



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 109 No. 12

Sunday, January 28, 2018

75¢ plus tax

Boats collide on Big O ... Page 2

Students chosen for regional science fair ... Page 3

Meet the officer: Lt. Brad Stark ... Page 8

Music Fest adds talent ... Page 12

Lake Levels

15.29 feet

Last Year: 13.93 feet



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



See page 4 for information about how to contact this newspaper.

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Special to the Okeechobee News

If you give a school an ag teacher ...

On Jan. 25, students from Everglades Elementary School flew to Tallahassee to receive an award for a book they wrote, illustrated and edited about the school's agriculture program. From left to right are (front row) Bennie Crowell III, Abigail Mata, Hayley Doyon, Achilles Ponce, (back row) Debbie Waldron, Leslie Lundy, Florida first lady Ann Scott, K-12 Chancellor Hershel Lyons, Florida Lottery Secretary Jim Poppell and Richard Myhre, director of Just Read, Florida! For the story, see Page 10.

'Cactus Jack' Ritter wields chain saw to create artwork

By Chris Felker
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee community has a unique artist living and meekly making gorgeous carvings in its midst whom probably not many folks know — except for his neighbors, of course, since he uses a chain saw.

Jack Ritter, better known as "Cactus Jack," has earned a modicum of fame locally as first-place winner a few years back in the Top of the Lake Art Festival in Okeechobee, but he's also traveled a fair amount with his carvings of fish, birds, lizards and other wildlife created out of raw wood. One recent year, he even upstaged all of the hundreds

of nationally known and locally famous artists who show annually at the widely popular, well-attended Amish Acres Arts & Crafts Festival in Nappanee, Ind., which last year marked its 55th year.

That time, Mr. Ritter says, he didn't even take what he considered his best works, yet he still managed to win that Amish ribbon under the noses of celebrated local artisans.

"I'd had a lot of people tell me if I could take myself there, that show is one of the top arts and crafts shows in the country. So I drove up there by myself, set up, right in the middle of Amish country, and there were 300 vendors. You take two of

Dike protects South Florida

By Katrina Elsken
Okeechobee News

The safety of the Herbert Hoover Dike is vital to the people of the Glades. Those who live around the Big O's southern shores in South Bay, Belle Glade, Moore Haven and Clewiston know the danger they could be in if the dike failed. The dike also protects the farms of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), the Everglades and more.

At the December public hearing on the South Florida Water Management District's proposal for the EAA reservoir, Clewiston Mayor Mali Gardner was among those who re-



A continuing series

See DIKE — Page 10



Okeechobee News/Chris Felker
"Cactus Jack" Ritter works on finishing up a fish carving of his in the space he rents for a workshop at the Eagles Club on U.S. 441 South in Taylor Creek.

See ART — Page 5

HAPPY NEW YEAR
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FLW tour underway on Lake Okeechobee

Special to the Okeechobee News

The FLW Tour event that started Thursday on Lake Okeechobee featured a field of 376 of the world's best bass-fishing professionals and co-anglers casting for top awards of up

to \$125,000 cash in the pro division and up to \$25,000 cash in the co-angler division.

The top 10 pros continue competition today, with the winner determined by the heaviest accumulated weight from the four days of competition.

Anglers will take off at 7:30 a.m. from Roland and Mary Ann Martin's Marina & Resort, 920 E. Del Monte Ave. in Clewiston. Weigh-in will also be at the resort at 4 p.m.

Prior to the weigh-in, FLW will host a free Family Fishing Expo at Roland and Mary Ann Martin's Marina & Resort from noon to 4 p.m.

The Expo is a chance for fishing fans to meet their favorite anglers, enjoy interactive games, activities and giveaways provided by FLW sponsors, and learn more about the sport of fishing and other outdoor activities.

In FLW Tour competition, pros and co-

anglers are randomly paired each day, with pros supplying the boat, controlling boat movement and competing against other pros. Co-anglers fish from the back deck against other co-anglers.

The total purse for the FLW Tour at Lake Okeechobee presented by Evinrude is more than \$930,000, including \$10,000 through 60th place in the Pro division. The tournament is hosted by Roland and Mary Ann Martin's Marina & Resort and the Hendry County Tourism Development Council.

Throughout the season, anglers are also vying for valuable points in hopes of qualifying for the 2018 Forrest Wood Cup, the world championship of professional bass fishing.

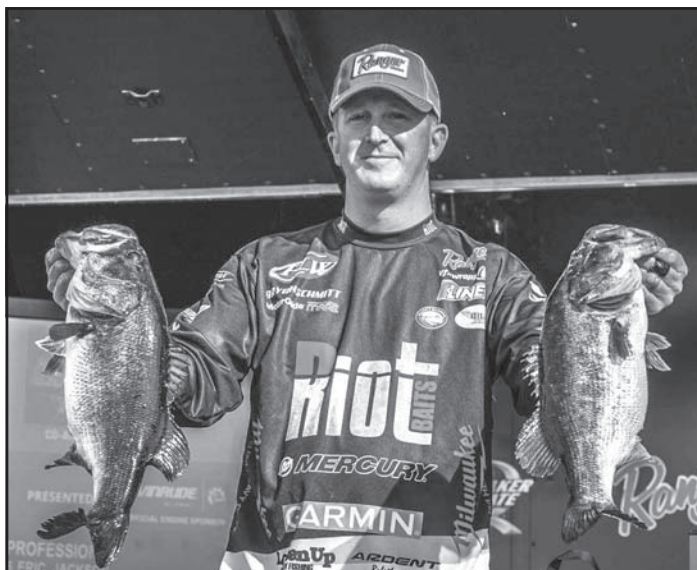
Boat collision on lake

Pro competitors Andy Young of Mound,

Minn., and William Campbell of Middlesboro, Ky., were involved in a boat collision on Lake Okeechobee Thursday afternoon.

The collision happened while both anglers were running the lake and met at an intersection, with Campbell's boat striking the port (left) side of Young's boat. Young and his co-angler were ejected, but were able to return to their boat after Young's mandatory ignition shutoff device disengaged the engine.

Both boats were able to return to the launch site at the Clewiston Boat Basin, and the accident is under investigation by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Young decided to seek medical attention upon his return to the ramp. Young's catch was weighed and he finished the day with five bass weighing 10 pounds even, good for 117th place, while Campbell was late in his return to check-in and did not weigh in.



Special to the Okeechobee News/FLW/Andy Hagedorn
Bryan Schmitt, a six-year FLW Tour veteran from Maryland, caught a five-bass limit weighing 24 pounds, 11 ounces, on the opening day of the 2018 season at the FLW Tour at Lake Okeechobee on Thursday, Jan. 25. Sunday is the final day of tournament fishing.

Okeechobee Forecast

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Today: Scattered thunderstorms in the morning, then mainly cloudy during the afternoon with thunderstorms likely. High 78F. Winds SE at 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 90%.

Tonight: Thunderstorms likely in the evening. Then the chance of scattered thunderstorms later on. Low 63F. Winds S at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 90%.

Extended Forecast

Monday: Chance of a shower or two during the morning, followed by partly cloudy skies in the afternoon. High 74F. Winds W at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 30%.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy. Low near 50F. Winds N at 5 to 10 mph.

Tuesday: Mainly sunny. High 66F. Winds N at 10 to 20 mph.

Tuesday Night: A mostly clear sky. Low 46F. Winds N at 10 to 15 mph.

Wednesday: Partly cloudy skies during the morning hours will become overcast in the afternoon. High 66F. Winds NE at 10 to 15 mph.

Wednesday Night: Considerable cloudiness. Low 54F. Winds E at 5 to 10 mph.

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News from Buckhead Ridge

The Buckhead Ridge Community Association is so glad to see so many of our winter residents back. There were 81 people at the monthly meeting Thursday, Jan. 25, sharing a great potluck dinner and catching up on news and information about the community.

Sheriff Dave Hardin opened the meeting, reporting on police activity during January. The department responded to 51 calls for service, mostly involving civil prosecutions, medical alarms and only eight criminal offenses dealing with fraud, theft and family disturbance. Sheriff Hardin emphasized that the community must do their part by keeping doors and windows, as well as cars, locked. He said, "When you help cops, we can do more to help you."

Sheriff Hardin also reported the arrest, following an eight-month investigation, of the former VFW commander and quartermaster on charges of embezzlement, fraud and other charges.

The latest Concealed Weapons Class registered and taught 15 people proper use, handling and responsibility of weapons.

Wendy Watts was congratulated on his award as the Senior Volunteer of the Year for the Okeechobee School District.

Bonnie Shop, director of the Buckhead Ridge office of Glades County Hope Connections, reported on a re-do of the center where

"older" members of the community can gather for lunch, recreation, movies, games or just conversation. A donor provided the center with a 55-inch TV, new chairs and a loveseat. Bonnie invited all in the community to stop in and see. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., with free lunch at noon for those 60 and older.

County Commissioner Tim Stanley reported that at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' recent meeting, it was confirmed that the reservoir planned to be placed across State Road 78 from Buckhead Ridge will be a modest 4-to-5 five feet deep instead of the previously proposed 15 feet deep.

The BHR Community Association meets the last Thursday of each month in the hall located just behind the fire station for a 6:30 p.m. potluck dinner and meeting. Attendance and membership is open to anyone living, renting or just visiting Buckhead Ridge. Plan now to be part of this group for an annual membership fee of only \$15. Also, plan to participate in the yard sale and pancake breakfast, which will take place Friday, March 3, from 8 a.m. until noon. Lunch will be pulled-pork sandwiches prepared by the Volunteer Fire Department and Auxiliary.

Daryl Lewis, acting president, will be glad to provide further information. Call him at 863-467-1762.

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Okeechobee County students compete in Science Fair



Special to the Okeechobee News/Gwenyth Gray

Students in senior division (front row) and junior division (back row) will go on to the Heartland Regional Science Fair in February.

Special to the Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee County School District had its Science Fair on Jan. 18. More than 250 students from Okeechobee High School, Okeechobee Freshman Campus, Osceola Middle School and Yearling Middle School participated in the fair.

In Junior Division, Best in Show for Biological Sciences went to John Williamson II from Yearling Middle School, and the Best in Show for Physical Sciences went to Abigail Holcomb from Yearling Middle School.

In the Senior Division, Best in Show for Biological Sciences went to Aubrey Pearce from Okeechobee High School, and the Best in Show for Physical Sciences went to Raquel Todd from Okeechobee Freshman Campus.

Junior Division students selected to attend the Heartland Regional Fair in February are: John Williamson II, Sarah Dodd, Zane Hicks, Jose Cisneros, Lauren Raulerson, Rylann Maxwell, Kaitlyn Brewer, Isaias Aguilar, Seyram Akahoho, Kayla Dean, Peyton Johnson, Madison Lilley, Conner Rucks, Summer McGalmory, Damaris Olivera, Denice Garcia, Elyssa Sanchez, Abigail Holcomb, Gwenyth Gray, Michal Jaskot, Nickolas Hopkins, Grady Pierce, Aleksa Cardona, William Rivero and Melissa Mojica.

Senior Division students selected to attend the Heartland Regional Fair are: Kaitlyn Williams, Alize Merchant, Simran Merchant, Kase Myers, Madison Lamb, Emily Land, Kara Hawk, Chloe Soriano, Lauren Sills, Brighton Bauman, Alexandria Boon, Raquel Todd, Isabella Johnson, Dayton Buxton, Itzel Guereca, Donielle Harper, Aubrey Pearce, Princess Salva, Dallas Miller, Carlos Mora and Artemio Virto.

In the categories of Animal Sciences, first place ribbons went to Kaitlyn Williams, Alize Merchant, Simran Merchant, Kase Myers, Zane Hicks, Jose Cisneros, Lauren Raulerson, Rylann Maxwell, John Williamson II and Sarah Dodd.

In the Category of Chemistry, first place ribbons went to Brighton Bauman, Alexandria Boon, Raquel Todd, Denice Garcia, Elyssa Sanchez and Abigail Holcomb.

In the Category of Physics, first place ribbons went to Dayton Buxton, Itzel Guereca, Donielle Harper, Gwenyth Gray, Michal Jaskot, Nickolas Hopkins and Grady Pierce.

In the Category of Plant Sciences first place ribbons went to Aubrey Pearce, Princess Salva, Kiersten Kennedy, Callie Rucks, Aleksa Cardona, William Rivero and Melissa Mojica.

This year, several special awards were sponsored by members of the community. The Okeechobee County Farm Bureau spon-

sored eight \$25 awards to the projects that showed outstanding interest in Animal and Plant Sciences. In the Senior Division, the awards went to Princess Salva from OHS, Aubrey Pearce from OHS, Jake Bessey from OFC and Gracie Gamiotea from OFC. In the Junior Division, the awards went to Isabella Becerra from YMS, John Williamson II from YMS, Cason Campbell from OMS and Samantha Fralix from OMS. Two \$50 awards sponsored by an anonymous donor were awarded to one junior and one senior division student who showed tremendous effort in "doing science" while under less than ideal circumstances. The awards went to Dallas Miller from OHS and Reyna Reynoso from YMS. Two \$20 awards sponsored by an anonymous donor were awarded to one ju-

nior animal science project and one junior plant science project. The awards went to John Williamson II from YMS and Aleksa Cardona from YMS.

Science fair organizers would like to thank the many people who helped make the science fair possible.

The Okeechobee Science Teachers would like to thank Osceola Middle School for hosting the fair and the many community members who helped judge the projects. In addition, they would like to thank Golden Corral, Domino's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken for their food donations for the judges. They would also like to thank all of the school administrators and parents that made the Okeechobee Science Fair possible.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Gwenyth Gray

Okeechobee County Science Fair "Best in Show" students in the Junior Division were John Williamson II (left) for Biological Sciences and Abigail Holcomb for Physical Sciences.

Lunch & Learn
When Hearts Fail:
Understanding Congestive Heart Failure

RAULERSON HOSPITAL

♥ **February 14th** ♥

GUEST SPEAKER:
DR. ORAL WALDO, CARDIOLOGIST

IRSC – Williamson Conference Center
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Please arrive at 11:45 am

Registration is required: **763-9228** or
RaulersonHospital.com (classes & events)

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If you or someone you know is in danger of domestic violence please reach out to Martha's House. The office is located at 4134 U.S. 441 N. and the office number is 863-763-2893.

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Public Forum/Speak Out

Speak Out comments can be shared in several ways. Comments on local issues are welcome on the Okeechobee News Facebook page. You can also leave your opinions in the comment box found under each story at okeechobeenews.net. We also accept comments via email to okeeneews@newszap.com or via U.S. Mail at the Okeechobee address below. Thanks for participating!

Code violation

• The story about the code violation fine that ran up to \$264,500 on a piece of property worth \$4,000 shows how ridiculous our system is. The county needs to work with people to keep their properties in good shape before it gets to such an extreme. Many times, the rundown properties belong to older residents who need some help keeping things in shape.

• I am glad the county commissioners

used some common sense and waived the massive fine for the man who bought an eyesore and cleaned it up. Maybe they could do that for other properties for the new buyer.

BHR VFW

• It is so sad that someone stole money from a VFW. That money is supposed to be used to help veterans. And Buckhead Ridge is such a small community. You would think you could trust your neighbors.

• This happens a lot to these clubs. It is very sad that you have these people who act like they are helping but they are stealing the money, food, etc. from a club that is trying to help others.

• We should pray for the woman accused of embezzling from the BHR VFW, not judge her. I can't believe this although I know we all have our own demons.

• They should hire an accountant to do the daily books. I bet they will do that now.

Social Security Matters

By AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor

Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty:

I keep receiving emails from different investor groups about, "The one word that will get you an extra \$570 per month in social security," which I could use. Of course they want you to buy all sorts of monthly newsletters in order to get their answer. Is there truly a way to get an extra \$570 per month, and if so how do I go about getting it, or what is "the word"? Signed: Curious

Dear Curious: I'm sure you've heard the old adage, "If it sounds too good to be true ... it is." I have seen the solicitation you're speaking of, and I've seen many other similar "come-on's," which are always meant to lure you into buying something in return for revealing a secret way to get more from Social Security.

The reality is this: There isn't any magical "one word" that will give you an extra benefit, unless that word is "delay," meaning if you can delay applying for Social Security your benefit amount will be larger. And that's because your benefit amount increases with each month you delay up until you reach

age 70 when it will reach its maximum. Simply put, the more you delay the larger your benefit will be, and that's certainly no secret. You'll often see another tempting and mysterious phrase referred to as "FAASF" - an acronym for "file as a spouse first" - which refers to an option called the Restricted Application for Spousal Benefits Only. This option, which allows a person to file only for spousal benefits while allowing their own retirement benefit to grow, was eliminated by The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 for anyone born later than 1953. Those born in 1954 or after are automatically "deemed" to be filing for both their own retirement benefit and any spousal benefit they may be entitled to and cannot apply to collect only spousal benefits. But the ads promising to reveal a special "FAASF" option to you are trying to lure a smaller segment of people who may qualify as well as a majority who don't to buy their product in return for revealing this "secret" option (which, of course, is no secret at all).

Social Security is a complex program with over 2,700 rules and regulations, and there really isn't any simple "one word" anyone can use to beat the system. My sug-

Letter to the editor

Water quality

As the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) board member representing the Treasure Coast, it was a pleasure at the December meeting to listen to a detailed report highlighting a major victory for Everglades water quality.

Agencies like SFWMD and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, along with members of the agricultural community, have a lot to brag about. The latest water quality results are great.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of these parties and the significant investment made by Florida's taxpayers, these results show that the district's network of constructed wetlands, known as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs), treated water to an average of 15 parts per billion (ppb) of phosphorus in Water Year 2017. That's the best performance on record.

Apparently I wasn't the only one blown away by this news.

As Champion of the Everglades Martha

Musgrove said, "That is the most encouraging report I have seen presented to the Governing Board in 29 years."

These words verify that water quality in the Everglades keeps getting better because of Gov. Rick Scott's innovative \$880 million Restoration Strategies plan.

The guidance laid out by Scott is working brilliantly and will soon bring the entire Everglades ecosystem into compliance with the state's stringent water quality standards.

When you invest \$2 billion-plus over the last two decades to improve Everglades water quality, you expect a return on your money, but this is a return that many deemed impossible to achieve.

I encourage the news media to share this wonderful news. A topic of this great importance must be spread far and wide until all 8 million of us living in South Florida have heard the message loud and clear. We are making a difference.

Brandon Tucker

Governing Board Member

South Florida Water Management District

gestion is to heed that old adage, and if you have any questions about whether or not you're getting all of the Social Security benefits you're entitled to, contact an independent Social Security advisory service (such

as ours at The AMAC Foundation) which isn't out to sell you anything. Our only goal is to be an independent free service to AMAC members and other senior citizens, with no strings attached.

OCSO Investigations

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office investigated reports of the following crimes last week:

ASSAULT

- 1600 block of Southwest Second Way
- 3000 block of Southeast 20th Court
- 5000 block of Northeast 168th Street
- 7200 block of U.S. 441 North
- 500 block of Northwest Fourth Street
- 7200 block of U.S. 441 North

BURGLARY

- 600 block of Northwest 20th Lane
- 600 block of Northwest 27th Lane
- 2500 block of Northwest 53rd Terrace
- 2200 block of U.S. 441 Southeast
- 2300 block of U.S. 441 Southeast

CRIMINAL MISCHIEF

- 3700 block of Northwest 30th Avenue
- 14000 block of U.S. 441 North
- 600 block of U.S. 441 Southeast

FRAUD

- 300 block of Northwest Fifth Avenue
- 500 block of Northwest Fourth Street
- 3100 block of U.S. 441 South
- 31000 block of U.S. 441 North
- 14000 block of Southwest 144th Parkway

- 500 block of Northwest Fourth Street
- 500 block of Northwest Fourth Street
- 300 block of Northwest 36th Terrace
- 9000 block of U.S. 441 North
- 1700 block of Northeast 50th Court

THEFT

- 9200 block of Southeast 60th Drive
- 3700 block of Northwest 36th Street
- 4700 block of Northwest 11th Drive
- 1200 block of Northeast 11th Street
- 1200 block of Northwest 39th Circle
- 14000 block of West Center Street
- 500 block of Northwest Fourth Street
- 3900 block of Southeast 28th Street

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

To Reach Us

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

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Our Purpose...

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

We Pledge...

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

- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers.
- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.



ART

Continued From Page 1

whatever your stuff is and leave one in the big center there." On that display, artists put their booth number to help people looking for some particular thing.

"Then the judges come by and they judge it," Cactus Jack continued. "Well, I didn't want to take my best stuff out there, so I took a couple of pieces, of fish, that were nice but they weren't my best. It was a three-day show, and at the end of the last day, I pissed off a lot of Amish people over there." He pulled out his first-place ribbon and said he also was given a check for \$1,000.

The beauty and real-life likenesses of his works, combined with the exquisitely weathered substance of the hunks of wood he uses, approach the quality of historical works you might see in a museum. Chain-saw carving is a relatively new art form (the chain saw itself has existed only since around 1830), having started to register in the popular consciousness during the 1980s, and not one that a lot of artists attempt. There are just a few groups of these artisans in the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest, so they're surely a rare breed.

But the thing is, Cactus Jack's been working in this art form for only eight years, while his creations resemble those of a career artist. He's 76 and originally from a tiny town in northeast Iowa, graduated from MacPhail College of Music at the University of Minnesota, "and I never taught a day of music in my life. I had a band on the road for eight years and then I got married, and it was either my music or my wife." After a divorce and a few other of life's twists and turns, he became a Floridian in 1973 and was a painting contractor for a time.

"I was one of the first ones that did the art deco hotels down in South Beach with all the wild colors, the hot colors. South Seas was the first one I did, and everybody started picking it up. I moved to Palm Beach County about 10 years ago, lived in Lake Worth."

Then comes the part about how he got started in this line of artwork.

"One day I was driving out by Daytona Beach and I saw a fella carving tikis with a chainsaw. So I pulled over and saw all these nice-looking, neat fish, and I said, 'Wow! Would you be interested in wholesaling these things?' And he said no but gave me his card and he said: 'If you'd like, come over. I'll teach you how to carve these.'"

The rest, as they say, is history, but recent. "I've only been doing it for about eight years. And he taught me how to do it and then I bought some stuff from him and I used mine that I had just started making and I went to some seafood festivals and nautical shows and things like that, and that's how I got into doing this stuff."

He learned more from others when he went to his first big show in Gatlinburg, Tenn.

"I met a bunch of carvers up there, and they were just like brothers. They took me in, and I tell ya, I learned a ton of stuff." There, Cactus Jack also found a great source of raw material. "That's where I get my driftwood, out of Norris Lake, Tenn. It's up by Knoxville, called the Norris Dam, that was a TVA project under Roosevelt, and there's actually about 1,200 miles of shoreline. When they let the water out, it'll drop back from the banks about 30-40 feet, and a friend and I go out in a pontoon

boat and we find driftwood just laying there and we pick it up."

He's also gotten wood in Florida but that's tough, he says. "There's some beautiful, beautiful cedar roots over on the Peace River and I used to really have some nice pieces, but I got stopped twice by the Marine Patrol over there." One friend scavenges in national forests illegally still. "But the fella that taught me how to do the carving, named Mike, he's a Florida Cracker, and he goes out and spends a lot of time at night in these swamps and gets sunken cypress. These are hearts of the cypress tree that have been underwater for anywhere from maybe 500 to 1,000 years." They make the most attractive pieces, says Cactus Jack, and cypress is his favorite wood.

Another special place he's acquired pieces of wood is the Suwannee River bottomlands in North Florida. "I ran into an old fella who lives up in Old Town, and he goes out and feels with his feet in Suwannee when the river's low and he gets these boards," which turned out, Jack says, to be leftovers from historic sawmills. "They were rough carved at one time, probably, I would say, in the 1700s or 1800s."

He does use more woodworking tools than just a chain saw, of course, but he never paints the wood unless he's creating something with a design, such as his FSU Seminole-tomahawks-the-UF Gator figurine, a piece he intends to duplicate many times over and wants to sell one year soon at football games.

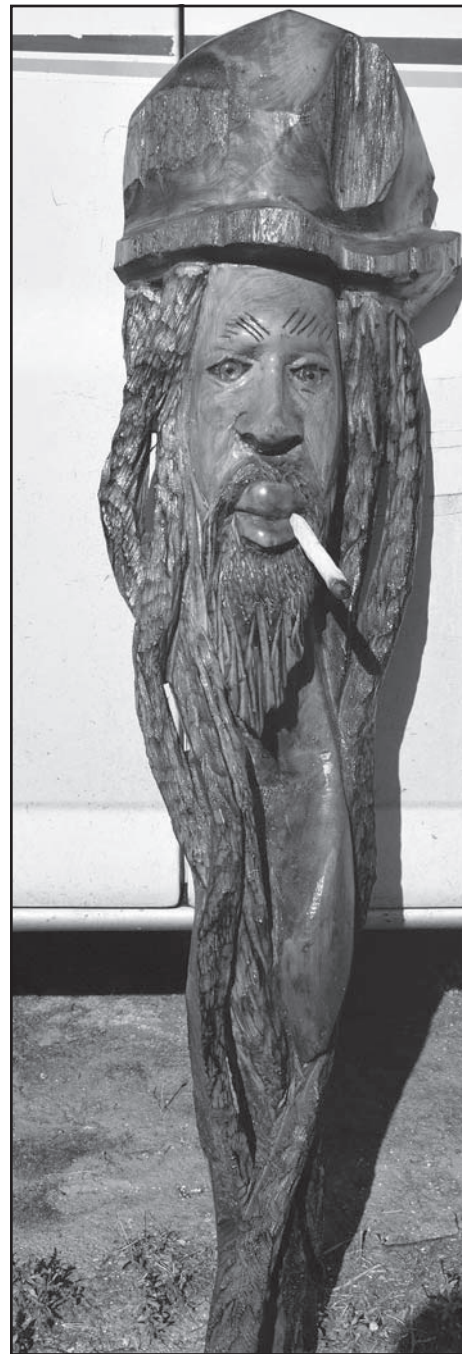
Cactus Jack will use stains to cover flaws or cracks, and always applies a clear coat at the end, but says, "I like to leave the wood as it is naturally so people can actually see what the log looked like before I put my hands on it."

Asked to explain what he attributes his talent to, Cactus Jack said, "I had no idea that I could even do this until I tried it. I guess I had it in my genes (his mother and sister paint), but ... if I would've known that I could've done this, I would've been doing this 45 years ago and I'd be living out there with Tiger Woods. But I really thoroughly enjoy it."

He likes it so much he won't intentionally "compete" at shows, in keeping with how he learned the craft.

"I don't even allow competition because if somebody wants to know something ... I'll share it with any of my competitors, and especially the young ones, because if I can help them come up and give them help that I didn't have, then the more power to us," Cactus Jack said. He's also gracious when it comes to sales, often knocking figures off his asking prices.

"Making people happy means more to me than anything else."



Okeechobee News/Chris Felker
It took 'Cactus Jack' Ritter a while to figure out what to make using an elongated piece of wood with roots dangling off the end that he'd acquired; a visiting friend saw a vision of Bob Marley's face and his Rastafarian-style hair braids in the piece when he saw it, so Cactus Jack carved it.

Artist may be at Top of Lake Fest

By Chris Felker
Okeechobee News

Former blue-ribbon winner "Cactus Jack" Ritter was unsure as recently as Thursday, Jan. 25, whether he'd be able to appear in person at this year's Top of the Lake Art Festival.

With some assistance, though, he might be able to get some of his artworks out on display for the fest, which is set for Feb. 10-11 in conjunction with Taste of Okeechobee in Flagler Park downtown.

The thing is, he might be scheduled for back surgery that week. A dozen years

ago, Cactus Jack fell off a ladder while trimming a tree, crushing two vertebrae which brought on arthritis that limits his stamina and ability to get around. Walking any distance is problematic.

He said that he might get a few friends to help him take some works to the park for display. They are available for sale, but only from him; many are at his workshop inside the old flea market at the Eagles Club on U.S. 441 South.

Anyone looking for him, though, may email him at mycactusjack@gmail.com.



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NEWS

*Community Service
Through Journalism*

Community Events

VFW will serve breakfast

The VFW Auxiliary will serve a French toast breakfast on Sunday, **Jan. 28**, at VFW Post 9528, 29012 S.R. 78 W., from 8:30 to 11 a.m. All benefits go for veterans services. For information, call 863-467-2882.

Legion opens Sunday bingo

American Legion 64, 501 S.E. Second St., will host Sunday night bingo on **Jan. 28**, at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. in the bingo area. All proceeds will benefit the American Legion veterans' programs. The event is open to the public.

Masons plan breakfast

The Masonic Lodge, 107 N.W. Fifth St., will host a breakfast with all the fixin's on Sunday, **Jan. 28**, for \$7 per plate. The public is welcomed and carry out is available. Breakfast will be served from 8 to 11 a.m. All proceeds go to local Mason giving.

Amvets host five-card bingo

Amvets Post 200, 3651 U.S. 441 S.E. Suite 6, will host five-card bingo Sunday, **Jan. 28**, at 2 p.m. and Tuesday, Jan. 1, at 2 p.m. For information, call 863-484-8135.

Sacred Heart will host bingo

Sacred Heart Church, 901 S.W. Sixth St., will host bingo on Monday, **Jan. 29**. Doors will open at 5 p.m. and the fun will begin at 7 p.m.

Legion host five-card bingo

American Legion Post #64, 501 S.E. Second St., will host five-card bingo on Monday, **Jan. 29**, from 1 to 3 p.m. with lunch served at 12:30 p.m. For information, call 863-763-5309.

Raulerson hosts ER class

Join Raulerson Hospital for everything you need to know about the ER, featuring ER Medical Director Dr. Anglin on Monday, **Jan. 29**, at 10 a.m. at IRSC, 2229 N.W. Ninth Ave., with a continental breakfast. To R.S.V.P. call 863-763-9228 or at RaulersonHospital.com.

Hospice hosts yard sales

Hospice of Okeechobee, 317 S.E. Third Ave., will host a yard sale on Wednesday, **Jan. 31**. Each yard sale is from 8 a.m. to noon.

Auxiliary will serve dinner

The VFW Auxiliary will serve a Cuban sandwich and pub-mix dinner on Wednesday, **Jan. 31**, at Post 9528, 29012 S.R. 78 W. All proceeds to benefit Florida military veterans in distress. For information, call 863-467-2882.

Quit your way classes set

Quit your way classes will be held at Raulerson Hospital, 1796 U.S. 441 N., in the cafeteria on **Jan. 31** and **Feb. 7**, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For information, call 877-848-6696.

Veterans will meet Feb. 1

U.S. Military Veterans of all branches are invited to the monthly meeting of the Okeechobee Chapter of The Vietnam Veterans of America Thursday, **Feb. 1**, at Cowboys BBQ, 202 N.E. Seventh Ave., at 7 p.m. Please arrive by 6 p.m. if placing a food order.

Republicans will meet

Come have an interesting time of food, fun and fellowship at the weekly informal breakfast meeting of the Republican Club of Okeechobee at Lakeside Grill, 1111 South Parrott Ave., Thursday, **Feb. 1**, at 8 a.m.

Brain health lecture set

Raulerson Hospital invites you to join fourth-year medical students from FSU for a community presentation about Brain Health on Thursday, **Feb. 1**, at 10 a.m. The lecture will be held in the Raulerson Hospital Cafeteria and refreshments will be provided. Please RSVP at 863-763-9228.

Children's Ranch sale set

Real Life Children's Ranch, 7777 U.S. 441 S.E., will host yard sale on Monday, **Jan. 29** through Friday, **Feb. 2**, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Come on out for great bargains.

Valentine's Day photos set

Trail of Hope Animal Rescue will hold Valentine's Day photos at Love on a Leash, 218 S.W. Seventh Ave., on Saturday, **Feb. 3**, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The \$25 photo package includes prints. For information, call 863-357-1104.

Multi-family sale set

Palm Village Ranch, 1200 S.W. 44th Blvd., will hold a multi-family yard sale on Saturday, **Feb. 3**, from 8 a.m. until noon. Look for household items and clothing, plus loads of surprises. There will be something for everyone. Palm Village Ranch is right off Southwest 16th Avenue.

Community-wide sale set

Seminole Cove, 1799 S.W. 35th Circle, will host a community yard sale on Saturday, **Feb. 3**, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Blues Brothers come to town

Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will host a charity concert with The Blues Brothers straight from Universal Studios in Orlando on Saturday, **Feb. 3**, at the KOA, 4276 U.S. 441 S. The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$35 per person. All proceeds to benefit Arnolds Wildlife. For information, call 863-634-6804.

OHS has dinner theatre

The Okeechobee High School Thespian Troupe 7319 will present a mystery dinner theatre, "Offed at the Bake Sale" by Matt Steele and Mike Steele on Saturday, **Feb. 3**, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per person. Call Ms. Raulerson at OHS for tickets and information, 863-462-5205, ext. 8011.

When Hearts Fail class set

Join Raulerson Hospital, 1796 U.S. 441, for a Lunch & Learn called "When Hearts Fail: Understanding Congestive Heart Failure" featuring cardiologist, Dr. Oral Waldo on Wednesday, **Feb. 14**, at 11:45 a.m. at IRSC. RSVP to 863-763-9228 or at RaulersonHospital.com (classes & events).

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.

Sheree Lynn Macy, 62

KEECHOBEE — Sheree Lynn Macy passed away Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018 at her residence. She was born in Detroit, Mich. on July 8, 1955 to Harold "Bud" and Catherine Ruth (Murphy) Litteral, who are both deceased. She is survived by her husband, Roger; two sons, Robert (Susan) Macy, Louisville, Ky. and Christopher (Jourdan) Macy, Lexington, S.C.; and two grandsons, Aaron and Benjamin.



Mrs. Macy was raised in Tipton, Ind. and graduated from Tipton High School. She attended Indiana University and graduated from Baylor School of Medicine in Respiratory Therapy. She was a Registered Respiratory Therapist for over 30 years. She proudly served our Country in the U.S. ARMY from 1974 to 1983 and attained the rank of Staff Sergeant before being forced to leave for Medical and family issues. Sheree loved working in emergency departments and neonatal intensive care and also taught respiratory care at Southern Wesleyan University and deeply caring for all her patients. As she was medically retired she still found time to enjoy friends, clients and colleagues with buying and selling LulaRoe Clothing. She attended More 2 Life Church. A true fighting will and spirit as she survived through over thirteen intubations over a 38 year period as she fought her pulmonary disease.

Friends may call at the Funeral Home from 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018 with services at 4 p.m. In lieu of flowers memorial contribution may be made to Fisher House Foundation.

All arrangements are entrusted to Seawinds Funeral Home and Crematory, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, FL 34974 (863) 357-7283.

Online condolences may be left at www.okeecheeseawinds.com

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Tractor Supply to host farmers market

Special to the Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee Tractor Supply Company store will host a Farmers Market on Feb. 3. From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., local farmers will be selling locally grown, fresh produce, along with other seasonal products.

"This is a great opportunity for members of our community to support local farmers while also getting to enjoy deliciously fresh

food," said Todd Thomas, manager of the Okeechobee store. "As a company, we believe in fostering community relationships and this event allows us to do just that."

Shoppers can expect to find many goods for sale including homemade crafts, canned goods, woodworks and baked goods.

Participating vendors will have tables set up at the tented space by the storefront where they will showcase their goods.

Some of the local vendors participating include:

- Swine Time 4-H Group;
- Steaks & Chops 4-H Group; and,
- Sassy Button Bows.

This event is open to the public and will take place at 3371 U.S. 441 South. For information, please contact the Okeechobee Tractor Supply store at 863-467-7844.



Okeechobee Livestock Market
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Florida agriculture celebrated at the state capitol

Special to the Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — Farmers and ranchers from across the Sunshine State will convene at the state Capitol Jan. 29-30, to discuss public policy issues with Florida state legislators.

Florida Farm Bureau's annual citizens' lobbying event will begin Jan. 29 with a reception at the Tallahassee Farm Bureau Legislative office and continue Jan. 30 with a legislative briefing breakfast. The day will proceed with a full schedule of legislative

meetings on Farm Bureau priority issues.

"The Legislative Days event is a critical component of our grassroots process," said Florida Farm Bureau President John Hoblick. "Farm families are able to speak to their legislators and make a real impact on the legislative process."

Issues on the agenda include: passing legislation to remove agricultural license plate restrictions, helping to secure additional funding for Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Fresh From Florida marketing program and the Rural and Family Lands Program. Securing additional funding for the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences research projects and 4-H programs are also on the list.

A Taste of Florida Agriculture reception will wrap up the event on Jan. 30, featuring special guest speakers Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam and Farm Bureau President Hoblick.

This year's Taste of Florida Agriculture event, "Ag Strong," is a joint partnership with Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to promote the recovery of our agricultural communities statewide.

Legislators, government officials and the public are welcome to sample locally grown Florida foods, meet farm families and learn more about agriculture's benefits for all Floridians.

To register to attend Legislative Days, visit <http://www.floridafarmbureau.org/events/florida-farm-bureau-legislative-days/>.

Florida Farm Bureau, the state's largest general agricultural organization, represents more than 145,000 member-families. We serve to enhance farm enterprise and improve rural communities.

Okeechobee Livestock Market Report

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

SLAUGHTER

COWS	LOW:	HIGH:	
850-1200	56.00	62.00	HIGH DRESSING
850-1200	51.00	57.00	LOW DRESSING
850-1200	0.00	0.00	LEAN

BULLS:

1200-1500	75.00	79.00
1500-2100	70.00	86.00

	MONDAY	TUESDAY
CLFS	890	803
COWS	221	209
BULLS	39	32
TOTAL	1150	1044

STEERS MED & LARGE 1:

200-250	215.00	225.00
250-300	210.00	230.00
300-350	189.00	220.00
350-400	175.00	200.00
400-450	170.00	190.00
450-500	162.00	188.00
500-550	175.00	185.00
550-600	140.00	170.00
600-700	132.00	160.00

HEIFERS MED & LARGE 1:

200-250	180.00	190.00
250-300	165.00	182.00
300-350	159.00	180.00
350-400	148.00	168.00
400-450	140.00	160.00
450-500	130.00	155.00
500-550	124.00	148.00
550-600	124.00	145.00
600-700	115.00	126.00

STEERS MED & LARGE 2:

200-250	0.00	0.00
250-300	195.00	205.00
300-350	179.00	210.00
350-400	164.00	190.00
400-450	160.00	180.00
450-500	152.00	162.00
500-550	148.00	175.00
550-600	130.00	160.00
600-700	140.00	150.00

HEIFERS MED & LARGE 2:

200-250	190.00	200.00
250-300	165.00	175.00
300-350	149.00	170.00
350-400	138.00	158.00
400-450	130.00	150.00
450-500	120.00	145.00
500-550	114.00	138.00
600-700	106.00	116.00

STEERS MED & LARGE 3:

250-300	0.00	0.00
300-350	169.00	200.00
350-400	154.00	180.00
400-450	150.00	170.00
450-500	144.00	154.00
500-550	138.00	148.00
550-600	0.00	0.00

HEIFERS MED & LARGE 3:

250-300	0.00	0.00
300-350	139.00	160.00
350-400	128.00	148.00
400-450	120.00	140.00
450-500	110.00	120.00
500-550	118.00	128.00

Calf prices took a considerable jump this week, especially 4-to-6 weight steers, \$6-\$8 higher. Lighter calves were mostly steady and heifers were \$2-\$4 higher. Slaughter cows and bulls were firm to \$2 higher. Volume was good for the week with stronger demand.

D Cross Ranch, Okeechobee, topped the calf market with a high of \$2.95 bought by Foy Reynolds.

Adams Ranch, Ft. Pierce, topped the slaughter cow market with a high of 65 cents by Florida Beef.

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Meet the officer: OCSO Detective Lt. Brad Stark

By Matteo Tullio

Okeechobee News

Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) Detective Lieutenant Brad Stark grew up here in Okeechobee and graduated from Okeechobee High School in 1983. He has been married to his wife, Diana, for 32 years and they have two children, Bradley and Andrea, who are now both grown and in their 20s.

After high school, he attended what was then known as Indian River Community College, where he obtained both his corrections and law enforcement certifications. Lt. Stark knew at an early age he would continue his law enforcement career and has been in the field now for over 31 years and worked for four sheriffs.

In June 1986, Lt. Stark began his law enforcement career at the Martin Correctional Institution for a short time until 1987, when the current OCSO jail facility was built, and he continued there as a correctional officer. He became dual certified and transferred to the Road Patrol Division in 1989. In 1996, he was promoted into the Detective Division, where he conducted criminal investigations and was on the evidence/crime scene unit. Lt. Stark progressed through the ranks, making sergeant and then lieutenant of the Criminal Investigations Division.

During his career, Lt. Stark became a Field Training Officer, Certified Instructor and "part of many units such as the Okeechobee County Dive and Recovery Team, Honor Guard, Evidence and Crime Scene Technician and the Hostage/Crisis Negotiation Team."

In 1995, he conducted many gang investigations and became part of the Florida Gang Investigators Association and the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations. He was later appointed as the Southeast regional director. In 2008, Lt. Stark worked with the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Task Force and in February 2009, he "assisted the Sheriff's Office in establishing the first Gang Unit, which later became the Street Crimes Unit."

Lt. Stark is currently the team leader of the Hostage/Crisis Negotiation Team and a member of the F.B.I.'s Joint Terrorist Task Force-Counter Terrorism Unit for the region, a member of the Sexual



Special to the Okeechobee News

Detective Lieutenant Brad Stark

Assault Response Team and the vice president of the 19th Judicial Circuit Victim's Rights Coalition.

Outside of law enforcement, Lt. Stark is a current member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles and the road captain/vice president of the Eagle Riders. He was formerly on the board of directors for the Boys and Girls Club of Okeechobee and the Communities in Schools mentoring program. Lt. Stark designed the Okeechobee County Youth Center/Skate Park Project for those programs and said, "with the backing of the Okeechobee Contractor's Association, it became a reality." He also helped to establish the Gang-Free Okeechobee Motorcycle Rally, which was held as a fundraiser for scholarships for students of the Okeechobee community.

In closing, Lt. Stark said, "I look forward to my retirement, where I can travel the back roads of the country by motorcycle."



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IRSC students offer free tax assistance

Special to the Okeechobee News

Student members of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program at Indian River State College will offer free tax return preparation for individuals or families in the community. Those with an income of \$53,000 or less in 2016 are eligible to participate in VITA services. Income tax assistance will be available Feb. 2 to March 30, except March 13-17 when the college is closed for spring break. The hours of operation are Thursdays from 2 to 7 p.m. VITA volunteers can be found in Room B-119 on the IRSC Main Campus located at 3209 Virginia Ave. in Fort Pierce.

Taxpayers are required to bring the following information to partake in VITA services: photo identification; Social Security cards or individual taxpayer identification numbers for you, your spouse and dependents; birth dates for all individuals on the tax return; current year's tax package if received; proof of medical insurance, if applicable; form W-2, W-2G or 1099-R from all employers; form 1099 for interest and dividend statements from banks; a copy of last year's federal and state returns if available; bank routing and account numbers for direct deposit; other information about

income and expenses; and total paid-for day care along with day care provider's identification number. Additionally, both spouses must be present to e-file a married filing jointly tax return.

Student volunteers are eager to utilize their accounting knowledge and training to assist members of the community through VITA. For additional information about eligibility and services, contact Crystal Carlson-Myer at ccarlso1@irsc.edu or 772-462-7489.



Special to the Okeechobee News
Student members of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program at Indian River State College will offer free tax return preparation for individuals or families in the community. Email ccarlso1@irsc.edu or call 772-462-7489 for more information.

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Everglades students receive award in Tallahassee

By Richard Marion
Okeechobee News

On Jan. 25, students from Everglades Elementary flew to Tallahassee to receive an award for a book they wrote, illustrated and edited about the school's agriculture program titled "If You Give a School an Ag Teacher."

The award was given for the Find Yourself in a Book contest that was being held during Florida's Celebrate Literacy Week.

Third-grader Achilles Ponce, fifth-grader Bennie Crowell, fifth-grader Abigail Mata and third-grader Hayley Doyon were all present in the Capitol to receive the award from Florida first lady Ann Scott, K-12 Public Schools Chancellor Hershell Lyons and Lottery Secretary Jim Poppell.

"I am extremely proud of these students for showcasing their creativity and promoting the value of literacy," said Mrs. Scott. "It is clear that they are on a path to success, and I am honored to recognize them for their hard work. I urge all Florida students to keep celebrating literacy and make reading a part of their daily routine."

Everglades came in third place out of all the schools that submitted books and received a check for \$250.

"Literacy is a critical skill that is the building block for lifelong learning," said Chancellor Lyons, "and I am extremely proud of these students for taking the initiative to participate in the contest and sharing the importance of reading with their peers."

Leslie Lundy, the principal of Everglades Elementary, was able to arrange the trip thanks to the generous help of Keith and Paige Walpole, Everglades Equipment Group and the Okeechobee County School Board.

It was an eventful day for Mrs. Lundy, the students, their parents, and instructional coach Debbie Waldron. Their day started bright and early at the Okeechobee County Airport, with the group taking a chartered plane at 7 a.m. to make the trip to Tallahassee in time.

After receiving the award, the group paid a visit to State Sen. Denise Grimsley at her office to present her with a copy of the book as well. Sen. Grimsley has a strong connection to agriculture and is running to be Florida's commissioner of agriculture in 2018.

The students left a letter at the office of current Ag Commissioner Adam Putnam, as well as some signed artwork.

Afterward, the kids were rewarded with ice cream at the Capitol Grill, a popular spot



Okeechobee News/Richard Marion

Students and parents from Everglades Elementary prepare to board a plane bound for Tallahassee on the morning of Jan. 25. Top row from left to right: Everglades Elementary Principal Leslie Lundy, Achilles Raymond Ponce, Andrea Beane, Bennie Crowell Sr. and Everglades instructional coach Debbie Waldron. Bottom row from left to right: third-grader Achilles Ponce, fifth-grader Bennie Crowell III, fifth-grader Abigail Mata and third-grader Hayley Doyon.

for lawmakers in the city.

"This has been the highlight of my 28 years in education," said Principal Lundy. "I really believe our kids' lives will be changed by this

experience. I can already see that it ignited something in them. What an opportunity it was for them to have this trip to the capital and win this award."

DIKE

Continued From Page 1

mindful officials that some Floridians don't understand the importance of the dike.

"The reason why we are here, whether it was back in 2008 when we heard 'take the land' and now this past year 'flood the communities' and 'remove the levee.' The job that we all have to do is very difficult," said Mali Gardner, mayor of Clewiston. "When you hear comments of 'take the land,' and 'flood their towns,' those are incendiary comments. And when we know there are underlying forces that do want to see agriculture taken out of the EAA, and people who do want to see our towns decimated, we are going to stand up. We are going to speak."

Those who live in the shadow of the dike have been outspoken about the importance of the rehabilitation measures to ensure its safety. But the safety of the Herbert Hoover Dike affects everyone in South Florida. If the dike should fail, it's not just the rural towns and EAA farms at risk — much of South Florida could be impacted.

The amount of water in the lake is mind-boggling. Just one inch of water on the 730-square-mile surface of Lake Okeechobee equals 12 billion gallons. The higher the lake level, the more water pressure is pushing against the earthen dike.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers tries to keep the lake between 12.5 and 15.5 feet above sea level, considered the best range for the lake's own ecology and the safest range for the dike. The actual depth of the lake varies.

Consider the elevations of the land surrounding the dike. The City of Okeechobee, at 26 ft. above sea level, is at low risk of flooding. Those on the east, west and south sides of the dike are at lower elevation and higher risk of flooding, with Clewiston and

Belle Glade at 16 ft. above sea level and Moore Haven and Pahokee at 13 ft.

Further south, the elevations are lower, with Miami just 6.5 ft. above sea level.

Another consideration is the impact of high water levels on the East Coast Protection Levee. This levee, another earthen dam, runs 105 miles from West Palm Beach to the Tamiami Trail. It serves as a buffer between three Everglades Water Conservation Areas and portions of the most populated regions in South Florida. In 2017, concerns over high water levels in the water conservation areas caused the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD to back-pump billions of gallons of water from these conservation areas into Lake Okeechobee. The reasons for this extreme measure included the safety of Everglades wildlife and the protection of the East Coast Protection Levee. Just like the Herbert Hoover Dike, the higher the water levels rise, the greater the risk to the dam.

Should the dike fail, the unrestricted flow of nutrient-rich water would also impact the Everglades. The phosphorus levels in the lake's water varies. It averages around 120 parts per billion of phosphorus. During periods of high water, the phosphorus level goes up. It also goes up if the lake is churned by a storm.

The Florida Department of Environment Protection set the maximum phosphorus level for the Everglades at 10 ppb. A system of water conservation areas and water treatment areas is used to reduce the nutrient levels in the water before it goes into Everglades National Park. If the dike failed, the rush of nutrient-rich water from the lake wouldn't stop for treatment in the water conservation areas.

In 2008, the Florida Department of Emergency Management imagined a potential scenario, modeled on their estimate of what would happen if the Herbert Hoover Dike breached during a Category 5 Hurricane.

For the purposes of the hurricane pre-

paredness exercise, they modeled the following: A Category 5 hurricane makes landfall just north of Fort Lauderdale. The storm travels northward across the state, maintaining Category 4 strength as it touches the southwest reaches of Lake Okeechobee.

The emergency scenario imagines:

Heavy rains cause the water levels on the lake to rise. A breach to the Herbert Hoover Dike near Clewiston. Tornadoes spawned by the hurricane also touch down on the dike, causing two more breaches, near towns Pahokee and Belle Glade.

The lake begins to flood the surrounding communities. Eventually, much of South Florida will be inundated.

U.S. 441 and 98, and State Roads 715 and 80 are destroyed by the slow-moving water.

The wall of water spreads out from Lake Okeechobee toward the Atlantic Ocean. It will be weeks before the flood waters recede.

The East Coast Protection Levy can't stop the pressure of billions of gallons of water from the lake.

The lower elevations south of the lake mean the billions of gallons contained in the 730 square mile lake flow — as water does — downhill.

Evacuations began in heavily populated Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties. But there isn't enough time.

After the dike breaches, more than 640,000 evacuees in Broward have less than 14 hours to move. Miami-Dade's more than 936,000 evacuees have less than 13 hours to get out. In Palm Beach County, nearly half a million people have less than 16 hours to leave.

Roads are flooded. The people can't get out in time and are trapped by rising floodwaters.

Nearly 3 million Floridians try to evacuate low lying areas.

In Miami-Dade County, the floodwater

puts 212 miles of evacuation routes under 2 feet or more of water. In Palm Beach County, 180 miles of flooded roadways make it impossible for residents to flee.

The death toll rises and damages to homes and businesses is in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

The environmental damage to the Everglades is devastating.

The flood will have a longterm impact on businesses, families and the Everglades. The hurricane winds have churned the lake, mixing the muck from the bottom through the water column. As that muddy water flows out of the lake, it destroys decades of work to reduce the phosphorus loads in water entering the Everglades. It will take decades for the Everglades to recover ... if it ever can.

The 2008 hurricane model estimates business interruption losses over \$53.5 billion.

The good news: It was only an exercise. In addition, the Herbert Hoover Dike is in better shape than it was ten years ago. Work has also been done to improve the safety of the East Coast Protection Levee.

Since 2001, the corps has made a significant investment, over \$870 million, in projects designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic failure of the aging structure. Actions taken include installing a partial cutoff wall along the southeast part of the dike, removing and replacing water control structures (culverts), and conducting a variety of studies and technical reviews to help ensure the safety of south Florida residents.

The current schedule, with the dike repairs funded by the federal government, calls for repairs to be completed by 2025. In 2017, the Florida Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott approved a plan to use state funding to speed up dike repairs by three years.

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Alleged burglar found at Okeechobee liquor store

By Matteo Tullio
Okeechobee News

A 34-year-old Okeechobee man was arrested Thursday afternoon for his alleged perpetration regarding reported burglaries in the community.

John William Mendell, State Road 78 West, was arrested Jan. 25 on felony charges of burglary of unoccupied structure and burglary of unoccupied conveyance and misdemeanor charges of two counts of petit theft (more than \$100 but less than \$300) and loitering or prowling. His bond was set at \$10,000.

According to an arrest report by Deputy Nathaniel Mitchell of the Okeechobee Coun-



John Mendell

ty Sheriff's Office (OCSO), he responded to Lakeside Car Wash in the 2300 block of U.S. 441 Southeast in regard to a burglary complaint on Wednesday, Jan. 24.

Deputy Mitchell's report stated that he spoke with the complainant who informed him that an employee could not open the door to the office in the morning and had noticed the door had been "messed with." The complainant told the deputy that a bucket of quarters worth approximately \$200 and a cup of car wash tokens had been missing from the office. A video surveillance system recorded a male with a green jacket go into the office, according to the complainant who informed Deputy Mitchell they wished to pursue charges against the individual.

At approximately 10:10 p.m. on Jan. 24, OCSO Deputy Tim Higgins responded to the

2200 block of U.S. 441 Southeast in regard to a burglary complaint made by a manager of the Pier II Resort.

According to the report, at approximately 2-3 a.m., a video surveillance system recorded a white male walking throughout the parking lot checking vehicles. It was reported that entry into an unlocked gold 2005 Jeep was made. The Jeep was known to the manager as belonging to one of the employees of the hotel who had finished their shift and left. An aluminum pool cue and suede jacket were reported as items stolen out of the vehicle.

Deputy Higgins made contact with the owner of the Jeep who reported that when he went to smoke a cigarette outside, he saw a male sitting on a bench across the parking lot also smoking a cigarette and assumed it was one of the hotel guests. The employee then reportedly said as he was leaving work, he noticed the Jeep's interior light was on, the glove compartment was opened with items scattered on the floor and that the front passenger door was not all the way shut. After all this was observed by the employee, he then saw that his brown suede jacket and aluminum pool cue with a hard black case were missing from the back seat.

On Jan. 25, at approximately 6:02 a.m. OCSO Deputy Mark Margerum responded to the 2400 block of U.S. 441 Southeast in regards to the possible burglary suspect being

in the area. Deputy Margerum was informed the complainant saw a white male in the parking lot of the Brahma Bull Restaurant look into vehicles with a flashlight. The male appeared to be the same one from the hotel.

While en route to the restaurant, Deputy Margerum reported passing by a subject matching the description provided in the 2300 block of U.S. 441 Southeast at Treasure Island Discount Liquors.

The subject was reportedly wearing a beige suede jacket with a blue one underneath seen by Deputy Margerum. It was noted in the report that the man, identified as Mendell, wore the same jacket seen in the surveillance video of the burglary investigated by Deputy Mitchell and in a surveillance video from the Pier II Resort parking lot.

The report concluded that Mendell was arrested, transported and booked into the Okeechobee County Jail on the aforementioned charges. It was noted in Deputy Mitchell's report that a bucket, small flashlight and red handled screwdriver were collected from a makeshift camp in the trees by the car wash. The items were collected and submitted into evidence and will be processed for latent prints. Crime Scene Technician Kathleen Watson was reported to have collected the video footage from both the Pier II Resort and Lakeside Car Wash.

Bomb threat reported at FP&L

By Matteo Tullio
Okeechobee News

According to an incident report by Deputy Bryan Holden, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), at approximately 8:58 a.m. on Jan. 24, he responded to the Florida Power & Light (FP&L) power plant in the 25000 block of State Road 60 in regards to a bomb threat.

Upon Deputy Holden's arrival, he met with the complainant who informed him that someone wrote "Bomb 1/30/18" with a black pen on the wall of one of the portable

bathrooms on the construction site. The complainant reported to the deputy that it was written between 4 p.m. on Jan. 23 and 8 a.m. Jan. 24 by an unknown person and informed the deputy that everyone will be checked when entering the job site.

The report concluded that a photograph was taken of the alleged threat, printed out and placed into evidence. The project manager informed law enforcement that every precaution will be taken to prevent any possible bomb from being brought on the site.

The Roots and Chaka Khan to join Snoop Dogg at music fest

Special to the Okeechobee News

Okeechobee Music & Arts Festival Friday revealed the star-studded lineup for its annual PoWoW!, a once-in-a-lifetime superstar collaboration that brings top artists together for an ultimate jam session. Snoop Dogg, the leader of the evening, will be performing with an array of special guests that will span the genres of hip-hop, funk and soul. Philadelphia hip-hop legends and Tonight Show band, The Roots, will be joining the bill along with the Queen of Funk, Chaka Khan. Rounding out the megawatt lineup will be rap's breakout star Joey Bada\$\$, Big Gigantic's saxophonist Dominic Lalli, the exceptionally talented New Orleans' multi-instrumentalist Trombone Shorty, and jazz great Cory Henry, will all be performing together. In true OMF fashion, additional surprise guests will be sure to make an appearance on stage at the signature PoWoW! Event.

As Okeechobee Fest enters its third year on the heels of two sold out festivals, it has quickly grown to be the largest independent festival in the Southeast and the first major destination of the festival season. By blending the world-class lineups and amenities of

mainstream events with the sensibility and community-oriented approach of independent festivals, OMF is designing the festival of the future.

Located in the heart of Florida, sitting between Miami, Tampa and Orlando, Sunshine Grove spans across 800 acres of pristine grasslands, clear lakes, and exotic tropical woodlands. The diverse, multi-genre festival celebrates the start of Spring with both world-renowned and on-the-rise performers, art installations, yoga, meditation, local culinary treats and more.

In addition to The Grove, the expansive tropical wooded venue for musical performances on OMF's Be, Here, Now stages, OMF continues to set itself apart with its signature areas like:

- Aquachobee — an all-day beachside music and swimming oasis;
- Jungle51 — an after hours techno party deep in the jungle; and
- ChobeeWobee Village — the cultural and artistic epicenter of the OMF experience filled with treasures and delights around each and every corner.

Festival passes are available now at <http://www.okeechobeeffest.com/tickets>. Visit the site for vehicle parking and camping details.

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has two immediate openings for School Crossing guards. One position is 5 hours a day and one position is 2 hours per day. We are also looking for well-qualified individuals who are interested in a career in Law Enforcement. Interested applicants can complete an application online at okeesherriff.org. Please contact the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office human resource office for more information 863-763-3117

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Seasonal

H2A Complete II, Inc. - Must be 18 years or older. 5 Temporary workers needed in Clewiston, FL from approximately March 6, 2018 - October 31, 2018. Workers will perform assigned duties as instructed by their supervisor. Applicants must be 18 years or older. Duties may vary from time to time. Duties performed: drive and operate farm machinery. Workers will load tractor with chemical and water multiple times a day. Lubricating, cleaning and repairing farm machinery. Must be able to lift 5-60 lbs. Apply herbicides to areas as instructed by supervisor. Workers will use caution to keep the treatment off the foliage, fruit, or trunk of citrus trees. Employee must have a valid driver's license or capable of obtaining one in 30 days. The worker must be able to work outside for at least 6 hours a day in all kinds of weather. All tools, supplies, and equipment will be provided at no cost to the worker. General Specifications and Physical Requirements of the Job: The majority of the workday will be spent outdoors. Worker must be able to withstand working in the direct sunlight and weather conditions ranging from hot and humid weather, moderate rain and cold while performing their required job duties. Hours and days of work may vary due to weather conditions. Due to possible Date of Need changes, worker is required to purchase travel insurance if available. We will reimburse the worker for transportation cost (including travel insurance) and subsistence to the employers' work site from the place of recruitment upon completion of 50 percent of the contract period. Transportation payment will be no less (and is not required to be more) than the most economical and reasonable common carrier transportation charges for the distances involved. A copy of the work contract or a copy of the ETA 790 in lieu of a work contract, and any modifications, will be provided to the worker on the day the work commences. If the employee is unable or unfit to perform the duties listed after the 14 day pretrial, the employee will receive warnings, hours may be reduced to the minimum allowed in the certified petition or terminated. Workers will be paid \$11.29 per hr, three fourth's guarantee, 35 hrs per week, housing, equipment and transportation provided at no cost to workers who cannot reasonably return to their permanent residence at the end of each work day. Workers must have valid identification for I-9 preparation when they report to begin work. Complete job description can be found at your local SWA/Job Enter. Apply for this job at the State Workforce/Job Center office in your area, please call for the nearest office in your area FL 866-482-4473, AL 256-259-1835, GA 404-656-6000, MS 662-842-2175 using job #FL10611981.

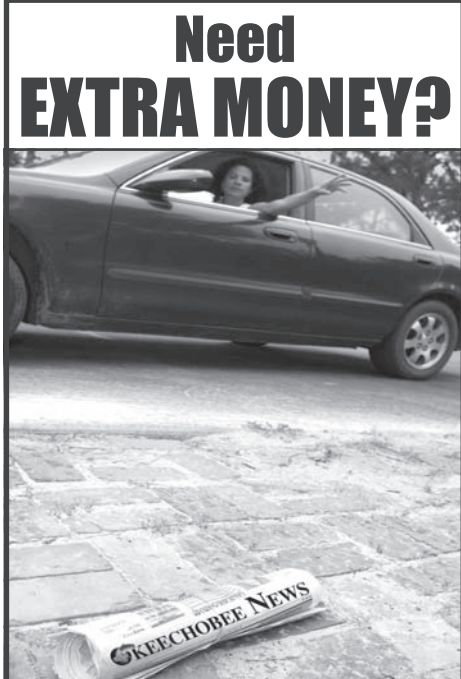
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Financial Business Opportunities



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NOTICE
Independent Newspapers will never accept any advertisement that is illegal or considered fraudulent. In all cases of questionable value, such as promises of guaranteed income from work-at-home programs - if it sounds too good to be true, chances are that it is. If you have questions or doubts about any ad on these pages, we advise that before responding or sending money ahead of time, you check with the Better Business Bureau at 772-878-2010 for previous complaints.

Some 800 and 900 telephone numbers may require an extra charge, as well as long distance toll costs. We will do our best to alert our reader of these charges in the ads, but occasionally we may not be aware of the charges. Therefore, if you call a number out of your area, use caution.

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PALMER TEERLASS GOLF CLUBS w/hats, umbrella and size 10 mens shoes. Great shape. \$125 (772)284-2722

Wanted To Buy

LOOKING TO BUY: Used PARK MODEL HOMES & RV's. To put in my Mobile Home Park... ANY condition. CASH PAID. **Call Paul 863-763-3241**

FOR RENT Rentals

Apartments

APARTMENTS FOR RENT, LOOKING FOR RETIRED PERSONS. APARTMENTS CAN BE 1, 2 OR 3BD AND RV SPOTS AVAILABLE. CALL 561-968-2083 OR 561-386-5636

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OAK LAKE VILLA #5, 2/2, w/all appliances. \$850/mo. 1st, last, and \$500 security required. (863) 228-0073 lv. msg.

Houses - Rent

LAKEPORT HOUSE FURNISHED 2BD/1BA, SCREENED BACK PORCH, YARD \$900.00/MO. 1ST, LAST & SECURITY CALL 863-532-5073

Real Estate

Real Estate Wanted

LOOKING TO BUY: Small Mobile Home Parks in Okeechobee. Any condition, Fast Closing. Looking for Owner Financing, \$50-100K Down **CALL PAUL 863-763-3241**

Mobile Homes

Mobile Home Rent

BHR 2BR/2BA CENTRAL AIR/HEAT, NO PETS, YEARLY LEASE \$625.00/MO. PLUS SECURITY. (863)763-4031

Mobile Home Rent

1/1 Rent To Own Remodeled; No money down. Low Monthly Payments. Adult park. Background Check Required. Call 863-763-3241 (Paul)

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2005 WINNABAGO Sun Cruiser, 39 Ft., 53K mls. No pets. No smoking. New tires. Electric awning. Custom paint job. Gas. New radios. New TV's. \$77,500. (772)284-2722

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RV Space Rent

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SUDOKU

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

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!

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

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