



**Panther released near Big Cypress**  
**COMMUNITY ♦ 3A**

**March Madness inspires Ahfachkee food drive**  
**EDUCATION ♦ 1B**

**Trevor Osceola signs with Kentucky Christian University**  
**SPORTS ♦ 1C**



# The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered



www.seminoletribune.org • 50¢

Volume XXXVIII • Number 3

March 31, 2014

## FPL walk postponed

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — A nearly 70-mile trek, on foot, from Big Cypress Reservation to the Hendry County Courthouse to oppose plans that could bring a massive power plant right next door, has been postponed.

The demonstration, set to start April 18 and end April 21 on the morning of a scheduled court hearing that pits the Seminole Tribe of Florida against defendants who support the plant, could be rescheduled to accommodate a new court date.

The lawsuit against Florida Power & Light (FPL), McDaniel Reserve Realty Holdings (owned by developer Edward Garcia) and Hendry County, stems from the Tribe's allegation that zoning for the property was changed improperly by the county from agricultural to mixed use after it was purchased by Garcia from the McDaniel family, who had lived and raised cattle on the land for decades.

Garcia was to build a community complete with homes, shops, parks and industry — a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that requires compatible land uses.

♦ See FPL on page 2A

## Tribe buys building for new clinic, offices

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**DAVIE** — The Tribe's recent purchase of a 10-acre site, complete with a large office building, on Stirling Road in Davie will house the future Hollywood Medical Center. The closing took place March 10.

Formerly home to Farmers Insurance, the nearly 100,000-square-foot, two-story building, located at 5701 Stirling Road, is about a mile from the Hollywood Reservation. The structure has hurricane impact-resistant glass and shutters, an emergency generator, an interior courtyard and 750 parking spots.

Because Council has already allocated funds for a new clinic in Big Cypress, Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said the Hollywood Reservation would have had to wait years to secure funds for a new medical center in Hollywood.

"We will use the new (Stirling Road) facility to fast track the schedule, as well as save the Tribe millions on building a new facility in Hollywood," he said.

The Tribe also plans to move the Health, Family Services and Information Technology Departments to the building.

♦ See CLINIC on page 10A

## Davie against land into trust application

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**DAVIE** — A 10.6-acre parcel of Tribal-owned land on Stirling Road is causing the Town of Davie great anxiety.

When the Seminole Tribe requested that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) place the land into trust in March 2013, Davie mayor Judy Paul formally objected based on the belief it will negatively impact the town's finances. The Tribe purchased the property, formerly a mobile home park, in 2005 and pays Davie \$26,251 per year in property taxes.

Davie held a public workshop Feb. 19 to discuss the BIA trust process and the financial implications for the town, and as a result, Davie has directed its federal lobbyist to contact the BIA and reiterate the town's opposition to placing the land into trust. Davie will also contact the BIA to determine what the Tribe plans to do with the land.

"It's all about the money," said Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola. "We much prefer them to talk to us; the Tribe wants to be a good neighbor."

♦ See TRUST LAND on page 6A

# Salacoa Valley Farms spring sale exceeds Seminole expectations

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**FAIRMOUNT, Ga.** — During the Salacoa Valley Farms spring cattle sale March 22, about 50 Tribal members got front-row seats to the event that generated nearly \$500,000 for the Seminole Tribe. The Board of Directors purchased the Georgia-based farm in December in hopes of improving the Tribe's cattle program.

"The average selling price was higher than the last sale," said Alex Johns, Natural Resource director who oversees the Tribe's cattle program and Salacoa. "There were some bargains, some brought what they were worth and some exceeded our expectations. It was a good turnout and there were a lot of Florida buyers, so a lot will be going back to Florida."

With the purchase of Salacoa, the fourth-largest purebred Brangus ranch in the country, all Tribal members are now cattle owners, but many who also have their own herds attended the sale and toured the 4,500-acre farm.

"This is what we needed to do," said Stanlo Johns, who purchased his first cattle in 1959 and has a 350-head herd in Brighton with his son Todd Johns. "The industry changes about every 10 years, and the people who adapt quickest stay afloat longer. I think having these guys stick their necks out and go for it is the best thing to happen with the Tribe. We should have done this 40 years ago."

Joe Osceola, 91, who has raised cattle on Big Cypress for most his life, agrees.

"This is moving the Tribe ahead," said Osceola, who takes care of his 150-head herd every day and has no plans to stop. "The cattle business has improved a lot over the last 25 years. This is a good thing."

Primarily a seed stock operation, Salacoa produces bulls and heifers for cattle owners who want to upgrade their herds.



Beverly Bidney

The Salacoa Valley Farms spring cattle sale in Fairmount, Ga. is in full swing March 22 as the auctioneer takes bids on 60 cows and 65 bulls.

Salacoa bulls' superior genetics are widely acknowledged in the industry. The Board ultimately aims to improve the genetics of its cattle program.

"I like seeing this good genetic breed because eventually we'll have these genetics," said Todd Johns, who runs his father's herd in Brighton. "As a producer, it

helps to sell our cows to others." Better genetics equals a better beef product for the consumer.

♦ See SALACOA on page 10A

# Hard Rock Tampa celebrates 10 years

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

**TAMPA** — Back in the corner by a chickee-roofed lannai, away from the bustling crowd gathering near the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa pool, Billy Walker leaned down, waved his hand in front of an upset alligator and deftly put his fingers beneath its snout. Dressed in a blue traditional long shirt, turban and bare feet, Walker brought the beast's gnarly

nostrils up high. The gator hung there, eyes wild, front toes barely touching the ground, unable to move.

Walker then called over his 5-year-old daughter, Shylah, a preschool student in Big Cypress, and directed her to put her little hand in the same place, as he slowly removed his.

Gasps came from everywhere.

Welcome to the pre-show for the 10th anniversary celebration of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.

A crowd of Tribal members, staff, dignitaries and community members assembled beneath a blazing sun March 11 to listen to speeches and toast one of Indian Country's most notable economic achievements: the growth that transferred the Seminole Tribe of Florida's humble Sheraton Hotel and Class II Casino into both the sixth-largest casino in the world and the most profitable Class III casino in Indian Country, complete with a 246-room hotel operating year-round at a 98 percent

occupancy rate — all in 10 years.

That's why Walker finally picked up the gator — a traditional Seminole symbol of prosperity — threw it across his shoulders and danced with his daughter behind Tribal Medicine Man Bobby Henry and his family in a colorful call-and-response stomp dance demonstration that began the afternoon's events.

The celebration was part of a week-long affair, highlighted by a concert and employee giveaways, including a bus trip to Seminole Casino Coconut Creek.

Chairman James E. Billie took the podium and reminisced about the formation of the Tribe's Tampa Reservation, crediting 144 Indians for the property that became federal trust land in 1980.

He was referring to the accidental unearthing of a forgotten Fort Brooke cemetery discovered during construction of a downtown Tampa parking garage; the remains turned out to be 102 U.S. soldiers and 144 Seminole prisoners, waiting for deportation out West.

In a unique trade-off between the city of Tampa and the Tribe, the Seminoles were re-interred on an 8.5-acre parcel of land in west Tampa near Interstate 4, which today is the Tampa Seminole Indian Reservation.

"I never dreamed it would look like this: one of the best brands in the world, Hard Rock," Chairman Billie said.

Chairman Billie also paid tribute to Henry and his extended family, who, more than 30 years ago, agreed to vacate their Bradenton village to live on the new Tampa Reservation property. He praised family matriarch Ruby Osceola, who, upon Chairman Billie's assurance that she could bring her prize pig, gave the final OK for the historic move.

Today the Tampa Seminoles are scattered about eastern Hillsborough County, waiting for a nearby 900-acre tract of land (just across the Polk County line) to be awarded federal trust land status.

When the Polk property becomes an official reservation, most of the original Tampa Seminoles, who now number more than 150, will move there.

Hard Rock International Chairman and Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen spoke of "the early days" when Hard Rock first arrived. He marveled at the progress.

♦ See HARD ROCK on page 4A



Peter B. Gallagher

The Seminole Tribe celebrates the 10-year anniversary of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa March 11. Pictured are Billy Walker holding the gator, and from left, Bobby Henry, Hard Rock International Chairman Jim Allen, Hard Rock Tampa President John Fontana and Chairman James E. Billie.

## INSIDE:

Editorial.....2A  
Community .....3A

Health .....11A  
Education ..... 1B

Announcements... 4B  
Sports .....1C

**Big Cypress hosts 18th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive. See full story on page 3A.**



# Editorial

## Snapshots of exciting Board projects

### • Tony Sanchez Jr.

**H**ard work, determination, commitment and due diligence – hallmarks of this administration – really work. Here are some brief updates of exciting Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. projects that are moving in the marketplace. I hope Tribal members will take a few minutes to acquaint themselves with these ventures and share our pride in these successful pursuits:

**EBG:** Hard Rock Energy drink is the product licensed to Enterprise Beverage Group (EBG). Hard Rock Energy's first cans came off the line last December and the excitement and sales have continued to build since then. In the stores that we are currently in, we have become the third best-selling energy drink. This month we are beginning distribution through Gold Coast. We are the first non-alcoholic beverage they sell. They have 10,000 customers in the area from Key West all the way up to Palm Beach and are excited to bring our product to their customers. We have already begun discussion with distributors in our next target market of Chicago and look forward to equal success there.

**Salacoa:** We were able to acquire the Salacoa Valley Farms, complete our first sale and continue the operations of this historic ranch without missing a beat. We now control one of the country's largest herd of Brangus cattle and are continuing to grow. Alex Johns maintains direct oversight of the operation and presided over this month's cow sale. The response in the community has been tremendous. As we continue to interact with cowboys and ranchers, they are excited not only about us owning the operation, but they are also looking forward to taking advantage of a buyback program that will benefit them and allow us to continue to grow an exceptional cattle and beef program.

**Branded Beef:** We were very excited with the launch of our Branded Beef program last year. In our first year of operation, our revenue was more than \$800,000. This year is starting off even

better. For the first two and half months we have already generated more than \$400,000 in revenue and many of the customers we have been pursuing are making commitments to us. Our relationship with Cheney Brothers continues to grow and we are talking to US Foods about taking us into the Atlanta market. If you get the chance, visit Fins at Sharky's in Venice, on the Florida West Coast, for a fine meal in a great location, at an establishment that features Seminole Beef.

**Noble Juice:** We have finished our acquisition of Blue Lake Citrus, the parent company that has been producing the Seminole Pride and Noble Juices. Noble Juices are currently available in more than 5,000 retail locations including your local Publix. The business continues to grow. Both Cheney Brothers and US Foods are taking us into more and more accounts, and we are now producing the private label juice for US Foods. This takes us nationwide and increases our profitability. We are in the process of redesigning all labels to combine Seminole Pride with the Noble Brand to celebrate the relationship that we have. We are also in the process of developing new flavors and products and have started the process of producing drink mixes. Our sister company has been instrumental in helping us develop flavors that will have great market potential.

**OWV:** Our latest product is the water we are calling OWV (ooh-wah). It is premium spring water, sourced in historic Orange Springs. The water is a hit. In just two weeks we have sold more than 1,000 cases of water and the response everywhere has been tremendous. While the old water does enjoy the volume of the Hard Rock distribution, it is a commodity with many competitors. Our profits were only a few cents a case. The profits with OWV are many times that.

**Bank Acquisition:** While the process has not been easy and the hurdles have not all been overcome, we are on track to acquire Valley Bank. We are going through the regulatory and legal processes and review but are on track to close the deal later this spring. This new acquisition will allow

us to serve Tribal members and have greater flexibility and opportunity for growth.

**Evans Oil:** Since our acquisition, we have worked hard to help Evans regain the status that it had prior to 2009.

We have earned back the trust of several suppliers including, Marathon and Chevron. Additionally, we have recently won back two major accounts, Collier County and U.S. Sugar. We will continue to use our expertise and influence to penetrate new markets, supply competitive fuel and re-establish ourselves as a leading supplier of fuel.

**Trading Posts:** The two stores owned and operated by the Board continue to experience phenomenal growth. The Hollywood C-Store is selling more gallons of gas than ever before, and the Board decided to double the tank capacity to meet customer demands. The Brighton C-Store has gained a lot of sales after the completion of its renovation last year. Brighton will continue to grow as the new and improved RV Park is slated to open in May.

**Seminole/Stiles:** To date, the joint venture has completed three projects. The first was the renovation of the interior of Hollywood Classic followed by The Bol Asian restaurant and the MEP upgrade at the Brighton Casino.

Three projects are currently in development: Hollywood Recreation Complex, Brighton Public Safety Building and Chupco's Landing in Fort Pierce. The slate of upcoming projects continues to grow and the company landed its first job off the reservation, the new Gunther Volkswagen dealership.

*Sho-naa-bish.*

*Tony Sanchez Jr. is President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc.*



## Ruby Osceola: No Tampa without the pig

### • James E. Billie

**B**ack in 1979 when I first became Chairman, one of my dreams was to expand our reservations around the state of Florida. The areas where I wanted to go were industrial-type cities, and Tampa, with all its shipping, was one of them. And one other thing that came to mind back in those days and who really helped me establish the Tampa Seminole Reservation were 144 Indians.

Of course, they'd been gone for more than 150 years. They were buried underneath the cement over there right in the center of Tampa. When I needed help, they came out to help us and it was, "Here we are." I never dreamed I would see the day when it would look like this.

Anyway, we have gone through a great transition here in Tampa. We started out with a bingo hall that used to be on the other side of this behemoth Hard Rock Hotel building. The original situation here has really been cannibalized, I think. We started out with just a little old tin building and I remember back in those days when we had finally got the reservation in place and we were desperately trying to open up a bingo hall. We were literally pouring the concrete beams and watching the clock. It was 24 hours and then you could put some weight on it.

Well, after about 23 hours and maybe 59 minutes, the damn thing collapsed, so we had to build it all back up again. That was a crazy situation.

This property that became the Tampa Reservation, when we first came here, there was an abandoned J.M. Fields over along Hillsborough Avenue, and right over there where the tall building is today, was the location of the Indian village where Bobby Henry and his family lived. I'm not sure what year it was, 1980 or maybe 1981, and they were living someplace else. I went to that village and I said, "We are gonna start an Indian reservation over in Tampa. I would like you all to come over here and help me establish it. We need to let the white people know that Indians live around here."

Me and another guy named Stanford Jumper – a tall guy, I'm only about 5'6" or 5'7" and he stands about 6-foot-6 or something – we were sort of an odd couple staggering around there. We started pushing down trees, building chickee huts and all. One year went by and the Henrys had not come over yet. I thought, "What the heck is going on?" I thought they would be glad to come on over.

So I made a trip back down to Bradenton, where they were. I said, "How come you all are not comin' here?"

Back in those days Ruby Osceola was still alive. She was the matriarch of the

family in the village. And Bobby Henry just comes over and says, "James, no one wants to leave here because we got a pig that we want to bring."

That damn thing stood up like Hogzilla or Pigzilla, I don't know which it was. And, for some reason this pig was holding up my plans to bring Seminoles to the Tampa Reservation.

So, I said to Bobby: "So how come you guys don't want to come without this pig." And Grandma walked up and said, "When we leave here, (the pig) is gonna have to be at the village." So mean ol' Stanford Jumper went out and got a U-Haul trailer and we pushed that doggone pig in there.

And I forgot it breathes. So we slammed the door back there, drove from Bradenton to here, and we were gonna put it in a pig pen. I opened the trailer and that pig was laying on the floor, "Hahh ... Hahh ... Hahh ... Hahh ... breathing just like that. Oh my God. Like the pig was breathing its last breaths. We were gonna kill it ... but wait a minute. It revived and the whole village finally came on over here and we established ourselves, in Tampa, and we have been here since.

We made the reservation and we were doing all right, living in chickee huts, letting people know we are an ethnic group. Bobby Henry and his family are very ethnic, very traditional, you couldn't ask for a better bunch of people. So time came, Hard Rock came in and it expanded and now we needed the whole reservation.

So I went to Bobby. I said, "Hate to tell you guys but you are gonna have to leave the reservation and find you a home some place else."

So, we went and found homes for everyone nearby because Hard Rock was getting to be very big, and it still is today, and it seems like we are pretty big around the world. So we'd like to keep it that way. I want to thank everyone who contributed to this effort, particularly one guy who really helped us make it. And that is Jim Allen. Thank you very much, Jim, for bringing this whole atmosphere here. We are very proud of you.

*Sho-naa-bish.*

*James E. Billie is Chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. These remarks were taken from his welcoming address March 11 at the 10th anniversary celebration for the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.*



## State should continue Gaming Compact

### • Jim Shore

**A** billion dollars – \$1,000,000,000. As of this April, that's how much money the Seminole Tribe will have shared with the state of Florida as its portion of gaming revenue, since the first Gaming Compact between the Tribe and the state went into effect in January of 2008.

It's all thanks to revenue sharing provisions in the Gaming Compact, which includes some gaming exclusivity for the Tribe in exchange for revenue to the state.

In 2014, the Tribe will contribute a minimum of \$250 million to the state of Florida, although that number is expected to move higher as the Tribe's gaming revenues increase.

It's a rare deal when the state gets more money than expected, but that's the success of Seminole gaming and the value of the Gaming Compact, and why the state should move now to continue the Compact for 2015 and beyond.

According to U.S. law, some degree of gaming exclusivity is required for revenue sharing between a Tribe and a state.

The Compact, hammered out over many years by the Tribe with Florida governors and legislative leaders, gave the Tribe the exclusive right to casino card games like blackjack and baccarat at five of its seven casinos in Florida through July 7, 2015.

The Tribe was also awarded the exclusive right to offer slot machines outside of Miami-Dade and Broward counties, through the year 2030. Even though Florida already ranks third among states for total gambling revenues, some in the state are talking about further expansion. If the state opts to expand gaming and chip away at the Tribe's exclusivity, then the Tribe can reduce or suspend revenue sharing payments to the state.

By not continuing a very successful Compact, the state not only risks billions of dollars in future revenue, but also suggests a willingness to invest more in out-of-state interests whose primary focus is elsewhere, not Florida.

The Compact also ensures that Florida gaming is both profitable and controlled versus other places, like Atlantic City, where rapid gaming expansion came at a huge financial and social cost.

For centuries, Florida's Seminoles struggled to gain an economic footing. Our fortunes began to change when the first Seminole gaming operation opened in 1979 as a high-stakes bingo hall, in what is now the Seminole Classic Casino. It was a forerunner of the Indian gaming movement throughout North America and helped to set the legal right for Tribes to establish gaming entities on their reservations.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act followed in 1988. It established the process for Tribes and states to

negotiate gaming compacts.

The Seminole Tribe pushed for a Gaming Compact with the state of Florida for nearly two decades. For the Tribe, a long-term Gaming Compact means a stable future for 3,900 Seminoles, who have achieved economic independence and expanded opportunities in education and business as a result.

In addition, profits from Seminole gaming operations are reinvested in the Florida economy, which generates more jobs and more re-spending as hundreds of millions of dollars are recirculated through the Florida economy.

In 2012, Seminole gaming was responsible for 23,000 direct and indirect jobs in Florida, an increase of 106 percent over pre-Compact employment levels.

Nearly a billion dollars in purchases of goods and services statewide are attributable to Seminole gaming operations, up 155 percent since before the Gaming Compact.

A billion dollars in revenue sharing, and growing. Tens of thousands of jobs. Billions in economic impact. It adds up to a great deal for Florida, one in which we're pleased to be a partner, and one that deserves to go on well into the future.

*Jim Shore is general counsel of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. This column originally appeared in the Sun Sentinel.*

### ♦ FPL From page 1A

Instead, Garcia sold the 2,300-acre property to FPL which then proposed in its 10-year plan to build a massive, gas powered power plant. The plant would be a twin to the utility company's West County Energy Center in Palm Beach County – one of the largest in the nation and the biggest producers of greenhouse gasses in Florida.

Stephen Walker, an environmental and land use attorney for the Tribe's legal team on the case, said the Tribe is challenging that the zoning change was inconsistent with the county's own land use guidelines.

"One of the questions the Tribe has is whether there is compatibility with land use ... Under Florida law a county or city cannot adopt a rezoning that is not consistent or compatible. They can amend it, but they can't ignore it," Walker said.

Tribal members say the plant's constantly burning generator fires will destroy the night sky; its three 15-story combustion towers will spew steaming clouds over the landscape; and its cooling pools will suck millions of gallons of water daily from the Florida aquifer – eventually destroying the Tribe's long-established cultural, historical and economic balance with nature.

Seminole descendants of Native Americans who called the land home long before cattle owners and developers, say the property that abuts the reservation line should be kept rural. They contend

that the existence of several archeological sites, medicinal plants and wildlife species including endangered birds, reptiles and Florida panthers near or on the land, would be jeopardized.

A preliminary hearing is set for 2 p.m. April 2 at the courthouse, 25 E. Hickpochee Ave. in LaBelle. There, the Tribe and the defendants will put the facts of the case, including discovery documentation concerning the land's hydrology, archeology and environment issues, before the judge. However, Walker said, because the defendants did not produce reports in time to question subject experts during pre-trial depositions, the Tribe will ask for sanctions – one being to postpone the trial. The decision could take days, but likely not weeks.

"The reports were provided to opposing (lawyers) but not to us. They showed it to us at the deposition, but it was too little too late," Walker said.

Tribal members and other interested people can attend April 2, but no testimony or arguments will be made.

Walker said the time for the public to be heard is now while compatibility with cultural, historical, environmental and other surrounding issues are being argued. The public may also attend on the decided date of the trial.

"Because the Tribe is unique, the distinction between Big Cypress and a subdivision in Weston is much, much more than a physical location. A reservation has a different kind of meaning than a typical residential community," Walker said.

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Hollywood, FL 33021

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**The Seminole Tribune** is a member of the Native American Journalists Association.  
Letters/emails to the editor must be signed and may be edited for publication.

Subscription rate is \$35 per year by mail. Make checks payable to The Seminole Tribune, 3560 N. State Road 7 Hollywood, FL 33021 Phone: 954-985-5700 Fax: 954-965-2937

Please note: Submissions that come past deadline will be published in the following issue.



# Community



## Cattle drive invokes past Tribal pioneers

*The 18th annual event memorializes the late 'Big' Charlie Osceola*

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Steven Yzaguirre rode high in the saddle through Big Cypress Reservation's vast grazing range under the infinite sky and lived, even for just a few hours, the life of his forefathers.

"This is a memorial tribute to the real cattlemen — the Natives who ran the livestock long before barbed wire. It was 200 to 300 miles of gritty labor," said Yzaguirre, the great-grandson of Immokalee cattleman John Jimmie, for whom the John Jimmie Memorial Arena is named.

The 18th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo March 22 brought nearly 50 riders on horseback to rustle 32 steer from Big Cypress and 15 other bovine from Immokalee.

The 9-mile re-enactment included cowboys and cowgirls, work dogs and the family of Honorary Trail Boss "Big" Charlie Osceola, which was represented by daughter Ruth Osceola, son Joe B. Osceola (who took over his father's ranch), granddaughter Geraldine Osceola and great-granddaughters Jordan, Randeau and Randeau Osceola and Hortecia Yzaguirre.

Geraldine Osceola, of the Culture Department in Big Cypress, said she felt the presence of her late grandfather from the moment word came that "Big" Charlie was chosen as the Honorary Trail Boss.

"It's getting us to remember him and talk about him again. It's like he is with us," she said.

"Big" Charlie Osceola was a big man — six-foot-plus and nearly 300 pounds — and regarded as a "gentle giant" by all



Morgan Yates, of Brighton, rides Blondie at the head of the 9-mile 18th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo March 22 on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Eileen Soler

recollection. He owned two horses, tended his cattle diligently, carved wood and loved to cook. His frybread was so impressive

that the recipe is handed down through generations. Hint: add sweet creamed corn. "We called it 'grandpa's bread.' No

matter what was happening, when we went to his house 'grandpa's bread' was always on the table," Geraldine said.

The cattle drive started at Ceremonial Road, snaked past the pastures of Clifton Billie, Richard Bowers, Mary Jene Koenes and others until the midway snack, prayer and speeches on Mondo Tiger's spread.

There, the Tribe's poet laureate and third-generation cowboy Moses Jumper read his *Indian Cowboy Dreams* that celebrates the memory of Seminole cattle pioneers, including Charlie Micco, Naha Tiger, Josia Johns, Big MorganSmith and Samson Dixon.

"These were the 'real men' from the top of their boot to the top of their 'Tom Mix Hat,'" Jumper read.

Meanwhile, many of today's Tribal cattle owners were out of the state adding to their herds at the Salacoo Valley Farms cattle sale in Georgia. Jumper said the Seminole Cattle program is the fourth most productive program in the state.

Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank said the annual cattle drive began in 1997 in memory of Junior Cypress, who made his mark not only for cattle work but also for rounding up children from all corners of the reservation and keeping them on the straight and narrow.

"I think the back of his truck saw more children than cattle. Now, today's cattle owners are the kids of the originals," Rep. Frank said.

For Lisa Osceola, who helps tend husband, Rudy Osceola's, ranch daily, the annual cattle drive is always a treat.

"We do this every day — working cows, out in the hot sun, riding a horse for long hours," she said. "But I'm not going to lie — today is more leisure than work."

♦ See more CATTLE DRIVE photos on page 8A

## Rehabilitated Florida panther released near Big Cypress Reservation

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**HENDRY COUNTY** — The young panther was hesitant to leave the familiarity of her crate for the unknown wilderness of Big Cypress after a long day of travel from north Florida to the Everglades March 10. After a minute, the rehabilitated cat realized freedom was hers; she slowly emerged and took off running toward a cypress pond in the distance.

She was gone in a flash, nearly a year after sustaining multiple injuries likely from a car collision.

Last May, a homeowner noticed the then-9-month-old kitten hiding in bushes, injured, and alerted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The FWC brought her to the Animal Specialty Hospital of Florida in Naples where she underwent surgery on her fractured leg, fractured ribs and bruised lung.

The panther was then taken to the White Oak Conservation Center in Yulee, Fla., where she was nursed back to health in a 10-acre natural enclosure with minimal human contact.

The healthy cat was released back into the wild by the FWC near the Big Cypress Reservation in front of a crowd of well-wishers who included FWC Commissioner Ron Bergeron, Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi and musician John Anderson.

"I'm honored to release it into the wild," Bergeron said. "It's a great day for the Florida panther."

The panther was set free on Bergeron's 750-acre Green Glades West Ranch, which borders the Big Cypress Reservation. Because female panthers require about 50 square miles for a home range in which to hunt, live and raise kittens, the panther will likely cross the boundary into the reservation.

"Female panthers are more readily accepted into a population," said FWC panther team leader and biologist Darrell Land. "We released her into an area where she will feel at home. And that's not mere bling she's wearing around her neck, it's a radio collar."

The collar will allow the FWC to track the 90-pound panther's movements throughout her life, which could be 7 to 10 years or more.

The Florida panther has been an endangered species since 1967. The Department of Interior's Endangered Species Act defines an endangered species as one in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The goal is to restore all federally listed endangered species to viable self-sustaining populations.

Since the 1980s, the effort to protect and increase the Florida panther population has proven successful, but its habitat

has decreased dramatically. Historically, panthers lived in the southeastern U.S. from Arkansas to Florida. Today their range is limited to about 4,000 square miles south of the Caloosahatchee River and inland from the coasts. This range includes portions of Big Cypress and Immokalee Reservations, as well as the parcel of land on the northern border of Big Cypress that Florida Power & Light hopes to develop into a massive power plant.

The FWC wrote a panther recovery plan in 1981 with the objective of preventing extinction. Bergeron said about 30 panthers lived in the wild in the 1980s, but today that figure is estimated to be between 100 and 160.

"We do see panthers out here, so it's quite a success story," Bergeron said. "My family has been out here for eight generations and we are honored to be a neighbor of the Seminole Tribe."

♦ See PANTHER on page 10A



Beverly Bidney

The healthy Florida panther emerges from the travel crate as a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission employee records the moment on her cell phone and iPad March 10 during the release of the panther near the Big Cypress Reservation.



Eileen Soler

During the Chalo Nitka Festival & Rodeo March 1, spectators watch Norman 'Skeeter' Bowers slice into a fresh campfire-cooked, 20-pound garfish.

## Chalo Nitka festival features old and new

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**MOORE HAVEN** — Only in Moore Haven, during the tiny town's biggest event of the year, do residents of all races color the landscape in Seminole patchwork clothing.

Decked in hand-stitched skirts, shirts, vests and jackets that boasted Seminole symbols, scores of white, Hispanic, black and Seminole spectators lined the former Main Street, now Avenue J, on March 1 for the 66th annual Chalo Nitka Festival & Rodeo parade.

"Lottie Huff, from Brighton Reservation, made this for me," said former Moore Haven High School principal and football coach Karl Engel, showing off a jacket fashioned by Huff to commemorate his years of coaching and teaching local children, including many who became Tribal leaders.

The entire Ogletree family — mom, Adrian; dad, Macon; and daughters, Jodi and Jayden — drove 11 hours from Georgia to don Chalo Nitka T-shirts and Seminole attire for the event that Adrian Ogletree said celebrates shared community culture and history.

"My great-grandfather was the second judge to serve Glades County. My mother was born right here," she said as her family cheered on a cavalcade of marching bands and floats from the front yard of the family home. "Community events like this are

critical. It explains who we are and helps us look to the future."

And only in Moore Haven did residents greet each other all day long with "Happy Chalo Nitka."

Chalo Nitka, which means "Big Bass" in Creek, began in 1949 to celebrate the asphalt paving of the narrow roadway. Then, like now, the parade led to an open field where Seminoles showcased doll and basket making, wood carving, traditional foods and alligator wrestling.

Lewis Gopher, of Brighton Reservation, who served on the organizing committee, said Seminoles have always been a part of the festival where non-Natives are more than welcome to sport Native garb. In fact, folks who dressed the part were admitted free.

"This is a community really into the Seminole history and culture, and they want to participate as much as they can. It feels good that they are interested in who we are," Gopher said.

Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Big Cypress Councilman Mondo Tiger, Florida Women's Hall of Famer Louise Gopher and all Seminole royalty rode in convertible cars while tossing candy to cheering spectators. Other Seminole VIPs traveled the route atop a swamp buggy. Students and teachers from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School waved aboard a float decorated in palm fronds.

♦ See CHALO NITKA on page 7A



# A conversation with John Fontana, president of Hard Rock Tampa

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

**TAMPA** — John Fontana, president of Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, oversees the day-to-day operations of the world's sixth-largest casino and a 12-story, 246-room hotel. With more than 3,300 team members, the fifth-largest employer in the Tampa Bay area had a \$592 million economic impact on the region in 2013.

Fontana has worked for the Seminole Tribe of Florida for 34 years and has been involved with Tribal gaming pursuits most of that time. As general manager of the original Seminole Casino Tampa, the Florida State University graduate coupled his financial training and management acumen with a unique experience to help transform a few rough acres around an abandoned J.M. Fields store into the award-winning Hard Rock Tampa, one of the most profitable casinos in the United States.

Fontana's career in Indian gaming includes stints as a consultant on the opening teams for the initial facilities built for the Sycuan Casino in El Cajon, Calif., and Little Six Casino in Prior Lake, Minn. Fontana also serves on the board for the Florida Council for Compulsive Gambling.

Fontana is the son of Jean Fontana, who worked myriad jobs during her 40 years as a valued Seminole Tribal government employee, including assistant controller, risk manager and Human Resources Department director for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. John Fontana's brother, Vincent, is a storage manager for the Seminole Tribe Accounting Department in Hollywood.

Hard Rock Tampa recently held a celebration in honor of its 10th anniversary.

**PG: In your wildest dreams, growing up and trying to figure out what you're going to do, did this kind of a life ever cross your mind?**

JF: No. As a kid, I was never one of those kids that was, you know, this is what I want to do, this is what I want to be. So when I really started thinking about a career and got to college, I used to tell people all the time, even two or three years after I started working at the bingo hall, if you had come to me my senior year in college while I was getting my finance degree and told me I would be running a bingo hall in three years, I would have said you're crazy.



So, I am just a great example of someone who has been in the right place at the right time. I have been really fortunate a lot of times and then you couple that with being willing to do the work the opportunity presents, you know, so you kind of make your own way sometimes. You've been working around the Tribe as long as I have. You know that even through their trials and tribulations and ups and downs, they have been great people and I am very fortunate to be around them.

**PG: When you first came to Tampa, remembering the way it looked back then, could you have envisioned that this would become, in less than 10 years, what they are calling the sixth-largest casino in the world?**

JF: Never, never in a million. I didn't even know to imagine it, you know what I mean? Even though I was working in the casino industry, I don't think I went to my first casino until after I was working here. I think the first time I was ever in a casino was a trip to Vegas that was part of work here, to a seminar about bingo as part of a gaming conference. First time I had ever been in a casino, so I am not sure I had the mental snapshot to imagine this. It would be like, could you ever imagine seeing Godzilla if you didn't know what Godzilla looked like? Certainly back then, I don't think anyone could have foreseen this. I think the first time I got a notion that this could really be something is when I saw what happened at Foxwoods. That was the first real (Indian) casino. There were people who had some slot machines out there prior to that, but the approach wasn't a casino approach. But when you saw Foxwoods you started to think, wow, what we could do?

What I do recall is when they first passed IGRA (Indian Gaming Regulatory Act) in '88, the management company Pan American was here. You know Jim Clare. They were great guys, real nice guys, and they got the deal of the century. But they made an honest deal and lived up to their end of the bargain, as the Tribe did. I remember going to those guys and saying, "Geez, we should just bring slot machines and blackjack tables and crap tables in and see what happens. No one knows what's going on."

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Authority did not exist at that time. They just passed this piece of legislation and there were no regulations, no government body, there was nothing. And it said you can do Class III gaming. So I said, you know what, let's bring the stuff in and sort it out when it is done.

But I think those guys were smart enough to realize — and I wasn't — that we didn't have a clue about running one of those things. It's one thing to say let's get some blackjack tables and another to actually open one and make it work the right way and not have everyone in the world stealing from you and those kinds of things. But, yeah, that was probably the time, right around then, when I started to

think what could happen. And then after I saw Foxwoods, what struck me was it was way up in Connecticut — if you look at the aerials of the place, it is in the woods. I thought, you know, if they can make that kind of money in the woods, think of what we could do in Tampa, or Hollywood.

**PG: You realized that people will travel a long way to go to the casino. In other words, they say people from Tampa won't drive to St. Pete to see the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team, but people from Sarasota will drive all the way up here to the Hard Rock Tampa.**

JF: Oh yeah. I had seen some of that. I had seen Cherokee Bingo. They used to bus in 10,000 people and the one time I went there, I don't know if you have ever been there, but it is on the side of a mountain. Getting there ain't easy. Imagine getting there on a bus. If you drive from Asheville to the Cherokee Reservation, it's a two-lane road and I am not even sure you get a bus down there with oncoming traffic.

Then you look around here and you think, wow, in the middle of all this, we could really do something. Then in the late '90s, we brought the machines in. One of the things I am really proud of is we were the first of any Native American Tribe to do machine-based gaming. We started with the bingo machines that we kind of invented and built in Sarasota, then went to the pull tab machines. There were a couple spots around the country where people went out and bought old used machines and put those out there, but in terms of any kind of scale with machine gaming, Tampa was the first place.

**PG: You keep up with all that is going on with Indian gaming around the whole country? I see a lot of those stories and in just the last four years it has increased dramatically. There are Tribes applying for gaming licenses everywhere, even, like you say, in the middle of nowhere.**

JF: You look at some of these places and they are beautiful. These travel resorts are all over the country. Gorgeous. People have spent tons of money putting these together. I think back during the time when the Seminole Tribe had partnered with the Pan American guys to go do otheringos. We went to Quapaw, Okla. You flew to St. Louis and then took a small plane somewhere else and you drove out into the middle of the plains on Route 66. It was literally 4 miles south of the middle of nowhere and there are places in those kinds of locations today that have world class, \$100-million buildings. And it just amazes me. It is unbelievable how much gaming there is and how ready to go to a casino America is.

**PG: But this is all happening while there are pockets of huge protest against gaming expansion everywhere. The opposition was never this vocal in the past.**

JF: Public opinion about gaming is on a kind of pendulum. Early on, obviously, there was a lot of resistance that was driven by the gaming jurisdictions lobbying against Tribal gaming. Vegas didn't want there to be gaming anywhere else in the world.

Then, the states started to understand the revenue potential for the state. That drove the states to say, hey look, the state of Connecticut is getting a \$100 million a year out of that. Real money. So you started to see a lot of states with budgets that weren't gigantic, (a lot smaller than the state of Florida) but where it was a really viable financial solution to some problems. But I think now what you are starting to see is the backlash from all of that ... where they are saying, you know it is an easy fix. But you just can't build casinos and suddenly all the state financial problems are going to go away.

I think you are starting to see a little bit of it. It will settle somewhere sensible at some point. It is crazy. If I had really wanted to chase it, I probably could have worked in 30 states. I never had that desire to be anywhere but here. But the way it has gone, I could have had a job a year for the past 30 years. Moved every year.

**PG: What do you see, looking in the future at this point? Is the increase in all these little dinky racinos and storefront gaming rooms, is this eventually going to saturate the market and affect Hard Rock Tampa negatively? Or is the Hard Rock brand so special it can withstand that?**

JF: Yes, it is. There is something about having that brand that is so important. Today, people who hear the brand, associate the brand with good things. They hear Hard Rock and they may not have the exact perception of what we are doing, but there is a kind of a subconscious, initial instant positive reaction that is a very positive thing. And I think the brand has helped us in that way. If it was just Seminole casinos, there would certainly be people who have no clue — maybe they never come here — and would have a different perception.

Most people at the end of the day, as voters in the state, will have a voice, whether they ever show up here or not. So I think the brand helps and the Tribe being good custodians of the brand helps as well. I think when you project out into the future, I don't care what anyone else builds, or what they call it, this brand is something you can't replicate, you can't knock it off. You just can't.

The Hard Rock brand is 40 years old, and I don't know what the number is but it is the fifth, sixth or seventh most recognized brand on the planet. You are talking about brands like Coke and Pepsi and Nike, IBM, that kind of brand recognition



Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa President John Fontana presents \$100,000 checks to four Tampa Bay charities: Metropolitan Ministries, the DeBartolo Family Foundation, Hands Across the Bay and the Bill Edwards Foundation for the Arts during the March 11 anniversary event.

Peter B. Gallagher

So, I don't care who comes up and builds a casino; they are not going to put a name on it that is more recognizable than Hard Rock. The value of the brand is what you make it. The Hard Rock branding guys work on quality and not just slapping a guitar anyplace that's willing to pay. It would be easy to do that. Lots of people would love to get the brand involved in stuff, no matter what the quality was. And there are opportunities that we need to specifically stay away from.

The brand department works with the "best in breed" type companies. When we do these hotel and casino projects around the world, it is going to be quality; it's not going to be, OK, someone's going to give us a million dollars so let's slap a guitar on the wall. A proper custodian of the brand ensures the future.

**PG: Do you get people approaching you here in Tampa with crazy ideas?**

JF: We would never handle brand stuff out of Tampa. Anyone who would come here regarding branding like that we would redirect to Orlando. They do come here, though. I had someone corner me with a proposal to have Hard Rock taxi cabs. They were going to use the brand and this really cool idea of a hybrid between a cab and a limousine with multiple people. They had all this software worked out to make it work.

Which brings up an interesting point. In the past, when people approached the Seminole Tribe, 10 out of 10 would approach the Tribe with their hands out (saying), "We can do this; all you got to do is put a million dollars into the project." Right.

Now it is the other way around with the Tribe. People come to the Tribe and it's, "Hey listen, we are willing to pay you to get your brand involved in this." Those are the kind of values, from buying and protecting the brand that I certainly didn't realize before being involved in all this.

That is a big difference; there are people now actively seeking out the Tribe as a partner — because of the credibility the Tribe brings to the table — instead of as a finance source. Even that was a metamorphosis from the time the Tribe didn't have a dime. When I first came to work for the Tribe in 1980 at the Accounting Department, if it wasn't coming in from a federal grant or a state grant, it pretty much wasn't coming in. The Seminoles just started making a little bit of money in cigarettes, for four or five years, but it wasn't giant money. And bingo had just been opened a little while.

It's all changed. I told a reporter the other day we're funding the state. The state wants our money. They come to us for money. Different world. Ten years down the road, on this property, no matter what happens, you are going to see growth because it is a very strong market. When I think about competition incoming to the market, certainly that is the last thing you want in a market. You don't need it.

But, we are running the place, the brand, in a way that is ready for whatever comes. The Tribe has a lot of historical claim to what it has and there are reasons that the state should respect that history and the partnership the Tribe has lived up to.

So, if the state wants to expand gaming in the state, my opinion is why would you need anyone besides the Seminole Tribe of Florida to do that? The Seminole Tribe is the strongest, most financially sound gaming company in the United States. We have the only investment grade credit rating. You look at a company like Harris that has 28 to 30 casinos and they are \$22 billion in debt. Their debt is 14 to 15 times what they earn in a year.

Our ratio is 1.2, 1.5. We have the strongest balance sheet in the industry. So look, if someone wants to build a billion-dollar resort on Miami Beach, we certainly have the financial wherewithal, the expertise and history and resources to do that very successfully. And then you get all the benefits — the revenue encompassing the state.

Believe me, if Genting builds a casino, every dollar of profit is going out of the United States. Seminole Tribe of Florida builds a casino, the expenditures, the

payroll, and the profit will all stay in the state of Florida because that's where the Tribe lives, that's where the owners live. So why do you need to go look at these other companies to do these things? And it's not like the Tribe can only build a Hard Rock, right? We can build any theme casino you want to build.

**PG: What about the Tampa Seminole people who lived on this reservation. The Chairman gave them a lot of praise in his speech. It seems they were very important to the success, as well.**

JF: I have been around the Tribe since I was 12 or 13 years old. So, as much as any non-Tribal member can have exposure to them, I had it. And these folks have been my friends here for 30 years. Bobby Henry, Richard Henry, their families, the Franks, Nancy Frank, these are people I have known for a long time. Now I know their kids and I know their grandkids.

To do what they did ... first to come here. These were family-based people. They focused on their families. It is important. It is a circle like a family should be. Think how hard it was to pick up and remove themselves from the structure they were living in, and move to a place where there wasn't that same structure. It wasn't like they all came to Tampa because, oh, there was all this money in it for them. It was, "Hey, come and live in Tampa. We are trying to establish the Seminole Tribe here and we need Tribal members to be in Tampa."

It's not like jumping on a ship for the other side of the world, but it was a commitment. I'm not sure I would have done that, or could have done that. And then, soon as they got here, we immediately started putting commercial stuff all around them. The bingo hall was busy, really busy

and the smoke shop traffic ... imagine trying to get in and out of your driveway every day by cutting through the smoke shop line. It was not an easy thing to do.

The building kept getting bigger around them and I don't know if you remember the townhouses we had back here; they were in the shadow of the back door that was the loading dock for the bingo hall, right next door to them. It wasn't like this was paradise in Tampa. They put up with so much here, and then we tell them it is going to get bigger so we need you to move off this piece of land; go live in another community. Now, they are spread out. That was a lot of sacrifice.

They were integral to the success we have here. This is a Tribal government. It is not a business. So if you think about how that group of people could have reacted in terms of their political position with the people who were at the helm when all this was happening to them ...

Think about it. If they had convinced James — no we should not economically develop the Tampa property; this is a reservation; we live here; we don't want to build Hard Rock here; go away — think about the impact on the Tribe. This was 60, 70, 80 people who sacrificed a lot.

It was different on the other reservations. Gaming was never as impactful as it was here in Tampa. That speaks volumes to the folk here. I have a huge amount of respect for them and, hopefully, they consider me a friend and not just a guy who works here.

And now you see the children of people who were born after we got here come to work. We have Johnny Henry's son, Andrew, in the TCD program. He's a good kid. You see Richard Henry's daughter, Alena, in the program and she is getting ready to have kids. There is definitely a rich Tribal history here in Tampa. I am very thankful to those folks.

## ◆ HARD ROCK From page 1A

"The amazing success that this particular facility has had is truly legendary. It clearly competes with any casino in the world, and it only happens because of John Fontana and the amazing staff here," Allen said.

The rise was swift. Pushed by Chairman Billie, the Tribe quickly took advantage of its reservation status, opening a museum and village (including a small zoo of Florida birds and animals), alligator pit, smoke shop and a high-stakes bingo hall within two years. Next came a Four Points Sheraton Hotel. Then slot machines and poker tables.

By 2000, the Seminoles had struck a deal with Hard Rock to rebuild the casino, which opened in 2004. Expansion occurred to both the hotel and casino areas in 2007 and 2012, as Vegas-style slot machines and blackjack were added.

Today, according to the *Tampa Bay Business Journal*, Hard Rock Tampa is the fifth-largest private employer in the seven-county Tampa Bay area. In 2013, it boasted a total economic impact of \$592 million.

"This growth doesn't just happen. It's leadership. It's vision, Jim Allen, James Billie and the Tribe," said John Fontana, president of Hard Rock Tampa. He leads a staff of 3,300 team members. "For the Seminole Tribe to continue to invest in us, to continue to show faith in what we are doing, it's so much appreciated and I don't want any Tribal member or leader to ever think that we take this for granted. We are truly, truly thankful."

To give back to the community, Hard Rock Tampa will donate \$100,000 (\$10,000 a year for 10 years) each to four Tampa Bay charitable organizations, adding to the more than \$10 million Hard Rock Tampa has



Tampa Seminole Nancy Frank shows her 'shakers,' tin cans filled with BBs, strapped to her legs to create a shaking percussion sound during traditional Tribal dances.

Peter B. Gallagher

donated to more than 100 charities since its inception. In fact, for the past three years, six Hillsborough County cultural institutions — Florida Aquarium, Lowry Park Zoo, Museum of Science & Industry, Straz Center, Glazer Children's Museum and Tampa Bay History Center — have shared about \$2 million in Seminole gaming funds.

The four charities honored March 11 were the Bill Edwards Foundation for the Arts, Hands Across the Bay, the DeBartolo Family Foundation and Metropolitan Ministries.

"We want to use our 10th anniversary as a celebration of the property's successes and accomplishments," Fontana said. "But, more importantly, we want to give back to show we are extremely grateful for the magnitude of support from Tampa Bay throughout all of these years."



# Army Corps of Engineers plunges into Seminole life

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — When the Army Corps of Engineers comes calling, the mission is often about building roads and bridges.

Recently, during a four-day stay at Big Cypress Reservation, 27 members of the Corps worked to build respect and understanding with the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

“Understanding the importance of relationships is the bedrock of everything we do. We have lawyers to keep us in compliance, but it’s no good if you can’t communicate and be harmonious with the people in the room,” said Jacksonville District Commander Col. Alan Dodd.

Corps members, from New England to California, from various professions like forestry, biology and environmental law, were immersed in Seminole culture — even sleeping in chickees and dining on campfire-cooked frog legs, deer, gator, lapale and swamp cabbage.

Georgeie Reynolds, a retired Tribal liaison for the Corps who attended as a consultant, said the experience was the 19th of biannual training opportunities through the Native American Perspective on Corps Projects program.

“We want to learn how (Native Americans) see the landscape. How they are tied more closely to the land — to be taught by them and learn from them,” Reynolds said.

The Corps is engaged in the Seminole Big Cypress Reservation Water Conservation Plan, a decade-long effort to improve 1,681 acres of swamp, hardwood hammocks, cypress sloughs, prairies and pine flatwoods; to provide water treatment for agricultural runoff; to reduce exotic plant infestation; to prevent flooding; and to make the most of the naturally wet season.

The project is within a larger \$60-million, 14,000-acre hydration effort that encompasses also the Big Cypress Preserve and the Everglades Protection Area.

Chairman’s Office Administrator Danny Tommie welcomed the group.

“It’s easy for people to formulate opinions about each other but it’s better to



Eileen Soler

Jacob Osceola presents a buffet of authentic Seminole fare during a traditional dinner for members of the Army Corps of Engineers. Included on the menu were lapale, corn, deer meat gravy, frog legs, catfish and alligator.

form relationships,” Tommie said during a meeting to explain the Tribe’s government and corporate structure.

The group also toured the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum for a history lesson that spanned the Seminole Wars to today’s Tribal influence on modern music. Storytelling around a campfire by Tribal members Everett Osceola and Ollie Wareham, followed by a pitch-dark swamp buggy excursion through the wildlife preserve, revealed the Tribe’s oneness with the land and deep spiritual beliefs.

Thuy Dao, born in Vietnam and raised in Kansas before becoming an environmental lawyer for regulatory, planning and project issues, said she knew nothing about Seminoles before the trip.

“It makes me understand more that our way is not the only way and not always the best way. Before contracts and negotiations, we should get to know the people,” Dao said.

A mile-long trek across the Museum’s boardwalk with Cultural Outreach specialist Reinaldo Becerra introduced wild native

birds and plants used for food and medicine. Three generations of Tribal members, Quenton Cypress, Everett Osceola and Willie Johns, later hosted a question-and-answer period that gave insight about the present, past and future of the Tribe.

Johns said he watched the Tribe go “from rags to riches” and it feels good. But he called out the U.S. government and the Corps, which does the bidding of Congress, for causing Florida’s water problems — especially in the Everglades.

“Someone’s head needs to roll when you hurt our environment. It’s our livelihood, our culture. If we lose our trees we’d be like living in Oklahoma and we do not want that. We can’t live like that,” Johns said.

“We have one eye on the past and one eye on the future. Our challenge is to keep our identity,” said Everett Osceola to the group.

Lance Pool, a park ranger from California’s Lake Sonoma, said exposure to the Tribe enhanced what he had previously learned in college Native American studies classes. Pool was surprised that the Tribe was first to open a high-stakes bingo hall and casino in the U.S. And he was moved during a day-long visit to Egmont Key to find that ancestors had endured a pre-chapter of the Trail of Tears that took them as prisoners by ship to the Florida Panhandle.

“Everyone knows of the Trail of Tears, but not about Egmont Key. It must have been very, very tough for their ancestors,” Pool said.

The 37,000 strong Army Corps of Engineers is 98 percent civilians who assist the U.S. military by building infrastructure and facilities in 130 nations worldwide. Everglades restoration, oil spill cleanup and rebuilding after weather disasters are among major environmental projects.

Museum educator Joy Murphy, who was the lead organizer, said the event was the second since 2008 that the Tribe opened its doors to the Corps for the purpose of education. Respect for Tribal land, traditions, government and culture is paramount, she said.

“We really hope, above all, that people from the outside can take the information and be able to work better with Tribal members and government,” Murphy said.



Eileen Soler

Men of the Army Corps of Engineers check out overnight digs inside a sleeping chickee at Billy Swamp Safari during a four-day Seminole immersion stay that gave participants a firsthand perspective of Seminole life, culture and history.

## Corps learns Egmont Key history, erosion issues facing the island

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

**EGMONT KEY** — As part of the Army Corps of Engineers immersion event, workshop trainees accompanied Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum staff March 5 on a short boat trip from Gulfport to Egmont Key to tour the island where Seminole Indians captured during the Second and Third Seminole Wars were held for deportation.

It was the last event in the four-day workshop.

The group visited the famed Egmont Key lighthouse, located at the entrance to Tampa Bay from the Gulf of Mexico, built in 1858, the same year Seminole Polly Parker escaped during a deportation trip when the steamer she and other Seminole prisoners rode stopped in St. Marks for fuel.

Part of the Pinellas National Wildlife Refuge, Egmont Key protects the largest brown pelican rookery in the world and is home to gopher tortoises. Egmont Key is also a state park and houses the Tampa Bay Pilots Association.

During a picnic lunch, Florida State University history professor Andrew K. Frank presented a brief history of Florida’s Indians and how they came to live in South Florida.

In addition, visitors witnessed the erosion currently being suffered by the island, caused by the pounding of large waves from dozens of huge cargo ships that pass by Egmont Key on the way to the Port of Tampa every day.

They observed an old generator plant that has already half fallen into the sea and heard a talk from Beau Williams, of Aquatic Ecosystem Solutions Inc., who described the



Peter B. Gallagher

U.S. Army Corps of Engineer trainees join Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum staff on a walk to observe erosion effects along the Egmont Key beach.

erosion and the techniques he and his group have developed to save barrier islands.

Tribal historian Willie Johns lectured the group on the history the Seminoles share with the Island, noting that there may be Seminoles buried in unmarked graves all over the island — all of them threatened by the erosion (which has robbed Egmont Key of nearly half its land in the past 20 years).

As Johns spoke, a large gopher tortoise

appeared behind the group, heading directly for them. Surprised, the group split apart and the gopher proceeded to walk, at a fast pace, directly toward Johns, passing him to one side at the last second and continuing on through the cemetery, walking over the graves before disappearing in a bushy area in the back.

“I think he was trying to tell me to shut up and go home,” Willie joked.



Beverly Bidney

The sculptural biofiltration wall on the southeast corner of the Seminole Casino Coconut Creek parking garage helps clean water and generate power.

## Coconut Creek casino biofiltration wall helps environment

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**COCONUT CREEK** — To reduce costs and help the environment, while also adding aesthetic appeal, Seminole Casino Coconut Creek built a sculptural biofiltration wall on the parking garage to clean water and generate power.

Since its completion in 2012, the wall has saved the Tribe approximately \$12,000 a year, according to Florida Power & Light.

“It was a collaborative effort between us and the city of Coconut Creek, which has guidelines for the public display of art,” said Steve Bonner, general manager of Seminole Casino Coconut Creek. “We wanted to set the standard and have something we and the city could be proud of. Instead of a big giant box you park cars in, it’s a nice space.”

The 40-foot-high wall on the southeast corner of the garage was conceived as a living system to improve the surrounding environment by filtering water from retention ponds on the property. The filtration system removes excess nutrients, metals and oils from the pond water.

Designed by Michael Singer Studio



Beverly Bidney

The system filters 150,000 gallons of water per day, first through the wall’s ultraviolet filters and then again by native plants at the base.

in Delray Beach, the biofiltration wall complies with Coconut Creek’s MainStreet Design Standards, which support the city’s progressive environmental practices encouraging green development and aesthetic character of the MainStreet District.

“It’s a great project; it’s one of a kind,” said Jason Bregman, associate with Michael Singer Studio. “When it rains, the ponds fill up and that water gets dumped into the canal system, which goes into the Intracoastal and the ocean. That’s where our fish population is raised, like a nursery. It’s also where a large part of the coastal biodiversity of Florida is found. The water quality in the canals is poor; if everyone did more to filter their ponds, the waters and fisheries would be stronger and cleaner. The Native American populations are the ones who knew this well and knew it first.”

The system filters 150,000 gallons of water per day, first through the wall’s ultraviolet filters and then again by native plants at the base of the wall. A solar canopy on the roof of the garage generates about 23 kilowatts of power per day, more than enough to power the pumps, filters, lights and elevators in the garage.

Native plants used by Seminoles for generations are incorporated into the design, including coontie and cattail.

“The aquatic plants have been scientifically proven to be effective for filtration and getting bacteria out of water,” Bregman said. “Their root systems foster beneficial bacteria which also filter the water.”

The biofiltration garden at the base of the wall uses technology found in aquaculture and fish farming. Aqua cubes in the aquatic plant bed bubble the water, adding oxygen to it. The system basically treats the water like a big fish tank.

“It’s interesting that the plants are native — it really speaks to Florida,” Bonner said. “It’s been a success. We had to play with the water flow, but it’s been pretty maintenance-free. It really does take care of itself.”

The deep retention ponds hold a lot of water, so it can take months to filter, depending on the amount of rainfall.

“Our environment is out of balance,” Bregman said. “This is a small piece, but if we all did our share it can have a huge impact and clean our waterways. Everything is interconnected in South Florida.”

## Child welfare conference coming to Fort Lauderdale

Event to be held April 14-16 at Pier Sixty-Six

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**FORT LAUDERDALE** — About 700 people are expected to attend the annual National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) conference in Fort Lauderdale April 14-16.

In its 32nd year, the Protecting Our Children National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect will offer workshops focusing on child welfare, foster care and adoption services; children’s mental health; data and research; legal affairs and advocacy; and youth involvement and family engagement, among others.

The theme of this year’s conference, to be held at Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six in Fort Lauderdale, is “In the best interest of Native children — ICWA’s enduring legacy.” The Seminole Tribe is the host sponsor.

Tribal member Ted Nelson, NICWA vice president who has served on its Board of Directors since 2006, helped bring the event to Florida.

“It is the first time the meeting will be held on the East Coast,” said Nelson, who

has attended NICWA conferences since 2004. “We wanted to bring the conference here so all the Tribal social services could be there from the East Coast Tribes.”

NICWA, a privately funded nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the well-being of Native children and families, offers a comprehensive source for information on Native child welfare and enforces the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) throughout the country.

Passed by Congress in 1978 in response to the high number of Native children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies, ICWA seeks to keep Native American children with Native American families.

NICWA is collecting donated items such as arts, crafts, jewelry and artwork for a silent auction to raise money for the organization, and needs volunteers to be greeters and to help with registration and the silent auction. Volunteers have the opportunity to attend portions of the conference.

For more information about the event, contact NICWA events manager Lauren Shapiro at 503-222-4044 ext. 118 or visit [www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org).



# Lowe Art Museum showcases Seminole life through painting by Erica Marie Deitz

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

MIAMI — Erica Marie Deitz joined an elite group of Native American artists recently when the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami purchased one of her paintings for permanent display in the Barton Wing of Native American Art. The museum held an opening March 7 for the redesigned wing, which features 115 examples of contemporary and historic art of the Americas — especially the art of Native North America.

*Seminole Village I* — Deitz's 29-by-33-inch acrylic on canvas painting — hangs prominently on the wall near other Seminole art, including patchwork clothing from the 1930s, sashes from the mid-19th century, modern sweetgrass baskets and a painting of Seminole chief Julcee-Mathla from 1826.

"The Lowe was looking for a contemporary piece that depicted the Seminole Tribe," said Deitz, a member of the Seminole, Winnebago and Ojibway Tribes. "They chose one of a Seminole camp. I made the painting to give my children a picture to look at so they have an idea of what it was like to live back then."

Deitz has always appreciated art. As a 3-year-old she asked her aunt Bonnie Motlow to draw pictures for her, but Deitz said she soon started drawing them herself. She has created art ever since.

Growing up in an artistic family has helped hone her creativity; her parents, Jo Motlow North and Robert North, met while students at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M., and her grandmothers were both artists.

Deitz had her first one woman show at Walker Elementary School in Fort Lauderdale at age 10.

"When it came to art, it wasn't a hobby," Deitz said. "It was something I did as if someone was to breathe or eat. It was innate; it was part of who I was."

Although she enrolled in advanced art classes at Nova High School in Davie, Deitz never pursued art school. Instead, she took criminal justice classes at Broward Community College and planned for a career as a criminal sketch artist. School and art took a back seat, however, when she married her husband, Bruce Deitz, and had three children, but she always managed to create pieces for Tribal Fair competitions. When the family moved to Eagle, Idaho in

2004, she devoted more time to her art.

"I was getting nostalgic for my Indian heritage and started putting the traditions into my paintings," Deitz said. "You have to move away from something to realize what's important and give you something to focus on."

Robert North not only encourages his daughter but he also promotes her and other Native American artists through his business, Cloud North Productions.

"We saw the talent in her early on and encouraged her," North said at the Lowe opening. "We knew it would come to this and so much more when the time was right. I have the honor of representing her, which is pretty close to perfect."

Deitz spends a lot of time in her in-home studio where she works in various mediums; she paints and draws, sews patchwork and plans to learn clay sculpting. She aspires to increase her visibility nationally and internationally by competing and showing her work in galleries with non-Native American artists. As a child, she entered and won medals in international competitions and wants to again.

In addition to her parents, Deitz is inspired by Native American artists, including the late R.C. Gorman and Woody Crumbo, who both created traditional images with modern sensibility. She also receives inspiration from Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali, 17th-century Dutch painter Rembrandt, Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci and American painter Andrew Wyeth.

"The whole idea is to immerse yourself in art itself; you never know what will interest you," she said. "You have to make goals for yourself or it goes on the back burner. You have to challenge yourself or you'll never expand as an artist."

North said the market for Native American art abroad is booming with a strong community of buyers and collectors. Europeans are enamored with Native American art and German collectors have extensive collections, he said.

"We told our children that there is nothing stopping you, but you really do have to think outside of the box," North said. "Don't let people define you. Erica does what she really enjoys; it's all about her ability to express herself."

Deitz's philosophy on art and life is simple.

"Believe in your talent and surround yourself with positive people," she said.

# Tina Osceola gallery talk: 'Art is the voice of people'

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

MIAMI — During a gallery talk at the Lowe Art Museum at University of Miami March 7, Tina Osceola explained to about 100 attendees the importance of art to the history of a group of people.

The museum asked Osceola to share her unique perspective as a former director of a Tribal museum for the opening of the renovated Barton Wing of Native American Art.

"Art is the voice of people who are no longer here to tell their story," said Osceola, former Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum director. "Three hundred years from now people will see this art and try to interpret a story from it."

To demonstrate how art helps modern society decipher the history and culture of people, Osceola spoke about objets d'art from the Second Seminole War, when people fled deep into the Everglades from advancing American troops.

She also cited Hopi pottery objects on display at the Lowe Art Museum, which to the creators were merely practical objects.

"What we call art today, they called bowls," Osceola said. "Those utilitarian items tell a story about how much care went into their ceremonial and everyday items. But they put just as much value and time into things they sold for the tourist trade. It's all about the story within."

Through her work at the Tribe's Museum, Osceola knows firsthand the challenge of illustrating the rich history and culture of a Tribe through its art. But Osceola said museums exist to tell stories, and Tribal museums give Tribes a voice.

"We are telling our own story and telling it our own way today," she said. "The stories we tell are those we want you to know. The stories we tell through art today are much different than the ones from earlier, but they are all rooted in our heritage."

Osceola also spoke on the renaissance of Seminole art today.

"Little girls are sewing again," she said. "Making patchwork is about human interaction and passing of stories. It tells us who we are. Art is a knowledge-seeking journey and every piece has a story."



Beverly Bidney

Tina Osceola speaks March 7 at Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami.



Beverly Bidney

Erica Marie Deitz poses with her painting March 7 at the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami.

## ◆ TRUST LAND

From page 1A

The Tribe does not yet have plans for the site, which is zoned for 10 units per acre or 100 homes. In the last couple years, they have used the property, lush with mature live oak trees and abundant shade, for Health Department walks and for Rez Rally.

"We are trying to bring the land into trust for self-determination purposes," said Joe Martin, Community Planning and Development Real Estate assistant director. "There is no plan for it yet, but once it is in trust, Council will decide. But whatever we do develop will be a less-intense use than what was there before."

The Stirling Road Mobile Home Park, which closed in 2006, contained 70 mobile home pads and two one-story residences. Since the land was vacated, Davie has

provided no services to the site but has collected taxes every year, Martin said.

In her letter to the BIA, Paul claims the town provides police, fire, public works and other municipal services to the property.

Martin said he believes Davie doesn't want to lose control of the land.

In 2010, for example, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood wanted to use the land for overflow parking for a one-time Super Bowl event — the game was being played in Miami — and Davie refused to allow it.

"That's why self-determination is so important — to bring control back to the Tribe," Martin said. "It's a good example of why the Tribe wants land in trust."

The BIA application process has been delayed until Florida Power & Light moves transmission lines to the edge of the property, which should be completed during the summer.

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# Business profile: Robert Nelson's Native Reign

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**OCALA, Fla.** — Robert Nelson, owner of Native Reign, became an entrepreneur because he couldn't find a cure for his dry scalp and realized he would have to do it himself.

He conducted research into natural versus commercial shampoos, found recipes for all-natural products, tweaked them to perfection and voilà; his scalp was clear of flaking.

"My scalp has always been really dry," said Nelson, 18, who lives in Ocala. "Every shampoo I ever used made it horrible. I found out all the ingredients were really bad for you, so I came up with my own recipes."

During his research, Nelson learned commercial soaps and shampoos are made with fats and lard, which he calls "nasty, nasty stuff." Using only natural oils, including olive, bran, castor, palm and coconut, he concocted a variety of soaps. It took him several weeks to create more

products and a few more months to refine them.

Nelson knew other people who share similar problems would be interested in his products, so he opened Native Reign in November 2013. The company offers shampoos, soaps, moisturizers, masks, scrubs and lip balm, all handmade by Nelson.

"It's a lot like cooking," said Nelson, who has dabbled in culinary creations since age 12.

Working from a lab in his home, Nelson experiments with various fragrances, essential waters and essential oils. He makes his own essential water by distilling the essence from plants grown in his backyard, including chamomile, lemon, marigold and patchouli. Essential water is lighter than essential oil but is used in the same way — mostly for healing properties and scents. He buys essential oils from plants he cannot grow, such as tea tree and eucalyptus, the two most frequently used in his products.

Like all glycerin soap, Native Reign's

are humectants, which add moisture to the skin. The company's biggest sellers are the masculine-smelling Glacier soap and the Help specialty soap for eczema, psoriasis, cellulitis and other dry skin issues.

Nelson creates Native Reign soaps a couple pounds at a time, enough for 10 to 12 bars. He targets high-end consumers who want quality, all-natural products and plans to market the line at shops in Ocala. He now primarily sells online.

To continue marketing his business through other avenues, Nelson attended Tribal Fair in February. While there, he sold his products and made business contacts.

"It was fun," Nelson said. "I met a lot of interesting people, which I don't usually do."

When Nelson's family recently suffered from the flu, he created a soap made with eucalyptus, mint and essential oils to ease the symptoms and open up the nasal passages. He likens it to topical treatments commonly used for colds, but in all-natural soap form. He calls it Breathe Easy.

"It came out great," Nelson said. "I had wanted to make it for a while, but hadn't gotten to it. The flu kicked me in the butt though."

He has plans for the company to become a full manufacturing company that also offers facial masks, mineral makeup and bath salts.

"I think five years is more than enough

time to get to that point," Nelson said.

His short-term goal is to increase traffic to the company's website and to secure more orders by increasing Native Reign's visibility on the Internet through social media sites. Native Reign products will soon be available for sale on Amazon.

For more information, or to place an order, visit [www.NativeReign.com](http://www.NativeReign.com).

## Product review: Native Reign's Glacier soap

SUBMITTED BY OLLIE WAREHAM  
Tribal Member

**HOLLYWOOD** — At the 2014 Seminole Tribal Fair, I met a young Seminole entrepreneur named Robert Nelson, an 18-year-old from Ocala, Fla. who started his own natural soap and bath products company called Native Reign.

Robert, the son of Christina and Ted Nelson, said he started his own business because he "wanted to invest my money into something I could believe in and be helpful to people and my Tribe." He aims to make the business profitable enough to move it into a warehouse.

Robert said all his products are homemade with all-natural oils and herbs, unlike commercial soap makers that remove the healthy ingredients from their products and replace them with synthetic lathering agents and harsh chemicals.

During Tribal Fair, Robert gave me one of his soap products, called Glacier, to sample.

I've tried all-natural soaps before. Some I like and others I should have left on the shelf, but all had the same common problem: no lather.

When I took the soap out of its wrapping, it had a very nice scent and the blue and orange swirls were pleasing to the eye. Now the next test was the lather



Ollie Wareham

Pictured is Native Reign's Glacier soap bar, made with all-natural ingredients.

test, and to my surprise the soap gave a nice foamy, bubbly lather.

After rinsing off, I felt clean, without the filmy feeling some commercial soaps leave.

While I enjoyed the product overall, it had one problem. It didn't last many showers. I guess the soap dissolves quicker than commercial soaps because it's all natural.

If you see Robert selling his all-natural soaps and bath products, buy a few bars of soap, body lotions or shampoos and tell him he's doing a great job.

For more information, visit [www.NativeReign.com](http://www.NativeReign.com), call 352-304-8714 or email [NativeReign1@aol.com](mailto:NativeReign1@aol.com).



Ollie Wareham

Robert Nelson, owner of Native Reign, poses with one of his soap bars during Seminole Tribal Fair in February. Nelson set up a vendor booth to promote his all-natural bath products.



Photo courtesy of Robert Nelson

Robert Nelson works in his Ocala lab. Behind him are ingredients used to make his products.

## Native voices blend harmony, history

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — It made sense that the first sounds at a reception to welcome the newest Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum exhibit — *To Sing as a Group: Multiple Voices of Seminole Music* — were Creek spirituals sung by elders who carry the wisdom of the past into the present.

"God the Creator gave us our voice that we could sing with our mouths," said Pastor Matt Tiger, of First Indian Baptist Church of Brighton before he and Rusty Powell uttered the hymns like blessings at the March 15 event.

Opened to the public weeks earlier, the show features contemporary Seminole musicians who have incorporated historic Native roots into many musical genres, including folk, country, rap and rock.

The retrospective highlights the earliest Mikasuki and Creek church hymns plus Chairman James E. Billie's 1989 country anthem *Native Son* and a 2011 Native American Music Award winner *The Storm* by Zack "Doc" Battisti and Spencer Battisti.

Other featured artists are the Rev. Paul "Cowbone" Buster, Savage Twins and The Osceola Brothers Band.

Memorabilia, videos and iPod listening stations are also included.

Curator Rebecca Fell, during the recent reception, hosted free tours of the exhibit and an outdoor live music lineup with Tiger

and Powell, Savage Twins, flautist Ollie Wareham and the Native Voices choir from All Family Ministries in Brighton.

"I hope we've made something you can be proud of," Fell said to an audience of about 75 who gathered at chickees and a makeshift stage.

The performers demonstrated how faith, history and artistic expression intertwined conjure notably Native sounds.

Native Voices, formed about three years ago, visits Florida churches dressed in traditional clothing to share Seminole culture and "the word" through songs in Creek. Members include Mary Jo Micco, Mary Alice Huff, Reina Micco, Rita McCabe, Louise Gopher and tiny Ila Trueblood, 4.

"We never meant to be a traveling group but now all of our children know the songs, and we believe that we have another generation of voices coming up," Gopher said.

Hollywood Reservation's Huston "Rocket" Osceola and Brantley Osceola, of the rap duo Savage Twins, performed in-your-face lyrics to illustrate a young boy's rise from the gritty streets of an urban reservation to manhood and a life that honors his ancestors.

"We had a tough time growing up around alcohol and drug temptation. Our message is that you don't have to go down that road," Huston Osceola said. "We never thought we'd be in a museum, ever. Now, it's our job to make music and be the

inspiration."

A solo flute instrumental by Ollie Wareham transported the audience to a state of serenity.

"Not all voices speak with words," Fell said.

The Rev. Paul "Cowbone" Buster, of the long popular Cowbone Band, explained how his love for music was inspired by his father, Junior Buster, who was an avid Grand Ole Opry fan. Often, Buster would listen in when his father and Jimmy Roberts would hold jazz sessions under a huge oak tree on the Big Cypress Reservation. His mother, Mary Annie Osceola Buster, bought him his first guitar from a grocery store in LaBelle for less than \$1.50 when the family rode into town in the bed of pickup truck.

"On the way home I could see the old clock tower in the distance. I took that guitar and it wasn't even tuned but I started picking a song," Buster said. "Music's always been a part of our lives. It's always been good to us."

Many tourists who attended were mesmerized by the music.

Snowbirds Al and Nancy Scaia, of Salisbury, Conn., who are Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum members, agreed that the event gave "in-depth meaning and enlightenment" to facts they learned from the exhibit alone.

"To see the musicians, especially the younger ones, come out and perform and then talk about their connections is priceless," Al Scaia said. "They are living the music, not just mimicking it."



Eileen Soler

Little Mr. Seminole Roberto Benard and Little Miss Seminole Madasyn Osceola wave to spectators at the Chalo Nitka parade. Chalo Nitka, which means 'Big Bass' in Creek, began in 1949 to celebrate the asphalt paving of the narrow roadway.

## ◆ CHALO NITKA From page 3A

Lorene Gopher, the director of cultural programs for the Brighton Culture Department, said local residents have always welcomed Tribal members.

As far back as Lorene Gopher can remember, Seminole families popped in on the yearly event. Her grandfather, Billy Bowlegs, would draw crowds when he demonstrated his turkey calling techniques. For many years, bass caught during a fishing tournament held earlier in the week were displayed for everyone to see.

At the end of the day, organizers insisted that the Seminole families take the bass home to eat.

"The town people looked out for us when we didn't have anything," she said.

The tables turned about six years ago following a few years of little Seminole participation.

Tracy Whirls, executive director of the Glades County Economic Development Council, said the Tribe stepped in as a Chalo Nitka leading sponsor after the local chamber of commerce, which used to host the event, folded unexpectedly in the midst of the global recession.

"We literally did not know if the festival would happen that year," Whirls said. "I can't say how delighted we were when the Tribe came back. We had two months to pull it together. The Tribe helped resurrect what Chalo Nitka was."

The day of cultural sharing included a menu of gastro-delights including Indian tacos and hamburgers, catfish and garfish, funnel cakes and frybread.

Cloggers danced to American roots



Eileen Soler

Big Cypress Councilman Mondo Tiger tosses candy into the crowd at the 66th annual Chalo Nitka parade March 1 in Moore Haven.

music. Seminole members competed in clothing contests.

And, in keeping with tradition, brothers James and Clinton Holt displayed alligator and snapping turtle talents to a captive audience.

"It's a big deal, a great big deal, for Glades County and Moore Haven. It's a reunion event," Karl Engel said.



Eileen Soler

Native Voices, a choir of Seminole members, sing in Creek at the reception. From left, Ila Trueblood, 4, Louise Gopher, Rita McCabe, Reina Micco, Mary Alice Huff and Mary Jo Micco.



◆ More CATTLE DRIVE photos from page 3A



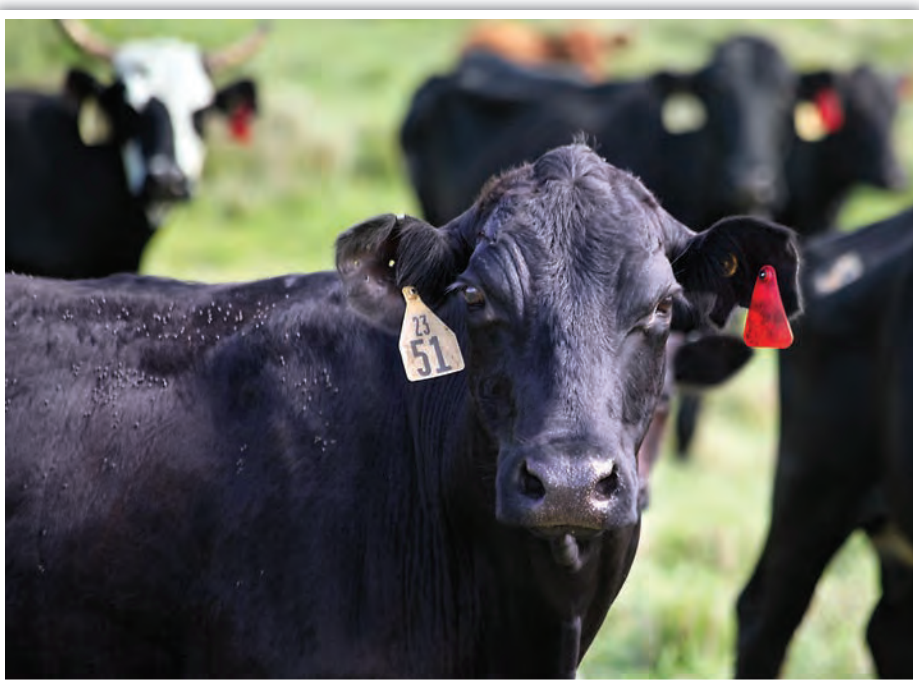
Eileen Soler

Family and friends of the 18th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo's Honorary Trail Boss, 'Big' Charlie Osceola, gather for a portrait March 22 during the midway break at Big Cypress Councilman Mondo Tiger's ranch.



Eileen Soler

The 9-mile trek through bucolic landscape provides peaceful scenes of man and beast.



Eileen Soler

Bovines are aplenty on the Big Cypress Reservation on and off the cattle drive trail.



Eileen Soler

Trail boss Heith Crum leads the March 22 cattle drive through Big Cypress Reservation.



Eileen Soler

Daniel Rodriguez, of Hollywood, competes March 22 in the rodeo portion of the 18th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo on the Big Cypress Reservation.

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Eileen Soler

Born and raised in New York City, Mike Maldonaldo, of Miami, lives out his childhood cowboy dreams atop Delilah at the cattle drive on Big Cypress Reservation.



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## 'Like it happened yesterday:' A summer with Josie and Susie Billie



Photo courtesy of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

If you know any of the people in this photo from 1948, please share your knowledge with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum staff so they can provide pictures of family members to those who request them.

SUBMITTED BY MARY BETH ROSEBROUGH  
 Research Coordinator

After exchanging many emails and phone calls, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum welcomed special visitor Edna DeHass Siniff, a friend and supporter of the Museum who had never actually set foot inside until recently. She originally contacted the Museum searching for a safe place to house her treasures and photos from when she lived in and visited Big Cypress throughout her youth.

One summer in the mid-1940s, Edna's parents were working as missionaries among Tribal members. Because of a dangerous storm flooding the Everglades, Edna and her brother were separated from their parents, which led Edna to stay with Josie and Susie Billie. Her brother lived with a different family. Although she missed her brother, Edna enjoyed receiving Susie's undivided attention. She taught her the day-to-day duties of a Seminole child, such as pounding corn. Edna described the distinct shape of Susie's mortar and pestle; the mortar had a bowl shape carved in the top and the base of the bowl was an opening only the width of the pestle – a detail that she said makes her experience seem "like it happened yesterday."

Stephen Bridenstine, Oral History coordinator, interviewed Edna and recorded her memories for safekeeping. Those memories include playing softball, making baskets, cooking and sewing a doll in the shape of a monkey, all under the guidance of Susie in her chickee.

Along with the vivid memories, Edna had unidentified photos in her possession that she donated to the Museum. If you know any of the people in either of these photos from 1948, please share your knowledge with the Museum staff so they can provide pictures of family members to those who request them. Call 863-902-1113, and ask for someone in the Collections Division.



Photo courtesy of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Please call 863-902-1113 if you can identify this woman.

## Preparing your home as you prepare for the season

SUBMITTED BY LAURENCE CHAUVET  
 Emergency Management Planner

It's that time of year again. Residential safety assessment teams will be out in the community and talking to community members about preparing their homes for the upcoming hurricane season. Team members will discuss generator, debris and shutter readiness, update emergency contact information, and help residents sign up for CodeRED, the Tribe's emergency alert and notification system. Here are some helpful numbers and tips to keep in mind this upcoming season:

### Generator readiness

- Never use portable generators inside your home or garage.
- Place generators away from windows, doors and vents to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Do not leave generators to run unattended. If you must leave, turn them off.
- Keep generators dry. Dry your hands before touching generators and operate them on dry surfaces under open, canopy-like structures.
- Turn generators off and let them cool down before refueling. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Make sure to use the proper recommended fuel for your generators.
- Make sure generators have been properly installed and serviced before turning them on for emergency power.

If you have any questions regarding generators, contact your local Housing Department office for assistance.

Hollywood: 954-985-2300 ext. 4  
 Big Cypress: 863-805-2940  
 Brighton: 863-824-6051  
 Immokalee: 239-657-4515  
 Fort Pierce: 772-466-1492  
 Tampa: 813-246-3100  
 Trail: 305-553-8245  
 Emergency: 1-800-617-7517



### Shutter readiness

The Housing Department provides assistance in setting up shutters and boarding up windows. Tribal members needing assistance should contact their local Housing Department office to request help securing their homes in the event of a hurricane or tropical storm.

### Debris readiness

During a storm, loose debris can become airborne and cause severe damages to people and property. Prior to a hurricane or tropical storm, community members are encouraged to place any debris around their homes that could become flying objects at the curb line of their property for pick up. Elders in the communities are encouraged to contact Public Works early to make special arrangements for debris collection.

The Public Works hurricane season debris pickup schedule from June to October is as follows:

- Hollywood Reservation: every Tuesday.
- Big Cypress, Brighton, Fort Pierce and Immokalee Reservations: every Wednesday.

In the event of a hurricane or tropical storm, the Public Works staff will be available to empty all trash cans.

All residents are urged to pull cans off the curb side and secure them inside their property prior to the storm's arrival. For any questions regarding debris and trash pickup, contact Public Works at 866-625-5376.

If you have questions about the effects of a storm, or how to keep your family and home safe, call Emergency Management at 954-967-3650 or visit [www.stofemd.com](http://www.stofemd.com) | [www.seminolepd.com](http://www.seminolepd.com).

Betty Mae Jumper

## Wisdom from the past

### The craft of Seminole art

The following column was written by Betty Mae Jumper and printed in the January 15, 1999 issue of *The Seminole Tribune*.

Previously I wrote about the store-bought Christmas doll I never got as a child, and how I finally got one when I was 15 when I was a student at the Indian School in Cherokee, N.C.

That doll meant so much to me that I kept it on my bed from the day I got it until I lost it in a house fire 13 years ago. Well, what a wonderful surprise when I opened my Christmas presents and discovered that my friend Tom Foche had replaced that lost doll with another.

But, writing about the doll and what it meant caused me to remember other dolls in other times. When I was a child, the only dolls the Indian girls got were the palmetto fiber dolls that are so valued by collectors today.

My mother, Ada Tiger, told me that the first palmetto fiber dolls were made by Alice Billy Boy's mother, Rosella Tiger Huff. Back then, no one in the Tribe had the money to afford store-bought dolls, so Rosella wanted something to give to her grandchildren.

She went out in the field and cut the fiber from palmetto buses. Then she made a head and put the body on it for the kids. It was the first palmetto fiber doll ever made, and it was made right on the Dania Reservation, as the Hollywood Reservation was called in those days.

Her grandchildren, Leado Osceola and

Francis Osceola from the Trail, were the first children to ever get to play with a palmetto fiber doll.

Later, someone came up with the idea of adding the traditional Seminole patchwork clothing to the dolls. These dolls were then sold to tourists out of Willie Jumper's store near where the Council Oak is today. Back then, many Seminole families depended upon tourists to survive, so once one woman saw that a tourist would buy a fiber doll, they all quickly began making them.

It was the same with the beadwork. My grandmother, Mary Gopher Tiger, told me that my aunt, Missie Tiger, started to make bracelets and necklaces to sell to the white people who came off trains. Then, her sisters picked it up and started making them, too.

After that the Trail Indians picked it up and improved the techniques until they made lots of beadwork, too.

When you visit a Seminole gift shop and see these things for sale, remember these items can be traced back to women who were creative and hard working.

They were fine at their craft. They made items that are still in demand today.

But, today there are fewer and fewer of our Tribe who still make these things. Some items, like the dolls, are getting harder to get every day.

I think it's important that our young people remember our past and our tradition.

The handmade products are a tradition that we shouldn't let pass away. I hope they take the time to learn these skills. I love my new "store-bought" doll, but I would really hate to think that the day of the palmetto fiber doll is past.

That would be a loss for everyone in our Tribe and for future generations as well.



## Hah-Pong-Ke: Indigo Girls

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
 Special Projects Reporter

Although the Indigo Girls regularly perform their popular song *Salty South* in live concert performances, the tune was not among those that stood out on the female folk rock duo's 2009 CD *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug*.

The song, which mentions the Seminole Indians, was co-written by Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, Georgia elementary school classmates who eventually became the Grammy-award winning Indigo Girls while attending Emory University and playing at bars and coffee houses around Atlanta.

The song describes a young person begging her mentor to, "Tell me all the stories that you never did/Of the salty south, the Seminoles held out/While Geronimo died in a lonely jail."

Descriptions in the song about waves and tides and draining the land for growing sugarcane are indicators that the foundation of the song is fragile Florida and the destruction of the state's natural resources.

Only the deluxe version of the *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug* CD contains the original recording of *Salty South*. The song was left off the original CD.

The deluxe version features the same 10 songs, plus *Salty South* performed by Saliers and Ray.



Courtesy photo

The female folk rock duo, the Indigo Girls, perform. Their song, *Salty South* references Seminoles and Geronimo.

## 'Salty South'

Mister, pull up a chair, I got time for tears  
 So tell me all the stories that you never did  
 Of the salty south, the Seminoles held out  
 While Geronimo died in a lonely jail  
 Thousand tides, thousand waves  
 Takin' it all away  
 It'll come back in, we'll be gone by then  
 And it's a miracle we ever learned to live  
 You drain that land for a better plan  
 Sugarcane and the civil man  
 But now the ringin' dead them pines planted in  
 that time  
 We gonna keep on killin' till they get it right

Thousand tides, thousand waves  
 Takin' it all away  
 It'll come back in, we'll be gone by then, oh  
 And it's a miracle we ever learned to live  
 I remember the wind as it was settlin'  
 And every sun goin' down was a picture then  
 But we look back at 'em framed, they all look the  
 same  
 There's no sense of time, no sense of pain  
 Thousand tides, thousand waves  
 Takin' it all away  
 It'll come back in, we'll be gone by then, oh  
 And it's a miracle we ever learned to give



**SALACOA**  
From page 1A

Seminole Pride Beef debuted at a large trade show in July and has generated more than \$1 million since then. Nationwide distribution channels, minority status and Seminole history in the cattle industry help the brand's success, said John Dembeck, Chief Operating Officer of Seminole Brand Development.

"When we rolled it out, people couldn't believe it was from Florida," Alex Johns said. "We showed customers we can produce a high-quality product."

**"Ranching is like a big family. We all have the same passion and values. I think if all the Tribal members could see this, they would be proud of it."**  
—Alex Johns

President Tony Sanchez Jr., Hollywood Board Rep. Steve Osceola and Brighton Board Rep. Larry Howard also attended the cattle sale.

"I don't know anything about cattle,



Beverly Bidney

Sheri Holmes, Liz Johns, Leoma Simmons Taylor and Theresa Bowers walk up the hill from the cattle pens before the Salacoa Valley Farms spring cattle sale March 22. The women had been scrutinizing the animals to determine which ones to purchase.

but I do know about business," President Sanchez said. "Alex knows everything about cattle and understands our long-term vision and the steps we take to move us in that direction."

He said he was glad Tribal members viewed the farm personally.

"I hope the individual cattle owners can see the value and be proud," he said. "They are part owners, as are the rest of the Tribe."

Prospective purchasers came from across the country for the sale, which was an auction. Others placed bids for the cattle

online and by phone. Most of the cattle sold will remain in the southeastern U.S., but some were purchased by bidders from as far away as Texas.

The sale featured 60 cows and 65 bulls. Many of the Tribes 67 cattle owners wanted to purchase cattle for their own herds, but lively bidding shut most of them out. Polly Hayes and Martha Jones both came to buy heifers — both were outbid.

"I think this will be very beneficial to the Tribe," said Hayes, the Tribe's 4-H coordinator. "I bought some bulls before the Salacoa purchase, but they aren't as nice as these. They have some beautiful animals here."

Rep. Osceola, Hayes' son, comes from a long line of ranchers, starting with his grandmother Lizzy Buck, one of the first cattle owners. After inspecting the cattle for himself, he said understands why they're so sought after.

"I'm here absorbing everything and looking at the economics of it," he said. "I'm glad my uncle Joe (Osceola) gets to see the progress we've made and know that his hard work is paying off."

Several Tribal members bought animals; Todd and Stanlo Johns added five bulls and three cows to their herd, Leoma Simmons Taylor increased her 61-head herd by one and Alex Johns bought three for his herd.

"They were better quality than what we have back home," Todd Johns said. "It was a real upgrade and I'm happy with the prices. I got what I wanted."

All attendees at the sale had at least one thing in common: pride in their animals.

"Ranching is like a big family," Alex Johns said. "We all have the same passion and values. I think if all the Tribal members could see this, they would be proud of it."



Beverly Bidney

Tribal members take a look at the cattle in their pens before the spring cattle sale at Salacoa Valley Farms March 22.

**CLINIC**  
From page 1A

Once the building is repurposed for Tribal use, Councilman Osceola said the current clinic on the Hollywood Reservation will be demolished, and the land will be used for new home sites.

Ultimately, the Tribe plans to submit a land into trust application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Approval may happen quicker than usual because of the land's use

for a medical facility, Councilman Osceola said.

"This was a good opportunity for the Tribe to expand the Hollywood community," said Adam Nelson, Tribal Community Development acting executive director. "We will allocate the entire bottom floor to the clinic."

The Tribal Community Development Department will survey additional departments to determine which may need more space, and they hope to have a design in place for the clinic this year.



Beverly Bidney

Formerly home to Farmers Insurance, the nearly 100,000-square-foot, two-story building located at 5701 Stirling Road, will house the future Hollywood Medical Center.

**PANTHER**  
From page 3A

The release of the panther was a moving experience for those who witnessed it.

"I loved when the cat sprinted off; it was magnificent," said Sam Tommie, who grew up and lives on Big Cypress Reservation. "She was very powerful. It was beautiful

to see her run off like that. It is one of the highlights of this year."

Anderson stood near the crate and sang *Seminole Wind* as the panther was introduced back into her natural habitat.

"It was very special," said Anderson, who wrote the song in 1990. "The panther is one of the most perfect animals on the North American continent. To see one in the wild is a spiritual thing."



Beverly Bidney

Making headway, the panther reaches top speed after being released near Big Cypress March 10.

4th Annual  
Seminole Okalee  
Indian Village

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# Health



Emma Johns

March of Dimes March for Babies participants pose for a picture during the annual 5K event that helps raise money to provide education and research on birth defects and infant mortality.

## Seminole Tribe rallies for annual March for Babies

BY EMMA JOHNS  
Freelance Writer

**OKEECHOBEE** — The annual Okeechobee March of Dimes Foundation's March for Babies 5K run/walk attracted 37 participants from the Seminole Tribe in support of the organization's vision March 8 at Flagler Park.

Formerly known as the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, the March of Dimes has been in existence for more than 70 years. After accomplishing its original mission to aid the cure for polio, the March of Dimes shifted its focus to help provide education and research on birth defects and infant mortality.

Each year the foundation hosts March for Babies walks in communities throughout the nation to raise awareness and funds that support its mission.

According to the foundation's website, more than \$2 billion has been raised since the March for Babies walks started in 1970.

Barbara Boling, of the Seminole Health Department, said the Seminole Tribe has actively participated in these walks for more than 17 years.

"The March of Dimes walk in Okeechobee was the first foundation walk the Tribe participated in," Boling said.

Although the Tribe does not participate in traditional fundraising for the foundation, they do make a significant donation each year.

"We believe strongly that all babies deserve a good start in life. The March of Dimes organization works to help ensure that mothers are educated, that research is state of the art and that services are available to the people who need them," Boling said.

## New studies show children living healthier lifestyles

*Drinking less soda, exercising more among reasons for positive numbers*

SUBMITTED BY BOB LAMENDOLA  
Florida Department of Health in Broward

There's good news about childhood obesity, one of the biggest health issues facing the Seminole Tribe and the nation.

Three medical studies in the past month found signs of improvements. It's too soon to know what caused the good news, or whether the change will last. But the studies came after years of efforts by Tribal leaders, government officials and advocates who have been urging people — especially children — to get more exercise and eat healthier, natural foods.

"We should honor food and our bodies by eating close to the earth," said licensed nutritionist Shannon McKeown, a former health educator for the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

"When we eat fast foods, convenience foods and synthetic foods like artificial sweeteners, we may be eating unconsciously," McKeown continued. Eating in a healthy way can be "as simple as making a commitment to shop for healthier food items, and buy and eat locally. This is not only a very important part of creating positive change, but it can also be more healthful for your body and more delicious."

Research has repeatedly shown that being overweight or obese raises the risk of developing illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and even some types of cancer. Many people don't believe this because nothing happens except for weight gain — until disease causes permanent damage. It is important to act, even in small ways, to prevent this.

In the first of the new studies, the Florida Department of Health found that the number of high school students who drank one or more sodas each day fell to 22 percent last year — down from 31 percent in 2007. The number was about the same among Native American teens. Nutrition experts say sugary soft drinks are the biggest single cause of childhood obesity — and one of the easiest to eliminate.

The information came from an annual Department of Health survey of 6,000 high school students. About 200 teens identified themselves as Indians or having Native ancestry.

The survey found that the number of teens who got a healthy amount of exercise — 60 minutes a day at least five days a week — rose to 44 percent. It was 38

percent in 2007. In addition, the number who watched television for three hours or more fell to 31 percent, down from 40 percent in 2007. However, the number who played video or computer games for at least three hours a day jumped to 41 percent, from 28 percent in 2007. The responses from Native American teens were very similar.

"It's essential that everyone help children make healthier choices, such as drinking more water, being more active and watching less television," said Dr. Paula Thaqi, health officer at the Florida Department of Health in Broward County.

The survey also found that 11.6 percent of Florida teens were obese, unchanged from past years. About 14 percent of Native American teens were obese.

A second study found that obesity dropped among Native American children in California if their Tribes added slot machines at their casinos. For every five machines added, childhood obesity dropped by 1 percent.

Why slot machines affect obesity is still unclear, the researchers said, but they speculated that more gambling generated more money to spend for good-health amenities such as community centers, medical clinics and improved housing.

A third study found that the number of obese toddlers ages 2 to 5 in the nation dropped from 13.9 percent in 2003 down to 8.4 percent in 2012. Many health advocates cheered because babies who are obese have a higher risk of being obese as adults. But researchers warned that it's unclear if the improvement will last, and overall obesity is still rising.

McKeown said that anyone can start combatting obesity by looking to nature for food. Healthy food has ingredients that are simple, natural, not overly processed.

"Eating a standard American diet may be the result of pressure by family or peers or just plain accepting social conditioning to do things the way they have always been," McKeown said. "In a state of higher consciousness, you will enjoy the foods that Mother Nature provides and take the time to make a plan and cook your food/meals, so that your body temple is honored and truly healthy."

For more information, call the Health Department at 954-962-2009 or visit [www.SemTribe.com/Services/Health.aspx](http://www.SemTribe.com/Services/Health.aspx), or The Florida Department of Health at [www.HealthiestWeightFL.com](http://www.HealthiestWeightFL.com) or [Robert.Lamendola@flhealth.gov](mailto:Robert.Lamendola@flhealth.gov).



## National Nutrition Month should be all year long

• Paula Bowers-Sanchez

March is National Nutrition Month, a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The focus is on making informed food choices and developing good eating and activity habits.

The academy is hailed as the most valuable and credible source for the most up-to-date, scientifically based food and nutrition information.

So I have two questions for you: First, are we supposed to eat healthy and take care of ourselves only in March? And second, are you making good choices when it comes to food?

The first one is easy. National Nutrition Month in March is only a reminder of what we should be doing every single month of the year. If you are serious about shedding unneeded weight and living a healthy lifestyle then every month should be your personal National Nutrition Month.

The second question is more complicated. We all have cravings for food that is not necessarily good for us. My favorites are anything chocolate, pizza and sweet tea. However, the academy suggests dietary guidelines to eating for a healthier you.

It is suggested that we eat more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt and seafood, and to use vegetable oils (canola, corn, olive oils). They also recommend that we consume less added sugar, solid fats, refined grains and sodium.

I'm not saying you have to give up those foods we all love to indulge in, but save them for

one day a week. You can enjoy many foods filled with great nutritious benefits by incorporating nuts, salsa, reduced fat cheeses and whole grain crackers — one of my favorites is Boar's Head Honey Maple Turkey rolled up as a snack, or yogurt with seasonal fruit or nuts.

Make up baggies with nuts, cut up veggies to take to your office or keep in your car as a snack for those times when you need a little something to hold you over and to avoid the temptation of going through a drive-thru. Cut back on sugary drinks like soda and juice, and try to drink water throughout the day.

Try this trick: When I feel like having a "bad choice" food, I ask myself if it's worth it. Do I really need those empty calories or do I really need that much fat? I usually change my mind and grab something more nutritious. And, on the other hand, if I've been eating healthy, I might end up having it anyway — I just don't over-indulge.

And as always, don't neglect to get out and walk, run, use the gym, ride a bike. Get those muscles moving, burning calories. The energy you get will make you feel amazing every month of the year.

Paula Bowers-Sanchez is Seminole Tribal member and a graduate of New York University.



## Tips for ensuring payment of medical and dental bills

SUBMITTED BY CONNIE WHIDDEN  
Health Director

• Show your STOF Member Health Plan card to medical, dental and pharmacy providers prior to receiving services.

• If you are also covered under another primary health insurance plan, such as Medicare, show that card as well. The STOF Member Health Plan is always the payer of last resort.

• If you do not have a new Health Plan card that looks like this, contact a STOF Health clinic to request your new card.

• Check your Health Plan book or call the Health Plan office to ensure your health care is covered by the Health Plan. Some services are limited or excluded from coverage.

• If you receive an incident report from the STOF Health Plan, please complete the form and return it to the STOF Health Plan office to ensure timely processing of your bills. Make sure to indicate whether care received was due to an accident on the form.

• If you receive a bill or a statement for health care services in the mail, call the service provider and have them mail a copy of the itemized bill to STOF Health Plan Administration, P.O. Box 173129, Tampa, FL 33672 to process your bill. This address is also on the back of your Health Plan card. In addition, bring the bill to a STOF Health clinic.

• If you receive a notice from a collection agency for an unpaid health care bill, call the collection agency and ask that they submit an itemized bill to STOF Health Plan Administration to process your bill.

In addition, please bring the bill to a STOF Health

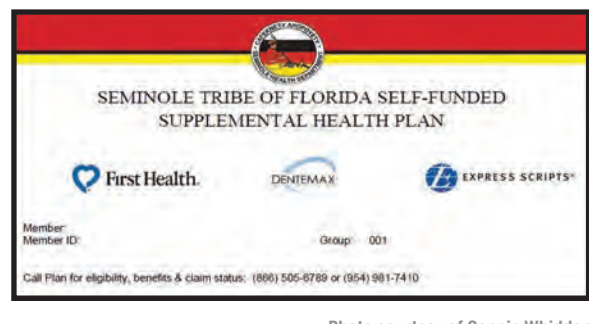


Photo courtesy of Connie Whidden

Pictured is the STOF Member Health Plan card.

clinic. We may ask you to sign a release form to allow the collection agency to speak with us about your bill and to obtain a copy of the itemized bill if necessary.

• Review the biannual explanation of benefits statement which provides detailed information about each medical and dental bill processed on your behalf. Please note that you are responsible to pay the service provider the amounts listed under the patient responsibility column.

• If you currently have unpaid health care bills on your credit report, the STOF Health Plan office will attempt to resolve these debts for you. Contact the STOF Health Plan office at 866-505-6789 for assistance. The office will need a copy of your credit report listing the unpaid health care bills and a signed release form allowing them to contact the collection agency on your behalf to discuss your account and obtain an itemized bill, if necessary, for processing.

• For all other question, call the Health Plan office.

## Peace of Mind for Indian Country

Everybody wants to make good decisions about their own health care. Reduce stress, eat right, exercise, and see your doctor regularly. Sure, it sounds easy, but when you can't afford health care, there's nothing easy about it. We all want health, harmony, and peace of mind, especially when it comes to our families. Don't let worries about health insurance get in the way! Thankfully, there are new insurance options that offer no- and low-cost coverage. Under the new health care law, more American Indian and Alaska Native people can get better coverage from a variety of providers, including tribal, urban, and Indian Health Service programs.

The time to sign up is now, before someone you love really needs it. You may be eligible for tax credits to help pay for health insurance; this makes it affordable and with no cost-sharing or deductibles when you receive services from Indian health programs. Sign up by March 31. Contact your local Indian health program about how you may qualify or find out more at [www.healthcare.gov/tribal](http://www.healthcare.gov/tribal).

**Have questions?**  
**Call 1-800-318-2596**  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week  
(TTY: 1-855-889-4325)





# SEMINOLE SCENES



Eileen Soler

**LIVING DOLLS:** Patsy West and Larry Mike Osceola pose with Seminole dolls made by Osceola's mother, Minnie Doctor, at a Bonnet House fundraiser Feb. 24 in Fort Lauderdale.



Jeremy Taylor

**STAR SIGHTING:** Former FSU football coach Bobby Bowden, credited for helping establish Seminole Chief Osceola as the school's champion icon, signs autographs during a lunch held in his honor March 11 at the Big Cypress Senior Center.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

**EAGLE SPOTTING:** The Pemasv Emahakv Charter School boys' basketball team listens intently to the Florida Gulf Coast University men's basketball team Feb. 23 during a special visit to the school in Fort Myers. Before the one-on-one with FGCU players, PECS team members watched the Eagles take on Kennesaw State.



Beverly Bidney

**INTO THE WILD:** Alex Johns and Todd Johns explore a cave March 22 in a former slate quarry, now a lake fed by a natural spring, on the Salacoa Valley Farms property. The crystal clear lake is about 150 feet deep.



Beverly Bidney

**CULTURE CRAFTER:** Rudy Juarez holds up the knife he is carving out of cypress wood Feb. 21 at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park.



Eileen Soler

**PRETTY IN PATCHWORK:** Seminole royalty show off their traditional clothing March 1 during the 66th annual Chalo Nitka Festival & Rodeo in Moore Haven.



Eileen Soler

**EYE ON THE PRIZE:** Elliot Young, of Hollywood Reservation, eyes his shot March 15 during the second Reservation Golf Challenge featuring adult golfers from all Seminole reservations who set out to win a traveling championship trophy. The event, fast becoming a triannual competition, was won by Big Cypress.



Eileen Soler

**FORE THE WIN:** Pastor Salaw Hummingbird, of Big Cypress, takes a shot March 15 during the Reservation Golf Challenge competition. He won the best score overall to clinch the win for Big Cypress Reservation.



Beverly Bidney

**PEACEFUL HORIZON:** The tranquility of Lake Okeechobee from its eastern shore makes even landlubbers long to board a boat.



Photo courtesy of Ethel Huggins

**ENERGY BOOST:** Enterprise Beverage Group (EBG) Chief Executive Officer David Drow stands next to the Hard Rock Energy drink car in front of Gold Coast Beverage Distributors headquarters in Doral. The Tribal Board of Directors recently partnered with the company to distribute Hard Rock Energy drinks.



Photo courtesy of Florida Women's Hall of Fame

**HALL OF FAMER:** Louise Gopher, center with award, poses with Gov. Rick Scott and Pemasv Emahakv Charter School students after her induction into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame March 12 in Tallahassee. She is the second Seminole woman in the Hall of Fame; Betty Mae Jumper was inducted in 1994.

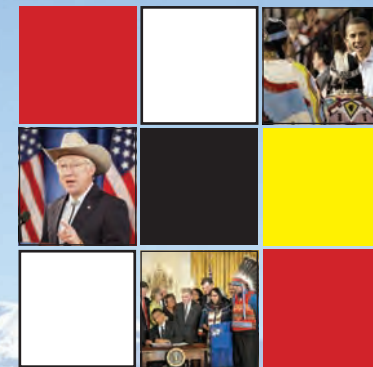


Jeremy Taylor

**COLOR ME NOLES:** Ruby Osceola poses with Bobby Bowden, decked in colorful Seminole beads, during a lunch held in his honor March 11 at the Big Cypress Senior Center.



# NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS



## Onondaga lacrosse stars change the game

ALBANY, N.Y. — Lyle Thompson, an Onondaga Indian from upstate New York, is a veritable Wayne Gretzky-like figure in collegiate lacrosse. As a sophomore last season, he finished one point short of tying the NCAA single-season scoring record. This year he is a leading contender for the Tewaaraton Award, lacrosse's Heisman Trophy, which has never been awarded to an American Indian.

If Thompson doesn't win, the award could easily go to his older brother, Miles, or their cousin and teammate, Ty, all of whom have turned in sterling performances in the sport of their ancestors, a sport that still carries deep spiritual significance to many Native Americans.

But the Thompsons' greatest accomplishment? They are "trailblazers" who have opened the doors for Native lacrosse athletes; their success has ignited a scramble for Native American recruits at lacrosse programs across the country.

The Thompsons chose to attend Albany instead of Syracuse, a regional powerhouse that has won 10 NCAA championships, and seemed to have a lock on the recruiting of American Indian players. Syracuse can trace its history with Indian athletes back to the 1950s and has featured at least one Native player on its roster for more than a decade. Other universities did not visit reservations, figuring the players would choose Syracuse. Now that is all changed.

Seneca Indians Zed Williams and Zach Miller enrolled at the University of Denver, and Seneca Frank Brown enrolled at Hobart and William Smith College.

It was no accident. The Thompsons chose Albany because they were eager to open a new door.

"We wanted to do something different," Miles Thompson, 23, told *The New York Times*. "We knew all of the big-time Natives were already going to Syracuse. We wanted to try to make a difference on our own."

— Source: *The New York Times*

## Cowboys, Indians ride to D.C. for Keystone protest

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Cowboy Indian Alliance — a group of ranchers, farmers and Tribal communities living along the proposed route of the Keystone XL Oil Pipeline — has scheduled a ride to Washington, D.C. with plans to set up camp April 22 near the White House, as part of their "Reject and Protect" campaign to protect land, water and climate now and for future generations.

The State Department is responsible for the approval of the 800,000-barrel-per-day pipeline because it crosses an international border.

The following call to action from the Cowboy Indian Alliance website explains their actions:

"On that day, we will set up camp nearby the White House, lighting our fire and burning our sage, and for five days, we will bear proud witness to President Obama's final decision on Keystone XL, reminding him of the threat this tar sands pipeline poses to our climate, land, water and Tribal rights. Throughout those five days, we will show the power of our communities with events ranging from prayers at Secretary of State John Kerry's home and an opening ceremony of Tribes and ranchers on horseback in front of the White House.

"On April 27, we invite our friends and allies against the pipeline to join us as we conclude our camp and march once more to the White House for our final, unmistakable message to President Obama. Our community of pipeline fighters just sent 2 million comments against the pipeline in just 30 days. We must follow this up with action in the streets on April 27 as we march with Tribal leaders and individuals currently living with the risk tar sands to show all the beauty and power we represent. Everyone is needed and everyone is welcome.

"With his decision closer than ever, President Obama must know what is truly at stake, and see once more the power of the alliances that have turned Keystone XL into a turning point for our movements, and for our future.

"The Cowboy and Indian Alliance brings together Tribal communities with ranchers and farmers living along the Keystone XL pipeline proposed route. Farmers and ranchers know the risk firsthand. They work the land every day. Tribes know the risk firsthand. They protect the sacred water, and defend sacred sites of their ancestors every day. They have united out of love and respect for the land and water on which we all depend.

"This is not the first time Cowboys and Indians have come together to stop projects that risk our land and water. In the '80s, they came together to protect water and the Black Hills from uranium mining and risky munitions testing. In the American imagination, Cowboys and Indians are still at odds. However, in reality, opposition to the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline has brought communities together like few causes in our history.

Tribes, farmers and ranchers are all people of the land, who consider it their duty as stewards to conserve the land and protect the water for future generations.

"The Cowboy and Indian Alliance asks President Obama a simple question: Is an export pipeline for dirty tar sands worth risking our sacred land and water for the next seven generations?"

"On June 25, 2013, President Obama said, 'Our national interest will be served only if this project does not significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution.' Anyone with common sense knows the Keystone XL pipeline would exacerbate the climate crisis: an 800,000-barrel-per-day pipeline filled with tar sands and chemicals like benzene will make it easier for tar sands companies to dig up and burn more of the world's dirtiest oil than they could with any other feasible alternative.

"Our actions next month will show President Obama that we are living up to his call to 'be the change we wish to see,' and that we stand with him to say no to Big Oil. Together we will make a clear promise that if President Obama goes back on his word and approves the Keystone XL pipeline, he will be met with the fiercest resistance from our Alliance and our allies from all walks of life. Bryan Brewer, President of the Oglala Sioux, speaks for us when he says, 'We are ready to fight the pipeline, and our horses are ready.'

"Please join us this April to tell President Obama to Reject the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, and protect our land, water, and climate."

— Source: *Huffington Post*

## Navajo Code Talkers live in bad housing

FARMINGTON, N.M. — Navajo Code Talkers, World War II legends who used their native tongue to transmit messages the enemy could not decipher, are celebrated at military parades and events nationwide.

At home in Navajo Country, however, most live in extreme poverty. Some Code Talkers live without electricity or running water. Others lack central heating. One Code Talker even lives in a house that has been struck by lightning, which is taboo in Navajo tradition.

Recently, two Code Talkers, their wives, a widow and daughter sat with a *Los Angeles Times* reporter at a community center to express their frustration with the difficult housing conditions they face.

Alfred Newman Sr. and his wife, Betsy, said they feel a bit used when paraded around at events: "People talk about Code Talkers. They say how famous they are," Betsy Newman said. "They don't feel like they are famous."

Navajo Nation officials think about Code Talkers and invoke them around Tribal elections, she said, but otherwise "they forget about us."

— Source: *Los Angeles Times*

## Natives ramp up support for Sen. Tester's language bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Sen. Jon Tester's (D-Mont.) Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act (NLISAA), filed last February, would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide increased federal financial support to Native American language programs at American Indian-focused schools. As the new Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, he is postured to gather support for the bill.

Sen. Tester's legislation would appropriate \$5 million under a grant program for fiscal year 2015 to support schools using Native American languages as their primary language of instruction. The Secretary of the Department of Education would be responsible for awards to eligible institutions.

"We are racing against the clock to save and revitalize our sacred Native American languages," Sen. Tester told *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN). "Preserving Native languages will strengthen Indian culture and increase student confidence — leading to greater academic achievement and a stronger economy."

The bill is supported by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), among many other Native-focused organizations: "In introducing the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, Sen. Tester has answered the call from Indian Country to invest in Native language immersion schools," NCAI president Brian Cladoosby told ICTMN. "Not only are these unique schools our best hope to save and revitalize our sacred Native languages, but they offer Indian education the purest form of intellectual sovereignty because no right is more sacred to Native peoples than the right to freely speak our Native languages."

John Echohawk, executive director of the Native American Rights Fund, wants the bill to be stronger by advocating Tribal governments take a strong role in saving Native languages included as part of this legislation: "Many Tribes now have Tribal education departments or agencies

(TEAs)," Echohawk told ICTMN. "Under Tribal law, under the laws of some states, and increasingly even under federal law, TEAs are in the best position to coordinate resources from Tribal, federal and state programs to focus on language immersion programs in schools and communities.

"As they grow in numbers and capacity, TEAs are consistently taking the lead in meeting the need for Tribal language, culture, and history programs and curricula," Echohawk said.

— Source: *ICTMN*

## Creeks donate \$500,000 to University of South Alabama

ATMORE, Ala. — With a \$500,000 donation to the University of South Alabama (USA), the Poarch Band of Creek Indians have created a Native American studies program that will focus on the history, culture and modern life of their Tribe, as well as others in the Southeast and across the United States at the university.

The philanthropic support will provide funding to the USA College of Arts and Sciences for an endowed professorship and program support. Among other activities, the university will offer two or more courses each year specific to Native American studies; renew the Native American Student Organization; support research by providing travel scholarships and research assistantships; host an annual speaker in Native American studies; and leverage existing USA resources through the Archaeology Museum and the Marx Library to promote awareness of Native American issues.

The Poarch Creek Indians, the only federally recognized Indian Tribe in Alabama, are descendants of a segment of the original Creek Nation, which once covered almost all Alabama and Georgia. Unlike many eastern Indian Tribes, the Poarch Creeks were not removed from their Tribal lands and have lived together for almost 200 years in and around the reservation in Poarch, Ala.

Poarch Creek Indian gaming manages three gaming facilities in Alabama, including Wind Creek Hotel & Casino in Atmore, Wind Creek Wetumpka in Wetumpka and Tallapoosa Casino in Montgomery.

Robert McGhee, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians' government relations adviser and a 1993 graduate of USA in anthropology, told *Native News Online* he found special personal meaning in the partnership with the University:

"My great-grandfather (Chief Calvin McGhee, who led the Tribe for two decades until his death in 1970) valued his Indian history and culture. He stayed true to his roots and his identity, even during years when it was not always easy to be an Indian. He would be so happy to know that students here will have the opportunity to learn that our history is also part of their state's history and important to everyone who calls Alabama home. I know he would view today as a landmark event and a great honor," McGhee said.

— Source: *Native News Online*

## Navajo author explores culture shock in new novel

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — Author Michael Woestehoff wanted to tell a humorous story with a modern Navajo perspective. Leaving the reservation to attend college far away came immediately to mind.

"Not only is it a culture shock leaving our communities to attend college, we are expected to succeed in a world completely foreign to us," Woestehoff said. "It is not that we have problems with the academic components of college; it is the interactions that make college difficult."

The resulting book, *Shades of Aye*, written for kids age 7 and older, explores the challenges American Indian students face as they leave the familiarity of the reservation for college, their resulting feelings of isolation and the difficulty in discovering who they are and what is important to them in a new and different world.

"They don't really tell you when you get to college this is how they are going to treat you, this is what is going to happen when you leave," Woestehoff said. "No one really has that experience they can share with you unless they are there. When you get there it is sometimes too late."

Woestehoff was born in Tuba City, Ariz., and grew up in Ganado where he went to school before attending Northern Arizona University and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He currently works as a communications specialist in Washington, D.C. for Native-based organizations, companies and associations.

Woestehoff believes younger generations can use technology to their advantage to create positive images of the Navajo people: "Navajo people can create. Navajo people are amazing and there are just so many different ways to be creative these days and you can embrace all that."

Perhaps the most important thing he wants people to know about the book and leaving the reservation is that it is possible to retain the things that are important

when in a different environment that is scary and unfamiliar.

He is working on a second book that continues the protagonist's journey.

— Source: *Navajo-Hopi Observer*

## One-man blockade stops 2014 Yellowstone bison slaughter

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — One day after a man handcuffed himself to a hunter orange 55-gallon barrel filled with concrete, with wire-mesh webbing spanning the entrance to the only roadway, Yellowstone National Park announced its 2014 bison removal project was ended.

Comfrey Jacobs was arraigned in a U.S. federal court for blocking the road to prevent the loading of more wild bison onto trailers destined for slaughter facilities.

Jacobs was charged with disorderly conduct, breaking a closure and interfering with a government operation. He refused a plea bargain that would charge him \$1,000 in restitution, with five years of unsupervised probation and a five-year ban from the National Park.

This was the first time a citizen exercised civil disobedience at Yellowstone's Stephens Creek bison trap. Yellowstone National Park initiates a 7-mile public access closure surrounding their Stephens Creek bison trap while highly controversial bison management activities are underway.

Since Feb. 7, approximately 450 wild buffalo were captured in the Stephens Creek bison trap, located in the Gardiner Basin; 318 were shipped to slaughter or research facilities and some were released. Additionally, more than 270 wild bison have been killed by state and treaty hunters just outside Yellowstone's boundary in Montana.

Through hunting, slaughter and consignment to research, more than 600 of America's last wild, migratory bison have been eliminated this year, marking a decimation of the world's most significant bison herds.

Yellowstone and its partners in the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) have set an arbitrary population target of 3,000 to 3,500 bison, yet a Yellowstone bison carrying capacity study has determined that the park can sustain upwards of 6,200 wild bison. Additionally, there are tens of thousands of acres of public lands surrounding Yellowstone that could sustain thousands more.

— Source: *Ecowatch.com*

## Goodell, Redskins, U.S. Senator meet in secret

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Football League (NFL) commissioner Roger Goodell and Washington Redskins executives quietly met with Sen. Maria Cantwell, then the chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, and Native American activists opposed to the team name in December 2013 — the first such meeting since the 1970s.

And it was not constructive, reports Travis Waldron (*Think Progress*) who broke the story:

"The sources said the defensive posture was evident from the Redskins and NFL's decision to unexpectedly bring two Native Americans with them to defend the name. That contributed to the sense that the team and the league were more committed to defending the name than they were interested in listening to the actual points of contention, given that none of the name's opponents have disputed the idea that there are indeed Native Americans who like the name and want it to stay."

After the meeting, and Goodell's comments during Super Bowl week that the Redskins name "has honored Native Americans," Sen. Cantwell co-wrote an open letter demanding the NFL take a firm position on the future of the name. The NFL had no response, but the Redskins began sending out weekly releases featuring letters from fans claiming Native ancestry who support the team name.

— Source: *Think Progress*

## Keep elders healthy, children connected with Skype

KESHENA, Wis. — As a technology coordinator at the Community Technology Center at College of Menominee Nation, Dean Davis has witnessed many great changes that have taken place within the surrounding community and its members. Many Natives from the surrounding communities have learned computer skills through the center that have made a difference in their lives.

In a column for *NativeTelecom.org*, Davis, a Menominee Tribal member, recommends American Indians learn the face-to-face video chat program known as Skype.

"This means that, for example, a parent in Wisconsin can communicate with their child in Florida, like grandparents Greg and Nancy Powless (Oneida) do with their grandchild," he wrote. "Once they had Skype set up on their computer and were trained how to use it, the two were able to build a communication channel with their

grandchild in Florida."

Davis quoted Nancy Powless: "Communicating with our grandchild through Skype has brought more joy into our lives. More than if they were to just use the phone."

Greg and Nancy Powless hang Tribal designs in the background to try to familiarize their grandchild with important cultural art and symbols. Davis said the grandparents have even taught the child a few Oneida words.

"Being more engaged with family and friends through technology made (them) feel happy, fulfilled and less disconnected," he wrote. "In my observations, Skype cannot only improve the well-being of our elders but also their children. This type of communication can fill the void when it comes to feeling lonely for family members when people move away from Tribal communities. There is more joy in seeing the other person on the other line, and by utilizing technology people are taking the necessary steps to deal with loneliness or depression. So, in a sense, Skype can assist the healing process. Remember, don't leave our elders behind. Teach them how to use technology, have a little patience, and then everyone can be connected."

— Source: *NativeTelecom.org*

## Tribes support Keith Harper's historic nomination

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Tribal leaders who serve on the executive committee of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) reiterated their support for Keith Harper, a member of the Cherokee Nation, to serve as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council. If confirmed, he will be the first member of a federally recognized Tribe to serve in an ambassador-rank post.

The NCAI committee voted 8-4 against a resolution that would have withdrawn the organization's support for Harper. Tribal leaders then voted 8-4 to reaffirm their backing for the prominent attorney to serve in the position.

NCAI's resolution stated: "Harper, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, is exceptionally well-qualified for this position. He is an attorney who has dedicated his career to a deep knowledge of the injustices facing Native people in U.S. history. Mr. Harper will be an invaluable resource to the Human Rights Council. He has proven himself to be a forceful and fearless advocate for human rights. We hope that Mr. Harper's confirmation will proceed without delay."

Prominent leaders like Billy Frank Jr., a treaty rights expert, and Native women leaders like Terri Henry, a council member for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who fought for Tribal provisions in the Violence Against Women Act, say Harper will be a strong asset for indigenous rights on the international level.

A small number of critics who have been adversaries of Harper in court, have gone to *Indian Country Today* with unsubstantiated complaints. One of those is John Berrey, the Chairman of the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma who serves as an alternate member to NCAI's executive committee and whose efforts against Harper were defeated yesterday. Berrey and his Tribe were also on the losing end of a motion in the Cobell trust fund lawsuit before it was settled for \$3.4 billion. And after the case was settled, the Tribe filed an objection that delayed distribution of payments to individual Indians.

Later, the Quapaws were excluded from a series of settlements that the Obama administration reached with more than 50 Tribes. Berrey has acknowledged that his Tribe faces an uphill battle in court.

— Source: *Indians.com*

## Oneidas pay \$11 million settlement to New York

ALBANY, N.Y. — The Oneida Indian Nation has started sharing its profits with the state of New York for the first time since the Tribe's Turning Stone casino opened in 1993.

The Oneidas have paid \$11 million to the state, the first installment required by a sweeping settlement ratified by a federal judge recently that ended decades of legal battles over land and taxes between the Oneida Nation and Madison and Oneida counties.

The money will be transferred to Madison County in "full satisfaction of tax revenues of any kind" that the county will not get from Oneida-owned land. The wide-ranging settlement also allows the nation to have 25,000 acres of land — not taxable and not subject to state or local control — set aside by the federal government for the Tribe's use.

The settlement also calls for the Oneidas to annually pay 25 percent of the revenues from its 2,000 slot machines at Turning Stone. The payment will be an estimated \$50 million a year. In return, the Oneidas get the exclusive rights to operate a casino in nine Central New York counties.

— Source: *Syracuse.com*

Compiled by Special Projects Reporter Peter B. Gallagher.



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# PLAY HARD



# Education



Beverly Bidney

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students work on traditional Seminole crafts Feb. 21 at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park, as about 500 local school children file past them for an up-close look.

## Students share culture at Okeechobee Battlefield

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

**OKEECHOBEE** — An event commemorating the 1837 Battle of Okeechobee during the Second Seminole War gave Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students an opportunity to showcase their culture to peers. About 500 students from nine area schools witnessed a mini re-enactment of the skirmish Feb. 21 at Okeechobee Battlefield State Park and participated in traditional Seminole activities.

About 30 PECS students attended as spectators, but 13 were part of the day's demonstrations. The culture students worked on crafts projects and cooked frybread as Glades and Okeechobee County students watched and learned.

"It feels good and makes me feel like I can get more into my culture and traditions," said eighth-grader Aiyana Tommie, 14, who made frybread for the crowd. "It makes me feel like I'm capable of a lot of things."

That confidence was shared by the students who kept busy with beadwork, sweetgrass basket and wood carving demonstrations, while curious onlookers filed past them. Some asked the Charter School students questions; others simply stared in awe.

"I can't imagine people watching me," said Stacy Castro, 9, of Okeechobee. "They are pretty brave."

The students were chosen from their culture classes because of their knowledge and proficiency of their crafts. Supervised by Culture events specialist Lewis Gopher, two eighth-grade boys wielded sharp carving knives with care as they created pieces out of cypress wood.

"It's pretty cool to show kids what we do at our school," said Rudy Juarez, 14, who has been carving since fifth grade. "It's pretty neat for them to see us actually carving the things they see on display."

Aubee Billie, 10, seemed unfazed by the hordes of young children as she concentrated on making a beaded necklace.

"They asked us questions like, 'Is it hard to make,'" said the fifth-grader. "I told them if you do it a lot, it isn't."

"It's funny because they kept saying we are really good at it," added fifth-grader Caylie Huff, 10.

Instead of selling their creations, the Charter School kids wanted to hold onto them.

"Everyone is asking if it's for sale," said fourth-grader Dakoya Nunez, 10, who worked on a beaded pen. "It makes me think 'I made it, go make your own.'"

Sixth-grader Sage Motlow, 13, liked sharing her knowledge of basket making to interested spectators as she worked on her craft. Janessa Nunez, 11, also enjoyed demonstrating how to make a basket, which she said takes a couple weeks to complete.

The day included Indian dancers, alligator wrestling, musical performances and 19th century-style artifacts for sale.

♦ See BATTLEFIELD on page 5B

## SAT to get student-friendly changes

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

Today's high school freshmen will face a friendlier SAT when junior year rolls around.

Formerly the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the Scholastic Assessment Test but now called the SAT Student Reasoning Test, the college admission exam that began in 1926 will get an overhaul in time for 2016 test takers.

The College Board, a nonprofit that produces the test, will "move beyond delivering assessments to delivering opportunity," according to a March 5 press release that coincided with a national announcement.

The biggest changes: The essay section will be optional; vocabulary will consist of less obscure words and include more words used in college and career settings; and the test will return to a 1,600 point system.

Three big advantages: Test preparation will be free via the online Khan Academy; wrong answers will not be counted; and students can take the test electronically.

"I'm jealous," said Tia Blais-Billie, the Tribe's Miss Seminole 2014 and a senior at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale. "As it seems more and more difficult to get into college for each generation in America, it's good that they are matching the process to the students."

Already accepted into her first choice, Rhode Island School of Design, Blais-Billie admitted envy that younger students face a friendlier and more relevant challenge — but she is also thrilled for them.

"I'm glad to see these changes being implemented, especially in regards to the socioeconomic correlation to standardized testing," she said.

Veronica Ramsundar, the Tribe's Higher Education program manager, said the redesign is long overdue.

"It's an antiquated test and the changes are welcome. It's indicative of changes that are taking place throughout the education system," Ramsundar said.

According to the College Board website, changes came about after college admissions officers, school counselors, teachers and students asked that the company rework the test to increase opportunities.

Studies have long indicated that about 50 percent of students who take the SAT are not prepared for college and that lower-income students do not generally apply to colleges within their reach. Further, Native American, Hispanic and African American students are less likely to have taken college preparatory advanced placement classes.

"The test now takes away chances for students who might not get the scores but have other factors to offer," Ramsundar

said. "The new test will open the arena for students who want to get into top tier and choice colleges."

College Board president David Coleman said it was time to admit that the SAT and the American College Testing (ACT) had become disconnected from what is taught in high school.

"Often the tests are mysterious and foster unproductive anxiety," he said during a press conference in Austin, Texas. "Neither allows (students) to show their best work."

Coleman said the tests could also reinforce privilege rather than merit because costs associated with college test preparatory classes are generally unaffordable, and therefore, out of reach for middle- to low-income students.

"It's time to shake things up," he said.

The SAT will no longer contain words that are not typically used outside the test, such as "sagacity" or "evanescent." Students will no longer lose points for wrong answers but will instead be encouraged to select the best answers for each question.

But students should not confuse the promise of better opportunity with misconceptions that the test will be easier.

"It will test the student academically and outside the academic arena, broadening the net so that more students won't get ruled out," Ramsundar said. "It's not dumbing it down. It is accommodating to many different students."

The reading and writing sections will expand with requirements to cite specific information that supports answers. Source material will span disciplines including science, history and social studies. Students will be asked to analyze information in certain texts and extrapolate meanings from historical or global documents, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech.

Mathematics questions now demand a vast knowledge of all topics but ask only one or two questions on each — calculators allowed. The 2016 test will cover focused math areas and include a no-calculator section.

For the optional essay test: If students choose to take the essay portion, they will be provided an essay passage prior to the test. At essay time, the student will be required to explain the author's argument and support the author's claims. The essay, which should resemble a college paper, will be scored separately. Some school districts and colleges will require it.

The Tribe has 47 high school juniors and 57 seniors eligible for the current SAT. High school sophomores and freshmen can get an advance look at the 2016 SAT test on April 16 through the College Board website, [www.CollegeBoard.org](http://www.CollegeBoard.org).

## March Madness inspires thoughtful giving

BY EILEEN SOLER  
Staff Reporter

**BIG CYPRESS** — Ahfachkee School senior Quenton Cypress knows something about spring: March Madness is fun but hunger doesn't take a break for basketball.

"Last year we went on a field trip to Clewiston and helped pass out free vegetables to people who did not deserve to be in that position. It felt good to give back to the community. I left there with a whole new idea of what it's like to be needy," Cypress said during a school assembly March 14 to meet Alice Whitt, head of Compassion Avenue Food Bank at First United Methodist Church of Clewiston.

This year, Cypress and other members of the Ahfachkee School Student Council led students in the first March Madness Basketball Game and Food Drive to benefit the food bank where Whitt said the need to feed Clewiston's growing poor population is year-round.

"When we started the food bank we were serving 75 to 80 families twice a month ... now we are serving 625 families," Whitt told students. "The need is more than you can imagine ... and summer is coming. People don't give as much in the summer."

But summer is when the need is the greatest.

Of the little city's nearly 2,800 public school children, about 80 percent get free or reduced school lunches based on household income, Whitt said. Every child is allowed free breakfast. Typically, many community food pantries slip into crises during spring simply because people do not donate as much outside of the fall and winter gift-giving months that bracket Thanksgiving and Christmas. That means food banks could be essentially empty in the summer, leaving children with empty stomachs during summer vacation.

Most of the food goes to children in families headed by single mothers or fathers.

"Parents in need don't want to be in

that position. Please help us help them," Whitt said.

On March 21, when Ahfachkee students battled the staff in basketball at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium, spectators paid \$5 or three non-perishable food items, including canned goods, for admission. About \$150 and 500 pounds of food were collected throughout the month-long effort.

Tradition Preservation curriculum specialist Mary Jene Koenes provided students during the assembly with insight about why they should care about people outside the reservation — even as they never forget the atrocities suffered by ancestors at the hands of invaders.

Stories heard and witnessed by Koenes as she grew up during transitional times testified to the Seminole spirit of respect for the earth and all living creatures. She remembers when the Tribe was so poor that when she started fifth grade in Clewiston she could not attend classes because she had no shoes. Those were the days when no one owned cars but when someone became ill the women walked for hours — even in the middle of the night — to give their last bit of food to the sick.

"My grandmother used to say, 'Love thy neighbor and forgive them,'" Koenes said. "I know we were not treated right, not from the very beginning, but we need to forgive so we can honor those who made the sacrifices and move on."

A cafeteria table at the assembly brimmed with canned vegetables, macaroni, rice and microwavable soup. Students attentively listened to Koenes and considered past hardships and present good fortune.

"Helping other people shows that even though we are a small community, we are strong," said ninth-grade Student Council representative Nashoba Gonzalez.

Classroom teacher Jarrid Smith, the Student Council's faculty adviser, said he and his family helped out the food pantry's needs three Thanksgivings ago when they gathered a truckload of goods and then



Eileen Soler

Ahfachkee School students check out food items donated by students and staff for the Compassion Avenue Food Bank at First United Methodist Church of Clewiston.

donated it to the church. Last year, he took Cypress and a small group of students to assist during a fresh produce distribution day.

Other Student Council members who helped organize the food drive and basketball game were Kaitlin Osceola, of

11th grade; Mya Cypress, of seventh grade; Leilani Gopher, of sixth grade; and Elisah Billie, of eighth grade.

Koenes said church members from surrounding communities were generous with the people of Big Cypress Reservation before the Tribe became prosperous. She

remembers when money was so scarce among Tribal families that when parents shopped for flour, the girls would pick flour sacks that could become their next new dress.

♦ See FOOD DRIVE on page 2B



# Look, hook, book, took



Eileen Soler  
Alani Marks, of American Heritage School, and Daleen Osceola, of Ahfachkee School, check out the Willie Frank Library book fair display in Big Cypress. After-school reading took on more meaning March 3-7 as parents and children purchased children's storybooks, teen novels, educational non-fiction and other reading-related items at the annual event, which this year was dubbed Book Fair Fiesta.

# Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School Students of the Month



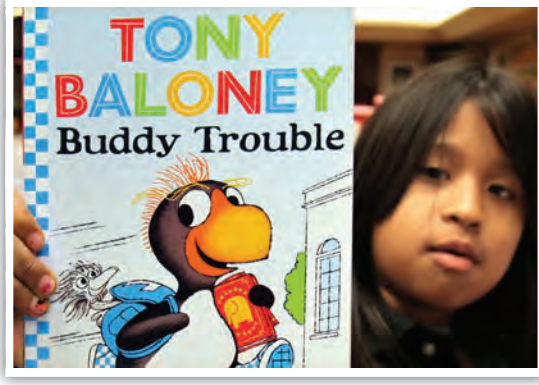
Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Students of the Month at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School are Etanis Torres, Josiah Hardy, Madison Ayuso, Serenity Micco, Kateri Smith, Keenan Jones, Jahdee Arnold, Shylynn Testerman, Makya King, Valek Martinez, Kalyn Hammil, Dakoya Nunez, Kayven Emley, Dalence Carrillo, Donovan Harris, Aleah Turtle, Brienna Brockman, Kano Puente and Jalynn Jones. Not pictured: Kimberlynn Toms and Laila Bennett.



Eileen Soler

Reading lovers gather to buy bundles of books at the Willie Frank Library book fair.



Eileen Soler

Felicia Buck shows off her favorite book purchase.



Eileen Soler

Books wait to be purchased at the Willie Frank Library book fair checkout counter.

## ◆ FOOD DRIVE From page 1B

"So when people from Clewiston and LaBelle used to bring us trucks filled with clothes it was a big deal. We would choose things first that we don't even think about today - like underwear," Koenes said.

Now, the Tribe's children take responsibility for helping others less fortunate.

"It's our turn to give back," she said. "We don't like people being prejudiced against us so we can't be prejudiced against them. We are still hungry in the same way. Our babies still cry in the same way."



Eileen Soler

Ahfachkee School Student Council members and faculty adviser Jarrid Smith pose with Alice Whitt, head of the Compassion Avenue Food Bank at First United Methodist Church.

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# Leviticus Berry wins drug-free essay contest

S.W.A.M.P. donates drug-free zone sign to PECS

**SUBMITTED BY VALERIE MARONE**  
Family Services Community Events Coordinator

**BRIGHTON** — To show the importance of attending a drug-free school, Brighton Reservation's Seminoles Without Addictions Make Progress (S.W.A.M.P.) alcohol and drug prevention program held an essay contest titled, "Why I Want My School to be Drug Free."

The winner, S.W.A.M.P. member Leviticus Berry, 8, read his essay aloud and presented a drug-free zone sign to Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School principal Brian Greseth.

Berry's essay is as follows: I want my school to be drug free because ... using drugs is bad for you; sometimes using drugs can make you die. Sometimes when you use drugs you can't even think. Even when you turn 21 still don't use drugs because you can get diseases or cancer.

S.W.A.M.P. members also read a letter reaffirming their commitment to living drug-free lives: We the youth and teens of the S.W.A.M.P. alcohol and drug prevention program would like to present our school, Pemaayev Emahakv, with a Drug-Free Zone sign to support our school's drug-free policy and to voice our commitment and resolve to make the most of our education and be the best we can be.

The S.W.A.M.P. program provides



Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone  
**Essay contest winner Leviticus Berry presents principal Brian Greseth a drug-free zone sign on behalf of the S.W.A.M.P. program.**

opportunities to build developmental assets that help youth grow up healthy, caring, responsible and drug free.

# Preschoolers treated to Fun Friday



Beverly Bidney

**Scarlett Young helps granddaughter DeLilah Young, 4, make a crafts project Feb. 28 at the Hollywood Preschool Fun Friday. The theme of the week was the five senses, so the day's activities touched on them all: visual, auditory, touch, smell and taste.**



Beverly Bidney

**Onnie Cypress, 2, carefully puts feathers on her drum during Fun Friday.**



Beverly Bidney

**LaToya Stewart helps her daughters Jenesis Stewart, 3, and Jaisley Stewart, 2, color their crafts projects as 2-month-old baby Jacey Stewart sleeps in the stroller nearby. Parents are invited to attend the monthly event with their children.**



Beverly Bidney

**Justine and Daniel Osceola raise their hands to show they're ready for the day's activities.**



Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone

**Brighton Reservation's Seminoles Without Addictions Make Progress (S.W.A.M.P.) members learn the importance of living drug-free lives.**

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# Announcements



## In memory of Casey McCall



For Casey McCall, at this year's Gathering of Nations, to be held April 24-26 in Albuquerque, N.M., Wanda Bowers will be holding a Memorial Grass Dance Special in memory of her son. It will be held Friday afternoon in the "PIT." If you are attending Gathering of Nations, please come and support the family.



## 2014 Pet Vaccination Clinic



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## Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence

In 2009, the U. S. Department of Justice released a study with alarming statistics about the safety and well-being of our nation's children. It concluded that "60 percent of children are exposed to some form of violence, crime, or abuse, ranging from brief encounters as witnesses to serious violent episodes." We learned that almost 40% were direct victims of two or more violent acts, and one in ten were victims of violence 5 or more times. While this study was not focused on tribal communities and had a relatively small sampling of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) respondents, anecdotal evidence suggests that on some reservations the percentage of children exposed to violence may be even higher. The consequences of this problem are significant and widespread. Children's exposure to violence, whether as victims or witnesses, is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. They are also at a higher risk of being victimized again and becoming involved in the juvenile and criminal justice system

In 2012, the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence found that AI/AN children have exceptional unmet needs for services and support to prevent and respond to the violence they experience. The Task Force called for the Attorney General to "Appoint a federal task force or commission to examine the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native children exposed to violence."

([www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf).) Based on that recommendation, the Attorney General has established a Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. This new Task Force is anchored by an Advisory Committee consisting of non-federal experts in the area of AI/AN children exposed to violence and a Federal Working Group consisting of federal experts working in areas related to AI/AN children exposed to violence ([www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood)).

The Advisory Committee will examine the scope and impact of violence facing AI/AN children and make policy recommendations to Attorney General Holder on ways to address it. The Task Force, through the Advisory Committee, will convene four public hearings and several listening sessions to examine the pervasive problems associated with AI/AN children exposed to violence in their homes, schools and communities. The information gleaned from these hearings and listening sessions will assist the Task Force, through the Advisory Committee, in developing policy recommendations to Attorney General Holder.

The Advisory Committee is in the process of identifying witnesses. If you are interested in providing information or recommendations through testimony (oral or written) to the Advisory Committee, please see the reverse side of this flyer.

For questions or additional information contact Kelly Stoner at 323.650.5467 or [kelly@tjpi.org](mailto:kelly@tjpi.org).

Hearing #3 – Ft. Lauderdale, Florida  
Wednesday, April 16, 2014 from 1:00PM - 6:30PM and  
Thursday, April 17, 2014 from 8:30AM - 12:00PM

Theme: Children Exposed to Violence in Tribal Communities

Location: Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six, Panorama Ballroom - 2301 S.E. 17th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL

This meeting is open to the public. There will be an opportunity for scheduled oral public testimony as well as an open microphone session just prior to the conclusion of the hearing on each day.

- While on-site registration will also be provided, those wishing to provide oral public testimony are encouraged to register at: [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood) in advance of the meeting.
- Those wishing to provide written testimony – please send written testimony to [testimony@tjpi.org](mailto:testimony@tjpi.org).
- While not required, those wishing to attend the hearing are also encouraged to register through the registration link at: [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood) in advance of the hearing.

### Members of the Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence

<b>Dolores Subia Bigfoot</b> Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Director, Indian Child Trauma Center, University of Oklahoma	<b>Rear Admiral Eric Broderick</b> Former Deputy Administrator, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
<b>Eddie Brown</b> Pasqua Yaqui Tribe and Tohono O'odham Nation, Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Institute and Professor of American Indian Studies, Arizona State University	<b>Valerie Davidson</b> (Yup'ik), Senior Director, Legal and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
<b>The Hon. Byron Dorgan (Committee Co-Chair)</b> Chairman, Board of Advisors, Center for Native American Youth; former U.S. Senator and chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs	<b>Anita Fineday</b> White Earth Band of Ojibwe, Director, Indian Child Welfare, Casey Family Programs
<b>Matthew Fletcher</b> Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Director, Indigenous Law and Policy Center, Michigan State University	<b>Alicia Lieberman</b> Director, Child Trauma Research Program, University of California at San Francisco
<b>Joanne Shenandoah (Committee Co-Chair)</b> Iroquois, composer and musical artist	<b>Chaske Spencer</b> Lakota, actor
<b>Ron Whitener</b> Squaxin Island Tribe, Executive Director, Native American Law Center, University of Washington School of Law	<b>Marilyn J. Bruguier Zimmerman</b> Assiniboine-Sioux/Fort Peck Reservation, Director, National Native Children's Trauma Center, University of Montana
<b>Jefferson Keel</b> Chickasaw Nation, Lieutenant Governor of the Chickasaw Nation	



# PECS honors Creek Spelling Bee winners



Photo courtesy of Jill Carner

Creek Spelling Bee Grade Winners: Kateri Smith, second grade; Charlie Armstrong, third grade; Joss Youngblood, fourth grade; Aubee Billie, fifth grade; Aubrey Pearce, sixth grade; Raeley Matthews, seventh grade; and Jalynn Jones, eighth grade.



Photo courtesy of Jill Carner

Schoolwide Overall Creek Spelling Bee Winners: First place, Jalynn Jones; second place, Aubrey Pearce; and third place, Aubee Billie.



Photo courtesy of Jill Carner

Teacher Creek Spelling Bee Winner: Mrs. Heather Dobbs, center with award.

## ◆ BATTLEFIELD

From page 1B

including old-fashioned candies. Tribal member Pedro Zepeda and two other men participated in the mini re-enactment on the Seminole side; four other men represented the American soldiers.

"Teaching culture in school is one way to get it to them," said Janelle Robinson, PECS teacher aide. "If we teach them, then they can get it out there to others."



Beverly Bidney

Frankie Zamora, of the Quechua Tribe in Peru, dances the traditional men's dance for students.



Beverly Bidney

Aiyana Tommie makes frybread Feb. 21 for about 500 students at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park.



Beverly Bidney

Nancy Shore demonstrates how to make a beaded sash on a loom for school kids.



Beverly Bidney

Ready, aim, fire! Re-enactors 'shoot' at Seminoles hidden in bushes during a re-enactment of the Battle of Okeechobee, which took place during the Second Seminole War on Christmas Day 1837.



Beverly Bidney

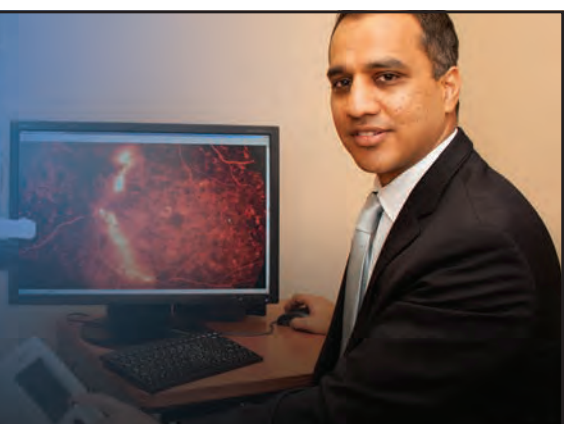
Rudy Juarez gets some hands-on assistance from Lewis Gopher as he learns to carve details on a knife made of cypress wood.



Beverly Bidney

Janessa Nunez works on a sweetgrass basket at the Okeechobee Battlefield State Park.

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447415	N/A	GUARDIAN GENERAC	GENERATOR 15000W	N/A	Poor	\$800.00
2 AVAILABLE	N/A	GUARDIAN GENERAC	GENERATOR 15000W	N/A	Good	\$1,000.00
4 AVAILABLE	2007	FORD	F-150 XLT 4X4	104-180K miles	Fair	\$5,263 - \$9,400
345220	2007	CHEVROLET	TAHOE LS 4X4 K9 UNIT	177,528	Poor	\$3,831.00
141320	2005	FORD	TAURUS SE	85,231	Fair	\$970.60
4 AVAILABLE	2007	CHEVROLET	IMPALA BASE (POLICE MODEL)	126-172K miles	Fair	\$1,528 - \$2,653
331641	2003	DODGE	GRAND CARAVAN SE	209,700	Fair	\$988.00
6 AVAILABLE	2003	FORD	CROWN VICTORIA (POLICE)	53-125k miles	Poor- Fair	\$589 - \$1,050
5 AVAILABLE	2004	FORD	CROWN VICTORIA (POLICE)	73-120k miles	Fair	\$1,103 - \$1,450
5 AVAILABLE	2007	FORD	CROWN VICTORIA (POLICE)	67-128k miles	Fair	\$1,432 - \$1,975
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100003	N/A	CELLINI 10 SPACE GUITAR CASE	CUSTOM FLIGHT CASE - 10 SPACE	N/A	Fair	\$75.00
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100006	N/A	CELLINI TRAVELLING FLIGHT CASE	CUSTOM FLIGHT CASE	N/A	Fair	\$75.00

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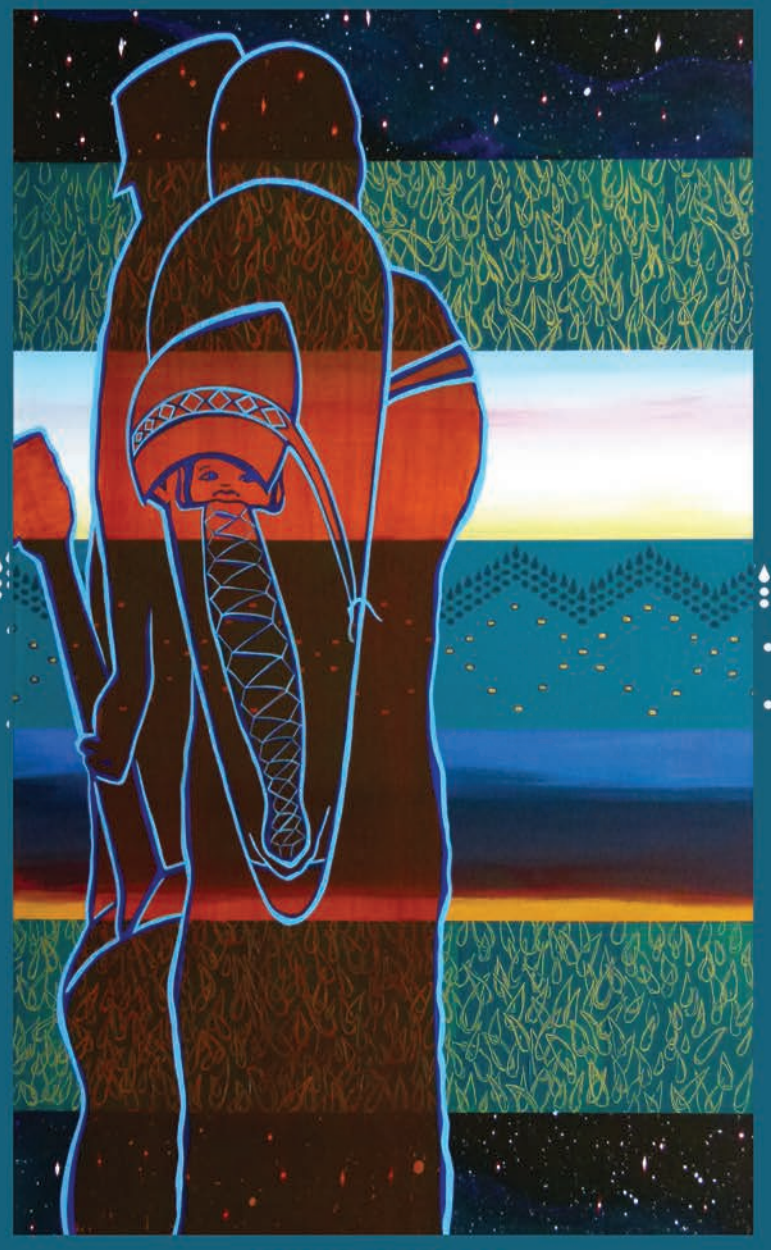
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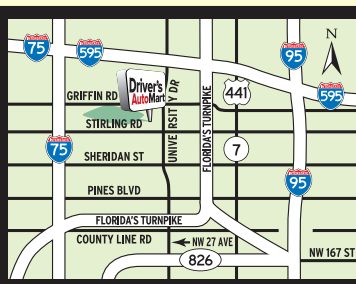
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# Sports



## Trevor Osceola signs with Kentucky Christian University

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

GRAYSON, Ky. — Cardinal Gibbons High School running back Trevor Osceola recently signed to play football at Kentucky Christian University (KCU) in the fall. With an average of 5.75 yards per carry this season, Osceola proved his value to the team and to the KCU recruiter.

“We built a great connection,” said Osceola, 18, who met with KCU coaches and players Feb. 6 during a visit to the school in eastern Kentucky. “When I saw the campus and met the players, it was like a home away from home.”

The small size of the university — about 600 students — appealed to Osceola. He believes it will make his transition to college life easier.

“Everyone knows each other on campus,” he said. “Teachers know the students and the classes are small. It feels more like a community than a lot of the other colleges I talked to, like living on the rez where everyone knows each other.”

KCU, a National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) school, aims to enhance the character building aspects of sports. NAIA schools have small athletic programs geared toward offering students the proper balance of athletics and academics.

“Trevor brings a very high amount of character to our team,” said coach James Gibson, recruiting coordinator. “He’s an outstanding kid and did everything he was supposed to do in high school. He has his priorities right — he’s a student first and an athlete second.”

Gibson believes Osceola is an important recruit for the team and has high expectations for him as both a player and a leader.

“He’s a powerful running back,” Gibson said. “He’s going to make it hard for people to tackle him.”

In addition to his work on the field, Osceola plans to study business or sports



Photo courtesy of Trevor Osceola

Cardinal Gibbons High School running back Trevor Osceola signs to play football at Kentucky Christian University Feb. 6.

management. He reports to football camp in August and knows he has his work cut out for him.

“The coaches like the way I play and I may have the opportunity to start,” he said. “The coach wants me to make a difference any way I can.”

Osceola looks forward to the football season, meeting new people and experiencing life away from family and friends. He said he’ll have butterflies in his stomach when he steps onto the field for the first time Aug. 30, but he welcomes it.

“I was always told hard work pays off, so I know I’ll always work harder than the people in front of me and behind me,” Osceola said.

## Kiauna Martin to train with Softball Factory at College World Series



Beverly Bidney

Kiauna Martin practices batting March 3 at American Heritage School.

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

PLANTATION — At 15 years old, Kiauna Martin is the makings of a softball superstar. A multi-talented player, she was invited to try out for the competitive Under Armour Softball Factory College World Series Select Training in January, and she made the cut.

The tryout drew about 35 players; only six were chosen.

Martin will now attend a four-day program at Oklahoma City University from May 29 to June 1, where she will train with and be evaluated by top college coaches. She will learn how to navigate the college recruitment process and possibly be chosen for the Softball Factory World Series and Fall Classic events later this year and next.

“I’ll work with them for a couple of years,” said Martin, who has played softball since age 5. “Our travel team plays in showcase tournaments where college coaches come to watch. They sent me an invitation to try out.”

A junior varsity player for American Heritage School, the ninth-grader also plays on the varsity team at the coach’s request.

“She won her first championship with a Tribal team when she was 8,” said Ruggy Jumper, Martin’s grandfather. “She plays all positions and her coaches want her to be part of the varsity team, but they use her sparingly. This is very exciting for her.”

To qualify for the College World Series Select Training tryouts, players must show potential to play college ball.

The Softball Factory program aims to help these players receive the best academic opportunities.

“Kiauna has a lot of potential,” said Christian Culicerto, regional player development coordinator for Softball Factory. “Her ability will probably make her eligible for the World Series this summer, but roster spots are limited. Our process is to get the girls into the best training environment so they are best prepared to do well in front of coaches at tournaments, showcases and the Softball Factory teams.”

The college recruitment process starts early for softball; 2016 college classes are filling up with high school sophomores now. The training program, which takes place during the Women’s NCAA College World Series, will allow players to see firsthand what it takes to play college softball.

Martin’s coach at American Heritage was pleased with her selection for the Softball Factory program.

“She is a talented player and very versatile,” said coach Marty Cooper. “She can bat righty and lefty, she is fast, has a strong arm and plays good defense. And she is very coachable.”

Culicerto said players need to get in front of college coaches as soon as possible.

“There is no doubt Kiauna can play after high school,” he said. “We are here to give the players tools and guidance. But getting that education and degree to help them through life is the most important thing. We want the players and their families to do what’s best for them.”

## Hunter Osceola helps American Heritage win state basketball title

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER  
Special Projects Reporter

LAKELAND — This time they weren’t going to lose.

“No way,” said American Heritage starting point guard Hunter Osceola, referring to the Florida High School Activities Association (FHSAA) Class 5A state basketball championship that had eluded the Patriots two years in a row. “Not again. It could never happen. No way.”

And he was right. The third year was a charm for Heritage (Plantation). After they reached the boys prep Final Four the past two years only to fall in the semifinals in 2012 and the final last year, the Patriots finally ascended to the top of the class as they overwhelmed the Lakewood High Spartans (St. Petersburg), 98-70, to claim their first state title before a packed Lakeland Center gym March 1.

Heritage nearly hit the century mark on the scoreboard as it set a state record for most points scored by a team in a state championship game since the FHSAA began keeping records in the 1950s.

Smiling with the joy of redemption, Heritage coach Charles Stephenson praised his team’s unrelenting run-and-gun attack.

“Like I’ve always told this team, when you’re running out the way we did, man it is showtime. Showtime Heritage,” Stephenson said.

Heritage’s nine senior leaders helped build a comfortable lead that guarded against any collapse. Osceola, the senior playmaker who has signed a letter of intent to play for Barry University in Miami Shores next season, played a key role in



Peter B. Gallagher

The jubilant 2014 state 5A basketball champions, American Heritage, pose on the Lakeland Center court following their 98-70 run-and-gun rout over Lakewood in the final game. Seminole Tribal member Hunter Osceola is pictured top left.

the victory. Beyond his eight points, two assists and two steals, he was the virtual quarterback for his team.

“When you first watch Hunter, you may not see how he impacts the game. But the more you watch him, the more you see how savvy and mature he is and how he does a lot of the little things,” wrote Josh Darrow, of *SouthFloridaHighSchoolSports.com*. “(Hunter) rarely turns the ball over. He

gets (his team) into their sets easily and gets the ball where it needs to be.”

The Patriots led 28-17 after the first eight minutes and 54-31 at halftime. The pace of the game was so fast up and down the court that one official had to leave the game due to dehydration as he had difficulty catching his breath.

♦ See HUNTER on page 5C

## Tribal softball players meet FSU coach and athletes, tour facilities

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY  
Staff Reporter

TALLAHASSEE — About a dozen Tribal softball players were taken out to the ballgame in Tallahassee March 15 to see the Florida State University Seminoles’ softball team sweep the North Carolina State Wolfpack in a doubleheader. Also, an alumni game that featured former Seminole

players was held as part of the team’s 30th anniversary of fastpitch softball.

FSU head coach Lonni Alameda met with the Tribe’s middle and high school girls in the team meeting room, where they discuss strategies, statistics and games, and gave them an inside look at the softball program.

“There is a lot of history and rich tradition from the people who played here

in the past and from you guys, whose name we wear on our jerseys,” Alameda told the girls.

She described the board at the back of the room on which they evaluate every game. The team’s objectives include having quality at-bats, getting lead-off outs on defense and not having back-to-back failed plays, she said.

The strategies have paid off with a 24-4 record halfway through the season. The Seminoles are ranked 11th in the country by *ESPN.com/USA Softball*.

Alumni player Carol O’Donski, 1980-81, who tagged along for the meeting, was impressed by the board and wanted the Seminole girls to know it.

“The four-plus run column is filled with yeses,” said O’Donski, of Key Largo. “That is coaching and dedication by the players. You are at the FSU complex and not many people get this tour by the head coach.”

Alameda wanted Seminole kids to understand what playing at the college level entails.

“Kids can make it here as a walk-on if they are motivated,” she said. “When they get around student athletes they see they are normal people and may think they can do it, too.”

The Tribal girls also toured the athletic facilities — including the baseball and football stadiums, the locker room and the weight and conditioning rooms shared by all teams — with FSU player Rylan Harvey.

♦ See SOFTBALL on page 4C



Beverly Bidney

Jaide Micco and Kiylier Baker, along with the rest of the group, tour the FSU softball team locker room March 15.



# Eighth-grade players recognized at parents' night



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Layne Thomas smiles with his parents, Laverne and Jason, and little sister Lexi at one of his last games as a PECS student during parents' night Jan. 21.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Girls' team captain Camryn Thomas poses with parents, Frank and Cecelia, at parents' night.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Richard Harris, who plays guard and forward on the boys' basketball team, is all smiles with his mother, Cheryl.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Point guard Sunni Bearden smiles for the camera with her mother, Timi, at parents' night.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Brady Rhodes poses with parents, Pam and Wade, during parents' night.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Chandler Pearce poses with parents, Alisha and Matt.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Morgan King poses for a photo with mother, Tammy.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Patrick Brady poses with parents, Alice and Dana.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Jalynn Jones is all smiles with her parents, Matt and Ginger. Pemaevtv Emahakv Charter School recognized the eighth-grade basketball players competing in one of their last games at PECS against Clewiston Middle School Jan. 21.

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# Big-time win for Big Town at Herman L. Osceola tourney

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Copy Editor

**BIG CYPRESS** — As the champions hoisted their prize at midcourt, the large framed photo of U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Herman L. Osceola on a wall overlooking the court served as an appropriate witness to the conclusion of the three-day basketball tournament held in his memory March 20-22.

Big Town earned the right to grasp the championship trophy by outlasting four other teams to win the men's title in the 29th edition of the Herman L. Osceola Memorial Basketball Tournament. The event serves as a tribute to Osceola, who died in a military helicopter crash in 1984.

Open to Native American players, the tournament has been held annually since the tragedy, which occurred before several players in this year's games were born.

"Next year will be 30. It's hard to imagine it's been that long; it seems like it was just yesterday that my brother left,"

said Veldina Osceola.

In some ways, Veldina's big brother hasn't left. Remembrances of Herman abound. In addition to the photo and another one near a doorway, a life-size bronze statue in his likeness proudly stands outside the entrance of the gymnasium that bears his name.

Veldina said Herman was one of the first Recreation workers at the gym when it opened.

"He would help at the tournaments and take the kids on field trips," she said. "He really enjoyed the kids. He loved spending time with them. He loved working weekends to keep the kids busy."

Big Town held off a determined Flight squad in the men's division championship March 22. The Outlaw Women won the two-team women's division — two games to one — against the Ball Hawks March 21. The double-elimination tournament started March 20 with dinner and games in the Legends division (age 35 and older), which drew three teams and was won by Old School.

"The first night we do Legends, which is people that (Herman) grew up with and are still playing," Veldina said.

Veldina recalled earlier years when games would last long into the night and beyond.

"On Friday and Saturday, they would play until like 2 or 3

in the morning because there were so many teams," she said. "It's kind of slowed down. When it was first a tournament it was real huge. We're hoping it will grow back up."

Spectators were treated to an extra game in the men's championship round. After cruising through the winners' bracket, Big Town needed just one more win to claim the title. Flight, on the other hand, emerged from the losers' bracket and faced the difficult task of having to beat Big Town twice.

Big Town appeared to have the championship sewn up with a 54-52 lead and only 2.5 seconds left in the first game. However, Big Town committed a foul when Flight's Josie Balantine and DeForest Carter worked a give-and-go for a desperation shot from well beyond midcourt. The shot missed, but Flight made three ensuing free throws with no time left to notch an improbable one-point victory and force a second game.

The winner-take-all game didn't match its predecessor in drama as Big Town roared to a 42-23 lead at halftime and went to post a 76-56 win behind a bevy of 3-pointers from former Boyd Anderson High School standout Jerome Davis.

During a brief ceremony after the final game, Veldina, her sister, Caroline, and their mother, Ruby, presented Big Town with the championship trophy and tournament sweatshirts.

Big Town forward Jay Liotta said the team recently returned from a tournament in Wisconsin, where it finished second. Liotta said the squad is comprised of players from the Cherokee, Comanche and Miccosukee Tribes.

Teams only had one or two substitutes,

so by the end of the tournament, fast breaks became slow jaunts.

"I feel dead right now," Flight guard Anthony Balantine said after the tournament. "We played five games today."

Balantine said the runner-up spot for

Flight was the team's best-ever finish in the tournament. Flight players are from Big Cypress and have been teammates for several years.

Shots Up finished third followed by Tropics in fourth and Prime Time in fifth.



Kevin Johnson

Tropics' Taylor Osceola drives the lane for a layup during the tournament.



Kevin Johnson

Flight's Josie Balantine, right, shakes hands with Big Town's Jay Liotta following the teams' championship game March 22.



Kevin Johnson

Big Town's Amos Huggins keeps the ball away from Flight's Adrian Baker during tournament play.



Kevin Johnson

Big Town's Amos Huggins takes a shot while his teammate Jerome Davis, No. 3, holds Flight's Josie Balantine, No. 20, during the 29th annual Herman L. Osceola Memorial Basketball Tournament March 22.



Kevin Johnson

Big Town celebrates after winning the men's division. From left, the players are Shelby Osceola, Jerome Davis, Jay Liotta, Amos Huggins, Rob Givens and Connor Osceola. The trophy was presented by, from left, Herman L. Osceola's sister Caroline, his mother, Ruby, and sister Veldina.

# Kids catch fishing fever at Big Cypress event



Eileen Saler

Big Cypress Recreation site manager Josh Jumper shows children how to gently release caught fish back into the water. Thirty-five children and grown-ups tribalwide cast cares aside March 8 for a morning on the water during Take a Kid Fishing on Big Cypress Reservation.



Eileen Saler

Zayden Cypress shows off his catch of the day, a nearly 5-pound bass.



Eileen Saler

Just because the catch-and-release contest ended didn't mean children went home. Here, fishing for fun continues on a Big Cypress boat ramp.



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# Brighton softball players battle Glades Day at home



Eileen Soler

Luzana Venzor is about to hit a single during a Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School home game March 5 against Glades Day.



Eileen Soler

First baseman Jacee Jumper makes a tough play for an out.



Eileen Soler

Sunni Bearden dashes for second base.



Eileen Soler

Camryn Thomas winds up for a pitch.



Eileen Soler

Julia Smith scores a run against Glades Day.



Beverly Bidney

Seminole softball players pick up the FSU softball team's latest poster March 15 before the game against North Carolina State.

## ◆ SOFTBALL From page 1C

"I came here because of the coaches and it was the best decision I ever made," said Harvey, a freshman. "We hang out together as a team, but it's nice to have friends in other sports."

In the evening, the group attended the doubleheader at the JoAnne Graf Field, named for the former Seminoles coach who guided the team from 1978-2008. Graf attended the game. Before the first pitch was thrown, the announcer introduced the Tribal softball players in the stands, as well as Graf, other former coaches and alumni players throughout the night.

FSU went on to notch victories, 4-1 and 4-2.

"It was a really cool experience," said Raven Frank, 16, who is considering attending FSU. "I was surprised by how many trophies they have and how huge they are."

"I liked talking to the coach," added Jaide Micco, 18. "She likes sporting our name on the jerseys; it made me feel good."

JoAnn Ferrieri,

who runs Rhino Softball and works with the Recreation Department to teach softball weekly on the reservations, organized the trip.

Ferrieri, who also played professionally in Europe and on the USA team that won a gold medal in the 1987 Pan American Games, would like to have these tours annually to expose girls to a higher level of play.

"We wanted to introduce them to what it looks like from the inside," said Ferrieri, who played college softball at California State University, Fullerton. "My goal is to inspire kids to go to college, and softball is one way to do it."



Beverly Bidney

Darlah Cypress checks out an FSU trophy case March 15 during a special tour of the university.

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# Ahfachkee staff edges students in charity basketball game

BY KEVIN JOHNSON  
Copy Editor

Gymnasium March 21.

The staff captured hallway bragging rights with a 24-22 win.

"It was fun. I did think they were going to give us a break, but they didn't," said student player Dalton Koenes.

The final score wasn't the only significant part of the game. The event was part of the Student Council's March Madness Basketball Game and Food Drive, which raised food and money for the Compassion

Avenue Food Bank at United Methodist Church of Clewiston.

"We had fun with (the game). The real work we already did for the food drive," said teacher Jarrid Smith, who tied teammate Tim Pruitt for game-high scoring honors with eight points.

Seeing teachers in red basketball uniforms, complete with shorts and sneakers, prompted plenty of giggles from students in the younger grades as they entered the gym. But the staff had the last laugh. The students' hopes to tie the game in the waning seconds ended with a steal by Pruitt that secured the victory.

The students had to play from behind throughout the game after the staff raced out to a 10-1 lead. With a few players taller than 6 feet – including teacher Antonio Wright – the staff used their size advantage on the boards. Wright had six points.

"But he can't play for the Miami Heat," said student player Leilani Gopher.

The students stayed close thanks in part to a 3-pointer from Jazmine Billie and a strong game on both sides of the court from Nathaniel Jim, who was the students' leading scorer.

The game was accompanied by an enthusiastic cheerleading team from the younger grades and the school band, which included an appearance by principal Lucy Dafoe on trumpet.



Kevin Johnson

Ahfachkee School student Nathaniel Jim, No. 7, tries to block a pass by school staff member Kristin Stoots during the school's staff versus students basketball game March 21.



Kevin Johnson

Ahfachkee School student Malari Baker tries to dribble March 21 while triple-teamed by staff members, from left, Gualberto Mollings, Ruben Cornejo and Tamaya Lawson.

## Horseshoe tourney celebrates John Billie Sr.



Kevin Johnson

Louise Billie, left, leads family members in the ceremonial first pitch at the start of the eighth annual John Billie Sr. Horseshoe Tournament March 22 at Panther Camp on Big Cypress Reservation. The tournament is held in memory of Louise's late husband, John Billie Sr.



Kevin Johnson

J.R. Buster pitches a horseshoe during tournament play.



Kevin Johnson

Frank Billie Jr. pitches a horseshoe during the eighth annual John Billie Sr. Horseshoe Tournament.



Kevin Johnson

From left, Alfred Billie, Almira Billie and John Billie Jr. participate in the ceremonial first pitch at the start of the eighth annual John Billie Sr. Horseshoe Tournament March 22 at Panther Camp on Big Cypress Reservation. About a dozen family members of John Billie Sr. joined the first pitch tribute before action started in a variety of divisions.



Peter B. Gallagher

Point guard Hunter Osceola looks for his next move during American Heritage's 74-47 victory over the Rutherford Rams in the FHSAA state semifinal game.

### ◆ HUNTER From page 1C

The third quarter ended with the Patriots up by 29 points. At the final buzzer, the Patriots swarmed the court in a madcap celebration that moved into the stands.

The victory was the fifth state championship in sports for Heritage in the 2013-14 academic year. The other titles belong to girls' soccer, girls' golf, boys' swimming and football.

The Patriot roundballers finished 25-7, ranked No. 1 among 5A teams and 111th among all teams nationally with only four Florida teams ahead of them: Montverde Academy, Weston Sagemont, Orlando Lake Highland Prep and Miami Norland.

Osceola spent his sophomore year at Hollywood Christian High School and his junior season at Northeast High in Oakland Park.

As of March 20, he was the 104th-rated guard in the country and 49th-ranked player in Florida by *ESPN Recruiting Nation*.

In addition to Barry, Osceola was also recruited by University of North Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University and Murray State.

"We are very happy that Hunter Osceola will be coming to Barry U," said Barry basketball coach Butch Estes. "This league is full of good players and especially guards. He will give us depth at this critical position. Hunter is very versatile and has the benefits of being well-coached at a young age and coming from a winning program."



Peter B. Gallagher

Proud father, Marl Osceola, hugs son Hunter Osceola after Heritage defeated Lakewood 98-70 in the championships.

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