



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 103 No. 25

Sunday, February 26, 2012

75¢ Plus tax

Teachers' contract negotiations to resume

The Okeechobee County Education Association (OCEA) and the Okeechobee County School District will go back to the negotiation table on Monday, Feb. 27, at 4 p.m. in the Okeechobee School Board meeting room of the School Board office.

The two sides stopped negotiations on the 2011-2012 contract on Feb. 4 when the OCEA negotiator declared an impasse.

A spokesperson for OCEA said they received word Friday that negotiations will resume on Monday.

Man convicted in stabbing won't get new trial

... Page 17

Lake Levels

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Florida Cracker Trail Association keeping history alive



The Florida Cracker Trail Association's annual cross state ride came through Okeechobee last week. The trail ride is approximately 110 miles, from west coast to east coast. For more on the story, see page 11.

Okeechobee News/Katrina Elsen

Man convicted of molesting children gets new trial

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

For the second time an Okeechobee man convicted of molesting two young girls has won his argument with the 4th District Court of Appeals (DCA) and, because of his most recent win, he will receive a new trial.

In their Feb. 15 ruling, the appeals court ruled that Timothy Lewis McLaughlin will get a new trial because of a screen that was put up by the state so the young victims would not have to see McLaughlin while they testified.

McLaughlin, 44, was arrested in March of 2008 on two counts of lewd and lascivious molestation victim under 12 years of age. He was convicted on both counts in April of 2010 then sentenced to life in prison on each count by Circuit Court Judge Robert Belanger.



Timothy McLaughlin

However, those sentences were later changed to 30 years on each charge after McLaughlin won his 2011 appeal to the appellate court.

"The molestations took place from 2003 to 2008, so we had to go back to the earliest date to sentence him," explained Assistant State Attorney Ashley Albright. "This put the incidents before the Jessica Lunsford Act, when the sentence was 30 years."

Judge Belanger then resented McLaughlin on Feb. 21, 2011.

The Jessica Lunsford Act, which was passed by the Florida Legislature in 2005, requires

those convicted of certain sex crimes to be sentenced to a minimum of 25 years in prison. If released from prison, the Act also requires those people to be tracked by global positioning satellite (GPS) for the rest of their life.

Former Florida governor Jeb Bush signed the Act a little over a month after Jessica Lunsford's body was found on March 19, 2005.

McLaughlin's latest appeal stated that placing the screen between him and the girls as they testified, violated his Sixth Amendment right to confrontation. Defense attorney Stanley Glenn, of the public defender's office, objected to the use of the screen at the time.

The victims' mother and therapist both of

See McLAUGHLIN — Page 17



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¹ Whichever comes first. See dealer for details. ² Example based on survey. Each dealer sets their own price. Your payments may vary. Payments are for a 2012 Cruze LS and an MSRP of \$17,470. 39 monthly payments total \$6,589. Option to purchase at lease end for an amount to be determined at lease signing. GM Financial must approve lease. Mileage charge of \$.20/mile over 39,000 miles. Lessee pays for excess wear. Must show proof of current ownership and/or lease. Includes bonus cash. Not available with other offers. Residency restrictions apply. See dealer for details. Take delivery by 2/29/12. ³ EPA estimated. ⁴ Always use safety belts and proper child restraints. Children are safer when properly secured in a rear seat. See the Owner's Manual for more safety information. ⁵ Requires a subscription sold separately by SiriusXM after any complimentary trial. Subscriptions are continuous until you call SiriusXM at 866-635-2349 to cancel. See siriusxm.com for Customer Agreement. Available only in the 48 contiguous United States and Washington, D.C. ⁶ Monthly payment is \$16.67 for every \$1,000 financed. Example down payment: 6%. Includes bonus cash. Some customers will not qualify. Excludes leases. See dealer for details. Take delivery by 2/29/12. ⁷ Monthly payment is \$16.67 for every \$1,000 financed. Example down payment: 6%. Some customers will not qualify. Not available with some other offers. Excludes leases. Must show proof of current ownership of a 1999 or newer vehicle. Must trade in vehicle. See dealer for details. Take delivery by 2/29/12. ⁸ Based on Vincentric 2011 Model Level Analysis. ©2012 OnStar. All rights reserved. ©2012 General Motors.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Karyne Brass

Special deliveries

Okeechobee Senior Services would like to express thanks to the 4-H Club, County Counsel/Junior Leaguers, for providing their annual outreach packages for all current recipients of home-delivered meals. A glimpse into the goodie bags revealed a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, mouthwash, lotion, soap, hand sanitizer, emery board, activity book, tissues, personal fan, granola bars and a few pieces of hard candy. All of our home-delivered meal clients will surely be pleased with such thoughtful gifts. County Counsel/Junior Leaguers club members pictured are Emilie Lege and Carrissa Tyson, who delivered the gift bags to Senior Services on Wednesday, Feb. 22, for distribution to our clients on the following day.

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Weather forecast for **Okeechobee County** from the National Weather Service

Local Forecast

Sunday: A 20 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a



high near 75. East northeast wind around 10 mph.

Sunday night: A 40 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 64. East wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Extended Forecast

Monday: Scattered showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 83. East wind around 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent.

Monday night: A 30 percent chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 65. East wind around 10 mph.

Tuesday: A 30 percent chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 81. East wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Tuesday night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 65. East southeast wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 85. 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!

Teachers' contract

• Think about all sides of this. The school administration wants to weed out the lazy, the teachers that are not willing to keep up with technology, some have been teaching so long they are just burned out. These teachers show up and go through the motions each day. We all can probably remember having a teacher like this. Tenure should be thrown out!

• There are schools in every county that are in the poorest part of their district. They have the most difficult kids to teach. These schools have it harder to get a good grade on fcet than the other schools in the same district. If teachers evaluations are based upon fcet scores why would any teacher want to teach at these schools? Most jobs have some type of evaluations. Would you want half of your evaluation depend on something that you had little control over. Way too much time is spent on getting the kids to pass the fcet test. Kids do not learn anything from FCAT, it should be thrown out!

• FCAT is the standard we should be teaching to, but not every subject is tested. I believe the only remaining FCAT exams at the high school level are the writing test and the English test which are on the way out the door for another assessment. Some of the maths and sciences have the end of course exams being phased in to place. At the moment, there is no standard assessment for subjects in the social studies, arts, musics, computer/web design, auto mechanics, carpentry, health sciences, physical education, foreign languages, drama, and all the myriad other classes and subject areas. This would mean that those teachers who aren't teaching in FCAT/end of course test areas are being judged on the performance of other teachers. So that PE teacher has half of his evaluation based on material and testing that he is not responsible for providing. It's his job to teach his standards as set forth by the state and national standards.

Pay your own way

• There is a huge contingent of people who do not claim income when we all know you do have income coming in under the radar. Yet, you are the first to say you are the 99% and you want the 1% to "pay their fair share." You really mean that THEY need to pay for YOU. Get real and get honest. If you don't pay anything in then shut your mouth and your hand. There are programs for the TRULY NEEDY in this country but you have glommed on to the system and lied to get "free money" from those of us who do pay income taxes. Stop "poor-mouthing" and own up to it and pay your own way.

A great place for a picnic

Several weeks ago, someone had a family park suggestion. We have driven through the area mentioned and agree it would make a fantastic place for picnics. The road is directly across from the high school just before the Ag building. It winds around the wooden jungle, pool and recreation fields. It would need cement slabs for tables and grills. The bathrooms are close as well as the activities - it just seems like the perfect spot. This would be much cheaper than starting from scratch at Taylor Creek.

Okee-Tantie

• If you're running a campground and want to keep it self sustaining, the rates of campgrounds around you shouldn't matter. Figure out how to bring in folks and have decent operators. I wouldn't go down to the Keys and pay KOA's rates. We stay at state parks at a lower rate. Go figure who's competing with whom? The county has paid thousands upon thousands and again thousands of dollars for outside consultants to tell us what we need for recreation and now we are spending more for the same advice to be put on a shelf. When will the almighty and knowing staff figure out for themselves what needs to be done? This isn't the bustling metropolis of Palm Beach county it should be a simple fix.

Father's message on Facebook

• Regarding the father who shot his daughter's laptop because she posted a rude message about her parents on Facebook, Personally, I could see me doing something like this ... however, I would have used a hammer—just as effective and a lot less noisy.

Reflections from the pulpit

The blessings of Community Theatre

By Elder John T. Garner

More 2 Life Ministries

One of the many blessings that God has brought into my life since I moved to Okeechobee is to be involved with the community theatre. I absolutely love working with the folks who are a part of this organization and especially Ron and Jackie Hayes. I appreciate the kind of dedication that has led Ron to oversee and direct the Okeechobee Community Theatre for 33 years. He and Jackie work very hard to assure that the productions done here are of the highest quality and also family appropriate. In a time when many of the community theatres in America are opting for tawdry and inappropriate it's a blessing to know here in Okeechobee that will not be the case.

The current production that is coming up in March (2-3, 9-10) is "The Diary of Anne Frank." The play is taken directly from the diary that Anne Frank wrote while she was in hiding with her family during the German occupation of Holland in WWII. When I was asked to be in the play in January, I was honored because of what the play has to say about the strength of the human spirit overcoming oppression and injustice. To think that the Frank family, along with four other people, lived in a small annex at the top of Mr. Frank's business for two years in an attempt to survive the ruthless, anti-Semitic tyranny of the Nazis is hard to fathom. How could it have happened there in Germany? How could this civilized country in Europe have come to such a state that the wholesale killing of Jews, Slavs, and others was not only condoned but even encouraged?

To better understand how it could happen, you have to know that in July of 1863 the Harper's Ferry magazine, one the leading magazines in the world at the time, declared Germany to be the "most civilized country in the world." This was based on many factors but primarily on the following three: education, affluence, and religion. In 1863, the schools of higher education in Germany were considered the greatest in the world. These schools, like so many here in America, were started with the idea of training men to be ministers for Christ. However, around 1840 the German universities had begun a controversial teaching of the Scriptures commonly referred to as "higher criticism." This teaching, in effect, worked to tear down the infallibility of the Word of God; ascribing most of the miraculous as nothing more than myth and the very words of Christ

as man-made propaganda to promote a fledgling church that was just coming into being.

The writer of the Harper's Ferry article could not have known in 1863 the far reaching effects of this teaching in Germany. By the 1880s, this teaching had produced a nation that had little or no regard for the Scriptures. Men like Friedrich Nietzsche rose to the forefront challenging the essential truth of Christianity and the very existence of God Himself. The Lutheran Church, that had been the religious and moral mainstay of Germany, was overwhelmed by this wave of Scriptural distortion; causing the nation to drift morally and spiritually. As the nation drifted, it moved to economics and affluence to mask the lack of moral fiber that had defined Germany since the Reformation. The move to economics created an insatiable desire for more and more luxury and self-indulgence; creating the "bohemian movement" where there was no right or wrong, only the pursuit of pleasure mattered. The further the nation moved away from God's truth the more it opened itself up to the lies of Satanic oppression and authoritarian dictatorship.

Is it any wonder then that by the first half of the 20th century, less than 90 years after it was declared to be the most civilized country in the world, Germany became responsible for triggering two world wars and the mass annihilation of so many human lives? What happened in Germany demonstrates the sad but very real truth of what can happen to good people when God's truth is suppressed and exchanged for a lie as Paul talks about in the first chapter of Romans. I have heard it said that what happened in Germany could never happen here in America. Yes, it could. All it would take is for this country to move away from the teaching of God's truth and accept the lie that pleasure and things are all that's important. That kind of thinking will always be ready to condone the removal of anything or anyone that is perceived of getting in the way of having it all.

In 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche, the godless philosopher of the "death of God," went insane and had to be institutionalized. Georges Bataille, a personal friend of Nietzsche, made the following statement, "Man incarnate must also go mad." His life and the history of Germany from 1840 to 1945 is testimony to the truth of Scripture that says we will always reap what we sow. So, let us determine that we as a nation and as individuals will sow righteousness so that we may truly reap the blessings of God.

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

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

Okeechobee News

USPS 406-160

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

107 S.W. 17th Street, Suite D • Okeechobee, FL 34974
Periodicals Postage Paid at Okeechobee, FL 34974

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

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

Staff

Editor: Katrina Elsen
Circulation Manager: Janet Madray
Publisher: Tom Byrd

Our Purpose...

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

We Pledge...

- To operate this newspaper as a public trust
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- 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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- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.
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MEMBER



From the Editor ...

Megacon 2012: 'Excelsior!'

As the 89-year-old writer entered the conference room, hundreds of waiting fans leaped to their feet for a loud and long standing ovation.

Stan Lee, who was born Stanley Lieber, told the fans that he never expected to be so famous as a comic book writer. When he first started writing comics in 1941, he published them under the "Stan Lee" moniker because he was saving his real name for the "Great American novel" he planned to write someday. Considering it the "bottom rung on the ladder of culture," he never expected the characters he created such as Spiderman, Ironman and the Fantastic Four to be so popular.

He is proud that so many young people who were drawn to the comic books developed a love of reading.

For more than an hour he answered questions ranging from the inspiration for his stories, to which movie cameo he liked the best and the origin of his trademark "Excelsior!"

The informal question and answer session with the witty and charming octogenarian was just one of the highlights of the 2012 Megacon at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando Feb. 17-19. The annual convention draws about 40,000 attendees or more—roughly equivalent to the entire population of Okeechobee County (and including quite a few of folks actually from Okeechobee County.)

Megacon is one of the largest conventions in the United States for fans of comic books, science fiction, fantasy, anime (a form of Japanese cartooning) and manga (a form of Japanese art). Guest speakers included writers, artists, film makers, actors and costume makers. The convention draws all ages, from grandparents to toddlers. At the 2012 event, there were special activities for the youngest fans such as a Lego pit and a scavenger hunt accompanied by costumed superheroes.

Many couples showed up in matching costumes, such as the Orlando couple who came as characters from the movie "Alien."

Letter to the Editor

Black history/legacy/ treasures/tradition

First, I am a colored, Negro, African-American, black woman!

A solute to BHM (Black History Month). So, I live this, every day. So, from the out-house to the White House. What month is it? Black History Month! Lord have mercy! So, from slavery times to showtime, it is black month. Well, just recognize we are doctors, lawyers, nurses, educators, producers, sports heroes, authors, poets and playwrights.

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson founded Negro History Week which was later renamed Black History Month.

Also, just a short thank you to Okeechobee Director/Staff, Student Volunteer Mariah, Sponsors/Guests who celebrated Black History Month with me.

Groups of friends wore matching costumes, each dressing as a different character from a favorite movie, comic book or video game. Parents who were fans of the "Harry Potter" books, brought their infant with a tiny lightning bolt drawn on his forehead.

For singles, there was a chance to find romance with a speed dating session. The weekend also features premiers of independent movies, previews of new video games, concerts, dance parties and costume contests.

Then there's vendor room—booths selling all kinds of comic books, other books, DVDs, art, jewelry, souvenirs, gaming items and costumes of all kinds. While about a third of the attendees come to the convention in their own handmade costumes, many are inspired to join in the fun and purchase costumes there.

Just seeing the costumes other fans wear has become a big draw at Megacon. It takes "people watching" to a new level. Those in costume are always happy to stop and pose for a photo—it's part of the Megacon experience.

For those curious about Stan Lee's answers—he said he doesn't know what his influences were. "I was just thinking I've got to get a great villain and I've got to give him something terrible to do," he said. Then, just when it seemed impossible that the hero could possibly survive, he continued, he had to come up with a way for the hero to win. He said his villains were not based on real people. "I never knew anyone as evil as our villains."

His favorite movie cameo? "You haven't seen it yet," he teased the crowd, promising for his best cameo ever in the "Avengers" movie, which will be in theaters in May.

And his trademark tagline "Excelsior?" "I used to write columns," he explained. In the days long before blogs were invented, the author wrote columns that would be published in magazines. He said he tried different tag lines to end his columns, but he saw them copied by other writers. He decided to come up with a tag line that no one would copy. He chose Excelsior—which is on the official seal for the State of New York.

He said he didn't think anyone would

At the Okeechobee Public Library last Saturday—Wow! Thanks for the celebrated, spirited support. What about the Newark, N.J. allowing the world to view and say goodbye to one of their favorite daughters, Mrs. Whitney Elizabeth Houston, the Homegoing, at New Hope Baptist Church, Piers Morgan of CNN stated, music icon!

Extraordinary, unbelievable, God, faith, church Tyler Perry, Oprah, Kevin Costner, Alicia Keys, Stevie Wonder. They had Church! Ya'll don't hear me. So, Black History/My history, from Africa to America. What month is it? Black History Month!

Just look at us now. Legacy/treasures/tradition keeping the vision/living the dream... What about you?

Brenda Scott, 2012

Poet/playwright/author

copy it because they wouldn't know what it means, plus it is difficult to spell.

Excelsior is an old English word, which means "onward and upward to greater glory," he continued. "What could be better than that?"

Next year's Megacon will be in March, 2013. Fans can keep up with the plans online at www.megaconvention.com. For photos from Megacon (including photos of some Okeechobee residents) see the Okeechobee News page on Facebook.



Special to the Okeechobee News

These zombies were promoting two books, "The Zombie Cause" and "The Immune" both by Doc Lucky Meisenheimer of Orlando. They were also fascinated by Okeechobee County's unofficial designation as "the safest place in the United States in case of zombie apocalypse."

Correction

An error appeared in an article with the headline "County hires new parks & rec director" that was on page 1 of the Friday, Feb. 24, issue of the Okeechobee News. The article stated that the motion to authorize staff to negotiate with attorneys to try to settle

the litigation with American Well Drilling passed with a four to one vote. The motion did pass, however the vote was three to two with commissioners Ray Domer and Joey Hoover voting no. We apologize for any inconvenience caused by this error.

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.

Free tax preparation and e-filing help offered

AARP Taxaide volunteers will be available to provide free income tax preparation and e-filing through April 17, at the American Legion, 501 SE 2nd Street, on Mondays and Tuesdays from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Those who need help with their tax forms must bring photo ID, Social Security cards for dependents, last year's tax return and all 2011 financial statements. No appointment is necessary. First come, first served. Doors open at 8:45 a.m. Please DO NOT call the American Legion. For more information, please call 863-357-1694 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Community Events

Lodge holds Sunday breakfast

The Masonic Lodge at 107 N.W. Fifth St., will hold a breakfast on Sunday, **Feb. 26**, from 8 a.m.-11 a.m. Adults \$6 and kids 12 and under \$3. Eggs, bacon, grits, pancakes, biscuits & gravy, etc. Carry outs are available. Public is welcome. The Lodge holds this breakfast on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month. Proceeds go to Okeechobee Youth Programs.

Cypress Eagles to host Fried Chicken Night

Cypress Hut Eagles will host Fried Chicken Night on Sunday, **Feb. 26**, from 1-5 p.m. Just \$6 per plate with all proceeds to benefit Community Charity Fund. The public is welcome.

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.

Frances Andrews, 83

CLEWISTON — Frances Andrews, Juanita to her family and friends, went on to Glory on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2012 at the age of 83.

Juanita was born Frances Juanita Barton to William "Aussie" and Frances "Estelle" Barton on August 13, 1928 in Pitts, Ga. She moved to Clewiston, in the 1940's, where she married her husband, Leslie "L.P." Andrews.

Juanita was preceded in death by her mother and father; her husband; and four children. She is survived by four children, Andrew (Evelyn) Andrews of North Carolina, Russell (Gloria) Andrews of Louisiana, Wanda Gail (David) Alderman of Okeechobee, and Sharon (Bill) Huggins of Lake City. She is also survived by 17 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

Visitation will be at 12 noon on Monday, Feb. 27, 2012 in the Buxton Funeral Home Chapel, 110 NE 5th Street, Okeechobee, Fla. Her home-going celebration will follow at 1 p.m.; Pastors Eric Phillips and Doug Nickalson will be officiating. Interment will immediately follow at the Ridgelawn Cemetery in Clewiston, Fla. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the Everglades Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1953, Okeechobee, Florida 34973

All arrangements are entrusted to the loving care of the Buxton Funeral Home and Crematory, 110 NE 5th Street, Okeechobee, FL 34972. On-line condolences may be made at www.buxtonfuneralhome.com.



Cypress Eagles to host spaghetti dinner

The Cypress Hut Eagles, 4701 U.S. 441 S.E., Okeechobee, will host "Spaghetti by Lorraine" on Tuesday, **Feb. 28**, from 5-7 p.m. The public is welcome to join us for dinner. All proceeds will benefit the Community Charity Fund.

Eagles North to host Bingo Night

Tuesday, **Feb. 28**, the North Eagles is holding Bingo from 1 p.m. until? Lots of Fun. 9985 U.S. 441 North, Okeechobee.

Proceeds go to the F.O.E. 4137 community benefit fund.

Ann L. Myles, age 74

OKEECHOBEE — Ann L. Myles, age 74, died Friday, Feb. 24, 2012 at the Hamrick Home following a courageous battle with cancer. Born in Miami on Dec. 27, 1937, to James A. and Erma L. Kinney, Ann and her husband Joe moved to Okeechobee in 1981. She was a member of Okeechobee Christian Church.

A licensed practical nurse, Ann worked intermittently for Hospice of Okeechobee from 1983 to 2005. She enjoyed shopping, working, and taking care of others.

Ann was preceded in death by her husband, Joseph P. Myles; and sons, Joseph W. Myles and Robert P. Myles. Survivors include daughters, Helen (Eugene) Myles Henning of Hialeah, Joann L. Hawthorne of Okeechobee; grandsons, Brandon Henning of Savannah, Ga., David Hawthorne of Okeechobee; granddaughters, Monica Henning of Miami, and Vicki Hawthorne of Okeechobee.

Visitation will be held tomorrow, Monday, Feb. 27, 2012, from 10 a.m. until service time of 12 p.m. at Buxton-Seawind Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in Ann's memory be made to Hospice of Okeechobee, P.O. Box 1548, Okeechobee, Florida 34973.

Friends may send online condolences to www.buxtonseawinds.com

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

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Red Cross offers disaster training

Community residents who want to learn more about how to help their neighbors in times of crisis are welcome to join the American Red Cross for an introductory class to explore how they can help fulfill the organization's vital humanitarian mission in their community. The Okeechobee Red Cross office will host a Disaster Services Overview (DSO) on Monday, **Feb. 27**, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the facility's training room located at 323 N. Parrott Avenue. This training orientation is open to all residents who wish to support Red Cross Disaster Relief efforts. There is no charge for Red Cross disaster training. For more information, please call the Okeechobee office of the American Red Cross at 863-763-2488. For information on how to become a Red Cross Volunteer, go to www.redcross-pbc.org.

Shrine Club to host spaghetti dinner

The Okeechobee Shrine Club, S.R. 78 W., members will host their Tuesday evening **Feb. 28**, spaghetti dinner from 4 until 7 p.m. A no-smoking atmosphere with music starting at 5 until 8 p.m. Donation is just \$6 per person. For information call the club at 863-763-3378 or Mac Simpson at 863-484-0427 or Kip Gardner at 863-610-6659.

CCC meeting date set

The next meeting of the Community Collaborative Council, a part of the Shared Services Network of Okeechobee, will be Tuesday, **Feb. 28**, at 10 a.m., in the board room of the School Board Office.

Dine with the Doctor

Raulerson Hospital's February Dine with the Doctor event is planned for Tuesday, **Feb. 28**, in the cafeteria. Dinner will be served at 4:30 p.m., for \$5 per person. The physician lecture is free and begins at 5 p.m. RSVP: 863-763-9228.

Guest speaker to talk on anti-tobacco

The Tobacco Free Partnership of Okeechobee presents national speaker, Rick Bender, on Tuesday, **Feb. 28**, at noon in the The Pentecostals of Okeechobee Activity Center, 405 SW 10th Avenue, Okeechobee. "Man without a face" warns of cancer risk. Former professional baseball player Rick Bender speaks all across the United States about surviving oral cancer caused by chewing tobacco. Join the partnership for this powerful presentation. Call Rosalind Brown at 863-462-5777 or 863-462-5724 for more information.

Eagles North to host Bingo Night

Wednesday, **Feb. 29**, Yep it's Leap Year Again, Eagles North will have Bingo starting at 4:30 p.m. until?, 9985 U.S. 441 N., Okeechobee. Proceeds go to the F.O.E. community benefit fund.

VFW Auxiliary hosts breakfast

The Buckhead Ridge VFW Ladies Auxiliary 9528 will have their monthly Wednesday night dinner on **Feb. 29**, starting at 5:30 p.m. For more information, please call Buckhead Ridge VFW at 863-467-2882.

Worried about your memory?

Many people are worried about their memory as they grow older and wiser in years, but do not know what to do about their worries. The Alzheimer's Association - Florida Gulf Coast Chapter will be at the Buckhead Ridge Community Center, 300282 Hwy. 78 East, Buckhead Ridge, with their "Memory Mobile" from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, **Feb. 29**. Learn about the signs, symptoms and causes for memory loss. For more information, please call 863-385-3444 or 863-763-2404.

Seacoast to host benefit bake sale

March 1 and 2, Seacoast National Bank will be hosting a bake sale to raise money for the March of Dimes. All proceeds will go to benefit the March of Dimes.

SRT raising money for Special Olympics

Area residents are being asked to Tip a Cop as members of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office Special Response Team (SRT) will volunteer as celebrity waiters Thursday, **March 1**, to raise money for Special Olympics. The deputies will be waiting on customers at the Golden Corral Restaurant, 700 S. Parrott Ave., from 5 until 8 p.m. Advanced tickets are available. For information, call 863-763-3117.

OCA hosts BBQ and rummage sale

You do not want to miss this! Okeechobee Christian Academy will be hosting a rummage sale from 8 a.m. to noon on **March 3**, and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., smoked pork dinners can be purchased for \$8 per plate. All proceeds will benefit Okeechobee Christian Academy. This event will take place on the school campus located at 701 South Parrott Ave. Advanced tickets can be purchased at the school office or by calling 863-763-3072.

Style Studio presents LP Foundation Fundraiser

March 3, Good Spirits Banquet Room 245 U.S. 441 S.E., LP Foundation is a non-profit organization Helping Extreme Youth Athletes and Families in need across the US. Pool Tournament- Food-50/50-Door Prizes-Auction-Music Donations of clothing, non-perishable food, toys and any type of athletic equipment is very much appreciated. Vendors wanted, join us and have a great time! If you have any questions, call Sheryl Tanner 863-634-9514.

Search obituaries nationally at
<http://www.legacy.com>

Okeechobee's Most Wanted

The following persons are on Okeechobee's Most Wanted list. There are active warrants for these persons. The criteria for making Okeechobee's Most Wanted list is based on the severity of the crime in conjunction with the age of the warrant.

• **Johnny Lynn Braswell**, 30, is a white male with brown hair and blue eyes. He is 5 feet, 10 inches and weighs 175 lbs. He is wanted for violation of probation – Possession controlled substance with intent to distribute.



Johnny Lynn Braswell

• **Michael Allen**, 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. (He was previously listed on the Okeechobee Most Wanted as "Michael Allen White." This was an error.)



Jennifer Lynn Herbst

• **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.



Michael Allen

• **Frank David Berry III**, 29, is a black male. He is 5'6", and weighs 150 lbs. He has a tattoo of two palm trees on his left forearm and the word "FRANK" on his right arm. He is charged with possession of Cannabis W/Intent to Sell; possession of cannabis over 20 grams; cultivation of cannabis; possession of drug paraphernalia. His bond was set at \$18,000.



Frank David Berry III

If you have any information on the whereabouts of this man, you can call the Treasure Coast Crime Stoppers at 1-800-273-TIPS (8477). If you call, you have the option of remaining anonymous. You can also receive a reward if the information results in an arrest.

Investigations

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office investigated the following incidents last week:

ASSAULTS

- 11000 block of S.R. 70 E.
- 3600 block of S.R. 70 E.
- 3400 block of N.E. 168th St.
- 1700 block of U.S. 441 N.

BURGLARIES

- 4200 block of S.E. 25th Drive

CRIMINAL MISCHIEF

- 2400 block of U.S. 441 S.E.
- 3000 block of S.E. 33rd Terrace

THEFTS

- 10000 block of N.W. Third Terrace (identity)
- 700 block of N.W. 36th St. (air conditioner)
- 3500 block of S.E. 27th St. (purse, phone, cash)
- 1900 block of S.E. 40th Drive (checks)
- 5200 block of N.W. 30th St. (tent)
- 3100 block of U.S. 441 S. (golf club)
- 12000 block of S.R. 70 E.
- N.E. 128th Ave./Center St. (trailer)
- 9200 block of N.W. 240th St. (identity)

VANDALISM

- 100 block of U.S. 98 N.

Help available for seniors to help with electric bills

Okeechobee Senior Services is currently taking applications for the EHEAP grant. You must be sixty or over or have someone in the household sixty and over. This grant will pay for electric bills and space heaters. You must have a Final Notice. Call Sheila at 863-462-5180 to find out the documentation you will have to apply.

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Pregnancy Center offers free services

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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Maintaining healthy plants and bank accounts

By Clifford Starling
Soil Conservationist- USDA

Whether or not you operate a 10,000-acre farm or maintain a tenth of an acre lawn this topic is important to everyone. Nutrient

Management directly impacts the environment and the applicator's wallet. Applying nutrients is essential for good plant growth, but over-applying nutrients can harm both plants and the environment. Rainfall or over-

irrigation can push excess nutrients through the soil profile, which can ultimately pollute drinking water and/or lakes and streams.

The first step in responsibly applying nutrients to soil is to determine the amount of nutrients needed by the plant or plants in question. The best and most effective way to determine this is to have a soil sample analyzed for its nutrient contents. The basic report will provide pH and lime recommendations along with Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium recommendations. This report is sufficient for typical Nutrient Management unless you are intensively using an area, in which case, you may need a micro-nutrient level report as well. Most reports provide a recommendation on nutrient application in either pounds per 1000 square feet or pounds per acre for each nutrient needed. The next step is to determine the fertilizer that best fits your needs, unless the quantity of the application would allow for you to have the material custom blended.

In order to get a sample that represents the area in question, obtaining sub-samples from several areas in your field or lawn may be necessary. The more sub-samples you pull the more accurate the sample will represent the area. Always avoid sub-sampling areas that do not represent the whole area, such as lower areas that may be dark, heavy, and rich in nutrients. First obtain sub-samples; collect them in a clean plastic bucket, and then vigorously shake the bucket to mix its contents. Use the mixture as your sample and then just send it to your soil lab of choice.

The three primary nutrients that are of concern are Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium. Generally, Nitrogen promotes

growth of foliage -the top portions of plants. Phosphorus helps develop stronger roots, as well as flower and fruit production, while Potassium builds durability and disease resistance. These nutrients are indicated on the fertilizer bag by numbers that represent the percentage of the nutrient in each pound of material, such as a 5-10-15. For example, 5-10-15 indicates 5lbs of Nitrogen per 100 lbs of material. The next two numbers refer to P2O5, which is the oxidized form of elemental Phosphorus and also the percentage per pound of material. Therefore, in the 5-10-15 fertilizer there is 10 lbs of Phosphorus. The same formula applies to Potassium (K), in that the fertilizer percentage refers to the oxidized form of K, which is K2O. There is 15 lbs of Potassium (K) per 100 lbs of material in the 5-10-15 fertilizer material. Just remember that the numbers on the fertilizer bag refer to the percentage of N-P-K in the fertilizer.

Some key points to remember when fertilizing lawns and gardens are: (1) use a slow release fertilizer if feasible and available; (2) mow often and leave clippings on the lawn as fertilizer; (3) be careful not to spread fertilizer on sidewalks and/or driveways; (4) be sure to calibrate your spreader correctly; (5) use compost or manures/organic fertilizers at a conservative rate. Organic fertilizers, such as manures or compost, break down slowly and make nutrients available for longer periods. Also, in flower beds and gardens, it's been proven that plants do better if fertilizer is applied next to the plants verses broadcasting the fertilizer over the entire area. This practice uses less fertilizer also, saving the savvy farmer or homeowner dollars in tough economic times.

Livestock Market Report

FEBRUARY 20 & 21, 2012

MONDAY SALE AT 12:00PM....TUESDAY SALE AT 11:00AM

COWS:			MED #1	STEERS	HEIFERS
BREAKING	80.00	- 100.00	150-200	- - -	- - -
CUTTER	72.00	- 79.00	200-250	250 - 285	215 - 255
CANNER			250-300	235 - 280	215 - 240
			300-350	230 - 255	190 - 222
			350-400	210 - 240	170 - 197
			400-450	187 - 220	165 - 188
BULLS			450-500	177 - 202	155 - 178
1000-1500	93.00	- 101.00	550-600	157 - 197	145 - 158
1500-2000	94.00	- 103.00	600-650	150 - 170	137 - 152
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	MED #2		
CLFS	231	749	150-200	-	-
COWS	80	411	200-250	210 - 240	200 - 210
STRS	1	15	250-300	200 - 230	175 - 205
HFRS	4	9	300-350	180 - 220	160 - 180
BULLS	9	27	350-400	180 - 205	150 - 165
YRLNGS	12	84	400-450	160 - 180	140 - 160
MIX	21	0	SMALL #1		
TOTAL	358	1295	220-235		
			250-300		
			300-350		
			350-400		
			450-500		

PRICES STILL SKY HIGH! FEEDER CALVES \$2 HIGHER AGAIN THIS WEEK.
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PAID CONTENT LIVE BLUEGRASS MUSIC

Keith Bass & the Florida Bluegrass Express will be performing live Saturday, March 3, 2012 @ 5:30 pm at the Okeechobee KOA. This will be their last performance at the KOA for this season. Cost is \$10 per person at the door 12 years old

and younger free with a paid ticket. Concessions will be available and there is plenty of seating. For additional information contact Darlene Bass at 863-634-5815 or Keith Bass at 863-781-2376



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Tuesday at 11 a.m.

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Fundraising opportunity offered by Cattlemen's Assoc.

Okeechobee County Cattlemen's Association is offering ticket sales fundraising opportunity for local clubs. For more information please contact Heather Hancock @ CenterState Bank 863-763-5573. Okeechobee County Cattlemen's Annual Spring Rodeo, March 10 and 11 at 2 p.m., Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center.

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‘Keeping History Alive’: Riders hit the Florida Cracker Trail

By **Katrina Elsen**
Okeechobee News

The 179 riders on this year’s Florida Cracker Trail Association (FCTA) ride ranged in age from six to 82. Some came from out-of-state. Others were riding familiar territory. They all share a love of horses, fellowship and history.

The FCTA 25th annual ride across the state travelled through Okeechobee County Thursday and Friday.

About a dozen children were among the riders. Six-year-old Jared Harrison earned a reputation for wanting to race his pony against all takers. At age 11, Isabella Parker from Englewood, Fla., was an old hand on the trail ride. The 2012 ride was her fourth journey on horseback across the state.

The oldest rider, C.B. Knight, 82, of Madison, Fla. had made the ride twice before. This year his two grandsons, Jeremy and Jason, accompanied him. “He’s been after us for years to go, so we figured we’d better,” said Jeremy.

Some of the participants chose to ride in wagons instead of astride their mounts. John Sandora and Alan Schukman from Crystal River, Fla. drove a rescued draft horse named Maddie. Maddie was slated for shipment to a slaughterhouse before she was saved by Florida Draft Horse Rescue.

Jane Vandeneynde came from Ohio with her mule for the ride. Her love of mules started with a surprise. “I bought a mare who wasn’t supposed to be bred,” she explained. “Four months later, I had a mule on

the ground. I was hooked.”

Beth Scrimger and her brother Mark Schrader came from Maine to ride. They rented Florida horses for the event.

Trail Boss Jennifer Osterline from Manatee County has been with FCTA for 18 years. She said about a month after the annual event, the club will host an “after ride” to get together and talk about plans for next year. She said they will also have another ride three or four months later, just to get together and camp out and go horseback riding.

The FCTA is a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to the mission of “Keeping History Alive” by education through demonstration of the old Florida Cracker pioneer ways of agriculture, animal husbandry, respect for the land as well as the hardships and joys of the life on the Florida frontier. The annual ride emphasizes the introduction of horses and cattle by the Spanish explorers and the birth and continuance of the cattle and horse industries.

The annual cross-state ride is held the last full week of February. Membership in the FCTA is mandatory. The ride begins at a site just east of Bradenton, Fla. and ends in Fort Pierce, Fla. It follows the path many Cracker Cow Hunters would take on their journey home after driving cattle to a shipping port.

The week-long ride is approximately 110 miles long, riding an average of 15 miles each day, sometimes more, sometimes less. Riders may ride as many days as they wish, or may elect to ride in the mornings only. It is quite the challenge to ride each day with



C.B. Knight, 82, (center) rode on the Florida Cracker Trail Association’s annual cross state ride with his grandsons, Jeremy and Jason.

Okeechobee News/Katrina Elsen

the culmination of a parade through the historic section of the town of Fort Pierce on Saturday.

For more photos of the Florida Cracker Trail Ride online, see the Okeechobee News page on Facebook.

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Congressman Rooney visits with OHS marching band

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Congressman Tom Rooney congratulated members of the Okeechobee High School Marching Band Thursday.

He nominated them to perform in the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, DC this year and the nomination was approved.

Fund raisers, hard work and determination from band members, their parents and the community have allowed the band the finances needed to make the trip a reality.

Rooney said he was proud to nominate the band and noted Okeechobee will be right in the middle of his new congressional district 17 next year.

"Every year we can nominate one band from the district. They must have a big enough size band, and Okeechobee qualified. We contacted the high school and they seemed very interested and so we were able to nominate them," he said.

Rooney said he expects the band members will really enjoy their trip to DC, "May is a beautiful time up in Washington because it's not too hot. We get to see all the sites and I'll hopefully get to show them around when they get there."

He explained to the kids about his history as a legislator and his time spent as an active duty member of the United State Army. He was also an instructor at West Point.

OHS Band Director Clint LaFlam said it was an honor and a thrill to host the Con-

gressman at the high school Thursday. He said a lot of the kids were excited to see him.

"It was nice of the Congressman to come and speak to the kids to let them know they are representing his district, the state and

Okeechobee," he added.

LaFlam said the band will start parade practices soon and will play an arrangement called "Patriotic Spectacular" that was arranged by Steve Barrett, Band Director for the University of Mississippi.

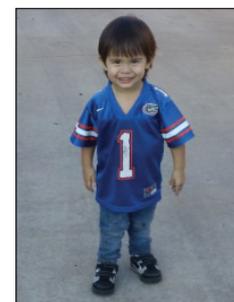


Courtney LaFlam, Congressman Tom Rooney, Clint LaFlam, and OHS Principal Toni Wiersma sit in front of the OHS Marching band during the Congressman's visit to OHS Thursday.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Wider angle view of the OHS Marching band with Congressman Tom Rooney.

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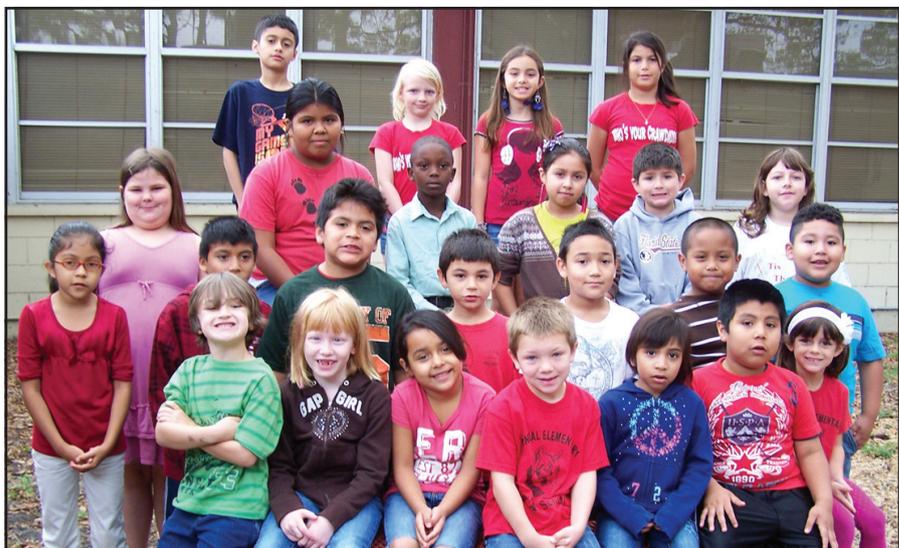
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Special to the Okeechobee News/CES

Central Students of the Week

Central Elementary Students of the Week for the week of Feb. 20 are: Juan Aguirre, Jacob Moats, Omar Gonzalez, Julia Angelos, George Seca, Juan Virto, Estela Rodriguez, Claudia Alvarado, Kylee Dennis, Oscar Landaverde, Logan Newman, Ryan Thomas, Jacari Mathis, Cuyler Maxwell, Henry Denova De Dios, Marrion Librando, Carlos Gamez, Sofia Zapata, Luis Noel Espinoza, Adolph Torres, Austin Suarez, Cynthia Sandoval, Giselle Betancourt, Victoria Simmons, Katelyn Shaw, Harli Slone, Itzel Guereca, Jennifer Salas-Garcia, Amber Hull, Jerry Stalans and Agustin Antunez.



Special to the Okeechobee News/SEM

Seminole Students of the Week

Seminole Elementary would like to congratulate their Students of the Week for the week of Feb. 24, including Michelle Jaimes Saucedo, Christian Hernandez, Hector Tagle, Leonardo Ibarro-Medrano, Juan Tijerina, Jessika Olivera, Apolinar Torres, Karla Lima, Noelani Lopez-Deharo, Araceli Garcia, Irvin Luviano, Brandon Ray, Aurelio Sanchez, Ashley Sparkman, Darrell Harden, Kavion Thomas, Christian Martinez, Luis Bucio, Julitza Urbina, Jasmine Snell, Bryan Rosas, Chadrick Williams, Kylee Smith, Lia Nieto, David Montoya, Karina Prado-Salazar and Isabel Avila.

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Raulerson recognizes American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month. Below are some facts on heart health:

- One in three U.S. adults is currently living with a type of heart disease
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and a major cause of disability
- One in every three deaths in the U.S. is from heart disease and stroke, equal to 2,200 deaths per day.
- Taking care of your teeth can impact heart health. If you develop gum disease, your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke increase by 50 percent.
- In 2010, heart disease cost the United States \$444 billion. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications and lost productivity.
- Statistically, most heart attacks occur on Mondays.

Raulerson Hospital offers a wide range of cardiac and respiratory testing for inpatients and outpatients. Services include therapeutic treatments, EKGs, EEGs, tran-

sthoracic and transesophageal echocardiograms, carotid ultrasounds, and cardiac stress testing. Raulerson Hospital also offers cardiac services including the implantation of pacemakers and Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators (ICD) devices. These are minor surgical procedures that are safe and can be life-saving.

For more information about these services, contact Raulerson Hospital at 863-763-2151 or visit our website at RaulersonHospital.com.

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*Raulerson Hospital's feature speaker for February's Dine with the Doctor -Tuesday, Feb. 28 - is Dr. Arain. Join us at 4:30 p.m. in the cafeteria for dinner and stay for Dr. Arain's lecture on heart health, beginning at 5 p.m. The cost of dinner is \$5 per person, the lecture is free. Call 863-763-9228 to RSVP.

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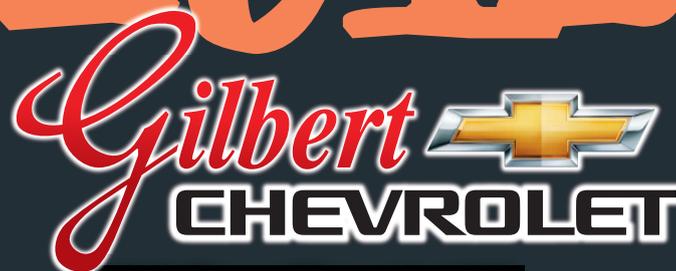
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Local roofer celebrates award winning year

Entegra Roof Tile celebrates two distinctive titles they proudly received during 2011: South Florida Manufacturers Association's (SFMA) "Manufacturer of the Year" and Manufacturers Association of Florida finalist.

SFMA judged Entegra Roof Tile 2010's "Manufacturer of the Year" in the division of 51 to 125 employees. The annual award recognizes organizations and individuals for outstanding success and achievement throughout the previous year.

Entegra Roof Tile earned a "Finalist" title in the Manufacturers Association of Florida's annual award ceremony. To receive this recognition, a panel of judges studied Entegra's leadership, customer/market focus, process management as well as its employees.

Entegra is a family-owned business that has manufactured and delivered concrete roof tiles in Florida for more than 25 years. Entegra's state of the art plant, built in Okeechobee in 2006 to help replace tile damaged by the hurricanes, is one of the most modern tile plants in the world. The plant is capable of producing millions of high-quality tiles per month. Entegra also delivers and loads their tile to the rooftop, allowing them to better meet the needs of customers.

"It is an honor to be recognized by our peers," said Mike Johnson, Entegra's president. "I am extremely proud of each employee for contributing to our success. We have great people and that has made us a great company."



Okeechobee News/Diana Whitehall

Wildfire awareness campaign under way

GLADES COUNTY-The Florida Forest Service, Okeechobee District; Glades County Emergency Management, and Glades County Sheriff have teamed up to create awareness about the dangers of wildfires.

As conditions get drier, it is essential that the residents help reduce the wildfire risk. "It's important for everyone to remember that almost 80 percent of all wildfires in Florida are caused by humans," said Senior Ranger Danny Callahan, Florida Forest Service.

On Feb. 29, emergency responders from the Florida Forest Service, Glades County Emergency Management, and Glades County Sheriff conducted a door-to-door campaign for the residents of Crescent Acres and Country Meadows in West Glades County. This door-to-door campaign involved passing out bags of fire prevention literature to nearly 150 residents. "As we pass out brochures, we talked to residents and informed them of the dry conditions," explained Senior Ranger Danny Callahan, Florida Forest Service. "A good percentage of residents had piles of debris ready to be burned. Hopefully, we

educated the residents of Crescent Acres and Country Meadows and they will think twice about burning."

The next phase in the educational campaign is to conduct fire prevention and Ready, Set, GO presentations to homeowner groups throughout Glades County. If your community would like to learn more, please contact Florida Forest Service, Senior Ranger Danny Callahan 863-674-4000 or Glades County Emergency Management, Angie Snow at 863-946-6020. The educational campaign will continue until normal rainfall patterns occur.

Remember that Glades County has a burn ban in place.

For questions on the burn ban, please contact Glades County Emergency Management.

For more fire prevention tips and burning rules and regulations information, go to www.Firewise.org. or contact your local Florida Forest Service office (Vero Beach 772-778-5085; Port St. Lucie 772-468-3915; Stuart 772-221-4045; Okeechobee 863-462-5160; Sebring 863-655-6407; Palmdale 863-674-4000). Or visit the website at www.floridaforestservice.com.

Guest speaker

The Thursday, Feb. 23, Kiwanis meeting held at The Lodge at the Lake Family Restaurant hosted Melissa MontesDeOca, the speaker and Greg Thogersen, president of the Kiwanis Club. Melissa is one of the Board of Directors for the Okeechobee County Ag-Venture, which is a new, exciting way to educate area children about the importance of agriculture. Ag-Venture will be held Wednesday and Thursday, May 2 and 3, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Trading Post Flea Market in Okeechobee. Ag-Venture is a free two-day, hands-on program for fourth graders (public, private and home schooled) who will learn about alligators, beef, citrus, natural resources, dairy, vegetables and more. They are in need of many volunteers as well as donations.

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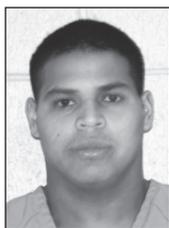
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DCA denies appeal by Ruiz

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News



Leonte Ruiz

The 4th District Court of Appeals (DCA) has denied the appeal of an Okeechobee man who was seeking to overturn his attempted first-degree murder conviction.

Appeal attorneys for Leonte Ruiz, 24, stated that his conviction should be overturned due to ineffective counsel and statements made by Assistant State Attorney Don Richardson to the jury that appealed to their "... passion and prejudice, and generated hatred and ill will towards Ruiz."

Ruiz also claimed that it was improper for Mr. Richardson to thank the jury on behalf of the victim and the State of Florida for serving.

On Feb. 4, 2010, Ruiz was convicted of attempted first-degree murder with a weapon and burglary of a conveyance with an assault or battery while armed. Circuit Court Judge Robert Belanger then sentenced him to life on the attempted murder conviction and 30 years on the burglary charge.

Ruiz was arrested in December of 2007 for stabbing his former girlfriend 21 times about her torso when she refused to renew their relationship. In her testimony, Marlena Mansingh told the jury that when the knife was plunged into her body four of her internal organs were punctured.

"I'm fine physically," she testified. "But emotionally and mentally, I'm not. One minute I'm fine and the next minute I flip out."

The attack took place on Dec. 7, 2007, after Ruiz called her and invited her to his mother's house for breakfast. While there, Ruiz began to pressure her to start dating

him again but she refused.

Shortly before 7 a.m. she started to leave the Ruiz home to go to work. As she sat down behind the steering wheel of her Dodge Stratus sedan, Ruiz again asked her to come back to him. And, again, she refused.

He then walked to another nearby car and when he returned he began stabbing her with a 5-inch steak knife. Ruiz was pulled away from the now bleeding girl by his mother.

At this point, Ruiz fled the scene.

Defense attorney Mark Orr said Ruiz "snapped" because of his prior steroid use.

"He had been using a bunch of steroids and was coming off them when this happened," said Mr. Orr. "He was not there—as a sane person—when he did this. Yeah, he did it—beyond a reasonable doubt. But, he was insane."

When Mr. Richardson addressed Judge Belanger at sentencing he said Ruiz had planned on killing his former girlfriend and inflicting as much pain on her as possible.

"He didn't just want to kill her—he wanted her to suffer," he said "The state asks that you show the defendant the same amount of compassion he showed Marlena—none! Absolutely, none!"

In his appeal, Ruiz also claimed Mr. Orr was ineffective due to his statement that "he was senile, had not done a jury trial in two-and-one-half years, and may be rusty on new law." The statement was not made in the presence of the jury.

"Our reading of the record reflects that the comment was made in jest," stated the DCA's Feb. 15, 2012, opinion.

The justices went on to rule that statements made by Mr. Richardson were proper and did not warrant a new trial.

McLAUGHLIN

Continued From Page 1

ferred testimony describing the mental state of the two girls, as well as the harm that seeing McLaughlin would do to them. Judge Belanger granted Mr. Albright's request to use the screen.

With the jury out of the courtroom the screen was put up and a television was placed in front of the defense table so that McLaughlin could hear and see the two girls as they testified. When that was done, the jury was brought back to the courtroom.

But, ruled the appellate court, the use of the television did not satisfy McLaughlin's Sixth Amendment right.

Citing a 2008 Nebraska case, the Florida DCA agreed that: "The screen unduly compromised the presumption of innocence fundamental to the right to a fair trial. The presence of the screen in the courtroom, in an obvious and peculiar departure from common practice, could have suggested to the jury that the court believed (the victim) and endorsed her credibility, in violation of (the defendant's) right to a fair trial."

Instead of using the screen, the DCA stated that the testimony of the victims could have been videotaped prior to trial, or the girls could have been in another room and had their testimony presented via closed-circuit video.

"The inherently prejudicial practice in this case cannot pass close scrutiny, because the court had available another equally effective method of protecting (the victim)," penned

the justices.

McLaughlin also appealed statements made by Mr. Albright during his closing argument, but the DCA found no error by the prosecutor and offered no further comment.

According to an arrest report by Detective Ted Van Deman, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), the two girls were ages 8 and 11 when the charges were filed in 2008.

The grandmother of the two girls addressed the court prior to McLaughlin being sentenced and told the court how the youngest child was afraid to go to sleep because he (McLaughlin) had threatened to kill them.

"They'll never be the carefree little girls they once were," she said. "I'll never forget the fear on their faces. You have caused so much pain. You've taken their innocence from them."

The detective's report stated that to keep the girls from telling anyone about what had happened, McLaughlin threatened to kill their mother by shooting her to death.

No date has been set for McLaughlin's new trial.

Red Cross seeks volunteers

The American Red Cross is looking for Disaster Services Volunteers for Hurricane Season. All necessary training is free of charge. If you would like to give of your time and talents to help your local community residents in times of disaster, please call your Okeechobee Branch office at 863-763-2488.

Program helps Hardest Hit homeowners

Are you unemployed or underemployed and having trouble making your mortgage payments? There's good news for homeowners. If you've experienced a financial hardship due to job loss or reduced hurs, resulting in a reduction in your income, the federal government has allocated funding to the State of Florida to help people in your situation. It's free to apply and those who qualify may be eligible for up to six months of mortgage payments. You can get the help you need when you need it and it's absolutely free to apply. To find out if you are eligible or for more information, visit www.FLHardestHitHelp.org or call 877-863-5244 or contact Okeechobee Non Profit Housing Inc., 115 S.W. 5th Avenue, 863-467-5525.



Weatherization helps cut electric bills

Okeechobee Non Profit Housing Inc., is collaborating with Indiantown Non Profit Housing Inc., to implement a weatherization program provided by the State of Florida Department of Community Affairs. Low income families in Okeechobee County can obtain funds through the program to add insulation and make other improvements to their homes that will help cut electric bills. The program is open to both homeowners and renters. In the case of a renter, the owner of the rental property must agree to pay 10 percent of the cost of the improvements. The program mission is to reduce heating and cooling costs by improving the energy efficiency of the home.

Strategies include sealing windows and doors to prevent waste of heating and cooling, attic insulation, installation of smart thermostats for central heating and cooling, replacing inefficient refrigerators, and many other improvements at no cost to the applicant. For more information, contact Okeechobee Non Profit Housing Inc. by calling 863-467-5525, or stop by the office at 115 S.W. Fifth Avenue, Okeechobee.

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Rooney helps city regain chamber building

By Pete Gawda

Okeechobee News

The long running standoff between the City of Okeechobee and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) concerning the chamber of commerce building at the intersection of S.R. 70 and U.S. 441 was finally resolved due to the intervention of Congressman Tom Rooney's office.

In 1986 the Okeechobee County Chamber of Commerce began leasing the city-owned building. However, that organization has been inactive for some time and the building has been vacant and locked up with the utilities shut off.

In July of last year the IRS seized the building as the result of a \$105,467.50 lien for unpaid taxes and penalties from 2001 through 2009. Even though the Okeechobee County Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization, it still had employees for which payroll taxes were required. The IRS changed the locks and was apparently the only entity that had keys to the new locks.

The city went to court to regain possession of the building. On Nov. 21, 2011, Cir-

cuit Judge Robert Bellanger issued an order that the Okeechobee County Chamber of Commerce vacate the building and return it to the city since that chamber had failed to respond to charges of abandonment.

On Nov. 30, 2011, the IRS held an auction of the contents of the building to help satisfy the tax lien. The recently formed Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County, acting through its president, J.D. Mixon, bought the entire contents of the building for \$2,000.

After the contents of the building were removed, the IRS locked up the building. While the city had a court order giving it possession of the building the IRS actually had possession of the building.

Apparently the IRS thought the lease value of the building was something that could be negotiated with interested parties. However, there are deed restrictions on the property that state the property can only be used for a chamber of commerce.

Michael Mahaffey, of Congressman Rooney's office, said the congressman intervened on behalf of the city to prevent the IRS from collecting rent money that should

have gone to the city. "We served as a go between," Mr. Mahaffey said. "I think it has been resolved to Okeechobee's benefit."

City administrator Brian Whitehall said that on Feb. 7 he received the keys to the building and a release of lien in express mail from the IRS. He said he had no dealings with the IRS since the auction. However, the package came as no surprise to him since he had received word on Jan. 30 from Congressman Rooney's office that the congressman was working with the IRS.

At the Feb. 21 city council meeting negotiations began between the city and the Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County for lease of the building. However, since the building has been vacant for so long and no one knows if it has structural problems, both sides wanted an inspection made before negotiations proceeded.

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

Type O blood donors needed

Due to extremely high usage by area hospitals the supply of O Negative blood has reached extremely low levels. An appeal is being issued for all O Negative donors to donate at Florida's Blood Centers as soon as possible.

O Negative blood is the universal blood type - meaning any patient can receive O Negative blood regardless of the recipient's blood type. O Negative is critical for trauma patients, premature babies and emergency surgeries.

While the need for Type O is critical, blood donors of all types are needed. The "Big Red Bus" bloodmobile will be in the Okeechobee area on the following dates:

- Sunday, Feb. 26 – Market Place Flea Mkt, by Publix, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 29 – Publix, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 29 – Beef O'Brady's, 4 - 7 p.m.

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).

• Christopher English, 21, N.E. 111 Lane, Okeechobee, was arrested Feb. 23 by Deputy Greg Popovich on an amended Okeechobee County warrant charging him with violation of probation - possession of oxycodone. He is being held without bond.

• Jennifer Hogg, 17, S.W. 67th Drive, Okeechobee, was arrested Feb. 23 by Dep-

uty Brian Cross on a felony charge of aggravated assault and a misdemeanor charge of domestic battery. She was booked into the Okeechobee County Jail then taken to the St. Lucie Regional Detention Center in Fort Pierce.

• Henry Homer DeBerry, 69, U.S. 441 S.E., Okeechobee, was arrested Feb. 24 by the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force on a charge of possession of a controlled substance - oxycodone. His bond was set at \$5,000.

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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Wrestling club begins registration

Okeechobee Wrestling Club is beginning its youth season for ages 5-18. Registration is Feb. 28, 29, March 1, 6 and 8, at O.H.S. gym. Practice is Tuesday and Thursday Elementary 6-7 p.m., Middle and High School 7-8 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact Coach Jahner at 863-634-9411.

Foster parents needed - Free training program available

Hibiscus Children's Center Foster Care Program recruits, trains and licenses all the traditional Foster Parents in St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River and Okeechobee Counties. The required 30 hour (MAPP) classes are held one evening a week or on Saturdays and are free. There is a tremendous need for loving and nurturing Foster Parents in all four counties on the Treasure Coast. For additional information about becoming a Foster Parent or to register for a class please call: 1-800-403-9311 ext. 415.

ARC Thrift Store requests donations

The ARC of Okeechobee Thrift Store is currently requesting donations of household items, dishes, kitchen appliances, furniture and clothing. Your tax deductible donation will be used to help further the mission of the agency to provide social, educational and vocational opportunities to the developmentally disabled. The store is open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. All items can be dropped off at the thrift store location, 403 N.W. 2nd Ave. in Okeechobee. For further information, call 863-763-2419.

Yard sale for Real Life 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.

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Okeechobee Sports News in Brief

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

- The Okeechobee High School track team debuted at a freshman and sophomore meet at Martin County Tuesday and the boys team finished in sixth place and the girls team in sixth place. Top performers for the track team included Michael Thomas in the 100 yard dash, and Hernan Baltazar in the 1600 and 3200 meter races. Tabatha Henry won the 1600 meter race and the 3200 meter race to pace the girls squad.

- The Lady Brahman softball team walloped Port St. Lucie 12-0 in a district 12-7A game on Wednesday afternoon in Port St. Lucie.

Samantha Harrell returned to the mound and was dominant in a five-inning stint. She

allowed just one hit and struck out 14 batters. She also had a nice day at the plate with four hits. Okeechobee pounded out 13 hits in the contest. Sarah Davis had three hits and Carissa LiCata had two hits including a homerun.

- The OHS tennis teams lost their first match of the year Wednesday at Martin County 6-1. The boys' victory came from Cody Walker in #2 singles as he outslugged Albert Morar 7-6 and 7-5. Otto Ramirez and Brendon Jonassaint both had competitive matches for the Brahms. On the girls' side, Samantha Rivero defeated Stephanie Pompa 6-2 and 7-5 in #1 singles. The doubles team of Rivero and Vanessa Watt played well in a 9-7 defeat to Pompa and Julia Cusamano.

Okeechobee Club Soccer offers spring training

Okeechobee Club Soccer will have an informational meeting Saturday, **March 3**, at 3 p.m. at the Sports Complex Pavilion. All interested parents and players are encouraged to attend. Spring training will be open to youth ages 7-16. Boys-only and girls-only teams will be offered as long as a minimum of 12 players register for that division. Try-outs will be held at the soccer fields across North Elementary from 5-6:30 p.m. as follows: ages 7/8, 9/10, 11/12 - Monday and Wednesday, March 12 and 14; 13/14, 15/16, - Tuesday and Thursday, March 13 and 15. If you have questions, call Lupe Serrano at 561-719-5585. Se habla espanol.

Looking ahead - Alumni Soccer Games Saturday, March 24, at OHS Stadium open to ages 16 & up. Games start at 4:30 p.m. OHS alumni interested in playing should call (women) Dawn Fox at 863-697-1641 or (men) Manuel Sanchez at 863-532-1145.

David Hazellief, 863-610-1553 • Betty Hazellief, 863-610-0144
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NEW LISTING	<p>5002-H: Larodo Shores Lg 3BR/3BA plus extra room for office on the Rim Canal with Lake access (3,088 Living sq ft.). Too much to list call for further info. Short Sale. \$175,000 MLS # 205575</p>	NEW LISTING	<p>7003-C: Opportunity to be your own boss! Lucky Gator Arcade (Business Only). Lucky Gator Arcade \$200,000 with 59 games OR \$75,000 with just the business and machine lease. MLS # 205522</p>

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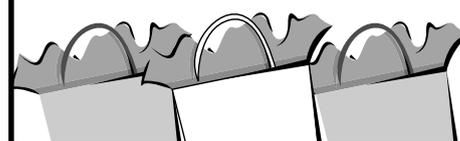
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Public Notice

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 19th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA CASE NO. 2011-CA-00408

PNC BANK, AS SUCCESSOR BY MERGER TO NATIONAL CITY BANK, SUCCESSOR BY MERGER TO HARBOR FEDERAL, Plaintiff,
vs.
JURLINE RHOOMS, et al., Defendant(s)

NOTICE OF ACTION-FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS

TO: **JURLINE RHOOMS AND ALTON RHOOMS**

including any unknown spouse of the Defendant, if remarried and if said Defendant is dead, his/her respective unknown spouse, heirs, devisees, grantees, assignees, creditors, lien holders, and trustees, and all other persons claiming by, through, under or against the named Defendant; and the aforementioned named Defendant and such of the aforementioned unknown Defendant and such of the unknown named Defendant as may be infants, incompetents, or otherwise not sui juris.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a mortgage on the following described property, to-wit:

LOT 28, Eagle Point, Unit 1, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 6, Pages 97 and 98, Public Records of Okeechobee County, Florida.

More commonly known as 2456 South West 33rd Circle, Okeechobee, FL 34974

This action has been filed against you, and you are required to serve a copy of your written defense, if any, to it on Plaintiff's attorney, Weltman, Weinberg & Reis, Co., L.P.A., whose address is 550 West Cypress Creek Road, Suite 550, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309, on or before 30 days after date of first publication, and file the original with the Clerk of the Circuit 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.

Witness my hand and seal of this Court on the 14th day of Feb., 2012.

Sharon Robertson, Clerk
Okeechobee County, Florida
By: Linda F. Young
Deputy Clerk

Weltman, Weinberg & Reis, Co., L.P.A.
Attorney for Plaintiff
550 West Cypress Creek Road, Suite 550
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
Telephone No.: 954-740-5200
Facsimiles: 954-740-5290

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact Corrie Johnson, ADA Coordinator, 250 NW Country Club Drive, Suite 217, Port St. Lucie, FL 34986, (772) 807-4370 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.

VWR File #10079622
410455 ON 2/19,26/2012

Amendment to Bid Date Subcontractors Notice of Bid Request Notice of Intent to Accept Proposals/Bids For Construction of Veteran's Park Phase IV

Lodge Construction, Inc. the Construction Manager for the named project, will be accepting bids for the work related to bid packages and scope as defined by the Bid Documents for the project known as **Veterans Park Phase IV.**

General Scope:
This project consists of the construction of a 6 acre park situated within the boundaries of Veterans Park, Homestead Blvd., Lehigh acres. The park is being constructed to include amenities such as a Cricket Field, Dog park, Rest Room Facility, Picnic Shelters, Boundary Fencing, New Parking and Roadway Construction, Sidewalks, a Pervious Concrete Maintenance Roadway, Handball Court and Supporting infrastructure. There will be new boundary Landscape and Irrigation as well as the development of a new 6" well. Site lighting will be extended into the new roadway and parking along with service to several shelters. New park directories and signage will be included within the scope of the project. The playfield shall be sprigged and maintained throughout the grow-in period.

Time Frame for Starting:
Work is scheduled to commence in April 2012.

Owner:
Lee County Board of County Commissioners

Design Representative:
David M. Jones Jr. & Associates
Greg Diserio, RLA
Fort Myers, FL.

Sealed Bids will be received at the office of Lodge Construction, Inc. on the following date and time: Friday, March 9th, 2012 @ 3:00 P.M in accordance with Addendum No.1.

Bid Documents:
In order to insure proper communications during bid period, please register your contact and company information with Lodge Construction office at mike@lodgeconstruction.com and information on plans and specifications. Bid Documents will be available on Friday, January 27th, 2012. These documents will be available through Lodge Construction's FTP Bid site as well as Blue Book. Instructions for Downloading Documents from the FTP site can be obtained by Contacting: Mike@lodgeconstruction.com

Local Business and Economic Support:
Lodge Construction is actively seeking Local Businesses to participate in the bid process. It is the intent of Lodge Construction, Inc. to monitor the 2nd round of capital spending. In addition to identifying the bidder as local or non-local, the bidder will also be required to identify their participation in their 3rd round of capital expenditure and portion thereof, going to local businesses. For more information on this subject visit, www.neweconomics.org, (LM3) Local Multiplier 3 rounds

Disadvantaged Business and WBE minority Business Development:
It is the intent of Lodge Construction, Inc. to track the expressed goals of Lee County Board of County Commissioners in the expenditure of capital funds as it relates to the businesses who are developing and are part of a minority group. The stated goal of this project is to provide a minimum of 10% revenue based contracts to this section of our economic community here in Lee County. Each bidder shall make it their policy to work in good faith to seek out and give deference to proposals from these classified Minority Businesses including DBE and WBE groups.
409972 ON 2/12,17,19,24,26;3/2/2012

Public Notice

UNSPECIFIED SITE STRATEGY NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

February 26, 2012
Responsible Entity: Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners
304 NW 2nd Street, Room 103
Okeechobee, FL 34972
Telephone 863-763-6441

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about March 7, 2012, the Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners (the County) will submit a request to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for the release of Neighborhood Stabilization Program 3 (NSP3) funds under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Act of 1974, as amended. The project will include purchasing foreclosed single family residential property in targeted areas of the City and surrounding vicinity, rehabilitating the houses, disposition of the properties for affordable rental and owner-occupied use, administration, and possibly housing counseling and downpayment and/or purchase assistance, with NSP3 grant funds of \$1,029,844. The project will occur over a 2-3 year period, including additional activity with program income from property sales.

The County has determined that the activities proposed in the Unspecified Site Strategy are exempt and/or categorically excluded under HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58 from the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requirements. As eligible sites are located, site specific checklists will be completed prior to the commitment of funds for each unit. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at the above address.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
Any individual, group, or agency may submit written comments on the Environmental Review Record (ERR) to Deborah Belcher at the above address. Additional project information is contained in the ERR on file at this address, and may be examined or copied weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. All comments must be received within 7 days following the publication date of this notice. Comments will be considered prior to the County requesting a release of funds.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The County certifies to the DEO and the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that Margaret Garrard Helton in his/her capacity as Chair of the Board of County Commissioners consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. The State's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws, and authorities and allows the County to use the NSP3 funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

DEO will accept objections to its release of funds and the County's certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of the County; (b) the County has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR part 58; (c) the grant recipient has committed funds or incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by the State; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures at 24 CFR Part 58, Sec. 58.76 and shall be addressed to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, 107 East Madison Street, MSC-400, Tallahassee, FL 32399-6508. Potential objectors should contact the County to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Margaret Garrard Helton, Chair, Board of Okeechobee County Commissioners, Certifying Officer
410972 ON 2/26/2012

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			9				
8			4	3			
			7	5		2	1
							3
		1					
		3			2	7	6
9				1		4	
	1		3	7		5	9
		2	9	8			

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

1	8	9	5	8	6	2	7	4
6	2	5	4	7	8	8	1	9
7	4	8	1	2	9	5	3	6
8	9	7	2	1	4	3	6	5
2	5	4	6	3	8	1	9	7
3	6	1	7	9	5	4	8	2
9	1	2	8	5	7	6	4	3
5	7	6	3	4	1	9	2	8
4	8	3	9	6	2	7	5	1

ANSWER:

OHS flag football team ready to play



By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee High School Flag Football has very reachable goals of a winning season and a district championship in the near future.

The team won some games last year and intends to continue their improvement thanks to athletes from other sports becoming more and more comfortable with the game.

Leaders this year should include four-year starter Morgan Crawford, Aubrey Robertson, Maci Thomas, Paige McCrary, Maranda Serano, Kyla Hargraves, DJ Nunez, and Darby Jones, just to name a few.

All of them excel in other sports and have brought their athleticism, positive attitudes, and work ethic to the flag football program.

Head Coach Bruce Jahner said the winning last year has spread enthusiasm throughout the school with 52 girls at practice this week. He said that gives the coaches a lot to choose from.

"These are active girls, most of them play volleyball or basketball or cross country. They aren't just involved in sports one or two months per year they are involved all year which is a good thing," he explained.

Jahner said a big reason the team will be better is experience. In the previous two years the girls were underclassmen who were learning the game. Now they have

been aged to perfection, have gotten the taste of winning, and want to see even more success.

"The biggest thing is we're not young anymore, we have some experience at QB and the skill positions," he added.

Jahner will be assisted by Coaches Todd Jones, and flag football veterans Robert Coleman and Jimmy Mills, who really added a lot to the program last year.

The team will remain in the same Palm Beach County District with impressive teams like Seminole Ridge, Palm Beach Central, and Royal Palm Beach. Jahner predicted the Lady Brahms will be able to stay with these other schools this year.

"There won't be any big blowouts and we should give them a run for their money," he added.

The team begins their schedule with a preseason tournament at Martin County on March 7. They will also have several home games on the schedule. Coach Jahner said any football fan or sports fan should come out and enjoy this sport.

"It is very entertaining. Some of these girls are tough out there. They collide, fall down, but keep dusting themselves off and get back in the huddle. If you come out you will be entertained. These girls give it all they have," he added.

Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
Kyla Hargraves has two years of experience at QB, and is ready to break school records in yards passing and touchdowns during her junior year.



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OHS Track team has new coaches and athletes

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee High School track program has two new coaches this year and a lot of new athletes ready to try their hands and feet with track and field events.

Jose Nunez, a product of Okeechobee High School, is the boys' track coach, and A.J. Mayernik, is the girls' track coach.

Nunez graduated from OHS in 2005 and played soccer, track and cross country. He went on to receive bachelors in education from Indian River State College and is now a teacher at Osceola Middle School where he teaches math and reading.

Nunez said his career in education has been interesting so far and he really enjoys it. He also knows how the boys soccer program developed as he was part of the building process.

"They have had a strong program for the past several years and that is what I'd like to do with track. I hope that it builds, and gets better," he explained.

Nunez will start with getting more athletes on the field. He's also committed to getting more equipment and volunteers to the program.

"We want to show the kids that we are coaches that care and want to help them out. I think we'll get more serious runners and athletes," he said.

Top boys athletes this year will include Tyrell Taylor, Hernan Baltazar, Erick Garcia, Phillip Suarez and Thor Harden, among others.

Coach Mayernik came to Okeechobee six years ago from Pennsylvania where he was a state champion in running. He attended Clarion University on a sports scholarship. He competed in cross country in the fall, indoor track in the winter, and track and field in the spring. He is now a sixth grade science teacher at Yearling Middle School.

Mayernik's goal is to get more kids so the team has more athletes to choose from and more to compete in every event.

"I think it will be awesome. I like to see these dedicated kids, and we hope to keep the program growing," he explained.

Inspiring kids, teaching them new things and new abilities, and challenging



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
New OHS girls and boys track coaches (L-R) A.J. Mayernik and Jose Nunez.

kids to compete, are some of his goals this year.

Mayernik also wants the kids to have a good time and enjoy the sport.

"We are all here to help the kids to do the best they can do. I'm excited about them and we hope to get a competitive team going," he added.

Key athletes on the girls team this year include Tabatha Henry who has two MVP trophies plus a District Championship in Cross Country already under her belt.

"She is an exception runner and has some very good natural abilities in distance running. We hope to get more people to help her and we have a couple of sprinters that I'm excited about," he added.

Mayernik said it is never too late to join the track squad. He grew up in Pittsburgh, Pa. and was among the best runners in the state during his career. He intends to continue being the track coach so the kids can have some continuity.

"I hope to stick around because that is what the team needs. There are coaches out here now that care about what the kids are doing and have knowledge in the sport. I tell kids to give it a try because we will welcome them," he concluded.



Okeechobee News/Charles Murphy
OHS girls track coach A.J. Mayernik addresses his team during a recent practice at OHS.



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Okeechobee



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