

IMMOKALEE BULLETIN

Serving Immokalee, Ave Maria and Eastern Collier County

Vol. 43 No. 9

Thursday, March 4, 2010

At a Glance

FREE
CLASSIFIED ADS
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Saving Florida Panthers ...Page 6

Attention Senior Parents and Businesses

Immokalee High School 2010 Project Graduation and our children need help. If you are able to help or have any questions please contact the Ms. Ayer at 239-377-1818 or Floreida at 239-503-6598.

It's sign up time for Little League baseball

At this time Immokalee Little League is accepting applications for boys ages 11 and 12 for this year's baseball season. Participants will play in the major league, which will travel this year for games. We are also recruiting children (boys and girls) age 4 for our new t-ball teams. For more information please call any of the board members below: President: Juan Garcia Jr. 239-643-2407; Vice President: Hector Ramos 239-564-9645; Secretary: Terrie Aviles 239-503-5568; Treasurer: Lori Garcia 239-935-9182; Equipment Manager: William Trevino 239-357-3823; Information Officer: Lisa Garcia 239-503-0922; Player Agent: Zenaida Soto 239-867-1573; Auxiliary Manager: Corina Garcia 239-462-8705.

See Page 2 for information about how to contact the newspaper.

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Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/IFD

Live training

Live Fire training took out a house on Wells Street on Friday, Feb. 26. Live Fire Instructors, Chief Scott Birge and Lt. Curtis Summeralls. They were assisted by others in maintaining safety of the blaze. See FIRE story Page 2

Sunrise services scheduled

By Rick Heers

Special to the Immokalee Bulletin

A large group of pastors from Immokalee met at Bethel Assembly of God Church on West Main Street this week and began plans to have a community Sunrise Service at the Immokalee Parks and Rec Center field on Easter Sunday, April 4. There will be special music, worship and praise, and short messages in Spanish, Creole and English. A free-will offering will be received



Rick Heers

See SUNRISE — Page 2

Jack Paul retires – a man of the good earth

By Patty Brant
INI Florida

After 40 years on the Hendry County Board of Supervisors for Soil and Water, formerly the Soil Conservation District, Jack Paul is retiring. The board recently presented him with a plaque for outstanding and dedicated service to the Hendry County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The old Soil Conservation Board is now the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), but the work continues. Bottom line, the organization still provides local input into large conservation planning and projects.

From January 1970 through January 2010, Mr. Paul has been

See JACK — Page 2



INI/Patty Brant

Jack Paul is retiring from the County Board of Supervisors for Soil and water.

Homebuyer workshops to be offered

The Empowerment Alliance of Southwest Florida is conducting a series of evening workshops that are designed to give prospective home buyers a comprehensive understanding of:

Assessing Readiness to Buy, Financing a Home, Responsibilities of Home Ownership, Budgeting, Understanding Credit, Selecting a Home, Protecting your Investment. A Part I & II English/Creole Workshop will be offered on: Monday, March 8 and Monday March 15, from 6-9 p.m. at: Career and Service Center of Southwest Florida, 750 South 5th Street, Immokalee. We will provide foreclosure assistance and work with lenders to help modify loans so clients can avoid foreclosure. We will also have guest from the lending industry and real estate to help answer any questions they may have. Registration is limited so register early! To register; or for more information please call: Ana Salazar at: 239-658-3318



Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/I HOPE

Helping hands

Men waiting in line to receive donations of food jump in to help with the task of unloading meals for distribution to local farmworkers. See story Page 2

JACK

Continued From Page 1

one of the organization's guiding hands at a time when water conservation became of supreme importance.

Back in the '70s, Mr. Paul said their main concern was drawing plans for flood control and irrigation, helping farmers meet their goals for permitting, as well as teaching and advising.

The group has grown, becoming more organized, he said. They work with state and federal organizations. Most importantly, he believes, years ago they set up agriculture's first Best Management Practices (BMPs) and proved that they would work.

A letter from former County Agent Dallas Townsend points to Mr. Paul's work in the 1970's with the Federal 208 Water Quality Study, which showed that citrus and other agricultural land uses were not polluting the Caloosahatchee River as was alleged by some environmentalists.

Over the years, Mr. Paul has served in many capacities including president of the Soil Conservation District for Florida. In 2004 he was the Florida Association of County Agriculture Agents outstanding agent nominee.

Along with others on the South Florida Agricultural Council, Mr. Paul helped make the University of Florida's Southwest Florida Research and Education Center at Immokalee a reality.

In his early years, Mr. Paul spent two years in the Peace Corps working with farmers in India. In 1965 he came to LaBelle to help manage his father's citrus business, Bob Paul, Inc.

His research demonstrations led to more efficient water systems and he became known in Florida for his expertise in growing citrus in flatwood soils.

At the Feb. 21 meeting, colleagues told Mr. Paul, "Your legacy will affect our children's children for generations to come." These days, no one - farmers included - can afford to waste precious resources.

After 40 years conserving nature's gifts, Mr. Paul said he still has the same core belief. It's our duty to conserve nature and "leave a small footprint."

Fire district conducts live fire training session

Immokalee Fire Control District conducted a Live Fire Training exercise at the address of 305 Wells St. on Friday, Feb. 26. The Live Fire Training was led by our two live fire instructors Chief Scott Birge and Lt. Curtis Summeralls. Also on hand for safety and assistance were Lt. Robert Kline and Lt. Shawn Morris from Big Corkscrew Island Fire Rescue; also live fire instructors.

Within 45 minutes the 800sq. ft. home was brought to ashes. Engines 30, 31, and 32 along with Water Tender 30 were on hand to assist with protecting the nearby homes from the up to 30 foot flames that projected into the sky.

Live Fire Training is a true lesson in Fire behavior.

Fire knows no boundaries once ignited

it will travel along the path of available fuel that will burn. Fuel is anything that can burn and leave an ash; clothing, paper, plastic etc. Prevention and Preparedness are the keys to surviving a fire within your home. It is important to take a few moments to look around your homes for fire safety hazards. Brochures on fire safety and fire drills within the home can be picked up anytime at the fire station located at 502 E. New Market Rd. between the hours of 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday - Friday.

Thank you to the communities of Immokalee and Ave Maria for your continued support to your local fire district. Our Mission: to protect the people and property within our community.

Farm workers receive much needed assistance

By Rick Heers

Special to the Immokalee Bulletin

Thanks to a growing partnership, unemployed farm workers in Immokalee are receiving special help at this difficult time. The TradePort office/warehouse of the Salvation Army was very quickly distributing over 15,000 boxes of prepared food for farm worker families, when I HOPE was able to obtain 6,900 prepared meals ready to eat (MREs) this past week. Men who were waiting in line to receive donations of food quickly jumped in without being asked and helped unload the load of meals.

Thanks to the generosity of Walt Burdick and Robert Juster, owners and operators of the TradePort Industrial/Business complex across from the airport, the Salvation Army was donated some much-needed space to receive, sort and distribute food to over 850 families who are desperate for assistance. The Community Foundation of Collier County-Immokalee Initiative contributed \$500 to pay the trucking costs for the food to be de-

livered from Orlando.

The Harry Chapin Food Bank has been instrumental in providing much of the food, while the Salvation Army has gotten special authorization to purchase additional supplies to augment their order. The local Lions Club has been instrumental in volunteering to assist with the distribution of food.

Additional rice and beans, as well as other food staples are expected within the next couple of weeks. Additional donations are needed to purchase food and also to provide rent and utility subsidies as farm laborers struggle to keep their families fed and housed until the April season brings back more work for those in the packinghouses and fields around Immokalee.

Donations can be sent directly to the Emergency Services Collaborative of Immokalee at the Community Foundation, at 2400 Tamiami Trail N., Suite 300, Naples, FL 34013 or can be sent to I HOPE at P. O. Box 777, Immokalee, FL 34143-0777.

News in Brief

Casino collecting donations for Haiti

The Seminole Tribe and Seminole Indian Casinos, in association with Food for the Poor, are collecting donations for victims of the Haitian earthquake tragedy. Non-perishables, water, personal items and other items are needed. Items may be dropped off at the casino.

Library presents Story Time

Immokalee Branch Library, 417 N. First St. will present Story Time on Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. "ABC Combined Story Time" is open to children age 10 months-5 years. Bring your child and enjoy a good story! For information please call 239-657-2882.

Sports Desk network invites participants

Youth, adult recreation leagues, and sports teams in the Immokalee, Ave Maria and Eastern Collier County are invited to participate online in the Eastern Collier County Sports Network. To visit Eastern Collier County Sports Network online, go to newszap.com, click the Immokalee, Ave Maria or Collier County homepages, then click on the Sports tab in the upper right part of the page. The web address is: <http://fl.newszap.com/EasternCollierCountySportsNetwork>. Interested teams and leagues can contact Renee Hawley by e-mail at: rhawley@communitysportsdesk.com. Or call her toll free at 888-853-7904 for a demonstration or to get started right away.

SUNRISE

Continued From Page 1

to benefit the Immokalee Pregnancy Center operating at Amigos Center on Second Street South. Following the service there will be a pancake and sausage breakfast at First Baptist Church-1411 Lake Trafford Road-donations will be accepted. All in the community are encouraged to join with us for this very special event. (Those attending should bring towels as stadium seating may be wet...or you can bring your own lawn chairs.)

Published by

IMMOKALEE BULLETIN

Serving Immokalee Since 1969

To Reach Us

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 518 • LaBelle, FL 33975
Physical Address: 22 Ft. Thompson Ave.
Phone: (239) 657-6000 • Fax: (863) 675-1449
Website: www.newszap.com/immokalee

To Submit News

The Immokalee Bulletin welcomes submissions from its readers. Opinions, calendar items, story ideas and photographs are welcome. Call (239) 657-6000 to reach our newsroom. The deadline for all news items is 11 a.m. on Monday prior to the following Thursday's publication.

E-Mail: ibnews@newszap.com

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Our Purpose...

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

We Pledge...

- To operate this newspaper as a public trust
- To help our community become a better place to live and work, through our dedication to conscientious journalism.
- To provide the information citizens need to make their own intelligent decisions about public issues.
- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
- 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.

'Click it or Ticket' stops unsafe motorists

Local law enforcement agencies across Florida are out in force renewing a pledge to save lives by cracking down on motorists who drive without wearing seat belts and properly restraining children.

Law enforcement officers will not only be targeting major roadways but also school zones ticketing drivers and passengers, including children under 18, who are not buckled up. The statewide campaign runs March 1-15.

According to 2008 data from the Florida

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, 2,938 individuals were either drivers or passengers in safety belt equipped vehicles. Sixty percent (1,085) of these people killed were not wearing safety belt. In addition to that, 54 of the 79 children ages 0-17 years old, killed in traffic crashes were either not using safety belts or restrained in child restraint device.

"With 30 percent of traffic fatalities due to Floridians failing to buckle up regularly, it's clear that far too many people still don't

take the safety belt law seriously," Hendry County Sheriff Steve Whidden said. "The unbuckled rate is especially high – and the fatal crash rate increases significantly at night. So look for us to be out on streets both day and night in March making sure that everyone is buckled up."

A seat belt usage survey conducted at three major intersections in Hendry County indicated a seat belt usage of 45 percent; less than 50 percent percent of drivers and their passenger's utilized safety belts.

Letter to the Editor

A special thanks!

The Roberts family would like to give a special thanks to two Immokalee Water and Sewer workers and their supervisor. Their prompt and decisive actions to an emergency call placed on Sunday, Feb. 21, kept our home from receiving what could have been an enormous amount of damage from a backup in the sewer line. They are our heroes.

E. Roberts and family
Immokalee

Clerk's Office promotes upcoming Sunshine Week

As the keeper of public records and as accountant, auditor and "watchdog" of the public funds, Dwight Brock, Clerk of the Circuit Court, is committed to practicing open government in Collier County by providing easy access to public records and financial information.

In an effort to educate the community about 'open government,' Mr. Brock is promoting various activities during Sunshine Week, March 14-20, in Collier County. For more information about Sunshine Week or to get direct access to public records and financial information related to the Clerk's Office visit www.CollierClerk.com and click on the Sunshine Week logo. <http://www.collierclerk.com/pdf/SunshineWeekInitial>

The origins of Sunshine Week:

In 2002, the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors (FSNE) launched Sunshine Sunday in response to efforts by some Florida legislators to create scores of new exemptions to the state's public records law. FSNE estimates that some 300 exemptions to open government laws were defeated in the legislative sessions that followed its three Sunshine Sundays, because of the increased public and legislative awareness that resulted from their efforts.

Several states followed Florida's lead, and in June 2003, ASNE hosted a Freedom of Information (FOI) Summit in Washington where the seeds for Sunshine Week were planted.

With an inaugural grant from Knight Foundation, the ASNE FOI Committee took

up the challenge and launched Sunshine Week in March 2005. It continues to be celebrated each year in mid-March, coinciding with National FOI Day and James Madison's birthday.

Sunshine Week is now a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include print, broadcast and online news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know.

Sunshine Week is about the public's right to know what its government is doing, and why. Sunshine Week seeks to enlighten and empower people to play an active role in their government at all levels, and to give them access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger.

Sunshine Week is a nonpartisan initiative whose supporters are conservative, liberal and everything in between. The only requirement is that you do something to engage in a discussion about the importance of open government. It could be a large public forum or a classroom discussion, an article or series of articles about access to important information, or an editorial. The extent to which you participate is up to you.

For more information contact:

Robert D. St. Cyr, Director, Community Outreach,

Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, 239-252-6879 or by email: Robert.StCyr@CollierClerk.com

Local Forecast

Weather forecast for Collier County from the National Weather Service

Immokalee and surrounding area

Thursday: Sunny with a high near 68. Winds will be from the north between 6 and 9 mph.

Thursday night: Mostly clear with a low around 37. Winds will be from the northwest around 6 mph becoming calm.

Extended Forecast

Friday: Sunny with a high near 68. Winds will be from the north between 5 and 9 mph.

Friday night: Mostly clear with a low around 45. Winds will be from the north around 6 mph becoming calm.

Saturday: Sunny with a high near 77. Winds will be from the northeast between 5 and 7 mph.

Saturday night: Mostly clear with a low around 45.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 76. Light north wind.

Sunday night: Mostly clear, with a low around 47. **Monday:** Sunny, with a high near 80.

Monday night: Mostly clear, with a low around 50.

Phone Discounts Available to CenturyLink Customers

With Link-Up America and Lifeline Assistance Programs, qualified low-income telephone customers can save money on installation charges and the monthly rate for basic local residential service. This includes access to long distance carriers, Emergency Services, Operator Services, Directory Assistance and Toll Blocking.

Link-Up America is a federally-sponsored program that provides discounted service installation charges to qualifying low-income customers. It provides a 50 percent discount, up to a maximum of \$30 for new residential installation charges for telephone service. The balance of the installation charges can be paid, interest free, over a 12 month period. In addition, the monthly service charge for toll restriction will be waived for customers requesting or required to have the service.

Lifeline Assistance is another federally-sponsored program for low-income customers. It provides a discount to the monthly charge for basic residential telephone service. Lifeline Assistance Program rates have been reduced and guidelines have been changed to allow for more low-income customers.

To qualify for both programs, customers may enroll in the CenturyLink Lifeline program by providing verification that they meet state low-income eligibility requirements. In addition, Tribal Telephone Assistance is available for those living on federally-recognized American Indian Tribal lands.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, please call 1-800-366-8201 or visit www.centurylink.com/lifeline with questions or to request an application for the Lifeline/Link-Up programs.



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Free online tutoring service by Tutor.com connects students to expert tutors for assistance with math, science, social studies, English, chemistry, book reports and more using the Internet. The Immokalee Branch Library is here to help! Available to students K to adult Monday-Friday from 2 p.m until close at Immokalee Community Park, 417 N. First Street. Call for more information at 239-657-2882.

Computer class helps answer questions

Bilingual staff from Naples Free-Net answers your computer and Internet related questions. Class size is limited to 7 participants. The classes will take place on Thursdays, March 11, April 15, May 13, at 6 p.m. at Immokalee Community Park at 417 N. First St. in Immokalee. Call 239-657-2882 for more information.

Students First

Breakfast - What a way to start the day!

By Joe Landon
Collier County District Schools

They say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Not sure who "they" are but I'm guessing they are right. I know I do better once I've had my bowl of cereal. Same, of course, holds true for our students – your kids. Research tells us that hunger actually limits a student's ability to learn. The other side of the research says that students who eat breakfast have an increased attention span and they get better grades in reading and math. That's why the school district offers a free breakfast (yes, I said no charge) to all Collier County Public School students. Sad truth is that, if it wasn't for the free school breakfast, some students might begin the school day hungry. Given our current daily participation, our nutrition services folks serve about 11,000 free breakfasts districtwide each school day. Over the course of the current school year, we'll be serving nearly 2,000,000 free breakfasts to students. That's a whole lot of those English muffin egg sandwiches, French toast, breakfast pizzas, pancakes, and cereal. Director Dawn Houser and her Nutrition Services staff do a great job! And we're celebrating that during Na-



tional School Breakfast Week, March 8th through the 12th. Here's another one of those "without this program kids might go without" kind of stories. A group known as First Book –

Collier County makes sure students get that first book. During the five years their program has been around, they've donated more than 195,000 free books to students attending schools with a high percentage of low income families (what the feds call Title 1 schools). The target group of students: those in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 3, and those in the federal Head Start program. Now this school year alone, First Book is handing out about 6,000 books each month to students districtwide. Here's the "without this program" piece that I mentioned. The books given to students by First Book – Collier County are often the only books to be found in the home. A Highlands Elementary School Kindergarten teacher says, "I just love the First Book program and so do my students." She tells us that some of her students have been heard to ask "You mean I can keep this book forever?" The good news is, yes they can, thanks to the very generous support of First Book – Collier County.

Latest live TV panel show scheduled for this Monday

The March edition of the School District of Collier County's monthly live TV talk show is scheduled to air at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 8, on The Education Channel, cable 99. Open Mic – Open Dialogue features an in-studio panel discussing the issues and challenges facing our schools and the district, and it features community members joining the conversation on the phone. For the March edition of the live show, parents Colleen Vasey and Dan Sullivan will sit at the table with Superintendent Dennis L. Thompson and School Board Chair Kathy Curatolo. Colleen Vasey serves on the School Advisory Council at Veterans Memorial Elementary School and on the school district's standards-based report card committee. Dan Sullivan is School Advisory Council Chair at Oakridge Middle School. Both parents will share their opinions and viewpoints regarding the issues discussed. And, viewers are encouraged to join the conversation simply

by calling in at any time during the live telecast, between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 8. The number to call: 239-377-9999. First names only are used on air.

Open Mic – Open Dialogue is moderated by Naples Daily News Editorial Page Editor Jeff Lytle. He is not paid by the district and the questions he asks as moderator are his own.

Community members interested in participating as panelists on future editions of the show should send an e-mail to TV-panel@collier.k12.fl.us or call the district's Communications Services Department at 239-377-0180.

Open Mic – Open Dialogue will be on TV live at 5:30 p.m. Monday, March 8, with replays at 5:30 p.m. March 9-14, 16-17, and 19-22, on The Education Channel, cable 99, available to all Comcast basic tier cable TV subscribers in Collier County.

Questions welcomed for new board member

Collier County's newest School Board member, Roy Terry, will guest with Superintendent Dennis L. Thompson on the next edition of the eConnection TV show. If you have a question you'd like to ask Mr. Terry or Dr. Thompson please e-mail it now to eConnection@collier.k12.fl.us. If you prefer, you may send your question directly to show host Jan Goldsmith at janeducationtv@aol.com. The current eConnection TV program features the Superintendent and School Board Member Steve Donovan as guests. It can be seen at 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday this week.

E-book reading week begins

If you love to read, Collier County Public Library (CCPL) has books to fit your on-the-go lifestyle. During the week of March 8, libraries across the nation will take part in Read an E-Book Week promoting the new trend in reading virtual books.

What are E-Books? E-books are essentially books in a digital format with viewable pages and text. You can read the books online or some of the books can be checked out and downloaded to use on your own portable device. Some portable devices are supported.

Collier County's Virtual Library offers two online E-Book resources OverDrive and NetLibrary. OverDrive offers popular titles that may be downloaded to your computer at home or you may transfer the checked out E-Book to a Sony Reader or Nook de-

vice. NetLibrary also allows you to read books online and some NetLibrary titles are allowed to be checked out and transferred to a compatible device as listed online such as COOL-ER, BeBook and Libre devices. Overdrive and NetLibrary require a valid Collier County Public Library card to obtain online access.

Don't have a library card? No worries. You may gain online access in a matter of minutes by visiting your local library branch and applying for a card today. For more information or to find the library nearest you, visit www.colliergov.net/library and click the Locations and Hours link, where you will find library addresses, phone numbers and hours of business. Customers may also call 239-252-7542.

Education News in Brief

Volunteers needed

The School on Wheels Program at Guadalupe Social Services of Catholic Charities in Immokalee is in need of female volunteers. The program matches volunteers with non-English speaking women for one-on-one tutoring sessions. Volunteers travel to the home of the student once a week to provide a 90-minute teaching session in basic, survival English. Training is provided. To volunteer or for more information, please call Helen Heffington at Guadalupe Social Services of Catholic Charities at 239-657-6242.

Upcoming event?

The Immokalee Bulletin welcomes news and photos for and about the Immokalee community. Submit news of your upcoming event by email to: IBnews@newszap.com.

School has openings

Immokalee Community School has openings for students in grades four, five and six. If you are interested in registering your child, please call Herminia Mendoza at 239-867-3220

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The Immokalee Foundation - volunteering for the community

Johnnie Gonzales, 18, plans on being a civil engineer.

That dream was born out of his experience with The Immokalee Foundation's Future Builders of America program.

Gonzales is a senior at Immokalee High School and president of Future Builders of America Club, which has 35 members. He's been in the program since the summer of his sophomore year.

"I've helped build homes for Habitat for Humanity, Adirondack chairs, bookshelves," he said. "It helps you take the next step for your career."

In 2006, The Immokalee Foundation - working in partnership with Collier County Public Schools, Collier Building Industry Association and Florida Home Builders Association - brought the Future Builders of America program to Immokalee. These students participate in vocational and on-the-job training, as well as summer internships with area businesses.

The programs emphasize leadership, skills development and community service, preparing students for post-secondary training and vocational success.

It also allowed Gonzales a chance to give back to the community. Since last April, the group has racked up more than 1,600 volunteer hours.

"This club teaches them about helping the community," said Elda Hernandez, vocational program manager for The Immokalee Foundation.



The students spend 10 weeks every summer working for Habitat for Humanity building houses in the community. They also work closely with the Collier Building Association Industry to learn the appropriate skills.

All of The Immokalee Foundation programs require that students perform community service.

Community service opportunities range from building Habitat homes to helping elderly neighbors build disability ramps that lead to their front doors.

"Recently they built bookshelves for First Book of Collier County," Hernandez said. "This nonprofit in Naples reads to the kids and donates books. We donate the bookshelves."

Hernandez is proud of their community service. "March is volunteer month and I'm expecting the students to put in at least 200 hours," she said. Their service is recognized - seven Future Builders of America students recently won the Presidential Volunteer Service Award for logging more than 100 community service hours each.

These students have many opportunities to succeed.

Vocational Success students have held internship positions at local businesses, in-

cluding Tri-City Electric, Made in Rio, D. Garrett Construction, Salazar Machine & Steel, Kraft Construction, Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board and Immokalee Technical Center.

Future Builders of America is just one of many successful programs. Since 1991, The Immokalee Foundation has been creating pathways to success for Immokalee's children through a variety of programs that focus on mentorship, after-school activities, college scholarships, the development of vocational skills and incentives for educational growth. In 2009, The Immokalee Foundation served 2,700 children through its core programs.

The Immokalee Foundation offers a road map toward a brighter future. It helps manage six core programs including: College Success: Take Stock in Children, Direct Scholarships, Vocational Success: Future Builders of America, Out of School Program: The First Tee of Naples/Collier, Immokalee Readers and Community Grants.

For more information call 239-430-9122, e-mail info@immokaleefoundation.org or visit www.immokaleefoundation.org.



Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/IF
Young Johnnie Gonzalez, a senior at Immokalee High School, has a bright future ahead of him. He has high hopes in becoming a civil engineer after college. He is the current president of the Builders Club at IHS.

Scholarships available for low income students

The fall application period for low-income K-12 scholarships in Florida will begin Monday, March 8.

The program, known as Step Up For Students and authorized under a state law called Florida Tax Credit Scholarships, provides annual scholarships worth up to \$3,950 that can be used at more than 1,160 K-12 private schools statewide. To qualify, new applicants must meet the household income guidelines for the federal school lunch program. For a family of four, that income limit for the 2010-11 school year is \$40,793. Students must also be entering either kindergarten or first grade or have attended a public school this year.

Beginning Monday, applications will be available online at <http://www.stepupforstudents.org> and a toll-free hotline, 877-735-SUFS, will be available for assistance.

The program was created in 2001 by the Florida Legislature to provide education options for economically disadvantaged children. The scholarships are financed by corporations that receive a dollar for dollar tax credit for contributions up to a total statewide of \$118-million. Currently, the program serves about 27,600 students.



Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/CHS

New role
Chief Financial Officer at CHS Healthcare, Sandra E. Steele, has announced the promotion of Betty Guerra in her new role as Billing Supervisor. She will manage the billing office and work closely with office managers at CHS's 12 locations with the billing and collections process. Betty has been with CHS since 2006 and successfully managed both Golden Gate Pediatrics and Immokalee Family Care Center. Congratulations Betty!

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Example: Chrysler Convertible 2009, Excellent Condition, Heated Leather Seats, Front-Wheel Drive, Satellite Radio. \$0,000. Call 555-5555.

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www.newszap.com click on Classifieds

Plus...post your ads in these Florida newspapers for as low as \$8 each!
Okeechobee News, Caloosa Belle, Immokalee Bulletin, Clewiston News, Belle Glade Sun & The Glades County Democrat

Conservation banking can help save panthers

By Nick Wiley, executive director, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Paul Souza, field supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are pooling resources and expertise to protect Florida panthers and other wildlife. Conservation banking is among the innovative and promising strategies.

Conservation banks for endangered species have been successful in other places across the country. Banks set up a system where the private sector provides funds to preserve and manage important habitat ... forever. Landowners can sell credits to developers planning to impact what are usually marginal habitats elsewhere, ensuring the most valuable habitats continue to flourish.

This system offers landowners an economic incentive to maintain and use the land in ways compatible with conservation.

Fittingly, ranchers, who have been stewards of Florida's landscape for generations, can pass that legacy to their children and grandchildren.

The panther Primary Zone in Southwest Florida is where most panthers live, but not all land there is of equal value for panthers. Through the federal and state development-review processes and working proactively with landowners, we identify important wildlife resources and applicable conservation strategies to guide land-use decisions. The Primary Zone includes 2.27 million acres; about 75 percent is permanently protected. Conserving the remaining high-value areas within the Primary Zone is extremely important, and banks serve a vital role. The Service finalized a conservation bank in the Primary Zone, another is nearly complete, and seven others are under consideration.

The panther Dispersal Zone represents the only natural passageway from the Primary Zone to the Caloosahatchee River and panther habitat farther north. The Dispersal

Zone is 28,000 acres – about 1 percent of the size of the Primary Zone. Most of the Dispersal Zone is privately owned and not held for conservation. Recent completion of a panther bank in the Dispersal Zone is an important step in preserving a portion of this valuable area. Three additional banks in the Dispersal Zone are proposed.

The strategic importance of the Dispersal Zone is well known and became even clearer during the past few years. Male panthers transit this area en route to habitat in South-Central Florida. Last year the FWC documented a female panther in the Dispersal Zone, just south of the Caloosahatchee River, within a mile of the recently finalized conservation bank. This was farther north than any female panther has been verified in decades and indicates a growing panther population – about 100 individuals today – as compared with the 62 panthers tallied a decade ago and 20-30 estimated two decades ago.

The Florida Panther Recovery Plan, published in December 2008, noted that protecting panther habitat in Southwest Florida and finding ways to expand the population are important for the long-term recovery of the species. The proximity of the Dispersal Zone to the river makes the land desirable and expensive. A few years ago, property costs in this location made it appear unlikely that conservation alternatives such as banking were possible. For example, according to the landowners, the recently finalized Dispersal Zone conservation bank was nearly lost to development for that reason.

We will continue to work with counties, landowners and environmental groups to avoid and minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitats. Conservation banks are one more tool – along with land acquisition, habitat restoration, wildlife crossings and advances in science – that will serve a strategic role in our partnership to conserve and recover the majestic Florida panther and many other treasured parts of Florida's rich wildlife heritage.

Prescribed Fire Awareness Week starts Monday

Prescribed Fire Awareness Week begins March 8 and this week is dedicated to reminding residents about the vital role Prescribed Fire or controlled burning plays. Prescribed Fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk. "Prescribed Fire is an important tool to clean the forest floor of dead or decaying vegetation", stated Melissa Yunas, Wildfire Mitigation Specialists, Florida Division of Forestry.

"Out of the ash, new vegetation sprouts thus creating a lush buffet for wildlife and cattle."

Wildfire occurs regularly across Florida. Historically, low-intensity fires burned every few years, fueled by grass, leaves, pine straw, and other forest debris. They kept the forest open, allowing sunlight to penetrate to its floor and reducing buildup of dangerous fuel loads. Changes in land

management practices and populations altered the landscape, allowing fuels to accumulate thus increasing the threat for wildfire and putting people and communities in jeopardy. There are many fire-dependent ecosystems across the state. Without fire, many native plants and animals will disappear due to changes in the habitat needed for them to exist

The passing cold fronts and rain have provided land managers a good opportunity to conduct prescribed burning. FL Division of Forestry provides burn authorizations to land managers, ranchers and farmers to burn for the following reasons:

- Ranchers use prescribed burning to increase the diversity and structure of vegetation to benefit wildlife and maintain livestock production. Rancher's burn predominantly during the winter months in order to prepare the land for the spring and summer

months.

- Farmers burn sugarcane before harvesting for increased efficiency of the harvest and it also serves to improve sugar quality and recovery in the factory.

- Foresters and land managers who manage large parcels of land for private land owners, state, and local government agencies use prescribe fire to manage their land. The fire reduces the risk of wildfire and cleans the forest floor of leaf litter allowing new growth to sprout.

Several Prescribed Fires conducted by the Florida Division of Forestry are planned for the month of March. Please contact your local FL Division of Forestry for more information about a media tour.

News in Brief

Upcoming event?

The Immokalee Bulletin welcomes news and photos for and about the Immokalee community. Submit news of your upcoming event by email to: IBnews@newszap.com

A 'Touch of the Irish' celebration set at Ave Maria

'Wearing of the Green' planned for Saturday at Ave Maria's Town Center

The Ave Maria celebration of the "Wearing of the Green" has been scheduled for Saturday, March 6, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Ave Maria's Town Center.

"We're planning for some real St. Patrick's fun," comments Tiffany Matteau, who is coordinating the event for Ave Maria Development LLLP.

"We hope lots of people from all across the area will join us," she said.

In addition to traditional Irish food and drink, the program will offer the West of Galway Irish Band performing live from noon to 2 p.m.

A golf cart parade also will be part of the festivities.

Kids, too, will find lots to do, with a Craft Tent, Bounce House, Gladiator Joust, Face Painting, and lots more.

Admission is free as is the ample parking available behind the Town Center buildings.

The Town of Ave Maria has been designed as a hometown for the 21st century, a place where residents of different generations and backgrounds can find all they need to live life to the fullest – schools, shopping, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, and more. In addition, the presence of Ave Maria University offers educational and cultural experiences unlike any other in the area. At its buildout, it will include 11,000 residences in its 4,000 acres.

Ave Maria is located at the intersection of Oil Well and Camp Keais Roads in Eastern Collier County. The main entrance, on Oil Well just west of Camp Keais, leads to the community's sales center.

Additional information is available

at: www.avemaria.com, or by calling 239.262.2600.

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Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/IFD

Live training

Immokalee Fire District Firefighters who participated in last Friday's Live Fire Training session included (from left to right standing) FF Strickland, Lt. Morris, Lt. Summeralls, FF/EMT Eidel, FF/EMT Velasco, FF/EMT Cunningham, FF/EMT Heath, Vol. FF Crews, Chief Birge, Lt. Kline, Lt. Dimas. Kneeling left to right: FF/EMT Negrin and Lt. Mendoza.



Special to the Immokalee Bulletin/DAS

Pets of the Week

Here kitty, kitty! There's lots to choose from with Lil Cheeks, (top left) a male 5 month old black and white domestic short haired cat. Charley (top right) is a 6 month old male orange and white cat. Charley loves to hang around with other cats and really enjoys his afternoon naps! Mason and Charley love to cuddle. Mason (lower left) is a 1 year old male Blue Point Siamese. Both are good with other cats and truly enjoy napping together. Gus is a loveable fellow (lower right). He is a 1 year old neutered male grey and black tabby cat. He really enjoys having company around and enjoys a good back scratch and brushing. They are all full of love and are looking for a new best friend. Adopt from Collier County Domestic Animal Services located in Naples at 7610 Davis Blvd. Call 239-252-PETS (7387) or visit DAS online to find a lost or adoptable pet at: www.collierpets.com. Adoption is a \$400 value including spay/neuter, starter bag of pet food, pet micro chip ID and pet's license. Cats are \$60 to adopt and dogs are \$85.

Football comes to Ave Maria

The clatter of cleats against concrete and sharp whistle blows of late afternoon practices will soon be heard at Ave Maria University (AMU). The school has announced that Barry Fagan has been hired to create AMU's intercollegiate football program and will serve as the school's first head football coach.

"In many respects, football helps to build character," said Ave Maria University Chancellor, Thomas S. Monaghan. "As a team sport, the players must learn to work together and trust each other – both on and off the field – in order to succeed. Football also teaches discipline and the importance of hard work in the pursuit of a common goal.

"Coach Fagan's demonstrated ability to lead a team and teach them these values is what attracted us to him. His strong Catholic convictions convinced us that he would not only develop an excellent football program, but he would also be an educator and moral example to his players," Monaghan continued.

AMU Athletic Director, Brian Scanlan, echoed Monaghan's respect for Fagan and discussed the realized impact the football team will have on the university.

"Football is much more than games and practices," Scanlan said. "Football builds school spirit and unites the campus. It often acts as a conduit to the surrounding community and therefore is an excellent student recruiting tool. For the players, football builds camaraderie and coping skills.

It is our hope that AMU's football program will be able to do all of these things. We could not be more excited about what the future holds, and how Coach Fagan will help shape that future."

Fagan comes to AMU from Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich., where he served for eight seasons as the school's offensive coordinator. Prior to his tenure at Hillsdale, Fagan served in various coaching capacities at Ferris State University and Wayne State University, both in Michigan; the University of Wisconsin; Louisiana State University; Clarion University and Shippensburg, both in Pennsylvania; and Miami University in Ohio. He also has coached at the high school level in West Bloomfield, Mich.

Nicholas J. Healy, AMU president, expressed his confidence in Fagan to hold the student athletes to the same rigorous standards in the classroom as he will on the practice field.

AMU is also looking toward other athletic endeavors. Ground breaking at the site of its new Tom Golisano Field House was this past Tuesday. The \$4 million donation from Mr. B. Thomas Golisano will fund the construction of AMU's first indoor athletic facility. The field house will be located just north of the Bob Thomas Student Union and its current design includes spectator seating for approximately 1,000 people; a court area for basketball or volleyball; locker rooms with shower facilities for home and visiting teams; coaches' offices; and a training and weight room.

Coaches - Players - Sports Fans

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