



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 109 No. 64

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

50¢ plus tax

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Young writer debuts first novel

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Candlelight vigil planned

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Mosquitoes carry disease

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Lake Levels

14.02 feet

Last Year: 11.05 feet



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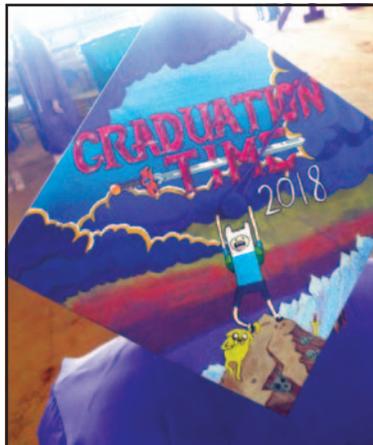
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Okeechobee News/Tammi Kelly

Graduation Day

The Okeechobee High School Class of 2018 participated in graduation ceremonies at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center on May 25. Pictured above from left to right are the OHS Class of 2018 Summa Cum Laude graduates, Cristian Rios, Artha Jonassaint, Princess Salva and Daniel Groso with Principal Dylan Tedders. At right Nicholas Amiet decorated his mortar board with an "Adventure Time" theme. For photos online, go to okeechobeenews.net.



Councilman arrested



Mike O'Connor

By Matteo Tullio
Okeechobee News

An Okeechobee City Councilman was arrested on an Okeechobee County felony warrant Thursday morning for alleged offenses that occurred outside of council meetings.

Okeechobee City Councilman, Michael Gerald O'Connor, was arrested May 24 at 8:17 a.m. by Okeechobee Police Department Detective, James Pickering, on an Okeechobee County See **ARREST** — Page 2

Be wary and safe around alligators

By Chris Felker
INI Florida

A funny video showed up on Facebook recently, by Daniel McNamara via Storyful, that shows a resting alligator, awakened by an errant golf drive, then devouring said ball and slinking off into the water hazard.

So far they haven't been trained to fetch by Florida golf course owners, but a local trapper tells the sto-

ry of how human activity can condition them to become nuisances.

Alligators become more active and visible in populated areas at this time of year because their mating season is under way, so the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) wants Floridians to be cognizant of how best to stay safe around them, what measures people can take to keep alligators at a safe distance and what to do if someone feels threatened by a gator.

Although they were removed from the endangered species list decades ago, alligators still are a protected species because of their resemblance to the endangered American crocodile. Under Florida law, it is illegal to feed, kill, harass or possess alligators without a farming or hunting license.

All residents and visitors are advised to be aware that as a fundamental part of Florida's natural landscapes, ecosystems and food chains, alligators are found in all 67 counties, especially in and near freshwater or brackish water bodies. So it is important to always be watchful when engaging in outdoor recreation nearby or in the water, even, possibly, in one's own back yard. And because gators are most active between dusk and dawn, swimming at night in inland water bodies is to be avoided.

Clean up the scraps while fishing

Fishermen especially are asked to be proactive in not providing artificial food sources or attractions for alligators. The FWC advises

See **GATORS**— 2



Courtesy of Gatorama
You'll often find FWC licensed nuisance-alligator trapper Allen Register feeding the specimens at Gatorama, or giving a lecture for visitors.



Accident?



Gerald Lefebvre

Law Offices of Lefebvre & Dixon

763.3333

Okeechobee, Florida

GATOR

Continued From Page 1

disposing of all fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps and fish camps; never throw them in the water. People are asked to observe and photograph alligators only from a distance.

Alligators under 4 feet long generally are not big enough to be dangerous to people unless handled. But male alligators 7 feet or longer, and females 6 feet or longer, most likely are sexually mature. Mating season occurs during May and June, and the animals are more active outside their usual ranges and are apt to act more aggressively during these months.

In any case, people are advised never to swim outside of posted swimming areas or in any waters where large alligators might be present. Also, people who own pets must remember that dogs and cats are close in size to alligators' natural prey, so they should not allow their pets to swim, exercise or drink in or near water bodies that might harbor gators. Attacks on humans are extremely rare but still possible, so always be wary if one is sighted, and leave it alone.

Alligators may be seen anywhere near ponds, canals, ditches, streams, pools and golf-course waterholes. Often they may just be sunning themselves or moving between wetland areas, but if anyone observes an alligator that is believed to pose a threat to humans, pets or property, they are encouraged to call the FWC's Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) at 866-392-4286.

The program's goal is to reduce the threat from alligators to people and their property in developed areas, while conserving alliga-

tors in areas where they naturally occur. In 2017, SNAP received 13,210 nuisance alligator complaints, resulting in the removal of 8,455 nuisance alligators. The number of calls was about 3,000 fewer in 2016, but the number of animals harvested was up from 8,036 that year. Overall, the recent number of calls is below the 2012-16 average of 15,124 calls but harvests are up substantially over that four-year average of 7,379.

This program permits the removal of alligators that pose a threat to people, pets, livestock, or property. It is illegal for members of the general public to kill, capture or relocate nuisance alligators. For more information about nuisance alligators, visit <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/man>.

Local trapper keeps busy

Local FWC-licensed nuisance-gator trapper Allen Register, who also is co-owner with wife Patty of the Gatorama attraction in Glades County, said on Saturday, May 19, that he's been somewhat busier lately than usual at this time.

"It's the breeding season so they're out moving around. I've got five open permits right now," he said. Five different people had called FWC in his area, reporting nuisance alligators, but some of them were reporting multiple gators.

Mr. Register, who's been working for FWC as a trapper for about seven years, is assigned the territory between the Caloosahatchee River and Fisheating Creek.

"There's high trapping traffic right now, because alligators are breeding so they're on the roads and they're in people's ponds," said Mrs. Register. She added that the alligators he traps are not killed. "We bring them back here (to Gatorama in Glades County) and, depending on their size, we either put them in the breeding area as new bloodlines, or we put them in this barebacking opportunity for a little bit." That's a new photo-op available to Gatorama visitors where they can be photographed as though they were riding an alligator.

Sometimes people report alligators that are too young to be a nuisance; Mr. Register said a woman in Moore Haven had reported several, but they were only 2-3 feet.

"A nuisance alligator is deemed as one 4 feet and above, but we as the trapper industry or group have said that we'll go get those alligators to keep the complainant

happy, and we'll relocate them ... to another body of water. The nuisance trapping never ends; it goes on year-round," Mr. Register explained.

"The state has to respond because of public safety, and so that's why they call the trappers. But some are not, in my opinion," he added.

Asked when it's necessary to report an alligator one might encounter as a "nuisance," he replied:

"I think when a person feels threatened — but there's different thresholds for that — I have a lady who's lived in the same house since 1977, and she said they're worse this year than they've ever been. Her house is up on stilts, and it was underneath her house or in her carport. That's certainly an incident where we need to take care of the alligator.

"But," he added, "there becomes a heightened awareness when there's an injury or death from an alligator and people start to freak out. We had that happen in Moore Haven several years ago when a boy got his arm bitten off, so it's a frenzy now. Generally what happens is, if an alligator's up on your property closer to your house than to the water, that's a good indication that it could be a problem alligator."

That can be because the animal's lost his fear of people, said Mrs. Register.

"If people start to feed them, then they lose that fear. It only takes one or two times to feed an alligator before that gator ... I mean, they're smart," Mr. Register continued. "We've trained some of these alligators here ... you see that triangle hanging from the tree over there (on a bank along Gatorama's alligator pond); if we go there and ring that triangle, then whomp, they all go over there, and then we can call them one by one back over here and then we'll feed them, stop them, have them walk around the trees and come back. It doesn't take but just a few incidents, or a few times of them doing that, and they understand what's going on."

"They easily get conditioned to know when there's food present or nearby and when there's not. They have a natural fear of people, they just lose that fear whenever people start to feed them."

Mr. Register even thinks the alligators might be smart enough to modify their behavior based on trappers' routine.

"The gators know ... there's this one in Moore Haven that we've been chasing for

about three weeks, and he's just in a canal system; there's ... four different things with culverts going through. You put out the bait, and he's not even close by. And then you've got to think about how long he is because you don't want to put it too low; then other animals would get it. You don't want to get the four-footers if you're after an eight-footer."

Alligator harvest program

The first application period for 2018 Statewide Alligator Harvest Permits ran from May 18 through May 28. Participants had to either complete an online harvest report form or mail in a hard copy form; but if they transfer their alligator carcass to a commercial processor, then they must also print out a copy of the form and submit it with the carcass.

There's also a Private Lands Alligator Harvest Program with similar reporting requirements, except that participants also must verify alligator habitat and population data using certified wildlife biologists.

Male alligators 7 feet or longer, and females 6 feet or longer, most likely are sexually mature, and mating occurs in May and June. Females build a mound nest of soil, vegetation and debris and lay 32 to 46 eggs in late June or early July. Hatching occurs from mid-August through early September. The hunting seasons, or harvest periods as they're called, start in mid-August and run through early September, and then again from mid-September through Nov. 1; however, the hunt dates vary by county and even is limited to weekends in some "harvest units." Check myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/alligator/harvest for more information.

Now it's time for our quiz. What are the basic rules for coexisting peacefully with Florida's alligators?

Never feed them; keep pets away from water's edge; swim during the day and only in designated areas; and keep your distance if you see an alligator.

If an alligator is on your property and causing concern, call the FWC's toll-free nuisance alligator hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286).

Okeechobee Forecast



Today: Cloudy in the morning, then thunderstorms developing later in the day. High 83F. Winds SSE at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 80%.

Tonight: Cloudy skies early. Scattered thunderstorms developing later at night. Low 72F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 40%.

Extended Forecast

Thursday: Scattered thunderstorms in the morning becoming more widespread in the afternoon. High 84F. Winds SSE at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 80%.

Thursday Night: Considerable cloudiness. Low near 70F. Winds light and variable.

Friday: Rain showers in the morning with scattered thunderstorms arriving in the afternoon. High near 85F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 40%.

Friday Night: Mostly cloudy. Low 69F. Winds light and variable.

Saturday: Cloudy in the morning, then thunderstorms developing later in the day. High 86F. Winds W at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 80%.

ARREST

Continued From Page 1

felony warrant charging him with tampering with or harassing a witness, victim or informant and a misdemeanor charge of battery.

The arrest warrant, issued on May 23, states that on May 19, O'Connor knowingly used intimidation or physical force, or threatened another person, or attempted to do so, or engaged in misleading conduct toward another person, with intent to hinder, delay or prevent the communication to a law enforcement officer of information relating to the possible commission of a criminal offense, and the official investigation or official proceeding affected involves the investigation or prosecution of a misdemeanor, in violation of Florida Statute 914.22; and that

he intentionally touched or struck a person against that person's will or did intentionally cause bodily harm to a person, in violation of Florida Statute 784.03(1).

His bond was set at \$5,500. He has since been released on bond.

Okeechobee's City Administrator, Marcos Montes De Oca issued an advisory notice to the office of Florida Governor Rick Scott stating, "We are advising your office of the arrest of one of our Okeechobee city councilmen, Mike O'Connor, on May 24, 2018, pursuant to a criminal complaint filed with our local police department. I have enclosed a copy of the arrest affidavit for review."

The letter continued, "Councilman O'Connor is presently serving as a duly elected councilman, with his term of office ending with the November 2020 election cycle."

The letter concluded, "It appears the in-

cident complained of is a domestic matter, unrelated to Councilman O'Connor's Office and duties with the City of Okeechobee; it is however, a felony arrest. Therefore, our city attorney advises that your office may elect to suspend Mr. O'Connor from office pursuant to Ch. 112.51, Florida Statutes. The City of Okeechobee is not advocating a position either way, and will abide by whatever course of action your office takes."

The arrest affidavit attached to the letter stated he was arrested at his residence that morning. During transport to the Okeechobee County Jail, O'Connor reportedly asked if the arrest stemmed from a video that he had allowed OPD Detective Sergeant Bettye Taylor to retrieve. Detective Pickering confirmed O'Connor's inquiry, to which he reportedly responded, "I guess I shouldn't have given it to her then."

Schools to offer lunch and breakfast in 2018-19

By Richard Marion
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee County schools will be implementing a new option provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to provide healthy breakfasts and lunches each day at no charge for all students.

All schools in the Okeechobee County School District will be participating during the 2018-19 school year.

CEP is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without col-

lecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Okeechobee County Schools Food Service Supervisor Lisa Bell says that the provision not only decreases the district's paperwork load, but helps ensure they can feed all students in the Okeechobee County school system.

"This option will alleviate the problem families have with being able to afford school meals for their children," Ms. Bell

explained. "Our programs are strictly regulated to meet dietary guidelines that are in the best interest of every child at every age level. We know that if students eat school meals, they are fueling not only their bodies but their minds as well. Although by going to CEP we will no longer have to collect free and reduced lunch form applications, therefore reducing our paperwork load, we will still continue to track each child and record the meals they are served throughout the day. This is important for allergen awareness, parent information and for continuing to allow students to purchase smart snacks ala carte. Students will continue to be able to keep a running account in the cafeteria for ala carte purchases."

Free breakfast had been in place since

the 2015-16 school year, but now with CEP, lunch will also be provided.

Teachers are not included in the national school breakfast and lunch program. However, the Okeechobee County School District is not planning to raise its rate for adult meals in 2018-19.

"While we would also like to see our adult participation increase, our main purpose is to feed children," said Ms. Bell. "All meals outside of those given to children must be charged at a rate that covers the cost of the meal and the government reimbursement at the highest rate. We will still be required to charge adults, but we are not planning to raise the price next school year, keeping the adult meal price at 3.50."

DEP and DCF celebrate National Foster Care Month

Special to the Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is partnering with the Department of Children and Families during National Foster Care Month to celebrate foster families and adoptive parents of special-needs children. This year, more than 7,200 children reside in foster care in Florida. Florida State parks will be providing annual passes and discounts to

support foster and adoptive families of special needs children to encourage outdoor recreation and create lasting memories.

Families operating a licensed family foster home, who have approved status from DCF, are eligible to receive a Florida State Parks Family Annual Entrance Pass and a 50 percent discount on base campsite fees at parks. Additionally, families who adopt a special-needs child from DCF are eligible to

receive a Family Annual Entrance Pass at the time of adoption.

Gov. Rick Scott said, "As a father and grandfather, I am thankful for the many Florida families who have opened their homes to more than 20,000 foster children. I am proud to offer these families free entry into Florida state parks as a small token of gratitude for their sacrifice and commitment to our children."

"While their time together may be temporary, the impacts that foster parents have on the children they care for last a lifetime," said DCF Secretary Mike Carroll. "Being a foster parent is a selfless act that should be commended and celebrated."

Learn how to receive an annual pass to Florida State Parks by calling 850-245-2157.

Young local writer debuts his first novel, 'The Phantom Janitor'

By Gia Pasquarella
Special to the Okeechobee News

From anywhere in my house, you can almost always hear the clicking of the keyboard as my brother Vincenzo writes his newest book idea. He mostly writes speculative fiction and is always coming up with new ideas.

Vincenzo Pasquarella is 20 but started the book when he was only 17. He finished writing the book by 18 and was published by 19.

I asked him how it felt to have a book in his hands after all his hard work and dedication. "Well, after all the time I spent working on it, it was worth it. It took a lot of time, a lot of rewrites and definitely a lot of hard work."

His first book "The Phantom Janitor," was inspired by "Another Cinderella Story," a chick flick starring Selena Gomez.

The book is of the genre furry fiction and is about Derrick Hillman, a timber wolf with a passion for acting. His mom was an actor and so was his dad. When Derrick hears of the death of his father he is devastated. Then, his mom decides to remarry to Ernesto and Derrick finds himself working at his stepdad's theater. Just when Derrick thinks things couldn't be more unorganized, Cassidy, his childhood best friend, re-enters his life. Through her fame, as an actor, she gets to put together an acting competition and tells Derrick he should really enter for a chance to win a scholarship at a prestigious fine arts college.

I asked him if he wanted to say anything to inspire young writers and he said, "Don't give up. Writing can be a long, hard, and strenuous endeavor, but with patience and perseverance you can write a fantastic story. And don't let anyone try to discourage you from doing the thing that you love just because the benefits aren't coming as quickly as they would like them to."

I loved the book, and I hope you'll love it, too. Come for a book signing at the Okeechobee County Library on Saturday, June 2, at 2 p.m. and for a presentation by Vincenzo about the writing and publishing process. He will speak about his book, "The Phantom Janitor," which will be available for purchase for \$12.,



Special to the Okeechobee News
Vincenzo, holding a copy of "Phantom Janitor," finds it hard to believe that at 19, he is a published author.

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Chamber of Commerce News

• We have a new business in town, Okee Jiu Jitsu, and they will be celebrating their opening with a ribbon cutting on June 1, at 211 S.W. Park St. at noon.

This is a Martial Arts academy offering training in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Classes are offered three days a week for children

between the ages of 5-13 and five days a week for adults. Master Johnny Cardona is a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Their grand opening will be the next day, Saturday, June 2, with a BBQ to celebrate. Come celebrate with them on Friday, see the Martial Arts studio and then plan on celebrating with

Public Forum/Speak Out

Speak Out comments can be shared in several ways. Comments on local issues are welcome on the newspaper's website at okeechobeenews.net, in the comments section following each article. Or, you can mail or drop off written, anonymous or signed opinions at the Okeechobee News office, 107 S.W. 17th St. Suite D., Okeechobee, FL 34974; or, email anonymous or signed Speak Out comments to Okeeneews@newszap.com. Thanks for participating in our discussion of local issues!

Emergency

An article about a daughter who used her Medical Reserve Corps training to save her father when he suffered a dangerous allergic reaction brought these comments from readers.

• "How terrifying and awesome at the same time! Great job Brilyn!" – Leah Suarez
• "Wow! Great job staying calm in a terrifying situation. I am glad dad is okay." – Theresa Ford

• "It was the Raulersons staff who did an amazing job taking care of my daddy and saving his life. These amazing people got him in and were so calm and collected. Okeechobee is truly blessed to have these people." – Brilyn Nicole Charity Sell

Code enforcement

The code enforcement article warning consumers to be wary of unlicensed contractor brought this response.

• "Only problem is getting one to do

a small job. They need to bring back the handyman license." – Tina Troendle

Teen suicide

The articles about the teen suicide attempt that mimicked the death on "13 Reasons Why" brought these comments.

• "I have been on all ends of this multiple times and also watched the show. This show will influence people wrong and should have more warnings and characters that show how to get out of these situations. It is a very compelling and good show but it very flawed as well." – Dan Jacobson

• "Seriously a show is not something that influences kids. It's the bullying and nobody paying attention to what is going on in their kid's life. I was suicidal when I was a kid, my mom was obviously clueless. I didn't get influenced by movies and shows. I just didn't want to live anymore. People have got to quit being under the rock and don't blame others for it. Blame the school and the bullies." – Travolta Bullock

• "I think the intention of '13 Reasons Why' is to get teens to open up and talk to someone." – Susan Herrington

• "The TV show showed directions on how to kill yourself by cutting your wrists. Suicide by cutting the wrists is actually pretty rare. In the book the TV show is based on, the main character takes pills. They could have made a show without the explicit scene of how to slice your arms to bleed to death. That scene is not in the book. Of course, had she not seen this, the Okeechobee girl may still have tried to take her life a different way." – J. Zimpel

them on Saturday. They are looking forward in sharing their expertise.

• Their signage is up, the building is ready and now the preparation begins for a big celebration of the newest addition to Gilbert Family of Companies. You are invited to attend the next Business After Hours on Tuesday, June 12, at Gilbert Fleet & Commercial division located at: 3550 U.S. 441 South, from 5 to 6:30 p.m ... right across

from the main Gilbert Chevrolet showroom. You'll want to stop in and see the new facility and see all that the commercial division has to offer. You can rest assured that their vehicle experts will work to understand your unique business needs. The Gilbert team will be waiting to share some exciting news with us, so don't miss out on stopping by and celebrating with them. Refreshments will be served.

Letters to the Editor

Memorial Tournament

On May 19, the Nik Kayler Memorial Tournament was held in honor of a Father, Husband, Veteran and Friend. Nik lost his life in a tragic boating accident on Lake Okeechobee while doing what he loved. I've been around the sport and fishing for a long time and personally have never seen a single incident or individual that has had such an impact on so many. From the day the incident happened up until today, I have never seen the outpouring of safety awareness, support and camaraderie that I have from family and friends, the fishing family and the community. I am in a position that I have a lot of contact with individuals and companies in the fishing industry that I can't thank enough. The support from them was second to none.

The family and friends that stepped up to say, hey we got you. Anything you need to make this happen, we got you!

The fisherman and women that came out and participated knowing the weather may not be the best that day. Lake Okeechobee and the Fish Gods did its part as well. Just a couple stats. We had 100 boats participate in the event, 24 boats weighed in over 20 pounds for a five-fish limit with 38.15 being the winning bag of the day by Chris Shirling and Kale Stevens good for a payout of \$2500. A 9.11 pound Big Bass was dropped on the scale by Ken and Kevin Lucas for the Reel Fishing Charities Big Bass award of \$1000 and a 6.05 limit of 5 fish for the Smallest 5 fish limit worth \$500 was also awarded to Bradley Mcqueen and Austin Schroeder.

Then there is the local community. I can't say THANK YOU enough. As we started putting everything together we reached out to the local and surrounding communities and they responded in an unbelievable way. From

the 8-year-old boy that did so well in school that he was awarded a "play day" with his class the day before the event yet told his mother he needed to come to Okeechobee to help with the event because the little girl and her mother could really use his help, to the generous donations that were received from SOOOOO many to make this one of the most special events I have ever been part of, to the friends and family that were so hands-on in making it all happen. All in all when the smoke finally clears, we will donate \$23,233 to one of the most humble families I have ever met. I have been part of a lot of tournaments over the years and I can honestly say this has been a truly humbling experience for me personally.

There are way too many family members, friends and acquaintances, industry companies and local businesses to list and I know I would forget some if I tried, so again, THANK YOU ALL!

Mike Krause
Okeechobee Fishing Headquarters

Why use "Deep State"

The words "Deep State" keep appearing, and it's hard to understand why anyone would waste energy focusing on this bizarre conspiracy theory. Why not believe what you see right before your eyes? Our fearful leader mocking others, encouraging behavior that is derisive by being devilish himself. In our schools there are posters that say "Character counts" and yet the so-called adults approve of a leader who lack character. How hypocritical can you get? We are supposed to rise above our bare natures and strive to achieve a more God-like image. Somehow I doubt God would like what he is seeing.

J.T. Martin

Fire/Rescue offers free blood pressure checks

Okeechobee County Fire/Rescue offers free blood pressure checks from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at:

- Fire Station #1, 504 N.W. Sixth Street,
- Fire Station #2, 3511 S.E. 38th Ave., and,
- Fire Station #4, 1199 N.E. 168th St.

Please understand that if you stop by a station and there is no staff there, they are out on an emergency call. Please stop back later.

OKEECHOBEE NEWS

To Reach Us

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

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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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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.



Free Mental Health Awareness education at IRSC

Special to the Okeechobee News

FORT PIERCE — Suncoast Mental Health Center and Indian River State College will once again host the popular Brown Bag Lectures on May 30, at the main campus in the Koblegard Student Union from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. The community, students, mental and behavioral health professionals and others interested in this topic are encouraged to attend.

For the last four years the organizations have teamed up during Mental Health

Awareness Month, May, to offer the lectures. Designed to fit during a lunch hour, each presentation — including from Dr. Bryan Reuther Human Services professor at IRSC and Sharmaine LaFleur a Suncoast staffer who will guide participants through an imagery exercise helpful in reducing anxiety, and Dr. Robin Zide, Education professor at IRSC — participants will find an up-to-date schedule of the day's agenda by visiting the Suncoast website or the event's Facebook page with presentations ending promptly at 1 p.m. A

certificate of attendance will be provided.

Debra Engle, CEO at Suncoast shared, "We are so grateful to IRSC, Dr. Patty Corey at the Health and Wellness Center there, Dr. Reuther and the Human Services department, Dr. Doak and the nursing students, and everyone instrumental in making this program a success. By success, we mean we are breaking down stigma associated with mental illnesses and educating, person by person, our community. We know these open-forum talks can absolutely save

a life." Topics include those mental illnesses and challenges often seen in college-aged students and ways to cope with situational anxiety and depression.

If you are interested in learning more about the Brown Bag Lectures, find the Facebook event <https://www.facebook.com/events/167287150609451/> or the Suncoast Mental Health Center website, www.suncoastmentalhealth.org. Please call 772-489-4726 for more details.

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).

- Tonya Dawn Mann, 48, Valley Way, West Palm Beach, was arrested May 24 by Deputy Tyler Ott on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging her with failure to appear - resisting officer with violence. She is being held without bond.

- Cameron Denice Carter, 17, Southwest Second Way, Okeechobee, was arrested May 24 by the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force on a felony charge of possession of a controlled substance (alprazolam) without a valid prescription and misdemeanor charges of possession of a controlled substance (cannabis) without a valid prescription and driving a motor vehicle without a valid driver license. He was booked into the

Okeechobee County Jail and then turned over to his parents.

- Jose Antonio Hernandez, 27, Southwest 34th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested May 24 by Deputy Matthew Huffman on a DOC felony warrant charging him with two counts of violation of probation - providing false information to pawnbroker, two counts of violation of probation - dealing in stolen property and violation of probation - burglary of unoccupied structure or conveyance. He is being held without bond.

- James Richard Baldauf Jr., 43, Northeast 29th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested May 25 by Deputy Robert Feldman on a DOC felony warrant charging him with two counts of violation of probation - possession of a controlled substance without a valid prescription and one count of violation of probation - failure to appear. He is being held without bond.

- Anthony Gerald Vickers, 25, U.S. 441 Southeast, Okeechobee, was arrested May 25 by Detective Mark Margerum on felony charges of armed burglary of a structure or conveyance and grand theft (more than

\$300 but less than \$5,000). His bond was set at \$80,000.

- Brett Allen Noel, 44, U.S. 441 North, Okeechobee, was arrested May 25 by Deputy Robert Feldman on a felony charge of possession of a controlled substance (oxycodone) without a valid prescription. His bond was set at \$1,500.

- Thomas Christopher Valdes, 25, North 59th Street, Tampa, was arrested May 25 by Officer Jason Gavern on a felony charge of unlicensed carrying of concealed firearm and a misdemeanor charge of possession of a controlled substance (cannabis) without a valid prescription. His bond was set at \$3,500.

- Douglas Charles Brege, 57, Southeast 28th Street, Okeechobee, was arrested May 26 by Deputy Joel Lacerte on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging him with cheating at common law. He was released on his own recognizance.

- Tonya Louise Collins, 34, Northwest 24th Avenue, Okeechobee, was arrested May 26 by Deputy Robert Feldman on three counts of felony charge battery on law enforcement officer. She was also arrested by Deputy Corporal Kristin Gray on a misde-

meanor charge of driving under the influence. Her bond was set at \$8,500.

- Kenneth Raymond Thomas, 43, Northwest 38th Avenue, Okeechobee, was arrested May 26 by Deputy Tim Miller on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging him with possession of a controlled substance (cocaine) without a valid prescription. His bond was set at \$5,000.

- Megan Elizabeth Cline, 24, Southeast 10th Street, Okeechobee, was arrested May 27 by Officer Jessica Francis on a felony charge of child neglect and a misdemeanor charge of resisting arrest without violence. Her bond was set at \$3,250.

- Brittany Leighann Alfonso, 30, Okeechobee, was arrested May 28 by Deputy Corporal Bryan Lowe on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging her with failure to appear - grand theft. She is being held without bond.

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

Life-threatening condition associated with synthetic cannabinoids use

Special to the Okeechobee News

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is providing information on: the current status of a multistate outbreak of coagulopathy from exposure to synthetic cannabinoid products containing a vitamin K-dependent antagonist agent, such as brodifacoum; signs and symptoms of presenting patients from this outbreak and which patients are at risk; laboratory testing options that are available to help identify and classify cases; available resources that may help clinicians make decisions; and to whom to report possible cases.

Synthetic cannabinoids are not one drug. Hundreds of different synthetic cannabinoid chemicals are manufactured and sold. New ones with unknown health risks become available each year. These chemicals are called cannabinoids because they act on the same brain cell receptors as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main active ingredient in marijuana; however, synthetic cannabinoids may affect the brain in different and unpredictable ways compared to THC (2). Synthetic cannabinoids are used in a variety of ways including: sprayed onto plant material and then smoked; used in electronic nicotine delivery devices (such as e-cigarettes); or in-

gested when added to herbal tea or food.

Synthetic cannabinoids are widely available. Consumers can buy synthetic cannabinoids in convenience stores, from individual drug dealers, friends, or online as incense or natural herbal products. They are sold under many different brand names, but are commonly referred to as synthetic marijuana, fake weed, legal weed, K2, and Spice. Adverse effects from synthetic cannabinoids use vary and can include neurological (e.g., agitation, confusion), psychiatric (e.g., hallucinations, delusions), and other physical (e.g., tachypnea, tachycardia, gastrointestinal distress) signs and symptoms.

In March 2018, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported cases of unexplained bleeding among patients who reported using synthetic cannabinoids. Subsequent testing of drug and biological samples from case-patients detected the presence of brodifacoum, a long-acting vitamin K-dependent antagonist that is used as a rodenticide.

CDC is currently coordinating national surveillance activities for possible cases of vitamin K-dependent antagonist coagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoids use. Since the index case was identified in Illinois on March 3, 2018, state health depart-

ments have reported 202 cases, including five deaths, to CDC. Case patients have been identified in nine states with the majority being reported from Illinois.

Maryland has reported 20 cases. Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin have reported six or fewer cases per state. More than 95 of case-patient biological samples have tested positive for brodifacoum. The current working hypothesis is that brodifacoum was mixed with synthetic cannabinoids products.

Case-patients from this outbreak have presented with a variety of signs and symptoms of coagulopathy (e.g., bruising, nosebleeds, excessively heavy menstrual bleeding, hematemesis, hemoptysis, hematuria, flank pain, abdominal pain, and bleeding gums or mouth). In addition, some patients have been asymptomatic or presented with complaints unrelated to bleeding but have had numerical coagulopathy that may put them at risk for bleeding complications resulting from injuries and invasive or surgical procedures. Patients should be considered high-risk for coagulopathy if they have reported use of or are suspected of using synthetic cannabinoids.

The most helpful and commonly avail-

able laboratory test to help identify cases is the International Normalized Ratio (INR) that is part of a routine coagulation profile. Case confirmation requires detection of brodifacoum in blood, serum, plasma, or urine, as determined by reference laboratory testing. Clinicians and healthcare providers should work with their healthcare facility's laboratory to determine what options are available to them for brodifacoum testing.

CDC recommends that people do not use synthetic cannabinoids. Synthetic cannabinoids are always dangerous because it is impossible for people to know what chemicals are in the product, how much they are being exposed to, and how their body will react to the chemicals. The synthetic cannabinoid products associated with this outbreak are especially dangerous because they contain brodifacoum, a chemical used as rat poison that can cause uncontrolled bleeding.

People who have used synthetic cannabinoids in the past three months and are concerned about their health should contact their healthcare provider. Synthetic cannabinoid users who develop any unusual bruising or bleeding should seek medical attention immediately.

Better Business Bureau News

Did you wire money using Western Union to a scammer between Jan. 1, 2004 and Jan. 19, 2017? If you were conned and lost money you are in luck!

The Federal Trade Commission has announced that if you were the victim of a scam between Jan. 1, 2004, and Jan. 19, 2017 and used Western Union's money transfer system, you can now file a claim to get your money back. You have until May 31, to file the free claim.

"American consumers lost money while Western Union looked the other way," said FTC Acting Chairman Maureen K. Ohlhausen. "We're pleased to start the process that will get that money back into consumers' rightful hands."

The refunds are a result of a joint investigation by the FTC, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Western Union agreed to pay a \$586 million settlement, and the DOJ is using that money to provide refunds to victims.

Consumers who were victim to multiple scams can also file a different claim for each case. Once the claim is filed, the DOJ will check with the Treasury Offset Program to ensure that victims do not owe money to the federal government. Refunds could be reduced if victims owe money.

To learn how to submit a claim click here.

Alert: Click here to read how some scammers are trying to take advantage of the settlement.

In 2017, BBB Scam Tracker received almost 88,000 scam reports. More than 10% requested that consumers wire money to complete the transaction. Some of the types of scams that requested money to be transferred (wired) include:

Romance scams — A person you meet online expresses interest in you romantically. When you are serious with your new friend they ask for money to travel to see you, for medical services, or to help a family member. You never meet your new friend or see your money again.

Advance fee loans — A loan is offered, but there is a fee that must be paid upfront prior to the issuing of the loan. The fee is for a processing fee or insurance. The loan never is received and your money is gone.

Lottery or prize scams — You are informed that you have won a prize or are a winner in a lottery. In order to collect your prize you must pay taxes, shipping or other fees upfront. The prize is never received and your money is in the scammer's hands.

Grandparent scam — You receive a call from someone who sounds like your grandchild, but you just aren't sure. They say they are in jail in another country and need bail or are having an emergency — such as needing medical assistance. They ask for money to be wired. It is a scammer calling you, not your relative. Your relative is fine, but your money will never be seen again.

BBB advises of 10 steps to avoid a scam: <https://www.bbb.org/avoidscams/>.

If you have questions about claims and refunds, you can contact the refund administrator at 1-844-319-2124. or info@westernunionremission.com.

Learn more on the FTC's blog in English and in Spanish.

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Summer play camp set

Summer play camp will be held from June 11 through July 27, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Okeechobee Civic Center, 1750 U.S. 98 N., for kids ages 5 to 13. Registration is from now through **May 31**, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Park and Recreation Dept., 1718 N.W. Ninth Ave. For information, call 863-763-6950.

Library will host programs

Each week, beginning **June 1**, the Okeechobee Library, 206 S.W. 16th St., will host a free program. From cooking to crafts to giant games, every week will be a different and fun experience. Be sure to check the summer calendar to see what programs you'd like to attend. All events are free and open to all ages. You must be registered to attend. For details and to register, call 863-763-3536 or come in to sign up.

REVIVE mission outreach set

REVIVE is putting on it's first youth "Revive Night" on Friday, **June 1**, at Oakview Baptist Church, 677 S.W. 32nd St. Six churches have partnered to bring this event to Okeechobee, with the hope of reaching people for Jesus and praying for God to send revival again.

Join the Wild Orchid walk

The Okeechobee Orchid Club will be on the annual Wild Orchid walk on **June 2**. Anyone interested in joining, contact Sue at 561-762-2788.

Fish tournament to be held

The 10th annual Lake Okeechobee Airboat Association Trash Fish tournament will be held on Saturday, **June 2**, at Okee-Tantie Airboat Landing, 1043 U.S. 78. For information, call Jamie Mellette at 561-718-3077 or Rob Jones at 561-722-6572.

Teen author book signing set

Okeechobee Library presents local author Vincenzo Pasquarella, discussing his debut novel, "Phantom Janitor," on Saturday, **June 2**, at 2 p.m. Learn how this young author at age 17 wrote and published his first novel. Book signing to follow. Books can be purchased on site for \$12.

DOH will hold CPR classes

Okeechobee Department of Health, 1728 N.W. Ninth Ave., will hold CPR/AED and basic first aid certification class on Tuesday, **June 12**, from 6 to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday, **June 23**, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For information, call Chuck Akers at 772-260-9026 or Sara Yates at 863-532-3436.

Library hosts Reading Camp

Ms. Kim at the Okeechobee County Library, 206 S.W. 16th St., is excited to announce that the "Summer Reading Camp" will be every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. from Wednesday, **June 20** through July 25. Camp is for ages 8 years old and under. If they have a sibling that is older, they may attend as well. Parents must attend! For information, call 863-763-3536.

Democrats to meet June 20

The Okeechobee Chapter of the Democratic Party of Florida welcomes you to attend the monthly meeting held Wednesday, **June 20**, at 6:30 p.m. at Beef O' Bradys, 608 S. Parrott Ave. Please arrive by 6 p.m. if placing a food order.

DOH will hold CPR classes

Okeechobee Department of Health, 1728 N.W. Ninth Ave., will hold CPR/AED and basic first aid certification class on Saturday, **June 23**, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For information, call Chuck Akers at 772-260-9026 or Sara Yates at 863-532-3436.

Reading challenge at library

The Okeechobee Library, 206 S.W. 16th St., will team up with Scholastic from now through **Sept. 7**, as students take the pledge to read as many minutes as they can this summer! To join, simply call the library at 863-763-3536 or come in to sign up with a librarian. Students will receive a pledge certificate along with a username and password. By logging reading minutes on the Scholastic website, students can unlock digital rewards and complete weekly reading challenges online. Reading minutes will also count towards special summer prizes and events at the library. Join the fun and sign up today!

CSC meeting canceled

The Children's Services Council meeting for June 14, has been canceled. There will be a special meeting held on Tuesday, **June 12**, at 5 p.m.

Save lives by donating blood

June blood drives in Okeechobee include:

- Monday, June 4, at Walmart from 1:30 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 12, at Walmart from noon to 12:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 16, at Walmart from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Sunday, June 17, at Golden Corral from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Sunday, June 17, at Walmart from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 19, at Raulerson Hospital from 2 to 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 19, at Walmart from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Obituaries

Lorene P. Mott, 88

MARIANNA — Lorene P. Mott passed from this life Wednesday, May 23, 2018, at Mariana Nursing and Rehab Center. She was born in Bartow, Fla. on June 23, 1929, to Jason Hudson and Sylvia Merritt Parker.

Lorene worked as a homemaker for most of her life.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and two brothers, Steve and Buddy Parker.

Lorene is survived by her son, Freddy Lee Mott; and her sister-in-law, Linda Parker.

Memorialization will be by cremation.

Family and friends may sign the online register at www.brownfh.net

Kenneth Wayne Powers, 50

OKEECHOBEE — Kenneth Wayne Powers died May 27, 2018. He was born Jan. 22, 1968 in Hollywood, Fla. to the late Charles and Yvonne (Wilson) Powers. A resident of Okeechobee for 30 years, having come from Hollywood, he enjoyed air boating, four wheelers, auto racing, and being outdoors.



Mr. Powers is survived by his brothers, Chuck Powers (Charley), of Virginia, Tim Powers (Lynda), and Ricky Powers, all of Okeechobee; a host of nieces and nephews; and Pop-Pop to Arihya, Navahya, Kolton, Hunter, Connor, Steven, Vanessa, and Toby.

A gathering will be held Saturday, June 2, 2018 at Buxton & Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home from 4 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Those wishing to leave a message of condolence may sign the register book at www.OkeechobeeFuneralHome.com

All arrangements are entrusted to the direction and care of the Buxton & Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home, 400 North Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida, 34972.

Jerry Lee Taylor, Sr., 78

OKEECHOBEE — Jerry Lee Taylor, Sr. passed away on May 26, 2018.

He was born on April 8, 1940. He married the love of his life on May 19, 1979.

He was preceded in death by his mom, Eileen Snider Brooks (husband, Lowell Brooks); and father, Frank A. Taylor (wife, Fern Taylor); and one great-grandchild, Robert Berry.



He is survived by his wife of 39 years, Debbie S. Taylor; children, Sherry Edmondson, Teresa Penrod (Rodne); Jerry Lee Taylor, Jr., Fay Taylor, Doug Carney (Joletta); eight grandchildren, Michelle Ray, Johnny Berry, Joseph Berry, Cindy Murphy, Melinda Penrod, Lucky Carney, J.J. John and Carson Carney; and nine great-grandchildren. Jerry is also survived by four siblings, Dick Taylor (Jan), Wayne Taylor (Patty), Larry Taylor, Betty Baker and Russell Taylor (Geraldine); along with several step-siblings.

Services are at 10 a.m., Thursday, May 31, 2018 at Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terr. in Okeechobee.

Condolences can be left at www.okeechobeseawinds.com

Candlelight vigil planned for accident victims

By Richard Marion
Okeechobee News

A candlelight vigil is scheduled to be held in honor of the three victims of a May 11 traffic crash that occurred on U.S. 441 near State Road 60.

Valerie Edlemon, 66, Tonya Macon, 49, and Jalen Edlemon, 14, were all traveling north on 441 in a Kia Sportage when a Dodge Challenger traveling south that was driven by Daniel O. Betancourt crossed into their lane while attempting to overtake a semi-trailer. The southbound Challenger collided head-on with the northbound Kia in the northbound lane.

Valerie J. Edlemon and Tonya L. Macon were pronounced dead at the scene. Jalen Edlemon was transported to Raulerson Hospital in Okeechobee, where he later passed away. Daniel O. Betancourt sustained only minor injuries, while his passenger Vernisha Murph was seriously injured.

Pam Barton says her daughter, Sabriel Goettert, was best friends with Jalen and she hopes the vigil can help her and other community members find closure after the tragic loss of life.

"My daughter said Jalen was her one true friend," said Ms. Barton. "He was the

one that could always make her laugh. So when we learned that he had passed, it was just devastating. Jalen's entire family in Okeechobee were just him, his mom, and grandma. And they all passed in the accident. The rest of the family is in Nebraska, so of course they are not going to have a service here. Because of that the kids didn't really get their closure.

"With how hard it hit home and with how hurt my daughter was, I decided to help put this together not just for her but the other kids as well, because he had several very close friends he had known his entire life."

The memorial will be held at 7 p.m. on **June 1** at the Clif Betts Jr. Lakeside Recreation Area (aka Lock 7) on the fishing pier. Fifty paper lanterns will be lit and released in memory of the three who passed away, and there will be candles and a poster board with pictures of Jalen and his family. The public is welcomed and encouraged to attend to observe or share memories.

"He was her friend throughout middle school," said Ms. Barton. "They had almost all their classes together. She's still hurting over it and I know others are as well. I hope with this memorial the kids can have closure and peace and be able to say goodbye to their friend."

Area churches host special events and VBS this summer

Okeechobee Chapter of Ladies Propel will meet Monday, June 4, at **Fountain of Life Church**, 1302 S.W. 32nd St., at 6:30 p.m. This is a new conversational-style series entitled, "Growth." There is no charge for materials. To register, call the church office at 863-763-8945. This is an internationally known group study by author Christine Caine and will continue on the first Monday of each month. All ladies, middle school age and up are welcome.

Okeechobee Missionary Baptist Church, 4214 N. U.S. 441, will host a Vacation Bible School from June 4 to 9, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. each day. All ages are welcome!

The **First United Methodist Church**, 200 N.W. Second St., will host a Vacation Bible School from June 25 to June 29 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., for school age children from Pre-K to Fifth grade. High school students are welcome to volunteer for extra community service hours. For information, call Emily Streelman at 863-261-3933.

Church of Our Saviour, Episcopal Church, 200 N.W. "Third St., would like to extend an invitation for you to come and worship with them. All are welcome. Come as you are. Church services are Sunday 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and Wednesday, 6 p.m. A nursery and a comfort room are available for your use. We offer an Adult Forum and Bible Study on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and Children's Church (ages pre-k through high school) Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Visit our website for more information, churchofoursaviourokeechobee.org, or call the church office Tuesday through Friday 863-763-4843.

Christ Fellowship Church, 701 S. Parrott Ave., invites all to worship with us. Service times are Sundays, 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. Childcare and children's programming, nursery through fifth grade, is provided. We have services for students, grades 6-12, on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Services are exciting, casual, and relaxed. Come as you are and expect to feel welcomed as our guest. Visit our website, gochristfellowship.com, or call 561-799-7600

for more information.

Okeechobee Missionary Baptist Church, at 4212 U.S. 441 N., would like to invite all to worship in church services. Sunday School is at 9:45 a.m., with Sunday morning worship at 10:45 a.m. Sunday night Baptist Training Course (BTC) is at 5:30 p.m., followed by Sunday evening worship at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday evening Bible Study is at 7 p.m., with Wednesday evening Youth Discovery Bible clubs at 7 p.m. For more information call Pastor Donny Raney at 863-763-3681.

Faith Alive Family Church, at 3075 S.W. Third Terrace, is non-denominational and Pastors Paul and Jen Smith would like to invite all to worship. Sunday service and kids church is at 10:30 a.m. On Wednesday, adult and youth (6th-12th grade) service is at 6:30 p.m. Find them on Facebook at Faith Alive Family Church. On Facebook, they are live on Sunday mornings. For information, call 863-623-4233.

Treasure Island Baptist Church, 4209 Hwy. 441 S.E., comes with an exciting message of hope, and a vision to reach out to all people in Okeechobee and the surrounding area. Pastor Douglas T. Ryan graduated from Hobe Sound Bible College. Be looking out for him in your community as he boldly encourages people everywhere to start a new exciting life with Jesus Christ as their guide. We welcome all to our family of friendly people who just seek to show you an outpouring of Gods love. Our service on Sunday starts at 10:30 a.m. with Sunday school at 9:30 a.m. We also invite all to our Wednesday or Sunday evening gathering at 6:30 p.m.

The **Pentecostals of Okeechobee**, 405 S.W. 10th Ave., have services on the followings days and times: Sunday school, all ages is at 10 a.m.; Sunday word and worship is at 11 a.m.; Tuesday prayer meeting is at 6:30 p.m.; and Wednesday worship, Bible study and kids church is at 7 p.m. Pastor Raymond Warren can be reached at 863-634-4567, email: pentefokee@yahoo.com, www.okeepentecostals.com. Spanish services are also available; call for times of services.



Places of Worship

Share your news and photos for this column by email to okeenews@newszap.com

Victory Baptist Church, 500 S.W. 9th St., would like to invite the public to attend any or all of their services each Sunday. Sunday School is at 10 a.m. for all ages. Morning worship service is at 10:45 a.m. and includes old fashioned preaching and singing. The youth band consists of the piano, violin, mandolin and guitar, as well as various singing groups. Sunday evening service is at 7 p.m. Wednesday evening prayer and Bible study and kids bible club is at 7 p.m. The King James Bible is used. For information, please call 863-763-0669. Check out the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/victorybaptistokee.

Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, 1057 S.E. 14th Ct., offers Sunday service at 11 a.m., Sunday school at 10 a.m., and Bible study on Tuesday at 7 p.m. Pastor is Bishop Maurice Alexander. Church phone is 863-467-9355, church email is truthwisdomlove@gmail.com.

The Gathering hosts "Joy in the Mourning" a grief support group and bible study for anyone who has lost a loved one, through death or divorce. All are welcome to attend. The support group will meet every Tuesday at 2 p.m. at 1735 S.W. 24th Ave. For more information, call Gretta Spradlin at 863-763-0899.

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Beef Breeding Show at Okeechobee Youth Livestock Show



Special to the Okeechobee News/Sandra Pearce
Edana Scalf showed a cow in the Beef Breeding Show during the Okeechobee County Fair in March. She did not sell the animal this year. 4-H and FFA projects involving breeding animals are sometimes continued from one year to the next.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Sandra Pearce
Rueben Castaneda also showed an animal in the Beef Breeding show at the Okeechobee County Fair.



Special to the Okeechobee News/Sandra Pearce
Reese Stokes showed a Brahman bull in the Beef Breeding Show at the Okeechobee County Fair.

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Suicide is growing health problem, says CDC

Special to the Okeechobee News

Suicide is a large and growing public health problem in the United States according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. It was responsible for 44,193 deaths in 2015, with approximately one death every 12 minutes. Many more people think about or attempt suicide and survive. In 2015, 9.8 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 2.7 million made a plan, and 1.4 million attempted suicide.

Suicide is a problem throughout the life span. It is the third leading cause of death for youth 10-14 years of age, the second leading cause of death among people 15-24 and 25-34 years of age, the fourth leading

cause among people 35 to 44 years of age, the fifth leading cause among people ages 45-54, and the eighth leading cause among people 55-64 years of age.

Some groups have higher rates of suicide than others. Suicide rates vary by race/ethnicity, age, and other population characteristics, with the highest rates across the life span occurring among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic White populations. Other Americans disproportionately impacted by suicide include veterans and other military personnel and workers in certain occupational groups. Sexual minority youth bear a large burden as well, and experience increased suicidal ideation and behavior compared to their non-sexual minority peers.

Warning signs

According to the CDC, most – but not all – persons contemplating suicide display some warning signs. Warning signs include:

- Talking about wanting to die;
- Looking for a way to kill oneself;
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose;
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain;
- Talking about being a burden to others;
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs;
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly;
- Sleeping too little or too much;
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated;
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge;
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide.

What to do

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide, the CDC advises:

- Do not leave the person alone;
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Health and agriculture officials urge mosquito-borne illness awareness

Special to the Okeechobee News

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida Department of Health is advising residents there has been an increase in mosquito-borne disease activity in several counties. Although no human cases have been reported, several horses and emus have tested positive for Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. West Nile virus (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) virus are also present in mosquitoes. The risk of disease transmission through bites of humans has increased.

The department recommends the following tips for residents and visitors:

- Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and take precautions to help limit exposure.
- Be aware that emus infected with EEE virus can also potentially expose owners and other animals who are in direct contact with their feces, meat, organs, blood and bodily tissues. Contact your veterinarian or county health department for information on how to safely handle potentially infected emus.

- Some wildlife can also be infected with EEE or other mosquito-borne viruses. Do not harvest wild game that appears sick, wear gloves when dressing or preparing meat from carcasses of healthy-appearing game, and cook meat well.

- For information on how to prevent EEE virus infection in horses, emus and camelids (alpacas and llamas, etc.) though vaccination, consult with your veterinarian, or the University of Florida College of Large Animal Medicine.

- If you suspect your animal has EEE, consult your veterinarian.

- EEE is a reportable animal disease. Animals suspected or confirmed with the virus must be reported to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry. Visit the division's website at www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Animal-Industry.

To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to "Drain and Cover":

DRAIN standing water weekly to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans and broken appliances.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.
- COVER skin with clothing or repellent.
- Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and IR3535 are effective.
- Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than two months old.
- Permethrin insecticide can also be applied to clothing and gear (but not skin)

Tips on repellent use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
 - Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) are recommended. Other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or IR3535.
 - Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
 - In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate.
 - If more protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing. Again, always follow the directions.
- The department continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses. Report dead birds via the site www.myfwc.com.



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4-H Camps offer summer fun for children

By **Katrina Elsen**

Okeechobee News

Want to keep the kids busy this summer with fun, educational well-supervised activities?

There are still openings for some of the summer camps offered through the Okeechobee County Extension Office. Camp fees of \$150 per week cover bus transportation and entry fees to the scheduled attractions. Campers bring their own bag lunches. The camps are supervised by 4-H adult volunteers with the help of teen counselors.

The popular H2O Camp starts the week with Eagle Bay Air Boat rides in Okeechobee. On Tuesday, campers will visit the Navy Seal Museum in Fort Pierce, and Sailfish Splash Waterpark in Stuart. On Wednesday, the campers will go to SeaWorld in Orlando. On Thursday, they will travel to the Fisheating

Creek Water Management Area in Palmdale. On Friday, they will go to Disney's Blizzard Beach in Orlando.

Blast to the Past History Camp allows participants to learn more about their community and about the State of Florida. History Camp includes visits to the Morikami Museum and Gardens, Boca Express Train Museum, Kennedy Space Center, Big Cypress Reservation and Preserve and Gatorland. The camp also includes a "My Town, Okeechobee" tour.

Horse camp is held at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center. Campers bring their own horses, and work with professional trainers to improve their riding and horse care skills. Horses may be left in the barn at the Agri-Civic Center for the week or transported to and from the camp each day. Horse camp has an additional fee of \$13 for stall shavings.

Shooting Sports and Conservation Camp meets daily at the Extension Office. Campers will travel to OK Corral, Skull Hill Archery Range, the sheriffs' range, and two more locations, to be announced. Participants will receive the FWC Hunter Safety certification for completing the required activities during camp. They will also participate in some career exploration through drone flying, wildlife ID activities, and exploring local natural resources.

The Agriculture day camp motto is: "Farm to Plate, We Educate." Participants will learn about a different local commodity each day of camp. They will travel to local farms, ranches, processing/packing operations to get a firsthand, hands on, look (and sometimes taste) at the many local aspects of agriculture and the important role it plays

in the community. Career opportunities in agriculture will also be discussed.

There's still time to sign up for these educational and fun summer camps.

- H2O Camp has sessions available for the weeks of June 4-8, June 11-15 and July 23-27.

- History Camp has openings for the weeks of June 18-22 and July 9-13.

- Shooting Sports Camp has openings for the week of July 9-13.

- Horse Camp has openings for the week of June 25-29.

- Agriculture Camp has openings for the week of July 16-20.

To sign up, or for more information, stop by the Okeechobee County Extension Office in the county annex on U.S. 98.

SFWMD python hunters eliminate 1000th snake

Special to the Okeechobee News

WEST PALM BEACH - Tuesday, May 22, hunters participating in the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board's Python Elimination Program achieved an important milestone for this highly successful initiative by eliminating the 1000th snake. An average of three pythons have been eliminated per day from SFWMD lands since the program began in March 2017.

Eliminating invasive species such as Burmese pythons is critical to preserving the rare Everglades ecosystem. Florida taxpayers have invested billions of dollars to restore the water quality and hydrology of the Everglades. Combating invasive plants and animals is necessary to ensure this investment results in our shared goals of the overall restoration plan.

"The success of this program was made possible through a dedicated team approach," said SFWMD scientist Mike Kirkland, project manager for the Python Elimination Program. "Staff implemented, hunters executed and our state leadership, particularly Gov. Rick Scott, supported a program that fights for the Everglades every day."

Hunter Brian Hargrove dispatched the 1000th python, an 11-foot-2-inch long snake. Hargrove, a Miami native who grew up visiting the Everglades as a child, talked about how he used to see the Everglades full of native species and how the python has decimated the native wildlife.

"When we would come out here as kids, rabbits would be everywhere," Hargrove said. "I've been out here hunting for months and I've seen one rabbit and 120 pythons."

Several hunters turned out at the 1000th snake weigh-in event to congratulate Hargrove and bring their own eliminated pythons. In all, seven hunters weighed in a combined total of almost 98 feet worth of eliminated invasive Burmese python.

All the pythons eliminated by the program would stretch approximately 7,300 feet - or about 1.4 miles - and weigh more than 16,500 pounds, or the equivalent of

more than 8 tons. To date, all of this has been accomplished with less than \$250,000 spent on wages and bounties for the hunters, an average expenditure of less than \$250 per snake.

"Congratulations to the South Florida Water Management District, and the many hunters that have taken part in this program, on the elimination of their 1000th invasive Burmese Python," said U.S. Rep. Francis Rooney, R-Naples. "The 12-foot-long python that is hanging in my office is a daily reminder of the need to eradicate this species and protect the unique ecosystem of our Everglades. I am currently working with the U.S. Department of Interior and the House Natural Resources Committee to allow for hunting of Burmese Pythons within Everglades National Park, as well as to allow the male python tracking program organized by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. This will speed up the process of eliminating these snakes, which are not native to our area and have no natural predators."

In addition to the innovative program fighting the spread of Burmese pythons, the SFWMD Governing Board for years has budgeted millions of dollars in cooperation with other state and federal partners to eradicate and control invasive species such as melaleuca, Brazilian pepper trees and the invasive fern, lygodium.

Elected officials and celebrities ranging from Rooney to superstar chef Gordon Ramsey have taken part in the hunt, bringing international awareness to the issue of this invasive species and the district's efforts to eradicate them. Python hunters were also featured in a Discovery Channel television special highlighting the program.

SFWMD's Python Elimination Program facilitates the elimination of the invasive snakes on district-owned land. A similar successful program is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Python Removal Contractor Program. This program pays qualified individuals to survey other specific areas of state-owned land for the pythons, humanely euthanize each python they catch in the field (according to American Veterinary Medical Associ-

ation guidelines) and then deposit them at designated drop-off locations.

"Under Gov. Scott's leadership, python removal has increased dramatically among the many state partners. This milestone demonstrates that the SFWMD is a significant and effective partner in our long-term goal to manage invasive species like the Burmese python," said Eric Sutton, Executive Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

About the district's python elimination program

A team of professional python hunters were selected from more than 1,000 applicants and given access to district-owned lands in Miami-Dade County for the pilot phase and later in Broward and Collier counties as the program expanded. These independent contractors are paid \$8.25 per hour, up to eight hours daily, to hunt in the Everglades. Depending on the size of the snake presented, hunters can also receive additional payments of \$50 for pythons measuring up to 4 feet and an extra \$25 for each foot measured above 4 feet. An

additional \$200 is given for each eliminated python nest with eggs.

The invasive Burmese python, which breeds and multiplies quickly and has no natural predator in the Everglades ecosystem, has decimated native populations of wildlife. The more that can be eliminated, especially females and their eggs, the better chance future generations of native wildlife will have to thrive in the Everglades ecosystem that Floridians have invested billions of dollars to restore.



Special to the Okeechobee News/SFWMD
The weigh-in of the 1,000th python captured as part of the SFWMD Python Elimination Program.

Historical Society has great gifts for dad

Special to the Okeechobee News

Stumped at what to get for that special someone on Father's Day? Want something a bit more unique than a new shirt or tie? The Okeechobee Historical Society is having a special sale of items that we think will appeal to most Dads! We have Centennial Mason Jars filled with candy, photo books, Tervis tumblers, coffee mugs and even copies of Pete Gawda's book "Reflec-

tions of a Small-Town Reporter" for just \$10. Most of our items are \$10 or less. You may visit the museum at 1850 U.S. 98 N, just next to the Civic Center on Thursday, May 31, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., Thursday, June 7, and 14 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. or Saturday, June 2, or 9 from 9 a.m. until noon. Not only can you purchase a great gift and help the Historical Society but you can also tour the museum if you haven't already. Hope to see you there!

Air potato beetles flourishing in Florida

Special to the Okeechobee News

GAINESVILLE — Across Florida, thousands of small, red beetles have been battling the invasive air potato vine for the last eight years, one bite at a time.

And they appear to be prospering, according to the latest data collected through the collaborative efforts of the University of Florida, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and hundreds of citizen scientists.

“The data we’ve collected so far have shown how well the air potato beetle has established throughout the state,” said Christopher Kerr, a scientist with the FDACS Division of Plant Industry, who manages its air potato beetle rearing program. “Most of the sites we received data from showed increased populations through the season.”

UF and FDACS teamed up to create an educational series for the program, which teaches participants how to identify the air potato vine and beetle, and how to collect data on the status of the vines and beetles on their properties, after which they join the group as citizen scientists.

“These citizen scientists make up the Air Potato Patrol, which now has more than 450 members in Florida,” said Bill Lester, residential horticulture agent for Hernando County with UF’s Institute of Food and Agri-

cultural Sciences Extension.

After a year of receiving data, the data collected indicated that the beetle population was growing, even on sites that had not received any releases. This is good news for the efforts to control the invasive vine, which is known to engulf existing vegetation and disrupt native ecosystems. The air potato beetle eats only the air potato plant, making it an excellent control agent. FDACS began releasing the beetles in Florida in 2010 with the goal of establishing a sustainable population.

In addition to submitting data, members of the Air Potato Patrol work with Lester to determine if the air potato problem on their properties requires additional beetles. Mary Estes, whose Hillsborough County property was overrun with air potato, received beetles through the program.

“The vine was choking out my plants and trees, and killed two of my orange trees,” she said. “Given the nature of this vine, I think citizens have to be involved.”

For years, patrol member Donald Jones had been struggling to control air potato on his Polk County property, where it was smothering his live oak trees. Since introducing the beetles, he’s seen no new vines. “I’ve learned, with UF’s help, how to spot them. We have some native vines here that



Special to the Okeechobee News

Data collected by citizen scientists throughout Florida show that air potato beetles have established in the state. UF/IFAS photo by Tyler Jones.

look very close to the air potato vines,” he said. Patrol or learn more about the program, go

To become a member of the Air Potato to airpotatobeetle.com.

Asian subterranean termites topple slash pine trees

By Brad Buck
UF/IFAS

GAINESVILLE — Most termites don’t kill trees, but Asian subterranean termites are slaying some pine trees in South Florida and damaging the rest of the local urban tree canopy, a new University of Florida study found.

“Our beloved native slash pine is lethally stressed by this termite, which is unexpected,” said Thomas Chouvenc, a UF/IFAS assistant professor of urban entomology. Not only can these invasive termites kill pine trees, they also hollow out the trunk of many other trees, including oak trees, making them structurally fragile and susceptible to hurricanes.

As hurricane season approaches, homeowners can help prevent the potential tree damage by using termite baits, Mr. Chouvenc said. With hurricane season starting Friday, it’s important to protect trees in residential areas, he said. Mr. Chouvenc led a newly published study that shows the extent of damage wrought by Asian subterranean termites in two suburban, residential areas of Broward County.

For the new study, published in the journal *Florida Entomologist*, Mr. Chouvenc walked neighborhoods to assess more than 400 slash pines in two residential areas of Fort Lauderdale and in city parks.

The city lost 12 percent of its pine trees in just a few years, and more than 50 percent of its pine trees surveyed are currently infested by this termite, Mr. Chouvenc said. He also noted that the termites hollowed out some large oak trees that eventually col-

lapsed during Hurricane Irma last year.

“Our results suggest Asian subterranean termites have the potential to kill pine trees, and severely damage oak trees in the urban canopy,” said Mr. Chouvenc, a faculty member at the UF/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center. The termite damage in pine trees is very unique and never observed before, as the damage acts like a girdle to the trees, killing them slowly.

Property owners can protect structures against subterranean termites in two ways: liquid termiticides or termite baits, which are intended to kill termite colonies.

“In order to protect trees and structures, eliminating the colony before it gets too big

is preferable, and baits appear to be the most efficient way to do it,” Mr. Chouvenc said.

UF/IFAS researchers compare the damage caused by Asian subterranean termites on oak trees in South Florida to that caused by Formosan subterranean termites in Louisiana. As they make that comparison, Mr. Chouvenc said he and his colleagues want to raise major concerns about the fate of these weakened trees if a strong hurricane hits South Florida.

In 2005, for example, Hurricane Wilma caused extensive damage to southeastern Florida. Since then, many trees have sustained major damage from the Asian subter-

anean termites, Mr. Chouvenc said.

As Irma struck Florida in September 2017, the center of the storm spared Broward County, and most oak trees lost only a few branches. Still, in his new survey, Mr. Chouvenc found that Asian subterranean termites had hollowed all three of the oak trees he examined. Those trees collapsed during Hurricane Irma and damaged properties.

Mr. Chouvenc believes that could be a bad omen, as many other trees are being weakened with current termite infestation and a direct hit by a future hurricane would amplify the potential damage.

Agri-Civic Center Schedule June 2018

The Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center will most a variety of events in June

- Tuesday, June 5, the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center will be open for recreational riding. Recreational riding nights are an opportunity for local residents to ride their horses in the covered arena from 6 to 9 p.m. Cost \$10 per rider, and you MUST have a current Coggins certificate.

- Thursday, June 7, through Saturday, June 9, is the 2018 Florida High School Rodeo State Finals. Okeechobee welcomes the State Finals rodeo back to the Agri-Civic Center. The top 15 competitors in each event compete for the honor of representing the State of Florida at the High School Rodeo National Finals in Rock Springs, Wyo. There is no charge for the public to attend, and a concession stand will be open. Rodeo

performance times are: Thursday, 9 a.m. Cutting Competition Rounds 1 & 2 at 7 p.m. is a Rodeo Performance. Friday at 8 a.m. is Cutting Competition Round 3 and 7 p.m. is Rodeo Performance. On Saturday at 7 p.m. is Rodeo Performance.

- Tuesday, June 12, is Chow Down Food Trucks. The food trucks are returning, and bringing entertainment with them. A variety of food to choose from, and things to keep the kids occupied, too from 4:30 to 9 p.m.

- Friday, June 15, through Sunday, June 17, Gold Coast Cutters Youth Clinic & Cutting Competition. Friday night clinic for youth cutting horse competitors Cutting horse competition starts at 7 a.m. Saturday and Sunday There is no charge for the public to attend, and a concession stand will be open.

- Saturday, June 23, 4-H Show Stoppers

Youth and Open three Show Circuit Western, English, Ranch, and Speed classes. Open and Youth. The show is open to the public and there will be a concession stand on-site. For more information on classes, go to the 4-H Area E Horse Show Facebook page, or the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center Facebook page.

- Monday, June 25, through Friday, June 29, 4-H Horse Camp. The Okeechobee 4-H Horse Day Camp is a week long camp that is geared toward developing riders. Activities focus on youth and horses with the goal to provide meaningful educational experiences for youth. The day camps provide for a continuance of learning opportunities during the summer months as well as motivation to be physically active in a safe supervised venue.

Brahmans fall in playoffs to Doral Academy

By Richard Marion
Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee High School Brahmans baseball team lost their regional final game against Doral Academy on May 22, 2-0, ending both their season and their remarkable playoff run.

The game was the first time the Brahmans have made their way to the regional final since 2005.

Doral was able to grab the lead late in the third inning when freshman Gabriel Gutierrez was able to hit a two-run home run off

OHS pitcher Sean Osceola. Besides allowing the lone home run, S. Osceola pitched a great game for the Brahmans, throwing six strikeouts in five innings with no walks. Which was no easy feat against a Doral Academy team that has won four of their last district championships.

Okeechobee threatened to score in the top of the fifth inning, after Mason Adams broke the ongoing no-hitter with a grounder that snuck past the Doral infield for a single. Ethyn Durfee kept things rolling with a single of his own, and when the Doral defense lost control of the ball on an errant throw,

Adams was able to advance to third base. But Doral was able to limit the damage by getting the last two remaining outs and stopping the Brahmans' attempt at a comeback.

Adams led the team in hits with two, and threw three strikeouts in relief of S. Osceola.

The 2-0 loss caps the end of an exceptional playoff run for the Brahmans, who entered the district playoffs with a 10-12 record. Okeechobee was able to upset the top-seeded Jensen Beach Falcons 2-0, before falling to rival Martin County in the district champi-

onship. Okeechobee then moved on to the regional playoffs, where they were able to shut down Dwyer 2-0 and then defeat Martin County 2-1 in their rematch during the regional semifinal.

The Brahmans showed great resilience during their playoff run, finding ways to win games right when they needed to.

But, ultimately, the magic ran out and the Brahmans couldn't put together enough offense to overcome Doral Academy, who will now move on to face Venice in the Florida High School state semifinal on May 30.

Lionfish tournaments remove 15,000 lionfish

Special to the Okeechobee News

More than 15,000 lionfish were removed from Florida waters thanks to several tournaments held across the state focused on targeting the invasive species. Five of those fish were tagged previously by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff as part of the 2018 Lionfish Challenge, a removal incentive program that started May 19 on Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day.

"This is an amazing showing for the fourth annual Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day weekend and surrounding events," said Jessica McCawley, director of FWC's Division of

Marine Fisheries Management. "Lionfish were removed via tournaments and the FWC's incentive program, and the public got to learn first-hand about lionfish and what they can do to help at festivals like the one in Perdido Key held by the FWC and Coast Watch Alliance, as well as various other partners."

The Lionfish Challenge runs through Sept. 3. More than 200 people have already registered to participate in the statewide challenge, which rewards lionfish harvesters with prizes for their lionfish removals, tagged or not. The tagged lionfish component is new this year and includes cash prizes up to \$5,000. Lionfish were tagged at 50 public artificial reefs across

the state. Harvesters who caught the five tagged fish this weekend took home cash prizes up to \$2,500 and non-cash prizes as well. All five tagged fish were caught off Escambia County.

Sign up and learn more today by visiting MyFWC.com/Lionfish.

The FWC thanks all of the sponsors and organizations across the state that helped make this Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day event a success.

Remember, lionfish and other exotic pets that can no longer be cared for should never be released into Florida waters or lands. To learn more about where to surrender an exotic

pet for adoption, visit MyFWC.com/Wildlife-Habitats and click on "Nonnative Species" and "Exotic Pet Amnesty Program."

Statewide Lionfish events removal totals:

- 9,606 – Lionfish World Championship – Pensacola.
- 4,056 – Lionfish World Championship Pre-Tournament – Pensacola.
- 1,490 – Lion Tamer Tournament – Panama City Beach.
- 231 – Florida Skin Divers Association Lionfish Calcutta – St. Petersburg.
- Postponed – Sebastian Lionfish Tournament – Sebastian.

Clewiston farm earns Ethical Supplier certification

Special to the Okeechobee News

On May 14, Rouge River Farms joined a fast-growing network of certified growers that have made a commitment to improve labor conditions, food safety and pest management through Equitable Food Initiative's workforce development program. The company's farming and packing operations in Clewiston became EFI's first certified grower/shipper on the East Coast after meeting more than 300 rigorous indicators, based on independent assessment by third-party certifier SCS Global Services.

Rouge River Farms is a year-round sweet corn grower with operations in Florida, Georgia and Virginia, as well as in Ontario, Canada, where it grows and packs bulk

and value-added sweet corn. Certified sweet corn featuring EFI's Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured label is now available in selected Costco Wholesale locations east of the Mississippi River, and farmworkers receive a premium from sales of the EFI-labeled brand. As a 30-year-old company that has grown from a roadside stand to a multinational operation, Rouge River understands the importance of transparency and customer satisfaction.

Robert Reesor, president of Rouge River Farms, remarked, "We have always made food safety and quality a priority, but EFI's process for skill-building and workforce development programming allows us to place an even greater emphasis on the task,

knowing that every employee understands and executes on that process." Mr. Reesor continued, "With the EFI leadership team model, we were able to fully engage all levels of our staff even more deeply around food safety, as well as working conditions and pest management."

"Through the evaluation audit process, Rouge River Farms has demonstrated that it has the full commitment of management and an engaged leadership team — both of which are essential to meet the rigorous requirements of EFI certification and make transparency a priority," said Bonnie Holman, sustainability program manager at SCS Global Services.

Rouge River Farms has earned EFI's 28th

certification, helping to consolidate a compliance model that drives business performance, engages employees to ensure food safety and empowers consumers to make informed choices. Unlike other certifications, EFI also requires ongoing training, which is part of a model for continuous improvement that is always raising the bar. The certification of the Florida operation is Rouge River's first, and plans are being made to certify additional growing operations.

To date, EFI has helped certify 10 grower-shippers representing 39 commodities and affecting more than 26,000 farmworkers.

Navy SEAL Museum receives Button 5.60 dry combat submersible

Special to the Okeechobee News

FORT PIERCE — The Navy SEAL Museum has announced acceptance of a GSE Trieste Button 5.60 prototype submersible. This Italian-designed submersible was one of several prototypes considered for the next generation of small, dry submarines to be used by USSOCOM and U.S. Navy SEALs.

The United States Special Operations Command Undersea Systems Program Office offered the Button 5.60 to the Navy SEAL Museum as a donated artifact to educate visitors.

"The Navy SEAL Museum is the choice custodian of this submarine," said Rick Kaiser, executive director of the Navy SEAL Museum. "Because the Button prototype was a

potential service choice for Navy SEALs' next dry combat submersible, we feel it warrants display at the museum. We are excited to exhibit this particular piece of important Navy and SEAL history."

Noted for its aesthetics and acknowledged for its effective engineering, the Button 5.60 reverses the typical layout of a SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV); the crew operates in the rear, with passengers in the middle, and the lockout chamber in the bow, allowing divers to exit the submarine while underwater through hatches in the top and bottom of the chamber.

The submersible arrived at the museum this week and is available for public viewing immediately.

About The Button Prototype Submersible

Almost 32 feet in length and just over 6 feet in height, the submersible weighs 39,000 pounds with a beam of about 6-1/2 feet. The Button 5.60 can accommodate four Special Operations Forces passengers and a crew of two. It has an operating depth of 190 feet, with a maximum depth of 360 feet. With a maximum speed of >9 kts, its max lockout depth for divers is 120 feet.

About The Navy SEAL Museum

The National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum is the only museum dedicated solely to preserving the history of the U.S. Navy

SEALs and their predecessors. Located in Fort Pierce, the museum resides on the training grounds of the original Navy combat swimmers, the frogmen. Built to honor the men who served with fortitude and ingenuity, the Navy UDT-SEAL Museum first opened its doors on Veterans Day in 1985. From humble beginnings, the facility has experienced tremendous growth, achieving national stature in 2007. The main objective of the museum remains the promotion of public education by providing the opportunity to explore the history of the Navy SEALs through interactive exhibits, while honoring the fallen at the SEAL Memorial and caring for those warriors' families through Trident House Charities.



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Rentals

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N.W. OKEE 2 BR, 1 BA, \$675 + \$50 rent per month, \$2025 to move in. 561-346-1642

Commercial Property

TREASURE ISLAND 2100SQ. FT. METAL BUILDING 2 ROLL UP DOORS BEHIND LAKEIDE CARWASH. \$1,000/MO. YEARLY LEASE, FIRST-LAST+SEC. CALL TAB 863-610-1027

Condos/Townhouses - Rent

TAYLOR CREEK CONDOS 1BD/1BA, PARTIALLY FURNISHED \$700.00/MO. MUST PASS BACKGROUND CHECK AND BE APPROVED BY THE CONDO BOARD 1ST, LAST & SECURITY REQUIRED CALL 561-352-4243

Need a few more bucks to purchase something deer? Pick up some extra bucks when you sell your used items in the classifieds.

Houses - Rent

3/1 HOME FOR RENT LAMINATE WOOD FLOORING, UPDATED, CENTRAL A/C, W/D ON WELL WATER WITH SOFTENER. LAKEIDE, BY 15B & 441 SE \$950.00/MO. 786-201-0306



Mobile Homes

Mobile Homes - Rent

BHR-MOBILE HOME'S 3BD/2BA & 2BD/2BA STARTING AT \$625.00. MO. PLUS SECURITY, 1YR LEASE, NO PETS CALL 863-763-4031

FURNISHED

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AAA Auto Analysis- All makes, all price ranges. We buy cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Established 1981. 772-260-9707

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Public Notices

Public Notice

FICTITIOUS NAME NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that BONITA HAZELLE, owner, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of A DUSTY ROAD TRAVELER located at 2065 STATE RD 710 EAST, OKEECHOBEE, FL 34974 in OKEECHOBEE County intends to register the said name with the Division of Corporations, Florida Department of State, pursuant to section 865.09 of the Florida Statutes.
264680 ON 5/30/2018

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case No:
47-2018-CA-000075-AX

CARRINGTON MORTGAGE SERVICES, LLC,
Plaintiff,
vs.
GEORGE CHARLES MORRIS, III; et al.,
Defendants.

NOTICE OF ACTION

Dorothy E. Morris
200 NE 8th Ave
Okeechobee, FL 34972

Unknown Spouse of Dorothy E. Morris
200 NE 8th Ave
Okeechobee, FL 34972

LAST KNOWN ADDRESS STATED, CURRENT RESIDENCE UNKNOWN and any unknown heirs, devisees, grantees, creditors and other unknown persons or unknown spouses claiming by, through and under the above-named Defendant(s), if deceased or whose last known addresses are unknown.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose Mortgage covering the following real and personal property described as follows, to wit: **LOT 26, RIVER RUN RESORT, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF, AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 6, PAGE 18, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA.**

TOGETHER WITH A 1986 HOMES OF MERIT MOBILE HOME WITH SERIAL NUMBER FLHMB0095-21051-A&B, AND LABEL/SEAL NUMBER FL A318217 & FLA 318218

has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Blake Borsack, Esq., Lender Legal Services, LLC, 201 East Pine Street, Suite 730, Orlando, Florida 32801, and file the original with the Clerk of the above-styled Court on or before 30 days from the first publication, otherwise a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

WITNESS my hand and seal of the said Court on the 10th day of May, 2018.

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 Court Administration, 250 NW County 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.

SHARON ROBERTSON
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
By: Arlene Nealis
Deputy Clerk
262151 ON 5/23/30/2018

Public Notice

LEGAL NOTICE

A public auction will be held at TOTAL ROADSIDE SERVICES, located at 3176 Hwy 710 E, Okeechobee 34974 at 9:00 a.m. On the date listed below Pursuant to Florida statute 713.78 for unpaid towing and storage. Year, make and model as follows:

AUCTION 06/11/18
2003 OLDS
VIN: 1G3NF1E53C225407
AUCTION 06/14/18
1998 TOYOTA SIENNA
VIN: 4T3ZF13C8WU084980
AUCTION 06/21/18
2011 NISSAN
VIN: 3N1AB6APXBL668846
AUCTION 06/20/18
2008 DODGE
VIN: 2B3KA43R48H105740

Terms of sale are CASH ONLY, no checks will be accepted. The seller reserves the right of final bid. All sales are final. No refunds will be made. Said automobile will be sold "as is" with no guarantees.

Location: 3176 Hwy 710 E
863-357-8772
264875 ON 05/30/2018

Reading a newspaper helps you understand the world around you. No wonder newspaper readers are more successful people!

PUBLIC NOTICE

A public auction will be held at BMJ Towing, Inc. at 414 South Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34974 on FRIDAY THE 15th DAY OF JUNE, 2018 from 10:00-11:00 A.M. Pursuant to Florida statute 713.78 for unpaid towing and storage. Year, Make, Model & Vin's as follows

1999 FORD CROWN
VICTORIA
2FAFP74W5XX148157

2000 CHEVY ASTRO VAN
1GNDM19W4YB194879

2006 CHEVY HHR SUV
3GND23P96S524212

2006 MITSUBISHI
ENDEAVOR SUV
4A4MN21S16E023872

Terms of sale are cash, and no checks will be accepted. The seller reserves the right of final bid. All sales are final. No refunds will be made. Said automobiles will be sold in "AS IS" with no guarantees.

265694 ON 5/30/2018

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

One man's trash is another man's treasure. Turn your trash to treasure with an ad in the classifieds.

Fictitious Name

NOTICE UNDER FICTITIOUS NAME LAW

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned pursuant to the "Fictitious Name Statute" will register with Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations the fictitious name, to wit;

Copperleaf Wealth Management

Under which we expect to engage in business at:

195 SW 28th St.
Okeechobee, FL 34974

In the City of Okeechobee/County Okeechobee, Florida. That the parties interested in said business enterprise are:

Michael L Costopoulos
Donna L Helton

Dated at Okeechobee, Okeechobee County, Florida this 29th day of May 2018
By: Donna L Helton

265744 ON 5/30/2018

NOTICE UNDER FICTITIOUS NAME LAW

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned pursuant to the "Fictitious Name Statute" will register with Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations the fictitious name, to wit;

McPeak Pressure Washing

Under which we expect to engage in business at:

3853 NW 35th Ave
Okeechobee, FL 34972

In the City of Okeechobee/County Okeechobee, Florida. That the parties interested in said business enterprise are:

Matthew McPeak

Dated at Okeechobee, Okeechobee County, Florida this 29th day of May 2018
By: Matthew McPeak

265760 ON 5/30/2018

NOTICE UNDER FICTITIOUS NAME LAW

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned pursuant to the "Fictitious Name Statute" will register with Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations the fictitious name, to wit;

100% Real Pure Virgin Hair

Under which we expect to engage in business at:

575 NE 16th Ave.
Okeechobee, FL 34972

In the City of Okeechobee/County Okeechobee, Florida. That the parties interested in said business enterprise are:

Tequesta Brifil

Dated at Okeechobee, Okeechobee County, Florida this 29th day of May 2018
By: Tequesta Brifil

265761 ON 5/30/2018

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The classified ads

Public Notice

Public Notice

PUBLIC NOTICE CITY COUNCIL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council for the City of Okeechobee will conduct a regular meeting on **Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 6 PM**, or as soon thereafter as possible at City Hall, 55 SE 3rd Ave, Rm 200, Okeechobee, FL. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. The agenda may be obtained from cityofokeechobee.com or by calling the Office of the City Administrator, 863-763-3372 ext. 9812.

ANY PERSON DECIDING TO APPEAL any decision made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need to ensure a verbatim record of the proceeding is made and the record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal will be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), any person with a disability as defined by the ADA, that needs special accommodation to participate in this proceeding, contact the City Clerk's Office no later than two business days prior to proceeding, 863-763-3372 ext. 9814.

BE ADVISED that should you intend to show any document, picture, video or items to the Council in support or opposition to any item on the agenda, a copy of the document, picture, video, or item **MUST** be provided to the City Clerk for the City's records.
By: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr.
265411 ON 5/30/2018

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, STATE OF FLORIDA

CASE NO.: 2017-CA-005
JUDGE: LAURIE E. BUCHANAN

JOSEPH ZACHARY GAZZA,

Plaintiff,

v.
CHRISTOPHER LEIN; and UNKNOWN TENANT(S) IN POSSESSION, IF ANY,
Defendants.

NOTICE OF ACTION
TO: Christopher Lein and all parties having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in the property herein described and all parties claiming interests by, through, under or against Christopher Lein.
YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for foreclosure of a mortgage has been filed against you on property located in Okeechobee County, Florida, further identified as:

1-17-34-33-0000-0004-F000
LOT E OF TRACT 4; THE WEST 1/2 OF THE WEST 1/2 OF THE SOUTH 1/2 OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF TRACT 4, SECTION 17 AS TO THE SOUTHERN COLONIZATION COMPANY PLAT OF TOWNSHIP 34 SOUTH, RANGE 33 EAST, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGES 3-3E INCLUSIVE, PUBLIC RECORDS OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA.

You are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on RENE S. GRIFFITH, ESQUIRE, Plaintiff's attorney, whose address is 4260 SE Federal Highway, Stuart, Florida 34997, within 30 days of first publication date, and file the original with the Clerk of this Court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a Default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.
Dated this 24th day of May, 2018.

SHARON ROBERTSON
Clerk of Court
By: Arlene Nealis
Deputy Clerk

265381 ON 5/30/6/2018

PUBLIC NOTICE

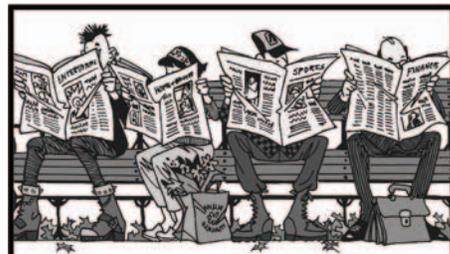
The Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners will hold a Regular Session at 9:00 am, on Tuesday, June 05, 2018 in the "Judge William L. Hendry Courtroom" at the Historic Courthouse, 304 N.W. 2nd Street, Okeechobee, Florida.

Any person deciding to appeal any decision made by the Board of County Commissioners with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purposes, he or she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of such proceedings is made, which record shall include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with disabilities needing special accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact the County Administrator's Office not later than four (4) working days prior to the proceeding at 304 N.W. 2nd Street, Room 123 Okeechobee, Florida 34972, or call 863.763.6441. If you are hearing or voice impaired, call TDD 1-800-222-3448 (voice) or 1-888-447-5620 (TTY).

Terry W. Burroughs, Chair
Board of County Commissioners
Okeechobee County, Florida

Sharon Robertson, Clerk
Board of County Commissioners
Okeechobee County, Florida
/s/ Paula Poskon/ Deputy Clerk
262481 ON 5/30/2018



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