Arcoho goes back to jail for DUI

Convicted of DUI-manslaughter for death of detective in 1990, man served less than a year

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

“My advice to you is never, ever get behind the wheel again when you’ve been drinking.”

And with that admonishment by Circuit Court Judge Robert Belanger, deputies handcuffed Luciano Arocho and took him to the Okeechobee County Jail where he will spend the next 270 days.

A six-member jury earlier on Tuesday, Feb. 1, had found Arocho guilty of driving under the influence, but acquitted him on a felony charge of corruption by threat. Following that trial, a second mini-trial was held in which the jury learned that this was Arocho’s second DUI conviction and they found him guilty of the prior DUI convictions.

The jury could not be told of the prior conviction until Arocho’s trial had ended.

Because of the prior conviction, it enhanced Arocho’s penalty from six to nine months in the county jail, explained Assistant State Attorney Stephanie Tew, who prosecuted the case.

Arocho was looking at a maximum sentence of five years in prison if he had been convicted on the third-degree felony charge, added Ms. Tew.

His prior conviction came in 1990 when he was found guilty of DUI-manslaughter and DUI involving serious bodily injury. Arocho was involved in a traffic crash that killed off-duty Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office Detective Fonda Marie Cook on June 29, 1990. The crash also injured Arcoho goes back to jail for DUI

Submitted photos/OCSO

See Sheriff — Page 2

See DUI — Page 7

Body found near SR 70...

BBQ event heats up...

OHS beats Ft. Pierce Central in soccer...

Lake Levels

12.48 feet
Last Year: 13.47 feet

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

Sheriff honors outstanding employees

By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

Four employees at the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) were awarded for their hard work last week when they were each named employee of the year for their respective categories.

The top winners were chosen from those nominated for employee of the quarter recognition. Employees are chosen from four categories—administrative, citizen volunteer, detention deputy and law enforcement.

Prior to the employees of the year being named at the Friday, Jan. 21, ceremony the employees of the quarter for the fourth quarter were announced. Those employees were: Administrative - Amanda ‘Amy’ Fisher; Citizen Volunteer - Jerry Trout; Detention Deputy - Karen Green; and, Law Enforcement -
Detective Rosemary Farless.
Each of them will receive a day off with pay for their achievement.
Sheriff Paul May then named the year’s top OCSO employees, who each received a check for $500 as their reward.
OCSO employees of the year were: Administrative - Amanda ‘Amy’ Fisher (fourth quarter); Citizen Volunteer - Donnie Trent (third quarter); Detention Deputy - Corporal Mark Garland (first quarter); and, Law Enforcement - Deputy Sarah Green (second quarter).

“I am very proud of these employees, as I am of all our employees,” said Sheriff May.

“They do a wonderful job for the people of this county. I could not ask for a better group of people.”

Sheriff Paul May

Detective Farless was nominated by Detective Lieutenant Brad Stark and Detective M.D. Faulkner because she has “…shown resilience and maintains a good work ethic” despite the difficult cases she works. Detective Farless handles a lot of the investigations dealing with sexual battery to both children and adults.

Lt. Stark and Detective Faulkner went on to say that her “…dedication to her job and (her) performance is above any scrutiny” and that Detective Farless is always willing to help whether she is on call or not.

Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) Detective Rosemary Farless (left) was honored Friday, Jan. 21, for being named employee of the quarter for the fourth quarter in the law enforcement category by Sheriff Paul May (right).

Submitted photo/OCSO

Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) Detention Deputy Karen Green (left) was recognized Friday, Jan. 21, as the OCSO employee of the quarter for the fourth quarter and was given a certificate for her achievement by Sheriff Paul May (right).

Submitted photo/OCSO

Okeechobee County Sheriff Paul May (left) presented Jerry Trout (right) with a certificate honoring him for being named employee of the quarter in the citizen volunteer category during a ceremony held Friday, Jan. 21.

Submitted photo/OCSO

“I am very proud of these employees, as I am of all our employees. They do a wonderful job for the people of this county. I could not ask for a better group of people.”

Sheriff Paul May

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Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) Detention Deputy Karen Green (left) was recognized Friday, Jan. 21, as the OCSO employee of the quarter for the fourth quarter and was given a certificate for her achievement by Sheriff Paul May (right).
Tickets on sale for OCT comedy

Watching the play The Dixie Swim Club, which will wrap up the Okeechobee Community Theatre’s 32nd season next month, has been described by one theatre reviewer as being，“like taking a pleasant, relaxing swim.” Another calls it “one of those breezy, carefree, feel-good productions that’s definitely worth diving into.”

In its short tenure on the theatre circuit, the play has become an instant classic, reminiscent of the funny but poignant style of Steel Magnolias.

Local audiences have an opportunity to reserve their seats early, as advance tickets are now on sale for the performances scheduled for 8 p.m. on March 4, 5, 11 and 12. They are available for $12 each at the office of Okeechobee—the Magazine, and the Pennysaver, 111 N.E. Second Street, just north of CVS Pharmacy. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Dixie Swim Club is the story of five southern women who met at age 18 when they were all members of a championship college swim team. It follows the ladies as they meet once a year each August at a North Carolina beach cottage to reconnect, without husbands, children or jobs to interrupt. Spanning a 33-year period, the characters experience numerous changes in life which include heartaches, joys, divorces, births and more.

It’s lighthearted and funny, punctuated by spiffy writing by playwrights Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten, the same team responsible for previous Okeechobee Community Theatre hits, Dearly Beloved and Christmas Belles. Wooten practiced his skill writing witty dialogue for strong and engaging female characters for the classic TV sitcom, The Golden Girls. “I never knew what true happiness was until I got married,” one of the Dixie Swim Club characters states. “By then, it was too late.”

The women of the Okeechobee Community Theatre’s ensemble cast make the most of the lines and situations, and ensure that the laughs just keep on coming. Laurie Garner and Louise Chandler are both veterans of the former Jones, Hope and Wooten plays performed by the OCT.

Phyllis Walker returns to the stage following her appearance in Dearly Departed, and Tina Welborn will be remembered for her roles in Over the River and Through the Woods, and 110 in the Shade. A newcomer to the OCT, Kelly Davis, brings considerable theatre experience with her, including having played the part of Truvy, the beauty operator, in a production of Steel Magnolias.

Dixie Swim Club will be performed at the theatre on S.W. Second Avenue at Seventh Street, one block west of Golden Corral restaurant.

The Okeechobee Community Theatre is an all-volunteer organization of local residents who produce Broadway-style musicals, comedies and dramas. It is a member of the American Association of Community Theatre and the Florida Theatre Conference.

Feb. 5 Poker Run planned to benefit homeless veterans

There are hundreds of homeless veterans living in wooded areas of Martin County, unknown and unseen to many residents. The “Hurricane Saturday” Poker Run on Feb. 5, 2011 hopes to raise money for a homeless shelter specifically for veterans. The event is sponsored by Vietnam Veterans and Legacy Veterans Motorcycle Club, Treasure Coast Harley Davidson and Philip DeBerard, Injury Attorney.

Motorcycle Poker Runs will leave from Barracuda’s in Okeechobee, American Legion Post 394 in Palm Bay, Ralph’s Stand Up Bar in Jupiter, American Legion Post 40 in Fort Pierce and Treasure Coast Harley Davidson at 10 a.m., with the last card dealt by noon. Local riders can purchase poker hands the day of the event at Treasure Coast Harley Davidson.

The winning hand and $1,000 winner will be announced at Treasure Coast Harley Davidson at 2:30 p.m. There will be food, contests and live music by Acoustic Remedy from 12 noon to 2 p.m. and The Bobby Friss Band at 3 p.m.

The Vietnam Vets and Legacy Vets Motorcycle club already owns a small, portable building and will use money raised at the event to later purchase land. The event is called ‘Hurricane Saturday’ because the shelter will provide a place for homeless veterans during emergency situations, such as a hurricane.

“Mr. DeBerard came across with sponsorship and it really helped us out. It has enabled us to get this far,” said a spokesman for previous Okeechobee veterans who produce Broadway-style musicals, comedies and dramas. It is a member of the American Association of Community Theatre and the Florida Theatre Conference.
Pet of the Week

Aggie is a young spayed female medium size mix breed. She is a shy and easy going girl. Her adoption fee is $135, which includes spaying and all shots. She is available for adoption at Okeechobee Humane Society/Pet Rescue on Highway 98, next door to the Livestock Market. For more information, contact Humane Society Pet Rescue Florida, at 863-357-1104. To see more available animals go to petfinder.com.

Okeechobee Forecast


Tonight: Mostly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. Lows in the lower 60s. Northwest winds around 5 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Extended Forecast

Thursday: Considerable cloudiness with a chance of showers. Highs in the mid 70s. Chance of rain 30 percent.

Thursday Night: Considerable cloudiness with a slight chance of showers. Lows in the lower 60s. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Lotteries

Florida Lottery — Here are the numbers selected Monday in the Florida Lottery:
Top of the Lake BBQ Affair another success

The Ninth Annual Top of the Lake BBQ Affair hosted by Okeechobee Main Street brought out the best of the best BBQ Cook Teams for the first of three Florida legs of this year’s FBA Triple Crown. Bub-Ba-Q took home the Grand Champion Trophy again this year as well as First Place for Ribs and Brisket. Jack’s Old South Team took home the Reserve Grand Champion Trophy. Placing first in Chicken was Southern Style BBQ and The Woodhouse Grill Team placed First in the Pork category. The area favorite, the Amateur Backyard “Homeboy” competition is for Okeechobee County residents only. The team of Heating and Beating took the Homeboy Grand Champion prize with Hill Jack BBQ Team winning the Homeboy Reserve Grand Champion prize. Okeechobee Main Street would like to thank all of those who volunteered to make this another great event for our community!

Battle of Okeechobee

At the January Okeechobee Historical Society meeting the featured speakers were Dowling Watford and Shawn Henderson, who represented the Okeechobee Battlefield Friends. During their presentations they shared many artifacts with the Historical Society members including the Albany, N.Y. newspaper that Dowling is holding which had an article about the battle. Shawn is holding a woodcut of the battle. The Okeechobee Historical Society will be present at the Battle of Okeechobee Re-enactment this coming weekend.

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Obituaries

Sandra “Sandy” D. Geary, 66
OKEECHOBEE — Sandra “Sandy” D. Geary, age 66, died at her residence on Friday, Jan. 28, 2011.

Sandy was born in Shamokin, Pa., to John and Victoria Dwinchick. She grew up in Pottstown, Pa., and moved to Florida in 1979 settling in St. Petersburg and then in Okeechobee ten years ago.

Her hobbies were crafting, gardening, and traveling. Sandy owned and operated laundromats with her husband for 15 years until early retirement.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother, Daniel Dwinchick. Survivors include her husband, Richard; sons, Brian (Susan) of Red Lion, Pa., Kevin (Michelle) of Newnan, Ga.; brother, Michael Dwinchick of Pottstown, Pa.; sister, Mary Kedra of Phoenixville, Pa.; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, as well as many nephews and nieces.

There will be no services at this time. Sandy will be laid to rest at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Fla.

In her memory, the family asks that you go out to dinner and celebrate all the good times you spent with Sandy.

Condolences may be sent online at www.buxtonseawinds.com

Deke A. Padgett, 24
OKEECHOBEE — Deke A. Padgett, age 24, died Thursday, Jan. 27, 2011.

Deke was a lifetime resident of Okeechobee and a member of the First Baptist Church of Okeechobee and an active member of their Youth Group throughout high school.

He was a member of the Class of 2005 at OHS and a member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the baseball team.

Deke’s hobbies were hunting and fishing and he was a member of the Quality Deer Management Federation.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Margaret Stokes; grandparents, Robert and Minnie Lea Padgett; and an aunt, Donna Gray Yates.

Survivors include his father, Kenny (Wendy) Padgett; brother, Ryan Padgett; sisters, Lindsay Padgett, Tara (Brad) Newman of Orange, Texas; Uncles, Larry (Judi) Padgett of Dothan, Ala.; John (Gretchen) Greer, Vince (Tiffany) Greer, both of St. Cloud, Fla., Paul Gray, Jr., of Okeechobee, Larry and Steve McBride, both of Newport News, Va., Lamar McBride of Ft. Wayne, Ind.; aunts, Becky (Leland) Hale of Lake Wales, Fla., Gigi (Dave) Ridley of Sebring, Sebring, Yvonne and Tonya Maupin, both of Okeechobee; 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; a brother, Lawrence (Jan) Maupin, Jr. of Jacksonville; and sisters, Norean Schoonmaker of Ga. and Elsie (Donald) Taylor of Okeechobee.

A private memorial service was held Sunday, Jan. 30, 2011.

Friends may make memorial donations in Norman’s name to Big Lake Hospice, 1203 N. Parrott Ave., Okeechobee, FL 34972.

Condolences may be sent online at www.buxtonseawinds.com

Norman ‘Hoss’ G. Maupin, 71

He was a resident of Okeechobee for 35 years and owner, operator of Hoss & Sons Aluminum.

He was a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. His hobbies included spending time with family, playing the guitar, singing, and classic cars.

Survivors include his wife of 43 years, Patty; sons, Jesse (Susan) Maupin of Md., Gregory, Norman (Adrianna), and Jason Maupin, all of Okeechobee; daughters, Norma Jean Axon of Sebring, Yvonne and Tonya Maupin, both of Okeechobee; 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; a brother, Lawrence (Jan) Maupin, Jr. of Jacksonville; and sisters, Norean Schoonmaker of Ga. and Elsie (Donald) Taylor of Okeechobee.

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Friends may make memorial donations in Norman’s name to Big Lake Hospice, 1203 N. Parrott Ave., Okeechobee, FL 34972.

Condolences may be sent online at www.buxtonseawinds.com

All arrangements were under the care of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home & Crematory, 4550 Hwy. 441 N., Okeechobee, Fla.

James ‘Jamie’ Allan Bigford, 27

He was born March 13, 1983, in Fernadina Beach, to James Bigford (Terri) and his late mother, Gina Bigford. He loved to do tattoo work and he also worked in the construction industry.

Mr. Bigford was preceded in death by his mother, Gina Bigford; grandfather, Kenneth Temple; and grandfather, Jimmy Bigford.

He is survived by his children, James Allan Bigford, Jr. and Jordan Temple Bigford; father, James Bigford (Terri); companion, Tiffany Bullington; brothers, Kenny Ray Bigford, Cody Bigford, Mark Bigford, all of Okeechobee; Jeremy Barfield of Blountstown; Benjamin Barfield of Altha; sister, Tiffany Barfield of Altha; grandmother, Cathy Rogers of Okeechobee and many beloved friends and family.

Visitation will be 5 to 8 p.m., today, Feb. 2, 2011, at Buxton Funeral Home, 110 NE 5th Street, Okeechobee. Interment will be in Blountstown.

All arrangements are entrusted to the loving care of Buxton Funeral Home and Crematory, 205 NE 2nd ST, Okeechobee, FL 34972.

Condolences may be made at www.buxtonseawinds.com

Timothy Le Russell, 46

He was born Sept. 11, 1964, to Willard and Frankie Russell and welcomed home by his big brothers, Terry and Tony. He was a registered LPN for 16 years.

Tim was preceded in death by his father, Willard Russell; grandparents, Frank and Dana Hargrove, and for Estef and Beulah Russell; uncle, Carroll D. Hargrove; and nephew, Zachary Russell.

He is survived by his brother, Taylor and son, Tyler; mother, Frankie Russell; brothers Terry Russell (Karen) and Tony Russell (Vickie); nieces, Amber, Anna, Dana; nephews, Tab (Caitlyn) Hamilton, Ohio, and Jason; cousins, Caryln Brock (Joe), Judy Harmon (Eddie), Kim Hargrove, Teresa Maines (Jeff); Uncle Richard and Aunt Martha Russell; many other aunts, uncles, cousins and friends; special friends, Tommie and Betty Rucks; Charles Graves and Doug Holmen.

Memorials may be made to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, 6931 Arlington Road, 2nd floor, Bethesda, MD 20814.

Memorial Gathering will be 6 to 8 p.m. today, Feb. 2, 2011, at Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home.

Friends may sign the guestbook at www.buxtonseawinds.com.

All arrangements are entrusted to the loving care of Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home and Crematory, 205 NE 2nd ST, Okeechobee, FL 34972.

Condolences may be made at www.buxtonseawinds.com
Moose to hold pancake dinner

The Buckhead Ridge Moose Lodge, #2417, will hold a pancake supper on Thursday, Feb. 3, at 5 p.m. until they run out. The donation is $4.49 for members and guests. Pancakes are buttermilk or blueberry, served with sausage and fresh fruit. Call 863-763-2250 for information.

Legion has Wing Ding day

The American Legion Riders will sponsor Wing Ding Dollar Day on Thursday, Feb. 3, from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. All of the following will only be $1 each: hamburgers, hotdogs, fried bologna, tuna, egg salad, ham salad sandwiches, chili, vegetable soup, beans/cornbread, and chicken wings 3 for $1.

Friday dinner/dance set

American Legion Post 64 will have dinner Friday, Feb. 4 from 5 until 7:30 p.m. The entire meal is only $6 with your choice of baked ham or country fried steak with mashed potatoes/gravy, salad, vegetable, roll, and dessert. Awesome dance music with Michael starts at 6 p.m.

Musical presentation at the library

A program on the great Broadway composers and performers will be presented at the Okeechobee County Library on Saturdays, Feb. 5, 12 and 26, at 1 p.m. R.B. Nairnsey, who is very knowledgeable, is the speaker for the program and will present slides and musical illustrations. The topic for the Feb. 5 program will be Meredith Wilson who wrote “The Music Man.”

Moose Lodge to host Lip Sync music show

The Okeechobee Lip Sync Group including Classic Music - Vaudeville - Comedy will entertain on Saturday Feb. 5, from 1 to 3 p.m., at the Okeechobee Moose Lodge on N.W. 36th Street. Parking and admission is free.

Legion has Ohio Day

American Legion Post 64 will host Ohio Day this Saturday from noon until 5 p.m. Please bring a covered dish and enjoy an afternoon with all of your Buckeye friends.

Wildlife refuge meeting in Okeechobee

As part of the planning process for the proposed 150,000 acre wildlife refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will hold a public meeting to solicit input at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 9, at Okeechobee High School. At this early stage input is requested from the public.

OCRA monthly meeting

An OCRA monthly meeting will be held on Monday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m. at the Annex Building on Hwy. 98. The public is invited to attend. For more information call 863-634-0515.

Church to host yard sale—tables still open

The Church of God Ladies Ministry will host a community yard sale on Feb. 5, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Church of God, 301 N.E. Fourth Ave. The public is welcome. Sellers - Come join us with a space with table for just $10 and a space and bring your own table for just $5 while spaces last! To reserve your space with our without a table, please call Norma Sue Kemp at 863-634-2930. Church of God Ladies Ministry will take care of the advertising.

DUI

Continued From Page 1

a passenger in the car with Ms. Cook.

Then-Judge William Hendry later sentenced Arocho to seven years in prison to be followed by eight years probation. Department of Corrections (DOC) records show that Arocho entered prison on Feb. 21, 1991, and was released from prison on Nov. 8, 1991.

In answering a public records request as to why Arocho served such a minuscule sentence, DOC replied that he was released due to a gain time formula and the Control Release Program which was aimed at avoiding prison overcrowding.

Arocho did, however, successfully complete his probation period.

He was arrested again on Aug. 22, 2010, by Sergeant Justin Bernst of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD). He was charged with DUI and corruption by threat after he told Sgt. Bernst that he would “get” the officer for arresting him.

“He said he was going to get me for this and I’d better smoke a cigarette because it would be the last one I would ever smoke,” Sgt. Bernst told the jury Tuesday morning under direct examination.

The OCPD officer also testified that Arocho claimed the arrest was racially motivated because he is Puerto Rican.

“Tm primarily concerned because you killed someone. You killed somebody because you drank and drove. I’m not will to let you go out and take those chances,” the judge told Arocho.

Besides the county jail sentence, Arocho will have to: pay a fine of $1,000; surrender his driver’s license for one year; attend DUI school; face all DUI sanctions; and, pay court costs and fees totaling $988.
Man’s body found Sunday
By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

Local authorities said the body of a young man found on S.R. 70 East Sunday morning has no connection to a body found Friday on S.R. 710.

A motorist called the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) around 7:13 a.m. on Jan. 30 in regard to a man’s body lying along S.R. 70 E. at N.E. 64th Ave. That man had been identified as James Allen Bigford, 27.

According to OCSO Public Information Officer Michele Bell, Mr. Bigford’s body was found about 30 feet off the roadway. He was fully clothed and there were no visible signs of trauma, she added.

Although it was not known Monday when Mr. Bigford died, Mrs. Bell said it didn’t appear as if his body had been there very long.

An autopsy was tentatively scheduled for sometime Monday, and was to be conducted by the District 19 Medical Examiner’s Office in Fort Pierce.

Mrs. Bell said there was no connection

between Mr. Bigford’s death, and the death of Timothy Lee Russell, 46. Mr. Russell’s body was found around 9:23 a.m. Friday in a wooded area on S.R. 710 by two bicyclists.

Mr. Russell had been reported missing by his mother on Wednesday, Jan. 19. She told OCSO Detective Susan Morrison that her son had left her home on his bicycle around 1 p.m. on Tuesday for an appointment in Okeechobee.

Detective Morrison said according to preliminary autopsy results, foul play does not appear to be the cause of Mr. Russell’s death.

She said more will be known once a toxicology report has been completed. Detective Morrison said those results should be known in about two weeks.

OCSO Detective M.D. Faulkner is the lead investigator in Mr. Bigford’s death.

If anyone saw or had contact with Mr. Bigford on Saturday night or early Sunday morning and have not already been interviewed, please contact Detective Faulkner at 863-763-3117.

Man charged with sexual battery
By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

An Okeechobee man remains in the county jail under $50,000 bond following his arrest for allegedly forcing a woman to perform a sex act.

Christopher Thomas Spells, 30, N.W. 42nd Ave., was arrested Friday, Jan. 28, on a felony charge of sexual battery.

An arrest report by Detective M.D. Faulkner of the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) stated that the victim agreed to give Spells a ride home Thursday night, Jan. 27. At some point Spells reportedly made his demands.

The detective’s report stated that Spells grabbed the woman by the throat, punched her in the mouth and forced her into a nonconsensual act. The victim’s bottom lip was cut, the report continued.

Detective Faulkner said once his interview had concluded, the victim went to Raulerson Hospital.

Chief urges residents to register their ECI
By Eric Kopp
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee City Police Chief Denny Davis is urging everyone to take part in a free state service that could ultimately be the difference between life and death.

Over 4 million Florida citizens have registered their Emergency Contact Information (ECI) with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), which can be accessed by law enforcement officers in case of emergency.

This information is critical in saving time if it ever becomes necessary to contact family members.

“It is extremely important that all Florida residents register their ECI so officers can quickly find loved ones who know you and your medical history,” said Chief Davis. “You may not be able to speak for yourself.”

ECI allows licensed Florida drivers, or residents with a Florida identification card, to register two contacts to notify in case of an emergency—such as a motor vehicle accident. The information can only be accessed by members of law enforcement.

Registration can be done at any state or tax-collector-operated driver’s license office. Or, it can be done online by going to www.flhsmw.gov/eci. There is no cost to register.

“It is reassuring to see the number of ECI registrants climb, but with more than 15.5 million licensed drivers in Florida we still have a long way to go,” said DHSMV Executive Director Julie L. Jones. “Our goal is for all Florida drivers and ID card holders to register their Emergency Contact Information.”

The ECI program began in 2006.

Waste Management offers disposal opportunities

Okeechobee residents can dispose of up to 4 passenger tires a year for free at Okeechobee Landfill. Located at 10800 N.E. 128th Ave, Okeechobee, or Household Hazardous Waste Amnesty Day is a free service for Okeechobee County residents and held bi-annually at 306 N.W. Ninth Ave. Okeechobee. The next scheduled Household Hazardous Waste Amnesty Day is Saturday, April 2, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.
Okeechobee boys ‘ready to play’ in soccer victory

By Charles M. Murphy

Erick Garcia and Sergio Vargas scored goals as Okeechobee won the District 14-4A District title for boys soccer, 2-1 over Fort Pierce Central, Friday night at Brahman stadium.

Okeechobee will host the Regional quarterfinal match on Thursday night against Titusville, the runner up in District 13-4A.

Okeechobee had to battle back from an early deficit on Friday. By early, we mean very early. Fort Pierce scored only 37 seconds into the match. Miguel Morales took a pass from Bidson Joseph to give the Cobras the advantage. Garcia scored at the 36 minute mark of the first half off a corner kick by Carlos Contreras to tie the match. It was a tough physical battle in the first half. Fort Pierce came out strong and controlled the ball for the first ten minutes. Morales had to go to the bench due to a yellow card as things got testy on both ends of the field. Fort Pierce had several opportunities to score and one shot hit the post on an open net opportunity. Okeechobee too had several chances to score but Cobra goal keeper Kevin Coleman played awesome in net with 12 saves and other smart plays.

Brahman Coach Lonnie Sears said Fort Pierce was very impressive as they came out with a high level of soccer, “We didn’t see that level of soccer in the first two matches we played. They came out ready to play tonight.”

Sears said he knew the Brahmans would score some goals because after the initial Fort Pierce rush, Okeechobee was able to control the ball. “We were hammering the ball at the net, knew we’d get a couple in the net, the bottom line is we did it.”

This is Sears’ first District Championship as head coach, he was an assistant coach for two other OHS District titles. He said winning the title in Okeechobee had a special meaning.

“It’s an unbelievable feeling. For two years we lose on penalty kicks. Then hosting districts for the first time, we win it on our home field, it’s unbelievable,” he added.

Fort Pierce Coach Jay Stewart said his team came close and had a couple of shots hit the goal post. He said it was a very competitive match and both teams played very hard.

“It was a tough hard battle. It’s a journey. It is all about getting to this level and playing. My guys at my school know there has never been a district title at Fort Pierce Central. Someday we are going to get one. We will keep working hard and we’ll be back another day,” he said.

Vargas said scoring the winning goal with under 10 minutes left to play really was a dream come true. He said the entire team worked together and wanted this victory. “I feel like I did what I had to do for my team. It was tough. We really fought until the end and that is what we had to do to win this game,” he said.

Vargas said the Brahmans are satisfied with this title and want to win some post season games. “It should be an exciting match on Thursday. If we discipline ourselves we will probably find another victory.”
Churches plan special events

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

Haven of Rest Church, 2947 S.W. Third Terrace, will host a revival with Evangelist Jerry Cottrell, services will be Thursday, Feb. 3, Friday, Feb. 4 and Saturday, Feb. 5 at 7 p.m. On Sunday, Feb. 6, services will be at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Grace Brethren Church, 701 S. Parrott Ave., will have a free family movie night, Friday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m. The movie “The Ultimate Gift” with Abigail Breslin, Brian Dennehy and James Garner is the story of a young man who receives an unusual inheritance that challenges him to grow, change and discover the true meaning of wealth.

The Church of the Nazarene, 427 S.W. 26th St., announces a series of Southern Gospel Concerts. The Mark Trammel Quartet will perform Friday, Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. The Perrys will be in concert Sunday, Feb. 13, at 2 p.m. The Kingstones will sing on Thursday, March 3, at 7 p.m. The Dixie Echoes will be in concert Saturday, March 19, at 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken at each concert. For more information call 863-763-7113.

Fountain of Life Church, 1302 S.W. 32nd St., will host “His Majesty’s Ministries” at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 6, to do a re-enactment of the Last Supper. Several men from the church will be a part of the re-enactment. A fellowship dinner will follow the service. For more information call Pastor Dave Robertson at 863-801-1297.

Westside Christian Church, 8082 S.R. 70 W., is hosting a revival Sunday through Wednesday, Feb. 6-9 with Rev. Kenneth Shouse as evangelist. Service times are Sunday at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday services will be at 6 p.m. Rev. Shouse is pastor at New Liberty Christian Church in Lawrenceburg, Ky. He also served Antioch Christian Church in Mt. Sterling, KY and Shelby Christian Church in Shelbyville, KY.

He is a graduate of Kentucky Christian University, Grayson, KY.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Catholic Church, on SR 78 at Choobee Loop in Buckhead Ridge, now has Sunday Mass in English at 10 a.m., French at 11:15 a.m. and Spanish at 12:30 p.m.

The Okeechobee News welcomes news from area churches for this column. E-mail okeechobee@newszap.com or call Pete Gawda at 863-763-3134, extension 4225.

Places of Worship

From the Miss Rodeo Okeechobee Sweetheart 2010 Pageant are: Donnielle Harper, Layla Edmonds, MRO Princess 2010 Cali Pearce, McKenna Hickson and Kaitlyn McKay. In the back row are: Katie Brummett, Sierra Coward, Raybon Durrance and Megan Mullin.

Miss Rodeo Pageant set for Saturday

The Okeechobee County Cattlemen’s Association will host the Second Miss Rodeo Okeechobee Pageant, Saturday, Feb. 5. Seven young ladies will compete for four titles: Miss, Miss Teen, Princess and Sweetheart. The pageant will begin at 9 a.m. at the IRSC Williamson Center for the modeling, speeches and personal interview categories.

The pageant will continue with the horsemanship division at 1 p.m. at the Okeechobee Cattlemen’s Arena on U.S. Hwy. 441 N. A BBQ Beef lunch will be available at the arena from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. for a $10 donation. Admission to the pageant is free and the public is encouraged to attend. All proceeds go towards hosting the pageant.

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Annual Family Health and Safety Expo hosts 2000

Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office participated in the Expo, sharing information and equipment at several booths. The OCSO Traffic Unit booth included one of the Sheriff’s motorcycles from the Motor Unit. This bike is driven by Deputy Adrian Rogers.

Fire/Medics from Okeechobee County Fire Rescue brought in two crashed vehicles to demonstrate the equipment they use to dismantle vehicles. The extrication equipment allows them to safely remove patients at the scene of a real accident.

Mary Hurley, Vice President of the Okeechobee Educational Foundation, offering an opportunity for a guest to complete a raffle ticket to win a health basket. For more information about the Okeechobee Educational Foundation 863-462-5000 ext. 257.

Elizabeth Ruiz, Outreach and Application Specialist, for Florida KidCare. Ms. Ruiz distributed applications and offered application, renewal and technical assistance. Florida KidCare is low-cost health insurance for children birth through 18. For local assistance call (863) 634-7678 or 888-540-5437.

Children’s Services Council of Okeechobee generously supports the Health and Safety Expo by donating prizes for the children that attend. The tables are loaded with jump ropes, ball, bats, bikes, skateboards and other fun gifts for attendees.

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Brahman hoopsters topple Jensen Beach, 64-61

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Mike Hernandez led three players in double figures as Okeechobee High School rallied from an 11 point fourth quarter deficit to defeat Jensen Beach 64-60 in their final home game of the season on Friday night.

Hernandez scored five of his 12 points in the final 90 seconds as Okeechobee completed a huge comeback win against a district arch rival.

“Coach told us to play for pride,” Hernandez said, “He said give it your best in your last home game. For us seniors this was our last game in this gym so we gave it our all.”

Deforest Shanks had 11 points and Alonzo Coleman added 10 points for the Brahman (8-9). Tim Hirst had eight points and seven rebounds. He also played good defense against the Falcons Daniel Thompson, holding him below his average. Thompson had 12 points and Sherrod Huntley had a game high 23 points for Jensen Beach.

Brahman Coach Bryan Van Camp said he knew this game would be close all the way. Okeechobee had a comfortable lead in the second quarter but Jensen held a 34-32 lead at the break.

“This game was totally about effort in the second half. Jensen Beach had momentum and I knew they were too good to go away. They were going to make a push. I told our guys, how will we respond? How hard are you willing to work to pull this out?”

Jensen Beach went on a 10-1 run keyed by Huntley in the third quarter and held a 56-45 lead at the end of three quarters.

Okeechobee responded with a run of their own in the fourth quarter as Deforest Shanks hit a three pointer and a lay up. Hernandez also hit a huge three point basket.

Hernandez scored five of his 12 points in the final 90 seconds as Okeechobee completed a huge comeback win against a district arch rival.

Brahmans fall 77-71 to Lake Placid

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Devontra Flemming scored 33 points – 22 after halftime – to help Lake Placid defeat Okeechobee 77-71 in high school boy’s basketball action Monday night in Highlands County.

Flemming was able to dominate play in the second half as Okeechobee tried a number of defensive schemes to try and stop him.

“We put our big guys on him and he was able to take them off the dribble. When we put our smaller guards on him, he was able to post them up and shoot over them,” Brahman Coach Bryan Van Camp said.

Okeechobee ends the regular season on a two game losing streak as they also lost to South Fork on the road Saturday night by 19 points, 76-57. Mike Hernandez led Okeechobee in that game with 17 points. Okeechobee (8-11) is off until the District 14-4A tournament next week.

Colby Frank had a career high 21 points for Okeechobee. The senior also grabbed 10 rebounds. DeForest Shanks had 17 points which included three, three point baskets. Freshman Eddie Neal also had a career high 13 points which also included three, three point baskets.

Okeechobee held a 39-31 lead at halftime but were unable to keep the lead in the second half. Coach Van Camp said it all came down to defense in the second half, “In the first half we really shot the ball well and ran the fast break. Lake Placid picked up their defensive intensity in the second half. Flemming kind of went nuts on us in the second half.”

Lake Placid (12-11) outscored Okeechobee 46-32 in the second half.

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Yearling girls defeat Osceola Middle

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Delaney Osceola had 26 points as Yearling defeated Osceola 43-39 in middle school girls basketball action Monday afternoon at Okeechobee High School.

Cheyenne Nunez added 12 points for the Lady Bulls who avenged a loss just one week earlier at Osceola. Taylor Trent had 18 points and seven steals to lead Osceola.

It was a tight battle throughout as Osceola led 6-4 after the first quarter and Yearling held a 17-16 lead at halftime. Yearling built a nine point lead in the third quarter but Osceola battled back to cut the deficit to 33-29 after the third quarter.

Carly McCoin had 15 points, eight rebounds and three steals for Osceola. She fouled out with 2:28 to play with Osceola clinging to a 36-35 lead.

Yearling did a great job defensively and Osceola repeatedly scored on fast break baskets in the first half. Shadasia Williams had seven rebounds, four steals, and a great defensive effort for the Lady Bulls. Sandra Luviano also provided some key steals in the second half.

Osceola out rebounded Yearling 23-18 while Yearling had 18 steals to Osceola’s 17 steals as a team.

Trent said she was very impressed with how Yearling responded from a blow out loss last week to her team, “I wanted to win and I was mad at the end. I was happy I scored a lot of points today. I have a lot of friends on Yearling and I congratulated all of them for winning. They did a good job today.”

Trent, whose goal is to play college basketball, said she was pleased she shot the ball well from the outside. She also had three assists.

Osceola said Yearling really focused on defense and tried to prevent McCoin from taking over the game. She had 38 points in Osceola’s victory last week.

We came out positive and played our game today. We tried harder during practice and we’ve been playing as a team. We tried to focus on her to get her out of the game because she is their main player,” she added.

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Task force nabs two on trafficking charge

By Eric Kopp

Okeechobee News

A traffic stop for an obstructed license tag led to felony drug charges being filed against an out-of-state couple who were traveling on the Florida Turnpike.

Sage N. Ross, 18, Brookstown Road, Cleopetra, Minn, and Kyle Ramone McBride, 23, Princeton St., Detroit, Mich., were both arrested and booked into the Okeechobee County Jail on bonds of $11,600 each.

Both Ross and McBride were charged with the felonies of trafficking in a controlled substance (percocet) and possession of ecstasy. Each one was also charged with one misdemeanor count of possession of marijuana under 20 grams.

An arrest report by a detective with the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force stated that a 2007 Lincoln was stopped at mile marker 187 because part of the Minnesota license tag was obstructed.

Ross was also charged with being the driver and owner of the vehicle, the detective pointed out.

The report then stated that Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO) Deputy Brian Cross walked his K-9 Barco around the vehicle to sniff its exterior, Barco, a narcotics detection dog, located a smell indicating the presence of narcotics.

According to the detective, some partially smoked cigarettes were found in the ashtray. When field tested, those cigarettes indicated a positive result for the presence of marijuana.

A more extensive search of the vehicle was then conducted, continued the detective’s report, and a can of puncture seal instant tire repair was found in the trunk. When inspected, the bottom of the can was threaded, the detective stated.

When the bottom of the can was removed, the detective’s report stated that they found two clear plastic bags of a green leafy substance, 473 percoct pills and one other pill that, when field tested, indicated a positive result for the presence of ecstasy.

The K-9 drug substance was also field tested and indicated a positive result for the presence of marijuana. One of the bags of suspected pot weighed 1.9 grams and the other weighed 5.6 grams, the report stated.

As they continued to search the vehicle, the detective said $4,201 in cash was found in the glove compartment.

The detective said the vehicle has been impounded at the sheriff’s office and forfeiture proceedings have begun for the vehicle and the cash.

Ross was issued a traffic citation for the obstructed tag and for operating a motor vehicle without a license, the detective added.
The following individuals were arrested on felony or driving under the influence (DUI) charges by the Okeechobee County Sheriff’s Office (OCSO), the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD), the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) or the Department of Corrections (DOC).

- Stewart Lynn Gray, 30, S.W. 10th St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 27 by Detective Rick Durfee on a charge of dealing in stolen property. His bond was set at $10,000.
- Justin Lee Harris, 29, N.E. Third Lane, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 28 by Detective Mark Shireman on a charge of possession of a motor vehicle with altered vehicle identification number. His bond was set at $2,500. Harris was also arrested by Deputy Greg Popovich on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with giving false information to a law enforcement officer during a felony investigation. His bond was set at $8,000.
- Dennis Allen Herd, 41, N.W. 17th St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 28 by Deputy Eliberto Carmona on a charge of failure to register as a sexual offender. His bond was set at $20,000.
- Terry Miller, 41, S.E. 20th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 28 by Deputy Greg Popovich on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with violation of probation - driving under the influence. His bond was set at $1,500.
- Cassie Bell, 26, S.R. 78 W., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 29 by Deputy Sergeant Clif Gill on an amended Okeechobee County warrant charging her with violation of probation - obtaining a controlled substance by fraud (six counts). She is being held without bond.
- Alfredo Gomez, 32, S.E. 33rd Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 29 by Deputy Steve Pollock on a felony charge of child neglect and a misdemeanor charge of disorderly intoxication. His bond was set at $750.
- Edwin Olmo Aponte, 42, N.W. 15th Place, Sunrise, was arrested Jan. 29 by Deputy Patricia Massung on a Broward County warrant charging him with burglary of a conveyance, possession of burglary tools and possession of marijuana. He is being held without bond.
- Tod Charles Lozen, 50, 26th Ave. West, Bradenton, was arrested Jan. 29 by Deputy Patricia Massung on a DOC warrant charging him with violation of probation - obstructing a criminal investigation, violation of probation - resisting a law enforcement officer without violence and violation of probation - refusal to sign a citation. He is being held without bond.
- Zila Lerma, 41, S.W. 28th St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 30 by Officer Scott Morgan on a charge of driving under the influence. Her bond was set at $500.
- Lucio Moran Aguilar, 45, was arrested Jan. 30 by Deputy John Hazy on charges of driving under the influence and no valid driver’s license. His bond was set at $1,500.
- David Joseph Yoder, 29, N.E. Sixth St., Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 30 on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with failure to appear - possession of methadone and failure to appear - driving while license suspended. He is being held without bond on those charges. Yoder was arrested on a second warrant charging him with the misdemeanor of failure to appear - resisting a law enforcement officer without violence. His bond on that charge was set at $1,000.
- Christopher Edward Gillaspy, 37, S.E. 33rd Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 30 by Deputy Steven Pollock on an Okeechobee County warrant charging him with the felony of burglary and the misdemeanor of petit theft. His bond was set at $36,000.
- Keosha Edith Butler, 28, S.E. 18th Terrace, Okeechobee, was arrested Jan. 30 by Deputy Adrian Rogers on a charge of driving under the influence. Her bond was set at $1,500. Butler was later arrested by Deputy Patricia Massung on an Okeechobee County warrant charging her with failure to appear - driving while license suspended. Her bond on that charge was set at $1,000.
- Kim Marie Fontanetta, 53, Wingate Drive, Sarasota, was arrested Jan. 31 by Deputy Patricia Massung on an Okeechobee County warrant charging her with violation of probation - battery, violation of probation - burglary and violation of probation - petit theft. She is being held without bond.
- Fortino Hernandez, 25, Okeechobee, was arrested Feb. 1 by Deputy John Fisher on a charge of possession of a controlled substance without a prescription (xanax). His bond was set at $2,500.

This column lists arrests and not convictions, unless otherwise stated. Anyone listed here who is later found innocent or has had the charges against them dropped or the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Diabetes Education Program presented

“Living with Diabetes,” a free Diabetes Education Program, will be presented by Wanda Haas, RN, CDE on Feb. 9, at 1:30 p.m. at the VNA’s Grand Oaks Assisted Living Facility, 203 S.E. Second St. For more information call 863-357-2197.

Republican candidate to visit Okeechobee

Republican Presidential Candidate for 2012 John Davis will stop in Okeechobee Wednesday, Feb. 9, at 9:25 a.m. at the Republican Party of Okeechobee Headquarters, 401 N.W. 4th Street, Okeechobee. For more information, call Debi at 863-532-9623.
YMS gets a 42-22 hoop win over OMS

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Yearling Middle School jumped out to a 19-2 lead after the first quarter and won their 10th game of the season to set a school record for wins Monday with a 42-22 win over arch rival Osceola Middle School in boy’s basketball action at Okeechobee High School.

Yearling did not have anyone in double figures as 14 players hit the floor for the Bulls. Trewiston Pierce led the way with nine points, five rebounds, four assists and three steals. Tyrrell Taylor had seven points, and five blocks. Tyrone Joseph had six points and five rebounds for Yearling.

Osceola was led by Expavious Mills who scored eight points. Jaquan Smith had seven rebounds for the Warriors.

Yearling held a 36-7 lead at the half and led 40-15 after the third quarter. Yearling played their reserves for most of the final three quarters.

Yearling Coach Efrain Ochoa said his team was flat in the first game the team’s played last week, “This was their last game and they wanted it. They played from the get go. If we play like that all year we go undefeated.”

Ochoa said his team’s first goal was to go undefeated. After they suffered some losses in early January he said the team just wanted to get the best goal possible, which was 10 wins.

Point guard Roshell Thomas, said he felt the team could have gone undefeated but still finished the season strong after some disappointments. “We showed up because this was our last game. We came together as a team and I feel good about our record.”

Ochoa said even though his team jumped to an early lead he didn’t want them to get comfortable. “Osceola has good talent. If you give them any kind of an opening or chance they will come back and make you pay. You have to get them down and keep them down because they are good enough to come back,” he added.
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