

Young man dead in shooting incident

A young man was killed in the early morning hours of February 2 in the vicinity of 601 W. Delaware. The Collier County sheriff's deputies received the call approximately 12:35 a.m.

Few facts could be discovered after the incident, which included another victim, Charles Gotty, 19, of LeHigh Acres, who had been shot in the left eye.

A third man at the scene could only tell officers that the victims were shot inside a blue BMW parked at the site.

Another victim, Jean-Claude Cimilien, 54, was also questioned by authorities.

A white iPhone was recovered from the scene.

Two witnesses were located and subsequently transported to the Immokalee substation to further investigate the incident.

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Phillippi resigns, moves on from CRA

by **Patty Brant**
Immokalee Bulletin

After five years, Penny Phillippi has called it quits - given up the reins of the Immokalee Community Redevelopment Agency.

After rescinding her new three-year contract, the county commission offered Ms. Phillippi a six-month contract, with up to a year to "prove herself" in the position she has held for five years.

She pointed out that she always received outstanding evaluations.

She tendered her resignation and Friday is Ms. Phillippi's last day as CRA Executive Director. It's been a long ordeal, she feels, first shepherding all the components of the proposed new Master Plan, then working to build a consensus on the finished product.

Arguably, she said it was the most important task, and proudest achievement, of her term with the CRA. One she ultimately be-

lieves was successful, despite the county commission's failure to pass it. In effect, the old Master Plan is the fall back document.

Still, Ms. Phillippi is satisfied that everything was done that could be. Besides, its most important features, are already being implemented, except for the land use changes.

Important projects like much needed stormwater drainage and building codes are in place. She wishes the Ninth Street Plaza project was complete, but stands behind her accomplishments.

She notes that the Master Plan the community put so much effort into was highly respected by many planners.

She is also thrilled that the CRA's Business Development Center is becoming a stand-alone non-profit agency. She said that, under Marie Capita, the agency will thrive.

She still sees a bright future for Immokalee and the CRA with a "wonderful" new MSTU director, native Immokaleean James Sainvilus,

a 1997 graduate of Immokalee High School.

Ms. Phillippi said she is looking forward to new challenges and is considering several offers of positions and intends to do some consulting.

She remains optimistic about Immokalee's future along with its vibrant, hard working people.



File photo

Penny Phillippi

I.H.S. Beta Club takes top awards at State

by **Maribel DeArmas**

Another victorious year is on the books for the Immokalee High School (IHS) BETA Club. Some 80 club members participated in the 71st Annual State of Florida BETA Club Convention, held in Orlando last weekend.

Once again, this incredible group brought home multiple State Championships and other honors.

The Immokalee Indians placed first in the state in the Sketching, Character Skit, and Group Talent competitions.

In addition, the IHS BETAs also placed second in Ceramics, On-site Art (colored pencil), Philanthropy, Spanish, and Scrapbook, and they received third place rankings in Wood Working, Watercolor, and Service.

Several current and former IHS students received additional honors and participated as part of the program throughout the convention program.

- Junior Jeffrey Flores was elected as the next Florida State BETA Vice President.



Submitted photo/Maribel DeArmas

Immokalee High School BETA Club at the 71st Annual State of Florida BETA Club Convention.

See Beta — Page 2

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Beta

Continued From Page 1

- IHS alumnus and the 2004-05 National BETA Club President Rodelin Anthony gave the closing session inspiration followed by senior Kerby Henry, current State BETA Vice President, presenting his closing keynote address titled "You've Gotta Have Heart."

- Senior Maricruz Gutierrez was recognized as the only Florida BETA to receive the Harris Leadership Award.

- IHS alumni Ramces Rouzard and Josh Washington performed a musical tribute to the National BETA Club Assistant Executive Director Glenn Stribling.

And, continuing on the theme of recognitions, longtime IHS BETA Club sponsor Linda Ayer was honored for thirty years of service and was re-elected Vice Chair of the Florida BETA Council.

Based on their performance, the Immokalee BETA Club will represent Florida in various categories at the National BETA Convention to be held June 19-22 in Mobile, Alabama. Club members will be working hard in the next few months to raise funds for their journey.

BETA stands for Better Education Through Achievement. The club motto is "Let us lead by serving others."

To be eligible to take part in convention activities, BETA members must maintain a 3.0 grade point average.

To learn more or if you would like to help in any way, please contact IHS BETA Club sponsor Tim Rayburn at 377-1800.

Community Briefs

Fishing

Join a park ranger and learn to fish or just come enjoy fishing if you already know how. Rods, reels and bait supplied. This program will be on the 4th Thursday of each month at Lake Trafford.

Project Graduation

Come to the 2013 Project Graduation Committee fundraiser, yard sale and bake sale February 9 7-11 a.m. at the Winn Dixie Parking lot. Spaces will be rented out for a fee of \$10. You must provide your own tables.

Donations and bake goods are needed for the 2013 Project Graduation's Yard Sale and Bake Sale. If you have any items that you would like to donate please: contact Veronica Guerrero at IHS 239-377-1819. All proceeds will help benefit the 2013 Project Graduation Celebration on May 31, in the IHS Gymnasium.

For more information call: Floreida Ocanas 239-834-2576 or Veronica Guerrero 239-377-1819.

The next Project Graduation meeting at Roma's on February 11th at 6 p.m. All Junior and Senior parents are welcomed to attend the meeting.

If you would like to donate, please mail your donation to 701 Immokalee Drive, Immokalee, FL 34142. Checks should be made out to Immokalee High Schol - Project Graduation. If you need any more information please contact Floreida Ocanas

at 239.834.2576 or Veronica Guerrero at 239.377.1819.

COFFO board to meet

The COFFO Board meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. February 15, at the COFFO Immokalee Office, 214 A South 1st Street, Immokalee.

Homebuyer workshop

Come to a Homebuyer Workshop Saturday, February 23 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Light lunch included. topics include: determining a price you can afford; managing your money; understanding credit, getting a mortgage loan, shopping for a home; insuring your property; keeping your home and managing your finances.

Registration required. Call Angela Johnson 239-658-3315 or Lillie Flores 239-658-3318. Seating limited. Free class. Must attend entire class for certificate. No children preferred. 750 South Fifth Street, Immokalee.

Taller de comprador de casa

Sabado, 23 de febrero 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Almuerzo incluido. Los temas incluyen: determinar su precio puede comprar; administrando su dinero; comprender el credito; obtener un prestamo hipotecario; comprar una casa; asegurar su propiedad; mantener tu casa y administrando sus finanzas. Llame Angela Johnson 239-658-3315 or Lillie Flores 239-658-3318. 750 South Fifth Street, Immokalee.

Thrift store second location

St. Matthew's Thrift Store of Immokalee has a second location at 502 Winn-Dixie Plaza. The store is open Monday-Saturday. All proceeds go to help the homeless shelters in Immokalee and Naples.

Volunteer tax assistance

Get all the money back you deserve. If you learned less than \$49,000 in 2012, you may be eligible for up to \$5,186 in Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit and free e-file and tax preparation. Bring proof of identification, social security cards, birth dates for you, your spouse and dependents, W-2, W-2-G and 1099-R statements, interest and dividend statements, a copy of last year's Federal and State returns if available, bank routing and account numbers for direct deposit and total paid for day care provider and day care provider taxpayer ID number. Come to Catholic Charities Guadalupe Social Services, 211 South 9th St. Wednesdays 6-9 p.m. and Saturdays 10 am.-2 p.m.

Asistencia de declaracion de impuestos

Asistencia voluntaria de declaracion de impuestos. Toma el dinero que has ganado. Recibe todo el dinero que usted se merece. Si usted gana menos de \$49,000 en el 2012, usted puede ser elegible para recibir hasta \$5,186 del Credito Tributario por ingreso del Trabajo o Credito por su hijo(a). Es gratis la preparacion de su declaracion de impuesto.

Que debe traer para su cita:

- Su identificacion
 - Tarjetas de seguro social
 - Fechas de nacimiento para usted, esposo(a) y dependes
 - Reporte de ingresos y ganancias de sus empleadores (W-2, W-2G, 1099-R)
 - Intereses y financia dividendos de su banco
 - Una copia de su declaracion de impuesto del ano anterior si esta disponible
- Numero de su cuenta bancaria incluyendo el numero de ruta si quiere hacer un deposito directo de su reembolso a su cuenta de banco
- El total que usted pago por servicios de guarderia incluyendo el numero de impuesto de la guarderia.

Locacion: Guadalupe Social Services/Caridades Catolicas, 211 Calle 9 Sur, Puerta #7, Immokalee; 239-657-6242 o 813-732-6615.

Dias y horario: Miercoles 6-9 p.m. y Sabados 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Living the call

All are invited to the "Living the Call" Conference Saturday, February 23, 2013 at Ave Maria University in Ave Maria, Florida. Join us as we explore together the calling we have each received as Catholics to live the mission God has given us and to become saints! Speakers include EWTN and Ave Maria Radio host Teresa Tomeo, former US Ambassador and author Michael Novak, Sisters of Mary Mother of the Eucharist, Sr. Teresa Benedicta, Journalist and Editor of Legatus Magazine, Patrick Novecosky and Fr. Dennis Cooney, Pastor of St. Raphael Parish in Lehigh Acres. The cost of the conference is \$50 with on campus lodging available at Xavier Hall by calling (239) 304-7206. Mass is at 9 a.m. and the conference will conclude at 5 p.m. Visit www.avemaria.edu and look under news and events for this and all conference information or call (239) 348-4724 or email conferences@avemaria.edu.

Medical class available

iTECH is pleased to announce the opening of a brand new Medical Billing and Coding class to begin on or about March 1st of this year. This 1,000 hour training program gives students a certificate of completion and prepares them to be nationally certified as a biller/coder. This course is also eligible for Pell Scholarship funding.

Also, please welcome the school's newest instructor, Donna Jolly, who comes from Georgia with several years of teaching experience in Medical Billing and Coding.

2013 ORV permits on sale

The 2012 the 2013 ORV permits for Big Cypress National Preserve are on sale at the ORV Permit Office located in the Oasis Visitor Center. For more information on ORV use within the preserve and permits required for this recreational access go to - <http://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/orv-use.htm>

You may also contact the ORV office at 239-695-1205. The ORV office is open from Thursday through Monday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. On Mondays the office is open for permit renewals only.



Bulletin

Serving Immokalee, Ave Maria and Eastern Collier County

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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.
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Our Purpose...

The Caloosa Belle 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.

Two days of musical tribute to Sam Thompson

The much-anticipated Sam Thompson Tribute, in recognition of a great local Country Western talent long gone but certainly not forgotten, is set for February 15-16.

This will be a chance not only to remember the man and his music, but will be a great fund raiser for a number of local and national causes.

Award winning artist Miss Birdie Lee will perform Friday, Feb. 15, at the Top Draw from 8-11 p.m. She worked with Sam at many appearances including the old Long Branch in LaBelle and was with Sam's band when she won first place female vocalist at the County Music Award State Championship finals in St. Petersburg in 1979. She will pay tribute to Sam in her performance.

Saturday, Feb. 16, the all day Music Tribute begins at 2 p.m. with many musicians, singers and bands.

Appreciation awards (Sammy Awards) will be presented to:

1. LaBelle Chamber of Commerce - Sara Townsend accepting
2. Gary Carico of Gary's County web site-musician/photographer - accepting Gary Carico
3. Waddy Thompson entertainment organizer musician/photographer - accepting Waddy Thompson
4. Jody Rogers recording artist/writer - accepting Jody Rogers
5. Jerry and Corrien McRoy musicians/gospel artists - accepting Jerry and Corrine McRoy
6. Jamie Mullis The Okeechobee Boys - accepting Jamie Mullis
7. Donna Hodges recording artist Patsy Cline replica/vocals - accepting Donna Hodges
8. Bubba Whidden musician/artist - accepting Bubba Whidden
9. Steve and Tina Leavenworth musicians video techs - accepting Steve and Tina Leavenworth
10. Richard Strickland musical organizer of community musicians - accepting Richard Strickland
11. Miss Birdie Lee emcee musician recording artist web designer entertainment organizer - accepting Birdie Lee
12. Joseph and Robert Thompson - Sam's grandsons - accepting Joseph and Robert Thompson

Jamie Mullis and the Okeechobee Boys will perform Sam's recording of Okeechobee on my Mind.

There will be no cover charge for this great event. Donations will be accepted at both doors for the fund raisers including:

1. Wounded Warriors Project - accepting VFW Post Commander Bobby Middleton and Robin Thompson.
2. Hope Healthcare Services Hospice - accepting Kristina Rodriguez
3. Ruben Rodriguez Family - accepting Ramos Rodriguez and Rosa
4. Steven Zamarron Family - accepting a family member

All proceeds from the door, individual donations and merchandise raffles will be given to these causes and organizations. One hundred percent of the proceeds will be divided equally. Checks will be issued at 8 p.m. Saturday at the Top Draw Bar and Grill.

Throughout the day there will be 50/50 raffles and three Win a Guitar raffles. Lil' Ole Bulldogs with Bare Assets, Inc., will have one Fender and two Gibsons along with various other items to be raffled off. "Bring it to win it" (you must be present to win).

Sam's Tribute CD - the live radio broadcast of Sam at the Long Branch CD and his oil field CD Songs of the Oil Fields, will be available. Budda Whidden provided a picture of the beautiful scene on the Tribute CD. The photo was taken at the Bar Crescent Ranch on Hwy. 98 in Basinger, owner Duck Smith. Bubba had it put on canvas. The painting is on display at the LaBelle Chamber of Commerce. Bubba donated his work to be used on the commemorative Tribute CD.

Patti Nixon and her You Say Sew printshop printed the T-shirts that will also be on sale. All are limited editions and reasonably priced. The art work is by Wendel Schneider of Okeechobee and entitled "Sam's Place."

Take a chance to win the "Sammy Bucket" that will have Sam's CDs and photo inside.

Look for lots of great stuff, including Western bling from Southern Divas - and remember all proceeds go to the charities mentioned.

For special needs seating or other information about the venue call 863-342-8216.



Submitted photo/Phillip Keyes

2013 newly elected LaBelle Masonic Lodge Leaders

Ray Navor, center, of Felda has been elected to lead LaBelle Masonic Lodge 379 for the coming year. He is pictured here with other elected and appointed officers for 2013. From the left: Jimmy Cianfrani, junior steward; ill Nordstrom, treasurer; Len Richardson Jr., senior deacon; Nick Fidanza, senior warden; Ray Navor, worshipful master; Greg Gunter, junior warden; Jerry Hubbard, secretary; Herb Hollenbeck, marshal; Phillip Keyes, senior steward, Bob Eltzroth, tyler; Tom Boardman, junior deacon, and Johnny Sandot, chaplain, were able to attend. Freemasons from throughout Southwest Florida were in LaBelle January 12 for the open installation followed by a catered banquet. Freemasonry is a moral institution, established by virtuous men. It is a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. The new officers and lodge members are planning a public open house on Saturday, March 2. Ray Navor and Jerry Hubbard are from Immokalee.

ANNOUNCING

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Astronomers night under the stars

The Rotary Club of Immokalee is proud to partner with Collier and Lee County astronomers and is pleased to invite one and all to join us and experience a Night Under the Stars on Friday, February 15, beginning at 7:00 P.M. at Lake Trafford Marina.

In making the announcement, President Richard Rice and Event Chair Chuck Pavlick said; "This should be an excellent night for viewing our atmosphere, as Jupiter and other planets will be plainly

visible."

Mr. Pavlick added; "I understand we will have a couple of really strong telescopes so people will be able to see even farther into space and maybe see something they've never seen before.

Everyone is invited to bring the whole family and let children, in particular, experience our heavenly galaxy, Rice said. There's no charge, but a lot of viewing excitement for those attending.

Share historical memories

Join local residents from the historic Everglades City area on Friday, February 22, for a nostalgia night when the theme is "Remembering Our Past." After a delicious dinner buffet in the Everglades Seafood Depot Restaurant, there will be a brief, award-winning film about preserving Oral History and then a panel discussion among some of the older members of the community, with contributions and questions from the audience.

What was it like to live in Collier's com-

pany town, all those years ago?

Where were you when President Harry S. Truman opened the National Park?

How did you cope with Hurricane Donna?

The event is hosted by the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation. It starts at 6:00 p.m. and costs \$25 per person. The public is welcome but reservations are required. For information, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905 or see www.evergladeshistorical.org. It promises to be a fun event.

Baptist Churches worship together on Race Relations Sunday

First Baptist Church of Immokalee, along with Glendale Bible Baptist Church of Immokalee, will worship together at First Baptist Church, 1411 Lake Trafford Road February 10 at 5 p.m. in observance of Race Relations Sunday. The Glendale Bible Baptist Church will be conducting the entire service with their choir bringing the music and Rev. Howard Allen, their pastor, bringing the message, followed by a fellowship meal in the church's fellowship hall.

Race Relations Sunday is observed on the Sunday nearest Abraham Lincoln's birthday because of the role he played in freeing the slaves during the Civil War. Up until 1965 it was sponsored by the National Council of Churches, but since that time, sponsorship has been taken over by individual denominations. Although it was originally conceived in 1924 as an opportunity to focus on im-

proving relations among all races, the longstanding racial conflict between whites and African Americans in the United States has made this the focal point in recent decades.

How much progress has the church made in race relations? On one hand, the church has made tremendous advances. After supporting segregation during the Jim Crow era, the Southern Baptist Convention in June 2012 elected its first African-American president—the Rev. Fred Luter. But multicultural churches remain far from the norm in the United States. Blacks mostly attend black churches, and whites mostly attend white churches.

We would like to invite the entire community to come and experience a little bit of heaven in worshiping with us on this very special day.

Another block party planned by Chamber of Commerce

The Immokalee Chamber of Commerce is providing another opportunity for the businesses of the South Side to offer the public delicious Foods, Beverages, Arts and Crafts and Live Music at this upcoming "Caribbean Taster."

So, it's time for another Block Party!

When: March 2, starting 12 noon to 10

p.m.

Where: 2nd to 3rd Boston Avenue in Immokalee

What: Caribbean Taster-Immokalee Block Party

Please call our Immokalee Chamber of Commerce@ 239-657-3237 for additional information about this event.

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Submitted photo

Workers buoyed by Church support

The Archbishop Carlos Garfias Merlos of the Diocese of Acapulco in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, met with CIW members in Immokalee January 30, hearing stories of the organization's struggles for fundamental human rights and warmly expressing his own support and encouragement to the workers, many of whom hail from the Archbishop's diocese in southwestern Mexico. Organized by longtime CIW ally Sister Karen Bernhardt HM of the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network the day included a roundtable discussion with CIW members, concerning the hardships workers face in the fields as well as progress under the Fair Food Program. The Archbishop told the workers, "I have much admiration and faith in what you do here, fighting for workers' rights, for your rights."

Get set for blues, brews and bbq

Ave Maria Town Center will host a Blues, Brews & BBQ event on Saturday, February 23, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the Town Center at Ave Maria. The public is invited to attend the free event featuring an outdoor concert by local favorite blues bands, Little Eddie and the Fat Fingers and the Mambo Brothers. The outdoor concert festival will also feature savory BBQ from Jones BBQ of Ft. Myers, beer sampling tent, local merchant booths, and cars on display from West Coast Muscle Car Club.

The public is encouraged to rev up their

engines—bike or car—and spend the afternoon in the February Florida sunshine in one of the area's most beautiful outdoor venues, Ave Maria Town Center. For more information about the event, please call 239-352-3903.

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 Town Center. For more information, please visit www.avemaria.com or call 239-352.3903.



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Three Fakahatchee Strand swamp walks scheduled for February

The Friends of Fakahatchee have scheduled two more swamp walks for Saturdays in February. The walks in Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park on February 9 and February 16 allow participants to get up close and personal with the plants and critters of the famous swamp called the "Amazon of North America." Past participants have called the guided wet walk their most memorable Florida experience.

The walks through knee to waist high waters of the park are led by naturalists who are experts in the flora and fauna of the 80,000 acre state park. The walks begin promptly at

9:30 am and conclude by 4 p.m. Be sure to bring dry clothes for the drive home!

The Swamp Walk fee is \$70 per person or \$50 per person for members of the Friends of Fakahatchee. The walks begin at the ranger station off Jane's Scenic Drive. The park entrance is on the west side of SR 29 between I-75 and U.S. 41.

Advance reservations are required. To see a Swamp Walk video and make reservations, visit www.orchidswamp.org and click "Events." For more information or to reserve by telephone, call Pam at (239) 695-1023.

The mind of a Champion at Rotary

by Richard Rice

Angela Bruckner, a certified Performance Intelligence coach for a Dallas based coaching firm called The Mind of a Champion, spoke to Rotarians on Wednesday, January 27.

Angela received her Bachelor's degree in Marketing/Management at North Texas State University. She quickly applied her knowledge of sales management and served as a leader in residential real estate for five years and transferring her experience to the health care arena where she served as a leader for 18 years in many areas including sales training product development as well as marketing and sales leadership.

Angela introduced the core principle of sport psychology and transferred that into the corporate playing field by stating that Performance Intelligence is comprised of five attributes: Confidence, Focus, Self-Discipline, Competitiveness and Winning Game Plan. These five elements will enable you to

execute at the top of your game regardless of the circumstances, she said.

Angela's energetic and comical presentation style resonated with the Immokalee Rotarians, as she used real-world and customized examples of thinking patterns that distract one from performing his/her best. She divided the group into twos; an A and a B.

The A person was to be well versed in a given subject, extremely knowledgeable, and capable of giving a really good presentation. B people were to act as "the monkey on your back" and whisper negative things into the other's ear, distracting them and causing them to be unable to deliver the message. Then the roles were reversed.

These specific examples allowed Rotarians to connect from what she was saying, and have a personal experience of the Mind of a Champion.



Submitted photo/
Richard Rice
Angela Bruckner recently spoke at the Rotary Club of Immokalee.



Submitted photo/Richard Rice

Harris Fellow Plus One

Congratulations to Edward "Ski" Olesky, owner of the Lake Trafford Marina, on achieving the Paul Harris, Plus One level in his contributions to the Paul Harris Society. President Rice called on Fred Thomas and Duane Wheeler, two members of long standing, to pin on Ski's lapel pin, at the January 27, 2013, Rotary meeting at I-Tech. This recognition is given when a member contributes \$1,000 to the Paul Harris Society. Actually, Rice said, "Ski is very close to achieving the PHP2 level, so hopefully we'll be able to repeat this recognition fairly quickly." Pictured from left: Ski Olesky, Fred Thomas Jr., and Duane Wheeler.

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Students First

by Maribel De Armas

I like traditions. I especially like traditions that can stand the test of time. And Immokalee High School (IHS) has a long-standing tradition that dates back to the 1960s when it comes to the school's BETA Club (Better Education Through Achievement). If you are a regular reader of our weekly column (and I hope many of you are), you can probably already guess where I'm going with this week's topic. The Immokalee High School BETAs have done it again – putting another victorious year on the books as they brought home big wins from the 71st Annual State of Florida BETA Club Convention held last month. Some 80 club members



traveled to Orlando for the convention and what an awesome experience they had. This year's convention theme was "The Heart of the BETA" and boy did these kids have heart. Let's start with this year's State Championships – four of them for the Immokalee Indians this year: Sketching, Character Skit, Campaign Skit, and Group Talent. But the wins were made extra special this year. Unfortunately, the school's Club President fell ill just prior to the competition and was not able to participate. But the BETAs put their heart all in as they dedicated their competitions and subsequent wins to their friend and leader. She is doing just fine now and is proud of the entire group.

I had the opportunity to catch up with one of IHS's BETA Club sponsors, Tim Rayburn, who shared that while the entire convention was great, the students' winning entry for the Group Talent category was probably the most fun – some may even describe it as a bunch of clowning around. In essence, the Group Talent category asks clubs to put on a talent show-like performance. The Immokalee Indians always choose a theme for this

category and this year it was "The Greatest Club on Earth." Now, that may sound somewhat familiar to you. You may better recall the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth? Yep, we're talking about the circus. And a circus performance is exactly how the IHS BETAs took the state win – complete with clown costumes, red noses, and rosy cheeks (take a look at the group photo included).

The club also took a first place win in the Campaign Skit category featuring IHS junior Jeffrey Flores, who was in the running for a seat as the next Florida State BETA Vice President. The BETA's campaigning was so good that Jeffrey was successfully elected to office. The Immokalee Indians also placed second in Ceramics, On-site Art (colored pencil), Philanthropy, Spanish, and Scrapbook, and they received third place rankings in Wood Working, Watercolor, and Service.

But I would be remiss in not including a special recognition received by a very beloved person within the Immokalee community. Longtime IHS Beta Club sponsor Linda Ayer was honored by the State of Florida BETA Club for thirty years of service. That's thirty years of dedication and commitment – setting the example of leading by serving others. I'm sure I speak for many, if not all, BETAs she has mentored when I say, "thank you!"

The IHS BETA Club is now gearing up for the National BETA Convention to be held June 19-22 in Mobile, Alabama. We congratulate them all and wish them the best of luck! Stay tuned for the results come June.

Scholars ready for academic tournament

It's time for the 24th Annual Collier County Public Schools High School Scholar Bowl Tournament. Academic teams from ten local high schools are preparing for this year's varsity tournament to be held from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday (February 8) and from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday (February 9) at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Administrative Center located at 5775 Osceola Trail.

The public is invited to attend any of the matches and the final varsity match will be televised LIVE at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 9th, on The Education Channel (Comcast cable 99).

Teams are competing for scholarships provided by SW Florida Workforce Development Board, Inc. Also, a district-wide team is being selected from the participating students to represent Collier County in the State Commissioner's Academic Challenge in Orlando on April 18-20.

The Junior Varsity Tournament will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 12th, at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Administrative Center located at 5775 Osceola Trail.

To learn more, please contact Ashleigh Koch, the Coordinator of Academic Competitions, at 377-4489.

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Career Corner

The Power of Belonging
by Matt Kindermann

I read a fancy statistic last week arguing that we are now entering such a technological era in employment where 50 percent of candidates are now referred by current employees through their own vast social networks. If you are an employer, job seeker, trades contractor or career professional, here are some tips on how to tap into the hidden job market and hidden candidate pool.

First, read the trade journals. Access to these "information mines" can be aquired for free by building a profile on LinkedIn or other professional social media site. There is a specialty trade group for nearly any occupation that you can join for free, gaining access to insider information on trends, new discoveries or technical applications, and possible job openings, all the while expanding your social network and digital footprint. To increase your attractiveness as a candidate, you should contribute to these groups by sharing information.

Second, go to the library where you can peruse the business sections of local newspapers, as well as business related magazines such as Gulfshore Business, Business Observer, Gulfcoast Business Re-

view and Florida Trends. These periodicals will tell you what businesses are expanding and who the movers and shakers are in the business community. Also, get on Facebook and "Like" those businesses or professionals you would consider working for or hiring; or, "Follow" them on Twitter. Most businesses and professionals have Facebook and Twitter profiles where they update news and insider information.

Third, be active in a local trade group. Money spent job advertising and job seeking can be saved by targeting an existing network of like-minded people. Visit the Horizon Council website, a regional economic development organization that functions as a public-private non-profit, at www.fortmyersregionalpartnership.com. This website has links where tech companies can join the SWFL Regional Technology Partnership, builders can join the SW Regional Manufacturers Association, HVAC contractors can join the SWFL Air Conditioning Contractors Association, as well as a host of others.

Next week we will focus on the possibilities gained by attending a networking event at one of these groups where employers and professionals congregate and socialize outside of the office and in a relaxed atmosphere, exchanging ideas, business cards, and even resumes.

Matt Kindermann

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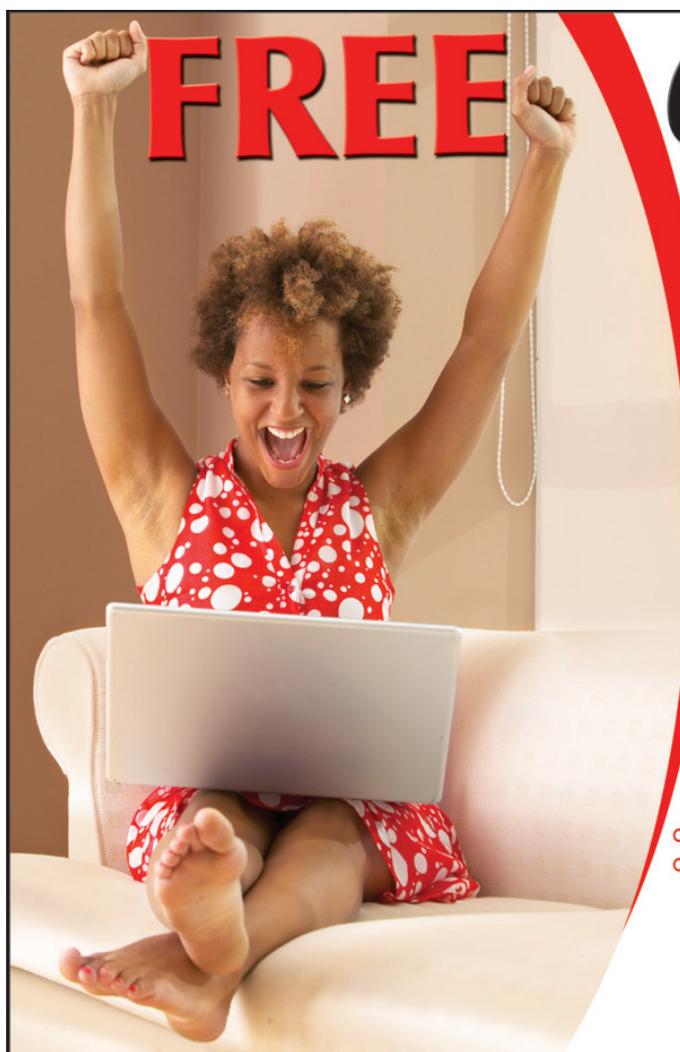
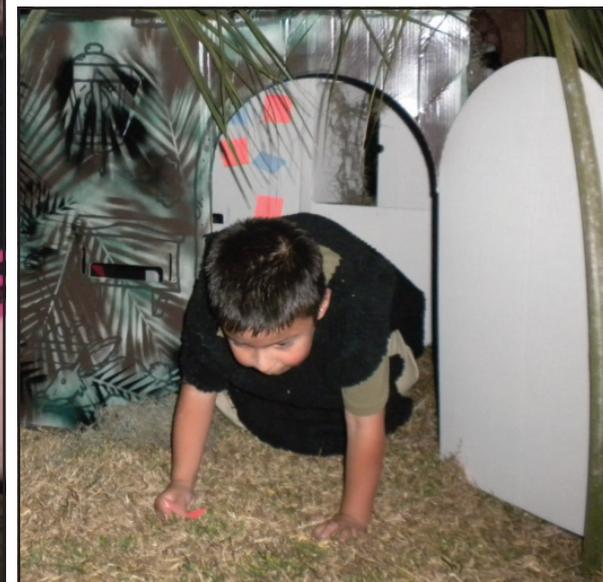
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Submitted photos/Jolen Mayberry

Learning about the wild and the free

On Jan 15th Collier County Parks and Recreation Park Ranger Jolen Mayberry gave an interpretive program about Florida Black Bears at Roberts Ranch. Immokalee is her designated area. Ranger Mayberry did a 15 minute power point presentation before letting the kids get dressed as bears and go through the bear maze. The bear maze consisted of what the bears eat during the year, when they enter the dens to have their babies and finally crossing the roads to get to their food. After the program they roasted marshmallows. This a free, once a year program.



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