



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

Vol. 109 No. 67

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

50¢ plus tax

Spider monkey attacks store employee

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OMF calls for Summer of Service

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Rash of thefts alarms local residents

... Page 11

Kids and pets at risk in hot cars

... Page 16

Lake Levels

14.22 feet

Last Year: 11.06 feet



Pogey's Family Restaurant
1759 S. Parrott Ave.
763-7222

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

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

okeechobeenews.net

Free Speech Free Ads



2019 music festival set for March 7-11

Festival moves to second weekend in March to match college spring break dates

By Katrina Elsken

Okeechobee News

The fourth annual Okeechobee Music and Arts Festival is planned for March 7-11, 2019, to coincide with spring break week for more than

1.7 million college students.

The change from the first weekend in March to the second weekend in March was approved at the June 5 meeting of the Okeechobee County Board of Commissioners.

Okeechobee County Sheriff Noel Stephen, Fire/Rescue Chief Ralph Franklin and Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center Director Matt Dorriety told the commissioners they are on board with the date change.

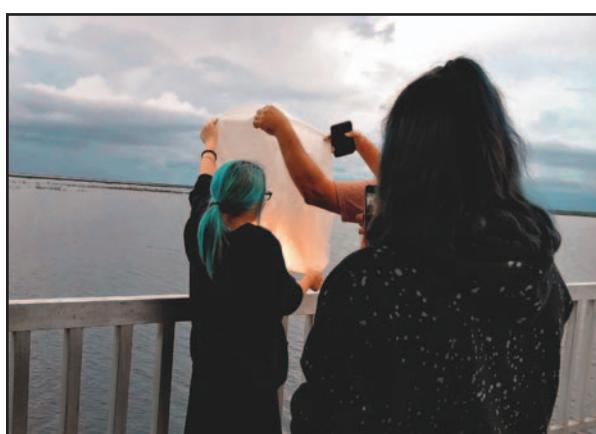
Attendance was down at the 2018 OMF, and

organizers believe the spring break dates were a factor.

The first music festival, OMF16, attracted nearly 35,000 people, including paid admissions, on-site staff, artists and guests. The second festival, OMF17, attracted a total of approximately 41,000 throughout the four days, including over 32,000 paid admissions.

This year's festival drew 34,000 persons

See OMF — Page 5



Okeechobee News/Richard Marion

Remembering a friend

Jalen Edlemon's friends and classmates gathered at the Clif Betts Jr. Lakeside Recreation Area (aka Lock 7) on June 1 for a candlelight vigil in memory of the late 14-year-old who, along with his mother and grandmother, passed away shortly after a tragic automobile accident on May 11.

Councilman O'Connor resigns

By Matteo Tullio
Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — On Friday, June 1, Okeechobee City Councilman Michael Gerald O'Connor, 77, submitted his letter of resignation to Okeechobee Mayor Dowling R. Watford Jr. and City Administrator Marcos Montes De Oca.

"I want to apologize for the cloud that has been cast on the city and the city family," stated the letter from Mr. O'Connor. He continued: "I have performed my councilman duties with extreme professionalism and attention. It is with the utmost sadness that I feel I should resign from the City Council for personal reasons." The letter concluded, "To my city family, I appreciate all you have done for me during my time as a councilman, and I look forward to retirement. I would appreciate you keeping me in your thoughts and prayers."

Administrator Montes De Oca said, "As of June 1, Mike O'Connor has resigned from City Council due to personal reasons, we wish him the best in his retirement." He continued, "Our city family will miss him. As a councilman, Mike always stood for what he thought was right and wanted the best for our employees."

See COUNCILMAN — Page 5



INJURED?



Gerald
Lefebvre

Law Offices of Lefebvre & Dixon

763.3333
Okeechobee, Florida

Home Depot employee mauled by spider monkey

By Matteo Tullio

Okeechobee News

A 50-year-old Okeechobee woman's spider monkey apparently escaped from a truck in the Home Depot parking lot Monday afternoon and allegedly bit a store employee multiple times.

According to an incident report by Deputy Devon Satallante of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), at 1:53 p.m. on June 4, he responded to Home Depot, located in the 2700 block of U.S. 441 South, in regard to an animal complaint.

Upon his arrival, he met with the complainant, who reportedly informed him

that she had left her pet spider monkey in her truck while she went inside the store. The monkey was on a leash but managed to get out of the vehicle and attack one of the Home Depot employees before being brought under the control of the owner.

The Home Depot employee reportedly informed Deputy Satallante that she was in the break area outside of the store when she heard fellow coworkers yell about a monkey and thought it was a joke. The employee then stated that she suddenly saw the monkey walk down the parking lot toward her with its leash attached.

The woman then apparently got hold of the leash, and the monkey then climbed

onto her back, biting her twice, stated the report.

The monkey then climbed down off the woman's back and she regained control of the leash. The employee then walked the monkey to front of the store in an effort to locate its owner.

The report stated that when the front sliding glass door of the store opened, the monkey then appeared to get scared and bit the employee on the arm and hand. The monkey also reportedly scratched the left side of the employee's face.

The report concluded that the employee refused medical attention but informed law enforcement that she would go to the hospital

herself for medical evaluation and treatment. Digital photographs were taken of the injuries and submitted into evidence.

OCSO Animal Control and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) were contacted and arrived on scene as well.

The case was turned over to FWC, and both the owner of the spider monkey and the Home Depot employee were provided an OSCO agency business card with Deputy Satallante's contact information and case number.

Fourth of July fireworks planned at Agri-Civic Center

By Katrina Elskens

Okeechobee News

This year's Okeechobee Fourth of July festivities will take place at the Okeechobee Agri-Civic Center. For the fifth consecutive year, the fireworks will be sponsored by the Okeechobee Fraternal Order of Police.

Michael Hazellief and J.D. Mixon were at the June 5 meeting of the Okeechobee County Commission to ask commissioners to agree to waive the fee for the use of the Agri-Civic Center for this event, which will be free and open to the public.

The fireworks show was at Okee-Tan tie for the past four years, Mr. Hazellief explained, but since BassPro is taking over that facility, they opted to move the celebration back to the Agri-Civic Center.

The Agri-Civic Center has plenty of parking, he said. The long driveway off State Road 710 makes it easier to control traffic in and out.

Events such as the watermelon eating contests will be inside the Agri-Civic Center. The fireworks show will be outside, with a grassy area designated for people to put

down blankets or chairs to watch the show.

"It's a great event," said Commission Chairman Terry Burroughs. "You guys do a tremendous amount of work. It's a great event for the community."

Commissioner David Hazellief noted that the annual event receives a lot of support from the community. "It's a great Okeechobee event," he said.

"The way we make this work is all of the support we receive from local businesses," Mr. Hazellief added.

The Fourth of July celebration is a no-al-

cohol event, free and open to the public.

The commissioners unanimously voted to waive the fee to use the Agri-Civic Center.

The celebration will be an all-day, family event and will include kids' games, family activities, music, baking contests and a Public Safety Expo featuring local agencies.

Low-cost food and drink items will be sold by local vendors, primarily non-profit organizations.

The required pyrotechnics fireworks permit has already been submitted and approved by Okeechobee County Fire Rescue.

Chamber of Commerce News

• Their signage is up, the building is ready, and now they are preparing for a big celebration of the newest addition to the Gilbert Family of Companies. You are invited to attend the next Business After Hours on Tuesday, June 12, at Gilbert Fleet & Commercial, 3592 U.S. 441 South, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on the south side of Gilbert Chevrolet. You'll want to stop in and see their new facility and see all their commercial division has to offer. You can rest assured their vehicle experts will work to understand your unique business needs. Team Gilbert will be waiting to share some exciting news, so don't miss out on stopping by and celebrating with them. Refreshments will be served.

• The next Rise Up With the Chamber

will be Thursday, June 21, and will be held in the chamber conference room, 55 S. Parrott Ave., from 7:45 to 8:30 a.m. The host for the morning will be the Waste Management wildlife division. There are three scheduled speakers talking about their organizations. Mariah will post each on live feed and then post their presentations on Facebook. You can find them at ... #ChamberCandidCamera. Light morning refreshments will be served. Come and learn more about our local businesses and organizations. It's always a great early-morning event, just 45 minutes.

• Join the chamber, county and city for the Summer Business Exchange Luncheon on Wednesday, July 18, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Indian River State College Dix-

on-Hendry Campus (Williamson Center, 2229 N.W. Ninth Ave.). In a crisis you pick up the phone and dial the familiar numbers you learned as early as kindergarten, and help is on the way. In the next five minutes as you answer questions and relay information, a team of highly trained professionals are working together to get to you and be prepared to help you overcome your new-found obstacle. The men, women and fur friends who are Okeechobee's first responders will speak from a variety of departments on the processes they use in their line of work and how you as a citizen can protect yourself! The world we live in today can be scary if we are not prepared! The cost of lunch is just \$15 and can be

paid by credit card when you pre-register online or stop by the chamber and pay by cash or check. This event is brought to you courtesy of Green Design Construction & Development!

• July's Chamber After hours will be on Thursday, July 19, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Florida Community Health Center, located at 2015 U.S. 441 N. (Fred Brown Children's Center) Mr. Jones and his staff are anxious to have you visit and see their facility and be present as they introduce their two new doctors. Be sure to stop in, take time to network with friends and new acquaintances as you snack on refreshments. All chamber events are open to the public.

Okeechobee Forecast



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Today: Mixed clouds and sun with scattered thunderstorms. High 83F. Winds W at 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 60%.

Tonight: Scattered thunderstorms during the evening, then becoming clear overnight. Low 69F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 40%



Extended Forecast

Thursday: Mixed clouds and sun with scattered thunderstorms. High 84F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 50%.

Thursday Night: Partly cloudy with an isolated thunderstorm possible after midnight. Low 69F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 30%.

Friday: Partly cloudy in the morning followed by scattered thunderstorms in the afternoon. High near 85F. Winds light and variable. Chance of rain 50%.

Friday Night: A few clouds from time to time. Low 69F. Winds light and variable.

County approves zoning changes

By Katrina Elskens

Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee County Commission June 5 approved zoning changes on two properties owned by Berman Ranch Inc.

A change in zoning from Agriculture (A) to the proposed classification of Heavy Commercial (C-2) was approved for a property located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Southeast 40th Avenue and State Road 710. The subject property is approximately 2.5 acres in area and has around 300 feet of

frontage on the south side of State Road 710.

The vacant property is at the southeast corner of the intersection of State Road 710 and Southeast 40th Avenue, also known as Everglades Boulevard.

A change in zoning from agriculture to residential single-family was approved for a 2.5-acre property on the east side of Southeast 40th Avenue, south of State Road 710. The strip of land is across the street from a residential neighborhood. It will be developed with half-acre lots on the east side of the road.

EAA reservoir plans continue to move forward

By Katrina Elskens

Okeechobee News

The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir project plans continue to move forward.

On June 4, Everglades Foundation Chief Operating Officer Shannon A. Estenoz issued the following statement regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' approval of plans for the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir: "We are pleased the assistant secretary of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved the plans submitted by the South Florida Water Management District for the Everglades Reservoir."

"The Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District are to be applauded, as both entities agencies acted with diligence and speed, reflecting the importance of the Everglades reservoir to Florida and to America's Everglades."

"Time is of the essence in completing this vital project, and we urge the Office of Management and Budget to review and approve it with equal speed so that it can be authorized by Congress."

On March 26, the South Florida Water Management District submitted its plan for the EAA Storage Reservoir to the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works for federal review, approval and submittal to Congress. In accordance with state law, the Post Authorization Change Report (PACR) seeks to increase the storage, treatment and conveyance of the congressionally authorized Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP).

The Tentatively Selected Plan was developed to meet the goals set forth by the Florida Legislature when it passed Senate Bill 10 and to be consistent with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The plan will reduce damaging discharges to the northern estuaries, deliver clean water for Everglades restoration and achieve water quality standards.

The plan was approved by the SFWMD Governing Board on March 8 and submitted to the assistant secretary along with an independent peer review that found the report to be technically sound.

The EAA reservoir will hold 240,000 acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is the amount of water it takes to cover one acre of land to 1 foot deep.

As part of CEPP, the EAA reservoir will be a dynamic reservoir with water flowing in from the lake and out to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

However, until the other CEPP projects are completed, that won't happen. During the wet season, there is already more freshwater north of the Tamiami Trail than the current water conveyance system can move south to the Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. (Flow through some existing water control structures is also restricted

from March 1 to July 15 to preserve the nesting area of the endangered Cape Sable sea sparrow.)

Without the rest of the CEPP, the EAA reservoir will be static storage and will have limited impact on the lake releases to coastal estuaries.

How does the storage capacity compare with current flows?

Current flow from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries is capped at 5,800 cfs (with up to 4,000 cfs going to the Caloosahatchee and up to 1,800 cfs to the St. Lucie. (Note that the 1,800 cfs measurement is taken at the St. Lucie Lock, so if there is runoff directly into the C-44 Canal between Port Mayaca and the St. Lucie Lock, there is less capacity to take flow from Lake Okeechobee).

That 5,800 cfs converts to about 11,504 acre-feet per day (or about 3.7 billion gallons per day).

If the reservoir were empty at the start of the rainy season, and that flow were diverted to a 240,000 acre-foot reservoir, the reservoir would be full in about three weeks. Consider, however, that due to rainfall south of the lake, the reservoir would not be empty at the start of the rainy season, and that rainfall directly into the reservoir would continue to

take up part of storage capacity throughout the rainy season.

With the other CEPP projects, the plan will move 370,000 acre-feet a year of clean water south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, according to the SFWMD report.

The plan will also reduce the number of damaging discharge events from Lake Okeechobee to the northern estuaries by 63 percent when used in conjunction with authorized projects, according to SFWMD reports.

The additional flows south to the Everglades will be treated in a new 6,500-acre Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) in combination with existing STAs and Flow Equalization Basins (FEBs), such as the A-1 FEB, to achieve state water quality standards.

The reservoir will store 240,000 acre-feet of water on the 10,100-acre site comprised of the district-owned A-2 parcel and lands to the west as identified in Senate Bill 10.

The reservoir plan was approved by the SFWMD Governing Board on March 8 and submitted to the assistant secretary of the Army along with an independent peer review that found the plan to be technically sound.

After the project is financed by Congress, it will take about eight years to complete — with three years estimated for engineering and five years estimated for construction.

OMF encourages Summer of Service in community

By Katrina Elskens

Okeechobee News

On June 6, Okeechobee Music Festival staff will volunteer in their local communities of Okeechobee, Miami and New York to kick off the OMF Summer of Service.

Festival organizers posted the following message on June 4:

"Upload a photo of your volunteer experience, community project or service project and show us how you're getting involved for a chance to win a pair of VIP passes to OMF19. Each time you volunteer and upload a new pic, that will count as another entry,

so get out there and show us what you've got.

"We'll be rewarding inspiring projects throughout the summer with OMF merch and other surprises. Join us and over 60 million volunteers in the United States to show that special Okee Love."

The festival's involvement in community service included the OMF18 Participation Row. In addition, area volunteers earned money for nonprofit organizations by run-

ning the beverage booths at the festival.

Over the past three years, OMF18 benefited 25 nonprofit organizations for a total of \$320,000 donated to the nonprofit partners. In addition, the HeadCount booth registered 2,600 voters.

Following the four-day camping festival, OMF staff and volunteers rescued food, which went to area food pantries and programs to feed the poor.

In addition, camping gear was rescued

with the help of the Warrior Center. The camping gear will go to homeless veterans and others in need. In 2017, some camping gear recycled from OMF17 was given to those left homeless by hurricanes.

The 2018 festival also took another step toward sustainability by banning the use of plastic straws, eliminating an estimated 70,000 straws that would have wound up in the landfill.

To enter for a chance to win VIP tickets for OMF 2019, follow the link at <https://okeechobefest.com/>.

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Letter to the Editor

Harvest of Hope at Okeechobee High School Class of 2018

Every year, the Okeechobee High School Migrant Program hosts an event called Harvest of Hope where we celebrate all of our migrant and Hispanic seniors who have maintained an A+ grade point aver-

age throughout this school year. During this special event, many of our businesses and donors contribute to acknowledge their excellence. This event was on Monday, May 7.

On behalf of the Migrant Program, I, Flerida Algarin, migrant advocate of Okeechobee High School, would like to say "Thank you" for your continued support of the students in our county!

- Beef O Brady

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 Okeenews@newszap.com. Thanks for participating in our discussion of local issues!

Water flow

• "Strange, isn't it, how agencies never listen to those who warn ahead of time about roads needing bridges, rivers that should not be straightened, canals that shouldn't be built, etc. and then discover with all the bad things that happened that it cost a lot more money to try to fix it than it would've been to do it right in the first place? Of course, they have to go through years of denial before, and if, they ever decide to try to correct their mistakes." - Pat H.

• "Instead of projects that are driven by politics like the EAA reservoir, the state and federal government should be funding the projects that are driven by science. Raising more of the Tamiami Trail should be on the front burner. The water can't go to Florida Bay as long as the road is acting as a dam across the Everglades. Less than 4 miles of raised bridging out of more than 200 miles of roadway is not going to do the job." - J. Zimpel

O.U.A.

• "Recently, my water bill was due on the seventh day of the month. I put the payment in the drop box at approximately 4:30 p.m. on the seventh of the month. I received a

\$5.35 late fee for late payment. I was taught that a new day starts at midnight except in Okeechobee. The next day was the eighth at 8 a.m. Bill was marked paid but late." - Anonymous

O'Connor

Articles about the arrest of City Councilman Mike O'Connor brought these responses.

- "Right, wrong or indifferent ... regardless of the events that led to this unfortunate incident ... it's upstanding that he is doing the right thing for the city. It's nice to know and see a mature and responsible decision." - Natalie Clegg

- "If he was mature and responsible, he wouldn't have picked a fight with a girl?" - Betty Latty

- "I've known Mike for years. His commitment to our country, our county and the city of Okeechobee is steadfast and loyal. He worked hard for Okeechobee ... to me one of the most notable actions by Mike was going out and cleaning ditches to help drainage in his area of responsibility. This last incident, I'm not aware of the particulars but fully understand him resigning to avoid further negativity involving Okeechobee." - John Howell

- "No matter what happened, it's not our place to judge, and I wish Mike well in his retirement. I can honestly say he was the only one that came to my rescue when I had a problem with city property. He was honorable in his position as city councilman. I pray it works out for all concerned." - Nancy Lowe Venter

- "It appears that a fine man did a stupid thing. It's a shame it cost him his job. Okeechobee loses." - Jerry Mayernik

- "We all make mistakes. No matter who, what, where, when, why, or how, we're only human." - Shoney Yates

- Keith White, Hope Alive Recharge
- Pat's Floral
- W&W Lumber
- Original Equipment
- Hope Chest
- Brown Cow
- Pamper & Polish
- Tin Fish
- Teresa Shears
- Dr. Brennan, Bishop Eye Care
- Tire Zone
- Zippy's
- Provost Russ Brown, IRSC
- Mrs. Elizabeth Wagner, OHS junior guidance counselor
- Mr. Johnnie & Nancy Jones, Seminole Indian Reservation
- Dr. Jennifer Laskey, DDS, Family Dentistry
- Terry Burroughs, Okeechobee County commissioner
- Osiel Luviano, Roofing & Construction Inc.
- Pueblo Viejo
- Jill Holcomb, School Board member
- Garry Ritter, City of Okeechobee councilman
- Noels Stevens, Okeechobee County sheriff
- Lonnie Steiert, coordinator of grants & special programs
- Dylan Tedders, OHS principal
- Ken Kenworthy, superintendent
- Drema Brewer, OHS senior guidance counselor
- Jenny Pung and Adan Cortez, Raulerson Hospital
- Lauren Myers, OHS assistant principal

- Vicki Goggans, OHS assistant principal
- Michelle Coleman, graduation coordinator

- Raylan Gilliland, OHS science teacher

- 2nd Street Pizza

- The Lounge

- Class of 2018 migrant parents

- Class of 2018 ESOL parents

- Class of 2018 Hispanic parents

- Elizabeth Ruiz, ESOL advocate

- Deedee Coker, grants and special programs bookkeeper

- Trisha Jennings, teacher on special assignment

- Isaura Henry, OFC & OAA migrant advocate

- Elmo Urbina, CES & NES migrant advocate

- Ana Huerta, EES migrant advocate

- Ana Waldron, YMS migrant advocate

- Mary Gammill, grants and special programs secretary

- Mayra Talavera, SES & OMS migrant advocate

- Rosa Ruiz, SEM migrant advocate

Congratulations, Class of 2018!

Flerida Algarin

Okeechobee High School migrant advocate



Special to the Okeechobee News
Osiel Luviano from Roofing & Construction presented iPads. In photo, from left to right are Karla Chavez, Sonia Delgado, Guadalupe Mojica, Carlos Garcia, Miguel Raya, Osiel Luviano, Kayla Aguilar, Antonino Garcia and Cristian Rios

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

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Our Purpose...

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

We Pledge...

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

- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.

- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.

- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers.

- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.

- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.

- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.



OKEECHOBEE NEWS

To Reach Us

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

To Submit News

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

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MUSIC

Continued From Page 1

with about 26,000 paid admissions.

Kevin Collinsworth, Soundslinger CEO, said about 87 percent of those who purchased tickets to OMF18 were 18-34 years of age.

Even though attendance was down this year, both county and Soundslinger officials said the event was a success.

"Most things went pretty smoothly," said Okeechobee County Planning Director Bill Royce.

He said the third annual Okeechobee Music and Arts Festival (OMF18) was held on the first weekend of March 2018. Festival attendees began arriving on Thursday, March 1, and left by Monday, March 5. Festival concerts began Thursday afternoon at the Aquachobee Beach stage.

Most festival concerts occurred on Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the main stages at The Grove as well as the Aquachobee Beach stage and the nearby Jungle 51 stage. The festival concluded with the primary headline artist playing Sunday evening at The Grove.

Following the festival, county staff met with representatives from the Sheriff's Office, Health Department, Fire Rescue and Emergency Management to discuss operational aspects of the festival, specifically which aspects could use further review and improvement in anticipation of the 2019 Okeechobee Music and Arts Festival.

For OMF19, it is anticipated that paid attendance could reach 40,000.

Mr. Royce said the working group of county staff approved the idea of moving the festival to the second weekend of March, with paid attendance of up to 40,000 and a total crowd on site of about 45,000.

"We were thrilled this year with how everything went," said Mr. Collinsworth.

He said moving the box office to the Agri-Civic Center helped the whole weekend go smoothly.

"It was definitely a big improvement," he said.

The third OMF featured 103 artists, he said, including Arcade Fire and Bassnectar.

"People were very happy with it," he said.

Most of those who attended the festival were from South Florida, Mr. Collinsworth said, but they had attendees from every continent with the exception of Antarctica.

The economic impact to Okeechobee County in 2018 was \$14 million; the economic impact over three years was \$48 million.

In 2018, \$290,134 was paid to Okeechobee County, including \$77,313 in ticket fees and \$212,821 paid to reimburse expenses by the sheriff's department and fire rescue. (For each of the 25,771 tickets sold, the county received \$3.)

Over the past three years, \$313,955 has gone to local nonprofits through their participation in the festival.

Mr. Collinsworth said the festival promotes recycling and reducing landfill waste. This year there were no plastic straws on site. After the festival, they were able to donate thousands of pounds of food to Treasure Coast Food Bank. The Warrior Center collected about 4,500 pounds of camping gear left behind by the festival fans.

Thirteen local nonprofits were featured

in Participation Row at OMF 2018.

Every nonprofit provides a positive interaction with festival fans, said Mr. Collinsworth.

He said the HeadCount booth registered 1,400 voters.

The festival's toll-free hotline for noise complaints only received two calls.

Outreach to the neighbors included hosting barbecues to allow neighbors to ask questions and voice their concerns before the event, putting up fences, putting up some light towers and adding security at their gates, he said.

Sound monitoring improvements were successful in reducing noise complaints from neighbors.

He said they used stage orientation to mitigate the level of sound leaving the property.

"Delay towers helped keep us pointing the sound where we wanted it," he explained.

The festival also changed some hours of operation and some set times to reduce noise problems. NoizCalc Software helped shape the sound.

"Each year has been a learning process," he continued, "the artists booked, time they play, weather are all factors in controlling sound."

The 2018 OMF included three marriage proposals — one by a skywriter — five weddings, 68 yoga classes, "almost 300 performances, and one heck of a show," he said.

Commissioner Kelly Owens complimented Soundslinger on the way they have worked with and listened to their neighbors.

"My concern is moving to the weekend the same as rodeo," said Commissioner Hazzelief. "Rodeo can't change. To get contestants to travel, it has to be the same weekend as Arcadia. If the hotels and motels are full, we won't have any place to put those contestants."

"This is the one time of year our places are full," he said.

Mr. Collinsworth said he has spoken to the Cattlemen's Association and they had no problem with the music festival being the same weekend, as they draw a different demographic.

He said the music festival will use more hotels on the coast.

"The only other concern I have is the strain having all of these events on the same weekend will put on our infrastructure," said Commissioner Bradley Goodbread. "The music fest is pretty much all hands on deck for the fire department and the police department. Having both events on the same weekend would probably be overstrenuous on our public safety men and women." He noted the youth livestock show also starts that weekend.

Sheriff Noel Stephen said all concerns were taken into consideration and he is comfortable with the new festival dates.

"I am at the comfort level (where) I think the security inside the music festival is sufficient," said the sheriff.

"I think it is time I can back off and let the music fest take over their own security now that I know it is adequately provided. It's on Soundslinger to make sure they maintain that level."

"We have looked at everything," he continued. "We think we can make it work."

Fire/Rescue Chief Ralph Franklin agreed.

"This year we brought in some outside

agencies to help reduce the burden," he said. "I am comfortable with the numbers."

"In regards to the rodeo, we knew we had to supply a unit for them, but that is not a 24-hour operation for several days," he explained, adding the rodeo needs EMS support only during the performances.

'From Fire/Rescue perspective, we are comfortable with it being on the same weekend," he said.

Matt Dorriety said the music festival will not interfere with the Youth Livestock Show or the county fair.

"Operations for OMF will start on Tuesday before their show. They will be out of there by midnight on Friday," he said.

"If it follows the same pattern as last year, about 80 percent of the people who came through there were on Thursday," he explained.

He said the livestock show's small animals will come into the Agri-Civic Center on Friday from 3 to 5 p.m.

"By then the music fest traffic will be very light," he said. The large animals won't arrive until Monday.

"I expect very minimal interference with livestock show," Mr. Dorriety said.

"The fair will be setting up in the circle during that time," he explained. "Most of that equipment is brought in during the night."

"That movement does not involve the perimeter road where the music fest traffic is," he said.

"I think everything can coexist at the Agri-Civic Center," said Mr. Dorriety.

Commission Chairman Terry Burroughs said the events attract a totally different demographic.

In regard to local hotels, most of the business has already been driven to the coast due to pricing, he added.

In the public comment period, Robert Keefe of the Warrior Center said: "I think that what they are doing for the community and the nonprofits is a phenomenal thing. In

regard to the new dates, make it happen!"

"The show this year was fantastic," said Jonathan Bean, executive director of Martha's House.

"It's also an arts festival," he said. "There is so much creativity going on the whole time, not just on the stage but throughout the whole place. There is creativity you won't see anywhere else in the county."

"It has a tremendous amount of impact on the people there. We also get to expose our organizations to the people who come. This year we had 30 to 50 people ask us how they could volunteer, how they could help. I was able to refer them to the local organizations in their communities where they can volunteer and help," he explained.

"As far as the date change, I am all for it," he said.

Rachel Heddings of Big Brothers Big Sisters said the festival was a great opportunity for the agency. She said they were able to connect with individuals who had been involved with the BB/BS program all over the country.

Courtney Moyette of the Substance Abuse Coalition said they "were really surprised at the number of people who were receptive to us" at the festival.

"We were able to talk to them about ways to build our coalition better and to reach a population we aren't reaching," she said. Due to the funding raised at the festival, the Substance Abuse Coalition has been able to host Friday Night Done Right events three times a year, providing a free night of fun to between 380 and 479 kids each time.

Friday Night Done Right events are open to local children in grades three through six. Without the funds from the festival, they could host only one event a year.

As a resident, she said she appreciated the efforts to reduce traffic issues during the festival weekend.

"I drove back and forth each day, and there were no problems at all," she said.



Okeechobee News

The man-made beach at Aquachobee was popular with 2018 OMF participants.

COUNCILMAN

Continued From Page 1

Mr. Montes De Oca finished, "We understand and do not question his decision."

Administrator Montes De Oca has since reached out to Florida Gov. Rick Scott's Of-

fice of General Counsel to inform them of the state of affairs.

The councilman was arrested on May 24, on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging him with tampering with or harassing a witness and a misdemeanor charge of battery. His bond was set at \$5,500. He was released on bond.

Kids can help with sea turtle conservation

Special to the Okeechobee News

STUART — Inwater Research Group (IRG) in conjunction with the YMCA of the Treasure Coast and Meagan Puett Art will be offering a sea turtle certification course for children. Sea Turtle Ambassadors is a three-hour training course that teaches children all about sea turtle biology while highlighting why these animals are endangered and how they can help,

how to involve their community, and what it's like to be a biologist who works with turtles.

Kids will go through the steps of data collection as they "work up" their own sea turtle model mirroring what IRG biologists do on a daily basis. They will join a campaign that helps spread the word of sea turtle conservation through art in their communities. During their time in the pool, they will act as sea turtle biolo-

gists as they learn how to safely capture a turtle for research while in the water. Kids will also learn the plights of pollution as they dive down in search of food only to realize that some of it is trash. To learn about the dangers sea turtles face when nesting, they must complete an obstacle course where they must overcome these obstacles to safely lay their eggs.

Participants will walk away with a t-shirt, certificate, and a genuine under-

standing of how to be ambassadors for sea turtle conservation in their communities.

The program will take place on World Sea Turtle Day, June 16, from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at the YMCA of the Treasure Coast (1700 S.E. Monterey Rd, Stuart, FL 34996). Ages: 8-13, \$5 fee to register. Children must be strong swimmers. For more information and to register, visit bit.ly/seaturtleambassadors.

Community Events



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Auxiliary will serve tacos

The VFW Auxiliary will serve tacos on Wednesday, **June 6**, at Post 9528, 29012 State Road 78 W. All proceeds will benefit Florida military veterans in distress. For information, call 863-467-2882.

Legion serves tacos

American Legion Post 64, 501 S.E. Second St., will serve margaritas and tacos from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. Wednesday, **June 6**. The grill will be open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Entertainment by Jay runs from 3 until 6 p.m.

Main Street mixer planned

The Market Restaurant inside the Okeechobee Livestock Market, 1055 U.S. 98 N., will host an Okeechobee Main Street mixer, on Thursday, **June 7**, from 5 to 7 p.m. OKMS mixers, which are open to the public, provide opportunities for community members to network with business owners, community leaders and other residents of Okeechobee. Door prizes will be given away.

Veterans to meet June 7

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

Swimming lessons offered

Swimming lessons are offered in Okeechobee for ages six months and up at the Okeechobee County Sports Complex Swimming Pool in June and July. Registration for the classes starts on **June 7 and 8** between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. For more information on the lessons, you're encouraged to contact the swimming pool located in Darrell Enfinger Sports Complex at 863-467-7667.

Oasis Lounge opens

The Okeechobee Shrine Club Oasis Lounge, 1855 S.W. 53rd St., will be open Friday, **June 8**, and Saturday, June 9, from 5 to 10 p.m.

BHR VFW serves dinner

The Buckhead Ridge VFW Post 9528, 29012 SR 78 W., will serve dinner on Friday, **June 8**, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. The menu will include grilled boneless rib eye steak, grilled pork tenderloin, fried fish and shrimp, baked and french fried potatoes, baked sweet potatoes, fried onion rings, salad and dessert. All proceeds will go to homeless veterans. For information, call 863-467-2882.

Healthy Start to meet

Okeechobee County Healthy Start Coalition Board of Directors will meet Friday, **June 8**, at 12:30 p.m. at First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 401 S.W. Fourth St. The meeting is open to the public. The coalition is part of a statewide network responsible for planning and implementing services for pregnant women and infants. The coalition is made up of citizens interested in promoting healthy pregnancies and healthy birth outcomes for Okeechobee County residents. For information, contact Kay Begin at 863-462-5877.

Legion will host dinner

On Friday, **June 8**, come and enjoy dinner at the American Legion, 501 S.E. Second St. Everyone is welcome. Dinner will be a spaghetti dinner and will be served from 5 until 8 p.m., with music from 6 to 9 p.m. For information, call 863-763-5309.

Memorial Benefit BBQ set

There will be a Memorial Benefit BBQ for Erik Clay and family on Saturday, **June 9**, at the Buckhead Ridge Park, behind the fire department, 30076 State Road 78. The BBQ lunch is a \$10 donation. There will also be a silent auction and live entertainment. All funds will go to the Clay family. For information or to drop off a donation, call 863-357-4465.

Legion opens Sunday bingo

American Legion 64, 501 S.E. Second St., will host Sunday night bingo on **June 10**, at 6:30 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m. in the bingo area. All proceeds will benefit the American Legion veterans' programs. The event is open to the public.

Legion host 5-card bingo

American Legion Post #64, 501 S.E. Second St., will host five-card bingo on Monday, **June 11**, from 1 to 3 p.m. with lunch served at 12:30 p.m. For information, call 863-763-5309.

CSC meeting canceled

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

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

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.

Butterfly sculptures unveiled

The official unveiling of the butterfly sculptures will take place on Saturday, **June 30**, at 4 p.m. at Hamrick Butterfly Garden, downtown Flagler Park #6. At the event, all sculptures will be unveiled and guests will have a chance to meet and mingle with the artists.

Reading challenge

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!

Skate Park is open again

The Parks & Recreation Department is proud to announce the reopening of the Okeechobee Skate Park at Kiwanis Park located at 350 N.W. Sixth Avenue. The skate park had been closed for several months in anticipation of installing new skate-lite wood surfaces on all of the ramps and some structural repairs to several modular frames. The skate park is open seven days a week from dawn to dusk.

Save lives by donating blood

The need for blood donations doesn't stop for summer vacations. If you are in good health and over the age of 17, you can help One Blood ensure area hospitals have a safe blood supply ready to handle emergencies.

June blood drives in Okeechobee include:

- 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.

Slow down and stay cool for safe summer travel

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) is launching its Safe Summer Travel Campaign, reminding motorists to put safety at the top of their travel checklist this summer. With more residents and visitors on Florida's roadways, the DHSMV and its Division of the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) are partnering with the Department of Children and Families, Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Police Chiefs Association, Florida Sheriffs Association and AAA – The Auto Club Group to help ensure all travelers Arrive Alive.

"Summer is a great time to explore all Florida has to offer. Before heading out on the road, make sure you and your vehicle are travel-ready by checking your tires, checking for recalls and always buckling up," said DHSMV Executive Director Terry L. Rhodes. "There are more travelers on Florida's roads than ever before, so it's critical to remember to slow down, stay cool and be safe."

In Florida in 2017, there were 54,044 and 64,541 speeding citations in June and July, respectively. The number of speeding citations given in July was the highest out of any month in 2017. The highest number of "unlawful speed" citations were written to 20 year old drivers and 61 percent of all speeding citations were issued to men.

"The Florida Highway Patrol strongly urges everyone to follow all laws as you travel to your destination this summer and reminds drivers, no matter how eager you are

to get to your destination, aggressive driving is extremely dangerous," said Colonel Gene S. Spaulding, director of the Florida Highway Patrol. "State troopers will be visible to ensure that drivers are obeying speed limits and everyone is buckled up."

In 2017, 3,306 tire-related crashes occurred in Florida, resulting in 285 serious bodily injuries and 46 fatalities. As a vehicle's first line of defense, tires should be routinely inspected and maintained to ensure they are in good condition.

In addition to educating Floridians on the importance of tire safety and seat belt use, the DHSMV reminds motorists to follow this critical Safe Summer Travel Checklist:

- Slow down, stay cool. Obey all posted speed limits. Speeding and driving aggressively increases the probability and severity of a crash.
- Check all tires, including the spare. Check the vehicle's tire pressure and ensure the vehicle's tires have adequate tire tread. Under-inflated tires can overheat. Never overload a vehicle; it can result in premature tire wear, blowouts and hydroplaning.
- Prepare for driving in inclement weather. Summer is hurricane season in Florida, and along with an increased number of wildfires, drivers should be aware of changing weather and road conditions.
- Drivers should know their evacuation routes, check road closures and call *FHP to report unsafe road conditions.
- NEVER leave children or pets in vehicles unattended. Summer can be incredibly hot in Florida, and leaving children or pets unattended for even a short time can be deadly. Make sure all passengers are accounted for when exiting the vehicle.

motorists to take simple steps to help make it to their destination and back safely: follow the speed limit, buckle up, avoid distractions like texting and designate a driver if you'll be drinking," said Miami Shores Police Chief Kevin Lystad, president of the Florida Police Chiefs Association.

"With our 663 miles of beaches and the most famous theme parks in the world, Florida is a destination for tourists and a great place for families to travel," said the Florida Sheriffs Association president, Sheriff Mike Adkinson. "Our Florida sheriffs ask all our citizens and guests to slow down, watch out for each other, and enjoy the ride!"

"Summer is a great time for traveling, celebrating and spending time with loved ones," said Matt Nasworthy, Florida public affairs director for AAA – The Auto Club Group. "But several contributing factors can make it a dangerous season to be behind the wheel. Please drive safely this summer and always plan ahead if you are celebrating away from home."

The public is encouraged to report aggressive or impaired drivers by dialing *FHP (*347) and check traffic conditions before departing for their trip. For more information, real time traffic conditions and additional travel information, visit: www.flhsmv.gov/summertravel.

Opioid prevention, treatment and recovery: What's working?

GAINESVILLE — Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett recently unveiled a new interactive feature on the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) rural opioid misuse webpage. Now, webpage visitors can tell USDA what prevention, treatment and recovery actions have been effective in addressing the opioid epidemic in their rural communities. USDA is collecting this information as part of an ongoing effort to identify best practices and effective strategies for addressing rural opioid misuse.

"Rural America has been especially hard hit by opioid misuse," Florida and U.S. Virgin Islands Rural Development State Direc-

tor Sydney Gruters said. "By utilizing the interactive features of the rural opioids misuse webpage, Florida residents can contribute their ideas to combat this horrific epidemic."

The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that more than 63,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016. More than half of those deaths involved opioids, including prescription drugs and heroin.

USDA is an important partner to rural communities addressing this national problem. The department is investing in treatment facilities and services, e-Connectivity and telemedicine, and public education efforts. In addition to program investment, USDA is helping communities share information about best practices to address the crisis.

Information collected from this new webpage feature will be used to create an interactive resource for communities looking to address the opioid crisis on the local level.

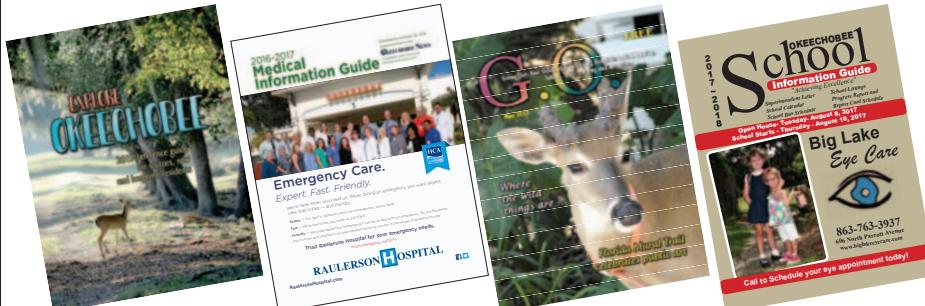
In April 2017, President Donald Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue presented the task force's findings, which included 31 recommendations to align the federal

government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America.

In the area of quality of life, the task force included a recommendation to modernize health care access. The report highlighted the importance of telemedicine in enhancing access to primary care and specialty providers. The task force also found that improved access to mental and behavioral health care, particularly prevention, treatment and recovery resources, is vital to addressing the opioid crisis and other substance misuse in rural communities.

For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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May Main Street Mixer is a hit at Quail Creek

Special to the Okeechobee News

This past week, Okeechobee Main Street with Quail Creek Plantation hosted the May Main Street Mixer. Welcoming all 60-plus guest who attended the night's mixer, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Fanizzi went on asking all who drove out to be a part of an amazing early evening of fun-filled conversations, and meets-and-greets of those who attended from the community. Much was learned from the Quail Creek Plantation mixer of what goes on out on the property.

Mr. Fanizzi spoke about the planning of different types of events hosted by other organization within our community. He continued to talk about how Quail Creek is not just about clay shooting outdoors and hunting, but offers a variety of outdoor-type activities, as well as a quiet getaway while staying in one of the log cabins on the property.

"It was an honor to host the event, and we were excited for the huge turnout and for the opportunity to meet other business owners in the community as well as political figures. The mixer was a great opportunity to showcase our business as well as network with local business owners and discuss all the opportunities available in

our community," said Maria Fanizzi, administration manager.

Refreshments were provided by the lodge bar, which, by the way, has happy hour every Friday night from 4 to 6 p.m. Accompanied by delicious food prepared by the kitchen staff from the restaurant located at the lodge. Mr. Fanizzi made everyone aware that the restaurant is open to the community, so all who can come out and enjoy their full menu should do so.

The evening closed with announcements from the community. Okeechobee Main Street would like to thank those who came out despite the weather conditions and the drive.

Means the world to us all to see the support from the community by attending our monthly mixers, also to those who co-host them with Main Street throughout the year.

If you missed this one, and all the fun, come out to the next Main Street Mixer. We promise you'll have a fantastic time! For more information on Quail Creek Plantation, visit their website at <http://www.quailcreekplantation.com>.



Special to the Okeechobee News

Top, left to right, Maria Fanizzi, administrative manager of Quail Creek; Joanie Tomlin; Shelly Doyle; Mark Bragel; Bridgette Waldau; and Jonathan Holt. Bottom, left to right, Fred Fanizzi, Kristina Stas, Sharon Cannon, Paulette Bragel, Marion Hedesheimer, Steffanie Immerfall and Maureen Burroughs.

Get a Head Start on Fall Classes at IRSC this June

Special to the Okeechobee News

Now is the time for new students to get a head start on fall admissions at Indian River State College (IRSC) at an "Admit One: Admissions Workshop" being hosted on all five IRSC campuses throughout the month of June.

The workshops will answer new students' questions, provide assistance with applying to IRSC, and after help with financial aid forms and New Student Orientation. Participants will have an opportunity to win free college gear, enjoy snacks, and meet other new students.

Pre-registration is required and can be done online at www.irsc.edu "Admit One:

Admissions Workshops" dates are:

- Wednesday, June 13, 5:30 p.m., virtual campus, online
- Wednesday, June 13, 5:30 p.m., all campuses
- Thursday, June 14, 2 p.m., main campus
- Tuesday, June 19, 5:30 p.m., all campuses
- Thursday, June 28, 2 p.m., main campus

The IRSC Main Campus is located at 3209 Virginia Ave. in Fort Pierce; the Chastain Campus is located at 2400 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart; the IRSC Dixon Hendry Campus is located at 2229 N. W. Ninth Avenue, Okeechobee; the IRSC Mueller Campus

is located at 6155 College Lane, Vero Beach; and the IRSC Pruitt Campus in St. Lucie West is located at 500 N.W. California Blvd., Port St. Lucie. Virtual Campus online sessions will take place through Virtual GoToMeeting. Instructions for participation in the online session will be sent in advance of the session.



Special to the Okeechobee News

New students to IRSC can get a head start on the admissions process for fall this June at one of the "Admit One: Admissions Workshops" being held at all five IRSC campuses across the Treasure Coast.

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Tropicana Public Speaking Contest winners announced

Special to the Okeechobee News

The annual Tropicana Public Speaking Contest took place Wednesday, May 23, at South Elementary School.

There was a fantastic turnout, and all the youth who presented speeches represented their schools admirably. The subject matter of the speeches varied widely and was well thought out, the flow of each child's speech was smooth, and the audience was engaged by the speakers throughout the competition.

Here are our winners from the countywide contest:

Fourth grade:

- First place winner – Amaya Alderman – Rock Solid Christian Academy (RSCA);
- Second place – Emma Pereira – Okeechobee Christian Academy (OCA);
- Third place – Reese Stokes – OCA;

- Honorable mention – Hailey Kelsen – Everglades Elementary School (EES).

Fifth grade:

- First place winner – Romin Rucks – North Elementary School;
- Second place – Channing Delagall – EES;
- Third place – Melanie Hernandez – Seminole Elementary School;
- Honorable mention – Hailey Harden – Central Elementary School.

Sixth grade:

- First place – Lily Duncan – Osceola Middle School (OMS);
 - Second place – Harmoni Randolph – OMS;
 - Third place – Gracie Ceballos – RSCA;
 - Honorable mention – Logan Rucks – RSCA.
- First-place winners will receive summer camp scholarships.

Event judges were County Commissioner Kelly Owens, UF/IFAS Extension representative Hunter Sills, and Fire Chief Ralph Franklin.

Emcee/Mistress of Ceremonies was Dr. Pat McCoy. Dr. McCoy's ability to

interact with and put the participants at ease is always a factor in the youth enjoying being a part of the contest and being excited to share their speeches.

Senator Grimsley holds mobile office hours in Okeechobee

Special to the Okeechobee News

The staff of State Sen. Denise Grimsley (R-Lake Placid) will hold "mobile office hours" on Tuesday, June 12, to assist constituents with state agency concerns. Staff will be at the Glades County Courthouse, 500 Ave. J S.W. in

Moore Haven, from 9 to 10 a.m. and at the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce, 55 S. Parrott Ave., from 11 a.m. to noon.

"Our office is on the road to provide services in person to those who need help," Sen. Grimsley said.



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High school diplomas presented to more than 100 at IRSC

Special to the Okeechobee News

More than 100 Indian River State College high school and GED Preparation graduates participated in the adult secondary education graduation ceremony on Thursday, May 24, in the McAlpin Fine Arts Center at the IRSC Main Campus, 3209 Virginia Ave. in Fort Pierce.

Commencement speaker Dr. Alfred Williams, associate professor and department chair of fire science, addressed the graduates with inspirational remarks about their

educational journey and career paths.

Many of these graduates will continue their education in one of IRSC's certificate or degree programs. Dr. Kelly Amatucci, assistant dean of the School of Education, explains, "Students enrolled in IRSC Adult Education programs have the opportunity to simultaneously begin their career while completing their high school credential. Ongoing support is provided through mentoring and career inventories. Financial support is also available for students in need who

would like to register for college courses."

Students in the IRSC High School program earn high school credits in traditional and online courses, while students in the GED Preparation program progress at their own pace to review high school subjects prior to taking the GED exam.

The IRSC High School and GED Preparation programs award thousands of dollars per year in scholarships through the IRSC Foundation Inc., and this year, 33 students received scholarships totaling \$35,000.

Kendy Campusano received the Ann Polk Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded to a student majoring in education, early childhood education or nursing. Miss Campusano has earned an associate's degree from IRSC and is in the process of applying for the registered nursing program at IRSC.

Along with the 33 students who received

scholarships, 13 members of the Class of 2018 were inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society.

Raheem Brown, Treasa Cornwell, Megan Crews, Jonathan Crofford, Devin Ferguson, Vianet Dominguez Gonzalez, Barbara Gaal, Benjamin Hanner, Liliana Martinez De Colon, Noah Pulido, Gloria Salazar, Rita Salazar and Kurt Wagner were selected by faculty for outstanding cooperation, attendance, perseverance and self-reliance in the GED Preparation Program.

In addition to GED Preparation, IRSC Adult Secondary Education also offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. For more information, call the IRSC Call Center at 1-866-792-4772 or visit <http://aecp.irsc.edu>.



Special to the Okeechobee News

Joseph White congratulates his grandmother, Barbara Gaal, after the IRSC adult education graduation ceremony May 24 in Fort Pierce. Both received high school diplomas and shared an unforgettable day.

FWC promotes BearWise communities

For a third year in a row, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is inviting local governments to apply for BearWise funding to help their communities reduce human-bear conflicts.

The FWC will focus on providing funding to local governments with BearWise ordinances that require residents and businesses to keep garbage secure from bears. The funding will offset the costs for residents and businesses to use bear-resistant equipment to secure their garbage from bears.

Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature appropriated the FWC \$500,000 in BearWise funding starting July 1.

"These new funds will allow us to expand our work with local governments to make it easier for people to avoid conflicts with bears," said Kipp Frohlich, Director of the FWC's Division of Habitat and Species Conservation.

The FWC invites counties and cities to submit applications to be considered for funding. Preference will be given to applications from areas with BearWise ordinances and to large projects benefiting a large number of people.

Local governments are strongly encouraged to consult with FWC staff to discuss

options and implementation before submitting their applications. The FWC will assist any local government considering passing an ordinance, including providing example ordinances.

Since 2007, the FWC has provided almost \$1.6 million in BearWise funding to residents and businesses in the 16 counties with the highest levels of human-bear conflicts in Florida. Funds have been used to purchase over 10,000 bear-resistant trash cans, 9,700 sets of hardware to secure regular trash cans, and 160 dumpsters modified to keep bears out.

For a community to be considered, the FWC must receive applications before close of business on Aug. 1, 2018. Applications should be emailed to BearManagement@MyFWC.com or mailed to: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Attention: Bear Management Program, 620 South Meridian St., 6B, Tallahassee, FL 32399.

For additional details on the funding and application process, visit MyFWC.com/BearWise.

Support the FWC's efforts to help bears and other wildlife by purchasing the Conserve Wildlife license plate at BuyaPlate.com.

SUDOKU

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

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:

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

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

ANSWER:

Local residents search for security after thefts

By Richard Marion
Okeechobee News

A wave of burglaries in Okeechobee during the month of May left some local residents searching for a way to keep both themselves and their property safe.

Man attempts to elude law enforcement

By Matteo Tullio
Okeechobee News

A 49-year-old Okeechobee man was arrested Monday afternoon when he allegedly failed to stop for a posted stop sign and attempted to elude law enforcement as he traveled in the wrong lane of traffic.

Scott Alexander Marra, Northeast 31st Avenue, was arrested June 4 on felony charges of possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine) without a valid prescription, possession of a controlled substance (hydromorphone) without a valid prescription, fleeing or attempting to elude a law enforcement officer and misdemeanor charges of possession of a controlled substance (synthetic cannabinoid) without a valid prescription, possession of drug paraphernalia, resisting arrest without violence and knowingly driving while license suspended. He is being held without bond.

According to an arrest report by the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force, at 1:16 p.m. on Monday, they attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a blue 2002 Mazda four-door car for failure to stop at a posted stop sign located at the intersection of Northeast 30th Avenue and State Road 70 East. The report stated the vehicle turned onto State Road 70 East and traveled west. The task force reportedly initiated the emergency lights on the vehicle close to the 2600 block to perform the traffic stop, but the Mazda — driven by Marra — made an abrupt left turn into an opposing turn lane, conducting an illegal U-turn.

Marra apparently then accelerated the car into oncoming traffic while he traveled eastbound in the westbound lane on State Road 70. A member of the task force reported having seen multiple vehicles make overt lane changes to avoid a collision with Marra's Mazda. Task force members were reportedly able to pace Marra at 60 mph in a posted 45-mph speed zone.

Marra then reportedly turned the Mazda left onto Northeast 30th Avenue, continuing at a speed of 45 mph in a posted 25-mph area the report stated. Task force personnel reportedly saw Marra apparently open the driver side front door while the Mazda continued to travel north on Northeast 30th Avenue before it went off the road into a ditch around the 700 block of Northeast 30th Avenue. Marra was reported to have then crawled out of the car through the driver door.

The report continued that Marra was commanded to stop, but he did not comply and was subdued with an electroshock weapon. Dispatch reportedly informed law enforcement that Marra's Florida driver license had expired in 2013, his driver license from Massachusetts was suspended in 2016 and he had an arrest warrant from the State of Virginia for violation of probation - grand

Linda Harper, who had a pressure washer stolen out of her back porch in early May, is looking for ways to be proactive in her home security.

"It just makes you feel unsafe," said Ms. Harper. "My own things aren't safe in my own home. I'm just glad they didn't try to

come into my house. It's scary. I'm looking into home security options now, if that will even help. They're getting so brazen."

On the night on May 15, there were 14 incident reports filed with the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) alone, including individuals reporting items stolen from inside their cars, and two vehicle thefts, one in Treasure Island and another in King's Bay.

One of the vehicles stolen on May 15 was recovered four days later in Tennessee.

Although property crime has fallen in recent years, a majority of the crimes go unsolved. According to the FBI, in 2015 only 19 percent of the property crimes reported to police in the U.S. were cleared. A case is considered "cleared" when it is closed through the arrest, charging and referral of a suspect for prosecution.

Bob Tucker, a spokesperson for home security company ADT based out of Boca Raton, said home security cameras can be vital in helping catch criminals who are stealing from homes and vehicles.

"Camera quality is so good now that even at night they can get a pretty good image of the bad guy," explained Mr. Tucker. "And then of course the cops can use that image to find them, and the prosecutor can use it to convict."

Mr. Tucker also recommends installing motion detector lights outside your house, and not broadcasting any vacation plans on social media, which can alert criminals that your house may be unoccupied.

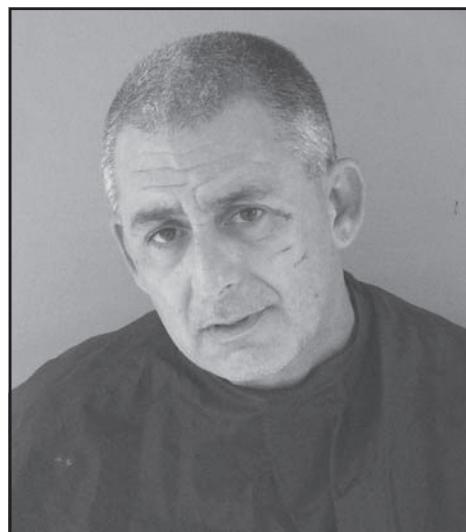
"Most of this is all about having the bad guy move on from your house," Mr. Tucker continued.

"They tend to like houses where they don't think anyone is home to break into. It's also good to encourage people to be nosy neighbors. You want someone who, when they see something going on at your house, like someone walking around the side yard or knocking on the door a lot, they will call you on your cellphone. That's how a lot of these people are caught as well — by people being proactive and being good neighbors," he said.

ADT offers home security systems that will alert you and the police. OSCO Public Information Officer Michele Bell offered a few tips to help stop a burglary from happening to you.

She recommends locking all vehicles, sheds, garages and not leaving valuables in vehicles. If items are left in a vehicle, cover them. Keep trees and shrubs trimmed near windows and doors. Do not leave bicycles and golf carts unsecured. And secure the pet door entry to your house.

"It's another (thing to) finance for us people who are retired and on a fixed income," said Ms. Harper of the home security installation. "Now we have to invest in something to protect ourselves."



Special to the Okeechobee News

**Scott
Marra**

larceny.

A reported inventory search of the vehicle provided the task force members with a black-and-orange bag that contained Marra's wallet with Massachusetts driver license, miscellaneous cards and another smaller black zip pouch.

Inside that pouch, the report said, were miscellaneous jewelry items, toothbrush, cellphone micro-SD cards, a phone charger, a plastic container with half of a white tablet, a used syringe and a plastic bag with suspected methamphetamine residue. On the driver's side floorboard, the report continued, an exposed used syringe was found, and in the cup holder on the driver's side was a silver mechanical socket with what appeared to be less than 1 gram of suspected synthetic cannabinoid.

The report concluded that the suspected methamphetamine residue and suspected synthetic cannabinoid field-tested positive. The tablet was identified as hydromorphone and sent to the Indian River Crime Laboratory in Fort Pierce for further analysis.

Digital photographs of the vehicle and its contents were taken, along with the reportedly found contraband, and submitted into evidence at the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office. Marra was arrested, transported and booked into the Okeechobee County Jail on the aforementioned charges in conjunction with receiving uniform traffic citations for failure to stop at a posted stop sign, improper U-turn, fleeing or attempting to elude a law enforcement officer, reckless driving and knowingly driving while license suspended. Dispatch confirmed that the State of Virginia will extradite Marra for the warrant.

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K-9 tracks man who fled crime scene

By Matteo Tullio

Okeechobee News

A 22-year-old Okeechobee man alleged to have gotten into a physical altercation with his girlfriend and two others was arrested Saturday after being tracked by law enforcement K-9.

Alexander Franklin Mason, Southeast 60th Drive, was arrested June 2 on felony charges of aggravated battery, aggravated assault, escape, tampering with or harassing a witness, victim or informant, resisting officer without violence and misdemeanor charges of three counts of battery and criminal mischief with property damage (\$200 or less). His bond was set at \$188,500.

According to an arrest report by Deputy Steven Pollock of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), at 11:02 p.m. on June 1, he responded to the 9300 block of Southeast 60th Drive in regard to a disturbance complaint.

Upon arrival, Deputy Pollock met with the complainant, who reportedly stated she was returning home from her walk down

Southeast 60th Drive when her live-in boyfriend, Mason, confronted her, ensuing in a verbal argument. The complainant then reportedly said that during the argument, Mason struck her via a head butt. The woman then said she went into her vehicle and tried to get away from Mason. Mason then apparently was able to reach the woman through the driver's door before she could lock it and throw her onto the concrete driveway, which supposedly caused an abrasion to her left arm and hand. The woman finished her complaint, reportedly stating when Deputy Pollock met with Mason previously, Mason apparently provided the false name of Danny Morris Lewis, which she claimed to know because Mason reportedly bragged about giving the fake name.

Deputy Pollock then met with another complainant who said she saw the interaction between the couple. The woman reportedly told Mason to take a walk and he responded by throwing his cigarette at her. The report then stated the woman went into the house and retrieved a wooden baseball bat in an attempt to protect herself and the

other woman from Mason. Mason supposedly then took the bat from the woman and struck her in the left knee and then threatened to hit her again.

A third complainant informed Deputy Pollock that he came out of the residence in an effort to get Mason to leave, with Mason threatening him with the bat as well. The three complainants then reportedly walked onto the screened porch to discontinue their interaction with Mason, but he apparently followed the trio, grabbed one of the women by the neck and pushed her against the wall. Afterward, Mason turned his attention back to the male complainant — who was in possession of an aluminum baseball bat — and took the bat before shoving him to the ground. One of the women then walked outside to the road to call law enforcement but was followed by Mason, who took the cellphone and threw it to the ground, breaking the screen. Mason then reportedly left the scene, walking south on Southeast 60th Drive with the baseball bat.

All three completed complaint affidavits and wished to pursue criminal charges.

Deputy Pollock then reported that Deputy Sergeant Matt Hurst requested Deputy Brian Cross and K-9 Magnum respond to the scene to search the nearby area for Mason. K-9 Magnum was able to track and located Mason in the bed of a pickup truck a short distance from the scene.

Deputy Cross reported he saw Mason with his flashlight lying down trying to hide.

He then reported giving clear instructions to show his hands, and upon non-compliance, K-9 Magnum was commanded to apprehend Mason. K-9 Magnum then reportedly jumped over the side of the truck and engaged Mason in the left buttock area. Mason then apparently tried to get K-9 Magnum off of him by pushing him back, with Magnum re-engaging Mason by way of the left bicep and rib area. K-9 Magnum was then reportedly called off Mason when he began to follow law enforcement's commands. Mason reportedly received small lacerations to his left bicep and minor punctures to his left hip area and was transported by emergency medical services to Raulerson Hospital to be treated for his injuries.

Deputy Pollock's report then continued that Deputy Jonathan Kemp was requested by medical staff at the hospital to restrain Mason to the emergency room bed. Deputy Kemp reportedly informed Mason he was going to remove the handcuffs to restrain him to the bed and as Deputy Kemp took off the left cuff Mason snatched his right hand away from him and took off running toward the exit door but was subdued.

The report concluded that photographs were taken of Mason's injuries from the K-9 utilization and were submitted into evidence. Mason was arrested, transported and booked into the Okeechobee County Jail on the aforementioned charges.

Okeechobee Arrest Report

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

• Tab Milton Morgan, 29, Southeast 85th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested June 1 by Deputy Tyler Ott on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging him with grand theft. His bond was set at \$5,000.

• Christian Zachary White, 21, North Old Dixie Highway, Fort Pierce, was arrested June 1 by Deputy Tyler Ott on a St. Lucie County felony warrant charging him with violation of probation - robbery by sudden snatching and violation of probation - possession of a controlled substance (cocaine) without a valid prescription. He is being held without bond.

• Leslie Diane Harmon, 51, South Post Office Road, Kenansville, was arrested June 1 by Deputy Jonathon Gove on a Highlands County felony warrant charging her with dealing in stolen property. Her bond was set at \$5,000.

• Jason Matthew Farmer, 42, Serene Lane, Lorida, was arrested June 3 by Deputy Dan Franklin on a felony charge of domestic battery by strangulation and a misdemeanor charge of battery. His bond was set at \$4,000.

• Orrin T. Wilkerson, 40, Northwest 266th Street, Okeechobee, was arrested June 3 by Deputy William Jolly on a felony charge of possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine) without a valid prescription. His bond was set at \$2,500.

• Jerry J. Garces, 25, Southeast 35th Avenue, Okeechobee, was arrested June 3 by FWC Officer Trevor Hausler on a misdemeanor charge of boating under the influence. He was released on his own recognizance.

• Claudio Moralez, 32, East Center Street, Okeechobee, was arrested June 4 by Deputy

Nathaniel Mitchell on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with a misdemeanor of driving under the influence - blood or breath-alcohol level of .15 or higher or accompanied in the vehicle with a person under 18 years of age. He was released on his own recognizance.

• Kathy Eteau-Froggy Cypress, 19, Northeast 30th Avenue, Okeechobee, was arrested June 4 by Deputy Ben Vuleta on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging her with possession of a controlled substance (alprazolam) without a valid prescription. Her bond was set at \$5,000.

• Jose Raul Feliciano, 36, Northwest Fourth Street, Okeechobee, was arrested June 4 on a DOC felony warrant charging him with driving under the influence - third conviction and knowingly driving while license suspended, revoked or canceled. He is being held without bond.

• Lisa Nicole Shaw, 43, Southeast 44th Avenue, Okeechobee, was arrested June 4 by the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force on a felony charge of possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine) without a valid prescription. Her bond was set at \$5,000.

• Rebecca Sue Thacker, 24, Park Lane, West Palm Beach, was arrested June 4 by on an Okeechobee County felony warrant charging her with five counts of failure to appear - possession of a controlled substance (alprazolam, amphetamine, carisoprodol, cocaine, oxycodone) without a valid prescription and misdemeanor charges of failure to appear - possession of a controlled substance (cannabis) without a valid prescription and failure to appear - possession of drug paraphernalia. 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.

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Personals

W/F 65 LOOKING FOR SIGNIFICANT OTHER TO GO PLACES AND DO THINGS WITH. GIVE ME A CALL 863-697-1345

Miscellaneous Notices

Announcing the Retirement of Kenneth F. Haas, M.D., F.A.C.G. He would like to thank all the patients who entrusted him with their care over the past 20 years. Copies of Medical Records may be requested by visiting 305 NE Park Street, Okeechobee, FL 34972 or call 863-484-8154.

How do you find a job in today's competitive market? In the employment section of the classifieds

Employment - Full Time

Employment - Full Time



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Maintenance/Janitorial position available. Looking for a reliable worker to perform a variety of duties including repairs/cleaning. Must have the ability to work independently; Full time position, 5 days per week, vacation, health insurance. Fax resume to 763-7874 or apply in person at 269 NW 9th St.



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Medical Assistant/ LPN Should be willing to work in all areas of the office Competitive Salary. Fax Resume (863)467-1156 Mail: PO Box 1268 Okeechobee, FL 34973

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Employment - Medical

Medical Assistant At least 1 year experience in a medical office. Please fax resume to 863-467-6833 or completed application to 111 NE 19th Drive, Okeechobee, FL 34972

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Employment - Part Time

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Deadline has been extended to Fri., June 15, 2018, 4:30 PM. See website for Job Description and Application packet, or in person at City Hall, City Clerk's Office, 55 SE 3rd Ave., Okeechobee, FL 34974, 863-763-3372 ext. 9814. Successful candidates are required to pass a background screening and a physical. EEO/ADA/GINA/VP/DFWP

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Public Notices



Public Notice

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA**
CASE NO.: 47-2017-DR-000410

IN RE: THE MARRIAGE OF
ROBERT L. LAZENBY
Petitioner/Husband,
and
JOANNE DEBORAH BENJAMIN,
Respondent/Wife.

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE
(NO CHILD OR FINANCIAL SUPPORT)

TO: **JOANNE DEBORAH BENJAMIN**
411 SE 3rd Place
Dania, Florida 33004

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for dissolution of marriage has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any to it on **JEFFRY A. FADLEY, P.A.**, whose address 180 NW 3rd Avenue, Suite A, Okeechobee, Florida 34972 on or before July 17, 2018 and file the original with the clerk of this Court at 312 NW 3rd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34972 before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you are the relief demanded in the petition.

The action is asking the court to decide how the following real or personal property should be divided: **None**. Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request.

You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. You may file Designation of Current Mailing and E-mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915. Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to address(es) on record at the clerk's office.

WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.

Dated: May 30, 2018.

Clerk of the Circuit Court
Deputy Clerk

265680 ON 6/6/13, 20/27/2018

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:

1-17-34-33-0400-00004-E000

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 5/30/6/6/2018

PUBLIC NOTICE

A public auction will be held at BMJ Towing, Inc. at 414 South Parrott Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34974 on FRIDAY THE 22ND 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

2008 CHEVROLET
IMPA LA
2G1WT58K689116723

1994 FREIGHT FLD
12-SERIES
TRACTOR TRUCK
1FUYDXYB7RP578776

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.

266979 ON 6/06/2018

READING A NEWSPAPER HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND THE WORLD AROUND YOU.



Public Notice

Public Notice

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 2017-CA-000114

TD BANK, N.A.
Plaintiff,
vs.
TERYL LYNN MATEO A/K/A TERYL L. MATEO, et al.,
Defendants.

NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to the Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated January 23, 2018, and entered in Case No. 2017-CA-000114 of the Circuit Court of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit in and for Okeechobee County, Florida wherein TD Bank, N.A., Plaintiff, and Teryl Lynn Mateo, et al., are Defendants. The Clerk of this Court shall sell to the highest and best bidder for cash at the Okeechobee County Judicial Center, Jury Assembly Room, 312 North West 3rd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34972 beginning at 11:00 a.m. on June 27, 2018, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment of Foreclosure, to wit:

PART OF THE SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 30, TOWNSHIP 35 SOUTH, RANGE 35 EAST, MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: FROM THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 30 RUN NORTH ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY LINE OF SECTION 30, A DISTANCE OF 192.27 FEET TO THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SR S-68; THENCE RUN SOUTH 81°1'41" EAST ALONG THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SR-68 A DISTANCE OF 1.01 FEET TO A POINT; THENCE RUN NORTH 0°50'49" WEST A DISTANCE OF 1745.13 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. THENCE RUN SOUTH 89°09'11" WEST A DISTANCE OF 330 FEET; THENCE RUN NORTH 0°50'49" WEST A DISTANCE OF 205 FEET; THENCE RUN NORTH 89°09'11" EAST A DISTANCE OF 330 FEET; THENCE RUN SOUTH 0°50'49" WEST A DISTANCE OF 205 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, ALSO KNOWN AS THE NORTH 205 FEET OF LOT 4 OF AN UNRECORDED PLAT OF ROBERT E. EDWARDS SUBDIVISION, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY PREPARED BY LEON H. WILLIS, REGISTERED LAND SURVEYOR, CERTIFICATE NO. 1358.

Property Address: 16605 NW 32nd Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34972-8428

ANY PERSON CLAIMING AN INTEREST IN THE SURPLUS PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE, IF ANY, OTHER THAN THE PROPERTY OWNER AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MUST FILE A CLAIM WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER THE SALE.

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

DATED THIS 25TH DAY OF APRIL, 2018.

SHARON ROBERTSON
Clerk of Circuit Court
BY: Sandra L. Creech
Deputy Clerk

260483 ON 5/30/6/6/2018

IN THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO. 2015 CA 171

CFS PROPERTIES, INC., a Florida Corporation
Plaintiff,
vs.
LLOYD W. HULCOLM, an individual, and any unknown heirs, devisees, creditors, grantees, and other unknown persons or unknown spouses claiming by, through and under LLOYD W. HULCOLM, an individual, Defendants.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to a Summary Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated May 10, 2018, entered in Civil Case No. 2015 CA 171 of the Circuit Court of OKEECHOBEE County, Okeechobee, Florida, wherein CFS PROPERTIES, INC. is the Plaintiff and LLOYD W. HULCOLM, et al. are defendants. I will sell the property described below to the highest and best bidder for cash, in the Okeechobee County Judicial Center, 312 NW 3rd Street, Jury Assembly Room, 2nd Floor, Okeechobee, Florida, at 11:00 a.m. on the 20th day of June, 2018, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit:

THE WEST 1/2 OF THE WEST 1/2 OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF THE SOUTH 1/2 OF TRACT 28, SECTION 10, TOWNSHIP 34 SOUTH, RANGE 33 EAST, OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGES 3A-D, INCLUSIVE OF THE OKEECHOBEE COUNTY PUBLIC RECORDS. (1-20-34-33-0400-00028-1)

THE WEST 1/2 OF THE EAST 1/2 OF THE SOUTH 1/2 OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF TRACT 26, SECTION 27, TOWNSHIP 34 SOUTH, RANGE 33 EAST, OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGES 3A-D, INCLUSIVE OF THE OKEECHOBEE COUNTY PUBLIC RECORDS. (1-27-34-33-0400-00005-H)

THE WEST 1/2 OF THE WEST 1/2 OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF THE NORTH 1/2 OF TRACT 06, SECTION 26, TOWNSHIP 34 SOUTH, RANGE 33 EAST, OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4, PAGES 3A-D, INCLUSIVE OF THE OKEECHOBEE COUNTY PUBLIC RECORDS. (1-26-34-33-0400-00006-D)

Any person claiming an interest in the surplus from the sale, if any, other than the property owner as of the date of the lis pendens must file a claim within 60 days after the sale.

Dated this 10th day of May, 2018.

SHARON ROBERTSON
Clerk of Circuit Court
BY: Sandra L. Creech
Deputy Clerk

R. Charles Ervin, Esq., Attorney for Plaintiff, CFS Properties, Inc., Tel: 863-465-7715; Fax: 863-465-7791
Florida Bar No.: 0180300

In accordance with the Americans Disabilities Act, persons needing a reasonable accommodation to participate in this proceeding should contact Corrie Johnson, ADA Coordinator, no later than seven days prior to the proceeding at 250 NW Country Club Drive, Port St. Lucie, Florida 34986, 1-772-807-4370 within two working days of your receipt of this NOTICE. If hearing impaired, contact (TDD) 1-800-955-8771, voice impaired, 1-800-955-8770. 262764 ON 5/23, 6/6/2018

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

Dissolution of Marriage/Divorce

Dissolution of Marriage/Divorce

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 2017-CA-009

JOSEPH ZACHARY GAZZA,
Plaintiff,
vs.
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, 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:

1-17-34-33-0400-00005-B000

Lot A of Tract 5 The East 1/2 of the East 1/2 of the North 1/2 of Tract 5, 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; AND

1-17-34-33-0400-00005-B000

Lot B of Tract 5 The East 1/2 of the East 1/2 of the North 1/2 of Tract 5, 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 from date of first publication, and file the original with the Clerk of this Court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a Default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

Dated this 31st day of May, 2018.

SHARON ROBERTSON
Clerk of Court
BY: Arlene Nealis
Deputy Clerk

266694 ON 6/6/13/2018

Dissolution of Marriage/Divorce

Dissolution of Marriage/Divorce

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO. 472018DR000131

IN RE THE MARRIAGE OF:
DONOVAN W. GRAY,
Petitioner/Husband,
and
TABITHA BARBER GRAY,
Respondent/Wife

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR PUBLICATION

TO: **Tabitha Barber Gray**
Last Known Address
1110 SW 4th Street
Okeechobee Florida 34974

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for Dissolution of Marriage, including claims for dissolution of marriage, payment of debts, division of real and personal property, and for payments of support, has been filed against you. You are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to this action on **Rebecca H. Boldt**, Petitioner's attorney, whose address is 180 NW 3rd Ave., Suite C, Okeechobee, FL 34972, within 30 days of first publication, and file the original with the clerk of the court at Okeechobee County Judicial Center, 312 NW 3rd Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34972, either before service on Petitioner's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a Default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.

WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings. DATED THIS 26TH day of April, 2018.

SHARON ROBERTSON
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
BY: Arlene Nealis
Deputy Clerk

265325 ON 5/30/6/13, 20/27/2018

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ATTORNEYS

Rebecca Boldt Hamilton, P.A.

REBECCA H. BOLDT, Esq.

RICHARD W. SEYMOUR, Esq.

Board Certified Criminal Trial Lawyer

863-467-1894

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FWC to expand python removal efforts

Special to the Okeechobee News

HOMESTEAD — Everglades National Park and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are partnering together to expand efforts to remove Burmese pythons from within the park. The partnership will expand the park's Python Removal Authorized Agent Program by allowing paid FWC contractors to remove pythons in Everglades National Park.

The expansion will triple the maximum allowed number of participants in the park from 40 to 120, allow FWC contractors to use firearms or other humane methods to euthanize pythons in the wild, and qualify additional trained National Park Service (NPS) personnel to live capture and turn in pythons. The purpose of this controlled invasive species management program remains to remove invasive pythons and other invasive species from the wild and advance research in methods to control pythons.

The park is working closely with the FWC on the terms of the agreement, which would allow FWC contractors to engage in python removals in the park, potentially as early as July.

"We are excited to partner with FWC on invasive species management and are certain this partnership will increase python removals within our park," said Everglades National Park Superintendent Pedro Ramos. "We worked hard in planning this expansion to ensure it won't harm the park and its exceptional resources."

To that end, the park and the FWC will hold a required Everglades National Park orientation for the contractors so they fully understand the park's program and rules they must follow prior to beginning removals within the park.

"We appreciate the support and efforts of our partners, especially Everglades National Park and Superintendent Ramos. With the leadership and support of Gov. Scott and our commissioners, we have seen a significant increase in efforts and results to remove the Burmese pythons and other invasive species," said FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton. "Our success moving forward relies on everyone pulling together collectively including agencies, nonprofits, private landowners and individual citizens."

Burmese pythons pose a significant threat to the Everglades ecosystem. Along with state, federal, tribal and local partners,

Everglades National Park and the FWC have invested millions of dollars and countless hours in developing and testing ways to remove pythons from the Everglades.

While this research has improved knowledge of the python population, eliminating pythons using current technology is impossible. Search and removal by trained individuals remains the best method to remove pythons. The park used volunteers for removal in the past, and while it will continue to do so, the addition of FWC contractors will allow greater numbers of skilled people to engage in removals than ever before.

"While hunting remains prohibited by law in Everglades National Park," said Everglades National Park Superintendent Pedro Ramos, "we believe the expansion of the program to include allowing FWC contractors to remove pythons in the park will be welcomed by concerned citizens that want to play a role in helping with this significant problem."

The FWC designed the Python Removal Contractor Program to further engage qualified individuals with python management efforts. Python removal contractors are paid for their efforts to survey for and, when possible, capture Burmese pythons in specific areas which will soon include Everglades National Park. They may also respond to survey requests in areas where pythons have been reported.

Burmese pythons became established in Florida as a result of escaped or released pets. People should never release nonnative pets in the wild in Florida. It is illegal and can negatively affect native wildlife and habitat. The FWC has an Exotic Pet Amnesty Program that allows nonnative pets to be surrendered without penalty.

For more information about the FWC's Python Removal Contractor Program or Exotic Pet Amnesty Program, visit MyFWC.com/Python.

For more information about invasive Burmese pythons in Everglades National Park: <https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/burmese-python.htm>

For more information about python management in the Park: <https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/npspythonmanagement.htm>



Special to the Okeechobee News/FWC
Burmese pythons became established in Florida as a result of escaped or released pets.

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS	DOWN		
1 Candy in a strawlike container	1 Dr. __	31 Behave theatrically	47 Human __
9 "The Great Santini" Oscar nominee Michael	2 New York school	32 They come before finals	48 Burned a little
15 Do-it-yourself style	3 66-Across setting, briefly	38 Superficially attractive thing	51 Scandinavian import
16 One often checking boxes	4 New York school	39 Colloquial language features	52 Vague feeling
17 Partly	5 Ticket generator	42 Spiegel: German magazine	54 Turner of old TV?
18 He broke Walter's NFL career rushing record	6 Body stretcher?	45 South American desert	56 Land near Albion
19 Was sharply critical, with "out"	7 Agcy. with complicated schedules		57 Paving stone
20 Adopted great-nephew of Claudius	8 Colossus and Cyclops, e.g.		58 Casual farewell
22 Everyday list ender	9 Collapsible topper		60 The Theatre Cat in "Cats"
23 Common pledge	10 Dragon habitat		62 Tiny tube travelers
24 Composer/conductor Boulanger	11 Tree that can form natural tunnels		
26 Philosophers in the news since 1985	12 Daughter of Anne Boleyn		
33 Like many fliers	13 Blowout		
34 Fictional place near Atlanta	14 Deco pseudonym		
35 Internet	21 Sweeps on a gridiron		
36 Put one's foot down?	25 Watson's creator		
37 What smart alecks do	26 Evergreen with edible pods		
40 Swift of fiction	27 Estée Lauder subsidiary		
41 Binged (on)	28 Spreadable sausage		
43 Fabrication	29 Goes after		
44 "Running on Empty" (1988) actress	30 Pearly coating		
46 Basics			
49 Ruin partner			
50 Metaphor words			
51 Dept. in a "Law & Order" spin-off			
53 Piece of work			
55 Like Miss Congeniality			
59 Compression-utilizing weapon			
61 Forbidden zone			
63 Beckett genre, with "the"			
64 Whirlpool protection, perhaps			
65 Designer Johnson			
66 2003 film with the tagline "He doesn't care if you're naughty or nice"			

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

L	S	D	T	A	B		S	L	A	V		B	R	O
A	E	R	A	T	E		H	I	V	E		O	A	R
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xwordeditor@aol.com

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65						66								

By Mark Bickham

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Kids and pets left in cars are in danger of heatstroke



Special to the Okeechobee News

On average, every eight days a child dies from heatstroke in a vehicle.

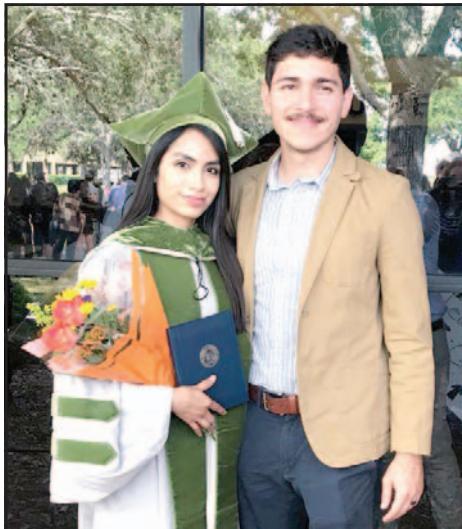
Nieto graduates School of Pharmacy

Special to the Okeechobee News

BRADENTON — Graciela Miriam Nieto of Okeechobee received a doctor of pharmacy degree from the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine's School of Pharmacy on Sunday, June 3, at the Bradenton Area Convention Center. Dr. Graciela Miriam Nieto is a graduate of Indian River State College.

During the ceremony, the LECOM School of Pharmacy graduated 154 new pharmacists who are prepared to become valuable members of the healthcare team.

Pharmaceutical advancements and the nation's growing dependence on pharmaceutical care are creating rewarding career opportunities in pharmacy. LECOM School of Pharmacy graduates go on to work in many settings, including community pharmacies, hospital/clinical pharmacies and long-term care facilities, and others move on to residency programs for further specialty training.



Special to the Okeechobee News

Dr. Graciela Nieto and her husband, Ricky, after the graduation ceremony.



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Special to the Okeechobee News

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children. The temperature inside of a car can reach oven-like temperatures in just minutes, often in excess of 140 degrees. On average, every eight days a child dies from heatstroke in a vehicle.

Young children are particularly at risk, as their body can heat up three to five times faster than an adult. Babies and young kids can sometimes sleep so peacefully that we can forget they are even there. It can also be tempting to leave a baby alone in a car while quickly running into the store. The problem is that leaving a child alone in a car can lead to serious injury or death from heatstroke.

Reduce the number of deaths from heatstroke by remembering to ACT.

A: Avoid heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

C: Create reminders by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cellphone that is needed at your final destination. This is especially important if you're not following your normal routine.

T: Take action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

That quick errand can turn into a disaster and could be fatal for your child or pet. Never leave children or animals in a parked car, not even if you park in the shade or plan to be gone for only a few minutes. These tragedies are completely preventable.

What can a pet-parent do to prevent heatstroke danger? Be smart and proactive! Make certain an outside pet has access to shade and plenty of fresh, cool water at all times.

Dog owners, when the temperature is high, don't let your dog linger on hot surfaces such as asphalt and cement. Being so close to the ground can heat their body quickly and is also an invitation to burns on sensitive paw pads. Try to keep walks to a minimum.

Giving your dog a lightweight summer haircut can help prevent overheating, but never shave to the skin, the dog needs its coat to be at least 1 inch to afford protection and avoid getting sunburned.

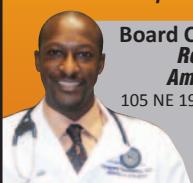
Restrict exercise when temperatures soar, and do not use muzzles on dogs because it inhibits their ability to pant.



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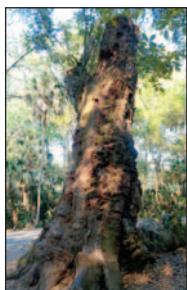
Summer 2018

*Brighton Casino plans
summer fun*

*Cool off at area pools
and beaches*

Highlands Hammock offers tram tours

SEBRING — Highlands Hammock's guided, narrated tram tour of the park and restricted areas where visitors may observe alligators, water birds, butterflies and other wildlife, runs at 11 a.m. on Fridays and at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays during the summer. The tour, which is approximately one hour and 15 minutes long, introduces



Courtesy photo

visitors to park history and natural communities including old growth hammock, cypress swamp, and pine flatwoods.

Tours provide the opportunity to glimpse deer and other wildlife relatively close-up. The tram is wheelchair accessible. Visitors are advised that pets are not permitted on tram tours. Tickets are sold only at the Hammock Inn Concession and may be purchased one day in advance or on the day of the tour. The Hammock Inn will

be open on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the summer months and resume daily operation during the fall. Concession hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tram tickets for adults and youth aged 13 years and older are \$10 per person. Tickets for children aged 6 to 12 years old are \$5 per person. Children aged 5 years and younger are free.

For more information, call the Hammock Inn at 863-402-0061. Park entry fees of \$6 per vehicle (includes up to 8 people) and \$4 per single occupant vehicle apply.

Highlands Hammock State Park is located at 5931 Hammock Road in Sebring.

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On the cover ...

Local residents find a break from the summer heat at the beach and area swimming pools. For the story, see pages 16-18.

Cover photo by Janelle Folk.



Going Out is published on the last Wednesday of each month, with a circulation of 10,000. GO is inserted in the last Wednesday edition of the Okeechobee News of each month and is also distributed free in stores, restaurants, doctors' offices, chambers of commerce and other businesses in the communities around Lake Okeechobee, as well as at special events in the Lake Okeechobee area.

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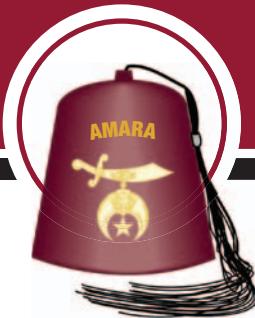
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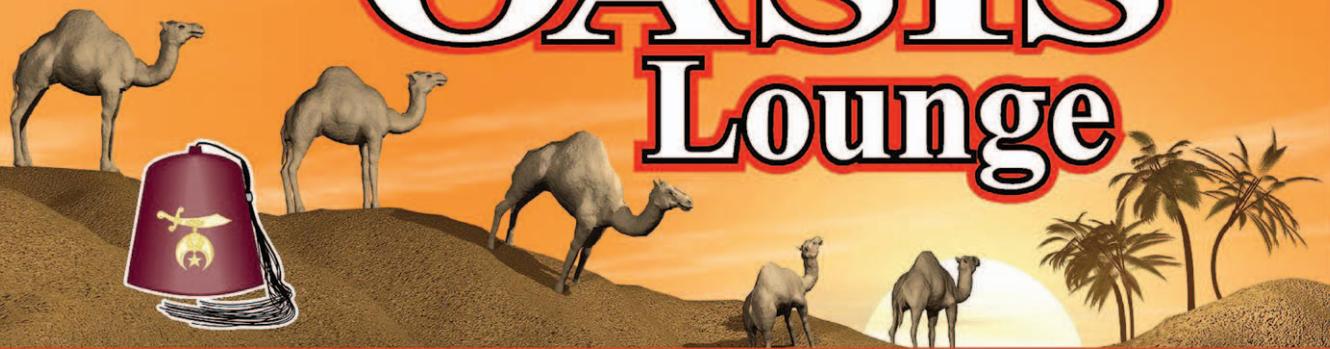
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Seminole Brighton Casino summer events include Buick Envision giveaway, live entertainment & Father's Day fun

BRIGHTON, Fla. - On Saturday, June 30 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. guests will have a chance to win a Buick Envision. Earn entries June 1 through 30, with triple entries earned for play on Thursdays.

Live entertainment during June will include singer-songwriter Carla Holbrook on Friday, June 1, Saturday, June 16 and Friday, June 22 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Enjoy your favorite classic rock and country hits. Country artist Eric Ryan will take the stage on Friday, June 8 and June 29 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Wallstreet will perform music from the 60's and 70's on Friday, June 15, 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Starting in July, there will be live music every Friday and Saturday night with Howl at the Moon dueling pianos performing on July 7 and July 28. Visit seminolebrightoncasino.com for updated entertainment information.

A special bingo session will be available at the casino on Saturday, June 16 at 6:45 p.m. Buy-in starts at \$70 (\$75 with computer). Regular games pay \$750, plus \$13,000 in jackpot games.

Want to party and play bingo at the same time? Enjoy dancing, glow products, games and giveaways at Seminole Brighton Casino's Party Bingo on the fourth Friday of each month.

Bingo Must Go Jackpot will be available at the casino Saturday, June 30 at 6:45 p.m. No passes, coupons or discounts will be accepted.

Celebrate Father's Day at Seminole Brighton Casino, where Josiah Restaurant will be offering a N.Y. Strip Steak dinner with an appetizer, salad bar and beverage included for \$32 from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. No coupons or discounts will be accepted. Offer is available as a dine-in option only while supplies last.

For full promotion details please see Player's Club.

Come check out the recent expansions at Brighton Casino. Now, you can play live Blackjack and Table Games in-

cluding Three-Card Poker and Ultimate Texas Hold'em. Also, the non-smoking area has been expanded and improved. Enjoy 1,300 square feet of smoke-free gaming.

You can now play slots and table games right from your mobile phone, tablet or desktop. Download Seminole Social Casino for FREE! Link your Seminole Wild Card to your Social Gaming account to earn Hearts which can be used to redeem offers for Free Play, Comp Dollars and more!

Looking for something new, fun and exciting? Interested in holding an office party or charity event? Seminole Brighton Casino is the perfect venue to have a great time or a fundraiser. Call today and ask about our charity bingo session and special slot tournament. Organizations must be a 501c3 and vendor approved prior to scheduling a charity event. Accommodations for small and large groups are available. For more information, please call Steffanie Immerfall at (863) 623-8760 or Mackenzie Johns Bowers at (863) 357-5672.

Be sure to check your offers at the Seminole Wild Card website or stop by the Player's Club to make sure your con-

tact information is up-to-date. Seminole Brighton Casino always makes their guests feel welcome, whether you have been playing for a while or you're a new Seminole Wild Card member.

About Seminole Brighton Casino

Seminole Brighton Casino is a 27,000-square-foot casino with six table games, over 400 slot machines, high-stakes bingo action and Josiah, a full-service restaurant and lounge. The casino also has an area for those who prefer to play slot machines in a smoke-free environment. Its warm and friendly staff, ultra-modern air-conditioning system, clean atmosphere, and rewarding casino promotions are a welcome alternative to big city gaming. The Seminole Brighton Casino is located just west of Lake Okeechobee on the Brighton Seminole Reservation, 17735 Reservation Road (SR 721), in Glades County Florida, 34974. For more information, call toll-free 800-360-9875 or 863-467-9998 or visit us online at www.seminolebrightoncasino.com or on www.facebook.com/seminolebrightoncasino.





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Distillery offers tours and tastings

LAKE PLACID — Making rum from sugar cane is part of Florida history.

According to the Florida Memory project website, the first major sugar cane operations began in North Florida when the British had possession of the territory in the 1700s.

"Over time, the risks associated with growing cane became too great for most planters to invest much money in the venture," Florida Memory explains. "Many plantations continued to produce smaller amounts of sugar cane for home and local use, but large-scale cultivation of sugar cane was for the most part abandoned by 1840." Settlers continued to grow cane for their own use. Even if there was a freeze, sugar cane could be processed for cane, which could be made into cane syrup, molasses or rum. The products became staples in the Florida settlers' households.



Courtesy photo

Moonshine comes out of the still.

id is expanding on that bit of Florida history by using sugar cane juice to give a unique flavor to rum and other spirits.

Sugar Sand Distillery, 264 Henscratch Road, in Lake Placid, is an agri-tourism business. Owners Don Davies and Jessica Giffin have planted 5 acres of sugar cane, which they plan to process into cane juice and distill into spirits.

While the Sugar Sands cane – a variety chosen because it grows well in the sandy soil – grows, the distillery is using cane juice from Clewiston to make rum.

The process of making rum from fresh cane juice comes from the French Caribbean. Fresh cane juice must be used immediately, explained Jessica.

"We call it our liquid gold. Once juice has been fresh squeezed, it's like cutting an apple. It starts to turn immediately."

She said the cane crop should be ready to harvest this winter.

"When our cane is fully mature, we will harvest 300 feet of cane each day, peel it, squeeze it and start fermenting it that day," she continued. "Each day starts a new batch."

Using fresh cane juice – instead of molasses or sugar – to make rum gives the beverage a different flavor, she said.

Currently, the distillery offers tastings and distillery tours. When the cane is mature, visitors will be able to see the whole process, starting with the harvest.

Jessica said currently, their vodka is made from grain. When their sugar cane crop is ready to process, they plan to add some cane juice to the vodka mix. They also plan to make a gin with some cane juice.

The moonshine is a corn whiskey, Jessica explained; it is one product that will not include cane juice.

The distillery is open Thursday through Saturday. Tours are offered from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday. Tours for groups of ten or more are also available at other times by appointment. The distillery is already becoming a popular venue to birthday parties, girls nights and bachelor parties.

For more information, call 863-449-0470.



Courtesy photo

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Cattlemen plan Labor Day Bull Bash

OKEECHOBEE -- Hold onto your hats during Labor Day weekend because bull riding is back in town! The Okeechobee Labor Day Bull Bash, a sanctioned Southern States Bullriders Association (S.S.B.R) professional event, will take place over Labor Day weekend at the Okeechobee Cattlemen's outdoor grandstand arena on US Highway 441 North.

The Okeechobee Labor Day Bull Bash promises fun for the whole family, including rodeo clowns and professional bull fighters.

"We are looking forward to an even better Labor Day event this year. It will be fun for spectators as well as benefit our local Cattlemen's Association," said Fritz Brewer, President of the Okeechobee County Cattlemen's Association.

The Okeechobee Labor Day Bull Bash will have onsite vendors, beverages and concessions. Tickets for admission are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the gate. Kids 12 and under are free. Tickets can be purchased at Eli's Western Wear in Okeechobee or online at TheOkeechobeeRodeo.com.

The historic Okeechobee Cattlemen's grandstand rodeo arena is located in the heart of Okeechobee County at 1885 U.S. Highway 441 North, directly off State Road 70.



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Muddin' enjoyed in the Big Lake area

By Tom Timmons

Special to GO

A popular local outdoor activity in South Florida is a phenomenon referred to as Mudding or "Muddin." If you are internet savvy, and search YouTube for videos about "Okeechobee Mud" it will return 29,100 results! That is 29,100 different videos that relate to mudding in and around Okeechobee. Watching a few of the videos, you find lots of mud, trucks, four wheelers, buggies and even golf cars, modified to run in mud, along with a large number of young women with very few clothes on. Looking at the posted videos, it seemed to me that the machines and the pretty girls in bikinis are getting about equal time.

So, if you are interested in learning more about mudding, and seeing the

pretty girls, where would you go? It appears that there are several major venues in the area. But in researching this activity, I find that only one of those venues is open all the time.

One nearby venue is Redneck Mud Park, on State Route 74, between Palm-dale and Punta Gorda just east of State Route 31. This is a large venue that has its next planned event scheduled for Nov. 8-11 for "Trucks Gone Wild." These events are not cheap, but for the cost of entry, you are allowed to camp and enjoy the mud, and perhaps see some pretty girls from Friday morning at 8 a.m. to Sunday at 5 p.m. There are multiple areas to explore, with mud holes and trails and lots of places for primitive camping along with vendors for food and things as well as a stage area.

There are no 'hookups' for your camping trailer but generators are allowed. According to their website, veterans with a DD-214 or VA Medical card are allowed in for half the price, although spouses are charged the full rate.

Closer to home, there is a place that is open for mudding all the time. It is the Plant Bamboo Mud Ranch at 27695 Martin Highway in Martin County. The Plant Bamboo Mud Ranch is owned and operated by Edward Underhill and has been operating since February of 2005. His is the only mudding area that is open year-round and is available to the public every day of the year.

The next scheduled event is "Trucks Gone Wild" on the weekend of October 4-7. Plant Bamboo Mud Ranch and the Underhill family have been in the



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Continued From Page 8

Okeechobee area for a long while. The Plant Bamboo Mud Ranch is 600 acres, is still an active cattle ranch. Mr. Underhill was telling me that his current herd of about 250 head, share space with the trucks and 4x4s of the muders with little problem.

The other venue I must mention is the Okeechobee Mudfest. Mudfest started in 2004, and was an annual event for many years. It was last operated at 11705 State Road 70 East in 2012 and is famous on the internet and in the memory of people in the Southeastern United States that enjoy playing in the mud. It was the biggest of them all and is planned to return for 2018, but no dates are available.

The last event took place the second weekend in February. The current plans, approved by the Okeechobee County Commissioners, is to hold two events a year, in August and February, until 2022. The next event is expected to draw 7,000 to 8,000 people, but in the past, the event has seen crowds as large as 19,000 people on the 254-acre property.

The Okeechobee Mudfest does not allow riding after dark, and will have live country music each night until 11 p.m.

In Hendry County, Devil's Garden Mud Club on County Road 835 south of Clewiston offers special events. The park has more than 1,200 acres of mud holes, swimming holes, airboat track, mud flats, King of the Ring stock car derby track, mud sand track, jeep obstacle course and miles of trails. For information on upcoming events, go online to <http://www.devilsgardenmudclub.com>.

Devil's Garden is currently planning events for the long weekend of Labor Day, and several later into the fall.

So, for those of you with a need for mud and big tires, there are plenty of opportunities here in the Big Lake area.

Gatorama offers animal interactions

By Chris Felker

Special to GO

GLADES COUNTY — After Hurricane Irma blew through the region last fall, its impacts at Gatorama forced the wildlife park on U.S. 27 in Glades County to shut down for nearly two months. But the original Old Florida roadside attraction has bounced back nicely for its 61st year in business, after the storm's damage made rebuilding key areas a must. Irma's still having ripple effects, even though all of Gatorama's popular wildlife shows, experiences and events are back — and then some.

Some rebuilding and new construction still were underway as the summer began. Their old snack stand is being remade into a pub-style gathering place called The Back Porch, which will offer beer and wine along with food to guests, and also will have a walk-up window and picnic area out front where patrons can have lunch and drinks without paying the park admission fee.

Gatorama "Mama" Patty Register said that the park received donations and gifts from fans all over the country; however, the amount they were able to raise was a fraction of what they have ended up spending to fix things.

One of the biggest projects was to restore their lagoon area, the first thing guests see after meeting the resident chatterbox, Petey the Macaw. Even he is getting new digs, as state regulators ordered the park to make him a larger enclosure so he can't so easily take a chunk out of overeager young visitors' fingers.

Mrs. Register said they had to rebuild all of the banks surrounding the lagoon because they'd washed away from Irma's flooding and subsequent erosion. She said they haven't been able to mow in recent weeks due to all the recent rain, "but we have changed the lagoon. We only had Croc Island way out there; now, we've resculpted the pond ... (and) this provides for more show experiences, plus it provides a little nook back there for breeding, for the crocodiles, because that's still a number



Photo by Chris Felker

Mark Gawlik of Lake Wales holds a baby albino alligator during his visit to Gatorama.

one priority is to create this American croc stud book."

That is one of Mr. Graziani's many projects.

"We were under water for seven weeks," said Mrs. Register. "Fisheating Creek went to 12 feet, which is just 500 feet behind us, and it broke through our berm that we have built around the property. So now, we've built a series of islands for shows and they work really well, but with the water so high at this time, you can't see them." She said their hope one day is to have a land bridge. "I think that would be exciting for people," she said.

The park is all about letting people interact safely with their animals, so they've started having a few new "experiences" for guests.

Now available is "gator barebacking" where visitors can enter a special new enclosure and "ride" a menacing 6- or 8-foot alligator that was trapped as a nuisance animal. She explained that it's a pool area where they hold those alligators until they're either sold or donated to another facility.

"We don't kill them; we bring them back here 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," she explained. Two handlers

are with a guest at all times while he or she is in the enclosure. The alligators are not leashed; "their mouths are wrapped, so they can't bite, but they could roll. But our staff is trained, that's why we have two; if he starts to roll or whatever, we're going to evacuate the guest."

There's also a photo-op area, a whole new part. There's Uncle Waders, which is not new. And they have a new African tortoise exhibit.

Their usual two shows a day, at 11:45 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., are still being staged. The type of the show varies depending on the season, the weather and other factors. But the daily feedings off the bridge always draw a crowd of visitors.

Mrs. Register said they're excited to be bringing on a new full-time keeper as of June 1 who is a retiring art teacher from Sarasota and has a lot of experience with reptiles and other animals. "We're going to be embarking on a total new mural project, in all of the pools and the walkways," she added, and the murals will reflect the habitats their animals came from.

They also have a "gator pull" experience that is being refined for guests. Allen Register is a nuisance-gator trapper for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, a job he's been doing for about seven years, and she said people always get very interested when he tells stories about that and brag that they, too, could do that. Now, they can have a chance to match their strength against that of a full-sized adult alligator; part of the fun is to see if they'll still be bragging after trying to drag one to shore.

Then there are the gargantuan land tortoises.

"We're doing so many more field trips and summer camps," Mrs. Register added. "Educators say there's a big buzz about us right now because we changed our group experiences. What we do with them, the land tortoises, is we've upped the game. So this is an encounter

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that we do; with a keeper, we allow the kids to come in one or two at a time and they get to feed them greens, like kale or romaine or whatever, plus have some time talking to the keeper about them."

One other new Gatorama feature is the American Alligator Color Mutation Exhibit, which has the most color variants of any facility in America. There visitors can see albino (white) alligators, melanistic (solid black) alligators, hypomelanistic (black and gold) specimens and piebald alligators, which have a normal pattern with white patches.

Other long-range plans include a walk-in aviary where guests can walk in and feed birds. It will be home to a flock of budgies, which are an ancient species (5 million years old) native to Australia and actually the smallest of the parrot species commonly kept as pets. "Budgie" is short for budgerigar

(*Melopsittacus undulatus*), and they're also known as the common parakeet or shell parakeet — small, long-tailed, seed-eating parrots that are very colorful and friendly, have the ability to mimic human speech and do not have a dangerous beak like their larger cousins. "They aren't a threat to your fingers," said Mrs. Register.

During the summer months leading up to their Hatching Festival that takes place for the three weeks preceding Labor Day, Gatorama is seeking capable volunteers to assist with the crowds that come for that popular attraction.

Gatorama, located at 6180 N. U.S. 27 in Palmdale, is open rain or shine, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week, 363 days a year, closing only for Thanksgiving and Christmas. There is a general store and gift shop, which sells gator meat, spices and fixin's, sauces, apparel, hats and ballcaps, novelties and recipes. See the park's website for more

information about its wildlife encounters, other hands-on experiences, educational field trips, group visit availability, discounts, specials and events.



Photo by Chris Felker

Gatorama staff member Shannon (left) returns a juvenile to the water in the Uncle Waders pond after she wrapped its jaws to prevent biting.

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Biking opportunities abound in area

By Tom Timmons

Special to GO

In the national news lately, it was discussed that riding a bicycle on the road in Florida is a dangerous thing to do. Florida is number ONE in the list of ten most dangerous states to bicycle in America. That is, statewide, there is a pretty good chance that a cyclist is more likely to be involved in a crash here in Florida, than ANY other state.

As an avid cyclist, here in Okeechobee, I can tell you that distracted drivers are as much of the problem as a cyclist who doesn't pay attention to the rules of the road.

Driving around in my truck, I can see who is not paying attention to their driving. They weave in the traffic lane, accelerate slowly, stop too slowly or too quickly, dart into other lanes, and never, ever signal their intention. I pulled up next to a lady in a car last week, who was holding her telephone on the top of the steering wheel while driving, and either texting or reading something, during the afternoon commute on Parrott Ave. I was astounded, but thankfully was in my truck, not on a bicycle.

With that out of the way I can say that in 12 years of riding a bike on the roads and trails around Okeechobee and the lake, I have never been in a serious accident with a car. I have had near-misses (near hits) and have had the wits scared out of me, but I have never actually been HIT by a car or truck. Perhaps I'm lucky, but maybe it's where I ride and when. Most of my near misses have been during the morning or afternoon commute, when people are running late, or distracted. I commute past the hospital on the way to work, and it always scares me to ride through there in the bike lane of U.S. 441, as the very LAST thing a driver of a car is thinking about on the way to the hospital in the morning is the old guy on the funny looking bike.

So, where can you ride and be safe? The Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) is good, as it is closed to vehicle traffic. But much of the LOST is closed due to construction projects that will last for years. The path, near Okeechobee, is open from the Kissimmee River to Taylor Creek, and from Nubbin Slough all the way to Port Mayaca. Good riding, great views of the lake and the rim canal, and not too many other folks out there make for a good time riding.

Because the roads around Okeechobee tend to radiate out like the spokes in a wheel, there are not too many road routes that you can ride that aren't an "out and back." Because I live down near the lake, I tend to ride the side of S.R. 78. The shoulders are wide and in good shape along this road and with the exception of crossing the Kissimmee River heading into Buckhead Ridge, you really don't have to ride in the traffic lane, and the motorists appreciate that, I'm sure. The traffic south of Buckhead Ridge is generally pretty light, the shoulders are in good repair, and there are places to stop in Lakeport for food and cold drinks, as well as in Buckhead Ridge. It makes for a good morning's ride to go down and back.

A new out-and-back ride, now that construction is complete, has to be S.R. 70 East. The new two lane highway from the corner of S.R. 70 and 710, has a shoulder marked as a bike lane. Traffic is heavy through there, but once you cross into Martin County, there is a bicycle path on the north side of the highway

all the way to where S.R. 70 crosses the Florida Toll Road. The one-way distance is 29 miles, and at the eastern end there are a couple of fast food places to eat. The bike path in Martin County is WELL off the highway, smooth and pretty and once you leave Okeechobee, is right out in the country. You need to prepare for this ride, as there aren't many places to stop for water or shade, but if the winds aren't too bad, it can be a very nice long ride. I have seen deer and other wildlife on this ride, which is surprising as it parallels a busy highway for the entire distance.

For a long, circle route I have created a route that kind of circles Okeechobee and is about 62 miles long. If you start from the intersection of S.R. 70 west and U.S. 98, head north up 98. Once you leave town, the shoulders are good, and the traffic is light. I usually start this ride at first light, to ride in the cooler part of the day, and have done the first portion up U.S. 98 with my headlight on. About 12 1/2 miles up, turn right on Northwest 160th Street which is S.R. 68. Now 68 has been paved recently, and is a nice smooth ride, but doesn't have any rideable shoulder, so you must be careful of traffic, which is usually quite light in the mornings. At mile 20, make a right turn

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Continued From Page 12

on the end of Potter Road and follow it around first south and then east. At mile 23 ½ you hit the intersection with U.S. 441. There are a few options here. You can head south into town and return to your starting point. You can turn right and run down to the store for food or drink, or you can continue across on Northeast 128th Ave. Follow Northeast 128th across to the east, it swings south, and then east again, and takes you past the spot where the Okeechobee Music Festival is held. Continue on the pavement and at 36 ½ miles you come to the stop sign at S.R. 70 East. There is a store on the corner, and a good place to stop to rest and refuel and get a cold drink or bite to eat. Continue south from the store on Northeast 128th Avenue (Berman Road) but be careful. There have been a lot of issues with semis hauling trash on this section of road, and there are no shoulders. At mile 45, you find the stop sign at S.R. 710, turn left and

ride the shoulder for a mile to Southeast 126th Blvd., also known as 15B. At the south end of Southeast 126th Blvd. you reach U.S. 441 S.E., and you turn right to follow it along the edge of the lake all the way back toward town. Stay on U.S. 441 S.E. until you come to the corner where it meets State Road 78. Rather than turning towards town on U.S. 441 and fighting with traffic or riding the sidewalk, follow State Road 78 another mile and at mile 58 turn north on Southwest 16th Avenue. Follow Southwest 16th Avenue, north to the tee at Southwest 32nd Street and turn left. Take the next right from Southwest 32nd Street onto Southwest 24th Avenue and follow it straight north through the neighborhoods to S.R. 70 West at mile 62. Turn right on S.R. 70 West, to the start point and the intersection of S.R. 70 and 98. A ride of this length is known as a "Metric Century" as it is 100 kilometers in length and is one that I like to do a couple times a year when I have time.

On any ride, especially the one just described, you need to do several things

to stay safe. State law says that cyclists riding on the roads are considered "vehicles" and need to follow traffic rules. That means stopping at stop signs, signaling your intention to turn or stop, and displaying lights on the front and back of a bike if it is dark or visibility is poor. I run a flashing red tail light ANY time I'm riding on the road. Be aware of the traffic coming up in front or behind and treat them with the respect they demand. DO NOT wear headphones! Doing so is contrary to state traffic law, and blocks out the sound of upcoming vehicles. Stay aware, expect the unexpected and react quickly to changing road conditions and traffic.

It's not mentioned too often but you need to keep your bike in good repair to make long rides like the ones detailed here. Carry tools, know how to fix a flat, make sure you have identification, money and your cell phone when you travel on long rides from home and make sure that someone knows where you are going and when you expect to be back.

OKEECHOBEE LABOR DAY BULL BASH

September
1st, 2nd
& 3rd



Area Special Events

Okeechobee Library hosts events

OKEECHOBEE -- The Okeechobee County Library, 206 S.W. 16th St. in Okeechobee, will hold a "Summer Reading Camp" every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. beginning June 20 through July 25 for 8-years-old and younger. (The library will be closed on July 4). If they have a sibling that is older, they may attend as well (they can be helpers). Parents must attend! For information, call 863-763-3536.

Get ready to Rock: Each week, beginning June 1, the Okeechobee Library will be hosting a free program "Get ready to Rock." From cooking to crafts to giant games, every week will be a different and fun experience. Be sure to check their summer calendar to see what programs you'd like to attend.

All events are free and open to all ages. Must be registered to attend. For more details and to register, call 863-763-3536 or visit the library to sign up.

Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge: The Okeechobee Library will be teaming up with Scholastic from May 7 - Sept. 7, as they take the pledge to read as many minutes as they can this summer!

To join, simply call 863-763-3536 or stop by 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!

Wild Orchid Walk

OKEECHOBEE -- The Okeechobee Orchid Club will be on their annual wild Orchid walk on June 2. For information, call Sue at 561-762-2788.

4th of July festival

BELLE GLADE -- The city of Belle Glade will celebrate the 4th of July with a festival at Torry Island, 5000 W Canal St. N in Belle Glade on Wednesday, July 4, from 4 - 9 p.m. A dynamic new band, The Clique, will play hits from every genre to keep the party moving! Other events will include food vendors, games and activities for kids including a water slide. The evening will end with fireworks.

Lake Placid summer events

LAKE PLACID - Independence Day on Wednesday, July 4, there will be fireworks over Lake June at 9 p.m. sponsored by the Lake Placid Jaycees.

Art and Wine Walk

OKEECHOBEE -- Okeechobee Main Street will host an Art and Wine Walk on Park Street in downtown Okeechobee on Saturday, July 14 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. This casual summer experience takes guests through various participating businesses located in the Okeechobee downtown area. Each business features an artist showcasing their art work or music. Businesses offer guests wine tasting, appetizers and promotional offers. For more information online, go to okeechobemainstreet.org.

Labor Day Festival

OKEECHOBEE -- The annual Labor Day Festival will be held in downtown Okeechobee Sept. 2 and 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. The annual festival allows local business owners, clubs and talent to say a fond farewell to summer. Park events include food, arts and crafts and entertainment.

On Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 3, the Labor Day parade will be held at 10 a.m. in downtown Okeechobee.

For vendor applications or more information contact Okeechobee Main Street at 863-357-6246, or info@okeechobemainstreet.org. For parade signups and information, contact Teresa Chandler Bishop at 863-801-4996 or email tchandler@wm.com.

The Okeechobee Cattlemen's Association traditionally hosts a rodeo event at the Cattlemen's Arena on U.S. 441 during Labor Day weekend.

Call for artists

SEBRING -- Artists are invited to apply for the Sebring Art, Wine, & Jazz Fest to take place on Nov. 3 and 4 on Circle Park Drive in Historic Downtown Sebring. This Festival is a free, outdoor, annual celebration of the arts. There is something for all tastes and ages at this downtown event. This festival is filled with continuous entertainment, fabulous food and artists' booths lining the charming Circle Park and downtown streets. For information or to register visit highlandsartleague.org



Lake Okeechobee fishing report

By Mike Krause

Okeechobee Fishing Headquarters

As we roll into the late spring and summer months, Lake Okeechobee has been showing out. The numbers and size fish being caught have been amazing. With the lake still in a little disarray from Hurricane Irma, it has been fishing really small. By that I mean fish grouped up in small areas where the water is a little cleaner or may have a little more submerged grass or vegetation.

The Monkey Box and Harney Pond areas have been the hot spots as of late. Popping Frogs in a black or sexy shad color seem to be producing the best. When that bite slows a little, pick up a Black/Blue or Junebug Gambler Fat Ace and go to work. Slow retrieve works best.

Kings Bar and the Buckhead Ridge area have also been holding numbers of bass. Watermelon Red Zoom Flukes or Zoom Mag Speed worms in a Junebug or Sungill color will do the trick. Most of this is due to the Bluegill starting to bed in those areas around the buggy whips and outside grasses.

The crappie bite has slowed way down but some anglers are still trying their luck fishing the Kissimmee River with live minnows or trolling Beetle Spins or Road Runners in 12 to 14 feet of water.

Bluegill are being caught around the outside of Indian Prairie Canal and around the Tin House Cove area as well using live crickets or grass shrimp. Fly rod anglers are staying inside Indian Prairie Canal and having good success on the pan fish as well.

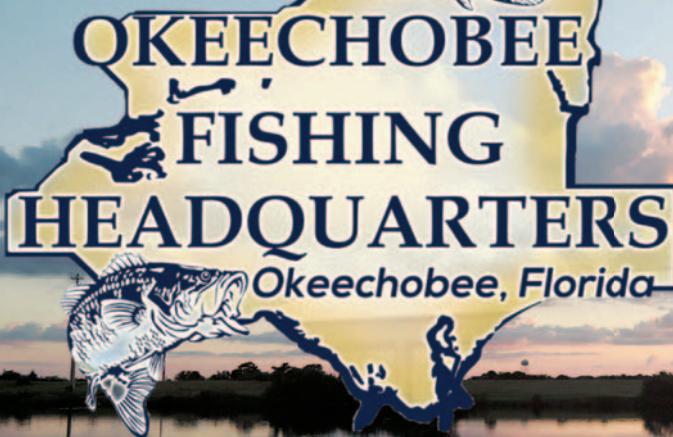
With the amount of rain we received in May, the water is rising each day, but is still low enough you still need to be cautious while navigating in or around the shorelines. Once the rains stop and the water stabilizes the fishing should only get better.

Have fun.

Be safe and courteous and Tight Lines.

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Plenty of swimming opportunities are chance to escape the heat this summer

Local swimming pools, lakes and nearby beaches offer a variety of options to residents looking to beat the heat this summer in south Florida

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

- **Okeechobee Sports Complex:** The Okeechobee Sports Complex Pool, 640 N.W. 27th Lane in Okeechobee. Okeechobee County Sports Complex pool, 580 N.W. 27th Lane in Okeechobee. For information call 863-467-7667.

Summer pool hours run June 4-Aug. 5: Tuesday-Friday, from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday 1 to 5 p.m. Starting Aug. 12 through Oct. 1 the pool is open Saturday and Sunday 1-6 p.m.

Family Swim Nights are Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. Family Swim Night admission is \$2 per person.

June 5-Aug. 5, senior water exercise is available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Admission is \$3 per person per day. Children age 3 and younger are admitted free but must be accompanied by a swimming adult. Passes good for 10 visits are available for \$25. Children under the age of 12 will not be admitted without an adult.

Discount rates are also available for groups of more than 15 people (including daycare centers) and for non-profit organizations.

Lap swimming admission is \$2 per day.

Registration for swim lessons will run from June 7 and 8 between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. at the pool. Cost is \$40 per

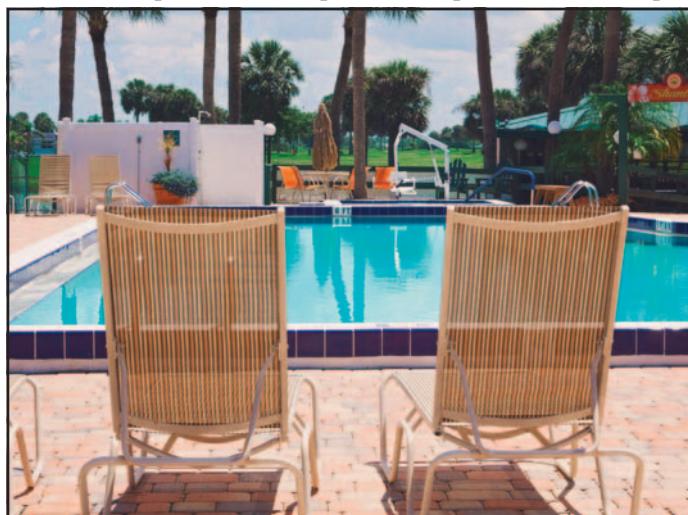


Photo by Richard Marion

The Okeechobee KOA has an adults-only pool, a family pool and a wading pool. Summer pool memberships are available for area residents.

child, with a \$5 discount for additional siblings living in the same household.

Senior Water Exercise sessions are available through Sept. 29 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 9:45 a.m. Senior water exercise is \$2 per person per visit.

The pool can be rented for private parties at a rate of \$60 for two hours and \$20 for each additional hour. For additional guests, the charge is \$20 for up to 30 additional guests.

- **Okeechobee KOA,** 4276 U.S. 441 South in Okeechobee, offers summer pool memberships for area residents. Membership fees are based on the number of adults and children covered. The KOA has two large pools — one for families and one for adults only — as well as a wading pool for the little ones. For information, call 863-763-0231.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

- **Justin K. Ward Aquatic Center** at the Highlands County YMCA, 100 YMCA Lane, Sebring, has an outdoor, heated pool with 10, 25-yard lanes. The facility is open year round, Monday-Thursday 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

YMCA day passes are \$5 per visit. Monthly and annual members are available for the whole YMCA or "swim only."

For more information online go to highlandsymca.org.

The center also includes a splash pad for the little ones, so everyone can enjoy the water all year long!

The **YMCA** offers a variety of swimming lessons including parent/child classes for ages 6 months to 36 months, pre-school lessons for ages 3 to 5, and youth level lessons for ages 6 to 14.

Private swim lessons for all ages are also available. Lessons are booked through the Aquatics Director, Jarrod Fuchs at 863-382-9622.

For more information on the YMCA or the aquatic center, call 863-382-9622.

- Highlands County residents also enjoy swimming in area lakes.

Lake Jackson, covering 9,212 acres, is located within the city of Sebring. Lake Jackson is approximately 25 feet at its deepest. Most of the area is fairly shallow. The lake has a number of private beaches as well as public swimming beaches.

Veterans Beach, 215 Lakeview Drive, has picnic shelters with grills, a playground, and a small beach.

City Pier Beach is located just to the West of Downtown Sebring. The park has a play area, public restrooms and a public beach.

The public beaches are open from sunrise to sunset.

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WESTERN PALM BEACH COUNTY

• **The Pioneer Park Aquatic Center**, 866 S.R. 715, Belle Glade, has pools, tipping buckets and water slides. The Pioneer Park Aquatics Center summer hours from June 2 through Sept. 3 include Open Swim hours Tuesday-Friday from noon to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The pool is closed on Sunday and Monday.

The schedule changes slightly for holidays. On July 4, the pool will be open noon to 4 p.m. On Sept. 4, the pool will be open noon to 4 p.m.

When Palm Beach County Public Schools are in session, the pool is open only on Saturdays. Admission is \$1 per person (93 cents plus tax). Infants under the age of 2 are admitted free. Vinyl cover and swim diapers are available for \$4 plus tax.

Pool passes — good for 20 admissions — are available for \$15.

Pioneer Park Aquatic Center is available to rent after hours for functions such as birthday parties and group events with a minimum of two hours. The fee is \$60 per hour.

Palm Beach County is proud to offer the American Red Cross Learn-to-Swim program, the most comprehensive and effective program available. Based on a logical, six-level progression that helps swimmers about 6+ years old and adults develop their water safety, survival and swimming skills. It is designed to give participants a positive learning experience.

The center will offer four sessions of swim lessons this summer. Session 1 runs June 6-16; registration is Saturday, June 3 starting at 8 a.m. Session 2 is June 20-30; Registration is June 17, starting at 8 a.m. Session 3 is July 11-21; Registration is July 8, starting at 8 a.m. Session 4 is July 25-Aug. 4; Registration is July 22,

starting at 8 a.m.

For information, please call 561-993-3892.

HENDRY COUNTY

- Clewiston Swimming Pool: Clewiston's public swimming pool at 113 W. Osceola Ave. has both a water slide and a diving board. The pool is open Monday through Friday from noon to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 6 p.m. Entry fee is \$4 per person. Children under the age of 3 are admitted free with a paid adult. For more information, please call 863-983-7656.

The pool will offer swimming lessons for beginners to advanced. Children's lessons will be held June 4 to 15; June 18 to 29; July 9-20. Adult lessons will be held June 11 to 29; July 9 - 27. Children's classes will be held for 45-minute sessions.

Continued on page 18

PRIMARY ELECTION • AUGUST 28, 2018

THREE CHOICES FOR VOTING

VOTE-BY-MAIL (Absentee)	EARLY VOTING DATES	ELECTION DAY
Would you like to vote by mail? A request may be made in person, by mail, by telephone, or through our website.	BEGINS: Monday, August 13 ENDS: Saturday, August 25 8:30am to 4:30pm Located at: Historic Courthouse Elections Office • 304 NW 2 nd Street	August 28, 2018 7:00am to 7:00pm Vote at your designated precinct

AT-LARGE VOTING:

County Commissioners and School Board Members are elected at-large, not by district. A voter may vote for either race no matter what district they live in.

VERY IMPORTANT

TO AVOID DELAYS WHEN VOTING: If you have moved or had a name change since you last voted, or if you are unsure if you changed your address or name, contact the Elections Office. You may update your signature or make a name change by completing a voter registration application and mail or bring the completed application to the office or use the voter registration application on our website.

REMEMBER

A current and valid photo and signature ID is required to vote in person per s.101.043(1)(a), F.S.

IMPORTANT ELECTION INFORMATION

Please take a few minutes to review this information. If you have questions, please call the Elections Office (863-763-4014), email Elections@VoteOkeechobee.com or visit the website at www.VoteOkeechobee.com.

Thank you, Diane Hagan, Supervisor of Elections

Continued from page 17

Children must be at least 5 years old by Sept. 1. Register now as space is limited.

The pool is also available for pool parties.

For questions contact Joanna Gutierrez at 863-983-1492 or email at joanna.gutierrez@clewiston-fl.gov.

• Harlem Swimming Pool: Swimming Lessons from beginner to advance will be offered at the Harlem Swimming Pool, 2001 10th Street in Clewiston. For more information, call 863-674-5252.

PUBLIC BEACHES

Public beaches on the Atlantic Coast include:

• Alex's Beach, one mile south of Jensen Beach on Highway A1A, in Jensen Beach is open for swimming, shelling, and dune walkovers. The beach is pet friendly and ample parking make this beach a favorite.

• Bathtub Reef Beach, 1585 S.E. MacArthur Blvd., Stuart, on the south end of Hutchinson Island, is one of the most popular sunning and swimming beaches. Scuba diving is also available offshore in the shallow waters around the reef.

• Chastain Beach, 1213 S.E. MacArthur Blvd., Stuart, is between House of Refuge and Bathtub Reef along Highway A1A. The beach is not guarded year round, so check to make sure a lifeguard is on duty. (The historic House of Refuge was originally built and manned to help shipwreck survivors.).

• Frederick Douglass Park, 3500 S. A1A, Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, is on South Hutchinson Island. The beach covers 13.7 acres. Lifeguards are on duty during summer months only. This beach is one of the few places you can ride a horse on the beach. Guided tours on horseback are available, advance registration is required at <http://www.beachtoursonhorseback.com>. If you are interested in riding your own horse on the beach, you must purchase an annual or weekly riding permit. For more information online, go to <http://www.stlucieco.gov>.

• Walton Rocks Beach, 6501 South

A1A, on South Hutchinson Island, is an off-leash dog beach. The 24-acre beach, has convenient parking, bathrooms with showers and a natural reef that is exposed at low tide. Dogs must be under their owner's control at all times. Dog owners must clean up after their pets.

• Glasscock Beach, 4775 N.E. Ocean Blvd, Stuart, Martin County, is off Highway A1A north of Jensen Beach Causeway. This beach is perfect for surfing and shelling.

• House of Refuge Beach, one mile south of Stuart Beach on Highway A1A in Hobe Sound is a good spot for snorkeling. The House of Refuge museum provides a look at turn of the 20th century living along the coast. Areas available for public viewing are the boathouse, kitchen, dining room, parlor, bedroom and a lookout tower constructed during World War II.

• Jensen Beach, 4191 NE Ocean Blvd., Jensen Beach, at intersection of Highway A1A and State Route 732, is a popular spot for visitors. The park area has volleyball courts as well as bathrooms and showers.

• Kimberly Bergalis Beach, off South A1A on South Hutchinson Island, has lifeguards on duty during summer months only. There are covered picnic areas, restrooms and showers.

• Pepper Park Beach Park, 3375 N. A1A, Fort Pierce, on North Hutchinson Island includes 52.4 acres and is

guarded year round. The beach has a large pavilion, picnic tables with grills, restrooms, showers, playground, volleyball, basketball, tennis courts, ample parking. This beach is next to the Navy UDT-SEAL Museum.

• Stokes Beach off Highway A1A in Jensen Beach offers opportunities for swimming, surfing and snorkeling.

• Waveland Beach, 10350 S. A1A, on South Hutchinson Island, includes 3.6 acres. The beach is guarded year round and has bathrooms & showers.

Gulf Coast public beaches include:

• Fort Myers Beach, off Estero Boulevard in the City of Fort Myers Beach, is on San Carlos Bay, which is wide open to the Gulf of Mexico, although not actually on the gulf. It is billed as the safest beach on the Gulf Coast because of its calm and shallow waters. There are more than 30 beach access points. The beaches are open from sunrise to half an hour past sunset.

• Sanibel Island is a barrier island just offshore from Fort Myers, accessible by the Sanibel Causeway. The island has sandy beaches that are well known for shelling. The beaches have public restrooms.

Beach parking is \$2 per hour. Captiva Island, also known for its beaches, is accessible over a bridge which crosses at Turner Beach.



Photo by Katrina Elskens

Dogs are welcome at Walton Rocks Beach.

State Park hosts Bike & Hike event

SEBRING — In recognition of Bike Travel Weekend, June 1-3, Highlands Hammock State Park is extending a special invitation to bicycling clubs throughout Florida, park visitors and visiting tourists to participate in a "Bike & Hike" event on Saturday, June 2.

Options for clubs to participate as groups include a weekend ride to the park followed by a picnic or barbecue and leisurely walks on park trails. Clubs traveling from greater distances may consider planning Bike Travel Weekend as a camping weekend at the park.

Campground sites can accommodate two tents and up to eight persons per site. Campsites are equipped with

water, electricity, a fire ring and a picnic table and are located in proximity to a restroom. Additionally, Highlands Hammock will be promoting bicycling and Bike Travel Weekend by providing a One-Day Pass to the members of bicycling clubs and park visitors from the general public who bike in the park on June 2.

One-Day Passes will also be provided to park visitors traveling from a distance who transport bikes in their vehicles and plan to bike the Loop Road or the extended bike path.

Bicycling the Loop beneath the shade of spreading oaks within the Hammock in the cool of the morning or prior to dusk in the early evening is a wonderful way to begin or end the

day! Bicyclists may park their bikes at trailhead bike stands, take a leisurely walk down a trail, and have a rest on park benches. Bikers and hikers are likely to spot families of deer with fawns at this time of the year.

Highlands Hammock State Park, 5931 Hammock Rd, Sebring, is a 9,000-acre park 4 miles west of Sebring in Highlands County, Fla., off U.S. 27.

The park opened in 1931, four years before the Florida state park system was created. For more information, call 863-386-6094.

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The South Florida Water Management District is the steward for more than 1 million acres of public land. Thousands of acres of public land are available for public use in the area around Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River.

Boney Marsh, Bluff Hammock and Hickory Hammock Wildlife Area

Majestic live oaks welcome visitors to the Hickory Hammock Wildlife Area hiking trail. From there, explorers can see marshes, patches of scrub and oak, hickory and cabbage palm hammocks. Remnants of the Istokpoga Slough provide cool relief to the landscape. Hikers and bird-watchers are often led to this diverse area by following the Great Florida Birding Trail and the Everglades Trail.

A section of the Florida National Scenic Trail winds for 11 miles through this area where visitors can also find primitive campsites. Visitors who travel three miles north of Hickory Hammock are rewarded by views of the restored Kissimmee River from a footbridge 25 feet high. The trail north through Boney Marsh offers a spectacular walk among live oaks, palms, bay and holly trees on the edge of the Kissimmee floodplain. The Florida National Scenic Trail continues north through the Avon Park Air Force Range. Hikers are encouraged to check with the South Florida Water Management District web site for trail closures before entering the range.

Horseback riding is popular at Hickory Hammock and Bluff Hammock. An equestrian center with stables, restrooms, night lighting, non-potable water and primitive campsites is available. Ten miles of marked equestrian trails, interior dirt roads and fire breaks offer riders a varied landscape.

Bicycling enthusiasts will enjoy riding on a two-mile section of the old Sebring Grade in the southern half of Hickory Hammock. Canopied by overhanging tree limbs, the road connected Sebring and Basinger before U.S. 98 was built in 1949. You can also enjoy bike riding on the interior "woods road," an old ranch road through the hammocks.

Boney Marsh and Bluff Hammock units are part of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area. Hickory Hammock is a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Wildlife Management Area.

How to get there:

Enter on foot, bicycle or horseback. There are three access points on the east side of U.S. 98, which runs between Sebring and Okeechobee.

- Bluff Hammock hiking trailhead is at the end of Bluff Hammock Road. Bluff Hammock Road is 14 miles south of Sebring and 32 miles north of Okeechobee.

- Equestrian access is at the end of McArthur Road, 30 miles north of the main Hickory Hammock trailhead.

- Main trailhead at Hickory Hammock is 8 miles southeast of Lorida, and about 1/2 mile northwest of the Istokpoga Canal (18 miles south of Sebring and 27 miles north of Okeechobee on U.S. Hwy. 98).

Oak Creek, No Name and Starvation Slough

Oak Creek features many majestic old-growth oaks, some nearly five feet in diameter, along the eastern edge of the Kissimmee River floodplain. This is a great spot to enjoy the shade or watch the spring butterflies.

Here, the creek's floodplain merges into the restored Kissimmee River, so hikers can only use the area during the drier winter months. Visitors will find several bay heads with trees up to 30 feet tall at the eastern end of the creek. Enter through the walk-through gate and travel one mile to visit the secluded campsite. Primitive camping is available at sites with fire rings and picnic tables.

Fishing is allowed in the restored section of the Kissimmee River. During the wet season, the best access is by airboat, canoe or kayak from the Starvation Slough Boat Launch. Access is through the north entrance.

The Starvation Slough Boat Launch also provides access to Starvation Slough and No Name Slough. If you walk west into the floodplain along No Name Slough, you will see a filled section of the canal.

Horseback riding is allowed at both sloughs. An old woods road winds for about three miles through the hammock from the parking area at the north entrance to Starvation Slough. The road continues across the old S-65B tie-back levee along fire breaks into No Name Slough.

These management units are part of the Kissimmee River Valley Public Use Area.

How to get there:

There are two entrances, about 1-1/2 miles apart, to Oak Creek on Micco Bluff Road.

- The north entrance is at Starvation Slough and boat launch. Access is by foot or shallow-drift boat (airboat, canoe or kayak). Parking is next to the boat launch and walk-through gate.

- The south entrance, south of the creek, includes parking and an information kiosk. Walk one mile from the parking area to the picnic and primitive campsite area.

Micco Bluff Road is off U.S. 98 in Ft. Basinger, about 28 miles southeast of Sebring, and about 15 miles north of Okeechobee. Travel north on N.W. 203rd Ave., next to the white block Basinger Community Center. Travel to the stop sign and turn left onto Micco Bluff Road (160th Street). Veer right at N.W. 285th Street. The south entrance is 7 1/2 miles from U.S. 98, and the north entrance is about 9 miles from U.S. 98. Both entrances are on the left.

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Turkey Hammock and Cornwell Marshes, Micco Landing and Chandler Slough

Turkey Hammock and Cornwell marshes are former floodplains converted to pasture. The property features a boat ramp, oak trees, a cypress dome and cabbage palms.

Traveling north from the S-65C boat ramp, you can see a borrow ditch on the south side of Turkey Hammock West. The mile-long ditch resembles a narrow stream, and almost every flowering Florida marsh plant grows here. Pink marshmallow "hibiscus," purple pickerelweed, creamy water hemlock and buttonbush flowers are on display. Hard-to-spot native water spider orchids, with humble yellowish-purple flowers, peek through the thick grasses. Bonnet worms found burrowing into spatterdock leaves are good fish bait.

Airboats, canoes and kayaks can be used on the waterway, but be certain to flag your boat. Enjoy this spot while you can, as the S-65C lock and access road will be removed in a future river restoration phase. Flooding this area is an important part of Kissimmee River restoration.

You can also put in at the new Istokpoga Canal boat ramp and travel east, or travel north past unusually large cypress trees about halfway to the C-38 Canal.

To the south, the Cornwell Marsh offers a non-motorized boat ramp off U.S. 98. A brown sign marks the 4-E's entrance. Until the late 1970s, the area was a stop on the historic Kissimmee Boat-A-Cade. Today's visitors will find only remnant dock timbers from an old wooden bridge that used to cross the Kissimmee River at Fort Basinger. This area's most striking asset is a beautiful oak hammock. A short road serves as a half-mile nature trail.

Chandler Slough is a 3,722-acre tract added to the Kis-

simmee River Public Use Area. The area is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Boating, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, camping and other activities that don't interfere with Kissimmee River restoration are allowed.

Hunting and horseback riding are popular activities at Micco Landing, where visitors will find a parking area large enough to accommodate horse trailers. Equestrians and hikers can enjoy the woods road trail. This 1,440-acre tract is also part of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area. It is managed by the South Florida Water Management District in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Hunting, boating, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, camping and other activities that don't interfere with Kissimmee River restoration are allowed.

These four locations are accessible from the Kissimmee River and from part of the Kissimmee River Public Use Area.

How to get there:

Turkey Hammock and Cornwell Marsh: Take U.S. 98 north from Okeechobee or east from Sebring. About 6 miles northwest of Fort Basinger is the S-65C Access Road. There is a boat ramp at the end of the access road on the right. Both of these sites can also be reached by the boat ramp at the Istokpoga Canal on U.S. 98.

Micco Landing: From the City of Okeechobee, travel 17½ miles north on U.S. 98. A trailhead and parking are on the west side of the highway.

Chandler Slough: From the City of Okeechobee, travel about 15 miles north on U.S. 98 to Lofton Road. Turn left on Lofton Road and travel about 1½ miles to the entrance on the west side of the road. Or travel about 18 miles north on U.S. Hwy. 98. A trailhead and parking are on the east side of the highway.

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Performing Arts

Jazz market

FORT PIERCE — The Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society will host a Jazz Market in downtown Fort Pierce on Saturday, June 2 and July 7 from 9 a.m. to noon. For more information online, to go jazzsociety.org.

Great American Talent Show

LaBELLE — Firehouse Community Theatre in LaBelle will present The Great American Talent Show June 14, 15, 16 and 17. Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances are at 7 p.m. Sunday matinée is at 2 p.m. From renowned playwright Joseph Robinette, here's a great parody of American Idol, America's Got Talent, and all TV talent shows. It's the final night of the yearlong TV talent show to end all talent shows. Our finalists anxiously await their final shot at fame and fortune. Three self-important judges — including the token brutally honest Brit character — cajole or praise each contestant in hilarious ways. Who will win the tournament of champions? Will it be the girl who sings a ludicrous "heartbreak" song? An eager comedian with laughably old jokes? Perhaps the kazoo-playing one-man band? The laughs are big even if the talent is small when you add in an impressionist who does everyone from Porky Pig to Gollum, a makeover artist, a model, and a genius who answers trick questions. Staging is simple and everyone gets their moment in the spotlight! On top of that, there's flexibility in the number of finalists, and the cast can be almost all male or all female or any combination in between. In other words, this show is a real winner!

For more information, call the box office 863-675-3066 or go online to firehousecommunitytheatre.com.

Monster in the Closet

LaBELLE — Firehouse Community Theatre in LaBelle will present Monster in the Closet on June 29, 30, and July 1. Friday and Saturday performances are at 7 p.m. Sunday matinee is at 2 p.m.

Emily has a big problem. Not only is

she sent to bed just as she reaches the highest level of her new video game, but there's a monster in her closet! It's not just her imagination. Her friend Stephanie saw it, too. Suffering the teasing of her brother and his friends, Emily and Stephanie recruit some of their own friends to help capture the monster. What they don't know is that Murray, the closet monster, doesn't mean any harm — he only wants to play Emily's new video game. He's too scared of kids to even think about trying to frighten them. Murray's boss, the Dream King, has heard about his goofing off on the job, and now Murray is on probation. Murray's supervisor, fellow monster Wanda, is not happy with him either. After all, every monster knows that when a child is born, a monster is assigned to watch over her — not to play with her toys and especially not to get caught in the act! What will happen when Emily has all her friends over for a sleepover to try to capture Murray? For more information, call the box office 863-675-3066 or go online to firehousecommunitytheatre.com.

Arsenic and Old Lace

SEBRING — Highlands Little Theatre, 356 W Center Ave, Sebring, will present Arsenic and Old Lace June 1-17. The classic American play by Joseph Kesselring is a dubious tale of two murderous aunts who see their killing as an act of charity. Generations of theatergoers have laughed their heads off over the homicidal activities of two sweet spinster ladies, Abby and Martha Brewster, who just happen to be insane. Throw in a long-lost brother, whose face is supposed to look like Frankenstein, another brother who believes he is Teddy Roosevelt, and you have a pretty entertaining night on your hands.

Show are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Doors open an hour before show time. For information online, go to www.highlandslittletheatre.org or call the box office at 863-382-2525.

Mary Poppins

SEBRING — Highlands Little Theatre, 356 W Center Ave, Sebring, will present "Mary Poppins" Aug. 17 through Sept. 9. Everyone's favorite nanny takes the stage in this musical adventure! Young Jane and Michael have sent many a nanny packing before Mary Poppins arrives on their doorstep. Using a combination of magic and common sense, she must teach the family how to value each other again. Shows are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Doors open an hour before show time. For information online, go to www.highlandslittletheatre.org or call the box office at 863-382-2525.

Live music at the KOA

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee KOA offers live music many weekends. Until the KOA Shanty reopens, live music nights will be poolside at the adult swimming pool at the Okeechobee KOA Campground from 5 to 9 p.m. The Shanty and music poolside are open to the public. (Actual swimming pool use is restricted to KOA campers and those with pool memberships.)

The summer live music schedule includes:

- June 1 – Captain Josh;
- June 2 – Jay Boree;
- June 8 & 9 – Dark Horse;
- June 15 – Al Jones;
- June 16 – Dark Horse;
- June 22 & 23 – Wes & Deb;
- June 29 & 30 – Tom Neely;
- July 6 & 7 – Dark Horse;
- July 13 & 14 – Wes & Deb;
- July 20 – Jay Boree;
- July 21 – Dark Horse;
- July 28 & 29 – Cowboy;
- Aug. 3 & 4 – Dark Horse;
- Aug. 10 – Dark Horse;
- Aug. 11 – Jay Boree;
- Aug. 17 & 18 – Wes & Deb;
- Aug. 24 & 25 – Cowboy;
- Aug. 31 – Wes & Deb.

Lake Placid winery hosts annual 'Grape Stomp'

LAKE PLACID – Get ready to “Do the Lucy!”

Henscratch Farms will host their annual Grape Stomp Festival on Aug. 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the winery, 980 Henscratch Road in Lake Placid.

Festival attendees will join together at the grape stomp tent to stomp grapes in an attempt to crush over 2,000 pounds of grapes for this year’s “Foot Stomped Vintage.” Once the grapes are stomped, the Henscratch Farm vintners begin making the wine. After approximately eight weeks, it is ready for bottling. Custom wine labels are available with your stomp photo! You may pre-order your wine the day of the festival with your custom labels. Your wine will ship around Thanksgiving!

Festival goers are invited to pick and eat grapes while at the festival. U-Pick grapes can be taken home for just 99 cents a pound on the day of the festival.

The Grape Stomp Festival will also feature entertainment by The Redneck Joe Band. Great barbecue and hot dogs will be available for purchase. Wine will be available for purchase by the glass or bottle.

The Ice Cream Shack will be serving delicious treats; the root beer float's always a crowd favorite.

Self-guided winery tours and wine tasting will also be provided.

The highlight of the festival is the “I Love Lucy” Look-Alike contest, in memory of the classic television episode in which Lucy learns to stomp grapes at an Italian vineyard.

Festival visitors are advised to bring their own lawn chairs.

Entrance fee is \$5 per person, collected at the gate when your drive in. Children 6 and under are free.

For more information about the winery, come visit Vintner, Drew Jones, call 863-699-2060; or visit Henscratch Farm's website at www.henscratchfarms.com.

Henscratch Farms, Vineyard & Winery is a 20-acre Florida Certified Farm Winery located in Lake Placid.

Primarily a Muscadine and Scuppernong Vineyard, Henscratch Farms is also popular for its Hydroponic Strawberries and High Bush Blueberry patch. A converted grain bin houses the country winery. Come view the timber beam construction and educational displays depicting the wine making process.

The Country Store is an open air, Cracker-style structure stocked with unique gifts, jams, jellies and 14 award winning “Country Style” wines.

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