Coyotes becoming a threat to livestock
By Katrina Elsken
Okeechobee News
They’re smart.
They’re hungry.
They’ve lost their fear of man.
And they’re here.
Coyotes, once thought to be found only in western states, have made themselves at home in Florida. According to a report by the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, coyotes can be found in all 67 Florida counties and the population is growing.
Coyotes are believed to have migrated to Florida from Texas and New Mexico in the 1980s.

High school rodeo coming to Okeechobee
Okeechobee High Schools Rodeo Team is working their way up in the state standings. A Florida High School Rodeo competition is planned at the old Cattlemen’s Arena in Okeechobee in March. Okeechobee will host the Florida State Rodeo Finals in May. Above, Jacob Anuez competes in Tie Down Roping. For more on the story, see page 2.

Funding problems stall plans to turn battlefield into park
By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News
The current budget crunch is far reaching, affecting even the development of the Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park.
The significance of the battle is that it was the turning point in the Second Seminole War. It was the largest and last major battle of the war and the frequency of smaller conflicts declined afterward.
The 145 acre site on S.E. 38th Avenue, which contains part of the battle site, was purchased from private owners on Nov. 30, 2006 with funds from the Florida Forever Program.

See page 4 for information about how to contact this newspaper.
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Special to the Okeechobee News/IFAS
Coyotes have been a concern for Florida ranchers since the 1990s. In recent years, coyotes have been seen in the more populated areas of the state.
Okeechobee High school rodeo team doing well

Okeechobee to host state rodeo finals in May

By Missie Peaden
OHS Rodeo Team

The Okeechobee High School Rodeo team is making good progress this school year.

In November, the team traveled to Perry, Ga. to compete in the “Southeastern Showdown” which included contestants from nine states. Following that, the team traveled to Zolfo Springs, Leesburg and Bunnell. Throughout these rodeos Nat Stratton and Tyler Mills have been unstoppable in Saddle Bronc, Bareback and Bull Riding events. Nat won three championships and one second place in Saddle Bronc, ranking him first in the state high school rodeo standings. Tyler won championships in Bareback and tied for first in another, placing him number one in the State. Tyler also won two Championship rounds in Bullriding, and is currently placed ninth in the state.

Andrew Holmes is currently ranked second in Bareback and tenth in Bull Riding. Currently the OHS rodeo team has several members high in the team roping rankings. In this event, many points have been earned which constantly changes the state rankings. Jacob Anuez is sitting in fourth place, Garrett Rucks in seventh, Joshua Lea in eighth, Nat Stratton in tenth, Allyson Trimble and Dalton Boney in 16th.

In Pole Bending, Carlie Lanier is moving up the chart and currently sitting 11th place. In Barrel Racing, OHS team members Carlie Lanie and Raybon Durrance are tied for 16th place.

In Breakaway Roping, Lexi Peaden is currently ranked tenth, Shiloh Anuez is in 22nd place and Allyson Trimble is in 24th place.

In Tie Down Roping, Garrett Rucks is currently ranked fifth, Jacob Anuez is sixth, Dalton Boney has moved up to 16th, Nat Stratton is 18th, and Jake Jimmerson is 21st.

In the Girls Cutting Horse event, OHS team member Carlie Lanier is tied for fourth place.

There are only seven high school rodeos left until State Finals in May, which will be held in Okeechobee at the Agri-Civic Center off State Road 710. The kids know it is crunch time and only the top 15 in each event will be competing at the State Finals. Their performances are getting better and better with each rodeo.

On Feb. 18 and 19, the team will be traveling to Ocala for a two-day event. March 5 and 6, they will be in Williston for another two-day event. March 25 and 26 will bring high school rodeo to Okeechobee at the old Cattlemen’s Rodeo Arena on U.S. Highway 441.

Spectator admission to high school rodeo events is free. There will be a concession stand and later that evening following the rodeo, the rodeo contestants will put on a “Parent Rodeo” which is ALWAYS full of fun. Parents who instruct and preach all year, get to show that they don’t always practice what they preach.

For more information concerning OHS Rodeo team or FHSRA, please contact Missie Peaden at 863-634-7825 or FHSRA.home-steam.com.

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**Wildlife refuge to be discussed at meeting**

By Pete Gawda  
Okeechobee News

Local residents need not fear losing their property to eminent domain because of a recently announced wildlife refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is planning a 150,000 acre wildlife refuge that would include parts of Polk, Osceola, Indian River, Okeechobee and Highland counties.

Some landowners have expressed fear that they would be forced to sell their land. That is not true according to Charles Pelizza, manager of Pelican Island National Wildlife Complex in Vero Beach, who is heavily involved in the project.

“This is a misconception,” Mr. Pelizza said. “We are different from other agencies. We are working only with willing sellers.”

Mr. Pelizza said that it is the policy of FWS on this and all their other projects to work only with willing sellers.

Plans call for FWS to buy 50,000 acres in the area from southern Osceola County to the northern shore of Lake Okeechobee. Conservation easements will be sought for another 100,000 acres. This means the property owner will retain possession of the land, however there will be restrictions on development. While some grazing will be allowed, the owner would be restricted from raising row crops.

Some local governments have expressed concern with state projects that have bought lands and taken them off the tax rolls. However, in this case Mr. Pelizza said local governments would receive revenue sharing payments in lieu of taxes indefinitely. He added that in some cases those payments amount to more than the local government would have received in taxes.

South Florida Water Management District has agreed in principle to work with FWS on this project.

Residents who want more information are invited to a public meeting Wednesday, Feb. 9, at 6 p.m. at Okeechobee High School. There will be a presentation on the planned wildlife refuge and FWS officials will be on hand to answer questions. Landowners who wish to sell or to participate in a conservation easement can get more specific information.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. Reporter Pete Gawda can be reached at pgawda@newszap.com.

**City code board may consider fine reduction**

By Pete Gawda  
Okeechobee News

When they meet Tuesday night, the City of Okeechobee Code Enforcement Board is scheduled to hear six cases including one request for fine reduction.

The 922 N.W. Tenth St. property of Leon and Ulysee had been assessed a fine of $25 a day. That fine ran for 94 days, totalling $2,350. They have requested a reduction of that fine.

Robert and Melody Jennings will have to answer charges that they installed new windows at their 506 S.E. Eleventh Ave. house without the proper building permit.

In two separate cases Jane Doster and Carl Simmons have been charged with neglecting general cleaning and beautification on several different S.E. Tenth avenue lots.

Luis and Zuleika Carcache were cited because of the condition of their 405 S.W. 22nd Street property.

According to code enforcement officers, Clifford and Tracy Kaufman, 925 S.E. 23rd St., have not taken care of he upkeep of their property.

**Free income tax preparation help available locally**

Free tax preparation and efilng by AARP tax aide volunteers is beginning Feb. 7, at the American Legion, 501 S.E. Second Street, Monday and Tuesday from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Participants must bring photo ID, social security cards for dependents, last year’s tax return and all 2010 financial papers. No appointment is necessary. It is on a first come - first served basis. Doors open at 8:45 a.m.

For more information, please call 863-357-1694 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Please DO NOT CALL the American Legion Hall.
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 sample of some of the discussions currently taking place. Thanks for participating!

No lines - not safe

• Would someone be kind enough to inform residents as to why there are no dividing lines on N.W. Ninth Street after it was paved weeks ago. It would be great and safe that there was some form of division placed on that street especially with all those large vehicles operating out of Walpole on that street. Can’t something be done? Thank you kindly.

Dangerous curve

• I think the county needs to do something to slow down the traffic on the curve where SW 16th Street turns into SW 48th Avenue. Too many people speed through that curve and wind up hitting wild animals that cross the road there. This week alone I have seen a deer, a coyote and an armadillo killed there. While some people will be glad the coyote was killed, that does not reduce the danger of vehicles speeding through that curve. With the larger animals, there is probably quite a bit of damage to the vehicles, and those driving and their passengers could suffer quite a bit of damage to the vehicles, and those driving and their passengers could be injured. The wrecks could also endanger other drivers. Maybe just some "SLOW-WILDLIFE CROSSING" signs would help. There are already speed limit signs, but many drivers seem to ignore those.

• I have seen dead hogs there. But I also see animal remnants dumped there for the buzzards.

• I drive slowly in that area and I see plenty of live wildlife there. I have seen quite a few deer running back and forth between the pasture on one side of the road and the wooded area on the other side. Sometimes there are deer grazing with the cattie in the pasture. I have seen wild turkeys there on many occasions. One day I stopped and watched a string of turkeys strut across the road. And of course the vultures are there all the time because they always have plenty of road kill to eat.

• That area is not far from Popash Slough, reported home of the famous Skunk Ape. Maybe we could put up a Skunk Ape crossing sign. That might get folks to pay attention.

• I noticed today there is a 15 mph sign on SW 16th Street just before the curve, but going the other direction, coming south on SW 48th Avenue, there is no sign. People should be warned they need to slow down for that curve, especially since there is quite often likely to be a deer, coyote or turkey in the road just after that curve and if they are going 30 mph, there is no way they can avoid an accident.

Wildlife refuge

• I hope everyone remembers to go to that meeting about the proposed wildlife refuge on Wednesday evening at the high school. From the looks of the map, they are talking about turning a good portion of Okeechobee County into a wildlife refuge. Now that might be a good thing and it might be a bad thing. But I think we need to have a good crowd there so they know we are concerned.

County commission

• I don’t think that there are any sitting on the board of county commissioners that don’t want to see Okeechobee grow but we need to do it right. There are so many things that have been approved and weren’t looked into in enough detail and now the land sits vacant or the business never started.

• The bottom line is, the more red tape you give to companies trying to come to town, the more problems there is going to be with them setting up shop. Period. All of the members of the BOCC are very intelligent people. But the biggest problem I have is at all times they need to remember they serve the public. In the future they need to know that the ENTIRE public is watching. We do not need to be putting off decisions until tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. We need answers today. We have to act today. People who are losing income do not have the luxury of waiting until tomorrow. They need money, their kids are hungry, they need a roof over their head. It is not going to get better until we take an EXTREMELY proactive stance in woeing these businesses to come, because the next county does want them. The businesses are going where the red carpet is being laid out for them, not the red tape they have to cut through.

Reflections from the pulpit

God meets us where we are

By Nancy Vaughan
Director of Christian Education, First United Methodist Church

I can’t say I’ve had a Damascus Road experience. I know that there are folks who have and I believe them. Wouldn’t it be awesome if we all could encounter the risen Christ in that way? There would be no doubt the message; no denying the blindness of our sight; no way we could avoid the “turn around” result in our being.

People who know me, know that I love butterflies. Not just the creatures, but the symbolism of “new life” in Christ. Today’s devotion by Dr. Charles Stanley is based on Ezekiel 36:25-27. He made me realize that the immediate effect of salvation (John Wesley said that his heart was “strangely warmed”) is just as radical and miraculous as the butterfly’s transformation, whether we feel it or not.

God says, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27 New Revised Standard Version)

So why do I still struggle every day in my walk with the Lord? Why do the concerns of this world still dominate my thoughts? Just how much of my heart is still stone and not flesh? Will I ever be tempted away from His statutes and ordinances?

Red Cross offers health and safety classes

The Okeechobee Service Center of the American Red Cross will be holding the following Health & Safety Classes in February:

- Feb. 9 - Adult CPR/AED
- Feb. 17 - Infant/Child CPR/AED
- Feb. 23 - First Aid Basics

All classes begin at 6 p.m. and are held at their local office located at 323 N. Parrott Ave. To register or for more information please call 863-763-2488.

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Our Purpose...

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We Pledge...

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

To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers.
- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.

MEMBER OF:

OPINION
Refl ections from the pulpit

Sunday, February 6, 2011

The answer to my last question is, "Yes!" As long as I am still in this world, I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin. I am going to sin.

Florida from the western states over many years. According to the FWC coyotes have also been illegally trucked in from western states and released. FWC has documented releases of coyotes in Gadsden, Liberty, Columbia and Polk counties. In Polk County, coyotes were released by a local fox hunter who believed he was stocking a depleted fox population with animals sold to him as “black fox.”

In Okeechobee County, ranchers have been dealing with a growing coyote problem for more than 10 years. Residents of the urban area of the county are also reporting sightings. In recent months coyotes have been spotted in populated areas such as Lazy 7, R-Bar Estates, Basswood, Seminole Cove and Buckhead Ridge.

“They are opportunistic omnivores, meaning they eat whatever animal and plant material is most abundant,” states the FWC report by Walter McCowen and Brian Scheick. “Although food items include wild species, conflicts with humans arise when coyotes prey on domestic animals such as chickens, house cats and livestock. Coyotes also carry diseases to domestic pets and livestock.”

Okeechobee County Livestock Agent Pat Hogue said coyotes also prey on baby calves.

“The coyotes are starting to become a real problem,” he said. “They take baby calves when they’re born. They have even been seen chasing older calves.”

“I’ve shot a couple coyotes when I’ve seen them messing with the cows,” he said. He said it is difficult to know how many coyotes are lost to coyotes each year because on the large ranches, the ranchers don’t know exactly how many calves they have until the round up. If a cow they know was pregnant does not have a calf at her side, the rancher doesn’t know if the baby died of natural causes or was taken by a predator.

Most troubling, Mr. Hogue said is that the coyotes seem to be losing their fear of man. He speculated this could be because they are crossbreeding with feral dogs.

“I’ve seen coyotes in the daytime more in the past year than ever before,” he said.

He added that the coyotes seem to be getting larger, which also indicates they may be cross breeding with larger dogs.

“I saw one coyote out in the middle of the day—it must have been 80 pounds. It must have been crossed,” he continued. While coyotes in other areas have been known to breed with wolves, in Florida it is more likely they are breeding with large dogs, he said, because there are no wolves here.

“They still look like coyotes,” he said. Coyote numbers are controlled to some degree by hunting and trapping.

“It’s hard to hunt coyotes because it mostly has to be done at night,” he said. While you can hear the coyotes, finding them is difficult even for an experienced hunter.

Mr. Hogue said some ranchers hire hunters to help keep the coyote population under control. Property owners do not need a permit to shoot a coyote, but special requirements are required to hunt coyotes at night and to use certain traps. He said there is no market for the pelts from Florida coyotes, due to the concerns about breeding with dogs and also because the weather does not get cold enough for the coyotes to grow thick fur. The only way a coyote hunter can make money is to work for a rancher.

Guard animals can provide some protection for livestock, he said. Donkeys, alpacas, llamas and certain breeds of dogs have proven to protect livestock from coyotes.

“Donkeys make excellent guard animals,” Mr. Hogue said. “Donkeys will become vicious when a predator comes around.”

He said his own cattle are protected by a Great Pyrenees/Australian Shepherd mix dog.

The effectiveness of any guard animal depends on the size of the herd and the size the property. You also have to consider the nature of the guard animals. For example, donkeys are very social. If you put a single donkey in a pasture with cattle or goats, the donkey will usually bond with the herd. But if you put several donkeys in the pasture, the donkeys may make their own herd, ignoring the other livestock. Male or “jack” donkeys used as guard animals are usually gelded; a jack that has not been gelded may be aggressive toward newborn members of the herd.

“Coyotes are most active at sunset and sunrise. Coyote home range sizes vary greatly. In a southeastern study, home ranges of adult coyotes ranged from 1,500 to 12,000 acres.”

Coyotes may carry small animals, such as chickens or newborn goats, leaving only tracks. They most often kill larger prey by biting the throat, causing death by suffocation.

Source: FWC

Protect your property from coyotes

• To make your property less attractive to coyotes, limit the food sources. Do not leave pet food out at night. If you put garbage cans outside, make sure they have tightly fitting, locking lids.

• Coyotes may carry rabies. Make sure your animals have been vaccinated against rabies.

• If coyotes are in the area, do not leave pet cats or small dogs outside at night. Coyotes view cats and small dogs as “prey.”

• Fencing can help keep coyotes out. To exclude coyotes, woven or welded wire fences should be at least 4 feet high with barbed wire above for a total minimum height of 5 feet. Adding height to the fence will increase its effectiveness. Mesh sizes should not exceed 4 x 6 inches. An outward overhang of fence wire will help prevent coyotes from jumping over. Electrical fency may also help to deter coyotes from crossing.

• If lethal control measures are necessary, they should be directed at specific coyotes or toward coyotes in a specific area. Indiscriminate killing of coyotes is unlikely to reduce coyote populations, which can withstand 70 percent annual kill.

• In pastures, guard animals such as donkeys, llamas, alpacas and certain breeds of guard dogs may protect livestock from coyotes.

Source: FWC

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March 2011

Okeechobee News
Community Events

Fountain of Life Church will host special program Feb. 6

His Majesty's Ministries will be at Fountain of Life Church, 1301 S.W. 32nd St., Sunday, Feb. 6, at 11 a.m., 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.

Post 64 hosting birthday club, Super Bowl Party on Sunday

American Legion Post 64 will have their monthly birthday club pot luck dinner Sunday, Feb. 6, at 3 p.m. Open mic karaoke with Michael will be from 3 until 6. Bring your favorite snacks and finger food to stay and watch the Super Bowl on our big screen TV.

VFW Post to host Super Bowl

The VFW North Post, 300 N.W. 34th St. will be hosting a Fried Chicken Dinner from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 6, with a Super Bowl party to follow.

Okeechobee to host meeting on proposed wildlife refuge

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.

Diabetes Education Program

“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.

Presidential candidate will visit Okeechobee on Feb. 9

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.

Obituaries

Selby S. Lee, 55

OKEECHOBEE — Selby S. Lee, died at her home on Friday, Jan. 21, 2011. Originally from Corbin, Kentucky, she had been a resident of Okeechobee since 1986. Her hobbies included reading, coloring and working crossword puzzles. She was preceded in death by her sister, Tammy Lewis. Survivors include her husband of 23 years, Mike; son, Willie (Rachael) Woodhouse; daughter, Wendy (Kyle) Dean; grandchildren, Meghan, Austin, and Nicholas Woodhouse and Kayla Dean, all of Okeechobee; sisters, Kathy (Bob) Riddings of Keavy, Ky., Rita (Bob) Kinser of Ashville, Ala., and Lynn (Jay) Lee of Land O’Lakes, Fla.; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Condolences may be sent online to www.buxtonseawinds.com. All arrangements were under the care of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home & Crematory.

Gerelda M. Hill, 91

OKEECHOBEE — Gerelda M. Hill, age 91, died at the Okeechobee Health Care Facility on Friday, Jan. 28, 2011. She was a native and lifetime resident of Okeechobee. She was a member of the First Baptist Church and the Ladies of the Moose. Gerelda was preceded in death by her husband, James Hill. Survivors include sons, Bobby Jo (Jackie) Jenkins of St. Augustine, Mike (Rhoda) Hill of Okeechobee, Dennis Jenkins of Ga.; numerous grandchildren including Jackie (Chuck) Pattison, Julie (Randy) Thomas and numerous great-grandchildren including Willie and Zack Pattison all of Okeechobee; and a sister, Mildred (Jack) Coker also of Okeechobee.

Condolences may be sent online to www.buxtonseawinds.com. All arrangements were under the care and direction of Matthew and Paul Buxton of Buxton-Seawinds Funeral Home & Crematory, 4550 Hwy. 441 N., Okeechobee, Fl.

Maurice L. “Doc” Joselson, 85

OKEECHOBEE — Maurice L. “Doc” Joselson, age 85, passed away Jan. 31, 2011, at his home. He was preceded in death by parents, Max and Rose Joselson; and sister, Edith J. Pearlman.

He is survived by his loving wife, Diane Walker Joselson; children, Emily Joselson (Alan), Rachel Joselson (Michael), Naomi Cole (Erik), Frank Lewis (Christi), and Leslie Barcia; and ten grandchildren.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date. Memorials may be made to Hospice of Okeechobee, P.O. Box 1548, Okeechobee, Fl 34973.
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Students of the Week

Central Elementary Students of the Week for the week of Jan. 24 are all very happy to have been selected including, kindergarten: Desel Arnold, Chase Ford, Emery Soto, Logan Bottari, Ira Garin, Keith Simpson, Daniel Tindall; first graders, Blake Hollister, John Smith, Stephanie Yanez, Zayda Ramirez, Brenden Willcuts, Labriosa McDuffie; second graders, Autumn Melear, Kate-lyn Shaw, Ke’Vin Floyd, Natalya Solis, Timoteo Mejia, Makayla Belangia; third graders, Cole Younger, Reed Jones, Lilian Arellano, Brianna Kukulka, Austin Allen, Bailey Manning; fourth graders, Jessica Rivas, Maria Aguilar, Daniela Caballero, and Martin Bornheimer.

Revival this week

Rev. Kenneth Shouse will speak at revival services at Westside Christian Church, 8082 S.R. 70W, Sunday through Wednesday, Feb. 6-9. Services on Sunday will be at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday services will be at 6 p.m.

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BIRTHS

SARAH MARIE HEPPE

Our families rejoice, a new life’s begun our circle is richer, with the birth of this little one. With joy and love in our hearts we welcome Sarah Marie Heppe she was born at 6:21 a.m. November 23, 2010, in Stuart, FL. She weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and was 19 inches long. She is the first born daughter of Charles D. Heppe and Rachel D. Byassee of Okeechobee, FL. Her maternal grandparents are Angela E. Jones - Fowler and Lester A. Fowler of Okeechobee. Her paternal grandparents are Daniel R. Heppe, of Okeechobee and Candy Lee Hyatt of Illinois.

Speckled Perch festival set for March 12-13

The 43rd Speckled Perch Festival will be March 12 and 13, in downtown Flagler Park. The event will be hosted by Okeechobee Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County. The event will feature various craft and food vendors beginning at 9 a.m. each day in the park. The Speckled Perch Festival parade will begin at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 12. Parade applications can be picked up at the Okeechobee Main Street office or by downloading it from the Main Street website (www.mainstreetokeechobee.com). For more information, call OKMS Executive Director Toni Doyle at 863-357-6246.
Students of the Week

Congratulations to the Students of the Week at South Elementary for the week of Jan. 24-28. They are: Kayden Carnley, Brice Anuez, Matlyn Staton, Jasmine Desai, Cobi Hernandez Aguillon, Christian Vega, Braelon Pelt, Yasmin Abonza, Alex Miller, Justin Scruggs, Irene Urvina, Alek Betscher, Sheila Flood, Jamaica Henry, Emily Land, Sharondra Jackson, Lane Collins, Ashley Travesio, Jesus Denova, Brianna Herrera, and Brenda Aguilar.

Students of the Week

Everglades Elementary students achieving excellence in the classroom for the week of Jan. 31-Feb. 4 include: Kindergarten students, Izaiah Bradley, Lizbeth Guerrero-Castro, Leticia Mejia, David Chapman Bulhmaier, Carlos Antonio-Rueda, Katelyn Slone, Daniela Sontai-Perez; first graders, Bryton Bohannan, Jordan Rickard, Philip Sanders, Drue Giles; second graders, Jesse Luna Raya, Zack Sutherland, CJ Kinder, Alex Younglove, Ashton Harper; third grade students, Bianca Fulks, Jonathan Johnson, Hailey Macrae, Josmar Estrada, Natalie Banuelos, Esrat Jahan; fourth graders, Brayon Rivera, Monica Luna, Earl Holiday; fifth graders, Juan Palacios, Perla Orozco, Margarita Elias, Alyssa Purviss, Alexandra Jacobo, and Destiny Reynolds. Congratulations to our many outstanding students.
Martin Memorial Medical Center named a 50 Top Cardiovascular Hospital

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*Based on overall results. Individual results may vary.
By Kati McWaters
Special to the Okeechobee News

Animal Science students at the Okeechobee High School are learning first-hand what it takes to manage a small-scale cattle operation.

Students fill the roles of foremen, hired-hands, accountants, ranch managers, and day workers on a 207 acre lease known as Grassy Island. The land was leased to Okeechobee High School for 30 years at the cost of one dollar per year by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to offer students as opportunity to learn in a real-world setting.

Animal Science Instructor Roger McWaters has the students fill out a job application at the beginning of the school year, and from there they are “hired,” the students manage 70 brood cows which are bred using a 3-breed rotation of Brahman, Angus and Gelbvieh bulls, build fences and maintain water sources on Grassy Island. They also keep track of financial records when cattle are sold.

According to Josh Lea, current Animal Science student, the profits from the sale of the cattle are used to support the activities of the agricultural program and the high school Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter.

The SFWMD works closely with the Animal Science classes to teach them about Best Management Practices (BMPs). These BMPs such as pasture rotation, controlled burns, and plant management are used on the lease to improve production of the land while maintaining Grassy Island’s environmental integrity.

Other members of the community have followed in the generous footsteps of the SFWMD and have contributed to Grassy Island in the form of a beautiful rock-wall entrance donated and installed by Mike Wallace, and a well and pump donated by Superior Water Works.

“It was awesome that SFWMD leased Grassy Island to our class as a way to replicate a real ranch-type setting,” said Daniel Ciorrocco, former Animal Science student.

“Gassy Island is an unmatchable education tool,” Mr. McWaters is glad his students have an opportunity to work outside and apply skills learned in the classroom in a real-world setting.

“Instructors and students are very appreciative of this rare opportunity to have the facilities to train students so they will be more employable in the agriculture industry,” said Mr. McWaters. “We are so grateful for the support the community has shown our program, and we hope we will be considered good stewards of the land.”

BY KATI MCWATERS

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Okeechobee County Fire Rescue, Okeechobee City Firemen, and the Division of Forestry spent five hours Wednesday to put out a brush fire that damaged some fence and fence posts at a local ranch at 4351 S.E. Berman Road.

Okeechobee County Fire Rescue Lt. Everett Wooten said firemen were greeted by a large white column of smoke as they approached the fire near State Road 710. The fast moving fire burned up some pasture and caught a cabbage hammock and some woods on fire.

Lt. Wooten said a flying ember from a burn barrel apparently sparked the fire. No buildings were damaged and no injuries were reported.

The American Red Cross Okeechobee office assisted firemen. About 2,000 gallons of water was used to put out the flames.

A burn ban remains in affect for Okeechobee County due to the ongoing drought and high threat of brush fires.

**OHS animal science students learning cattle management**

**Okeechobee Livestock Market Report**

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**Prize basket goes to raffle winners**

The Okeechobee Educational Foundation, Inc. hosted a booth at the Health and Safety Expo. The Foundation offered a raffle prize, a basket full of health care items. The lucky winners, Larry and Janice Trent. Many thanks to all who stopped by the Foundation booth.

**For more information on scholarships and mini-grants call 863-462-5000 ext. 257.**

**Brush fire burns 55 acres**

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**ENgagement**

KRISTIN LARSON & ALEX HAMILTON

M s. Karen Williamson Larson and Mr. John Larson of Okeechobee announce the engagement of their daughter, Kristin Annette to Alex Hamilton, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Hamilton, Jr. of Aiken, SC. Kristin is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sonny Williamson and Mr. and Mrs. Red Larson of Okeechobee. Kristin graduated from the University of Florida and is currently employed by Erwin-Penland Advertising in Greenville, SC. Alex is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and plays golf professionally. A July 9, 2011 wedding is planned in Greenville, SC.
Flight school could benefit local economy

By Pete Gawda
Okeechobee News

A proposed flight school at the Okeechobee County Airport could help Okeechobee’s ailing economy.

The Academy of Aviation, based in Farmingdale, NY, first made a proposal at the Dec. 16, 2010, meeting of the Okeechobee County Commission. At that time the school wanted to open on Jan. 1, 2011. County administrator Lyndon Bonner said that would not be possible because there was not enough time since he only received the proposal on Dec. 12. The school wanted a hangar but there were no hangars available. The school also wanted permission to erect a modular building at the airport which would require a hangar. Commissioners Ray Domer and Matthew Stinnett were in favor of the modular building, while commissioners Joey Hoover, Bryant Culpepper and Margaret Helton were in favor of a hangar building being used temporarily for no more than 18 months. The board took no official action at that time.

The matter came up again at the Jan. 27 meeting. This time there was no request for any type of building. The school offered to rent conference room space from a local hotel for classroom instruction. The school just wanted guaranteed tie down spaces for two aircraft that they were willing to pay for. Currently there is no charge for tie down spaces. The board voted their approval of the flight school and directed staff to come up with a policy and rate schedule for tie down rentals.

According to figures supplied by the school, the total estimated direct economic impact generated by the school would be $687,019 annually. This includes $37,980 annually for the required 100 hour and annual inspections of the two aircraft that would be used by the school. The two aircraft would burn an estimated 56,800 gallons of aviation fuel annually at a cost of $276,900.

The flight school would be willing to pay $148 per aircraft per month in tie fees. That amounts to $3,804 a year. Total annual salaries for three flight instructors would be $127,800.

The school estimates that students would spend an average of $15 a day for two meals at the airport restaurant. Based on 10 students, that comes out to $8,760 a year. Incidents for student pilots were estimated to be $350 a day or $12,775 annually. The 10 students would pay a total of $4,380 a year in lodging in local hotels.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at www.newszap.com. Reporter Pete Gawda can be reached at pgawda@newszap.com.
Soccer player charged with felony

By Eric Kopp

A man reportedly “excited” because his team had just won a soccer match was arrested after he allegedly bumped an apartment manager with his car.

Emanuel Salvador Castaneda, 18, N.E. 64th Ave., was arrested Thursday, Feb. 3, on a felony charge of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and a misdemeanor charge of racing on a highway.

Castaneda is being held in the Okeechobee County Jail in lieu of $10,500 bond.

An arrest report by Officer Bryan Enderle of the Okeechobee City Police Department (OCPD) stated that he clocked two cars on U.S. 441 N. travelling at a speed of 73 mph each in a 40 mph zone. The two cars—one black and the other yellow—were racing in the 1100 block of the highway, stated the officer.

When he pulled out onto the highway and turned on his emergency lights both vehicles turned onto N.W. Ninth St., the report stated. The officer said the yellow car pulled into an apartment complex, while the black car continued west on N.W. Ninth St.

According to the officer’s report, the driver of the yellow car (Castaneda) turned off the headlights then turned in behind a building after driving through the grass and over a sidewalk. The manager of the complex stopped the vehicle and told Castaneda he needed to stop and wait for police. Instead of stopping, Castaneda bumped the manager with the car’s front bumper “… and fled the parking lot in a reckless manner,” the report continued.

Officer Enderle went on to indicate that he saw Castaneda’s car leave the parking lot at a high rate of speed. The officer stated that he was able to stop Castaneda on N.E. 14th Ave. According to the report, Castaneda finally stopped when he realized he “… was not able to avoid contact…” with law enforcement.

The man allegedly told Officer Enderle that he was racing his friend because they were both excited about winning a soccer game.

The report does not indicate who was driving the other car, or if that driver was arrested.

Drug arrest made at boat ramp

By Eric Kopp

A man was booked into the county jail Thursday night after suspected marijuana and some alleged prescription medications were reportedly found in one of his shoes.

Dewayne Edward Rutherford, 22, S.W. 11th Ave., Okeechobee, was arrested Feb. 3 on a felony charge of possession of a controlled substance (oxycodone) and a misdemeanor charge of possession of marijuana under 20 grams.

He is being held in the Okeechobee County Jail under a bond of $10,500.

An arrest report stated that a detective with the Okeechobee Narcotics Task Force was summoned to the Taylor Creek Boat Ramp in regard to a suspicious vehicle. After arriving at the ramp, the detective met with the people in the vehicle and asked them to consent to a search.

While searching Rutherford, the detective stated that three oxycodone tablets and three unidentified tablets were found in one of his shoes. The detective went on to state that a small plastic bag containing a green leafy substance was also found in his shoe.

When that substance was field tested, the test indicated a positive result for the presence of marijuana. According to the report, the suspected pot weighed 6 grams.

The detective’s report also stated that Rutherford paid approximately $75 for the pot weighed 6 grams. The report stated that he was racing his friend because they were both excited about winning a soccer game.

The report does not indicate who was driving the other car, or if that driver was arrested.

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Cotton thanks coaches, mom for prowess in sports

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

LeAnna Cotton is one of the few girls at Okeechobee High School who will earn varsity letters in three sports this year, volleyball, soccer and softball.

Cotton has already won the most valuable player award for volleyball, was one of the top players in soccer, and will undoubtedly be one of the best players on the softball season this year.

The veteran and three-year starter figures to play first or third base depending on how the team shapes up during practice. She will also bring a big bat to the middle of the Brahman batting order.

“I think we are going to do great this year and we should make it to the state finals,” Cotton said.

She already has earned a scholarship to Capital University in Bexley, Ohio, and will play both softball and volleyball. She said she loves both sports and a main reason she chose that university was because she didn’t have to choose between the sports.

Cotton also participated in a volleyball showcase in West Palm Beach in December and got to test her skills against some of the best players in South Florida.

Now she turns her attention to softball. Cotton really became a force at the plate late in the season. She thanked former coach Kim Hargraves for helping her make adjustments at the plate to improve her results.

“My hitting really came along last year. I felt last year was my best year in softball so far,” she added.

Cotton said the girls have been kept on their toes this year because no one has been given a starting spot. She said there are a lot of good young players who have challenged the older girls to get better and work hard.

“I feel like all the seniors have been real good role models and leaders so far. We all have to fight each other for our positions. The younger players are really nice people to be around. We all get along really well,” she said.

Cotton knows Jensen Beach will always have a solid team. She also expects Sunrise to be a tough team this year. Nonetheless, Cotton is certain Okeechobee will be in good shape.

“If I feel we should be fine as long as we play like we know how,” she said.

Cotton started playing ball at a young age in OCRA T-ball leagues. She thanked her mother Karen Cotton for helping her to play all of her sports. “If I didn’t have them I wouldn’t have been able to play any of my sports. I also thank my coaches who made me the player I am and made me better.”

Drew Selvey is ready to produce for OHS ‘Boys of Spring’

By Charles M. Murphy
Okeechobee News

Selvey has also embraced the role of team leader this year. He said as a senior it is his time to step up and help the younger players.

He said the seniors on the team have done a good job so far playing hard and showing the right way to play baseball.

Selvey said although he’d like to remain the leadoff hitter in the lineup, he hasn’t been told where he might fit in. He said he is a first ball fastball hitter and the leadoff spot is where he is most comfortable.

“I’m not real big on sitting back and hitting curveballs, I want to hit the fastball,” he said.

Selvey predicts Lincoln Park to remain Okeechobee’s biggest rival this year. The Greyhounds defeated Okeechobee last year in the District semifinals.

Selvey also predicted the Brahman pitching staff will play a big role in whether the Brahms go to the post season this year, “We have Austin Hamilton and Brandon Farless so I think we should be alright."

Okeechobee opens up their season on Feb. 18 against Jensen Beach at home.
Diego Rodriguez scored in the 96th minute in double overtime as Okeechobee defeated Titusville 2-1 in the Regional Quarterfinal match Thursday night in Okeechobee.

Rodriguez got a one-on-one opportunity with Terriers goal keeper Nick Stover after a great feed by Hunter Pritchard about 40 yards from the goal and buried the shot into the lower left hand corner of the net to keep the Brahman season going.

“We’ve been training hard and this is what we’ve been training for,” Rodriguez said, “You have got to keep going until the end and never give up. You must give 110 percent all the time.”

Rodriguez said he knew he had to end the match and he put in a shot almost impossible to block.

Erick Garcia scored a first half goal for the Brahmans in the 17th minute of the first half on a long pass from Javier Garcia. Erick flipped the ball high over the head of Stover and it landed in the upper right hand corner of the net.

Titusville scored five minutes later to tie the score. It remained tied through the second half and one 10 minute overtime period. Both teams played at a high level of skill and intensity.

There were a few yellow cards but most of the match was simply good, clean aggressive soccer.

Brahman Coach Lonnie Sears did take time to talk to the referees at the halftime break after they had blown the whistle 12 times against his team and only three times against Titusville.

“We are playing hard. If we keep playing hard we will be hard to beat. We are the heartbreak kids. We have owned overtime for years,” he said.

Sears said he knew Titusville could score goals and were physical. He said he was surprised the Terriers did a good job of controlling possession of the ball.

He stressed possession to his team at halftime.

He also told the Brahmans to relax and make something happen.

“I didn’t expect that high a level of soccer from them. I was surprised they controlled the ball and pushed it around the field like they did,” he added.

A great, energetic crowd was on hand to cheer on the Brahmans. Coach Sears said he told his team to spread the word and bring as many friends and family to the match so his team would have the home field advantage. He thanked the crowd for making a lot of noise whenever the Brahmans had the advantage.

He urged Brahman sports supporters to do that again for Tuesday as Okeechobee will host Merritt Island, a 5-0 winner over Fort Pierce Central in the other regional match.

Sears said he feels his team has the talent to keep this run going. “The stars do come up with stuff. Our team is full of stars. Somebody different has stepped up every single game,” he said.