Gun, ammo sales are exploding

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

“People are scared. They don’t know what’s going on and I don’t blame them, to tell you the truth.”

Because people are afraid of the government and what the government might do, Paul Box, owner of The Gun Shop on S. Parrott Ave., said gun and ammunition sales are off the charts.

“People are scared of the government. People are afraid of losing their freedom,” he said Thursday, Jan. 3. “Most people are trying to get AR-15s and guns like that—and ammunition.”

But because of the burgeoning sales, weapons like the AR-15 and the .223 caliber ammunition it uses are virtually unavailable right now.

Fueled by the fear that the government may soon ban such semi-automatic weapons as the AR-15 after the horrendous killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., buyers are flocking to gun shops like Mr. Box’s.

The Bushmaster .223 caliber assault rifle was used by Adam Lanza, 20, to kill 20, 6- and 7-year-old children at the school as well as six adults. One of those children, 6-year-old

Woman dies after bicycle accident

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

Alcohol and no safety helmet may have been contributing causes in the delayed fatality of a woman who fell from her bicycle onto a concrete culvert on New Year’s Eve, stated an accident report.

According to that report by Deputy Adrian Rogers, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO), Linda Rae Hill, 52, apparently died from “... complications stemming from her injuries.”

The deputy’s accident report went on to indicate that the

Pilot error blamed in Yeehaw crash

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Pilot error stalled out the Cessna 152 airplane that crashed just east of Yeehaw Junction in June, 2011, killing the pilot and passenger aboard, the National Transportation Safety Board reported.

The student pilot, Carly Beattie, 21, failed to maintain adequate airspeed while maneuvering, the report stated and the plane sub-

Book-a-neers visit area schools

The Book-a-neers visited Okeechobee elementary schools in December, and encouraged children to become “Readers of the Caribbean” and encouraged parents to make reading a family activity. For more on the story, see page 16.
Boat fire being treated as arson

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Martin County Fire Rescue, Martin County Deputies, the State Fire Marshall, and Okeechobee Fire Rescue all responded to a boat fire on the side of State Road 710, south of Martin Highway in Martin County early Sunday.

Martin County Deputy William Brown said a 1990 24-foot Regal boat cabin model on a Shoreland dual-axle trailer was spotted burning by a passing motorist, Fidel Navarrete Jr., of Indiantown at about 1:15 a.m.

Firemen arrived about 12 minutes later.

Community Theatre seeks men and women for roles in ‘The Odd Couple’

Special to the Okeechobee News

The Okeechobee Community Theatre (OCT) is seeking six men and two women for roles in its upcoming production of Neil Simon’s classic comedy, “The Odd Couple.”

Open auditions are scheduled for Monday and Tuesday evenings, Jan. 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. at the auditorium on the Okeechobee Freshman Campus, one block west of Golden Corral Restaurant, on S. W. Second Avenue at Seventh Street.

No previous acting experience is necessary, according to OCT Coordinator/Director, Ron Hayes. All that is required is a desire to be a part of an exceptionally enjoyable and rewarding project. Two participants at a time will be asked to read short comic scenes from other Neil Simon plays. Casting decisions will be based upon an individual’s apparent comic timing, voice quality, and suitability to the available roles. “The whole process is designed to be unintimidating, and is actually a lot of fun,” Hayes says.

There is also an on-going need for support personnel to assist with the construction of the set, operation of the sound control equipment, and other behind the scenes duties. Sign-ups for these positions will also take place at the auditions. Anyone interested in more information, may call 863-763-1307.

Health Expo open to vendors

The Sixth Annual Okeechobee Family Health and Safety Expo will be held Saturday, Jan. 26, 2013 at the Agri-Civic Center. Vendors, please sign up now to secure booth space at this event. Vendors may set-up at no cost to share health or safety related information or to provide free screenings or demonstrations. The 2012 Expo hosted over 120 vendors and attendance was over 2,000. For more information call Sharon Vinson, Shared Services Network, 863-462-5000 ext. 257 or Donny Arnold, Okeechobee County Fire Rescue, 863-634-6464.

Chamber hosts Leadership program

The Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County is looking for those interested in becoming future community leaders. The Chamber is taking applications for the inaugural class of Leadership Okeechobee which is scheduled to begin in October, 2013. This is a commitment of one day over a 6-8 month period of time with an entry fee of $395 to cover meals, transportation and other program fees. Only 25 persons will be considered for this class. For further information or an application, contact the Chamber at 863-467-6246 or email terry@okeechobeebusiness.com.
New employer to come to Okeechobee

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

The economic situation in Okeechobee could be improving with the arrival of a new manufacturing company. John Smith of Charles Composites, LLC told the Okeechobee News that he will soon open a new manufacturing concern at Okeechobee Industrial Park.

Pending authorization of requested tax breaks, Mr. Smith hopes to be in operation by April 1. Initial operations are expected to require 20 to 25 people. The operation will require skilled labor. However, Mr. Smith said his company will provide training. One of the reasons he said he chose to come to Okeechobee was the availability of a labor force. Charles Composites will use fiberglass and resin transfer molds to make equipment for utility companies. Mr. Smith said that in the future they might look to expanding to producing other products that could be manufactured with existing skills and equipment.

This business will be an expansion of existing manufacturing operations in five, small midwestern towns. Mr. Smith is partial to small towns since he grew up in a town smaller than Okeechobee.

He already had a significant presence in Okeechobee as he is connected with the OK Corral Shooting Club.

Charles Composites plans to make an investment of over $1,500,000 in equipment to be installed in the Olde Tyme Construction building in the City Industrial Park. The county is considering giving them a break in property taxes on the new equipment they plan to install. This will amount to a loss to the county of $12,820 a year in revenue for ten years. However, there is a possibility that one half of that amount could be restored to the county through a grant from the Governor’s Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development.

Congrats warts off sharp increase in milk prices

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

Taxes were not the only thing averted from going over a cliff by the recent action of Congress. Milk prices could have taken a big jump.

“The price of milk is currently regulated by the Farm Bill of 2008 which would have expired at the end of 2012. However, portions of that bill dealing with milk prices were extended to the end of fiscal year 2013. The price of milk is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture according to a complicated process based in part on supply and demand. The supply can be affected by uncertain elements like weather conditions and feed costs.

“We need something not quite as volatile as we have had in the past,” said local dairy farmer Red Larson. “It is a level playing field for milk producers,” he said because all milk tends to the end of fiscal year 2013.

Mr. Larson calls this process “hedging.” The proposed 2012 legislation would have provided a Farm Bill of 2008 with a more permanent framework for the milk industry. The price of milk is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture according to a complicated process.

The recent action of Congress will affect the price of milk. He said he did not know at this time exactly what features of the 2008 bill have been extended and which ones have been eliminated.

“We still need a Farm Bill,” Ms. Davis said.

Mortgage Assistance for unemployed or underemployed

The federal government has allocated funding to help qualified Florida families to pay the first mortgage on their homes through the Hardest Hit Help program. Assistance may be given for 12 months, and/or to re-instate a delinquent first mortgage. Loans will be “forgiven” in 5.5 years after completing the program.

You can register by calling Okeechobee Non-Profit Housing at 863-467-5525. You may also visit the HHF web site at www.FLHardestHitHelp.org and use the Referral code 85087 so you can be assisted by ONHP.

Foster parents are needed - Training classes are open

Hibiscus Children’s Center Foster Care Program recruits, trains and licenses all the traditional Foster Parents in St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River and Okeechobee Counties. The required 30 hour (MAPP) classes are held one evening a week or on Saturdays and are free. For additional information about becoming a Foster Parent or to register for a class please call: 1-800-403-9311 ext. 415.

Seniors play Country Bluegrass Music

The senior country bluegrass music program has begun again this year at the Okeechobee Senior Center. All persons age 60 and over who has a musical talent are invited to participate every Wednesday from noon to 1:30 p.m. Listeners are welcome too!

Senior center offers free line dance lessons

The Okeechobee Senior Center is having fun at free line dancing classes. Come join the fun Mondays at noon at Okeechobee Senior Services at 1019 S.W. Park St.
Public Forum/Speak Out

Speak Out has moved online, where it is quicker and easier to share your ideas and converse with others. Go to www.newszap.com, click on the community name and your local or state Public Forum. There, you can create new topics or comment on existing topics. What follows is a sampling of some of the discussions currently taking place. Thanks for participating!

Pay raise

- Obama has signed an executive order that Congress, government employees, and Joe Biden get a pay raise. The government is spending more than it can bring in and he thinks that the worst government since the 1940s needs a pay raise. Remember this when your taxes go up next year.
- More government waste. I just read that congress is going to allot $60.4 billion to help the storm victims but only 47.4 billion is actually going to the victims, the rest is going to pet projects.
- That's the way things are done politically in this country. And is still pretty great in spite of the poor administration.
- From what I heard on the news, Congress rejected the pay raise for themselves. But they gave a nice tax break for the Hollywood studios. Guess Obama had to repay his buddies in Hollywood for their campaign support. The millionaires in Hollywood apparently aren't expected to pay their "fair share" like everyone else.
- Why didn't we hear about this Executive Order from the main stream media? They don't publicize anything that might make people question the president. They got him elected and now they continue to try to make him look good and ignore anything that might make people question him. It was only when some members of Congress rejected the pay raise that the public even found out about it.
- Obama claimed he wasn't going to raise taxes on the middle class. Take a look at your next pay statement. Payroll taxes that fund Social Security are going up for all workers.

SR 70 Traffic

- The recent accident on SR 70 in which a couple was seriously injured when their vehicle was rear-ended by a semi illustrates how dangerous the traffic is on that road. The Michigan couple's car was stopped and the driver was signalling to turn left. They were waiting for oncoming traffic to clear so they could turn left into a church parking lot when the truck hit them. Trucks and cars go way too fast on that two-lane road. The speed limit is 60, but they drive way over the limit. The drivers also follow too close and don't have room to slow down or stop. Until SR 70 is four-laned all the way to the Kissimmee River bridge, something should be done to slow down traffic on that stretch of highway. There is also a big problem with people who try to pass in the no-passing zones, especially in the area of the bridge over Popas Slough. I hope the sheriff can put some deputies out there to help slow down the speeders.
- How about an approach something akin to imposing severe restrictions on drivers and vehicle owners like some people believe should be put on guns and gun owners? Limit vehicles to 10 mph. Raise the price of fuel higher still. Incarcerate bad drivers for long terms and make them clean the highways. I am sure you can think of some good methods, too.
- We already have the necessary traffic laws to solve the safety issues. We just need to enforce what is already on the books. I know the problem is that the sheriff does not have the budget for enough deputies to regularly work traffic patrol. But I hope he can at least temporarily assign someone to ticket the speeders on this stretch of road to slow things down.
- We need a turn lane from SW 67th Drive to SW 87th Avenue, not just at selected roads. I see semis "fail to slow" too often.

Letters to the Editor

To our Community, Family, and Friends

We would like to take a moment to reflect on what has happened over the past 4 months.

On Aug. 12, 2012, our 6-year-old son Ryan woke up complaining of a headache—we immediately took him to the hospital. Little did we know that at that time, our world would never be the same.

Ryan suffered a left-sided MCA stroke (in the brain). We were told Ryan would need brain surgery. We were not ready to hear that information and we told the doctor in Miami we had to go home, process everything and we would get back with the neurosurgeon. I got to work on the internet and found there was very little known about moyamoya, much less doctors who are experienced in doing the surgery needed.

Fortunately, Ryan fully recovered from the stroke. Soon after his diagnosis we were told Ryan would need brain surgery. We were not ready to hear that information and we told the doctor in Miami we had to go home, process everything and we would get back with the neurosurgeon. I got to work on the internet and found there was very little known about moyamoya, much less doctors who are experienced in doing the surgery needed.

We found a doctor in Boston, Mass, who has dedicated the last 25 years of his career to moyamoya and he has only done 800 of these types of surgeries. I sent all of Ryan's records there for a consult. He indeed did recommend surgery. We wanted Ryan to have the best surgeon, of course, he is our son, and that would be the surgeon in Boston.

This is where things got a little hectic. Our insurance company initially refused to allow us to go out of network or out of state for treatment, unless it was an emergency. They then agreed to allow us to go, but we would be responsible for 40 percent of the charges and they would cover 60 percent. So, I got the figures from Boston and our share would be around $50,000.

That is when this community started to "Rally Around Ryan."

The fundraising started with a fish fry and there were many others back to back, and there have been 12 different ones in total and the community initially raised $60,000 in six weeks.

That brings us where we are today. We are leaving for Boston for Ryan's very invasive 8-hour brain surgery on Saturday, Jan. 5. He will be admitted on Monday, Jan. 7 and surgery will be Tuesday Jan. 8.

We want to thank to each and every one of you who have helped us, plan, organize, and hold the fundraisers, made the donations, sent Ryan cards, gifts, etc.

When we tell our story to people not from Okeechobee, most say "Wow, how does that happen?" We simply say that is how Okeechobee is. They are like family and we take care of one another.

We want to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

We feel God has blessed us in so many ways.

A simple "Thank You" is not enough for the amount of love, care, and compassion that we have felt from each and every one of you.

We are so proud to call Okeechobee home.

This is the first surgery, he could possibly need two additional brain surgeries. We are going to keep our faith that this one surgery will fix any other issues to prevent any more surgeries. When the dust settles, our plan is to set up a foundation in Ryan's name to give and help others, mainly locally, but also children fighting moyamoya.

If you are available, we would love for you to stop by the City Park in front of City Hall, Saturday (tomorrow), from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., as a "Rahn Arnold Send Off Celebration" will be held.

It is a surprise to Ryan. We will drive by and people are going to be in the park with signs and balloons. We will stop for approximately 30 minutes and then we will be off to the airport.

We ask that you continue to pray for Ryan and us as well.

Also if you would like to follow Ryan's progress you can go to:
www.facebook.com/rallyingaroundryan
www.caringbridge.org/visit/rallyingaroundryan or send him a note at getwellryan@gmail.com.

Again we can't say "Thank You" enough,
Donny, Madonna, Ryan and Rylie Arnold
Taylor Creek bridge project starts Monday

By Eric Kopp

Okeechobee News

A Department of Transportation (DOT) spokesperson said local motorists may want to plan for a little extra travel time due to maintenance work on the drawbridge over Taylor Creek.

Although some preliminary work has already started, DOT's Debbie Tower said the $1.6 million project is slated to get under way Monday, Jan. 7. The state-funded project is estimated to be completed by this summer.

"It's a rehabilitation project. We're making some repairs that range from structural, to mechanical and electrical," she said in a phone interview Thursday, Jan. 3. "We're also painting the bridge and doing some work on the control house."

Workers will also be replacing expansion joints, restoring the concrete along U.S. 441 S.E. and making repairs to the slope.

Ms. Tower said all work will be done between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. and will involve some lane closures on the two-lane highway.

"Anything involving lane closures is done at night. With this project they will start work on Sunday night and finish up on Friday morning," she explained. "We'll have flagmen to monitor and help manage traffic."

Main Street seeks artists for annual festival

Okeechobee Main Street invites all artists to apply for acceptance to the 2013 Top of the Lake Art Fest. The art fest will be held on Feb. 9 and 10, 2013.

The art fest is a juried outdoor Fine Art Show which will take place in Flagger Park. The purpose of the Top of the Lake Art Fest is to bring talented fine artists to our community to showcase and sell their work. Highlights of the art fest will be the Top of the Lake Chalk Walk (street painting) and the dedication of the 5th Okeechobee Main Street mural project. Entertainment, art demonstrations, children's art programs, a pet parade and food will also be featured on both days of the show.

There will be juried art categories:

- Booth Artists Division—for artists with a body of work and individual tent set-up; application deadline: Feb. 1, 2013.
- Chalk Walk Division—for artists who want to do street painting with chalk on site during the Top of the Lake Art Fest; Application deadline: Jan. 28, 2013.
- Adult Division - Gallery Tent—for artists who want to show up to 3 pieces of art; Application deadline: Feb. 6 and 7, 2013.
- Student Division - Gallery Tent—for young artists who want to show up to two pieces of art; Application deadline: Feb. 6 and 7, 2013.

All applications may be picked up at the Okeechobee Main Street Office, 55 S. Parrott Avenue, Chamber Building; Bridgette Waldau Studio of Graphic Design, 111 N.E. 2nd Street, or Affordable Art & Framing, 110 S.W. 14th Street. Applications include all the rules and regulations; entry fees; art requirements; deadlines and place to drop off art. Artists may also call Cindy at 863-357-6246 or Bridgette Waldau at 863-467-7300 for more information.

CASTLE calls for volunteers for safe parenting program

If you have a few hours to spare and share your great parenting techniques, call CASTLE today. Teaching Safe Parenting, CASTLE's mission is to stop child abuse before it even happens by empowering parents with the education necessary to create successful, loving, and nurturing families. We are currently seeking volunteers for our Safe Families Program. We're making a difference, one family at a time. Call 772-465-6011 or e-mail hr@castletec.org for more information.

GUNS

Continued From Page 1

Noah Pozner, was shot 11 times. Lanza then killed himself at the school.

Since that infamous day of Dec. 14, 2012, there has been a public outcry to ban the popular AR-15 rifle and the type of high-capacity magazines that were used by Lanza. Those magazines were covered under the federal assault weapons ban that Congress let expire without renewing.

And because of that outcry, more gun ownership applications are being filed out than ever.

In fact, in Florida alone there was a 77.5 percent increase in background checks for gun purchases done in December of 2012 over December 2011.

Statistics from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) show that in 2012 there were 797,970 background checks done. In the previous year, there were 606,655 such checks done by that state agency.

In December of 2012, FDLE did 131,103 background checks, compared to 73,825 done in December of 2011.

Gretl Plessinger, a spokesperson for the FDLE, said those numbers don't reflect what type of guns are being purchased.

"It doesn't matter what gun they're purchasing, we only do the background check," she said.

She added the those numbers are statewide only and are not broken out by counties.

The FDLE records also show that the biggest hike in background checks came just days after the killings at Sandy Hook.

FDLE background checks started to really spike on Dec. 19 in 2012. Records indicate on that date 8,250 checks were done. Then on Thursday, Dec. 20, that number increased to 8,436. The checks went up again on Friday, Dec. 21, to 7,630. By Saturday, Dec. 22, the number of background checks dropped slightly to 7,598.

Ms. Plessinger said her agency does not keep track of ammunition sales.

Which, according to Mr. Box, doesn't matter since ammo can be extremely hard to find.

"Our distributors have dried up," he said. "The price on ammunition has tripled—if you can get it. The demand is driving the price up."

He went on to say that he really doesn't sell that many AR-15 rifles. In fact, he's only sold two and he has three on consignment.

"Our bread and butter are .38 (caliber) revolvers and hunting rifles and things like that," he said. "There's been more of a rush to buy .223 ammunition, but people in Okeechobee already have their guns."

BICYCLE

Continued From Page 1

A woman's official cause of death won't be known until a report is issued by the District 19 Medical Examiner's Office.

Deputy Rogers stated in his report that Ms. Hill, of a S.E. 33rd Terrace address in Okeechobee, was riding her black Huffy bicycle in a northerly direction on that street when the accident occurred around 3:47 p.m. on Dec. 31.

Apparantly the woman, who had allegedly been drinking alcohol most of the day, traveled off the road onto the northbound shoulder of the street. She then fell into a drainage ditch and struck the left side of her head on a concrete culvert, added the report.

Deputy Rogers stated that the woman sustained lacerations and abrasions to the left side of her face, and had possibly fractured her neck.

The report goes on to state that she was unconscious for an unknown period of time.

When Ms. Hill awoke, she apparently crawled out of the ditch and crossed the street then sat down next to a power pole. A passing motorist saw the woman and contacted the sheriff's office.

Okeechobee County Fire/Rescue responded and treated Ms. Hill at the scene, then took her to Raulerson Hospital.

Deputy Rogers stated that blood was found on the culvert and a large puddle of blood was found at the bottom of the ditch where she was lying. It's not known how long she was in the ditch.

When the deputy spoke with Ms. Hill shortly after the accident she was reportedly unable to tell him what happened, other than she was riding her bike. The deputy went on to say that she had a strong odor of alcohol about her and that her eyes were bloodshot and her speech was slurred.

The deputy was notified the next day that she had died.

Ms. Hill's bicycle was inspected and, stated the deputy, it was found to be in sound condition. Deputy Rogers went on to state that nothing was found to indicate that the Huffy had been struck by another vehicle.

Weather conditions did not play a part in the accident, added the report, since the skies were clear and winds were out of the east at 9 mph.

Ms. Hill's Florida driver's license had been revoked, Deputy Rogers stated.

The report stated the plane was substantially damaged when it crashed nose down into some trees and a swamp in the vicinity of Blue Cypress Lake. The wreckage was found buried three feet into the ground and authorities stated the plane was travelling 2,000 feet per minute when the impact occurred.

The plane was registered to Space Coast Aviation out of Brevard County.
Church hosting movie night
Life Community Church, 701 S. Parrott Ave., will have their free family movie night, Friday, Jan. 4, at 7 p.m. The movie, “A Mile in His Shoes,” based on the novel “The Legend of Mickey Tussler” about a young man with Asperger’s Syndrome, a form of Autism, who makes it onto a baseball team with his incredible pitcher’s arm. The public is invited.

Eagles plan special events
On Friday, Jan. 4, Eagles North will have steak night from 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. Music with those fantastic Harpers. Events are: Saturday, Jan. 5, card bingo at 5:30 p.m.; Sunday breakfast is from 9-11 a.m.; Tuesday, Jan. 8, bingo starts at 1 p.m.; and Wednesday, Jan. 9, bingo starts at 5:30 p.m. Proceeds go to the FOE 4137 community benefit fund.

Moose Lodge hosts dinner
Buckhead Ridge Moose Lodge will be hosting a dinner Friday, Jan. 4, from 5-7:15 p.m. Dinners include shrimp, meatloaf or all the catfish you can eat. Music will follow featuring Rick and Red. All proceeds collected benefit Moose Charities.

Library site of series
The Okeechobee Library will host “Ian R.B. Nairnsey—musical theater presenter” A series depicting Broadway shows with musical selections and narratives. The series begins on Saturday, Jan. 5, at 1 p.m. and the presentation will be on “Oklahoma.”

DAR to meet Jan. 5
On Jan. 5, the Okeechobee Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution will meet at 11 a.m. at the Golden Corral Restaurant. Our speaker, Barry Richardson, Cultural Historian for Florida State Parks, will give us some history of our Battlefield and Jonathon Dickinson State Park. Interested visitors, potential members and members are invited to attend.

Eagles’ dinner aids children
On Jan. 5, the Cypress Hut Eagles will host a barbecue rib dinner and two side dishes starting at 4:30 p.m. All proceeds from these dinners will be given to the KOA kids with cancer camp (KOA Kids Care Camp). Meals will cost $10 and public is welcome. There will be live music starting at 5:30 p.m.

BHR Lodge hosting dinner
Buckhead Ridge Moose Lodge will be hosting a prime rib dinner Saturday, Jan. 5 from 5-7:15 p.m. Dinner includes Prime Rib, baked potatoes, veg., salad and dessert for $13. Music will follow by Cripple Creek Band. All proceeds collected go to Moose Charities.

Fair Board will meet
The Okeechobee County Fair Board will hold their next meeting on Thursday, Jan. 10 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Chamber of Commerce office.

Post #64 hosting bingo
American Legion 64 will host Sunday night bingo on Jan. 6, at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. The American Legion will be closed on Jan. 13 and Jan. 20 due to the free fair being here and will remain on Jan. 27. The kitchen will offer a limited menu. Payoffs will be determined by player attendance. All proceeds will benefit the American Legion veterans’ programs. The event is open to the public.

BHR women hosting fried chicken dinner
The Women of the Moose, Buckhead Ridge will be hosting a “Darling” fried chicken dinner on Sunday, Jan. 6, from 2-6 p.m. Dinner includes fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans and cole slaw for $7. All proceeds collected benefit Moose Charities.

OCRA gearing up for 2013
OCRA is currently planning the upcoming season. Signs up will be held for the first three Saturdays in Feb. from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the score tower at the Sports Complex. All children between the ages of 4 and 14 (15 for girls) are invited to sign up. Sponsors, coaches, umpires, and volunteers are needed. Please call 863-643-0515 for more information or to help out. The first monthly meeting of the new year will be held on Monday, Jan. 7, at the score tower at 7 p.m. Interested citizens are invited to attend.

You can have coffee with a commissioner
Coffee with the Commissioner will be hosted by Commissioner Frank Iby on Tuesday, Jan. 8, from 10 a.m. – noon, and will be held at the Brown Cow Sweety, 103 S.W. Park Street. Citizens wishing to participate are encouraged to call 863-763-6441 to schedule an appointment.

Shrine Club resumes dinners
The Okeechobee Shrine Club will resume the weekly spaghetti dinners on Tuesday, Jan. 8. You are invited to join your friends and neighbors for delicious homemade food and great fellowship. Serving is from 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. and reservations are not required. The Shrine Club, located at 1740 S.W. 53rd St. (S.R.78W) is pleased to offer smoke free dining. For your listening and dancing pleasure, music is provided 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. The complete dinner is available for a donation of only $6. Proceeds benefit Shrine Charities. For more information on the activities of the Okeechobee Shrine Club, contact Kip Gardner at 863-357-0427, Randall Mims at 863-763-9200 or the Shrine Club at 863-763-3378.

Ranch plans yard sales
Real Life Children’s Ranch will be having a yard sale next week on Jan. 9 and Jan. 11. Fill a bag for $1. Come on out for great bargains. Our hours are 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Obituaries
Obituaries should be submitted to the Okeechobee News by gmviholding obits@newspzap.com. Customers may also request photos and links to online guest books. A link to the obituaries is available at www.newspzap.com.

Carl Ashley Woods, 69
OKEECHOBEE — Carl Ashley Woods passed away on Saturday, Dec. 15, 2012 after a long hard battle with cancer, he now rests in peace with the Lord.
He was born in Tampa, Fla. to the late Richmond and Louise (Page) Woods. He served his country faithfully in the United States Navy.
He is survived by his devoted wife, Reba Woods; three daughters, Pamela, Sandra, and Sheryl; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.
Carl’s wishes were to be cremated and his ashes spread over Lake Okeechobee, where he enjoyed many years of fishing and air boating. Gateway-Forest Lawn Funeral Home & Crematory, 3596 South U.S. Hwy 41, Lake City, Florida 32052, (386) 752-1954 is in charge of arrangements. Please leave words of comfort for the family at: www.gatewayforestlawn.com

Leroy Sprey, 93
OKEECHOBEE — Leroy Sprey passed away Dec. 23, 2012 at the Hamrick Home. He was born May 14, 1919 in Oklahoma. He was a building contractor having come to Okeechobee from Boynton Beach in 2008. He proudly served our country in the U.S. Navy during WWII as part of the Pacific Campaign. He was a member of the American Legion and VFW.
Mr. Sprey is survived by his wife of 20 years, Nancy Sprey.
No services will be held.
All arrangements are entrusted to the care of Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home, 205 NE 2nd Street, Okeechobee, FL, 34972.

Rita Jo Hancock, 84
OKEECHOBEE — Rita Jo Hancock died Friday, Dec. 28, 2012 at the Raulerson Hospital. Rita, currently residing in Indiana, was a former 25 year resident of Okeechobee.
She was a lifetime member of the VFW in Okeechobee and a member of the Eagles.
Rita enjoyed sports, NASCAR, working crossword, ice tea and spending time with her family. She was known for her “black thumb” and inability to grow anything.
She was preceded in death by her husband, James E. Hancock.
She is survived by her sons, Gary Lee (Patricia) Young of Moundsville, W.V.; a daughter, Kellie (Scott) Chapman of Okeechobee; three grandchildren; a nephew, Roger (Deana) Garrison of Okeechobee; and a sister, Charlene (Sam) Young of Moundsville, W.V.
There will be no services at this time. If friends desire, donations may be made in Rita’s memory to Hospice of Okeechobee, P.O. Box 1548, Okeechobee, FL 34973.
Friends may send online condolences to www.buxtonseawinds.com.

Arrangements are under the care of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home, 3833 SE 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, Fla.

Yvonne E. Brooks, 77
OKEECHOBEE — Yvonne E. Brooks of Narlona Heights, Pa. passed away Monday, Dec. 24, 2012 in Allegheny Valley Hospital, Narlona Heights. She was born May 19, 1935 in Canal Point, Fla., the daughter of the late Horace and Vera Brinkley Lowe. Yvonne was a 1954 graduate of Okeechobee High School and was a graduate of Jones Business College in Orlando, Fla. Yvonne worked as a nurses aide at the former Georgian Manor Nursing Home in Brackenridge, Pa. She enjoyed spending time with her family.
Yvonne is survived by her husband of 56 years, Robert Brooks; her children, Brenda Samples Oldsmar, Fla., and Robert Michael “Mike” (Debi) Brooks of Holiday, Fla.; her grandchildren, Nicole Brooks, Kayla Sample and Kelsie Brooks; her great-grandchildren, Zachary Ferguson, Keywanna, Army and Mikayla Fquist; her brother, Elton (Nancy) Lowe of Lake Placid, Fla.; and her sisters, Opal Lightsey and Floy Lowe both of Okeechobee, Fla.
Yvonne was a member of Narlona Heights American Legion and VFW.

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By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

An Okeechobee man was arrested and booked into the county jail after he reportedly shot a woman in her derriere with a BB gun during an argument.

Gary Aunspaugh, 53, U.S. 441 S.E., was arrested Thursday, Jan. 3, on a felony charge of aggravated battery with a weapon.

He is being held in the Okeechobee County Jail on a $5,000 bond.

An arrest report by Deputy DeMarcus Dixon, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO), stated that Aunspaugh and the victim were involved in an argument early Thursday morning.

Aunspaugh then retrieved a Daisy Powerline 880 .177 caliber BB gun and shot the woman in her left buttocks.

The woman, added the report, refused medical treatment from Okeechobee County Fire/Rescue even though she was bleeding from the wound.

According to the deputy’s report Aunspaugh was heavily intoxicated and said he didn’t know how the woman got shot. The man was so intoxicated he “... could not stand up on his own without losing his balance,” stated Deputy Dixon.

Shrine Club collecting can tabs

The local Shrine Club is collecting the “pull tabs” from aluminum cans. Bring yours to the Shrine Club where we convert them into gas money for the free transportation van of local patients to the Shriners Hospital. For more information on the activities of the Okeechobee Shrine Club, contact Kip Gardner at 863-357-0427, Mac Simpson at 863-484-0427 or the Shrine Club at 863-763-3378.
Blood drives set for January

Special to the Okeechobee News

Start the New Year right by giving the gift of life to all in need. The mobile unit will be in Okeechobee this month on the schedule listed below. Please mark your calendar now and plan your donation. Also watch for additional drives as the month progresses.

Blood drives are set for:
• Tuesday, Jan. 8, KOA Campground, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
• Tuesday, Jan. 8, SFWM District Station, Hwy. 70 across from the Ag Center, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
• Thursday, Jan. 17, Ancient Oaks, Hwy. 441 SE, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
• Saturday, Jan. 19, Seminole Cove, 8 a.m. - Noon
• Monday, Jan. 21, Okeechobee Correctional Institute, public invited, 2:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
• Tuesday, Jan. 22, Raulerson Hospital front parking lot, Noon - 5 p.m.
• Friday, Jan. 25, Walgreen's, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.
• Saturday, Jan. 26, Okeechobee Family Health and Safety Expo, Ag Center, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 a.m.

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Look for the puzzles near the Classifieds section
Follow ‘rule of halves’ in managing wild turkeys

Outta’ the woods

By Tony Young
FWC

Whether you oversee a large tract of land or own a smaller parcel, there are many wildlife management techniques you can use to help attract and keep wild turkeys on your property.

Wild turkeys, like deer, are “edge species,” because of their need for more than one type of habitat. Most of the time, with large tracts of land, this isn’t a problem because the vast landscape is diverse enough. But in the case of small-acreage, one-habitat properties, it’s up to you as the landowner to create varied, preferred habitats if you expect turkeys to use the property.

For optimal turkey habitat, most experts believe a “rule of halves” should be applied to the landscape. What that means is that half of the area (and if you own a small tract, then include surrounding properties) should be in mature forests and the other half in early-succession openings, such as fields or clear-cut and plantation-cut landscapes.

To create even better and more varied habitats for turkeys, you should offer differing age classes of forests and early-succession areas — and make prescribed burning a big part of your management plan. This will enable new growth of succulent, woody ornamentals, native grasses and weedy-type flowers.

Hardwood lowlands provide travel corridors that turkeys and deer use extensively and feel comfortable moving through. Most wild turkeys prefer to roost in trees over or near water, so it’s important to leave these areas undisturbed and free from timbering. Buffer strips of native grasses and woody ornamentals should be left unmowed where clear-cut areas meet pine or hardwood forests. Hens require this thick understory cover for nesting.

In Florida, most hens begin laying their eggs in late March or early April and the eggs take about 25 days to hatch, so take care not to burn or mow through August. After hatching, pouls will roost on the ground for the first 14 days, and during this period, approximately 70 percent of these young birds won’t survive, primarily because of predation from raccoons, hawks, coyotes, foxes and bobcats.

Attempts to control these predators are usually ineffective and economically unfeasible, so your efforts are better spent creating and maintaining good-quality brood habitat.

Good brood habitat should hold food in the form of seeds, insects and tender, new-growth vegetation for young pouls to feed upon throughout the summer. It should consist of 1- to 3-foot-tall grass and weeds open enough to enable the young pouls to move about, yet dense enough to provide cover from the above-mentioned predators.

There is great interest nationally in the planting of food plots for wildlife, including turkeys. Within extensive closed-canopy forested areas, food plots and/or game feeders are essential to keeping turkeys on your property. Where an open forest structure is maintained by adequate timber thinning and the use of fire, such supplemental feeding is not as necessary because there is enough natural browse vegetation on which game can feed.

On very large tracts of land, sufficient supplemental feeding can be quite expensive. In these cases, proper use of burning and timber-thinning management are more economical ways of providing food for turkeys and other wildlife.

Food plots, though, are a lot more cost-effective at feeding game than using feeders on moderate-sized pieces of property. In cases of smaller tracts, perhaps where food plots can’t be utilized because the landscape is all lowland and you have a closed canopy, game feeders filled with corn or soybeans are your only option for attracting turkeys.

When thinking about good food plot sites, avoid excessively wet or dry areas, and don’t place them along heavily used roads to minimize disturbance and possible poaching.

Look to create these openings along an edge where upland pines meet a hardwood drain. This way, you’ll have an area where three separate habitats converge. Keep in mind that it is recommended that 2 percent to 3 percent of the land should be in these permanent openings.

The best food plots are long and narrow rectangular shapes that follow the contour of the land. When possible, create food plots where the length (longest part) runs east to west. That way, the planted crops will receive the most direct sunlight.

In the fall, cereal grains like wheat, oats and rye can be planted along with Austrian winter peas, clover and brassicas like turnips, rape and kale. Except for clover, these crops grow well in most of Florida.

Clover requires a higher soil pH — between 6.5 and 7 — and it often won’t grow in the sandy soils that make up most of our state, unless you apply enough lime to bring the pH level up. In the northern-tiered counties that border Alabama and Georgia, the soil is richer with red clay, and several varieties of clover and other legumes will grow well there.

All of the above-mentioned cool-season forages can be planted by “broadcast” method after Oct. 1. At least twice as much fertilizer should be applied. Slightly cover the seed by pulling a drag over it, and try to put your crop in the ground when the soil is holding some moisture and rain is in the forecast.

In the spring after May 1, you can plow under your “browned-up” fall crop and replant it with any combination of soybeans, cowpeas, browntop millet, sorghum or peanuts. If you can afford it, turkeys are especially fond of chufa. That, along with the other warm-season forages, can be broadcast and planted just like the cool-weather crops. Hopefully, using some or all of these wildlife-management practices will help bring in turkeys and increase your property’s carrying capacity for birds. If you need assistance, contact the FWC’s Landowner Assistance Program, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Natural Resources Conservation Service or your county agricultural extension agent. Here’s wishing you luck obtaining your management goals and objectives.

2013 Youth Basketball sign ups under way

Sign-ups for Okeechobee County Parks & Recreation’s Youth Basketball League will be held Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Jan. 11. Registration is $45 per child and is being conducted at 640 N.W. 27th Lane (at the Okeechobee County Sports Complex). The league will consist of boys and girls in three divisions: 10 & under, 12 & under, and 14 & under. Birth certificates must be presented when registering.

A clinic for first-time players is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 12, at the Yearling Middle School gymnasium. Please call 863-763-6590 for more information.
‘Do not call’ violations top list of complaints

As 2012 came to a close, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services released the top 10 consumer complaints filed this year as of Dec. 26. Violators of the Do Not Call List and telemarketers received more complaints than any other categories.

The department’s consumer assistance center answered 191,200 calls and 33,450 emails in 2012. In addition, the consumer assistance operators participated in 4,917 online chats through a new online chat option available at www.800helpfla.com. Some 50,622 complaints were filed, a 21 percent increase over the previous year (2011).

“We’re an important resource for consumers to find information about registered businesses and professionals, as well as learn how they can protect themselves from deceptive business practices,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam. “In many cases, we can moderate disputes between consumers and businesses and help recover money lost.”

The top 10 complaints filed by consumers with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ consumer assistance center from Jan. 1 through Dec. 26 are:

- Do Not Call – 17,337
- Telemarketing – 4,419
- Communication – 2,392
- Landlord/Tenant – 1,564
- Sellers of Travel – 1,515
- Motor Vehicle Repair – 1,470
- Credit/Banking – 1,460
- Real Estate Broker/Salesperson – 1,126
- Cable – 1,120
- Motor Vehicle Sales/Accessories – 1,078

Complaints about violators of Do Not Call has topped the list for four consecutive years, but this year saw a substantial increase over last year, growing from 11,769 in 2011 to 17,337 in 2012. The increase in complaints is consistent with the increase in subscribers to the Florida Do Not Call List. In April of this year, Commissioner Putnam announced subscriptions to Florida’s Do Not Call List would be offered at no cost to Floridians as a result of a measure passed during the 2012 legislative session. Since then, more than 330,000 numbers have been added to Florida’s Do Not Call List, increasing subscriptions five-fold.

Of the 50,622 complaints received by the department, 33,251 were successfully resolved or closed. More than $3,858,000 has been recovered on behalf of Florida consumers this year.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state’s clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection and information. The consumer assistance center is staffed with trained analysts who answer more than 220,000 telephone calls, emails and chats annually from consumers and businesses. Staff is able to respond to questions about programs and regulations under the department’s purview, provide information on a wide variety of topics or direct callers to the appropriate government agency.

Consumers who believe fraud has taken place can contact the department’s consumer protection and information hotline at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) or, for Spanish speakers, 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832).

For more information about the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, visit www.FreshFromFlorida.com.

Gravity not needed to orient plant root growth

By Robert H. Wells
University of Florida

GAINESVILLE, Fla.—Plant growth is not as dependent on gravity as previously thought, according to new research from the University of Florida. In a study published in the current issue of the journal BMC Plant Biology, researchers found for the first time that roots display normal movements used to get around rocks and obstacles even when there is no gravity.

The movements, known as waving and skewing, were thought to be due to gravity pulling on roots as they sample their growing surface with touch, said Anna-Lisa Paul, one of the study’s lead authors and a UF horticultural sciences research associate professor.

“The skewing and waving of roots has always been thought to be dependent on gravity, but as the images from our experiment started to come down from the International Space Station in early 2010, it was clear that gravity was not required after all,” said Paul, a member of UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

“Roots in space make these same kinds of movements and choices that you see on the ground,” she said. The findings are important, said Rob Ferl, the study’s other lead author and a UF/IFAS horticultural sciences professor, because they provide fundamental insight into how roots interact with their environment and suggest that plants could likely be cultivated in reduced-gravity environments, such as space stations or the moon.

“As space agriculturalists, we really want to know that when we move to the moon, when we move to Mars, which don’t have the same amount of gravity that we have, can we still grow plants? Will their roots still work right in a fractional gravity environment?” Ferl said. “And the answer is yes, definitely.”

For the study, the researchers grew Wassilowskija and Columbia varieties of Arabidopsis thaliana, plants related to mustard that scientists often use as model plants for research, on both the ISS in zero gravity and on Earth.

The plants were grown in a nutrient-rich agar solution in specialized chambers developed by Kennedy Space Center engineers that allowed a high-resolution camera to photograph plant growth every six hours. For the plants in space and on Earth, images were transmitted to the researchers for real-time analysis.

The chamber housing the plants on the ground was set to provide the same temperature and environmental conditions experienced by the plants in orbit.

Although differences in root growth were recorded between the plants on Earth and the plants in space, overall, root growth behaviors were generally similar.

Both varieties demonstrated growth away from the seed and typical patterns of skewing, which means to grow at a slant away from a purely vertical direction, and waving, which means to grow in tight, alternating curves. For example, Wassilowskija roots skewed strongly to the right in space while Columbia roots slightly skewed to the left, just as they do on Earth.

Paul said in the absence of gravity, perhaps the plant is responding to another directional cue, such as the overhead light source.

“The space flight environment is absolutely outside the evolutionary experience of any organism on the face of the planet,” Paul said. “It was very intriguing for us to realize there is an evolutionary adaptation for roots to grow away from the seed to find the nutrients and water the plant needs to survive in the absence of gravity.”

The experiments were launched in 2010 and returned on space shuttle Endeavour on June 1, 2011. NASA funded the research.

Claire E. Amalfitano, who was a biological scientist in Ferl’s lab, is also an author of the study.

Silent Guitar Auction

This is a picture of State Senator Denise Grimsley who won one of two guitars in the YOUNIFIED silent auction. The other guitar owner is unavailable. Governor Mike Huckabee signed the guitars when he was elected to speak at the YOUNIFIED Gala in October.
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**TAYLOR CREEK** - 2BR, 2BA, condo on ground floor, water, pool & boat ramp included. Seasonal or long term. Call (863) 639-0663.

**Houses - Rent**

**KINGS BAY** - 2/2 1 car garage, W/D. Home Reality Services, LLC 863-801-4498

Shop here first! The classified ads

**KOKOKEE** - 1002 SE 8th Dr. Newly Remodeled, 2 b. & 2 b. $650. All apps., tile floors, hurricane windows. Immediate occupancy. Last, sec. & ref. Chris 863-447-3282

**OKEECHOBEE** - 21st 2 b. Palm Creek waterfront Gated Community. Owner financing. Option to buy. 863-532-0273.

**When you want something sold, advertise in the classifieds.**
River Space Rent

THE PLACE TO BE!!
Big O RV Resort
Weekly/monthly/seasonal
Dine with the stars
Landscaped pads
Large clubhouse
Recreation hall
Outdoor activities
Friendly people
www.bigrvpark.com
Call Ken (712)240-5689

autos Wanted

2005 Harley Davidson
Sportster, 4,600 miles,
red & black,
$4,500 o.b.c 863-467-8559

Travel Trailers

Travel Trailer - 22' Sunliner;
Sleeps 8;
New Tires & Wheels;
A/C & Heat;
Very Good Condition;
5,000 miles
(772)538-6432

Public Notice

PUBLIC NOTICE CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTING A CITY ORDINANCE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City Council of the City of Okeechobee, Florida, will hold a public hearing before the City Council of said City of Okeechobee, Florida, on Tuesday, January 8, 2013, at 6:30 p.m., in the Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida, to consider an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Okeechobee for the purpose of revising the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan, providing for an effective date, and for all other purposes necessary or convenient in connection therewith. The meeting shall be open to the public.

Specific information, maps, and agenda are available on the website. All persons are encouraged to attend and participate in said hearing. The proposed ordinance may be reviewed in its entirety by members of the public at the Health Department Auditorium, 1728 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida. The purpose of the public hearing is to consider an amendment to the comprehensive plan of the City of Okeechobee for the purpose of revising the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan.

When doing those chores you are doing in, it's time to look for a helper in the classifieds.

Reading a Newspaper Helps You Understand the World Around You.

Legal Notice

PUBLIC AGENCY

Notice of Public Hearing

Notice of Public Hearing to Consider an Amendment to the Okeechobee County Comprehensive Plan

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

2B/1B MOBILE HOME IN 55+
PARK, EXCELLENT LOCATION
$1000.00
863-824-8794 OR
337-7034-309

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS
1 Ores mining
8 Where the music stops
5 band
11 Upgrading
12 Consider
9 Down
13 Slip forcer, to its owner
6 Bad lads
17 Scotti Gaich
3 Sea food
7 Seal help segments
10 Seal
16 End of
14 Sale
BLOWOUT
18 Victory expanse
70% of seventy-

20% of seventy-
25% of sixty-
15% of forty-
10% of forty-
5% of twenty-
2% of twenty-
1% of twenty-

48 Acoustics, e.g.:
46 Uses a straw
43 ATM output
41 A U.S. coin
40 Like much real
39 Acetate, e.g.:...
Book-a-neers visit Okeechobee schools

Special to the Okeechobee News

Throughout the month of December, special Book-a-neers have been visiting the elementary schools in our county.

So far, South, Central and North Elementary Schools have hosted “Readers of the Caribbean,” a program designed to help parents make reading at home fun and enjoyable. “Book-a-nee Bob” and “Deckhand Debbie” have trained at the first three events.

The program’s creator, Dr. Angela Martin-Walker, will be here in January to present the program to the audience at Everglades Elementary.

Seminole Elementary held a pirate themed reading event earlier in the school year as well.

“Readers of the Caribbean” teaches children how to become “Bookaneers” by using the five major components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

The workshop begins with children being welcomed to “pirate tryouts.” The wanna-be pirates are put through a battery of funny “tests” in their quest to become Book-a-neers. Parents and children practice reading activities as they participate in demonstrations led by the trainer. Each participating family goes home with a literacy adventure game board that encourages them to apply what they have learned from the Readers of the Caribbean Workshop over the next 21 days (the number of days experts say it takes to form a habit).

The goal is to promote literacy in the home as a long-term family value. The program is being sponsored by the Office of Grants & Special Programs at the Okeechobee County School Board.