Nitrogen from the air helps fuel blue-green algae ...

Community News ...

Big, healthy bass and big checks continue strong on Lake Okeechobee ...

Sugar farmers push back on attacks from media ...

Local surgical services reduce burden of travel ...

Lake Levels

14.54 feet
Last Year: 13.27 feet

Source: South Florida Water Management District. Depth given in feet above sea level

FFA chapter has had a busy summer

Marco Sanchez
Clewiston FFA

The Clewiston FFA chapter has had a very productive summer. Eighteen students and five chaperones attended the Florida FFA State Convention, which was held June 10 through 15.

Our parliamentary procedure team, consisting of Soraya Martinez, Morgan Daniels, Caroline Sweet, Karlee Lamb, Olivia Williams and Mark Faulk, competed in the state-level competition, and did an outstanding job, making everyone from Clewiston very proud. Each member attended several different workshops that helped us in developing leadership skills. We will bring back these newly learned skills and spread them throughout our chapter and school. All in all, it was a very exciting, motivational and educational experience.

In the middle of the summer, the Clewiston FFA officer team was invited to help campaign and survey for Denise Grimsley, candidate for Florida commissioner of agriculture.

On July 21, the officer team traveled to Haines City, home of the Florida FFA Leadership Training.

See FFA — Page 4

Bottom left to right and up: Olivia Williams, vice president; Caroline Sweet, president; Gwendolyn Ash, secretary; Damien Rivera, sentinel; Mark Faulk, treasurer; and Marco Sanchez, reporter.

School board, teachers’ union at impasse

Public meeting set for Aug. 21, at LaBelle High School Auditorium

Special to The Clewiston News

The Hendry Education Support Professionals Association, HESPA, is at an impasse with the Hendry County School District regarding pay raises. The impasse hearing is scheduled for 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 21, at the LaBelle High School Auditorium in LaBelle. HESPA is arguing for a raise for all support staff for the 2018-19 school year. HESPA is inviting the community to stand behind those who support the children and educators of this county with their attendance.

President of HESPA Richard West said: “After several years without a raise, HESPA is advocating for fair and reasonable wages for 309 employees that support the education of over 7,200 students daily. We believe that this is not about ability to pay but willingness to support the staff and students of our district.” Support staff includes non-instructional staff such as paraprofessionals (teacher’s aides), secretaries, bookkeepers, custodians, mechanics, maintenance, bus drivers and bus aides paid by the county. Part of the impasse also includes increases for bus drivers. According to HESPA, the district refused a

See SCHOOL — Page 4

Bosley inducted into the FL 4-H Hall of Fame

Special to The Clewiston News

A Hendry County resident has been named to the Florida 4-H Hall of Fame.

Patricia Ann Bosley began her 4-H experiences in 1978 in a small community between Clewiston and LaBelle. Patricia enrolled her three older children in the local 4-H Club, but soon the volunteer leader moved away. Instead of disbanding the club, Patricia became the new volunteer leader for the Pioneer Arts and Crafts 4-H Club. Presently, Patricia is the 4-H leader of the Pioneer Sewing 4-H Club and the Pioneer Small Animal 4-H Club. Previously, she served as the Pioneer Dairy Goat 4-H Club leader.

In addition to being active in the Hendry County 4-H Club Program, Mrs. Bosley is strongly involved in her community. For 16 years she has held the position of secretary for the Pioneer Neighborhood Watch Organization. Moreover, Patricia has been an outstanding 4-H

See BOSLEY — Page 4
Tests by the University of Florida show the cyanobacteria bloom in the lake has changed.

At the start of the summer, the dominant type was a species of Microcystis, according to Florida Department of Environmental Regulation (FDEP) tests. In late July, the Microcystis bloom appeared to die off. A new bloom that has grown in size in August is a different type of cyanobacteria.

Changes in the cyanobacteria in Lake Okeechobee have been tracked this summer by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration using satellite imagery to detect cyanobacteria in the water column. The NOAA imagery cannot determine what kind of cyanobacteria is present.

The Aug. 10 image showed cyanobacteria in about 38 percent of Lake Okeechobee, according to satellite oceanographer Dr. Sachin Mishra of NOAA.

Most of the cyanobacteria was in the northeast quadrant of the lake according to the Aug. 10 image.

Cyanobacteria, commonly called “blue-green algae” although it is not technically algae, was detected in 90 percent of the lake in July, then dissipated to about 10 percent of the big lake, according to the NOAA imagery. The most recent imagery shows the cyanobacteria concentrations in about 38 percent of the lake.

The cyanobacteria in the NOAA imagery may not be visible on the water surface, according to Dr. Mishra. It could be in the water column. The satellite can detect cyanobacteria that may not be visible to the human eye.

On Aug. 7, Dr. Dail Laughinghouse, an assistant professor of applied phycology at the UF/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, collected water samples from Lake Okeechobee. He found the samples of blue-green algae included three species of Microcystis, which dominated the bloom that started in June, and six species of Anabaena.

Dr. Karl Havens, director of Florida Sea Grant, said the original bloom that started in June appeared to dissipate before another bloom resurged on Lake Okeechobee.

“We use the word resurging because two weeks ago the bloom appeared to be dissipating – perhaps due to weather conditions or because the algae ran out of dissolved nitrogen in the lake water. We speculated that the bloom might reemerge and be dominated by a species, like Anabaena, that could obtain the nitrogen it needs to grow from the atmosphere. The last update confirmed that this predicted change in the kind of algae did happen, and this latest image indicates that the bloom is steadily growing in size,” Dr. Havens wrote on the Florida Sea Grant website on Aug. 11.

According to Dr. Havens, “it is impossible to say how long the bloom will persist, because it is controlled in part by wind, rain and cloud cover, which are unpredictable. However, the bloom now includes Anabaena, a species that can obtain, or fix, the nitrogen it needs from the atmosphere. With continued sunny days, warm water, abundant phosphorus from the lake sediments and an unlimited source of nitrogen from the atmosphere, this bloom has the ingredients it needs to grow. This is different from the original bloom of Microcystis, which needed nitrogen from the lake water.”

Dr. Havens noted that the releases from the lake to the coastal estuaries may or may not have seeded blue-green algae blooms in those waterways.

“Finding the same kind of blue-green algae dominating the blooms in the lake and in one of the estuaries neither confirms nor negates a physical connection,” he wrote. “Microcystis is a common bloom-former in lakes across the United States, Europe and Asia.”

Most of the water – and the nutrient load – that goes in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries comes from the local watersheds, not from Lake Okeechobee, he noted.

“On average, 60 percent of the total fresh water going into both the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries originates from the local watersheds, and 40 percent originates from Lake Okeechobee,” Dr. Havens wrote.
Community News

Support group set Aug. 16
The Florida Gulf Coast Chapter Hendry County of the Alzheimer's Association will hold an All Dementia Caregiver Support Group on Thursday, Aug. 16, at 6 p.m. at the United Methodist Church, 331 W Osceola Ave. in Clewiston. For information, call 561-755-3129 or email mzlulvile2@yahoo.com.

USAJobs overview set Aug. 16
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will provide a USAJobs website overview at no cost to the public on Thursday, Aug. 16, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Clewiston Public Library, 120 W Osceola Ave. in Clewiston. Learn how to navigate the site and get a job. For information, call 863-983-8101 ext 232.

Creative workshops open
Painting workshops hosted by the Confident Creator, Heather Caldwell, will be held at the Clewiston Public Library, 120 W Osceola Ave., on Saturday, Aug. 18. The children’s workshop for ages 8 and up will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. An adult workshop will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. There is a $15 registration fee which includes all materials. Registration is required due to limited seating.

Florida B. Thomas Library
• Abuse Counseling & Treatment Inc. invites the community to a presentation on sexual violence, and domestic violence on Wednesday, Aug. 22, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Florida B. Thomas Library located at 1010 J Harlem Academy Ave. in Clewiston. This event is free.
• Stop by the Florida B. Thomas Library to sign-up for a free smoke detector, and installation, from the American Red Cross. Sign-up now through Aug. 30. For information, call 863-902-3322.

Red Cross installs alarms
The American Red Cross is able to provide smoke alarms at no cost to at risk communities as well as provide fire safety education and check existing smoke alarms. They will install new smoke alarms at no cost in the City of Clewiston on Thursday, Aug. 30, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you would like them to visit your home, call the Clewiston Library at 863-983-1493 to sign up.

Pool days and hours set
The Harlem Community Pool, 2001 10th St. in Clewiston, is now open on Saturdays through Sept. 1 and on Labor Day, Sept 3. Pool hours are from 10 a.m. to noon, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., and from 3 to 5 p.m. Admission is $2.

HGUNC meets Friday
Non-profit representatives and the public are invited to the Hendry/Glades Unmet Needs Coalition (HGUNC) meeting, to be held on Friday, Aug. 17, at 5:30 p.m. at the Carlson Memorial United Methodist Church, 310 Campbell St. in LaBelle. For information, call Terri Miazga at 813-892-5021.

Know when to swim, shore it or dodge it
Special to the Glades County Democrat

GLADES/HENDRY — The Florida Department of Health in Hendry and Glades Counties reminds residents and visitors to safely enjoy Florida’s waters this summer. Florida’s 2.4 million miles of freshwater and saltwater shorelines offer opportunities to have fun and stay cool, but it is important to know when to swim, stick to the shore or avoid naturally occurring living organisms such as mosquitoes or algae blooms.

Cyanobacteria/blue-green algae are a group of organisms that can live in freshwater, saltwater or mixed “brackish” water. When conditions are right, such as with warm water and increased nutrients, these organisms can increase in numbers and accumulate in some areas of a water body. These blooms can sometimes be pushed near the shore by winds, waves, tides and currents. When this happens, people have a greater chance of contacting the blooms.

Exposure to water containing algae may cause gastrointestinal effects if swallowed and rash if touched or inhaled. Swimming in water with blue-green algae blooms may cause ear, eye and skin reactions, and hay fever- and flu-like symptoms (including diarrhea) — these reactions are not common. Algae blooms can also remove oxygen from the water and cause fish kills. The department offers the following “Swim It, Shore It or Dodge It” reminders:
• Swim It with a buddy when safety flags and signs indicate that it is safe to do so.
• Shore It on the sand if you have a cut on your skin, have a weakened immune system or you are alone.
• Dodge It by avoiding organisms that live in or near the water, and stay clear of algae blooms. If you experience illness related to an algae bloom, please call the Florida Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222.

For health-related questions, contact the Florida Department of Health in Hendry and Glades Counties at 863-674-4014. To report fish kills, call Fish Kill Hotline (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) at 800-636-0511. To report algae blooms, contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at 855-305-3003.

About the Florida Department of Health
The department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @HealthyFla. For more information about the Florida Department of Health, visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.
Celebrating 50 years of public health service

Special to The Clewiston News

On Saturday, July 14, a celebratory dinner was given in honor of Joanne Vorhees, an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP), who has served in the Department of Health in Hendry and Glades Counties for 50 years. She began her long career in public health as a registered nurse for 25 years before pursuing her advanced degree as a nurse practitioner.

Ms. Vorhees has done it all, including epidemiology, prenatal services, immunizations, family planning, school health, and more. As an ARNP, she has provided women’s health services for many generations of women.

“Joanne also performs disaster duties and is one of the most ‘resourceful’ nurse practitioners I have ever met!” said Jennifer Hood, ARNP, nursing director for the Florida Department of Health in Hendry and Glades Counties. “She has the knowledge and skills that have helped many of the people we serve.”

Joseph Pepe, the health officer for the Department of Health in these counties, said: “Joanne has been loved by the community she serves. We hope she never retires! She is an amazing and certainly a public health icon!” He read a congratulatory letter from the state surgeon general, secretary of health for the State of Florida, Celeste Phillips.

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has started a Joanne Vorhees Nursing Scholarship for those interested in pursuing nursing. This scholarship is exclusive only to Hendry and Glades counties. We all can donate to this fund to show our love, respect, sense of community and admiration to this lady. To donate to the scholarship, you can visit the link: http://bit.ly/JoanneVorheesScholarship.

SCHOOL

Continued From Page 1

50 cent per hour raise for all support staff, and instead offered a 1 percent raise. This 1 percent equates to 9 cents for the lowest-paid employee. Their offer was $60,270, split over 300 employees. The district’s claim is that it does not have the money; therefore, it does not have the ability to pay.

On July 1, 2017, the district started the year with $10,605,452 in its fund balance, which is 19.21 percent of the annual budget. This was an increase of $523,000 over the previous year’s fund balance, another year with $10,605,452 in its fund balance, another percent of the budget. A 50-cent raise for every support person would cost the district less than $220,000.

BOSLEY

Continued From Page 1

Club leader for 41 years in Hendry County. She has helped numerous youth in the Pioneer community overcome many barriers to help them achieve their goals in 4-H and in life. Learning to work with a diverse group of youth, Patricia has learned to adapt to difficult situations and circumstances while maintaining balance and conformity within the Hendry County 4-H Club Program.

Patricia was awarded the Hendry County 4-H Outstanding Leader Award in 1980, 1987 and 1997. She was also awarded FAA 4H Friend of 4-H in 2001 and captured the National 4-H Council Lifetime Volunteer Award in 2003. Congratulations on being inducted in the Florida 4-H Hall of Fame on Aug. 1.

FFA

Continued From Page 1

Center, for a three-day bonding and team building retreat, where we collaborated on projects together and learned to strongly cooperate together as a team. We believe this time together will help us build unity and also achieve goals that we set for our chapter.

Several members also volunteered with teachers and staff to help Clewiston High School beautify the campus by adding new plants, laying mulch, trimming trees and cleaning sidewalks.

Our chapter is ready for a new and exciting year, and we would like to encourage all agriculture students to take advantage of the opportunity to join our FFA chapter, and adults to join our FFA alumni.

Serving the communities south of Lake Okeechobee
August 16, 2018
**Obituaries**

Obituaries should be submitted by sending e-mail to obits@newszap.com. Customers may also request photos and links to online guest books. A link to the obituaries is available at www.newszap.com.

**Billie Joyce Wiseman Borst**

A burial of cremains of Billie Joyce Wiseman Borst will be held at 3:00 p.m. Friday, August 17, 2018, immediately followed by a celebration of her life held at the Clewiston Inn. There was a funeral director error in last week’s newspaper.

**Debra A Hughes, 59**

MOORE HAVEN — Debra A Hughes passed away Aug. 10, 2018 in Loxahatchee.

She was born Nov. 2, 1958 in Pensacola, to the late George and Julie (Gam) Harris.

Survivors include one son, Robert (Jackie) Durson; two daughters, Leslie Whitehead and Shelley (Matt) Farnam; three brothers, Paul Harris, Steve Harris and Ronnie Harris; two sisters, Carol Whitehead and Donna Dixon; five grandchildren, Jenna Smith, Kaitlyn Durson, Chase Dowd, Paisley Farnam and Everley Farnam.

Memorial services will be held Saturday, Aug. 18, 2018 at 11 a.m. at Alvin L. Ward Boat Ramp, Moore Haven.

Arrangements by Akin-Davis Funeral Home - Clewiston.

**Philip Earnest Mann, 75**

CLEWISTON — Philip Earnest Mann passed away Aug. 13, 2018 at home.

Philip was born Mar. 25, 1943 in Light, Arkansas to Earl and Margaret (Barber) Mann. Mr. Mann married Linda L. Shannon on March 13, 1961 at Brooklyn, Arkansas. He served in the United States Air Force from January 1961- January 1965. After he was discharged from the Air Force, he worked for many years as a corrections officer for Glades Corrections Institute. He continued retiring as a Sergeant. He enjoyed wood working, building items with wood. He just built a display of wood working tools the day before he passed away. He was a member of the PBA.

Philip leaves behind his loving wife of 53 years, Linda Mann of Clewiston; four sons, Tony Mann and wife Suzie, Steve Mann and wife Sheri, Troy Mann, Tracey Mann and wife Lindsey; sister, Barbara Treadway; grandchildren, Heather Isaac and husband Ryan, Brandon Mann, Josh Mann and wife Katherine, Trent Mann, Elizabeth Smith, Savannah Mann, Kyle Mann, Ely Mann, Cooper Mann, Colton Mann, Kayci Gillean and husband Ty, Braden Compton, Alexis Diliberto; great grandchildren, Lily Isaac, Noah Isaac, Gannon Gillean, Sawyer Mann, Sloan Mann, Stella Mann, Liam Bradley, Callen Pitt and Weston Smith.

Memorial gathering of family and friends will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 18, 2018 at Akin-Davis Funeral Home — Clewiston.

Cremation arrangements by Akin-Davis Funeral Home - Clewiston.

**Reflections from the Pulpit**

When people aren’t heard for the wrong reasons; and what to listen for

By The Reverend Samuel S. Thomas, Ph. D.+

Saint Martin’s Church, Clewiston

Somehow I was involved with a discussion on oil consumption when on vacation one year and where I disagreed with the people around me. I don’t remember all of the details, but I remember someone asking me “Where are you from?” I replied that it doesn’t matter where I am from, the points I was trying to make did not depend on my geography. My answer wasn’t satisfying and my comments were dismissed by others in the group. I hung on nevertheless, and continued to make my points. When we ended, nobody had changed their mind and each kept reiterating what was previously said. Other than disagreeing, the dialogues were useless!

All too often I’ve heard that “People from ... are like that” or “That’s typical of those ...” or “You can always expect people from ... to think that way.”

A few years back, one of my colleagues was deemed as trying to “understand” immigrants from a Caribbean country in the church he served and apparently didn’t make much headway. When I began ministry there, one parishioner said to me “You don’t understand us.” My reply was “Well, you all don’t think alike!” and I let it go at that. So did the people in the congregation and we got along very well for my tenure there.

My parents came from different backgrounds and disagreements were sometimes attributed to the differences. For awhile I dated someone whose parents came from the same country. Disagreements being attributed to the fact that they were from different towns! As I began to explore the New Testament, I noted that people were identified by their professions or where they came from. They were divided among themselves; “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (v. 52).”

The ploy is to assail the person and ignore what he is saying; to look for weaknesses in what is being proclaimed; to point out “we know him, he’s outside of his field” and find a rationale to dismiss what is being said. I’ve been told that it is an effective tactic, even if it has nothing to do with the topic at hand.

It was a problem in Jesus’ day and is still with us. Jesus chose to stay above the fray. His words are still with us and have lasted.

I have found that I do better when I listen to what people say rather than worry about where they’re from or what their lineage may be. Jesus’ “lineage” didn’t bother Him; He made use of it by opening the doors to all of humanity. His mandate was to “Go into all of the world...” and that’s the way that overcomes dismissing others for reasons that don’t matter after all.

**Lakeside Ranch STA contract approved**

Special to INI Florida

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWM) Governing Board last week awarded a contract to build the final piece of the Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) project, the S-191A Pump Station.

In cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, SFWM’s project will improve the hydrology and water quality of Lake Okeechobee.

The Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area in western Martin County is a key component of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. It is one of the restoration projects included in the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan that will improve the quality of water flowing into the lake.

SFWM previously constructed 2,700 acres of wetlands in two phases, capable of treating stormwater runoff from the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough basins flowing into Lake Okeechobee. The 1,200-acre first phase was completed in 2012 and the 1,500-acre second phase will be completed this year. The treatment area uses wetland plants to remove phosphorus from stormwater runoff naturally.

The S-191A Pump Station is the last component of the Lakeside Ranch project. Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough basins have the highest phosphorus levels of any incoming watershed into the lake, with average total levels of more than 400 parts per billion (ppb). Phosphorus levels leaving Lakeside Ranch after treatment have been measured as low as 20 ppb. The STA can remove nearly 21 tons of phosphorus each year from the waters feeding the lake.

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CLEWISTON — How is Lake Okeechobee doing? With lots of big bass hitting the stage and checks with big numbers being handed out, the anglers in the third qualifier of the 2018 Roland Martin Marine Center Series will tell you it’s doing just fine. With 137 boats launching out of Roland Martin Marina at safe light for Qualifier #3, the highest paying tournament trail in Florida continued strong.

The winning team of Charles Metheny and Brandon Medlock loaded their well with 28 pounds of Lake Okeechobee bass and banked the $6,000 winners’ check. They came from the north with black and blue Medlock jigs in the reeds and proved to be the winning ticket. And they needed all 28 pounds, with the top eight teams bringing in sacks of 20 pounds-plus.

The second-place team of Donny Bass and Mike Melsenheimer tapped some plentiful honey holes for 26-13 and cashed in for $3,000. The third-place finishers included the top female finisher, Deanna Ford, who collected her bonus check from Mary Anne Martin and added $1,800 more with her teammate Anthony Ford with a weight of 24.73. Overall, the highest-paying team tournament trail in Florida paid out to the top 22 finishing teams, with 83 of the 137 teams bringing healthy Lake Okeechobee bass to the scales. And despite what rumors and news-hype sound bites are saying, Lake Okeechobee is doing well. But one of the most famous big-bass fisheries in the world could use your support.

Recently, the SlowTheFlowFL.com was launched to urge leaders to come up with solutions to get all of the excess water and nutrients entering Lake Okeechobee from the lakes and the surrounding area. The website is designed to provide information on how to protect Lake Okeechobee AND the coastal estuaries at the same time.

Big healthy bass and big checks continue strong on Lake Okeechobee

Special to The Clewiston News

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World Breastfeeding Week recognized

Special to The Clewiston News

HENDRY/GLADES — The Florida Department of Health in Hendry and Glades Counties and partners across the state celebrated World Breastfeeding Week 2018 during Aug 1-7. This year’s theme was Breastfeeding: Foundation of Life.

“We know that an infant’s first 1,000 days are a crucial time for ensuring the child grows up healthy and thriving, and breastfeeding can significantly improve health outcomes for both mothers and infants,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip. “Supporting mom and encouraging breastfeeding in the first days of baby’s life are essential steps for ensuring successful breastfeeding.”

Joe Pepe, health officer and administrator for the DOH in Hendry and Glades Counties, stated, “The department is working to promote breastfeeding as a vital health activity, and encourages breastfeeding-friendly hospitals, child care facilities, work places and communities.”

World Breastfeeding Week 2018 encourages everyone to be an advocate for breastfeeding. When a mom chooses to breastfeed, she helps improve baby’s overall health and prevents malnutrition. Breastfeeding has positive lifelong health effects on infants, children and mothers, such as lower incidence of respiratory infections and ear infections for infants and children and reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer for mothers. Also, breastfeeding reduces the risk of overweight and obesity.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for infants for the first year of life and beyond, with the addition of appropriate complementary foods when the infant is developmentally ready, around six months of age.

Breastfeeding provides food security to infants from the very beginning of life, contributes to food security for the whole family and ensures food security for babies even in times of household or widespread disasters. The economic benefits of breastfeeding can help break the cycle of poverty for families, which impacts hunger and malnutrition. With no additional burden on household income, breastfeeding is a low-cost way of feeding babies and contributes to poverty reduction. Breastfeeding can also reduce costs to the health care system and employers, by decreasing costs of hospitalizations, medications, and reduced absenteeism.
Dena Pittman: Hendry appraiser seeks election

On June 25, I was honored with the appointment as Hendry County property appraiser by Gov. Rick Scott.

I started my career in 1989 in Palm Beach County and, after 17 years there, I transferred to the Hendry County Property Appraiser’s Office in 2006.

I became the chief deputy for Phillip Pelletier in 2009 and had the privilege to work under his leadership until he retired in March 2018. During my career, I have worked in several departments within the appraiser’s office and have the experience necessary to understand every aspect and role of the property appraiser.

As I move into this important position, I am proud to say that I will lead this office with respect, character and integrity. I have worked under four property appraisers in my nearly 30 years of employment, and while each one held different talents and beliefs, my most important goals are to always serve the public in a kind and courteous manner and to uphold the law while creating a fair and equitable tax roll.

I am excited to announce that Lucia Hernandez will serve as my chief deputy. Lucia has been a tremendous asset to this office for the past 11 years, starting as a record specialist and quickly moving to administrative assistant. Ms. Hernandez works closely with the Department of Revenue, our software programmers and the department heads of various offices within the county. Her talents are appreciated by many both in and out of this county. I know she is capable of fulfilling this position with great success.

I have also promoted Nick Tanner to appraisal director. Mr. Tanner has been with this office for nearly five years, becoming a certified Florida evaluator in the first two years of employment. He played a tremendous role during the conversion of our new software, assisting with the intricate aspects of valuations, calculations and data imports.

Mr. Tanner has been a field analyst and has assisted in Value Adjustment Board proceedings as well as the valuation process of both residential and commercial properties.

I am very confident of the abilities of my entire staff and will continue to serve our county with excellence.

On a personal note, I have lived in Hendry County for 22 years, having moved to Clewiston after marrying my husband, Mike Pittman, in 1996. We have raised two daughters in Clewiston. Both graduated from Clewiston High School with honors and now attend college. Our daughters kept us very busy as they were both three-sport athletes throughout high school and played travel ball on weekends and during the summers. I also have two beautiful step-daughters and four amazing grandchildren.

Hendry County is the place where I call home, and it is my pleasure to represent you home, and it is my pleasure to represent you well and serve you to the best of my ability. I thank you for your support in the November election. Please remember — “Pick Pitt for Property Appraiser.”

Florida SouthWestern launches virtual campus tour

Special to The Clewiston News

FORT MYERS — The Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) Virtual Campus Tour was officially launched Aug. 1 for prospective students.

The simulated experience includes 360-degree media layered with interactive elements, putting visitors in control of their own journey around the college’s four locations in Fort Myers, Naples, Punta Gorda and LaBelle. Users can access the tour on desktop, mobile or with virtual reality headsets at www.FSW.edu/virtualtour.

“Students want to see our campuses before they start classes, but are often unable to visit in-person. By providing a virtual tour option, students in our local area and around the globe can see firsthand what FSW offers,” said Amber McCown, FSW director of admissions. “The virtual tour is an exciting new opportunity to showcase the college using some of the latest technology available.”

While the majority of FSW students come from the five counties encompassing southwest Florida, the college is experiencing increased interest from students statewide and nationally. More applicants from states such as New York, Michigan, and Ohio — along with international students — are considering FSW to continue their education.

Traditional, in-person tours are still available throughout the year and by appointment at www.FSW.edu/tours. FSW is still accepting applications for admission to the fall 2018 semester. For more information about FSW and how to apply, visit www.FSW.edu/admissions.
Sugar farmers push back on attacks from media

Special to INI Florida

Farmers around Lake Okeechobee are attempting to push back against attacks from politicians and media outlets around South Florida.

After toxic algae blooms began to take over waterways in South Florida, some politicians running for election began to single out one scapegoat, ‘Big Sugar.’

During a campaign event in Fort Myers in early July, Republican Florida governor hopeful Ron DeSantis blamed sugar farmers for the algae crisis and claimed his opponent Adam Putnam was controlled by “Big Sugar.”

“I want to clean up the waterways here in South Florida,” said Mr. DeSantis. “He (Putnam) is captive to big sugar. He won’t do anything they don’t want him to do” — the implication being that “Big Sugar” is responsible for the algae crisis, and that their goal is for it to continue.

Opponents of “Big Sugar” claim that sugar farms around Lake Okeechobee are responsible for the increased phosphorus in the lake that blue-green algae feeds on, and water released from the lake by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers is responsible for the algae crisis on the east coast of Florida and the red tide disaster on the west coast.

However, about 90 percent of the phosphorus load into Lake Okeechobee comes from the watershed north of the lake. A majority of the sugar farms in Florida are located south of Lake Okeechobee.

According to the South Florida Water Management District, only 4 percent of the phosphorus entering the lake comes from south of the lake.

University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) regional sugarcane extension agent Stewart Swanson thinks there is the disconnect between rhetoric and reality is a function of so few people being involved with agriculture.

“Everybody looks for a word that’ll catch everybody’s attention you know that’s how you get ‘Big Sugar’ and everything,” said Mr. Swanson. “But there isn’t that much acreage of sugar cane that’s in the watershed north of the lake.”

Mr. Swanson also stated that sugar cane has the lowest requirements of nutrients for many crops grown in South Florida, only requiring a fraction of the nitrogen and phosphorus compared with a vegetable or citrus crop.

Neither Mr. DeSantis nor any of the governor hopefuls on the Democratic side have run ads attacking “Big Citrus.”

Judy Sanchez, senior director of corporate communications and public affairs for U.S. Sugar, says both U.S. Sugar and the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce are conducting public tours and bringing coastal residents out to tour sugar farms and processing facilities to get a firsthand look at how their food is grown and processed in hopes of telling their side of the story.

The former colleagues of the Alberta-grown farmers is disappoint- ed that farmers, who are natural caretakers of the land and water resources, are being falsely accused of harming the coastal environment,” said Mr. Sanchez. “These accusations absolutely come from misunderstanding, some of which has been intentionally spread by anti-farming activist groups. In 2018, communities south of Lake Okeechobee contributed barely 2 percent of the water into Lake Okeechobee, and that was for flood control for the city of Clewiston. It had nothing to do with protecting sugarcane farmers or farm land.”

An article published in the Tampa Bay Times on Aug. 6, reporter Craig Pittman called out Adam Putnam for being the only candidate in the governor race to take money from Florida sugar companies in the midst of the algae crisis. In the article, Mr. Pittman correctly pointed out that Florida’s best management practices (BMP) program, which consists of cost-effective actions that agricultural producers can take to conserve water and reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilizers, animal waste and other pollutants entering our water resources, is a voluntary program for most of the state. However, Ardis Hammock, co-owner of Frey Farms located near Moore Haven, released a statement attempting to correct Mr. Pittman’s article in regard to BMP practices in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), where a majority of sugar farms operate.

“Mr. Pittman claims that the sugarcane farmers’ best management practices that have successfully reduced phosphorus by 57 percent are some sort of ‘voluntary’ program,” said Ms. Hammock in statement released by Florida Sugarcane Farmers. “Nothing could be further from the truth. Sugarcane and vegetable farmers in the EAA are required by law to reduce phosphorus by 25 percent annually, and they bettered that by more than twice what is legally required for quite a few more than two decades. Every single drop of water flowing off their land is cleaned, and the farmers pay 100 percent of the cost to clean the water flowing off their property — the vast majority of which flows south to the Everglades.”

UF/IFAS regional sugarcane extension agent Stewart Swanson backed up Ms. Hammock’s claims.

“In the entire EAA south of the lake, the BMPs are mandatory,” explained Mr. Swanson. “I managed a research station for the University of Florida in that area. I had an auto collector that collected water samples once every hour, and those samples were sent off to a lab and the phosphorous content was tested.”

Some of the attacks on the sugar industry in Florida from politicians and media have led to threats being made to the communities south of Lake Okeechobee. The sheriff’s offices in Glades, Hendry and Palm Beach counties are currently investigating some of the veiled threats that were made online.

Hendry County Sheriff Steve Whidden was quoted as saying the threatening language was posted by several vocal people online and was generally aimed at people living near Lake Okeechobee. One person criticized the sugar industry for causing the algae problem and declared they’d show up “2nd Amendment in hand.” Another said protesters should gather near the lake “to draw police.” “take physical action” on Lake Okeechobee and said “I got a welder and an AR (assault rifle) but it’s gonna take a big group to stand up to local law enforcement.”

“Agriculture is an easy target,” concluded Mr. Swanson. “Few people are involved in it anymore. I think nationally we only have half of one percent of people that are actually involved with agriculture. But I think we need to do as good a job as possible protecting our water resources here in Florida and I’ve spent years working in this program to do just that.”

Is your boat prepared for a hurricane?

By Samantha Grenrock

UF/IFAS

GAINESVILLE — When a hurricane is on the horizon, boat owners need to do more than batten down the hatches to get ready, according to an expert with the University of Florida. Hurricane season started June 1, but boaters in the sunshine state can take steps now to make sure their vessels don’t end up beached, underwater or in pieces, said Brittany Scharf, a Florida Sea Grant agent with UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension in Hernando County.

“It is important to do a trial run of how you would secure your vessel so you will know how long it will take. Factor in possible road closures or low lying areas that may make your action plan difficult. Vessels will need to be moved 48 to 72 hours before a storm is predicted to hit an area,” she said.

“Boat owners should develop a plan of action and practice this plan. Are you going to secure your vessel in a marina? Are you going to remove it from the water and secure it on land? Do you need to moor your vessel? What materials would you need to make this possible?” Ms. Scharf said.

If you can, plan to move inland. Storing your boat in a garage or building is ideal, but if that’s not an option, the leeward side of a building will offer some protection, Scharf said. If you store your boat outside, place it away from trees and power lines.

“Overall, the best place for your boat during a hurricane is on dry land that’s far away from coastal areas,” Ms. Scharf said. “This is definitely easier to do with smaller boats, but these boats are also the most vulnerable to damage from a storm.”

“Make sure your insurance policy is current and that you know what your policy covers,” Ms. Scharf said.

I am Mercedes Perdomo Reese and I’m a candidate for Hendry County School Board District 4.

“Vote for change and new representation”

“Vote for change at the Primary Election on August 28th

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August 16, 2018
Serving the communities south of Lake Okeechobee

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Notice of Public Notice

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CASE NO.: 22-2018-CA-000067  
WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A.  
vs.  
The Unknown Heirs, Devisees, Grantors, Assignees, Lienors, Creditors, Trustees, or Other Claimants Claiming By, Through, Under, or Against, Rebekah Jacobo A/K/A Rebecca Jacobo, et al.  
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HENDRY COUNTY

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

ON LEVY OF NON-AD VALOREM ASSESSMENT

AND COLLECTION BY THE UNIFORM METHOD FOR

MOSQUITO CONTROL MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNIT

TAKEN notice that a public hearing will be held before the Board of County Commissioners of Hendry County, Florida, at 5:30 p.m. on September 11, 2018, at the Commission Room, Clewiston City Hall, 115 West Ventura Avenue, Clewiston, Florida, for the purpose of considering the levy of a non-ad valorem assessment on additional parcels within the Mosquito Control Municipal Service Benefit Unit.

The purpose of the non-ad valorem assessment is to cover the costs necessary to provide mosquito control services to the assessed parcels. The proposed assessment amounts are as follows:

- Residences: $30.00 per dwelling unit/$500 maximum per parcel
- Vacant lots: $30.00 per lot/$400 maximum per parcel
- Commercial: $0.10 per square foot, with a minimum of $30 and a maximum of $200 per parcel
- Vacant acreage: $1.00 per acre, with a minimum of $1.00 and a maximum of $100 per parcel

The additional parcels proposed to be assessed are depicted on the four adjacent maps.

The proposed assessment will be collected by the uniform method (on the tax bill) by the Tax Collector and the assessment will be collected every year indefinitely until the County Commission discontinues it.

All affected property owners may appear and be heard at the public hearing and also have the right to file written objections with the Hendry County Administrator, Post Office Box 2340, Labelle, Florida 33935, at anytime within 20 days from the date of this publication.

The meeting is open to the public. If a person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he/she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

If you have a disability that will require special assistance or accommodation for your attendance at the meeting, please contact Hendry County Administration at (863) 675-5220; Hearing Impaired: Florida Relay 7-1-1; or e-mail keitha.daniels@hendryfla.net.

Hendry County is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete que hable español para participar en esta reunión, por favor pongase en contacto con Myra Johnson al (863) 675-5240.
Local surgical services reduce burden of travel

Common surgical procedures available at Hendry Regional Medical Center make recovery easier

Electa Waddell
Hendry Regional Medical Center

CLEWISTON — Traveling long distances can add to the stress and discomfort of surgery. The need to travel to and from a facility outside the community can also cause a burden for family members. Fortunately for Hendry County residents, common surgical procedures are available at Hendry Regional Medical Center (HRMC).

The team at HRMC is able to perform a number of surgeries here in the community, providing convenience and comfort for patients and their families. “Having your surgery performed in the local community is a smart decision,” said Dr. Leonard Carroll, board-certified general surgeon. “Knowing you are near home can provide peace of mind for your family and make the recovery process easier.”

HRMC’s highly trained surgeons can perform common general surgical procedures such as tonsillectomy, laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal), hernias and colonoscopy. In addition, visiting specialists can perform other procedures such as gynecological, interventional pain management, endoscopy surgery and more.

Many common procedures can be performed with laparoscopy or endoscopes, which enable the surgeon to see inside the body without having to make large incisions. Other benefits of these techniques include shorter hospital stays and faster recovery times. According to Dr. Carroll, patients sometimes delay having certain surgeries for various reasons, but doing so can prolong discomfort or raise the risk of complications.

“Traveling for a surgical procedure can be inconvenient,” Dr. Carroll said. “The need to travel can disrupt a person’s life, so he or she may opt to wait. Having surgical services available locally makes it easier for people to get the surgeries they need, when they need them.” Dr. Carroll added that it’s best to follow doctors’ recommendations when elective surgery is required.

When a physician recommends surgery, choosing the right facility is also important. Dr. Carroll said that convenience is one of the reasons Hendry County residents choose HRMC.

Additionally, the convenience of local recovery services can make the transition from hospital to home smoother. The Swing Bed Program at HRMC allows patients covered under Medicare who need extended care to stay in a hospital setting. With a compassionate nursing team on hand around the clock, recovering at the hospital following a surgical procedure can provide comfort to patients and their families. “In many rural areas, qualified surgeons can be hard to come by,” Dr. Carroll said. “We are fortunate to have a team of highly trained physicians and medical providers in Hendry County. Having access to the medical care you need here in the community is a huge asset and can help you get back to your everyday life quicker.”

Talk to your primary care provider about choosing the right facility for your surgical procedure. To learn more about HRMC’s services, call the hospital at 863-902-3000 or visit http://www.hrmcu.us.

Hendry Regional Medical Center is a 25-bed critical access hospital that incorporates modern technology with state-of-the-art medical staff to care for its patients. Its mission is “to excel in quality, compassion and innovation to make our community healthier.”