



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 103 No.10

Sunday, January 22, 2012

75¢ Plus tax



OHS band nears fundraising goal

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Pertussis still a major health problem

... Page 9

Okeechobee's Most Wanted

... Page 14

Lake Levels

13.39 feet

Last Year: 12.41 feet



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

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Football coach has new game plan

Branham to emphasize academics, accountability, in return to sidelines

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Chris Branham returns to the sidelines as Okeechobee High School football coach with a plan that doesn't begin with high school football, but ends there.



Chris Branham

He plans to here long term, right some

His plan includes greater emphasis on youth football, tougher academics standards, and more of his trademark, hands-on relationships with players and their parents.

"I'm very excited. Growing up here, working here for seven years, I know it'll be a building process and this time there is a long-term plan," he said.

wrongs, and continue some rights, in his own words. He said the long-term goal is commitment to the community and the school.

"I wasn't rushed into this decision, but winning won't happen overnight," he said. "We're going to win some games."

Branham admits he didn't realize how much players and parents appreciated what he did during his first stint on the sidelines. He said he was able to spend more time with his family but never lost the itch for coaching, "I

See COACH — Page 12



Okeechobee News/Katrina Elsken

Lake Okeechobee was at 13.39 feet on Friday. The Okee-Tantie Recreation Area marina (above) stayed busy as boaters enjoyed the nice weather.

Corps continues releases from lake

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District has announced Friday it will continue releasing water from Lake Okeechobee, sending additional fresh water into the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

The new release began Jan. 20. The Corps

is making the release in a pulse-like manner to mimic a rainfall event, similar to releases that began on Dec. 16. The target flow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary for this release is an average of 450 cubic feet per second (cfs) over

See LAKE — Page 12

Panel upholds dismissal of OCSO detective

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

The courtroom was deathly silent as Lieutenant Scott Deloney, clearly conflicted, labored for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, he said: "I've got to go with the sheriff."

And with that, Rick Durfee was officially out of work.

Mr. Durfee, 42, a detective with the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), was terminated Dec. 1, 2011, by Sheriff Paul May following his arrest in October on a misdemeanor charge of domestic battery. The 20-year cop was never prosecuted because the state dropped the charge.

A close-out letter from the state attorney's office stated that the charge was being dropped due to a lack of credible evidence, said Mr. Durfee's attorney.

As is his right, the former investigator appealed his termination and that hearing was held in an Okeechobee courtroom Thursday, Jan. 19. The appeal was heard by a panel of three OCSO representatives: Lt. Deloney, Road Patrol Captain Bud Slay and Detective Mark Shireman.

See DURFEE — Page 15

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Special to the Okeechobee News/Kiwanis Club

Kiwanis check presentation

Kiwanis meeting held at The Lodge at the Lake Family Restaurant welcomed Clint LaFlam, director of the Okeechobee High School Marching Band (left). J.D. Mixon, club vice president presented Clint LaFlam with a \$15,000 check that was obtained by Kiwanis through a grant from the Children's Services Council. The Okeechobee High School Marching Band has been trying to raise money for their trip to Washington, DC this year to perform in the Memorial Day Parade. The OHS Band was the only in Florida selected to perform at the event. If you would like to donate to help the band raise the last of the necessary funds, please contact Mr. LaFlam at the Okeechobee High School at 863-462-5025.

In the Military ...

Jeffers stationed at Ft. Hood

2nd Lt. Joseph Jeffers of the 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division is stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas. He is the son of Bruce Jeffers of Okeechobee; the grandson of the late Lloyd Jeffers of Okeechobee and the grandson of Catherine Jeffers of Okeechobee. He is also the son of Kellye Jeffers of Nashville, Tenn and the grandson of Elmo and Marcia Mercer of Nashville, Tenn.

Joseph's basic OCS, and Signal Corps instruction was received at Fort Benning, Ga. and Fort Gordon, Ga.



2nd Lt. Joseph Jeffers

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Weather forecast for Okeechobee County from the National Weather Service

Local Forecast

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 82. Calm wind becoming southeast between 5 and 10 mph.

Sunday night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 57. Southeast wind around

5 mph.

Extended Forecast

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 83. South southeast wind around 5 mph.

Monday night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 57. Southeast wind around 5 mph becoming calm.

Tuesday: Partly sunny, with a high near 83. Calm wind becoming east southeast around 5 mph.

Tuesday night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 59. East southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 82. East southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Wednesday night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 61. Southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph

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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!

Coach rehired

- The school board is rehiring the previous football coach, Chris Branham. Awesome!
- Maybe this time the community will support him instead of second guessing every decision he makes.

Martin Luther King Day Parade

- Why didn't the Martin Luther King Day Parade receive the same assistance from law enforcement that other parades are given? While the parade did have a police escort, the police did not stop traffic in all four lanes on U.S. 441, as they do for other parades.
- I think it was probably just a matter of crowd and traffic control. With the other parades, people are lined up all along the parade route waiting for the parade. On Monday, the only spectators I saw waiting for the parade were in the park. However, since the parade only lasted about 15 minutes, it would not have been that big a deal to stop traffic for it.

Paula Deen

- Paula Deen has been a success story but whenever people throw all caution to the wind they are going to pay the price later. What is most terrible is that she was diagnosed 2 or 3 years ago and still continued profiting from a show that seemed to promote a "what the heck, live it up" pattern of eating. She claims that when she was diagnosed she had to take awhile to get her head around the thing. I'm sure she was most concerned about how she was going to handle this blow to her reputation and fortune. She has deceived her fans by not revealing what damage she has done to herself and them through her seeming promotion of "eat all you can" and don't worry about anything.

OHS Band

• To all of our Band followers we are so pleased to announce that we are grateful to the efforts of the Kiwanis Club and the Children's Services Council who provided our band \$15,000 this week. We are currently at \$57,000.00 of our goal. Everyday we just have to pinch ourselves and remember how grateful we are to live in our town who shows how much they really pull together to do great things for our kids! Now for a little education about the Children's Services Council (CSC): This is a little known tax that you pay and have been paying for many years. Our county has been extremely blessed with very fiscally conservative CSC members who have done their level best to manage this fund for our kids. They do things like fund summer activities for children through not for profits agencies, help fund mental health services for children who might not have health care coverage, help cover a one-time prescription need for a child, fund numerous not for profit agencies who provide services to children in need in our community. The reason I am giving you this brief lesson, is because soon we will be asked to reauthorize the CSC, and CSC members are restricted from "politicking" you about it. The ramifications of losing this, would be catastrophic for the many thousands of children this tax has helped over the years. Our CSC has not frivolously spent money on buildings, and has continued to make sure that the money goes right back into our community serving as many children as possible. Some communities have not been quite as thoughtful, thus the push to reauthorize the CSC's in the entire state.

- Congratulations to the OHS Band and to the community for supporting the band! These kids work hard. It takes a lot of practice both as a group and individually at home to maintain this level of excellence.

Student population

- According to the story in the Okeechobee News Friday edition, the Okeechobee County school population is declining. While a few years ago, the school board was planning to build another elementary school due to the overcrowding at the schools, now they say they expect the overall student population to decrease by 1,000 students over the next ten years. If you look at the census, it appears the county population is pretty stable at right around 40,000. So does this mean the young people are moving out and retirees are moving in?

Letters to the editor

Thank you from My Aunt's House

WOW! What a year for My Aunt's House. We had thousands of articles of clothing, shoes, and assorted household items donated. We were able to pass these items on to our needy children and their families. Our School Supply Drive was bigger and better than ever. We provided over 275 backpacks filled with school supplies for our children in Okeechobee.

Christmas at My Aunt's House was spectacular! We were able to give gifts from Santa to over 260 children! Each child received several gifts in their black bag. Most received some type of clothing.

None of this would have happened without the help of: the Ard family, Michelle Bell, Frank Brooks, Jr., Theresa Brooks, the Bryan family, Debbie and Butch's Redneck Yacht Club, Gwen Chandler and family, Teresa Chandler and family, Children's Services Council, Sharon Vinson and the Children's Collaborative Council, Debbie Clements with 4-H, Sharp Shooters 4-H, Jessica Starr and the Steak and Chops 4-H, the Harry Cosner family, Reba Folsom and her friends, Paulette, Kathy and Fran from Palm Beach Gardens, Sean Chase and Florida Power and Light, Martin County, Pam Hales and family, Juannette Lee and family, Mary Magdelene Sunday School at United Methodist, Holly

Mixon and family with Mixon Realty, Patricia O'Connor and family, Okeechobee Big Lake VFW AUX 10539, Okeechobee VFW Post, Peace Lutheran Pre-School, Buster Perry and Family, Jeff and Alex and Pine Creek Plantation, Lisa Renfranz and family, Gretchen Robertson and family with State Farm, Mark Stanley at Style Studios, Gary at The Sign Guy, Bruce with Unlimited Upholstery, Leyton and Carson Watford, Magi Cable and Sorority X I Nu Omega, Keith and Sabrina Yeates, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Dept. We have a couple of donors who wanted to remain anonymous and you know who you are. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone, but thank you one and all for everything you did. We want to give a special thank you to Mr. Rob Willson. He provided My Aunt's House one of his properties to stage our Christmas. This was a huge help to us and we really appreciate it.

This has been a really tough year for our disadvantaged children and their families. Times are tough. Times are tough for all of us. But our sponsors and friends came through and made this Christmas happen for our children.

Our Christmas was GREAT and our year GREAT.

Thank you again,
Judy Watt, Director
Anna Adamo, Christmas Coordinator

Yard sale to benefit Children's Ranch

Real Life Children's Ranch Yard sale is open on Tuesday - Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Come on out and get great bargains. The ranch welcomes all donations that are in good condition and can be sold. They are in need of clothing items.

Orchid and Garden Club to meet Monday

The Orchid Club will meet at 7 p.m. in the extension Center at 451 98 N at 7 p.m. on Monday, **Jan. 23**. The Garden Club will meet at 6 p.m. Please bring your favorite orchid to show or a problem orchid to discuss. For more information please call 863-763-6469.

Speckled Perch vendor applications available

Okeechobee Main Street is currently taking applications for the Annual Speckled Perch Festival, to be held in Flagler Park on March 10 and 11, and the Speckled Perch Parade on March 10 at 11 a.m. Applications for booth space or parade participants are available at the Main Street office, 111 N.E. Second St., directly behind C.V.S., and can also be found on the Main Street website at www.mainstreetokeechobee.com. Main Street is gearing up for this very exciting event, to be held in conjunction with the Spring Rodeo. For further information, please contact Cindy Birdashaw at 863-357-6246.

KEECHOBEE NEWS

To Reach Us

Address: 107 S.W. 17th Street, Suite D
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Website: www.newszap.com

To Submit News

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

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The Okeechobee News is available three times a week via home delivery and is on sale at rack and store locations throughout Okeechobee County. Call the office to find out if your home is within our present home-delivery boundaries.

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

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

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Publisher: Tom Byrd

Our Purpose...

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

We Pledge...

- To operate this newspaper as a public trust
- To help our community become a better place to live and work, through our dedication to conscientious journalism.
- To provide the information citizens need to make their own intelligent decisions about public issues.

- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
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Community Events

Early voting open on Sunday

Today, Sunday, **Jan. 22**, The Okeechobee County Supervisor of Elections' Office in the Okeechobee County Courthouse, 304 N.W. Second St., will be open for early voting in the 2012 Florida Republican Presidential Primary. Early voting will continue Monday, Jan. 23 through Saturday, Jan. 28 at the same location. The hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You must be registered to vote as a Republican to vote in this election.

Fundraiser breakfast to support Martha's House

A traditional breakfast with good home-cooked food to benefit Martha's House will be held Sunday, **Jan. 22**, from 8-11 a.m. at the Okeechobee Masonic Lodge No. 237, at 107 N.W. 5th Ave. Eat in or take out for a donation of \$6. For ticket information call George at 863-467-0038.

Orchid and Garden Club to meet Monday, Jan. 23

The Orchid Club will meet a 7 p.m. in the extension center at 451 98 N at 7 p.m. on Monday, **Jan. 23**. The Garden Club will meet at 6 p.m. Call 863-763-6469.

Eagles North to host BINGO

Eagles North will have Bingo on Tuesday, **Jan. 24**, starting at 1 p.m. Ya'll come play. Proceeds go to the F.O.E. 4137 community benefit fund. Located at 9985 Hwy. 441 North, in Okeechobee.

CCC meeting planned

The next meeting of the Community Collaborative Council, a part of the Shared Services Network of Okeechobee, will be Tuesday, **Jan. 24**, at 10 a.m., in the board room of the School Board Office.

OKMS plans first mixer event

Okeechobee Main Street's first Mixer of 2012 will be sponsored by the Grand Oaks - a VNA Assisted-Living Facility on Tuesday, **Jan. 24**, 2012 from 5 until 7 p.m. Grand Oaks is located at 203 S.E. 2nd Street. The public is invited and current members are encouraged to bring a friend!

Shrine Club hosts dinner

The Okeechobee Shrine Club, S.R. 78 W., members will host their Tuesday evening **Jan. 24**, spaghetti dinner from 4 until 9 p.m. Music starts at 5 until 9 p.m. Donation is just \$6 per person. For information, call the club at 863-763-3378, Mac Simpson at 863-763-8650 or Elma Yates at 863-697-2765.

Okeechobee Public Library presents Broadway programs

Ian R. B. Nairnsey is presenting a series of talks in January and February on "Broadway Musicals Decade by Decade." The programs are held on Wednesdays at noon at the Okeechobee County Library, 206 S.W. 16th St. Admission is free. Those attending are encouraged to bring a brown bag lunch. The programs last about 75 minutes and are illustrated with slides and musical selections. The **Jan. 25** program covers the 1960s and 1970s.

Main Street to hold general membership meeting

Quarterly General Membership meeting for Okeechobee Main Street will be held on **Jan. 25**, at noon at the Golden Corral Restaurant, 700 S. Parrott Avenue. Please plan to attend to network with fellow citizens and business owners, greet new members and welcome our guest speaker Ms. Alta Mosley, Director of the Agri-Civic Center.

Hospice to host yard sale

Hospice of Okeechobee's next yard sale will be Wednesday Jan. 25 and Thursday, Jan. 26, from 8 a.m. until noon. The yard sale is located at the corner of SE 4th Street and SE 3rd Ave. Donations are accepted Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. to noon. For information call 863-467-2321 or see our web page www.hospiceofokeechobee.org and click on Events tab.

Considering adoption?

Anyone interested in learning more about adoption is encouraged to join the Children's Home Society of Florida, at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, **Jan. 26**, at the Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie County office, located at 804 S. 6th Street in Fort Pierce.

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.

Linda S. Vernon, 60

OKEECHOBEE — Linda S. Vernon, age 60, of Sunrise and formerly of Okeechobee, died Monday, Jan. 16, 2012, in Fort Lauderdale.

She was born March 24, 1951, to Ronald G. and Edna J. Schmaltz in Binghamton, N.Y. Ms. Vernon came to Florida from New York in the 1960's.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Ronald G. and Edna J. Schmaltz.

She is survived by her son, George R. Copeland; daughter, Carrie A. Van Meter; grandchildren, Joshua and Ashley Van Meter, and many other family and friends. We will love and miss you always.

A graveside service will be Monday, Jan. 23, 2012, at 1 p.m., in the Evergreen Cemetery, Okeechobee, with Pastor John officiating.

All arrangements are entrusted to the loving care of the Buxton Funeral Home and Crematory, 110 NE 5th Street, Okeechobee, Florida.

On-line condolences may be made at www.buxtonfuneralhome.com.

View obituaries from the past month at <http://www.legacy.com>

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School Information Guide: <http://specialsections.newszap.com/SS/Page.aspx?&secid=68371&pagenum=1>



Special to the Okeechobee News/Rotary Club/Tabitha Trent

Arnold visits Rotary

Rotarian Jeanette Miller extended a warm Rotary welcome to guest speaker Joe Arnold. Beginning his campaign for U.S. Congress, Joe Arnold made one of his first stops the Rotary Club of Okeechobee. He discussed with Rotarians the preliminary redistricting for Okeechobee and the surrounding Heartland Region. Mr. Arnold assured those in attendance that he will work hard to bring prosperity to our region and nation and will continue to be accessible just as he has been on the school board.

Okeechobee Livestock Market Report

Jan. 16 and 17, 2012

| | Monday | Tuesday | Med #1 | Steers | Hftrs | Prices still good! Feeder calves were higher, about \$2. Slaughter cows and bulls were steady to maybe \$1 lower. Numbers have been unpredictable, so get your cattle in early. Joe Lott, Venus, topped the calf market with a high of \$2.30 bought by Foy Reynolds. Peeples Family Ranch, Moore Haven, topped the cow market with a high of \$88, bought by Central Beef. See ya next week Jeff |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cows | | | 200-250 | 200-230 | 170-200 | |
| Breaking | \$72.00 | \$87.00 | 250-300 | 185-215 | 155-185 | |
| Cutter | \$64.00 | \$74.00 | 300-350 | 182-215 | 148-172 | |
| | | | 350-400 | 170-200 | 140-160 | |
| Bulls | | | 400-450 | 160-192 | 135-160 | |
| 1000-1500 | \$85.00 | \$93.00 | 450-500 | 145-175 | 130-150 | |
| 1500-2000 | \$88.00 | \$96.00 | 550-600 | 138-158 | 125-136 | |
| | | | 600-650 | 130-145 | 120-130 | |
| | Monday | Tuesday | Med #2 | Steers | Hftrs | |
| Calves | 704 | 873 | 200-250 | 165-195 | 140-160 | |
| Cows | 277 | 555 | 250-300 | 160-175 | 130-150 | |
| Str | 71 | 9 | 300-350 | 145-177 | 128-140 | |
| Hftrs | 83 | 12 | 350-400 | 135-160 | 125-138 | |
| Bulls | 34 | 26 | 400-450 | 130-150 | 118-132 | |
| Yrlngs | 3 | 35 | | | | |
| Mix | 133 | 41 | | | | |
| Total | 1305 | 1551 | | | | |

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Special to the Okeechobee News/CES

Students of the Week for Dec. 5

Central Elementary School Students of the Week for the week of Dec. 5, 2011 included: Lauren Abbate, Joey Beaman, Marcus Statn, Crystal Garcia, Thomas Wigfall, Balin DeVore, Logan Gilstrap, Jenna Smith, Rosalia Jaimes, Ingrid Correas, Zayda Ramirez, John Martz, Alexandra Pacheco-Almaraz, Donald Harris, Jonathan Orozco, Pedro Estrada, Princess Espinosa, Kyle Lowe, Cristian Morales, Aaliyah Bowie, Anacely Velazquez, Keyana Johnson, Sergio Montalvo, Crystal Ellman, Joshua Jenkins, Maya Pippin, Sol Albright, Molly Spearow, Rebekah Raulerson, Jafamian Smith and Trina Wiggins-Williams.

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Special to the Okeechobee News/OCHD

OCHD Employee of the Year

Erin Hess, administrator, Okeechobee County Health Department presents the Okeechobee County Health Department Employee of the Year award to Marcia Woodham, LPN.

Pertussis still a major problem

By Vickie Elkins, RN
Community Health Nursing Director
Okeechobee County Health Department

You may have thought pertussis was a disease of the past, but it is more common than you might think. The CDC, Center of Disease Control, reports in 2010, there were 27,550 cases of pertussis in the United States. While many of the childhood diseases have been nearly eliminated by vaccinations, pertussis is still a major problem, and in recent years has made a significant comeback. The CDC website states Pertussis is a contagious disease that creates sticky, thick mucus in the airways, which makes it hard to breathe, eat and drink. Infants with pertussis can have trouble breathing and turn blue.

Pertussis, also known as “whooping cough” because of the “whooping” sound that is made when gasping for air. The disease can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults and can even be life threatening, especially in infants. Pertussis can be spread through a sneeze or a cough and is transmitted through droplets from the nose

or throat. Pertussis is highly contagious during the first weeks of infection. So a simple sneeze or cough or even talking up close, could lead to exposure.

You may have received pertussis containing vaccines as a child, but this vaccination may lose its ability to protect after 5-10 years. The CDC recommends a pertussis booster, also called the tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine, for everyone 11-64 years of age, and anyone who is planning on being around young infants get the adult pertussis vaccine.

Ask your health-care provider about the adult pertussis vaccine, (Tdap), or call the Okeechobee County Health Department for more information, and to schedule an appointment at 863-462-5819. If you are researching vaccines please use credible sites. www.cdc.gov is an excellent site for vaccine information. There are many misleading articles on the web, and children who do not receive their childhood immunizations are at serious risk. Let's help protect the babies and children you care about by helping to protect yourself.

BIRTHDAY

Lordy, Lordy,
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Happy Birthday, Gina!
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Hospital Patient Advisory Council dinner planned

Raulerson Hospital is committed to providing its patients with the best possible patient experience. Patient feedback allows the facility to gain the unique perspective of its patients. Raulerson Hospital Administration and staff conduct Patient Advisory Council meetings to learn first-hand, about this critical perspective.

The Patient Advisory Council meetings are an opportunity for people who have been patients at Raulerson Hospital in the past three months, or so, to provide honest, unfettered feedback about the care they received while in the facility, and to express any other thoughts or suggestions they may have.

The Patient Advisory Council is not necessarily intended for positive or negative incidents. The Administration and staff at Raulerson Hospital acknowledge that meeting the goal of constant improvement, requires open communication. The quarterly Patient Advisory Council meetings held at Raulerson Hospital are offered for exactly this purpose.

If you or a loved one were recently treated and/or a patient at Raulerson Hospital, you are invited to attend the first Patient Advisory Council meeting of 2012. It will be held in the facility's North Dining Room at 5:30 p.m., on Feb. 22. A complimentary dinner will be provided for guests of the Patient Ad-

visory Council. Hospital Administrators and Department Directors will be present to hear the information shared by the past-patients. The meeting's atmosphere remains extremely cordial and your participation is encouraged and welcomed. If you've recently been a patient at Raulerson Hospital and are interested in attending the Patient Advisory Council Dinner on Feb. 22, please contact Jenny Pung at 863-824-2702.

Blood drives scheduled

The Big Red Bus will be in Okeechobee this month on the following dates:

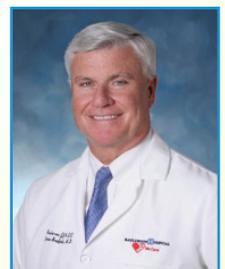
- Sunday, Jan. 22 - St. Theresa Church, State Road 78 at Chobee Loop in Buckhead Ridge, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
- Tuesday, Jan. 24 - Okeechobee High School, 7:30 to 3:30 p.m.;
- Saturday, Jan. 28 - Health and Safety Expo, Ag Center 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
- Saturday, Jan. 28 Catfish Festival at the Buckhead Ridge Fire Department; and,
- Saturday, Jan. 28 - Okeechobee Walmart, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Owners of sweet shop like small town atmosphere

By **Pete Gawda**
Okeechobee News

ing to create," said Terry Bourroughs of the chamber of commerce. Mr. Burroughs' words were spoken at the

Friday, Jan. 20, ribbon cutting for the Brown Cow Sweetery, the family owned and operated business of Mark and Paulette Bragel. They have gourmet coffee, a large selection of chocolates, and ice cream. Their specialty is chocolate dipped strawberries.

a small town. So they decided to move to Okeechobee from Palm Beach County and open their business here. Mr. Bragel said Okeechobee reminded him of the small town where his dad ran a diner downtown and knew everyone. He has a lot of sweat equity in the construction of the shop. He built the shelves and candy cases and laid the tile on the floor. Mrs. Bragel said the people of Okeechobee have made her feel welcome and she hopes to be here for a long time.

The Bragels got started in this type of business because they had a friend who was involved in the chocolate business. However, their friend's business was a corporate owned operation. Mr. Bragel said he wanted to have his own business.

The Brown Cow Sweetery is located at 103 S.W. Park St. and the hours are Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Since their grandchildren live in Okeechobee, the Bragels were familiar with the area. They liked the people and politeness of



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda
Owners Mark and Paulette Bragel of the Brown Cow Sweetery, 103 S.W. Park St., are hard at work behind the counter of their shop which features gourmet coffee, a wide variety of chocolate candies and ice cream.

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New agent welcomed

Coldwell Banker Berger Real Estate is pleased to announce the arrival of Cristie Schmidt into the agency. Ms. Schmidt is very well known in the real estate industry, as she has been in the business and the area for many years. Ms. Schmidt is very experienced in the representation of both buyers and sellers and is a great addition to the sales staff of Coldwell Banker Berger Real Estate.

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Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

Liberty Tax Service

Doug Scholten, of Liberty Tax Service, provides a unique extra for his clients. Mr. Scholten is standing in the play room furnished with toys and a flat screen television to entertain the children while the adults are having their taxes done. Mr. Scholten, a CPA, has operated Liberty Tax Service in Boyton Beach for eight tax seasons. He recently opened up a new office in Suite 3543 of the Publix Plaza. He does all types of taxes, including income, business and payroll taxes. Walk ins are welcome.



Okeechobee News/Pete Gawda

New tobacco shop

Wholly Smokes, a different kind of tobacco shop, is operated by, left to right, Suzanne St-Laurent, Anne Dersa and Michael St-Laurent. Here smokers can buy bags of loose tobacco in sizes ranging from one half pound to 5 pounds. Wholly Smokes also has everything needed to convert the tobacco into cigarettes. Customers can buy a cigarette rolling machine or use the machine at Wholly Smokes to roll their cigarettes. The tobacco shop also has an assortment of lighters and cigarette cases. Wholly Smokes is located at 8840 S.R. 78 W.



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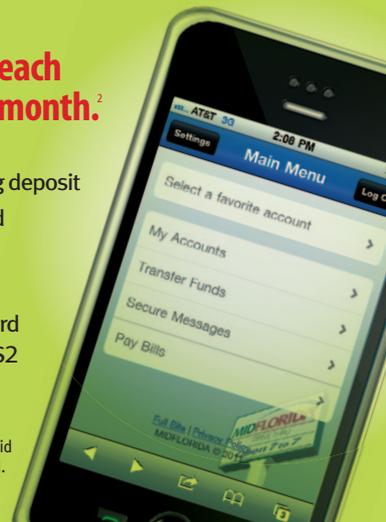
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COACH

Continued From Page 1

don't want to say there is regret. I made a decision for myself. It was probably the first decision I've made in my life for me, instead of thinking how it would work out for others. For the past three years I've been pretty happy."

A big part of the equation is his intention to stay in Okeechobee and raise his family. He said if he is going to be here, he wants to make a difference.

Branham said he intends to play the best player who gives the team the best chance at success. He said the class of 2013 should not worry about playing time because the policy remains: the best player is on the field.

"I've watched some game tapes and evaluated things. There are some special kids that will be out there—I'm very excited about the opportunity to work with the returning kids," he added.

Branham said no senior will be overlooked because they have put in their time and done the work. "They should have no apprehension. I hope they're excited. The big thing will be getting to know them as a person and reach out and extend an olive branch of peace."

He will visit one-on-one with parents and players at their homes. He also has a team meeting planned for next week. He emphasized this year is extremely important because first impressions are very important.

"We want to build relationships with the kids and give them the best experience they

could have on a high school football field," he added.

Another part of the plan is revitalizing the old Chobee Bulls program. The team could join the Mid Florida Football Conference with teams from Highlands, Hardee, and Polk counties. There could be seven local teams based on age groups. This is unlimited weight football which should challenge Okeechobee players. A bid to start the organization will be considered on Saturday.

It starts with flag football at 6 years old and works through middle school ages. Each team would play 10 games, five at home and five away and likely play home games at Okeechobee High School.

"That is just an extension of Okeechobee football. They will be the Brahms. If they are Brahms they are Brahms from 6 years old to 18 years old. Once a Brahman you're a Brahman for life," he noted.

He wants to use the high school system in the younger grade football so the kids stick together as a group and come to high school together. It could mean the end of 22 member teams on the Brahms and add to the depth of the high school team. He said every coach in this league will be part of one program, and one coaching staff.

"It is a major part of my plan. I want to work together with them. I'm not taking away anything from OCRA, there is a place for them, there will be apprehension with unlimited weight, but we have to get kids to a point where they are not playing in a three-team league and playing the same team six times in a year. That is not helping them competitive or confidence wise or helping them to get better, iron sharpens iron," he

said. OHS Principal Toni Wiersma emphasized that she was looking for a good teacher first. She said she was very pleased with the quality of applicants, which numbered over 50. She also praised the committee for their volunteer work and their extensive questioning. She noted their recommendation was unanimous to hire Branham. She also wanted to find a Florida candidate familiar with all Florida High School Athletic Association rules.

"We wanted someone to come in and build relationships with our students and promote them on to college. I highly supported the committee's decision and I'm very proud to welcome coach Branham back to the high school staff," she said.

Wiersma predicted Branham would do an outstanding job and was excited about Branham's long-term commitment to football throughout the community.

Other candidates considered included Port St. Lucie offensive coordinator Adam Chavez, former Nease High School head coach William Cowgill, former Fort Pierce Westwood assistant Damieon Mills, and former John Carroll head coach Kevin Wald.

The citizens committee included Andy Bowers, Larry Davis, Tim Gillis, Brian Greseth, Randy McCall, Sylvester Whitaker and David Suarez.

Branham named Tyrone Smith as his assistant head coach and offensive coordinator. He also named Todd Hackett and Darryl Allen as assistants. He also will consider several other existing Brahman coaches and emphasize the use of former Brahman players on his coaching staff. He plans to use an I-formation, play action offense.

LAKE

Continued From Page 1

a seven-day period, as measured at W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79) east of Fort Myers.

Water managers expect this release of water to help to push back saltwater intrusion, which will have other associated benefits to the estuary. These low-volume releases are expected to prolong the benefits of lowered salinities, reducing impacts and degradation of the freshwater tapegrass and other submerged aquatic vegetation.

"The new pulse release is critical in maintaining the environmental health of the Caloosahatchee Estuary," said John Kilpatrick, Chief of the Jacksonville District's Multi-Project Branch, which has oversight of water management at the lake.

On Friday, the lake stage was 13.39 feet. The lake is currently within the Operational Band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS). At current levels, the Corps may make releases up to 450 cfs to the Caloosahatchee Estuary and 200 cfs to the St Lucie.

The Corps and partner agencies will continue to closely monitor and assess system conditions, and may decrease releases if local basin runoff contributes to flows. For more information on water level and flows data for Lake Okeechobee, visit the Corps' water management page at the following website: <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Operations/Branches/MultiProject/WaterMgt/index.htm>.

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GAMBLE WITH CARE

Highway 721 west of Lake Okeechobee on the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation



Special to the Okeechobee News/SEM

Students of the Week

Seminole Elementary would like to congratulate their Students of the Week for the week of Jan. 20 including: Stevie White, Kimberly Lundy, Kyle Boney, Anthony Mujica, Victor Cardoso, Leslie Martinez, Sonny Hancock, Jordan Wilson, Jo'Navia Sewell, Marlene Huerta, Karla Lima, Lisbet Hernandez, Lauren Hill, Isis Lopez, Pedro Sanchez, Rangel Martinez, Gracie Miller, Christian Amador, Ruben Aguillar-Gonzalez, Jesenia Jaimes, Claudia Vines, Lynden Mingo, Maria Vasquez, Angelea McCullers and Kevin Garcia.

A Walk for Children - Celebrating health and safety

In celebration of Children's Week, The Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee Counties will sponsor a "Walk for Children" in conjunction with the Okeechobee Health & Safety Fair at the Agri Center, 4601 State Road 70 in Okeechobee on Jan. 28, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The "walk" will promote good health and make more people aware of Children's Week in Tallahassee. Help us celebrate Children's Week and "Walk for Children." Those who sign up at the ELCIRMO booth will receive a free pedometer (while supplies last) to document their steps. The participant with the most recorded steps will receive a prize. For more information, visit the ELC website at www.elcirmo.org or call toll free 1-877-220-1223.



Special to the Okeechobee News/CES

Dec. 12 Students of the Week

Central Elementary School Students of the Week for the week of Dec. 12, 2011 included: Keyna Perez, Keyla Albarran, Zaidyn Micco, Jonathn Duque, Justus Griffin, Alexa Hayes, Marco Flores, Alberto Hernandez, Colby Burke, Laisha Castaneda, Isaiah Brock, Ashley Skinner, Giovanna Garcia, Jonathan Orozco, Katelynn Perry, Rene Bucio, Morgan Tucker, Khamari Jones, Selvin Atunez, Audrey Jenkins, Jayce Morgan, Yamila Lopez, Saul Auntera, Tara Hunt, Levi Hunter, Ivan Gonzalez, Max Abreu, Keondra Rawls, Brianna Perry and Nick Owens.

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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).

- Monique Yvette Everett, 25, Riverside Drive, Greenacres, was arrested Jan. 18 by Deputy Corporal Aric Majere on an Okeechobee County warrant charging her with alter/destroy/conceal evidence. She was released on her own recognizance.

- Emilio Borja-Nunez, 39, N.W. 23rd Ave., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 18 by Deputy Cpl. Aric Majere on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with failure to appear - trafficking in cocaine. He is being held without bond.

- Robert Curtis Joiner Sr., 55, S.E. Fourth St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 18 by Deputy Cpl. Aric Majere on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with the

felony of resisting a law enforcement officer with violence and a misdemeanor charge of misuse of 9-1-1 or E9-1-1 system. His bond was set at \$3,000.

- Leonel Ruiz, 20, S.W. Second St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 19 by Deputy Justin Akins on an Okeechobee County warrant because his bond had been revoked on the original charge of felony battery. He is being held without bond.

- Elizabeth Marie Starcher, 30, N.W. 47th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 19 by Deputy Cpl. Aric Majere on a DOC warrant charging her with amended violation of probation - possession of cocaine (two counts) and amended violation of probation - possession of a controlled substance (two counts). She is being held without bond.

- Jack Wesley Kimberlin, 43, Foxrun Road, Pendelton, Ky., was arrested Jan. 20 by Deputy Steven McKinley on Okeechobee County warrants charging him with failure to appear - violation of probation - worthless check (two counts), failure to appear - violation of probation - contracting without a license during a state of emergency (two

counts) and failure to appear - violation of probation - grand theft (two counts). He is being held without bond.

- Christopher Lee Martin, 26, S.E. 33rd Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 20 by Deputy Steven McKinley on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with amended violation of probation - driving under the influence and amended violation

of probation - leaving the scene of an accident with property damage. 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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Okeechobee Most Wanted



Michael A. White



Jennifer L. Herbst

The following people are among Okeechobee's Most Wanted persons. There are active warrants for each of them.

The criteria for making Okeechobee's Most Wanted top five is based on the severity of the crime in conjunction with the age of the warrant.

- **Michael Allen White**, age 27 is a white male with brown hair and brown eyes. He is 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 150 lbs. He is wanted for violation of probation on charges of possession of marijuana - less than 20 grams, possession of drug paraphernalia.

- **Jennifer Lynn Herbst**, age 35, is a white female with brown hair and hazel eyes. She is 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 135 lbs. She is wanted for violation of probation - Possession of controlled substance with intent to distribute.

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

If you call Treasure Coast Crimes Stoppers, you have the option of remaining anonymous. You can also receive a reward if the information results in an arrest.

Guardian Ad Litem program needs local volunteers

Join a local volunteer of the Guardian ad Litem program. Find out how a few hours a month can provide the safety and oversight our abused, neglected, and abandoned children need. Join a volunteer Guardian ad Litem (GAL) at 2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at Mom's Kitchen, Hwy 441 S., over a cup of coffee and learn how you can become part of the solution."

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DURFEE

Continued From Page 1

After hearing evidence presented by attorneys—Marc A. Sugerman, representing the sheriff, and Anthony M. Livoti Jr., representing Mr. Durfee—the three-member panel voted 2-1 to uphold Sheriff May's decision to terminate Mr. Durfee for conduct unbecoming a police officer.

Under Florida Sunshine Law, the panel had to deliberate in public.

Detective Shireman said the OCSO Standard Operating Policy defining conduct unbecoming "was vaguely written" and recommended action other than termination.

"What was the embarrassment to our agency?" he asked.

Capt. Slay and Lt. Deloney both ruled that Mr. Durfee should be terminated.

Mr. Durfee was arrested by OCSO Corporal Paul Ferrell on Oct. 24 following an argument with his wife.

In his arrest report, Cpl. Ferrell stated that Christen Durfee told him that her husband "... grabbed her by the throat, pinned her against the wall, was choking her (and) yelling 'if anything happens to my kids I'll kill you.'"

The report then states that Mr. Durfee punched "over her" and struck a glass door in a hutch, and severely cut his hand. Mrs. Durfee, whose back was to the hutch, suffered a cut to her arm by falling glass, the report added.

However, when asked by Mr. Livoti none of the deputies or detectives involved in the case saw shards of glass in Mrs. Durfee's hair or on her clothes.

Mrs. Durfee did not testify at the one-day hearing.

Witnesses, including Mr. Durfee, testified that the couple had been having marital problems for quite some time.

Testimony throughout the day Thursday indicated that the argument started after Mrs. Durfee took the couple's three children to the home of another couple. She then left her children in that home under the care of a young boy and went out with the couple to a local bar.

The Durfee's children were asleep in the home when the couple left, stated the arrest report.

When Mrs. Durfee later told her husband about this "... he went ballistic..." stated Cpl. Ferrell's report.

The reason for his anger was that the boy who was left to watch the Durfee's children had been a sexual molestation victim and, due to his many years as a cop, Mr. Durfee knew that many times a victim will re-offend.

OCSO Detective Rosemary Farless, who primarily handles sexual abuse cases, bolstered that statement when she took the stand.

"It's common for victims to re-offend," she testified.

Detective Farless, who is a friend of the Durfee's and stated that Rick is one of her best friends, also offered statements from the witness stand that contradicted Mrs. Durfee's claim that her husband was drunk that night.

While questioned by Mr. Livoti, Detective Farless said she, her boyfriend and Mr. Durfee were all at the home of a mutual friend prior to the alleged incident. She said Mr. Durfee only had about half of an 8- to 10-oz. plastic cup of beer. The beer, she said, came from a keg and Mr. Durfee doesn't like draught beer because it gives him a headache.

"I know how much he had to drink because he was sitting next to me," she told Mr. Livoti. "I knew it was a lie (Mrs. Durfee's statement) because he wasn't drunk."

She also admitted, however, that she left

the home around 8:25 p.m. and that Mr. Durfee stayed about another two hours.

Mr. Durfee testified that he had his children with him and that after drinking only a small amount of beer, he later had an energy drink and that's all he had to drink.

As for the accusation that Mrs. Durfee had been choked, both Detective Farless and Detective Captain John Rhoden disputed that claim. Capt. Rhoden, who heads up the OCSO detective division, also conducted the internal investigation concerning the domestic battery claim.

Detective Farless testified that in a strangulation case bruising will appear on the throat. The bruising, she continued, comes from the skin being "pinched" between the fingers of the attacker. But, even as much as two days after the alleged abuse, no such bruises ever appeared on Mrs. Durfee's throat. She added that there was redness and swelling on the woman's throat, but added that Mrs. Durfee is very fair-skinned so redness isn't unusual. She said the redness and swelling "looked more like a thyroid condition" to her.

Capt. Rhoden's testimony on the woman's throat was similar to his detective's. "I didn't see marks that he reached up and grabbed her," he said.

Testimony also indicated that Mrs. Durfee posted photos of her throat and neck on Facebook. The captain also testified that Mrs. Durfee was the aggressor and that a man has a right to defend himself "up to a point." However, he added, "I think he (Mr. Durfee) crossed that point when he lost it."

Further testimony depicted an episode several months ago between the couple in which Mr. Durfee was actually injured by his wife. According to testimony, Mr. Durfee was in the couple's bed when the two began to argue. Then, at some point, Mrs. Durfee alleg-

edly pushed her husband backward. That push forced his head back into the headboard of the bed and actually cut the back of his head.

Mr. Durfee called the sheriff's office and three deputies responded. One of those deputies attended to the cut and bandaged it. Mr. Durfee testified that he then left the home and spent the rest of the night at the home of a fellow deputy.

When he was on the stand, the former investigator told Mr. Livoti that he never hit his wife. During that incident in the early hours of Oct. 24, he said his wife grabbed him as he was walking away from her. He then pushed her away from him with his forearm and told her to leave him alone. As he was walking away from her he struck the glass cabinet door with his hand, he said.

In his closing arguments to the three-member panel, Mr. Sugerman said there were two things that could not be disputed: in some way, Detective Durfee struck his wife; and, Mr. Durfee punched the glass that cut his hand and his wife's arm. Mr. Livoti told the panel in his closing arguments that his client was trying to get away from his wife to avoid a confrontation. "This is what Mr. Durfee always did when the couple argued, he withdrew," said Mr. Livoti.

"I give Capt. Rhoden credit, he smelled a rat when he didn't see marks on her throat," said Mr. Livoti, who handles such cases for the Fraternal Order of Police. "The question is, does this conduct rise to the level of a death sentence for a police officer? Balance this man's life. Balance this man's career."

He then asked the panel to recommend something other than termination.

When asked for comment after the hearing, Mr. Livoti would only say: "We're disappointed."

But that was obvious—it was etched on Mr. Durfee's face.

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Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

- ACROSS**
- 1 17-Across in the neck
 - 5 Adventurous
 - 10 Domesticated
 - 14 Chase on stage
 - 15 Cat...tails
 - 16 Wicked
 - 17 See 1-Across
 - 18 Passé keyboard key
 - 20 Bigger photo: Abbr.
 - 21 Extremely, in Essex
 - 22 Horror maven Craven
 - 23 Follower of Mary
 - 25 Sphere
 - 27 Was beaten by
 - 29 Middy energizer
 - 34 K-6
 - 35 Stroll
 - 37 Vowel before omicron
 - 38 Bounty rival
 - 39 Angle irons graphically represented by four sets of black squares in this grid, and by letter formations starting in the four longest answers
- DOWN**
- 2 Verve
 - 3 Video game difficulty setting
 - 4 Bronze relative
 - 5 Pasadena arena
 - 6 Andean ancient
 - 7 Letter addressees
 - 8 Masseuse's challenge
 - 9 Cowardly
 - 10 Business card abbr.
 - 11 Speak bluntly
 - 12 Cats' quarry
 - 13 Benevolent lodgeful
 - 19 Ancient strings
 - 21 NYC subway line named for two boroughs
 - 24 Farmers' publication?
 - 26 Brush component
 - 27 Hyped-up feeling
 - 28 Say "bo's'n," say
 - 29 Scottish pattern
 - 30 Gumbo pod
 - 31 Names on it are off-limits to telemarketers
 - 32 Big name in video games

- 33 Big name in beer
- 36 Up to the task
- 40 Wet ones, so to speak
- 46 Banana discard
- 47 Have as a customer
- 49 Stock mkt. debut
- 52 Makeup accentuates them
- 53 Recline lazily
- 54 Do a slow burn
- 56 Trot or canter
- 57 Litter's littlest
- 58 Kellogg's toaster brand
- 60 Donkey's protest
- 61 Ballet leap
- 63 Sad
- 64 Ernie of the PGA, to whom this puzzle could be dedicated

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | I | T | E | P | A | N | D | A | S | S | G | T | | |
| A | C | H | T | A | W | A | I | T | A | L | E | R | | |
| R | E | A | D | O | N | E | S | F | O | R | T | U | N | E |
| O | T | T | N | E | S | T | N | I | C | E | T | Y | | |
| M | E | L | E | E | R | O | T | H | | | | | | |
| A | L | L | I | N | T | H | E | F | A | M | I | L | I | |
| F | L | O | R | I | D | S | O | R | E | S | | | | |
| O | F | F | R | A | T | S | O | K | A | L | | | | |
| C | O | R | G | I | S | M | E | R | S | H | | | | |
| A | B | O | U | T | H | E | A | U | T | H | O | R | | |
| I | S | A | Y | | | | | | | | | | | |
| P | I | S | T | O | L | B | O | L | O | G | U | Y | | |
| I | T | T | A | K | E | S | A | V | I | L | L | A | G | E |
| S | E | E | R | S | I | R | E | D | O | N | E | A | | |
| A | M | P | S | E | X | T | R | A | U | S | S | R | | |

xwordeditor@aol.com

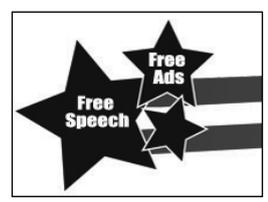
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | | | | | 15 | | | | | 16 | | |
| 17 | | | | | 18 | | | | 19 | | | |
| 20 | | | 21 | | | | | | | | 22 | |
| | | 23 | 24 | | | | | 25 | | 26 | | |
| 27 | 28 | | | | | 29 | 30 | | | 31 | 32 | 33 |
| 34 | | | | 35 | 36 | | | | | 37 | | |
| 38 | | | | 39 | | | | 40 | | 41 | | |
| 42 | | | | 43 | | | | | | 44 | | |
| 45 | | | | 46 | 47 | | | 48 | 49 | | | |
| | | | 50 | | | | | | 51 | | | |
| 52 | 53 | 54 | | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | | | 59 | 60 | 61 |
| 62 | | | | 63 | | | | | | 64 | | |
| 65 | | | | | | | 66 | | | | | 67 |
| 68 | | | | | | | 69 | | | | | 70 |

By Don Gagliardo
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Gilbert teams with Walmart Bass Fishing League

Registration for the second BFL Gator Division tournament will be held at Gilbert Chevrolet, located at 3550 Hwy. 441 S. on Friday, Feb. 17, from 4-6 p.m. All anglers interested in entering the tournament on Lake Okeechobee are required to attend registration to determine eligibility. The tournament entry fee is \$200 for the boater and \$100 for the co-angler. First place could win a maximum payout of \$9,500 for the boater and \$3,000 for the co-angler with a full field and contingency. The tournament weigh-in will be held at C. Scott

Driver Park, located at 10100 W. Hwy. 78 in Okeechobee on Saturday, Feb. 18, at 3 p.m. Gilbert Chevrolet is offering attendees at the weigh-in the chance to register to win FLW hats and a Lowrance hand-held GPS unit! In order to win, guests must both register and be present during the prize drawing.

FLW is the industry's premier tournament-fishing organization, providing unparalleled fishing resources and entertainment to our sponsors, fans and host communities. FLW is offering anglers of all skill levels the opportu-

nity to compete for millions in prize money nationwide in 2012 over the course of 190 tournaments across five tournament circuits, each providing an avenue to the sport's richest payday and most coveted championship trophy – the Forrest Wood Cup. FLW is committed to providing a lifestyle experience that is the "Best in Fishing, On and Off the Water," through a variety of platforms including tournaments, outdoor expos and the world's richest fantasy sports game – FLW Fantasy Fishing. For more information about FLW and FLW Fantasy Fishing, visit www.FLWOutdoors.com or www.FantasyFishing.com and look for FLW on Twitter and Facebook.

For more information, please contact J.D. Harrod at 404-581-7116 or via email at: jharrod@aimmarketingsolutions.com.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Terry Burroughs

100th member

Hazellief & Prevatt Century 21 Realtors become the Chamber's 100th member including: David Hazellief, Century 21, J.D. Mixon, President and Terry Burroughs, vice president of the Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County awarding Mr. Hazellief with a certificate for becoming the 100th member of the "New" Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County.

Annual Big O Birding Festival planned

The Big O Birding Festival, the largest bird-themed event in South Central Florida will be held March 28-31. The four-day event will have a registration "roost" at the Port LaBelle Inn off State Road 80 in LaBelle. From there, visitors will explore Hendry and Glades Counties, which are home to more than 400 species of birds, including Wood Storks, Everglades Snail Kites, Limpkins, Painted Buntings, and others who resident in

the area from October through April as well as species that live in Florida year round. Visitors can choose a single bird tour or opt for all inclusive four-day passes. The festival offers exclusive bird tours led by prestigious experts, workshops with a prestigious bird photographer, birding activities, meals and transportation to and from birding sites. For more information online go to www.BigO-BirdingFestival.com or call 863-675-0125.

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1008-M: River Run Resort 2 Bedroom 2 Bath Mobile Home. Seller is ready to sell. Make an offer! ~~\$30,000~~ NOW \$25,000 MLS #204194



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1007-H: SW Section. Street on two sides, Living Sq Ft 2343, Lg Island Kitchen, dining rm, large FL room with fireplace, appliances, large oak and fruit trees. \$209,000 MLS #205526

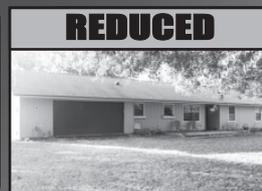


LAKE ACCESS

4004-M: Buckhead Ridge waterfront 2BR/2.5BA with additions. Large FL room, screened rm, workshop, boat lift, double carport on a large corner lot with water on two sides. \$85,000 MLS #205528



5000-H: Foreclosure Indian Hammock freshly painted Two story 2 Bedroom 2 Bath on 3.74+-acres. Home has been remodeled.. stairs, floors, and new appliances. large fireplace. \$144,900 MLS # 205524



REDUCED

5006-H: Yeewah. 3 Bd 2 Bath on 3.53+- acres. Close to Turnpike and SR 60. Appliances, fenced yard, animals welcome. Short Sale. 1,444 sq. ft. of living. ~~\$150,000~~ NOW \$79,000 MLS #205327

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Samantha Harrell signs with Brevard Community College

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Samantha Harrell signed a full scholarship to play college softball with Brevard Community College this week.

Harrell is a two-time all state player in softball for Okeechobee High School and a proven winner on the softball field.

"I'm really excited to go there," Harrell said at a signing party Wednesday at Lunker's Restaurant, "I get to play my friends from high school again and I'm excited to be able to do that."

Harrell had interest from several other junior college programs. Siena and the University of Central Florida also showed interest in her. Harrell said she just felt comfortable at

Brevard and wanted to stay close to home for the next two years.

"I just liked the place and I felt it was the best decision for me," she noted.

Her father Wayne Harrell has helped coach his daughter since she began playing softball year round at 9 years old. He said Sam loved the game, had a strong corps of coaches through the years and some excellent teammates.

"There was a great supporting class of players through the years. All of the girls worked very hard and all of them deserve everything they are getting," he added.

Harrell said his daughter knew players on the Brevard team and really felt comfortable with the coach. He said she knew on her first

visit to campus that this was where she wanted to be.

Harrell said it was a huge relief to get a full scholarship paid for but also pointed out the Brevard program is strong, the town is nice, and his daughter is very happy there.

Brevard coach Ed Yanes said he was very fortunate to sign a very special person in softball like Harrell. He praised her coaches and family and said she will fit in well with their rotation and staff.

"We look for some very good things from Sam over the next two years. Our motto is position by competition, she liked the fact she could compete right away," he added.

Yanes also coached OHS alumnus Kelci Breaux, who pitched two years at Brevard and moved on to pitch for two years at Florida Gulf Coast University.

"We are fortunate to have somebody of their talent come into our program," he added.

Coincidentally, Kelci will be Sam's pitching coach this year for the Brahms.

Harrell started her athletic career as a cheerleader but knew pretty early on that she wasn't going to pursue it, "I hate cheerleading. My three brothers all played baseball and I started to play pony tail softball and went on from there. I focus when I get on the field and don't hear or see anything around me. I'm just focused on the field."

Now she will be focused on college softball and academics. She thanked all of her coaches including Kim Hargraves, Heather Gillis, Christina Bragman, and Breaux. She also thanked all the fans and boosters of the

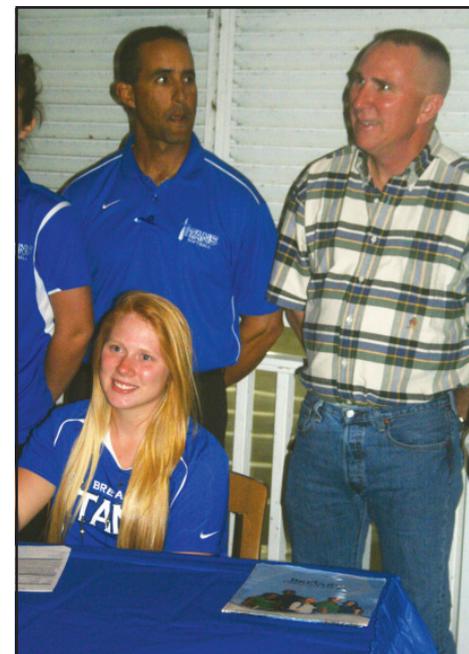
OHS softball team.

Sam said she was happy that so many people showed up for her signing party and said she is ready to have a strong senior year.

"I'm ready to dominate again for my senior year," she explained.



Samantha Harrell and her college roommate, both signed letters of intent to attend Brevard Community College this week.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Samantha Harrell is all smiles at her signing party as her dad Wayne Harrell (back right) and new coach Ed Yanes look on.

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