C-wall, dock, Shed & lift. Asking \$42,300. 352-854-9257 or 772-285-5734.

Recreation
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RV Space Rent
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* Water Front RV Lots \$400.00/mo. Incl. Utilities
* Covered Dockage Incl. W/Lot Rent
* Cabin \$500.00/mo. Incl. Utilities
* Call 863-763-4417

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Fifth Wheels
2001- 33 Foot Sandpiper 1 push out, Queen Size Bed, excellent condition, Never had pets or smoked in. Call for more information 863-763-4620

Automotive
For more listings, go to www.newszap.com

Automobiles
2000 Tahoe Z71 4x4 V-8, Front and rear air, automatic and loaded. \$3,800 OBO 417-848-6360

Public Notices
For more listings, go to www.newszap.com

Public Notice

LEGAL NOTICE
A public auction will be held at BMJ Towing, Inc. Lot at 414 South Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34974 on Friday the 20th day of Jan. 2012 from 10:00-11:00 A.M. Pursuant to Florida statute 713.78 for unpaid towing and storage. Year, Make, Model & Vin's as follows:
1994 Purple Honda Accord 1HGCD5609A009026
1998 Black Volkswagen Beetle 3VWB861C9W017736
2002 White Ford Ranger 1FTYR10U52PB62816
Terms of sale are cash, and no checks will be accepted. The seller reserves the right of final bid. All sales are final. No refunds will be made. Said automobiles will be sold in "AS IS" with no guarantees. 406946 ON 1/6/2012

Public Notice

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO: 2011-CA-337
FERNANDO SANTANGELI, individually and as trustee of the Fernando Santangeli Living Trust dated December 12, 2001, Plaintiff,
VS.
JEAN F. DULIEPRE, if living, and any unknown spouse, or if said Defendant is deceased, the Estate of Jean F. Duliepre, deceased, her children, together with all unknown heirs, devisees, grantees, assignees, creditors, lienors and trustees, and all other persons claiming by, through, under or against the named Defendant.

NOTICE OF ACTION

TO: JEAN F. DULIEPRE, if living, and any unknown spouse, or if said Defendant is deceased, the Estate of Jean F. Duliepre, deceased, her children, together with all unknown heirs, devisees, grantees, assignees, creditors, lienors and trustees, and all other persons claiming by, through, under or against the named Defendant and all other parties having or claiming to have any right, title and interest in and to the real property in the complaint

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Complaint to quiet title on the following described real property, to-wit: LOT 11, GRAND PRIX RANCHES, PLAT 1, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF, AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 5 AT PAGE 72 OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA. TOGETHER WITH ALL THE TENEMENTS, HEREDITAMENTS AND APPURTENANCES thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

has been filed against you, and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to JOHN D. CASSELL, JR., Attorney for Plaintiff, whose address is Post Office Box 968, 400 Northwest 2nd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34973, within 30 days of first publication, and file the original with the Clerk of this Court either before service on Plaintiff's Attorney or immediately thereafter, otherwise a Default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint. This Notice shall be published once each week for four (4) consecutive weeks in the "Okeechobee News". DATED this 27th day of December, 2011.

SHARON ROBERTSON Clerk of the Circuit Court By: Arlene Nealis Deputy Clerk 406373 ON 12/30/2011 1/6,13,20/2012

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE WILL HOLD A REGULAR BOARD MEETING TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2012 AT 3:30 P.M. IN THE BOARD ROOM OF THE BEN L. BRYAN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ON THE MAIN CAMPUS OF INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE AT 3209 VIRGINIA AVENUE, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA 34981-5596. NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN THAT AT 9:00 A.M., TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012, AN AGENDA MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM OF THE BEN L. BRYAN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ON THE MAIN CAMPUS, 3209 VIRGINIA AVENUE, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA 34981-5596. ANY PERSONS WISHING TO PLACE BEFORE THAT BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION ARGUMENTS CONCERNING ISSUES OF LAW OR POLICY OR PRESENT EVIDENCE OF ANY PERTINENT FACT THAT MAY BE IN DISPUTE MUST NOTIFY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE AT LEAST SEVEN DAYS BEFORE THE SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. ANY PERSONS WISHING TO APPEAL THE DECISIONS OF THIS BOARD WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT SUCH MEETING WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND FOR SUCH PURPOSE MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS IS MADE. 406860 ON 1/6/2012

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

Public Notice

PUBLIC NOTICE CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTING A CITY ORDINANCE
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City Council of the City of Okeechobee, Florida will on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter possible, at City Hall, 55 SE 3rd Ave., Okeechobee, FL conduct a PUBLIC HEARING on and thereafter to consider final reading of the following Ordinance into law: Ord No. 1081: AN ORDINANCE GRANTING TO FLORIDA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMPANY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR A PERIOD OF 30 YEARS TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE, MAINTAIN, OWN AND TRANSPORT IN THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA, WORKS FOR THE MANUFACTURE, TRANSMISSION, DISTRIBUTION, TRANSPORTATION, AND SALE OF GAS, INCLUDING NATURAL, MANUFACTURED OR MIXED GAS; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE UPON FINAL PASSAGE. TAKE NOTICE AND BE ADVISED that no stenographic record by a certified court reporter will be made of the foregoing meeting. Accordingly, any person who may seek to appeal any decision involving the matters noticed herein will be responsible for making a verbatim record of the testimony and evidence at said meeting upon which any appeal is to be based. Please contact City Administration at 863-763-3372, or website www.cityofokeechobee.com, to obtain a copy of the agenda. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 persons needing special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the City Clerk's Office at 863-763-3372 for assistance. by: Jamie E. Kirk, Mayor Lane Gamioeta, CMC, City Clerk 406985 ON 1/6/2012

LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT

The Region 20 Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast, Job/Workforce Solutions, is seeking statements of qualifications/resumes from individuals interested in developing, coordinating, and monitoring a Summer Youth Employment Program beginning February 20, 2012 through August 31, 2012. Please consider this document a formal Request For Qualifications (RFQ). Responses will be used to determine the best qualified individual for the aforementioned services and will be the basis for negotiating a contract.

Please submit (by U.S. mail, courier or hand delivery) one original cover letter, resume, proposed fee schedule and references with three copies in a sealed envelope labeled RFQ# 11-005-SYCONSULT no later than 5:00pm on January 17, 2012. Responses received after this date will not be considered. The request for qualifications (RFQ) package may be viewed at www.vocworkforcesolutions.com or picked up at 584 NW University Blvd., Suite 100, Port St. Lucie, FL 34986. 406353 ON 1/4,6,8/2012

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

2011TD093
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that JOSEPH FREDERICK GAZZA the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificates for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows: Certificate No: 3129 Year of Issuance: June-01-2009

Description of Property: CONSOLIDATED LAND COMPANY THAT PART OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION LYING & BEING IN SECTION 9, TOWNSHIP 38 SOUTH RANGE 36 EAST THE NORTH 1050 FEET OF THE SOUTH 1457 FEET OF LOT 15 AND 16, BLOCK 5, CONSOLIDATED LAND COMPANY, LYING WEST OF STATE ROAD 15-A ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 1, PAGE 5 PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY FLORIDA. LESS & EXCEPT THE FOLLOWING: COMMENCE AT A POINT WHERE THE NORTH BOUNDARY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15-A INTERSECTS THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15-A AND RUN NORTHERLY ON THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15-A, A DISTANCE OF 751 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING THENCE RUN NORTH 51 DEGREES 06 MINUTES 15 SECONDS WEST A DISTANCE OF 313.98 FEET TO THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF LOT 15, BLOCK 5, CONSOLIDATED LAND COMPANY SUBDIVISION; THENCE RUN NORTH 34 DEGREES 55 MINUTES 01 SECONDS EAST ON THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF LOT 15, A DISTANCE OF 294.49 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 51 DEGREES 06 MINUTES 15 SECONDS EAST A DISTANCE OF 279.21 FEET TO THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15-A AND SOUTHERLY ON THE WEST BOUNDARY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15-A A DISTANCE OF 298.12 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING LYING AND BEING IN SECTION 9 TOWNSHIP 38 SOUTH RANGE 36 EAST OKEECHOBEE COUNTY FLORIDA.

1-09-38-36-0A00-00018-0000 Said property being in the County of Okeechobee, State of Florida Name in which assessed: JAMES J ROWLON Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder at the Okeechobee County Judicial Center, Jury Assembly Room, 312 NW 3rd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 10:00 A.M., on the 2nd day of February, 2012. SUBJECT TO CURRENT TAXES

SHARON ROBERTSON, CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT Okeechobee County, Florida /s/ Robin R. Parrish Deputy Clerk NOTICE REGARDING THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, persons needing a special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact Court Administration no later than seven days prior to the proceeding at 250 NW Country Club Drive, Port St. Lucie, Florida 34986, 1.772.807.4370 within two working days of your receipt of this notice. IF YOU ARE HEARING IMPAIRED CALL 1.800.955.8771; IF YOU ARE VOICE IMPAIRED CALL 1.800.955.8770. 405674 ON 12/23,30/2011 1/6,13/2012

CITY CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Okeechobee Code Enforcement Board will be meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter, City Hall, 55 SE 3rd Ave, Rm 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. PLEASE TAKE NOTICE AND BE ADVISED that no stenographic record by a certified court reporter will be made of the foregoing meeting. Accordingly, any person who may seek to appeal any decision involving the matters noticed herein will be responsible for making a verbatim record of the testimony and evidence at said meeting upon which any appeal is to be based. Please contact Sue Christopher, 863-763-4423, or website www.cityofokeechobee.com, to obtain a copy of the agenda. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 persons needing special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the Fire Department at 863-763-4423 for assistance. by: Jamie Gamioeta, Code Board Chairperson 406976 ON 1/6/2012

Grab a bargain from your neighbor's garage, attic, basement or closet in today's classifieds.

Your new home could be in today's paper. Have you looked for it?

Public Notice

NOTICE OF CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED ZONING RECLASSIFICATION
NOTICE: A PUBLIC HEARING will be held before the Okeechobee County Planning Board on Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the Okeechobee County Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida to consider a request for a change in zoning from the existing classifications of Residential Mixed (RM), Residential Mobile Home (RMH) and Commercial (C) to the proposed classification of Light Industrial (L-1). The property owner and applicant is Doris Eyer. The property address is 3585 Highway 441 North and is more particularly described as follows:

PARCEL 1: COMMENCING AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF LOT 52, WHISPERING PINES, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 3, PAGE 25, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, BEAR NORTH ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY LINE OF SAID LOT 52, A DISTANCE OF 325.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE CONTINUE NORTH ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY LINE OF LOT 52, A DISTANCE OF 125.00 FEET; THENCE BEAR EAST AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE), ACCORDING TO SAID PLAT, TO THE INTERSECTION WITH THE WESTERLY RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF STATE ROAD NO. 15; THENCE BEAR SOUTHERLY ALONG SAID WESTERLY RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF STATE ROAD 15 A DISTANCE OF 130.00 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO A POINT THAT IS 325.00 FEET NORTH OF AND PARALLEL TO THE EXTENDED NORTH BOUNDARY OF SAID N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE), AS MEASURED AT RIGHT ANGLES, TO AND OPPOSITE THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE BEAR WEST AND PARALLEL WITH THE SAID NORTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, LESS AND EXCEPT THE WEST 210.00 FEET.

PARCEL 2: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE EAST BOUNDARY OF LOT 52, WHISPERING PINES, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 3, PAGE 25, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SAID POINT BEING 450 FEET NORTH OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) ACCORDING TO SAID PLAT; THENCE RUN NORTH ALONG SAID BOUNDARY OF SAID LOT 52 A DISTANCE OF 200 FEET; THENCE RUN EAST AND PARALLEL TO THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF PINE AVENUE TO A POINT ON THE WEST BOUNDARY OF S.R. 15; THENCE RUN SOUTHERLY ALONG THE WEST BOUNDARY OF STATE ROAD 15 A DISTANCE OF 200 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO A POINT THAT IS 450 FEET NORTH OF THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) AND OPPOSITE THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE RUN WEST AND PARALLEL TO THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

PARCEL 3: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE EAST BOUNDARY OF LOT 51, WHISPERING PINES, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 3, PAGE 25, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SAID POINT BEING 650 FEET NORTH OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE), ACCORDING TO SAID PLAT, THEN RUN NORTH ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY OF LOTS 52 AND 28 OF SAID WHISPERING PINES, A DISTANCE OF 70 FEET; THEN RUN EAST PARALLEL TO THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF PINE AVENUE TO A POINT ON THE WEST BOUNDARY OF S.R. 15; THEN RUN SOUTHERLY ALONG THE WEST BOUNDARY OF SAID S.R. 15 A DISTANCE OF 70 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO A POINT THAT IS 650 FEET NORTH OF THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) AND OPPOSITE THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THEN RUN WEST AND PARALLEL TO THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF N.W. 34TH STREET (PINE AVENUE) TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

In the event that all items scheduled before the Board are not heard, the hearings shall be continued to Wednesday, January 25, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the Okeechobee County Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida.

A SECOND PUBLIC HEARING on the request for a change in zoning will be held before the Board of County Commissioners on Thursday, February 9, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Meeting Room, Okeechobee County Courthouse, 304 N 2nd Street, Okeechobee, Florida.

ALL INTERESTED PARTIES SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD AT THIS PUBLIC HEARING. Any person deciding to appeal any decision by the Board of Adjustments and Appeals with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made and that the record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal will be based. Planning and Development tapes are for the sole purpose of backup for official records of the department.

William D. Royce, Planning Director Petition R-2011-0690 406849 ON 1/6/2012



Reading a newspaper makes you a more informed and interesting person. No wonder newspaper readers are more successful!

OHS boys golf team honored at banquet

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

State golf champion Richard Donegan can add another award to his trophy case as he was named Brahman Boys Golf Most Valuable Player at the annual golf banquet Wednesday night at Beef O'Brady's Restaurant.

Donegan won the award for the third consecutive year. Kodi Stephen earned the Brahman Award and six members of the team were honored as scholar athletes.

Golf coach Kenny Buckner said the golf team might have been the best in OHS history with Richard Donegan exciting the community with a state title in Class 2A. He said the big job now will be to keep the program at a high level.

"We have some young guys who will help and some eighth graders moving up so we should be pretty competitive," he said.

Buckner said Donegan really was a great example for athletes at OHS. He said he re-

ally handled himself well as a senior leader and got both mentally and physically tougher.

"As a two-sport guy it would be hard to top him. He is one of the top guys we've had at OHS during my years here," he added.

Buckner also thanked the Okeechobee Golf and Country Club, the KOA, other businesses, volunteers and parents for their support of the golf team this year.

Stephen said the Brahman Award meant a lot to him. He said he worked hard to raise funds and get sponsorships and teams interested in the annual golf tournament this year. He returns for his senior year next fall as the undisputed leader of the golf team. He said his goal will be to win another state title.

That goal might be derailed by his ongoing physical problems with his back. Stephen already has a list of physical therapy sessions and doctor appointments planned in the near future. Stephen has a brace on his back to provide support.

"I hope to be ready in the spring and

summer so I can practice up and be ready for fall. I look at my golf clubs sitting idle in my room every day and it gets mentally draining," he added.

Stephen did make the regional tournament this year despite some back problems.

Donegan added the MVP award to two he already has, plus the state title and golfer of the year award for the Treasure Coast. His next goal is to add a college scholarship to his golf resume.

Donegan has several schools interested which include Maryland, Louisiana Monroe and Stetson. He will visit several colleges in the next month and hopes to make a verbal commitment in February and sign a scholarship in April.

"I've had some good memories over the past four years, it will be tough to move on and I will miss my teammates. It was really nice to get the MVP this year and I'll remember all these honors for the rest of my life," he said.

Donegan admitted his love for the game of golf was a big reason he has had this success. He also thanked golf coaches Buckner and Mark Ward for their help during his high school career. His highest praise he bestowed on his parents who have supported his golf career.

"They are definitely my biggest supporters and it is nice to have them in my corner. I know they will always be there for me," he added.

Bryan Stokes earned a first-year letter, Kutter Crawford a two-year letter, Stephen a third-year letter, and Billy Childers, Donegan, Tyler Finney and Justin Morgan earned four-year letters.

Stokes, Stephen, Childers, Donegan, Finney and Morgan were also scholar athletes.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Kodi Stephen (right) receives the Brahman Award for Boys Golf from coach Kenny Buckner.



Richard Donegan was named the Most Valuable Player for the Brahman Boys Golf team at the team's banquet on Wednesday. Also in the photo is OHS golf coach Kenny Buckner.

Cold weather a big factor in manatee deaths

A cold-related die-off of manatees in early 2011 set the stage for a third straight year with high numbers of deaths for the species. Biologists with the research arm of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) documented 453 manatee carcasses in state waters in 2011.

During the past three years, biologists documented the highest levels of cold-related manatee deaths, with the "cold stress" category accounting for 112 in 2011, 282 in 2010 and 56 in 2009. In the previous five years, cold stress accounted for an average of 30 manatee deaths per year.

The total number of reported manatee deaths in 2011 was the second-highest on record. Biologists documented a record 766 manatee deaths in 2010 and recorded the third-highest total of 429 in 2009.

"We are concerned about the number of manatee deaths the past three years, including those resulting from exposure to cold weather," said Gil McRae, director of the FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. "Over the next few years, we will use data from monitoring programs to better understand any long-term implications for the population. We will continue to work with our partners to enhance the availabil-

ity of natural warm-water sites, which are important habitats for the species' survival," McRae said.

FWC researchers, managers and law enforcement staff work closely together to evaluate mortality data and identify necessary actions. Managers focus on actions that can reduce risks to manatees and protect foraging and warm-water habitats. The FWC's Division of Law Enforcement, in cooperation with partner agencies, uses knowledge of local boating habits, well-posted speed zones and up-to-date manatee information as part of its on-the-water enforcement operations. Informing boaters about manatee conservation and enforcing manatee-protection zones are priorities for the FWC.

To learn more about manatee conservation, go to MyFWC.com/Manatee.

To view the 2011 preliminary mortality numbers, visit MyFWC.com/Research/Manatee and click on "Manatee Mortality Statistics."



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