



The Seminole Tribune

Voice of the Unconquered

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'Seminole Girl' at home on New River



Eileen Soler

Gordon 'Ollie' Wareham captures a quiet moment after crowds thinned following the unveiling ceremony March 20 of 'Florida' A Seminole Girl, a bronze sculpture atop a Seminole patchwork pedestal that was erected on the bank of the New River in Fort Lauderdale across from Stranahan House.

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

FORT LAUDERDALE — The long-awaited arrival of a bronze sculpture that commemorates the timeless Native presence along New River in Fort Lauderdale occurred March 20 amid fanfare and speeches.

"Fort Lauderdale is a city about building community. Having the sculpture here among so much history is symbolic and meaningful. Let the circle be unbroken," said Fort Lauderdale Vice Mayor Romney Rogers.

More than 150 people packed the tiny city-owned plot directly across the waterway from the historic Stranahan

House, home of city pioneers Frank and Ivy Stranahan. Many, including non-Natives, wore patchwork dresses, jackets and vests in respect to the Seminole Tribe, whose forefathers in the late 1800s and early 1900s traded alligator hides and bird plumes with Frank Stranahan in exchange for sugar, flower, beads and other commodities of the day.

Broward County Historical Commission member Larry Mike Osceola II and performance artist and painter Elgin Jumper, who recited his poem "Seminole Girl," represented the Tribe in place of Chairman James E. Billie.

"I am so proud to be a part of the blood, sweat and tears that went into bringing the sculpture here today, and I am proud to be a

Seminole, Floridian and a Fort Lauderdale resident," Osceola said.

He noted the sculpture's pedestal: 500 Seminole patchwork tiles — 100 purchased by project sponsors, including the Seminole Tribe, and 400 donated by philanthropist AJ Acker and then named for people who help support the life and spirit of the region, including many Tribal members. Hugging the base are 76 tiles hand painted by Ahfachkee School students to portray everyday reservation scenes that include native birds, fish, turtles, chickees, horses and peaceful vistas.

"It gets me right here," said Osceola tearfully, with his hand over his heart.

Other Tribe attendees included Gordon "Ollie" Wareham, who played a Native

flute; MaryJene Koenes, who offered a prayer and song in Mikasuki; and Koenes' grandsons Nicholus and Lane, who led the Pledge of Allegiance twice — in English and Mikasuki.

Titled "Florida" A Seminole Girl by international sculptor Nilda Comas, the bronze is a life-size rendering of a 5-year-old dressed in traditional attire circa 1910 happily prancing at play with palm fronds in her hands and Everglades wildlife at her feet.

The city of Fort Lauderdale donated the space at Stranahan Landing along the New River where Seminoles would bank canoes and then shuttle across to the

❖ See SEMINOLE GIRL on page 7A

Doors open at Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — Patrons of the Tribe's casino in Immokalee now have a good reason to play late into the night: an adjoining 99-room hotel that opened for business March 12.

"This was a dream we all discussed," said President Tony Sanchez Jr., who worked at the casino — now known as Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee — for 12 years. "To see this dream come to fruition, I can't say anything but 'wow.' This property is like a diamond; we needed to shine it to bring out its luster and brilliance."

In addition to the four-story hotel with 19 suites and 80 guest rooms, the multimillion-dollar project encompasses the 800-seat indoor Seminole Center entertainment venue, Asian-inspired Lucky Mi Noodle House restaurant, Seminole Poker Room, remodeled Paradise High Limit Room and an additional 5,600 square feet of casino space for more slot machines and live table games. The complex, which opened in 1994, now measures 175,600 square feet; the expansion added 100,000 square feet.

About 250 people attended the grand opening, including Tribe officials, Tribal members and casino customers. Medicine man Bobby Henry marked the occasion by bestowing a traditional blessing on the property.

"Four years ago, Tony Sanchez thought we could put a hotel here," Chairman James E. Billie said. "We went with that and we are opening it today."

The casino and hotel employ 1,000 workers, which benefits the Immokalee

❖ See IMMOKALEE HOTEL on page 6A

Hendry says yes to Sam Jones Trail

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
Special Projects Reporter

CLEWISTON — The Hendry County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the renaming of County Road 833 to Sam Jones Trail during its regular meeting March 10.

The vote ratified a request made by Chairman James E. Billie.

The 34.4-mile stretch from State Road 80, west of Clewiston then south to the northern border of Big Cypress Reservation, was named to honor Sam Jones — also known as Abiaki — a medicine man and a leader of the Seminole Indians during the three Seminole Wars of the 19th century.

Old maps and aerial photographs researched by the Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) show that CR 833 was laid down almost exactly along the primitive trail that Jones blazed through the jungles and swamps, through an area called Devil's Garden — named for Jones, the only major Seminole War leader not captured or killed during the wars.

Today, the landscape traversed by the Trail is more pastoral than jungle, with miles of flat cattle pasture and farm fields.

"So dense were the interior Florida jungles of that era, the United States military was unable to penetrate far enough to apprehend Abiaki and his followers," wrote Chairman Billie in a letter to commissioners. "The soldiers gave up and Abiaki's small band of Indians remained in Florida — their descendants, today, are the unconquered Seminole and Miccosukee Indians of Florida."

Chairman Billie said he long dreamed of naming the road after Jones: "He was the reason we are still in Florida to this day," he said.

❖ See SAM JONES TRAIL on page 6A

State's folk heritage award honors the late Lorene Bowers Gopher

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
Special Projects Reporter

TALLAHASSEE — With uncommon strength of character and painstaking dedication, Lorene Bowers Gopher helped rejuvenate and safeguard the Florida Creek language, taught hundreds of children about the old ways and completed her life's work by handing down a rich, preserved treasure trove of tradition and culture to the next generation of Seminole Indians.

Her lifelong advocacy for Seminole language and culture was rewarded March 11 when Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner handed Lewis Gopher a Florida Folk Heritage Award — the state's highest folkways honor — inscribed with his mother's name.

Lorene, who passed away on Aug. 4, 2014 shortly after completing the first Florida Creek dictionary, was one of three Floridians honored during the ceremony at The Museum of Florida History. Okeechobee whipmaker Calvin "Buddy" Mills and White Springs foodways culturist Ruby Shaw also received Florida Folk Heritage Awards.

"My mother, she lived her life without thinking of awards," Lewis Gopher told attendees after accepting the honor. "Her

rewards were her kids and grandkids, seeing them graduate, seeing her granddaughter graduate from Florida State University. So she has the rewards. I want to thank the state for recognizing her. We really appreciate this."

Since the award was instituted in 1985, the Secretary of State considers annual recommendations from the Florida Folklife Council to honor outstanding folk artists and folk culture advocates for their long-standing contributions to state folkways. The council solicits nominations from the public between June 1 and Oct. 1.

Chairman James E. Billie, Chairman's Administrator Danny Tommie, Florida State Parks Director Donald Forgione and Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Director Paul Backhouse were among those who nominated Lorene.

Led by Lorene's brother Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., some 30 Seminole Tribe members and members of Lorene's immediate and extended families made the trip to the state capital to share in the ceremony.

Camera phone flashes filled the air everywhere Miss Florida Seminole Brianna Nunez and Jr. Miss Cheyenne Nunez walked in their traditional attire.

"It was so wonderful to see so many

Seminoles here at the museum today," said Jeana Brunson, director of The Museum of Florida History. "So many were dressed in their traditional clothing. It was very, very beautiful."

A big-screen, multimedia presentation introduced each honoree. Still photos — historical and contemporary — were mixed with film of Lorene shot by Carlton Ward Jr. and Elam Stoltzfus when Lorene hosted the Florida Wildlife Corridor expedition in 2013 at her camp on the Brighton Reservation. A letter praising Lorene from Florida State University President John Thrasher was read by his special adviser Elizabeth Hirst.

"At the university, we understand the importance of protecting and continuing the historical legacy and values upon which an institution is founded and draws its strength and direction for



Courtesy photo

The late Lorene Bowers Gopher was honored with the Florida Folk Heritage Award for her efforts to preserve the Seminole ways of life.

Award for Writing to University of South Florida professor Gary Mormino and

❖ See LORENE GOPHER on page 8A



Vote Monday, May 11, 2015



Editorial

White House Tribal Nations Conference

• Andrew J. Bowers Jr.

I had intended to provide this some time ago, but time constraints would not allow me to do so until now.

On Dec. 2-3, 2014, I had the privilege of attending the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Conference hosted by President Barack Obama. I thank Chairman Billie for allowing me to represent our Tribe. This was the sixth year that the president has hosted the conference as he continues his efforts to strengthen the relationships among the U.S. government, Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives. It was a time to hear and see things and people. And part of that time was to see some old friends and try to make new ones.

Ever since I have been in this position in our Tribe, I have usually said and believed that we should be more involved with other Tribes on matters that may affect all Tribes. You never know when you might need other Tribes to stand with you on some matters that affect our Tribe.

I remember in the old days when someone went on a trip people would ask, "What did they go there for?" So I thought I would share some of the highlights of the conference with our folks.

As some of you may know, I'm not much of a traveler unless I thought a trip has something to do with our Tribe. I thought this one did because the White House invited one member of the governing body of each of the recognized Tribes.

The focus of the conference was on Native youth and the negative things that affect them and perhaps keep them from reaching their potential. In June 2014, President Obama and his wife visited with the youth on Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The youth there freely told their stories of their challenges and struggles. With those stories in mind, the president decided to do more for Native youth as he saw them as future Tribal leaders. He challenged the Cabinet members to initiate programs to confront these challenges faced by the Native youth. As one might expect in this type of a setting where the focus is on children, education was highly stressed, along with the negative effects of domestic violence on children and juvenile justice/law enforcement.

On Dec. 2 and part of Dec. 3, attendees had the opportunities to attend separate sessions on different topics. These sessions were well attended by the respective Cabinet members and their high-level staff. I participated in the sessions on Education and Law Enforcement. To hear members of other Tribes talk about the shortcomings in education within their Tribes showed me that things are entirely different from our Tribe. They spoke of lack of resources and pressing needs for more action from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Many of them called for the establishment of the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Education within the Department of Education.

I suppose the thinking may be that a person in a higher place than the BIE might have a louder voice within the administration. We'll see how that goes! I clearly understood that most of them do not have the resources to provide scholarships for their children.

In Law Enforcement, concerns were voiced by those Tribes who live on the large reservations and do not have their own law enforcement agencies. When crimes occur in the isolated parts of those reservations, it may be hours before someone responds to a call because most of the Tribes rely on county (non-Indian) agencies for assistance. While listening, I remembered when we had to rely on Glades County in Brighton and on Hendry County in Big Cypress. So it's a different world with some of the other Tribes than what we might be accustomed to here. These situations might be something to keep in mind when it comes to appreciating what is available here. But this is probably an area (law enforcement) about which all Tribes should be concerned because of the violence and other illegal activities that are exposed to the youth.

In this session, there were several agencies represented, like the FBI, BIA Law Enforcement, Federal Wildlife Commission, Justice Department and Deputy Solicitor for the Interior Department, among others. So I threw out my usual question about the non-Indians' conduct on the reservation. Is a non-Indian allowed to hunt, fish, camp, carry a firearm or just generally act like he or she owns the reservation "as long as they are with a

Tribal member?" This is what many of us have heard over the past several years. I saw a lot of heads shaking. I had my belief confirmed that there are no such words in the federal laws, federal Indian policies, treaties, etc. Our Tribe's Hunting and Fishing Code does not contain such words either. The point here is that federal laws prohibit these types of conduct of non-Indians on the reservations and that there is no exception, such as "as long as they are with a Tribal member."

The main highlights of the conference were the live speeches by Attorney General Eric Holder, who spoke about the Violence Against Women Act; Vice President Joe Biden, who spoke out against domestic violence anywhere; and finally President Obama, who spoke about the challenges for Native youth and the initiation of some programs to address them. First, the Native Youth Community Projects will address nutrition, mental health and culturally related curriculum in schools. Second, another project called Generation Indigenous has been established to develop future Tribal leaders. A part of this project is the National Tribal Youth Network, which has been set up to reach out to potential future leaders. And the president will hold the first White House Tribal Youth Gathering sometime this year (2015). He closed his remarks by stressing his commitment to protect tribal lands and the government-to-government relationships among the U.S. Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives. He ended by stressing the responsibilities of all to the youth.

It seems appropriate that the Tribes should get on the presidential bandwagon as far as focusing on the Native youth and their challenges. Here, there seems to be several programs dealing with our youth. But then, I see high absenteeism rates and truancy among some of the local school children. The focus does not seem to be there. I suppose the schools do their best, but a child cannot be taught if he or she is not in school. Why don't we load up on the president's wagon and focus more on our little future leaders?

Thank you for the time and space for this opportunity.

Andrew J. Bowers Jr. is Councilman of the Brighton Reservation.



Eileen Soler

Seminole Tribe Chairman James E. Billie welcomes Tribal members March 14 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood to the annual Chairman's General Assembly.

Chairman's General Assembly delivers state of the Tribe

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Tribal members could see a few cuts in coming months as part of a belt-tightening approach to further secure the future.

"We have things to do and things that need to happen and we need your blessing," Chairman James E. Billie said during opening remarks March 14 at the annual Chairman's General Assembly. "It's our responsibility to put our money in the right place."

Nearly 500 Tribal members packed the ballroom at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood for the four-and-a-half hour meeting. Six large video screens flanked the podium where Chairman Billie, Chairman's Administrator Danny Tommie and William Moon, of Blue Stone Strategy Group, a Native-owned consulting firm, presented highlights of a recent tribalwide government effectiveness assessment.

Blue Stone measured the quality and value of services and programs across all departments with the Tribe as the business entity, Tribal members as the consumers and Tribe employees as the providers of services and resources.

A rolling slideshow of faded photographs dating back to the early 1900s created a stark contrast to dozens of colorful

graphs and pie charts that illustrated how the Tribe continues to grow but also how spending could be reduced for more savings.

The Education Department stood out for high spending with low return; senior services were marked for redundant spending on subsidiary services; Recreation was underscored for elevated expenses due to facility construction; and Public Works was singled out for continual cost increases due to unavoidable water treatment plant maintenance.

Cuts could affect staff size. Blue Stone suggested decreasing staff by nearly 20 percent.

Chairman Billie said the time has come to take a clearer view of Tribal spending, cap projects, bank more money and take future spending "nice and easy."

Future focus will be set on saving, Tommie said. Tapering construction spending is imminent primarily because community facilities are practically built out. New and improved recreation facilities at Big Cypress, Hollywood and Fort Pierce were noted. Also mentioned was the new administration and public safety building in Brighton.

"How much more can we build?" Tommie said. "The main focus moving forward is homes."

And building a hefty surplus account "for a rainy day," Chairman Billie said.

New power of Native voters

• Mark Trahan

I have been writing for years about the success — well, at least mostly — of Native American voters. During recent presidential election cycles the turnout from Indian Country is inspiring, helping to swing elections from Arizona to North Dakota. And just last year Alaska Native voters helped dump a hostile state governor and replaced him with Gov. Bill Walker, an ally, as well as electing Byron Mallott, a Tlingit leader, as the Lt. Governor.

But do you want to know something really cool?

The demographic shift that reflects Native voting power is only beginning. What's more, the landscape is changing faster than expected and should bring about dramatic changes in states as "red" as Alaska and Oklahoma.

A new report looks at the numbers, and the results are stunning. In 1980 when Ronald Reagan was elected president, the population of the United States was 80 percent white. Today that proportion stands at 63 percent and it's likely to be less than 44 percent by 2060.

The report, "The States of Change: Demographics and Democracy" is a collaboration of the liberal Center for American Progress, the conservative American Enterprise Institute and demographer William H. Frey, of the Brookings Institution. One of the goals is to "document and analyze the challenges to democracy posed by the rapid demographic evolution from the 1970s to 2060."

One lens that is particularly revealing: states where people of color are the majority. The report said: "Right now, there are only four majority-minority states: California, Hawaii, New Mexico and Texas. But with the ongoing demographic transformation of the country, our States of Change projections find that this will become more and more common." So in five years Maryland and Nevada will be in that category. Then by 2060 the number of majority-minority states will reach 22, including seven of the currently largest states, making up about two-thirds of the country's population.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are very much a part of this new majority because we are younger and growing faster than an older white population.

Alaska is the ideal example. The report says the state will be majority-minority as soon as 2030. Alaska Native voters, Asian Americans, Hispanics and African Americans will make up more than half the population then and by 2040 nearly 60 percent.

Another state that's about to change dramatically is Oklahoma. That state's white population dropped 20 percentage points — from 87 percent to 67 percent — between 1980 and 2014. This means Oklahoma is likely to be a majority-minority state by 2045 and should be only 43 percent white by 2060.

Usually I am not pleased when I see demographic tables that lump the Native American category into the "other" category. But this report clearly identifies Native Americans as a significant development in

that category. The report finds that South Dakota, Montana and North Dakota are also seeing a rapid increase in the Native population — and potential voters.

So what do these trends mean for Indian Country?

We are going to have more say. Or else.

Political parties and politicians must compete for American Indian and Alaska Native voters if they want to remain competitive. So it will not be enough to say that Native issues are a federal concern. Soon each state with a new majority of voters will need to adapt, being a better partner with tribal governments. The new voting majority means a better shot at Medicaid expansion to support the Indian health system or to improve state funding for tribal community colleges (a hot issue in Montana right now) because legislators are going to need to address these issues if they want to remain viable.

Of course, none of these demographic trends represent a sure thing. Fact is we still have a gap between the Native population and the number of eligible voters (something the report says is shrinking). And Indian Country doesn't turn out as many voters as is even possible now. But then again, being in the majority might change that. There's nothing better than winning elections.

Mark Trahan holds the Atwood Chair at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He is an independent journalist and a member of The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. This column originally appeared on NativeNewsOnline.net.

Native controversy: 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt'

• ICTMN Staff

In "The Jerk," protagonist Navin Johnson, played by Steve Martin, introduces himself with the line "I was born a poor black child." And it's funny because it's not true. A new TV sitcom is trying to play a Native character who's obviously not Native for laughs and is catching some heat for it.

"Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," a Netflix original series, debuted March 6 to critical acclaim. Created by Tina Fey, the show is about a young woman (Kimmy, played by Ellie Kemper) who has escaped an apocalyptic religious cult and is starting her life anew in New York City.

The show has a Native American subplot (most seem to, these days), and this is where it runs into some trouble. Kimmy gets a job as a nanny, working for Jacqueline Voorhees, played by Jane Krakowski. And Jacqueline has a secret: She's American Indian. Oh, right — spoiler alert.

Jacqueline, so the backstory goes, left her people, culture and parents — played by Comanche actor Gil Birmingham and Cherokee actress Sheri Foster — behind to become a white woman (she dyes her hair and begins wearing blue contacts) and pursue her dreams of being a well-off Manhattanite. To an extent, her story of reinvention mirrors the main plotline: Kimmy's efforts to live her life after escaping the cult. Yet if that's what's going on, there are problematic parallels: That being born Native is like being born into a cult, that "escaping" Native culture is necessary to get somewhere in life. Admittedly, that is an

emotional reaction, but it's there.

A writer for AV Club, Kalya Kumari Upadhyaya, grants that the subplot isn't an inherently terrible idea — it's just terribly executed. "As a mixed race and often white-passing person myself, pretending to be white is a reality I'm all too familiar with," Upadhyaya writes. "But Kimmy Schmidt doesn't seem like the right show to tackle that. Or, more accurately, the very white Jane Krakowski doesn't seem like the right actor to tell this story. It's a whitewashed plot about whitewashing. And it just feels off. Krakowski should not be playing a Native American character, even one who has decided to pretend to be white."

Upadhyaya sees the Native storyline as a troubling way to make a simple point: "Why does it matter where I'm from? It's where I'm going that counts," Jacqueline asks. Sure, yes. That seems to be the character's central philosophy. But we probably could have gotten there in a different, less whitewashy way."

Here's another way we could have gotten there: Keep the Native American character, and hire a Native American actress, one who looks like she might share a single gene with pappy Gil Birmingham, to play her. Irene Bedard and Kimberly Norris Guerrero are contemporaries of Krakowski, either of them with dyed-blond hair would be funny — funnier than a white woman playing a Native who is passing as white.

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Publisher: James E. Billie

Senior Editor: Brett Daly
BrettDaly@semtribe.com

Copy Editor: Kevin Johnson
KevinJohnson@semtribe.com

Staff Reporters: Peter B. Gallagher Beverly Bidney Eileen Soler

If you would like to request a reporter or would like to submit an article, birthday wish or poem, please contact Senior Editor Brett Daly at 954-985-5701 ext. 10725 or by fax at 954-965-2937

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Community

A



Beverly Bidney

Moses Jumper Jr., portraying Abiaki during the Second Seminole War, 'shoots' at U.S. soldiers March 14 during the Big Cypress Shootout.

Hollywood Culture ensures Seminole traditions endure

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Early in the morning of Feb. 27 a small contingent of Seminoles journeyed to the isolated fields of Yeehaw Junction to pick sweetgrass for basket making and carry on a tradition that has endured for generations.

The Hollywood Culture Department brought them to Yeehaw, where sweetgrass grows abundantly, to teach how and where to find the wild grass that grows among the saw palmetto.

Madeline Benard brought her 6-year-old daughter Victoria, the reigning Little Miss Seminole, and her 2-year-old son Duke to the outing. She said she wanted to show Victoria how women in the Tribe collect sweetgrass.

"When we get home, I'll show her what to do with it," Benard said. "I want to show her what it means in our culture to be a woman."

The art of Seminole sweetgrass baskets began in the 1930s when women crafted them for selling to tourists. Over time, the baskets became a traditional tribal art form along with patchwork and dolls. The baskets are constructed by making coils from the dried grass and stitching them together with colorful thread.

About the width of thin spaghetti, sweetgrass grows in the underbrush of saw palmetto, typically found in pine forest thickets. It must be picked carefully to avoid being scratched by the sharp edges of the saw palmetto fronds.

Culture teachers Myra Frank and Bonnie Williams showed the women how to locate the longest grass, which is best for making baskets, and then the women started picking.

"Women who make baskets have to learn to get it themselves," said Frank, who doesn't make baskets anymore because of carpal tunnel syndrome, but she picked bundles for those who need it.

The women collected in groups, but each found their own clumps of sweetgrass growing under the palmetto. For three hours, they moved deliberately from one palm to another.

After picking a load of sweetgrass herself, Amaya Shenandoah, 13, gave each woman string to tie their bundles together.

Lorelei Tommie, 20, made her last basket when she was 8 years old. She recently started making another in the Hollywood Culture Department with the help of Fairuza Billie, 17.

"It's something we should all know," said Fairuza, who has made four baskets. "It should be passed down through families, but now it's done through Culture."

Tommie said she is disappointed that few in her generation are continuing the tradition.

"It's not hard; it just takes a lot of time," she said. "I can understand why people can get bored with it, but it's rewarding in the end. I look at my basket now and I'm so proud of it."

Lacey Jordan, 23, had never picked sweetgrass before the outing, and has yet to make a basket, but she intends to learn.

"It was fun, quiet and peaceful," she said. "I'll do it again."

The excursion was a multigenerational affair that provided quality family time



Beverly Bidney

Little Miss Seminole Victoria Benard examines a piece of sweetgrass before picking it Feb. 27 in Yeehaw. The Hollywood Culture Department organized the trip to teach the art of basket making.

for Williams, her daughter Benard and grandchildren Victoria and Duke.

"I learned about plants and Mother Nature," Victoria said. "I'm going to learn how to make a basket out of these and I'll get to spend time with mama."

Another tradition the Hollywood Culture Department is actively trying to pass down is the making of mosquito nets. The department has helped Tribal members make them for two years, but the tradition of using mosquito nets dates back to life in the Everglades.

"It's a hot commodity," said Frank, culture center assistant manager. "You put it over your mattress to protect you from mosquitos."

The department had plenty of materials on hand in early March to help whoever wanted to make mosquito nets for use while

staying in chickees. The nets are made of lightweight, opaque muslin, which offers individuals some privacy when sleeping in a camp with others. Made of five panels, the nets have loops on the top panel corners that attach to hooks on the ceiling of sleeping chickees. Once in place, the nets are tucked underneath the mattress.

"They are like tents hung from inside chickees," said Allison Osceola, who fashioned a doll-sized mosquito net as a demonstration model.

Bobby Frank, community culture center manager, said the culture event aimed to pass down the knowledge to the next generation. He said that while mosquito nets were used for everyday living in the Everglades, they still have practical uses today.

"If you have a chickee and you sleep outside, you are going to need it," he said.

Shootout commemorates unconquered Seminoles

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Battles from the Second Seminole War, the longest and most expensive U.S. war waged against Native Americans, were realistically reenacted March 13-15 for descendants of both sides.

Deadly skirmishes during the 1835-1842 war took place in the same general vicinity as the reenactments at Billie Swamp Safari in Big Cypress. Tribal members and other reenactors donned authentic uniforms and used period weapons to stage battles.

"John Wayne doesn't save the day," said master of ceremonies Wovoka Tommie, Billie Swamp Safari acting director of operations. "They aren't going to raise the American flag today."

Daily crowds, more than 2,100 over the three-day event, watched the action from a hill overlooking the battlefield as U.S. soldiers were soundly defeated by guerilla tactics used by the Seminoles. Led by medicine man and warrior Abiaki, also known as Sam Jones, they fought valiantly and never surrendered.

"Today we run like dogs; our warriors diminished, our horses gone, we have no cattle or crops," Moses Jumper Jr., acting as Abiaki, said to the crowd. "I don't understand what it is they hate about us. They want Florida but there is plenty of land for all of us. We want to live in peace and yet you come and follow us and try to exterminate us from this earth. We have

nowhere else to run, so today we must make a stand and fight. We have guns and we will fight until the last drop of Seminole blood is poured on this land."

Spectators watched as U.S. soldiers marched into the open, lined up and took orders from their commander on horseback. Meanwhile, Seminoles hid in trees and emerged on foot or horseback only to fire weapons and scurry back to the cover of the underbrush. Only when most Army soldiers fell did the Seminoles appear in the open to finish them off with hand-to-hand combat.

"Every second I do this I'm honoring my ancestors who did their part so I could live here," said Tylor Tigertail, 21, who has participated in the Shootout since he was 13. "It lets me do my part to educate the next generation. This year there were more soldiers than Indians, which made it more realistic."

Tribal members of all ages played a part in the reenactment, along with non-Tribal reenactors who travel the state for other historical shows. Jumper's grandsons Riley "Coyote" Jumper, 9, and Talen Jumper, 5, were part of a Seminole "family" chased out of their chickee by soldiers.

Pedro Zepeda, who has played the part of a Seminole warrior for 18 years, said the event accurately educates people about Seminole history.

"Changing people's misconceptions is

♦ See SHOOTOUT on page 7A

Patchwork bonds a community of many colors at Chalo Nitka

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

MOORE HAVEN — The common thread that tied hundreds of revelers on Avenue J for Moore Haven's 67th annual Chalo Nitka Festival parade spun a lasting story about community and cultural inclusion.

"That's what I love the most about Chalo Nitka. It's always been a day everyone puts on patchwork," said Lewis Gopher, Brighton Reservation's cultural events specialist, who also served on the festival committee.

City and county royalty from tots to teens waved from floats in a colorful array of patchwork dresses, shirts and jackets. City and county officials and department heads, business leaders and educators from many ethnic backgrounds also wore Seminole fashions that further created a sea of streaming color.

Spectators, many also clad in patchwork, lined the sidewalks and cheered for the cavalcade led by Mingo Jones, of Hollywood Reservation, who rode on horseback in Seminole warrior regalia. The 2015 grand marshals, Joe and Annie Espinosa, were escorted just behind Jones. Seminole royalty, Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Brighton Board Rep. Larry Howard and a

delegation of teachers and students from Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School waved and tossed candy to the crowds.

Chalo Nitka, which means "day of the big bass" in Creek, was first held in 1949 to celebrate the asphalt paving of the pathway formerly called Main Street.

In those days, the festival coincided with the Tribe's earliest efforts to promote cultural tourism. Then, the parade led to an open field, now Chalo Nitka Park, where Seminoles created Native artworks, cooked sofkee and frybread on a campfire and performed alligator wrestling. Billy Bowlegs' turkey calling technique was a sure hit.

At the end of the festival, after the winners of the weeklong bass fishing contests were announced, the fish were distributed to Seminole families to take home and eat.

But those were the days when the Seminole were poor and dependent on culture-based economy, according to historians. About seven years ago, in the advent of gaming and other business ventures, the Tribe became one of the festival's top sponsors.

The 2015 Chalo Nitka activities included the Chalo Nitka Queen Pageant, a four-day Glades County Youth Livestock Show, three nights of rodeo competitions,

"That's what I love the most about Chalo Nitka. It's always been a day everyone puts on patchwork."

— Lewis Gopher,
Cultural events specialist

♦ See CHALO NITKA on page 7A



Beverly Bidney

Allison Osceola, left, and Kurya Kippenberger make mosquito nets March 3 at the Hollywood Culture Department. The nets are made of lightweight, opaque muslin and are used while staying in chickees.

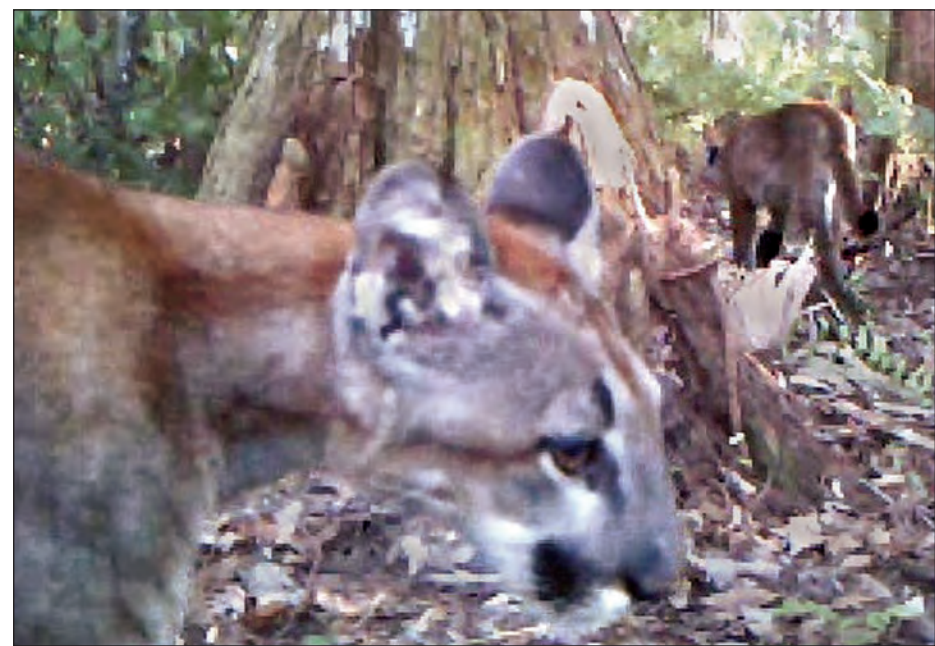


Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Two panthers are photographed by wildlife cameras not far from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki boardwalk in the cypress dome behind the Museum. The images were captured on a Saturday afternoon while tourists enjoyed the Museum's attractions.

Museum wildlife camera snaps prowling panthers

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum installed two wildlife cameras off the boardwalk on Jan. 7 to observe animals that frequent the area. Seventeen days later, a pair of Florida panthers posed for the camera.

The mile-long boardwalk meanders through the 60-acre cypress dome, where Museum visitors learn about the flora and fauna of the area.

"At least one of the photos was triggered at 4:15 on a Saturday afternoon," operations manager Annette Snapp said. "The cameras aren't far from the boardwalk; they are probably watching people all the time."

Because the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki property is part of an environmental mitigation area, the Environmental Resources Management Department has an interest in documenting wildlife and loaned the cameras to the Museum. Raccoons have also been photographed.

Snapp said she was surprised to see the panthers so quickly because so few live in the wild. The Florida panther has been on the federal endangered species list since 1967. The population has rebounded, from about 30 panthers to an estimated 100-180 today, since the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) enacted a recovery plan for the

cats in the 1980s.

Although the effort to protect and increase Florida's panther population has been successful, 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, including Big Cypress and Immokalee Reservations, according to the FWC.

Florida panthers are large, solitary and elusive cats seldom seen in the wild. Although panthers have a potential lifespan of up to 12 years in the wild, many are killed each year by other panthers or vehicles. Last year, 24 panthers were killed by vehicles, and 12 were killed from January to March 2015.

Female panthers weigh between 70-100 pounds, while males can weigh 130-160 pounds. Males require about 200 square miles for their home range, which sometimes overlaps with territory belonging to other males, according to the FWC.

The Museum will continue to check the cameras monthly and monitor the four-legged visitors' presence at the boardwalk. Monitors in the Museum show footage from the cameras.

"It's very exciting and so engaging," Snapp said.

Native rower pit stops in Big Cypress

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Trans-Atlantic rower Victor Mooney recently visited the Big Cypress Reservation while his 24-foot rowboat was being repaired in Miami.

Mooney, a Canarsee Tribe descendant from New York, has spent the last decade attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean to raise awareness for AIDS testing. During his fourth attempt, he finally succeeded when he made landfall on the Caribbean Island of St. Martin after rowing about 3,000 miles for 130 days from the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa. The final leg of his journey will take him from South Florida to New York's Brooklyn Bridge.

Mooney strives to encourage individuals to get tested for HIV and AIDS. He lost a brother to the disease and has another living with HIV. March 20 was National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and Mooney said he felt compelled to spend the day with other Native Americans.

He reached out to the Seminole Tribe and began the day with Daniel Tommie well before sunrise. The men built a fire, watched the sunrise, paid tribute to their ancestors and gave thanks for the journeys on which they are traveling.

"It was a privilege for me to assist him," Tommie said. "I prayed for his safe journey and for him to complete his task. We talked about our personal challenges, what made a difference in our lives and about not ever giving up. It was a great experience; I was honored to meet Victor."

Fire represents strength to Mooney, 49, so he burned a piece of his damaged boat, the Spirit of Malabo. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is his major sponsor, so he named the boat after the nation's capital.

"What I was hoping for to start the day was achieved," he said. "The highlight was interacting with Daniel; I made a new friend. We shared stories our grandfathers told us. Oral history is a big part of our culture and we agreed it's important to share it."

Mooney also toured Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, walked through the boardwalk to the village and learned about native plants and animals. A rower since he was a young boy, Mooney was impressed with the authentic dugout canoe on display in the village near the ceremonial grounds.

"The holes in the canoe aren't for drainage, but people think they are," community outreach specialist Reinaldo Becerra said. "They were so whoever was making the canoe would know how deep the wood went."

Never give up are words Mooney lives by and now he knows how to say them in Mikasuki. Tribal member Linda Beletso taught him to say, *honchetek*, during his visit to the village at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki. Mooney spent the night in a chickee at Billie Swamp Safari.

"I knew it was important for me to be on tribal land today to reconnect with Mother Earth and say thank you," he said. "I feel a special connection to my ancestry and am proud of it. What better sendoff than to come home to your ancestors."

Mooney's first attempt to cross the ocean began in 2006 but ended when his boat sank off the coast of Senegal. He tried again in 2009 but aborted the mission when his water system failed. The third time wasn't a charm in 2011 when his boat took on too much water to continue and he spent 14 days in a life raft.

His latest boat, custom-made from wood and fiberglass in Brazil, was certified for the trans-Atlantic crossing. It was equipped with the latest technology, the same as any yacht or container ship, and includes an automatic identification system radar (AIS), which made his boat appear "as big as a cruise ship" to other vessels, Mooney said. A second radar system, two satellite phones and additional standard marine equipment kept him in touch with authorities worldwide. He was in communication with local coast guards, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

After training for five months, Mooney left the Canary Islands on Feb. 19, 2014 and landed in St. Martin more than four months later. From there he visited the British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

During the journey, he was attacked by whitetip sharks, which left holes in his boat, and by Haitian robbers, who left him with nothing but a severely damaged hull.

Mooney left Monte Cristi on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic in

late October, and after a few days at sea, he noticed four boats following him. They got close enough to bump his boat and finally threw a line and tied his boat to theirs. Mooney sought refuge in his cabin, where he turned on the emergency signal monitored by government agencies as his craft was dragged back to land near Tortuga, Haiti by the pirates.

"I didn't understand their language," Mooney said. "Since they have nothing, they believe anything that comes near them belongs to them."

When they reached land, Mooney said about 40 people jumped aboard and he was taken off his boat. The Spirit of Malabo was stripped bare by the time the U.S. Coast Guard arrived by helicopter. He was taken to Port-au-Prince, where he made arrangements for what was left of the boat to be transported by container ship to Miami. The boat is undergoing complete renovation at the RMK Merrill-Stevens shipyard on the Miami River.

"It's been very difficult, but I never gave up," he said. "The sharks were hungry. If I wasn't upset with the sharks, how could I be upset with the people in Haiti; they were hungry, too."

Mooney is nearing the end of his 5,000-mile journey. He plans to row 1,500 miles up the Intracoastal Waterway to New York, which should take about two months. He plans to donate the boat to the United Nations in September as a symbol for an AIDS-free generation.

Mooney lives in Queens with his wife and three children. For more information and to follow the rest of his journey, visit www.GoreeChallenge.com.



Beverly Bidney

Victor Mooney examines a traditional Seminole canoe March 20 at the Seminole village at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress. Mooney is in the process of rowing from the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa back to his home base in New York.



REGISTERED VOTERS

REMEMBER
ELECTION DAY

MAY 11th, 2015

IF YOU DID NOT REGISTER BY THE DEADLINE OF JANUARY 31ST 2015, YOU CANNOT VOTE IN THIS ELECTION



Visitor surge at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki credited to hard work at home

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — If numbers tell all, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, the first tribal-owned and governed museum to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is a popular destination for visitors.

According to data compiled by Museum staff, the visit count for January 2015 over January 2014 alone is up 38 percent. Additionally, an early estimate for 2015 shows potential for doubling expectations.

“My goal for the entire year was to increase (visits) by 5 percent, but we’re already up 10 percent,” said Carrie Dilley, the Museum’s visitor services and development manager. “The front of the house is invested and excited.”

In December 2014, “the front” underwent mild restructuring changes that placed guided tours, the welcome desk, the gift shop and the orientation theater under the visitor services umbrella.

Dilley said staff members like Joy Murphy, who coordinates intense educational programs, and Reinaldo Becerra, who provides homegrown bird of prey lectures, are focused on attracting visitors and encouraging them to return with more guests.

Welcome desk personnel are friendlier and more outgoing. Staff managers take

time throughout the day to walk through the Museum exhibits, greet guests and answer questions.

“We want to make sure that we share in an educational way what brings the Seminole story to life,” Dilley said.

On March 12, more than a dozen adult tourists joined an afternoon reception for student artists from the “Kaleidoscope: Ahfachkee School K-12 Art Exhibit” simply because they were there.

“It’s fantastic for the Ahfachkee students to see some random visitors interested not just in their artwork but in them as individuals,” said Rebecca Fell, curator of exhibits.

The next day, more than 40 students from Spanish River Christian School received a guided tour of the Museum and the 60-acre cypress dome campus, which includes the clan pavilion and the Seminole village.

“What’s fun and interesting is learning so much. It’s pretty cool how the Seminole Tribe lived back then,” said fifth-grader Steven Schenk.

Museum collections manager Tara Backhouse said recent enhancements to the mile-long boardwalk that snakes through the property makes touring the facility grounds more inviting and interactive.

The amphitheater, at the base of the boardwalk, was reroofed and restaged. Animal and plant information signs have

been erected. Becerra’s bird show area, at the ceremonial grounds, is now covered. A formerly meandering segment of the walk was straightened to shorten the distance to the village.

Alligators, panthers and other wildlife that cross through the area naturally are sometimes visible, but Tribal members and Museum employees are scheduled to work in the village as weather and tribal commitments permit.

A wooden welcome sign handmade by artist Jeremiah Hall and new fiberglass statues of an alligator, bird and hunter further boost the friendly atmosphere.

“It used to be that visitors might not feel they could walk into the village, watch the artists work or speak with them, but we are doing a better job of getting the message out,” Backhouse said.

Village artists include Hall, Lorraine Cypress, Patsy Billie, Linda Frank, Linda Beletso, Lorraine Posada and Lenora Roberts. Wood carvings, beads, dolls and baskets made by the artists and other Tribe members are always available for purchase.

Dilley also credited multi-departmental cooperation for the rise in tourist visits.

For example, Florida Seminole Tourism’s promotional coordinator Melissa Sherman personally delivers brochures and discount cards for Seminole attractions at hotel concierge desks throughout Florida; maintains memberships in Chamber of Commerce organizations for chamber online and event presence; and works promotional booths at trade shows, conferences and regional events year-round.

Social media and the Internet also play an important role. The Museum and Florida Seminole Tourism websites and Facebook pages are typically updated daily.

On March 18, the Museum’s Facebook page showed photos of Victor Billie, of Big Cypress, carving a totem pole in the cypress dome. Tourism’s Facebook page showed a film crew riding a swamp buggy through Billie Swamp Safari, just a mile away.

“When film crews contact us we always try to sell the Museum and Billie Swamp Safari as a site location for the free exposure,” Sherman said in an email.

Dilley said the staff strives to balance customer service, commitment to Tribal members and their professional obligation to preserve the history and culture of the Tribe.

“Our thinking is always about how we can provide an excellent experience,” Dilley said.



Eileen Soler

From left, Lenora Roberts, Linda Beletso and Lorraine Posada pose with award-winning sweetgrass baskets March 6 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum’s Seminole village.

Family talent for sweetgrass baskets displayed at Museum

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Everyone can tell a Beletso basket, even without a blue, red or yellow prize ribbon hanging from its rim.

For Linda Beletso and her daughters Lorraine Posada and Lenora Roberts, the distinction is a matter of family pride and personal artistry. With colors that mesh like music with each stitch of thread and every curve of sweetgrass coil, the baskets blend the marks of ancestor teachers and their own individual hands.

Having won high honors in the Tribe’s recent Tribal Fair and Brighton Field Day basket contests, Beletso and her daughters posed March 6 at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum’s Seminole village for a portrait before putting the award-winning pieces up for sale.

“We try not to copy each other. We have our own little ways in our own little hands,” Beletso said amid the display flanked by beaded jewelry also handmade by the family.

Beletso, trained in traditional basketry under Ethel Frank, Margaret Cypress and Linda Frank, said she creates “signature” baskets by pairing turquoise and red thread into ascending coils.

Posada credited her mother for adding even more elaborate art elements to the otherwise functional vessels “just to be a little different.” Beletso uses embroidery thread to “paint” life, such as a grazing buffalo, onto the basket.

“We each have our own technique,” Posada said.

Posada started weaving at age 18. Roberts got her start in kindergarten.

Beletso was surprised by both her daughters’ talents; in fact, she had no idea that Roberts had begun weaving long before her tiny fingers were ready for the intricate work.

“My grass pile kept getting lower and lower. I wondered what was happening. Lenora was watching and I was teaching without even knowing,” Beletso said.

Roberts prefers to use thinner coils and spiral stitches to fashion tighter vessels. She often punctuates her style with pastel-colored thread. One day, she surprised her mother with a small basket that she made perfect enough to show.

“It had to be perfectly finished and good enough to show my mother,” Roberts said.

Posada, who is right-handed, also learned from her mother, who is left-handed — which is why Posada is ambidextrous; at least when it comes to basketry. Posada’s touch incorporates complicated bead art, such as a diamond made of fire-colored glistening glass.

The grazing buffalo and diamond-beaded baskets are on sale at the historic Smallwood Store on Chokoloskee Island. Other baskets are on display at administration offices tribalwide. Still others are owned by the rich and famous,

including actor Kevin Costner and comedian George Lopez.

Beletso and her daughters are at the Seminole village daily, weather and tribal events permitting, along with crafters Jeremiah Hall, Lorraine Cypress, Patsy Billie and Linda Frank. There, the group creates, displays and sells wood-carved items, beadworks, dolls and baskets.

Basket prices are based primarily on the time it took to create. Each artist might have some idea of what they want the size to be, but the end result can never be planned. Sometimes one coil can take a full hour to thread. Buyers often ask the family to fashion identical baskets, but that is an impossible task.

“We just never know how big or small the basket will be or what the basket will look like. It takes its own shape,” Posada said.

“We just know that when it is finished, it is finished,” Beletso said.

Tourist Sue Klopfer, of Clarkston, Michigan, who strolled the Museum grounds March 6 with her husband, Erwin, said watching the creation of art was “amazing.” They were most impressed with how the Tribe strengthens tradition and culture.

“I read about the Seminoles and how they were forced out of Florida to Oklahoma, but being here and seeing how the survivors worked so hard to maintain a culture (we) tried so hard to destroy — that’s what I call tenacious,” Klopfer said.

Posada’s daughters Lauren, 16, and Lindsey, 13, are now learning the skill. Roberts’ daughter Ewanteke, 6, will be next to learn. All of the Wind Clan, the girls are automatically part of a familial group that some Tribal members loving refer to as “the little basket makers” and the “women’s win clan.”

But Beletso, Posada and Roberts fear for the future of sweetgrass baskets because the wild land from where the sweetgrass grows

and is harvested blade by blade is in danger of disappearing. Beletso said land development for homes and roads is good on one hand, but on the other hand, “what God has given us, man is destroying,” especially in Collier County near and in Immokalee, she said.

Still, the family enjoys meeting daily under a chickee at the Seminole village to weave and bead. There, the smoke of a campfire and the touch of a breeze that whispers through towering banana trees give comfort.

“It reminds me of when my grandmas had their camps. Susie Billie and Margaret Huff Dixie ... (Margaret) cooked there on the fire every day until the day she passed,” Beletso said.

Beletso almost quit making baskets when her daughters started to win. She said that was the plan, to give the younger girls a chance. But when she aged enough to become eligible to compete in the senior division, she had a change of heart.

“I just love making baskets, and I just don’t think I’ll ever stop,” Beletso said.

“I just love making baskets, and I just don’t think I’ll ever stop.”

— Linda Beletso



Eileen Soler

Children from Spanish River Christian School gather around a chickee used by Linda Beletso and her daughters Lorraine Posada and Lenora Roberts to create sweetgrass baskets and other artworks March 6 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum’s Seminole village.

BC bird man lands tourist audience

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Reinaldo Becerra is a man of many hats but being a falconer puts another feather in his cap.

The Air Force veteran, videographer, tour guide, environmentalist and animal advocate is also the only non-Tribal community outreach specialist at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the creator and presenter of the Museum’s increasingly popular bird of prey show.

Staged at the Museum’s ceremonial grounds 2 p.m. every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the shows teach the special significance of the hook beaked and sharp-clawed birds also known as raptors.

“Some people think they are bad animals because they are predators, but they are essential. They control species and are a vital part of the ecosystem. Once people get a chance to have a close encounter, they appreciate the birds’ importance,” Becerra said.

Becerra, originally of Cuba, was introduced to falconry as a child. His mentor was a German refugee who escaped

to the island nation during World War II. Becerra’s talent was eventually put to work by the Cuban military, which used falconry to control bird populations at airports.

At age 22, Becerra defected to the United States, joined the Air Force and became a falconer at Naval Air Station Pensacola.

“People don’t realize how much birds of prey are used to keep other birds and wildlife from causing accidents at air bases and airports. It’s unbelievable,” said Becerra, now age 50.

According to a 2014 report by the Federal Aviation Administration, of 142,603 wildlife strikes against aircrafts from 1990 through 2013, birds accounted for 138,257 hits. In 2013 alone, a record number of 11,315 strikes were made — 97 percent by birds and 2.2 percent by land mammals.

Anyone could read facts from a script but Becerra brings life to lectures. He was inspired by renowned master falconer Ray Pena, who performs at historic festivals and pow-wows nationwide.

On a recent Tuesday, Becerra’s audience consisted of two women from San Francisco who marveled at the sight

of Sabal, a 27-year-old red-tailed hawk, and Ellen, a juvenile red-shouldered hawk, responding to Becerra’s commands.

Ellen, named for Museum security guard Ellen Batchelor, was born on the 60-acre property. During the show, her mother perched atop a towering cypress tree tweeting and squawking. The mother bird’s cries hindered her fledgling’s performance.

“Sometimes that is why we call them bird of prey. Sometimes, if you let them loose, you have to pray they come back,” Becerra said.

He peppers the show with historic facts about falconry and interesting details about Florida’s native predatory birds. And he tells spectators that the birds are not meant to be captured and owned; instead they are cooperative partners with humans for hunting and wildlife control.

Becerra, who lives on a 7-acre ranch in Clewiston with horses, cows, parrots, dogs, cats and peacocks, was an animal trainer for movie production companies and at Parrot Jungle in Miami when he met Chairman James E. Billie in 1998. Chairman Billie hired Becerra to establish the bird of prey show at Billie Swamp Safari where Becerra then worked for 14 years. He was a videographer for Seminole Media Productions before transferring to the Museum last year.

Like a bird, Becerra will not stand still on the ground. He is currently launching plans for a new venomous snake presentation and honing in on his next project — a critter show using indigenous Everglades animals. The far future includes hosting bird watching, hiking and wild orchid tours.

Meanwhile, Becerra splits a non-typical 40-hour week between the Museum, festivals, schools and other educational opportunities throughout the region. Recently, he provided exhibits at the Battle of Okeechobee Reenactment. In May, he will perform at the Florida Folk Festival.

“Outreach takes the culture out of the Museum and into the community at large. It builds stronger understanding,” he said.



Eileen Soler

Reinaldo Becerra, the only non-Tribal community outreach specialist at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, takes a break from his bird of prey show to pose with Sabal, his 27-year-old red-tailed hawk.



Eileen Soler

Lorraine Posada shows ambidextrous skills in the early stage of fashioning a sweetgrass basket March 6 at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum’s Seminole village.



Beverly Bidney

Marvin Hines shows a group of Hollywood 4-H'ers how to groom a steer during a workshop Feb. 27 at the Hollywood barn. Dyami Nelson, Maleah Smith and Nettie Smith watch carefully.

Bovine beauties

4-H'ers learn art of grooming steer

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Hollywood 4-H'ers recently learned that a show ring for steer isn't much different than a stage for beauty queens.

On Feb. 27, they were taught how to hide an animal's flaws while accentuating its best attributes during a steer showmanship and grooming clinic at the Hollywood barn. The lesson helped kids prepare for the annual 4-H show and sale held March 27-28 in Brighton.

"Grooming tries to enhance the good parts and hide the others," said instructor Marvin Hines. "It's like a woman with big ears who wears her hair long; she makes the most of what nature gave her."

Dyami Nelson, Maleah Smith and Teijo Smith, the first 4-H'ers to house steer in Hollywood, attended the clinic. Hines taught them how to trim steer to show off its muscle. Each kid received hands-on experience with the clippers.

"There is no right or wrong way to groom," Hines said. "The judges look at a steer without the head; the body should be

a large rectangle."

Judges look beyond the skin for bone structure, muscle and finish (the line of fat on the top of the back). Steer had to weigh 1,000 pounds to qualify for the Brighton show. Maleah's steer, her first, weighed 1,074 pounds a month before the event.

"It's more work than a hog," said the Hollywood 13-year-old. "I spend more time with it, about two hours a day. I walk it and bathe it."

A steer needs to walk about a mile every day to build muscles in the hind quarters, but Hines showed the 4-H'ers how to mask a lack of muscle by clipping a line down the hind quarters to create the illusion of width.

Tools for steer grooming compare to any beauty contestant's: brushes, combs, blow dryers, shampoos, sprays, oils and hair enhancements. But a steer also needs clippers, scissors, show halters, adhesives (which act like hair spray), adhesive remover, show foams and shaving cream.

Some steer and heifers have their hair fluffed up for the show to mask imperfections. If a cow is more Angus than Brahman, the hair will be longer and easier to fluff, Hines said. The blow dryer, spray dye and oil make hair shine under the lights of the show ring.

To get the cattle in show shape, Hines said steer should be fed either steam rolled oats or whole corn with MoorMan's Beef-trate pellets to aid digestion.

"It will put on weight in a hurry," Hines said. But the show is more than just a bovine beauty pageant; the kids studied for questions they would be asked in the show ring and practiced walking their animals with a halter to prepare for the showmanship aspect of the event.

Hines said showing the animals generates enthusiasm and competition within the show ring and also teaches valuable lessons, including accepting responsibility, winning graciously, losing with dignity and learning the amount of work and determination it takes to become a winner.

Grooming clinics were also held in Big Cypress, Immokalee and Brighton leading up to the Seminole Indian 4-H Livestock Show and Sale.



Beverly Bidney

Maleah Smith learns how to groom a steer's tail during a 4-H steer grooming clinic at the Hollywood barn.

SAM JONES TRAIL

From page 1A

Hendry County signs designating Sam Jones Trail are already installed along the roadway.

In Tallahassee, Rep. Matt Hudson is shepherding a similar request through the phalanx of committees necessary to grant a state designation for Sam Jones Trail. He is confident that the request will pass through the House and Senate before the end of this legislative session.

The county and state approvals will then be processed by the Florida Department of Transportation, which will install historical markers at both ends of the trail and stage a ceremony to mark the renamed Sam Jones Trail.

"It was the right thing to do," said Chairman Billie, whose letter stressed the benefits of public awareness. "Most importantly, this honor will educate Floridians and visitors of all ages about a critical era of Florida history which has remained hidden, along with the great leader who showed the Indians the way to survival."



Photo courtesy of Paul Backhouse

A stop sign at the junction of County Roads 833 and 846 shows the newly renamed Sam Jones Trail.

Tribe pioneers lauded at Smith Family Cattle Drive

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — About 150 people saddled up and hunkered down Feb. 28 to move 50 cattle from the Brighton marsh pens to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena for the third annual Smith Family Cattle Drive and Ranch Rodeo.

The family organizes the event to honor the Smith men, Jack Sr., Fred, Richard, Jack Jr. and Roger.

"We want to keep these guys' names out there because they did a lot for the Tribe," said Diane Smith, Roger's widow.

Their legacy reads like the history of Brighton. Patriarch Jack Sr., who died in 2008 at age 90, was a cattleman in Brighton, as were his sons; Fred served as President of the Board of Directors and Brighton Councilman; Richard held the positions of Brighton Councilman, Brighton Board Representative, Recreation Department director and police officer; Jack Jr., the only living son, served as a Brighton Councilman; and Roger served as Brighton Board Representative and Councilman, was named Cattleman of the Year three times and organized the Tribe's sugarcane operation.

Jack Sr. also had another son, Paul, who passed away as a teenager, and has four daughters, Mahala Madrigal, Nellie Smith, Oneva Baxley and Linda Tommie.

"If he were here, he'd be right here with us, ready to ride," Madrigal said. "This was really his life. He's probably watching us and smiling."

The family chose Richard Bowers to serve as trail boss of the cattle drive. Bowers said he was honored to lead the way. His relationship with the family dates back to childhood, when he forged a close friendship with Roger.

"Those were the good old days," Bowers said. "They were carefree days; we just jumped on a horse and went anywhere on the reservation. Our biggest thing was the cattle roundup. We all had cattle. Roger was my favorite friend; we went through a lot together."

Bowers, as Vice Chairman, and Roger

served together on Tribal Council. They both flew to New York in 2007 to ring the bell on the New York Stock Exchange, which Bowers called the highlight of his life. He said the Smith family worked diligently to improve living conditions and cattle ranching in Brighton and helped shape Brighton as it exists today.

"The government took dying cattle from the dust bowl, put them on rail cars and gave them to the Seminoles," Bowers said. "They wanted us to calm down, be domesticated and have something to do. Some of the Seminoles back then took to it, liked it and went from there. They nursed them and that's where the herd came from today. The cattle were our casino back then."

The 6-mile cattle drive began in Jack Jr.'s pasture and continued past the Red Barn to Fred Smith Rodeo Arena. Participants in the cattle drive included mothers on horseback with babies, children of all ages on horses or in vehicles, old-timers who have moved cattle a hundred times and newbies on the trail for the first time.

The crowd carefully navigated the pastures, which were pitted with a profusion of muddy gullies, while working dogs rounded up cattle that strayed from the herd. They stopped momentarily in front of the Red Barn and then took a longer break in a pasture on Harney Pond Road before reaching the arena for a hearty lunch.

The journey took about three hours.

"This is a like a field day for me to participate in something that will be a historical tradition for the Tribe," Brighton Board Rep.

Larry Howard said. "The Smith family had some pioneers in their time and this shows the roots of the family. I enjoy watching everyone come together."

The annual event concluded with a rodeo featuring bronc riding, team tying, team roping and branding, team sorting and relay race competitions.

"The ranch rodeo is for local cowboys and their families," rodeo director Amos Tiger said. "People come from all around the area and we give them a good show."



Beverly Bidney

In front, Amanda Julian, with her son Charles, 17 months, helps drive cattle to the rodeo arena Feb. 28 during the third annual Smith Family Cattle Drive on Brighton Reservation.



Beverly Bidney

Trail boss Richard Bowers, at left, leads the Smith Family Cattle Drive through the Brighton Reservation.

IMMOKALEE HOTEL

From page 1A

economy, said Jim Allen, Seminole Gaming CEO. All together, the Tribe employs 35,000 through various businesses, including Hard Rock International, he said.

"This takes the facility to a whole other level," Allen said. "It's as beautiful as anything in Atlantic City or Las Vegas."

The casino draws customers primarily from Naples, Marco Island and Fort Myers, about 30 miles west of Immokalee. Allen said the added amenities, including the restaurant, event center and hotel rooms, give patrons the opportunity to stay longer and enjoy the facilities.

"We didn't get here by accident," Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola said. "We got here because we have some of the best folks in the world working for us."

Chairman Billie recalled building the Tribe's casino business from 1979 to 2000. He credited Allen, who joined the team in 2000, for driving the business to today's world-renowned level of success.

Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee general manager Tony Alves, who worked with Allen at The Trump Organization in Atlantic City in the 1980s, pledged to grow the business and offer the best guest services.

The project, which took about a year to complete, was a joint venture of the Tribal Council and Board, with construction by



Photos by Beverly Bidney

The four-story Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee, complete with 80 guest rooms and 19 suites, at left, is now open.



Seminole/Stiles.

"It's historic any time you bring on a new business for the Tribe," Brighton

Board Rep. Larry Howard said. "This has been a long time coming; we need it here for this casino. When both the Board and Council work together, it's a win for the Seminole Tribe."

After the ribbon cutting, guests toured the facility and adjourned to the Seminole Center, which was decorated with historic photos, dramatic ceiling drapes and a centerpiece commemorating the Tribe's eight clans.

"I was asked if I stay here, and I said no and I probably never will," Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr. said. "I hope it is full from now on by paying customers."

BC Cattle Drive a somber reminder of those passed

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Escorting 44 cows and steers through the shell-packed roads of Big Cypress Reservation was fitting March 21 for the honorary trail boss of the 19th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive.

It was there on the land, more than 80 years ago, that this year's honoree Johnny Cypress, an original cattle keeper, was a trustee in the first loosely organized cattlemen's association, which became the forerunner to the Tribal government established in 1957.

"I was only nine or 10 years old when I heard dad talking about it, but I just wanted to play. He worked all the time. He drove that cattle from Okeechobee to Brighton to [Big Cypress] and back," said his daughter Lydia Cypress, now in her mid-70s.

Lydia Cypress and relatives Fred Hall and Jeremiah Hall rode with the cattle drive in a swamp buggy.

She believes the family ranch where

her older two brothers and two sisters often pitched in was located across the canal from where the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena now stands. Her earliest memory of her father has him hollering at her to "get out of the way."

"I tagged along and watched the branding and the pregnancy checks and such. There were no fences then and all the cattle owners' stock would come together. It could be dangerous for a little girl who just wanted to play," Lydia Cypress said.

The course of the commemorative cattle drive was also where Johnny Cypress helped carve from Everglades uplands a string of backwoods roads that would become today's modern street grid — Josie Billie Highway included.

Lydia Cypress recalls traveling and camping whenever her father's heavy machinery took him to dig out roads for community access — from South Bay to Palm Beach to Okeechobee and back to Big Cypress.

Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank reminisced during a snack break at the

halfway point of the drive that Johnny Cypress also served a law enforcement role on Big Cypress. He drove a truck topped with flashing lights and when teenagers would meet up in groups late on weekend nights, he would chase them home by shining a spotlight their way.

Lydia Cypress remembers some folks calling her father "the barefooted sheriff."

"My father was a man of few words, but when he spoke them we listened because he said what he meant," she said.

Tribal Court associate judge and cattlemen Moses Jumper Jr. gave a prayer and a nod to Johnny Cypress and then recited one of his poems in honor of the Tribe's original cattlemen.

"Big Morgan Smith cracking the whip and riding along with old Samson Dixie ... Those were the days of the big roundups, the family feast and the long cattle run," Jumper read.

The run also honored a tiny Tribal member whose life ended tragically during the previous week. Little boots and a toddler's cowboy hat were placed atop the saddle of a horse that was led riderless by Blevyns Jumper in memory of Ahizya Osceola, 3, the great-great-grandson of Junior Cypress, for whom the cattle drive is named.

Andrea Jumper, Ahizya's aunt, said her father, Jonah Cypress, and her mother, Esther Cypress, provided Ahizya's first boots and hat the night before the drive.

"He was a good baby, a sweet kid who takes his first and last ride today in spirit," Andrea Jumper said before the drive began. "It's terribly sad. In times like this we should take stock in our children, hold them closer and make this tragedy a call to action, to cherish their lives and never take them for granted."

Few Tribal members participated in the event in respect to the Tribe's traditional grieving period. Others chose to ride in remembrance of lives past. Rep. Frank said Ahizya's family permitted the annual drive to continue as planned.

"Today we honor all cowboys and Native cowboys, those who set the path for us and those who cannot be with us today," Moses Jumper Jr. said.



Eileen Soler

Nancy Shore, of Brighton, demonstrates patchwork design and sewing using a hand-cranked vintage Vibra sewing machine March 7 in Moore Haven during the Chalo Nitka Festival.

◆ CHALO NITKA

From page 3A

a pancake breakfast at Moore Haven Elementary School and the bass fishing tournament.

The parade and festival, held on the first Saturday of every March, bring the most Seminole participation.

"And if a person wears Seminole clothing, they get in free. For us, the day promotes the Seminole clothing and our heritage. We still have that tie that carries on today," Gopher said.

Retired firefighter Ernest Collingsworth, a 10th generation Floridian who has attended Chalo Nitka since childhood, donned a summer patchwork jacket that was handed down through his family. Because it lacks rickrack trim, the

jacket could date to the early 1930s. His wife, Marilyn Collingsworth, a sergeant at Hendry County Sheriff's Department, received her more contemporary Seminole jacket from her mother about a decade ago — it contains several rows of rickrack.

Former Glades County property appraiser Larry Luckey and his wife, Neva Luckey, have attended the festival for the past 30 years. Neva Luckey said she loves the "novelty and the artistry" of patchwork clothing. But the couple only dons Seminole attire once a year.

"I've had this Seminole jacket for 25 years and wore it exactly 25 days," said Larry Luckey, pointing to the light blue jacket that was gifted to him in 1990 by the Moore Haven Women's Garden Club. "That's how many Chalo Nitka events this jacket has been to and that's how special it is."



Eileen Soler

Alice Sweat, left, of the Brighton Culture Department, keeps her cool during a hot morning of gar, sofkee and frybread cooking over open flames at the 67th annual Chalo Nitka Festival.

◆ SHOOTOUT

From page 3A

a challenge," he said. "It's easier to teach people who don't know anything about Seminole culture than those who have erroneous information."

Escaped or freed slaves fought side by side with Seminoles during the seven-year war and subsequently became black Seminoles. Gerald Wellington, who traveled from Chattanooga, Tennessee to participate in the Shootout, helped tell the story of black Seminoles.

"They had a lot to lose, so they fought along with the Tribe," Wellington said. "They wouldn't have shipped them to Oklahoma; they would have been sent back into slavery."

The 18th annual event had plenty to offer in addition to the battles, which were complete with the sounds of canons and gunfire. Tribal members also demonstrated Seminole stomp dancing, and Zepeda shared the legend of how Seminoles learned to dance.

"A long time ago we didn't know how to dance," he said. "A hunter sat under an oak tree and took a nap. He woke up disoriented and couldn't find his way out of the woods. He kept winding up at the same tree. A whooping crane flew down and told him he was walking in circles. 'I can help you; I can fly up and see the way and lead you to your village,' the crane said. 'I've seen your village and you guys just can't dance. I will teach you how to dance.' From that point on, we knew how to dance. We always start with an opening dance that honors that crane."

Other attractions included authentic Seminole and soldier camps, which were manned by the 54 reenactors. They welcomed visitors, posed for photos and answered questions. Interactive activities like tomahawk throwing and blacksmithing were all faithful to the era and drew long lines of those who wanted to give them a try. Chunky Stone, a historic Native American game, gave attendees another taste of the past. One player threw a stone while his opponent threw a spear as close to the stone as possible.

Traditional Native American arts and crafts, jewelry and walking sticks were among the items available for sale. Seminole food, including frybread, Indian tacos and barbecue, was a hit with the crowd.

Boy Scouts, 499 of them, came from all over the state for the event and camped onsite not far from the battlefield. Troop 888 from St. Cloud was 63 boys strong as they attended the Shootout for the fifth time.

"This is their favorite event of the year," Scoutmaster Robert Garza said. "They hold fundraisers all year to come here."

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office exhibit provided an overview of the Seminole Wars, complete with a timeline and photos of leaders on both sides of the conflict.

"We have to make sure we get the truth out," Moses Jumper Jr. said. "There aren't a lot of reenactments with Seminoles. A lot of young people don't know about our past and the battles we never lost. I hope people get to see a side of this that they don't see in history books."



Beverly Bidney

Pedro Zepeda, portraying a Seminole warrior during the Second Seminole War, looks to see if he hit any soldiers during the reenactment March 14 at the Big Cypress Shootout.



Eileen Soler

Blevyns Jumper leads a riderless horse March 21 during the Junior Cypress Cattle Drive in Big Cypress. The horse is saddled with tiny cowboy boots and a toddler-sized hat in memory of his cousin Ahizya Osceola, 3, who died tragically earlier that week in Hollywood.



Eileen Soler

Cowhands, cowboys, friends and Tribal members lead 44 cows and steers through Big Cypress Reservation during the 19th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive.

◆ SEMINOLE GIRL

From page 1A

Stranahan homestead. There, they would often camp for several days while the men traded goods, and Ivy Stranahan, a former teacher, taught children to read and write.

But historian Patsy West, who wore a long Seminole skirt while providing a narrative of the location, said Native presence dates much further back to when the tributary provided a natural water route to the Everglades.

"Long before, the Tequesta gathered clams and oysters and hunted manatee here," she said.

The area was also home to the great warrior Sam Jones, who as early as 1828 used the route to course toward Pine Island and Long Key — the highest land masses in the area where Natives camped through the Seminole Wars.

"After all, the history of Fort Lauderdale is the history of the Seminole," West said.

Comas hails from Puerto Rico. She owns art studios in Fort Lauderdale and Italy, and her local pieces include "Lil' Blader" in Colee Hammock Park, "Play Ball" in Holiday Park and two bronze bas-relief pieces at the Tequesta Indian sculpture in Lewis Landing Park.

Minutes before climbing a ladder to release strings that tied a massive cloth around the statue, Comas told the crowd that she began her quest to create the Seminole piece about four years ago when she was moved by the state's 500th anniversary



Eileen Soler

Seminole Tribe members, artists and community supporters pose March 20 after the unveiling of 'Florida' A Seminole Girl on the bank of the New River across from Stranahan House in Fort Lauderdale.

events. Her research of the first Floridians opened doors at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum where she learned much about Seminole life in the 1900s — what clothes were worn, what animals roamed the area and that palm fronds were collected and then used to thatch roofs on chickees.

Soon, she met Jimmy Cypress who

knocked on her studio door one day seeking an art teacher. Months later she met Elgin Jumper who also became her student.

The rest is history, Comas said.

"We all became great friends ... now I want you all to love the Seminole Girl," Comas told the crowd just before the unveiling.

Innovation and demonstration: Challenging perceptions of visitors to Seminole villages



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

In this postcard, an unidentified boy and woman pose for a photograph while she sews at Musa Isle in the early 20th century. (ATTK Catalog No. 2003.15.233)

SUBMITTED BY TARA BACKHOUSE
 Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Nestled in the far southwest corner of the cypress dome, the village at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki is the crown jewel of the Museum's boardwalk. Before the boardwalk was recently redesigned, it was possible to miss the winding entrance, as it was shrouded by trees. The entrance beckoned some visitors, but others felt they were intruding and passed it by. For the latter category, many glimpsed the chickees and perhaps the fire but thought they would invade private homes if they ventured any farther. This is a funny conclusion for those who work at the Museum, but staff members have heard it's true. Now visitors must pass through the village to complete the boardwalk journey, so this mistake should not continue to happen.

Feedback from additional visitors who have stepped off the boardwalk to admire the setting and artwork at the village has been equally surprising. Some noticed and commented on the electric fans, refrigerators, radios and other evidence of modern life, like the smart phones that some employees have there. But why should this be surprising? These items are found anywhere that people work and spend their time today. Staffers think this is due to some uninformed visitors expecting to step into the past when they enter the village. They see a thatched roof and people wearing patchwork and mistakenly think those individuals are portraying a historic period, perhaps as long as 75 years ago when tourist camps began to flourish in Florida.

A postcard from the Museum's collection shows a woman and child in one of these historic villages. In such a village, Seminole men and women demonstrated customs and crafts for visitors. The woman in the postcard is sewing patchwork using an antique, hand-cranked sewing machine used by many Seminole women at the time. But sewing machines were not always available, forcing Seminole women to sew only by hand. Did visitors to popular villages such as Musa Isle in Miami wonder why sewing machines were featured in that



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Connie Gowen, right, and an unidentified woman display dolls, jewelry and patchwork hats during the late 20th century at an unknown event. (ATTK Catalog No. GRP1790.1)

camp, the way some wonder about modern equipment at the Museum's village today?

The fact of the matter is that in both cases, the people in the village were contemporary artists using their preferred mediums and tools. Hand-cranked sewing machines were common in Seminole camps 75 years ago. But today, electric sewing machines are more commonly used by Seminole textile artists. So why wouldn't artists today use contemporary tools and conveniences?

Museum staff would like to revolutionize the way people think of craftspeople in villages that are open to tourists. When visitors enter one of these villages, they are privileged to witness the studios of modern Seminole artists who constantly design new products to keep their art fresh and relevant. Never expect these people to be stuck in the past.

It's easy to imagine why such an artist would use modern tools to produce

art quickly, and why they might want a refrigerator, radio or phone while they work. In another photo in the Museum's possession, two women happily show off their work, as visitors walk by their stall. Museum staff doesn't know when this photograph was taken or at what event they were selling their work. But whether it is a tourist camp in the 1940s, an event in the late 20th century or the Museum's village today, all these women have something in common: They are the modern artists of their time, and none were stuck in the past.

Staff members celebrate all artists at the Museum and have many photographs of present and past artists. If you know anything about the women in these pictures, contact the Museum to share your information. And while you're here, please visit the artists who are celebrated in the village. If you have any questions, contact collections manager Tara Backhouse at 863-902-1113, ext. 12246.

◆ LORENE GOPHER

From page 1A

the Florida Artist Hall of Fame Award to opera composer Carlisle Floyd. Authors Randy Wayne White, Mike Maihack, Sue Monk Kidd, Viviana Diaz Balsera, Rachel A. May, Erin Belieu, Dr. David Axelrod, Lenny Schneur, Carol Thomas, Jose M. Fernandez Pequeno, Madeleine Kuderick, Amanda Carlson and Robin Poyner received the 2015 Florida Book Awards.

Lorene is the fifth Seminole to receive a Florida Folk Heritage Award. Other recipients are medicine woman Susie Jim Billie (1985), former Chairperson and Seminole Tribune editor Betty Mae Jumper (1994), canoe maker Henry John Billie (1998) and medicine man Bobby Henry (2001).

"My mother was never one to seek out any awards. She preferred to stay in the background," said Norman "Skeeter" Bowers. "If she were here today I guarantee she would be like, 'What's going on? What's the big deal?'"



Peter B. Gallagher

Lorene Bowers Gopher's immediate family, who traveled to Tallahassee to accept the Florida Folk Heritage Award on her behalf, pose for a picture. Standing from left are Lewis Gopher, Lucy Bowers, Martha Jones, Andrew Jordan Bowers, Charlotte Burgess, D'Anna Osceola, Norman 'Skeeter' Bowers and Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr. Elsie Bowers is seated in front.

Betty Mae Jumper

Wisdom from the past

Easter

The following column was written by Betty Mae Jumper and printed in the March 27, 1991 issue of *The Seminole Tribune*.

Read Matthew 26, 27, 28. Easter is around the corner and everyone thinks of eggs, rabbits, little chickens, ducks and pretty flowers with visiting and outings.

People dress in their best, sometimes to see if they can outdo others.

This day is to hunt eggs with kids, enjoy visiting kin folks and friends.

But do we really know what Easter stands for?

Do we know it's a day that our heavenly Father rose from the grave three days before Jesus was whipped and made to carry a cross to a hillside where he was nailed to it and put between two robbers?

People yelled at him, put a crown of

thorns on his head, spit upon him and put vinegar on a sponge to put in his mouth. Jesus' mother was there to see all this. Think of how you mothers would feel if it was one of your sons being put through this torture. But to the last minute of all this, Jesus told his father, "Forgive them for they know not what they are doing." So today Jesus is saying to us he forgave and paid his precious blood for our sins that day on the cross.



Today, when you go through Easter, remember that Jesus hung on the cross for you a long time ago and he is still asking for you to believe in him. As the world turns it is bringing us nearer and nearer to when he will come back.

Are you ready; ask yourself. When the trumpet rings you don't want to stay behind. Just think, in heaven there will never be the end. And after all this, you can go free. Just believe in him.

Hah-pong-ke: James Hawkins

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
 Special Projects Reporter

James Hawkins has been called the dean of contemporary Florida songwriters, and he has the song catalogue to back it up. His plaintive plea for musical rescue – "Swept Away" – is regularly performed by scores of Florida acoustic music acts.

He is also well known for his musical profiles: "Black Hat Troubadour" is his famous song about the man they call the father of Florida folk music – Will McLean.

But blessed with a natural talent for condensing a grand event into a four-minute song, Hawkins is perhaps best known for his historical ballads. Case in point: "Major Dade," a classic Hawkins song-story that appears on his new album "Tales From Horse and Chaise." A popular subject for Florida songwriters, the Dec. 28, 1835 Dade Massacre has spawned many tunes over the years by dozens of songwriters, including McLean, fascinated by the defeat of an entire U.S. regiment after an ambush by Seminole Indians hiding in trees and tall grass near the present-day town of Bushnell, north of Tampa.

The battle still ranks as one of the worst defeats in U.S. military history. Only three of 108 U.S. soldiers survived. Seminoles lost three men and suffered a handful of injuries.

With simple words and strong imagery, Hawkins hones in on the fatal mistake made by Major Francis L. Dade, who was hunting Indians while marching to Tampa's Fort King. For reasons still unknown, Major Dade relaxed his

vigilance and "He saw no need for flankers only the advanced guard," Hawkins writes. "Micanopy, Alligator waited in the grass so tall, When the first shots came half the command did fall ..."

Hawkins, originally from Kentucky, has lived in the Venice area for the past 30 years.

"After getting out of the Navy I started doing community theater and performed at the Venice Little Theatre, Sarasota Players and the Port Charlotte Players off and on for about five years," Hawkins said. "I started writing songs and hitting the open microphones around the Venice, Sarasota area in the mid-1980s. Someone told me about the Florida Folk Festivals that were happening, so I packed up my guitar and went to White Springs and from that day I was totally hooked."

Hawkins is a past president of the Sarasota Folk Club and is a member of Friends of Florida Folk.

Hawkins credits Florida songwriters such as McLean, Don Grooms, Jim Bellew, Gamble Rogers, Frank Thomas, Steve Blackwell, Bob Patterson and Bobby Hicks as his inspiration: "The more I watched and listened to these artists, the seeds of my own songs were sown," he said.



Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

'Major Dade'

Words and music by James Hawkins

Let me tell you a story that's sad but it's true
 It happened when Florida was so fresh and new
 Major Dade marched north with over 100 men
 When the shooting was done only three came home again

Chorus
 Where were you going Major Dade
 Riding into history on that fateful day
 100 souls did follow you to an early grave
 Only three would tell the tale, of Major Dade

Major Francis Dade was a prudent cautious man
 Sending out his scouts to scour the land
 Keeping his men safe from the Seminole bands
 When he lowered his guard it all came to an end

It was two days after Christmas northward they did march
 He saw no need for flankers only the advanced guard
 Micanopy, Alligator waited in the grass

so tall
 When the first shots came half the command did fall

The men fought so bravely and did what they could
 Five times they fired the cannon at the Seminole in the woods
 Some of the men gathered ammunition others felled some trees
 Most the men lay dead or dying in the weeds

After the 2nd attack scarcely few were alive
 The Seminole took the weapons and left the rest to die
 Soon 40 black Seminole rode up with axes and knives
 Massacred the wounded despite their mournful cries

Clark, Thomas and Sprague slipped away after dark
 The hell they lived through left its mark
 Crawling to Fort Brooke more dead than alive
 An there they told the tale of the ones left behind

Health



Campaign strives to combat deaths in kids younger than 4

SUBMITTED BY BOB LAMENDOLA
Florida Department of Health in Broward

When children under age 4 died in Broward County over the past five years, unsafe sleep and drowning were the biggest causes, claiming 97 of 205 young lives lost.

In response, the Children's Services Council of Broward County, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Florida Department of Health and other agencies have launched the #SaferBy4 campaign. Unveiled during a meeting of city and county officials, the campaign urges the public, police, firefighters, paramedics and inspectors to watch more closely for life-endangering conditions in the home.

"These tragedies were completely preventable. Our goal is to eliminate all of them," said Dr. Paula Thaqi, director of DOH-Broward.

Seminole Fire Rescue Chief Donald DiPetrillo, who serves as president of the Fire Chiefs Association of Broward County, urged his colleagues to set aside resources to become more active in preventing the tragedies.

"Some of our cities are very proactive," DiPetrillo said.

Children are safest when they sleep alone, on their backs, in a crib free of items – no blankets, pillows, stuffed animals or bumper pads, said Kim Gorsuch, DCF Circuit Community Development administrator in Broward, to the group.

Parents should not sleep with a baby in their arms or co-sleep in any bed. Parents may enjoy the practice, but it is risky, Gorsuch said.

Local governments can help by training first responders to educate parents about unsafe sleep environments observed in the home, said Michelle Reese, executive director of Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Broward County.

Another leading cause of deaths in children younger than 4 is drowning. Children often die in the water without a sound, moments after slipping away unnoticed from a parent or caretaker – more so in Broward, with 130,000 backyard pools and miles of waterways.

The best protection is an adult paying undivided attention to children, especially toddlers, said DOH-Broward health educator Linda Olson. She helps coordinate the Water Safe Broward campaign.

Families should install four-sided fences around pools, alarms on the doors and safety devices on pool drains. They should learn to swim, teach children to swim and learn CPR.

Too often, Olson said, drowning children stayed in the water until paramedics arrived because adults could not swim to get them out. Life or death may hinge on a few seconds.

DOH-Broward is partnering with first responder agencies to train staff to seek out and recognize safety violations at public pools and report them immediately to DOH-Broward, which is in charge of inspections and enforcement.

For more information about the #SaferBy4 campaign, call 954-331-3499 or email Kim.Gorsuch@myflfamilies.com.



Eileen Soler

A walker in the Pathways Poker Run Pedometer Program takes a brisk solitary stroll March 3 along the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's 1.2-mile boardwalk.

Pedometer fitness challenge bets on improved health

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

No one can say for sure how 101 Tribal members and employees who spend six weeks walking thousands of steps in a pedometer challenge could increase their odds in a poker game.

What is known: losing a few pounds, gaining muscle strength and improving heart rate is definitely in the cards through the Pathways Poker Run Pedometer Program.

"There's nutrition, physical activity, getting together with other fitness-minded people and the poker gimmick," said Hollywood nutritionist Lucy Bowers.

Here's how it works. Participants who had already gone through physical screenings and overall fitness assessments received pedometers that were clipped near hips to record the amount of steps taken daily. The pedometer readings were to be recorded by the participants at the end of every day. Once weekly, walkers met at predetermined locations on respective reservations for a group walk and for program leaders to ledger steps.

Each walker who met a certain number of steps received a poker card. Adults ages 18 to 54 had to walk 40,000 steps weekly for a card. Seniors (55 and older) walked 28,000 steps to take a card. At the end of the six weeks, hands were to be compared to determine winners from each age group. Some considered the poker walk win-win-win.

"It mixes work, fitness and fun. I would never be out here walking if not for the program," said Tribal member Tacey Thomas.

Thomas was among 10 who turned out March 10 to snake through a 3-mile course at Seminole Estates. The former street scape, still dotted with mango, oak and palm trees, provided an airy and green break from the surrounding urban community.

"I don't even care about counting steps when I walk out here," said participant Wanda Bowers who strolled the course at her own leisurely pace, sometimes skipping certain streets, with her furry

pooch Winston.

To each his own path – hence the Pathways Program.

Dedicated to health promotion and disease prevention, the Tribe's Allied Health Program (one of eight programs under the Health Department) uses the Pathways Program as an umbrella delivery system for Allied Health's main goals: provide health education and activities in schools, within the community, for the sick and to the Tribe's employees.

But Allied Health Program manager Suzanne Davis said Pathways programs that include pedometer walks and other fitness challenges let participants play as they are able.

"Everyone is an individual, everyone has a special path. We ask them, 'Where are you on your path to health?' And then we work with that person right where they are to help them on the steps to where they want to be," Davis said.

A person who is already fit may simply desire to maintain healthfulness, Davis said. Another may be recovering from a recent injury. One more could be in prevention mode against diabetes or other diseases.

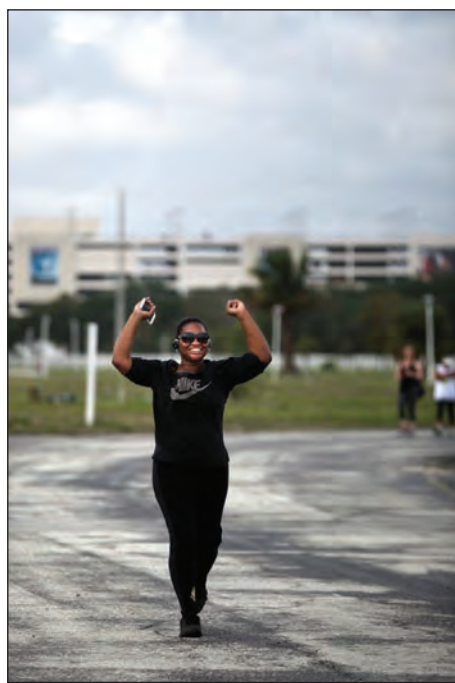
"No matter where a person is on their road to good health, we are there with them," Davis said.

Once involved, participants usually discover more avenues to healthier lives. Some ask for inoculations against disease, begin regular regimens at the gym, start eating healthier foods and forge new friendships.

The Pathways Program umbrella also covers the Tribe's Rez Rally, 21 Day Weight Loss Challenge, Senior Fitness Challenge and preschool Get Fit days.

Brighton's Pathways pedometer challenge featured about 30 participants. Many gathered as a group on Tuesdays at the Brighton Filed Office. In Immokalee, about 19 walkers met at the gym. Big Cypress' challenge puts walkers on a scenic trek along the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki boardwalk – but not before packing a trail mix bag of free nuts, dried fruit, fiber filled flakes and fresh strawberries.

"The poker aspect puts a fun spin



Eileen Soler

Tribal member Tacey Thomas is thrilled to near the end of a fast-paced, 3-mile ramble March 10 through Seminole Estates in Hollywood during the Pathways Poker Run Pedometer Program.

on pedometer walking. Everyone likes a chance to win something," said Big Cypress health educator Jamie Diersing.

Prizes for best poker hands were kept secret on Big Cypress to add another gaming element.

For Sam Tommie, of Big Cypress, participation was just for fun. An environmental filmmaker and competitive runner, Tommie turned out for the Big Cypress weekly boardwalk meet up March 3 but he did not record his steps.

"I set my goal to walk 100 miles in two weeks but I ended up walking 110 miles – and that was just because I was hiking," Tommie said.

In April 2013, Tommie won Most Steps and Most Participation awards in the Big Cypress Stomp the Swamp pedometer challenge. But Tommie was happier then with what he lost – 8 pounds.

Colon cancer affects Natives at significantly higher rate

BY MALLORY BLACK
Native Health News Alliance

While colorectal cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, it's the second most common cancer among Northern Plains American Indians – a population with rates 53 percent higher than the general U.S. population. About one in 20 Americans will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer, also known as colon cancer, develops in the colon or rectum. Abnormal growths, or polyps, can develop in these areas and can potentially become cancerous over time.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and the American Indian Cancer Foundation, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is promoting awareness of colorectal cancer throughout the month. The Colon Cancer Alliance designated March 6 as "Dress in Blue Day" to raise awareness of the disease.

"Over the past 20 years, the U.S. population as a whole has been celebrating decreases in cancer mortality. Unfortunately, American Indian populations have not had the same good news," said Kris Rhodes (Ojibwe), executive director of the American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF), a nonprofit dedicated to eliminating the cancer burdens on American Indian families. "This is largely the result of cancer diagnoses that are too late. AICAF sees opportunities to change that story with the promotion of screening to catch cancer early when it is easier to treat and survive."

Because there are often no symptoms of early colorectal cancer, experts agree that a colonoscopy screening is one of the best forms of prevention, as early stage cancer can be removed during the screening.

Peter Lance, deputy director of the University of Arizona Cancer Center, said the idea of cancer screenings is prevention.

"The reason we don't want to wait until there are symptoms is because the cancer we can diagnose through screenings is [found] much earlier in their development," Lance said. "Most colon cancers develop from [non-cancerous] colon polyps."

While some people in Indian Country are still largely unaware of the risk of colorectal cancer, that's changing every day, said Joy Rivera (Haudenosaunee), a community health worker with AICAF and former colorectal cancer screening navigator.

Rivera helps increase awareness of the importance of cancer screenings in American Indian urban and reservation communities. Her work includes dispelling myths about cancer screenings, which stem largely from past bad experiences. Some of the most common concerns she hears are whether the screenings hurt or if it's as bad as people say it is.

Rivera said bad news spreads fast in the communities. "A lot of times people are saying they

had a bad experience, painfulness, so what I try to do is realize they [likely] haven't been apologized to," she said. "Things are better now."

Rivera tries to help hesitant patients by reminding them that because American Indians make up such a small part of the general population, each life is a big deal. As soon as the walls come down, she said she stresses the importance of regular screenings and healthy living to be around for generations to come.

"If you want to see your children or your grandchildren grow up, this cannot be ignored," Rivera said.

One of Rivera's most memorable moments happened when an American Indian man rode up to the clinic on a bicycle in the middle of winter asking for a colon cancer screening. He was diagnosed with colon cancer soon after. Curious to know what brought him in that day, she asked and he told her he wanted to buy gifts for his children because the holidays were coming up. The clinic was offering a \$25 gift card to anyone who came in for a cancer screening.

The man underwent several operations to remove the cancer, and the treatment seems to be working.

"The last time I saw him, he was doing well," Rivera said.

Individuals have options for screenings, some of which are less invasive than others, but for many American Indians, the thought of cancer or cancer screenings can be intimidating. Fears about procedures, complications or pain can be perpetuated within small, close-knit Native communities.

David Perdue (Chickasaw), a gastroenterologist in Minneapolis, said most people share a fear that the doctor could find something. He said what many people don't realize is when clinicians talk about cancer screenings, they're really talking about cancer prevention.

"Some people would rather not know, which is something we've been really trying to impress on people; that really the intention of screening is not so much finding cancer, it's finding polyps and getting those out before they turn into cancer," Perdue said.

He said sometimes genetics play into the incidence of colon cancer and polyps are bound to occur.

The American Cancer Society recommends people receive screenings beginning at age 50. Research shows most colorectal cancers could have been prevented if more people participated in regular screenings. If colorectal cancer is found early, nine out of 10 patients survive, according to AICAF.

Still, many people are impacted by colorectal cancer every year. The American Cancer Society expected the disease to be diagnosed in nearly 72,000 men and 65,000 women in the U.S. in 2014 alone.

© Native Health News Alliance

What is a communicable disease?

SUBMITTED BY AVA JOHN
Environmental Health Department

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent, such as bacteria, virus, fungi and parasites. Most of these diseases can be passed from one person to another. A communicable disease reported under state law is a basic feature of societal mechanisms for protection of public health. Florida law mandates health care providers and laboratories to report more than 80 diseases or conditions to their local health department. Some examples of the reportable communicable diseases include hepatitis, lead poisoning, measles and salmonella.

Some ways communicable diseases spread are by:

- Physical contact with an infected person, such as through touch (staphylococcus), sexual intercourse (gonorrhea, HIV), fecal/oral transmission (hepatitis A) or droplets (influenza, TB).
- Contact with a contaminated surface or object (Norwalk virus), food (salmonella, E. coli), blood (HIV, hepatitis

B) or water (cholera).

- Bites from insects or animals capable of transmitting the disease (mosquito: malaria; flea: plague).
- Travel through the air, such as TB or measles.

These healthy habits protect individuals from diseases and prevent germs and infectious diseases from spreading:

- Handle and prepare food safely. Food can carry germs. Wash hands, utensils and surfaces often when preparing any food, especially raw meat. Always wash fruits and vegetables, and cook and keep foods at proper temperatures. Don't leave food out – refrigerate promptly.
- Wash hands often.
- Clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces. Germs can live on surfaces. Cleaning with soap and water is usually enough. However, disinfect bathrooms and kitchens regularly. Disinfect other areas if someone in the house is ill. Use an EPA certified disinfectant (look for the EPA registration number on the label), bleach solution or rubbing alcohol.

- Cough and sneeze into sleeves.

- Don't share personal items. Avoid sharing personal items that can't be disinfected, like toothbrushes and razors, or sharing towels between washes. Never share needles, use them only once and throw them away properly.
- Get vaccinated. Vaccines can prevent many infectious diseases. There are vaccines for children and adults designed to provide protection against many communicable diseases. There are also vaccines that are recommended or required for travel to certain parts of the world.
- Avoid touching wild animals. Be cautious around wild animals, as they can spread infectious diseases to people and pets.
- Stay home when sick.

The Environmental Health Program requests that you call the STOF Health Department with any environmental health issues. The department can be reached at 954-985-2330.

Sources: Alameda County Public Health Department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites.

SEMINOLE SCENES



Eileen Soler

THE EYES HAVE IT: Quenton Cypress is focused March 21 on speakers presenting the history and traditions of the Tribe's cattlemen during the halfway snack break of the 19th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive in Big Cypress.



Eileen Soler

RUSH TO READ: Savannah Cypress, decked in a tiara and ribbons, dashes through a display of books during the Scholastic Books Under the Sea book fair March 5 at the Willie Frank Memorial Library on the Big Cypress Reservation.



Eileen Soler

HOME AT LAST: A detail of the 'Florida' A Seminole Girl bronze sculpture unveiled March 20 in Fort Lauderdale on the bank of the New River shows the intricate work of its creator, international sculptor Nilda Comas.



Beverly Bidney

LOOPING LASSO: Jaylen Baker attempts to rope a steer on the loose Feb. 28 during the Smith Family Cattle Drive through the Brighton Reservation.



Eileen Soler

BURN, BABY, BURN: Michael Lightsey, field operations supervisor for the Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue Forestry and Wildland Division, controls a prescribed burn on a Big Cypress Reservation cattle ranch. Occasional prescribed and controlled fires help prevent brush and forest fires that occur from lightning strikes or other natural and potentially destructive causes.



Eileen Soler

THAT'S AMORE: From left, Ina Robbins, Brandi Osceola and Aaliyah Billie show off a baking sheet of soon-to-be abundanza homemade pizza during a Club Café activity March 6 at the Big Cypress Boys & Girls Club.



Beverly Bidney

BLOOMING BROMELIAD: Spring arrived March 20 in Big Cypress with a showy display along the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum boardwalk courtesy of this bromeliad in bloom.



Beverly Bidney

SKIP TO MY LOU: From left, Bonnie Williams, Victoria Benard and Bobby Frank happily leave Yeehaw Feb. 27 after a successful few hours collecting sweetgrass for Seminole baskets.



Eileen Soler

LADY JUSTICE: American Heritage School student Marsha Osceola is filled with anticipation while she waits with other Native American high school teens from Tribes nationwide to tour the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C.



Photo courtesy of Maury Neipris

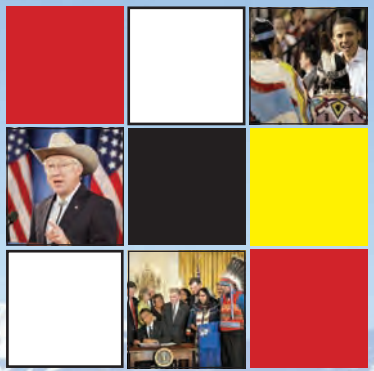
HOME RUN: Gordon 'Ollie' Wareham is all about Florida State University team power and the FSU softball team during a recent visit to the school.



Eileen Soler

PROTECT AND SERVE: Hollywood firefighter Holly Montellanico, center, is honored by Tribal Council March 13 for saving the life of Tribal youth Neo Osceola, who was attacked by his family's two 75- to 80-pound Rottweiler dogs in November. Montellanico, who was off duty at the time, freed Neo from the dogs and carried him to safety. Montellanico was recognized and commended for her selfless act of bravery by the Tribe's Fire Rescue and Police departments.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS



Poll: Majority wants to renew gaming compact

TALLAHASSEE — A new statewide poll, financed by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, has found a clear majority of Floridians like the level of gambling currently being offered in Florida; by wide margins they support renewing the Seminole gaming compact and oppose any gaming expansion.

The poll is a “screaming” statement about “where people see gaming. They like it the way it is. They fear having more of it,” said media consultant Adam Goodman, in a conference call with reporters.

“The Seminole Tribe of Florida remains a trusted name in Florida and a sizable majority of Floridians support the extension of the gaming compact with the State of Florida,” said pollster Neil Newhouse, who conducted the poll on behalf of the Tribe. “With options that will determine the future of gaming in Florida on the table, the Seminoles enjoy broad support for a continued partnership with the state.”

Among the poll’s findings: 61 percent support the Seminole compact, while 26 percent oppose it; 62 percent believe Gov. Rick Scott should renew the agreement, while 27 percent believe the governor should not renew it; by a 7-to-1 margin (56 percent to 8 percent), Florida voters have a favorable impression of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

A portion of the Tribal compact expires in July and the Florida House has proposed a bill to replace it with a massive expansion of gaming in South Florida. The Florida Senate, meanwhile, says it is considering not renewing the option of the compact that expires this year.

Support for the Seminole compact, however, has dramatically increased in recent months. A previous Newhouse poll conducted in December 2013 found 59 percent supported it. The current poll surveyed 793 Floridians and included a 600 sample of voters statewide (margin of error +/-4.0 percent in 95 out of 100 cases), as well as “oversampling” in the Tampa and Orlando DMAs in order to have a larger sample size in those two key markets.

—Source: Miami Herald

Sun Sentinel Q-&-A with Seminole Gaming’s Jim Allen

The South Florida Sun Sentinel interviewed James Allen, the chief executive officer of Seminole Gaming, recently, about the Seminole Tribe’s Class III gaming compact now under debate in the Florida Legislature. Here is an excerpt:

Q: Why should Florida renew its gambling compact with the Seminole Tribe?

A: The reality is there is a relationship, and it’s truly a partnership, between the state of Florida and the Seminole Tribe. We believe, which I think we can demonstrate, that the partnership has been amazingly successful for both the state and the Tribe...

We have done quarterly meetings with [state regulators] and frankly, we’ve never had a material issue ... They’ve actually complimented us countless times on the integrity, the honesty and the sophistication of our operations ... We believe that relationship between the state and the Tribe has been very favorable.

The Tribe has not only met but exceeded all the revenue projections that we gave to the state. If we were to stay on the current agreement for another 15 years, we would pay the state of Florida based upon our projections ... \$6.1 billion ...

[Currently] we do not market anywhere out of the state of Florida. We barely market outside Broward County. If we had certainty in this particular partnership with the state of Florida, we would immediately start marketing into Atlanta, into New York City, into Philadelphia ... We would market all the way up to Chicago. And we would obviously be then moving more business and more tourism into the state of Florida ...

If we complete these [renewal] negotiations, we’re prepared immediately to announce ... major hotel expansions [worth \$1.6 billion total], both in Tampa and in Hollywood.

—Source: South Florida Sun Sentinel

Outdoorsmen, Natives join to oppose Everglades bike path

MIAMI — Frank Denninger, a 66-year-old hunter in a camouflage hat, nodded at Independent Seminole Bobby C. Billie: “Me and him shut down two underpasses,” Denninger bragged to a Miami New Times reporter, referring to a canceled road project. “We stopped the jetport.”

Now, Native Americans who live along Tamiami Trail and the outdoorsmen who play and hunt there are teaming up again in a fight to prevent a bike lane: the proposed River of Grass Greenway (ROGG) — a \$38-76 million, hard-surfaced path running alongside Tamiami Trail, 75 miles from Naples to Miami. The 12- to 16-foot wide path would contain levees,

boardwalks and bridges, parking lots, bathrooms and access points.

The plan is touted by bike activists and government officials as an environmentally friendly tourism boon that could single-handedly change Florida’s image as a bad place for cyclists. But Denninger and Billie disagree for multiple reasons, citing the construction threats to an already damaged ecosystem and the violation of the rights of the indigenous people who live there.

“I’m a person; I’m not an attraction. What, we’re in a zoo now?” asked Billie, who has refused to join the organized Seminoles or Miccosukees, considering instead a treaty from the 1800s to be in effect that grants them the rights to all of Southwest Florida. He complained about aerial photos taken of a site where they perform sacred rituals and signage marking burial mounds. “There’s a reason we don’t want you to know where it is — because it’s private,” he said.

Officials say it’s still far too early to raise protests. An updated draft master plan — with input from 14 agencies — will be revealed in April, after which a 30-day public comment period will follow. The next step would be a Department of Transportation study, then trying to piece together funding as an environmental impact study is conducted.

“It could be 10 or 20 years before anything is ready,” said Mark Heinicke, a senior park planner with Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation who is managing the project. “Bulldozers are not revving up to break ground tomorrow.”

Billie, however, set his platform to paper in a 2012 letter: “We do not want to see any road building equipment or machinery, lime rock, gravel, concrete, asphalt or any other road building materials or machinery on our aboriginal indigenous land. We do not want you to start or even think about it. Hang it up and forget about the project, unless you walk barefoot in the woods — that would be healing.”

—Source: Miami New Times

Council urges Creek Chief George Tiger to resign

OKMULGEE, Okla. — For failing to follow his Tribe’s “high standard of conduct, ethics and transparency,” Muscogee (Creek) Nation Chief George Tiger should resign, the Tribal Council told the Chief in a letter in March. The Chief refused.

The Council then voted 12-2 that Tiger should leave. He refused again.

Creek Tribal citizen organizers are now seeking 3,300 signatures on a petition that seeks the official forced removal of Tiger, who was elected in 2011 to a four-year term as Principal Chief. Tiger has faced criticism since the Tulsa World disclosed his secret financial arrangement with a developer who wanted to build a casino in Broken Arrow for the Kialegee Tribal Town — a casino that would compete with the Creek’s own casino.

Tiger has brushed off the conflict of interest charges, claiming his arrangement with developer Shane Rolls was in place before he became a member of the Muscogee National Council.

Petition organizers are even circulating the petition among Tribal members in California and Washington, D.C. Organizers have 60 days to collect the signatures before the Tribe’s National Council can consider impeachment proceedings against the Chief.

“The Office of Principal Chief carries with it a high standard of conduct, ethics and transparency. During your term in office, these valued characteristics have not been demonstrated,” the letter to Tiger states. “The National Council respectfully requests that you resign your position as Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.”

He failed to disclose the contract to the Tribal Council despite vetoing a resolution that opposed the casino. Tiger later publicly opposed the casino, after a storm of public protest.

The Kialegee Tribal Town, based in Wetumka, was part of the original Creek Nation confederacy along with several other tribal settlements in Oklahoma. Today, the Kialegees are members of a separate Tribe with about 400 members. The Creek Nation has about 79,000 enrolled members nationwide.

—Source: TulsaWorld.com

Judge sides with Arapahos in bald eagle dispute

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — U.S. District Judge Alan B. Johnson has ruled the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) violated the Northern Arapaho’s religious rights when the agency improperly denied a permit for the Tribe to kill bald eagles on its central Wyoming reservation.

Johnson’s ruling, coming in a case the Northern Arapaho filed in 2011, is the latest round in a contentious dispute with the federal government over the Tribe’s need to kill eagles for its annual Sun Dance.

Johnson ruled FWS was wrong to limit the Arapaho permit to two eagles taken a year only outside the boundaries of the Wind River Indian Reservation, which

the Tribe shares with the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. The Eastern Shoshone Tribe has its own religious grounds for opposing the killing of eagles.

In his ruling, Johnson stated that the issue of the federal government burdening one American Indian Tribe’s exercise of its religious rights to benefit another Tribe has never come up before in federal law, deciding that the First Amendment prohibits it.

The Northern Arapaho sued the federal agency in 2011 to get the bald eagle permit following the federal prosecution of Winslow Friday, a young Tribal member who shot a bald eagle on the Wind River Indian Reservation in 2005 for the Sun Dance. Friday ultimately pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a fine in tribal court.

Former U.S. District Judge William Downes originally dismissed the federal charges against Friday, ruling that it would have been pointless for him to apply for a permit to take an eagle on the reservation because FWS wouldn’t have given it to him anyway.

“Although the government professes respect and accommodation of the religious practices of Native Americans, its own actions show callous indifference to such practices,” Downes wrote in 2006.

The bald eagle was removed from the federal list of threatened species in 2007, following its reclassification in 1995 from endangered to threatened. However, the species has remained protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. FWS maintains a stock of carcasses of eagles and other protected birds — many of them killed by wind turbines and power lines — at a Colorado repository, releasing feathers or other bird parts to members of federally recognized Tribes who apply for them.

Northern Arapaho Tribal members, however, have said it’s unacceptable to them to use an eagle carcass from the federal repository for their Sun Dance.

In an appearance at an appeals court hearing in Denver in late 2007, Northern Arapaho Tribal member Nelson P. White Sr. — then a member of the Northern Arapaho Business Council — said that birds American Indians receive from the federal depository were rotten, or otherwise unfit for use in religious ceremonies.

“That’s unacceptable,” White said after the court hearing. “How would a non-Indian feel if they had to get their Bible from a repository?”

—Source: Washington Times

Tobacco campaign tells kids ‘keep it sacred’

FORT WASHAKIE, Wyo. — Campaigns to keep students from smoking that target Native American kids often go beyond the simple slogans like “Be Smart, Don’t Start.” On Wyoming’s Wind River Indian Reservation, for example, the catchphrases are more like “Keep It Sacred,” and “Traditional Use, Not Commercial Abuse.”

Tobacco use is an indispensable part of numerous Native traditions, but with sky-high smoking rates on reservations, Wyoming Public Radio’s Aaron Schrank said the need to limit nontraditional tobacco use is greater than ever. For example, 45 percent of Native American Wyomingites use tobacco compared to 18 percent of all Americans, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

Growing up on the Wind River Indian Reservation, Reinette Tendore started smoking cigarettes when she was 13.

“It was because I was surrounded by it. My family smoked, and all of my peers did,” she told WyomingPublicMedia.org.

Native Americans smoke at higher rates than any racial or ethnic group in the country.

Tendore quit for good after 10 years and when she had a son, she taught him the dangers of smoking. “My mom said it was bad, so I listened, and never did it,” said Hudra Herrera, Tendore’s 14-year-old son who has stayed smoke-free with her help.

But, a few years ago, when Tendore lit up in front of Hudra and his cousins as part of a traditional ceremony, Tendore said the kids were a little confused.

“They looked at me like, ‘Auntie, why are you doing that?’ she said. “And my son even said, ‘Mom, can you do that?’ So I used that as a teaching moment. Like, this is where we’re going to learn.”

Tendore said she taught the important difference between puffing on commercial cigarettes for pleasure, which is harmful and addictive, and using the tobacco plant in ceremonies that offer prayers to the Creator.

Stanford Devinney teaches the Shoshone language to students at Wyoming Indian Elementary School and Wyoming Indian High School. The 55-year-old is also an Eastern Shoshone Sun Dance leader and an authority on traditional tobacco use.

“When they’re saying their prayers, the smoke of the tobacco is lifted to the heavens and the prayer is with that smoke. So we don’t actually inhale the smoke. We send it up to the heavens — to Tam Apo — so that he can hear the prayers of the smoke,” Devinney said.

Tobacco is a sacred gift given to Native Americans by the Creator long ago, Devinney said. Along with herbs like sage and sweetgrass, it’s used in a variety of ceremonies and prayer rituals. But over the years, commercial tobacco has snuck into ceremonies.

“A lot of the Native Americans here, they like to say, ‘Well, it is my tradition or it is my heritage to use tobacco,’” Devinney said. “I’m having to find that real fine line between ‘are they really using it traditionally?’ or ‘are they addicted?’ You know there’s a lot of denial in addiction, and we’re no different.”

—Source: WyomingPublicMedia.org

Three Cherokee Tribes present joint history in D.C.

WASHINGTON — All three Cherokee Tribes are partnering to educate the public about their combined history via live cultural art and interactive events for children at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

The Cherokee Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians will host “Cherokee Days” April 10-12. The three Tribes will share Cherokee stories regarding events such as the Trail of Tears and the successes of the modern Cherokee Tribes.

The three-day fest will include an exhibit showcasing historical milestones, live cultural art demonstrations, cultural performances and a make-and-take experience that allows children to create traditional Cherokee items.

—Source: The Gazette

Indian Country Online Congress scheduled for June 10-11

PALA, Calif. — Changes in consumers’ online gaming activity and the prospects for legalized Internet gambling will headline the conference agenda for the third annual Indian Country Online Congress, scheduled for June 10-11 at the Pala Casino Spa Resort.

The conference, jointly produced by Pechanga.net and Spectrum Gaming Group, will bring together tribal gaming operators, suppliers, regulators, attorneys, analysts and gaming experts from around the world to witness six expert panels, all focused on opportunities for Indian Country:

•iPlayer: Who is the customer for casino, social and fantasy games on the Internet, and how valuable will they be to your tribal property?

•iMobile: What trends are occurring in the way people access online wagering content, and how can tribal casinos integrate mobile into their gaming mix?

•iSkill/iSocial: How should skill and social games become an important part of the online engagement strategy?

•iFantasy: Do fantasy sports make sense for casinos, and what implications does this new online wagering industry have for Indian Country?

•iStrategy: How can Indian Country utilize the Internet for more than just gaming and to ideate a multi-channel engagement strategy?

•iPolitics: iGaming has generated much interest on both sides of the issue. What are the political realities and potential opportunities today?

Early bird registration rates are available through May 15. The full agenda and conference details are available at www.IndianCountryOnline.com.

—Source: Yahoo Finance

Federal recognition advances for six Virginia Tribes

WASHINGTON — The Senate Indian Affairs Committee has cleared a bill, introduced in February by Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, that would grant federal recognition to six Virginia Tribes.

The Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2015 recognizes the Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Upper Mattaponi, Rappahannock, Monacan and Nansemond Tribes of Virginia, which have been seeking recognition since the 1990s. The six Tribes have a combined membership of 3,000 members.

With its passage out of committee, the bill will now be considered by the full Senate. Rep. Rob Wittman has already introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives, which has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources.

Recognition would make the Tribes eligible for certain federal programs, including housing and health care but would not allow them to operate casinos. In a joint news release with Sen. Warner, Sen. Kaine said the committee approval takes the legislation “one step closer to rectifying this grave injustice.”

“We won’t give up until the Tribes receive the recognition they deserve and have fought so hard to achieve,” Kaine told Fredricksburg.com.

Virginia recognizes 11 Tribes, none of which are federally recognized. According to the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, the federal government

recognizes 566 tribal or Native entities in the United States.

“This is an issue I have cared about deeply since serving as Virginia governor,” Sen. Warner said, “and I will keep working with Sen. Kaine and our House colleagues to get this bill passed and ensure that Virginia’s Tribes finally get the federal recognition they deserve.”

—Source: Fredricksburg.com

Colorado Tribe among top bidders for Gulf drilling lease sale

IGNACIO, Colo. — Red Willow Offshore, the Colorado gas and oil operator from the Southern Ute Indian Tribe’s Red Willow Production Co., was the second highest bidder (behind Chevron) for the March Gulf drilling lease sale with \$59 million in high bids on eight lease tracts.

Originally formed to operate the Utes’ Colorado resources, the company has since expanded to operate wells in New Mexico, Texas and Louisiana, as well as the deepwater Gulf of Mexico.

The federal government opened 41.2 million acres in the central Gulf of Mexico to oil and gas exploration in mid-March. The sale, the seventh under the Obama administration’s 2012-2017 leasing plan, drew 195 bids from 42 companies. High bids totaled more than \$538.7 million.

The government must review the bids to ensure fair pricing before officially selling the leases.

A decline in participation compared with previous sales is attributed to low oil prices, which have slid from more than \$100 per barrel last summer to as low as \$42. The March 2014 sale drew \$872.1 million in high bids.

Red Willow submitted bids with several partners, including Houston Energy, an independent exploration and production company. The two companies bid \$52.2 million on a single lease in the Walker Ridge region of the deepwater Gulf of Mexico, the single highest bid submitted during the sale.

—Sources: BayouBuzz.com, NOLA.com

Native Yankees player stars in Nike N7 ‘Dragonfly’ preview

BEAVERTON, Ore. — The Nike N7 program featured Native American baseball player Jacoby Ellsbury (Navajo), of the New York Yankees, in preview pictures March 18 for its “Dragonfly Collection.”

The Nike N7 program initially began with the idea of selling and targeting Native Americans with a special brand of shoes to promote healthier lifestyles with a goal of inspiring and enabling 2 million Native American and aboriginal youth in North America to participate in sports and physical activity. The N7 philosophy embraces the Native philosophy: “In every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”

The 2015 line features a detailed pattern of the dragonfly wing on the running and training apparel and footwear. Ellsbury, a Yankees outfielder and the first major leaguer of Navajo descent, was just 8 years old when his mom told him about the dragonfly.

“If you catch a dragonfly without killing it and rub it on the bottom of your feet, it will make you faster,” Ellsbury told NativeNewsOnline.net.

—Source: NativeNewsOnline.net

Puyallup Tribe plans first tribal-owned cancer center

PUGET SOUND, Wash. — The Salish Integrative Oncology Care Center (SIOCC), the Puyallup Tribe’s new 8,200-square-foot cancer center, is planned to open in early spring. The center is believed to be the first of its kind in Indian Country, providing care that integrates traditional healing with modern science.

For the Native community in and around the Puyallup Indian Reservation, the center means access to affordable care that is also culturally sensitive.

“As the indigenous keepers of the Puyallup Tribe Indian Reservation, we have a strong ancestral bond with nature and creation. We believe that natural healing through traditional roots, berries, herbs and traditional healing can blend with modern oncology practices,” said Puyallup Tribal Chairman Bill Sterud.

SIOCC will have 23 infusion chairs and providers who have been recruited from the Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center and from private acupuncture and allopathic practices.

“Most of our allopathic community doesn’t believe in how we practice medicine with complementary care,” said Kim M. Sunner, SIOCC practice administrator. “However, the Puyallup Tribe, who has operated the Puyallup Tribal Health Authority since the early 1970s, wants to build upon the established proven success record that mixes traditional and natural healing.”

—Source: StateOfReform.com

Compiled by Special Projects Reporter Peter B. Gallagher.

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Education



Mercedes Osceola: Beauty school graduate

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

DAVIE — Mercedes Osceola didn't wear a cap and gown at her graduation March 4. Instead, she and 13 other cosmetology graduates of the Aveda Institute South Florida donned beautifully coiffed hairstyles as they proudly received their diplomas.

Graduation wasn't an easy achievement for Osceola, 28, who has five young children. During the 13-month program she often logged 50 hours a week at school. But even with her demanding schedule, when the children were sick and needed to see a doctor, she took them regardless of her cosmetology obligations.

"There were times I didn't think I could do it," Osceola said. "The best thing about graduation was seeing my kids there. They missed me, but it was worth it in the end to see how proud they were."

All five children — Draven Osceola-Hahn, 8; Presleigh Osceola-Hahn, 7; Daveny Osceola-Hahn, 5; Dahlia Sanders, 4; and Vesper Sanders, 1 — sat quietly as their mother marked a milestone in her life.

♦ See MERCEDES on page 5B



Beverly Bidney

New graduate Mercedes Osceola shows off her diploma in cosmetology science March 4 from Aveda Institute South Florida.

Wanted: Advanced Career Development participants

STAFF REPORT

Staff of the Education Department's Advanced Career Development (ACD) program is searching for the Tribe's future leaders.

ACD aims to prepare Tribal members to take over daily operations of the Tribe. Participants in the 24-month, paid program will be placed in various departments for on-the-job training from top managers and executives. The program will help participants learn skills and behaviors to help them succeed academically and professionally.

Participants must be at least 18 years old and enrolled members of the Seminole Tribe, must have earned have an associate degree or higher, and must pass a background check.

The Education Department promotes the program through Tribal events, email blasts and newsletters. They have also reached out to college graduates from 2009-2014 and plan to contact current college students.

For more information or to enroll in the program, call Luis Yeguez at 239-867-5303 or Marley Amaro at 954-989-6840.

Ahfachkee artists paint like pros for Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum show

'Kaleidoscope: Ahfachkee School K-12 Art Exhibit' on display through May 15

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Warm pastels and brilliant paintings make up a three-tiered, 27-piece art wall at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Each evokes works by world-renowned art masters but all are original pieces produced by the hands of Ahfachkee School students.

"They are inspired by famous artists — each work represents a different art lesson," said the school's seven-year art teacher Ivette Lopez.

There's Henri Matisse in the textured cutouts of a Precious Jimmie collage; Wassily Kandinsky in Sarah Robbins' bold abstract repetitive circles; and Paul Klee in Sontino Billie's cubist and surreal high rise at dusk.

The children's own experiences are evident in the use of Seminole colors and glimpses of what their eyes see every day: Emma DiCarlo's chickee nightscape collage; Diamond Osceola's jewel-like turtle on crumpled paper; and Tatiana Herrera's purple patchwork that anchors a monochromatic abstract.

"The students have the Seminole connection of color or patchwork to connect culture with every lesson ... there is always the chance to see in their art what they see daily on the reservation," Lopez said.

Sontino said he was inspired by what he sees off the reservation and by his daydreams about the future.

"I was thinking that I was a famous artist and an office worker and that I could build things like my own house and my own business," Sontino said. "The violets, yellows, whites and blues come from what I see in cities like Hollywood."

Nearly a dozen 3-D clay sculptures, enclosed in glass display cases, flank the art wall to complete the show.

Rebecca Fell, curator of exhibits at the Museum, said Lopez was asked several months ago to compile student artworks for the Mosaic Community Gallery, a space that features Tribal artists. Exhibits coordinator Siobhan Millar organized the show dubbed "Kaleidoscope: Ahfachkee School K-12 Art Exhibit."



Eileen Soler

Precious Jimmie strolls through the 'Kaleidoscope: Ahfachkee School K-12 Art Exhibit' at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Mosaic Community Gallery during a reception March 12 for student artists.

"The show has all the moving parts of a full-size museum gallery exhibit, just on a smaller scale. It's a great way to showcase as many kids as possible, a broad range of styles and a great kaleidoscope of color," Fell said. The show runs through May 15.

Ned Crouch, a snowbird resident of the Big Cypress RV Resort and a Museum member, said he was sold on the show since it opened March 9. He placed an offer to

purchase a watercolor and pastel by first-grader Lavin Billie.

"I own the smallest trailer in the world that needs a little color," Crouch said. He also said he knows real art when he sees it. Crouch, a retired businessman and author, said he learned a few things from his wife of nearly 50 years, Elizabeth Crouch, a former registrar for art at the White House.

Though Lavin, a first-grader, declined

to sell his "Valley With Mountains" piece, Crouch said his wife would have loved the purchase.

"I like Lavin's impressionistic goulash of the sky. It's a nice counterbalance to good, solid and strong mountains," Crouch said. "My wife would have been mightily pleased."

♦ See more ART photos on page 2B

Battlefield education teaches hard-fought lesson

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

OKEECHOBEE — For Winnie Gopher and other Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students, the chance to spotlight Seminole culture during Education Day at the annual Battle of Okeechobee reenactment is a matter of pride.

"It's important to show other kids what we do every day and what our ancestors did in the past," Winnie said.

On a tiny portion of Okeechobee

Battlefield Historic State Park, the Feb. 26 event kicked off this year's four-day commemoration of the Dec. 25, 1837 clash between Native Americans and the United States Army.

The second bloodiest battle of the Second Seminole War marked a turning point in the fight for freedom. There, at the northeastern tip of Lake Okeechobee, 1,000 soldiers and a few hundred Native Americans fought the last of large-scale battles.

About 300 children from 10 local

elementary schools attended the kids-only day hosted by Okeechobee Battlefield Friends, the park's civilian support organization.

All were treated to glimpses of the past via vendor and education stations that included a sweet shop filled with old-fashioned candy and beverages; a notions tent where beads, buttons, fabric and leather goods were sold; and several tables where Seminole Tribe members cooked pumpkin frybread, whittled knives and fashioned beaded jewelry and sweetgrass baskets.



Eileen Soler

School children file past Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students Winnie Gopher and Alaina Brady as the girls fashion Seminole artwork, including beaded jewelry and sweetgrass baskets. The demonstration by PECS' young crafters was provided during Education Day, Feb. 26, at the Battle of Okeechobee reenactment.

"It's important to show other kids what we do every day and what our ancestors did in the past."

— Winnie Gopher, PECS student

Brighton Reservation's cultural events specialist Lewis Gopher said most of the children who attend the annual event usually think it's a cool field trip — at first.

"They all come to attention and get the bigger picture when the cannon starts to fire," Gopher said.

The blast of a cannon, though not likely used at the Battle of Okeechobee according to historians, is typically engaged during war reenactments.

PECS history teacher Jade Braswell Osceola said Seminole War education is built into the school curriculum. By the time fourth-graders participate at the Okeechobee battle event they have been equipped with lessons learned in the classroom.

"What's great about coming to the battlefield is being able to see the curriculum come to life. This is where everything they learn is tied together," Osceola said. "It's walking through living history."

♦ See BATTLEFIELD on page 2B

BATTLEFIELD

From page 1B

The relevance of PECS children showing kids from other schools how they bead, carve wood, cook frybread and twist sweetgrass into baskets is apparent to other teachers and to Native American children who attend different schools.

"When you look at the battlefield and then look at the children, you know what happened next. The Seminole Tribe is still alive," said teacher Eileen Nichols, of South Elementary School in Okeechobee.

Gary A. Poe, a history buff with the 8th Florida Company C reenactors, who goes by the stage name "Stumpy," said no one won the battle on Christmas Day 178 years ago.

Historical accounts indicate that 26 soldiers were killed and 112 injured, but no counts were taken of slain Native Americans. However, Native casualties were estimated to be similar.

"It was never a win or a loss. It was just a terrible battle," Poe said.

For South Elementary fourth-grader Mya Billie, Education Day was a welcome experience. The only Seminole in her class, Mya said the field trip gave her friends a chance to discover what she learns from daily life through her parents and Tribal elders.

Nichols said Mya helped prepare classmates by sharing some of her Seminole culture. She told them about how her family uses corn to make sofkee and she explained a bit about the history of patchwork clothing.

"I just hope that today helps them better understand what happened to us. It's a lot more than what you read about in books," Mya said.



Eileen Soler

Braison Crews, left, and PECS student Ramone Baker check out Native American-inspired jewelry Feb. 26 during Education Day at the Battle of Okeechobee reenactment.



Eileen Soler

Children from 10 elementary schools packed the bleachers at Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park to view a reenactment of the Dec. 25, 1837 clash between Native Americans and the U.S. Army. Here, students cheer for Seminole warriors who took down Army troops during a reenactment.

More ART photos from page 1B



Eileen Soler

Ahfachkee School student Lauren Doctor shows off her artwork at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. The show, titled 'Kaleidoscope: Ahfachkee School K-12 Art Exhibit,' is on display through May 15.



Eileen Soler

First-grade artist Lavin Billie poses next to his 'Valley With Mountains' pastel and watercolor artwork at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum for Ned Crouch, a snowbird resident of the Big Cypress RV Resort and a Museum member.



Eileen Soler

PECS eighth-grader Conner Thomas carves a knife from cypress wood for Education Day at the Battle of Okeechobee reenactment.



Eileen Soler

PECS student Jagger Gaucin creates a sweetgrass basket during Education Day at the Battle of Okeechobee reenactment.

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Students glimpse future based on current GPA

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Reality came to Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School recently in the guise of a middle school activity about finances.

Hosted by Indian River State College (IRSC), the March 13 Reality Fair offered students insight to what their lives could be like in the professional world based only on current academic achievements.

"The whole purpose is to hammer home how doing well in school has a direct effect on your future," PECS principal Brian Greseth said. "It also gives them a perspective on the real life situations their parents have to deal with."

Students received a list of potential careers predetermined by their grade point averages and the monthly salaries they would likely earn. Once they chose a career, students took their budgets to nine stations representing expenses for housing, insurance, child care, furniture,

transportation, groceries, personal luxuries, banking and "chance."

At the "chance" station, which demonstrated how life throws unexpected curve balls, students saw a windfall like an inheritance or tax refund, or had to deal with an unexpected expense like a speeding ticket or wisdom teeth surgery. The exercise taught students to live within their means.

"It's like the game of Life, but a hands-on version," IRSC Provost Russ Brown said. "Careers ranged from laborers to doctors. They have to make the numbers work. At the end, we hope they realize their GPA is important and that academic achievement will open more doors of opportunity for them as they get older."

Eighth-grader Vivianna Gore-Martinez said she learned the message loud and clear.

"I need to raise my grades up if I want to make more money in the future," said the 15 year old. "I'm concerned about it now; it's something I know I have to do. This whole thing is a reality check of what life is going to be like."

Vivianna's 3.0 GPA earned her a "job" as a paralegal with a gross monthly salary of \$4,264. She said she wants to be a sound engineer in a music studio and intends to work hard to follow her dream.

Seventh-grader Justina Martinez, 13, wasn't too pleased with what the numbers showed her. Her 2.8 GPA qualified her to be a painter with a gross monthly salary of \$3,273.

"My life is going to suck," she said. "I have to pay attention more in school and try to focus on tasks."

Some students were pleased with what the future could hold.

"I could live on this salary," said Dante Thomas, 13. His 2.71 GPA qualified him to be a computer programmer and gross \$6,744 monthly. "But it's really hard to be an adult; it takes a lot of responsibility and hard work."

Aidan Tommie, 13, got a hefty tax refund at the "chance" station and decided to put it into savings. With his 3.14 GPA, he chose to be a boat captain with a monthly

gross income of \$5,960.

"I know a lot about bills and stuff," he said. "I watch my dad do them, and I pick things up real quick; to me it isn't hard."

IRSC received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to focus on career awareness for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

related fields for middle and high school students. Brown presented the program to Okeechobee Middle School last year and customized it for PECS.

"It was an eye-opener to them about the value of a dollar," Brown said. "They have idealistic lifestyles and realize they may not easily fulfill their desires."



Beverly Bidney

From left, Aleina Micco, Cady Osceola and Tyler Howard listen to teacher aide Diana Greenbaum at a station where students must choose housing based on their salaries during the Indian River State College Reality Fair at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School on March 13.



Beverly Bidney

Alex Armstrong checks out furniture options during the Indian River State College Reality Fair at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School.

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Charter School February students of the month



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School elementary students of the month: Rozin Fish, Serenity Billie, Hannah Platt, Elizabeth Baker, Ayana Fonseca, Deanthony Torres, Kalissa Huff, Maylon Foster, Naleah Billie, Chayton Billie, Jahdee Arnold, Eric Puentes, Tatiana Torres, Karlyne Urbina, Terald Garner, Jahcole Arnold, Alice Osceola, Tammy Martinez and Stanley Rodrigues.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Middle school students of the month: Tanner Shore, Kamani Smith and Kano Puentes.

Fort Pierce S.W.A.M.P. hosts first family Valentine's dance

SUBMITTED BY VALERIE MARONE
Family Services Department

FORT PIERCE — Family Services' S.W.A.M.P. program, or Seminoles Without Addictions Make Progress, and the Recreation Department partnered Feb. 13 to host the first Family Valentine's Day Dance in Fort Pierce.

The family-oriented dance provided a fun, drug-free alternative that parents could share with their children. The gym at the Chupco's Landing Community Center was transformed with red, pink and white posters with drug-free Valentine's Day messages.

The Council Office provided a candy station while the Ranch provided a cupcake table.

A chocolate fountain, dinner buffet, DJ and photo booth completed the ambiance.

Valentine's royalty was also named: queen and king of hearts were Farrisha Berthier and Fletcher Sanders II; and the princess and prince were Anaysse Stockton and Jimmy Fanning. The winners of the dance off were Antillis Stockton II in the adult category and Mahayanna Stockton for the youth.



Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone

Prince Jimmy Fanning smiles big for the camera during Fort Pierce's Family Valentine's Day Dance.

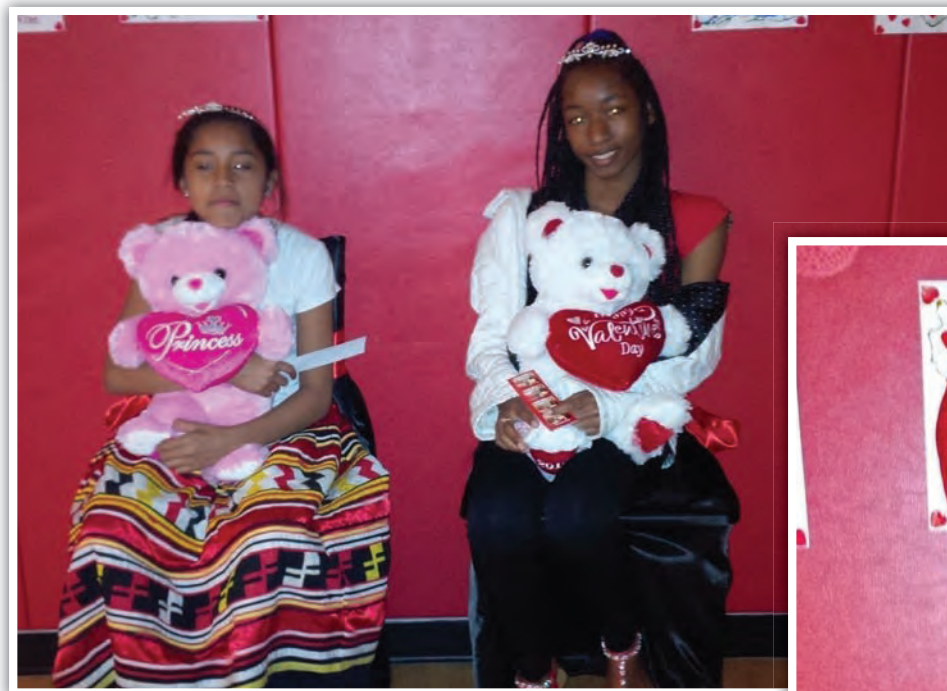


Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone

Anaysse Stockton and Farrisha Berthier are named princess and queen, respectively, during the first Family Valentine's Day Dance Feb. 13 in Fort Pierce.



Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone

Fletcher Sanders II is crowned king of the Fort Pierce Family Valentine's Day Dance.



Photo courtesy of Valerie Marone

Antillis Stockton II poses with his prize after winning the adult dance off contest during the first Family Valentine's Day Dance in Fort Pierce.

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Stars shine bright for Ahfachkee students

Kids visit Buehler Planetarium & Observatory

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

DAVIE — It's not every day that a school field trip goes to the moon, Mars and beyond, but a voyage to Buehler Planetarium & Observatory in Davie provided a galactic experience for five Ahfachkee School fifth-graders.

Inside the planetarium that seats up to 100, the small contingent had plenty of space to learn about space during a private presentation on the campus of Broward College. Along with teacher Alicia Murray, the students plunged into darkness Feb. 26 as they spent an hour gazing upward at two presentations on a domed ceiling.

"Infinity Express," a 23-minute film made for the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, provided images and history about the solar system and galaxies. From Mars' massive canyon region known as Valles Marineris to the liquid ice in Jupiter's Europa moon to photos of a supernova captured by the Hubble Space Telescope, the film served up a celestial buffet for eyes to feast upon.

"It was great. I learned a lot of stuff. I didn't know there was that much stars and galaxies," said student Edie Robbins.

Inquiries into the beginning of the world, existence of other life forms and the end of the universe were posed by the film. For the students, the end — of their visit — came when Buehler technician Travis Wright concluded his presentation by providing guidance and tips for locating planets and stars in the nighttime sky.

"I liked it a lot. I liked learning about the different kind of galaxies and the 'Infinity Express,'" said student Ramona Jimmie.

All the students said they would like to return to the planetarium for additional programs. The planetarium and its next-door neighbor observatory offer presentations, lectures and shows that are open to the public. For more information, visit www.ILovePlanets.com.



Kevin Johnson

Ahfachkee School students have fun with a model of the moon Feb. 26 during their visit to Buehler Planetarium & Observatory at Broward College in Davie. The students are, from left, Lauren Doctor, Ramona Jimmie, Edie Robbins, Marina Garcia and Sontino Billie.



Kevin Johnson

Ahfachkee School students watch a film inside Buehler Planetarium & Observatory in Davie.

"If you want it enough, you can achieve anything. Nothing is going to be easy and it will always be a struggle, but if you want it you can make it happen."

—Mercedes Osceola

the graduation ceremony with fellow supporters Thomasine Motlow and Joni Josh.

Osceola is proud of her accomplishment and hard work.

"If you want it enough, you can achieve anything," she said. "Nothing is going to be easy and it will always be a struggle, but if you want it you can make it happen."



Beverly Bidney

Mercedes Osceola, second from left, sits with her graduating class at the Aveda Institute South Florida on March 4.

◆ MERCEDES From page 1B

"I'm just so happy for her. It's the happiest day of my life," Draven said.

Growing up, Osceola said she always loved styling hair and experimented on her sister.

"Now that I'm a cosmetologist, you can see how you can help someone's confidence just by doing their hair," she said.

Osceola said she chose Aveda because of its reputation. According to the school's website, the cosmetology program incorporates theory with hands-on experience to provide students with an understanding of beauty, wellness, business development and client retention.

"Aveda is a prestigious place," she said. "When people hear you went there, they want to hire you. They taught us a lot of skills that are great for the workplace and gave us a really good foundation."

Osceola credits her classmates for helping her balance school and family responsibilities. She said they didn't let her quit, and they empowered one another by acting as each other's support system.

Inspiration came from Osceola's hair stylist at the salon at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood's Rock Spa who motivated her to pursue her dream and attend cosmetology school. Osceola hopes to ultimately own a salon, but first she will "earn her chair" at someone else's place.

"She found something she liked and pursued it. I'm really happy she is here today graduating," said Osceola's friend Deidra Tigertail, who attended

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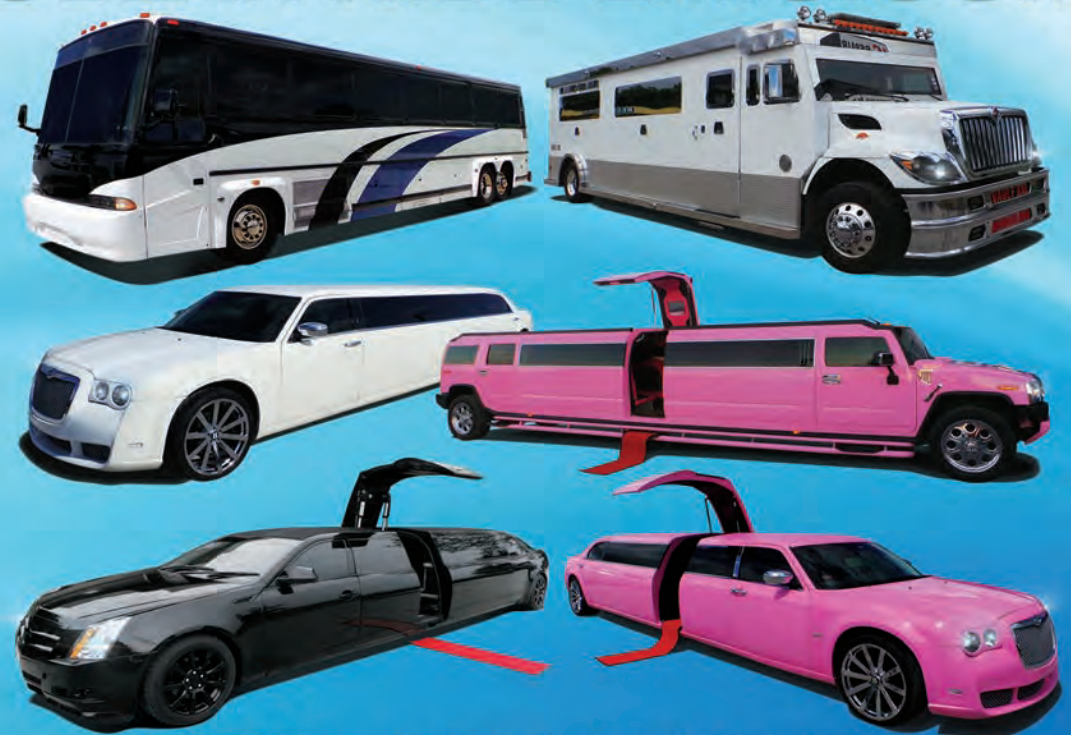
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Sports



Eileen Soler

T-ball players have a field day of fun even before season opening games Feb. 26 at Billie Johns Sr. Ball Field on the Big Cypress Reservation.

Remodeled ball field a hit in Big Cypress

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — There was likely no better way to debut the newly remodeled and expanded Billie Johns Sr. Ball Field on Big Cypress than with an inaugural game that guaranteed just about everyone hit, ran and scored.

The Feb. 26 contest started 45 minutes late and lasted two innings. It was heralded a success as both teams left the field squealing victory.

T-ball always ends happily, according to the Big Cypress Recreation Department employees who serve as coaches.

"The main thing to let happen for all the kids: Let each hitter make it to first base," said head coach and Big Cypress Recreation coordinator Kelvin Robinson.

Parents, grandparents, siblings and friends filled new bleachers flanked by roomy and roofed dugouts. Fresh orange clay glowed from home plate, past the infield and way back to the warning track. Ball park aromas, thanks to roller-fried hot

dogs and other concession fare, wafted through the air.

On the field, rice-white chalk lines that defined the diamond and batter's box awaited pint-sized players dressed in bobblehead helmets and sparkling new Braves and Marlins uniforms.

But the perfectly coifed field, one of two diamonds at the park that had been under reconstruction since 2013, lasted only minutes.

Before the ump called "play ball," the kids took the field by storm. Some ran the bases in no particular order. Some cupped handfuls of chalk and tossed it in the air. Some took apart the T-ball stand, put it back together like a stickman, then took it apart again.

"I'm too tired to play anymore," said Teena-Maree Covarrubias in the midst of the playful melee.

But as soon as the first ball was whacked, teams shifted into the T-ball groove as spectators cheered all the hits and runs.

♦ See more T-BALL photos on page 7C

Cara Osceola concludes high school season with state championship game

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

OKLAHOMA CITY — Cara Osceola's high school basketball career ended nearly the same way it started.

Three years after winning a state championship as a freshman, Cara came up just shy of capturing another state title, as her Anadarko High School girls team fell to Locust Grove, 51-33, in Oklahoma's Class 4A final March 14 at State Fair Arena in Oklahoma City.

It was the third state championship game in the past four years for Anadarko. For the second consecutive year, Anadarko earned runner-up honors. This year didn't feature the late heart-breaking drama of last year's championship game, so the outcome was easier for Cara to digest.

"I was over it because we didn't play

as good as we should have," she said. "Last year we lost on a last-second shot. This year we were down the whole game."

The teams were tied 11-11 after the first quarter before Locust Grove seized control with an 11-4 spurt in the second quarter.

Cara scored four points, snagged a team-high three steals and grabbed five rebounds. Controlling the boards — especially on defense — is one of her strengths.

"That's doing my job. That's my specialty," she said.

Cara, a second-year starting forward, said the team figured it had a good shot to win it all this season because it was basically the same unit — including six seniors — that reached last year's final.

"We all grew up together," Cara said about her teammates from the class of 2015.

Anadarko, which went 27-3 this season, won more than 100 games during Cara's four years on the team.

As she transitioned to her spring slowpitch softball season at Anadarko, Cara had already accumulated plenty of honors in her senior year. She was named homecoming queen, selected to play in a state fastpitch softball all-star game and earned most valuable player in the Midfirst Warrior Classic basketball tournament.

After graduation, Cara said she will likely attend Cameron University in Lawton, 40 miles south of Anadarko. The daughter of Tara Tartsah and Curtis Osceola Sr. plans to study nursing.

Cara wasn't the only Osceola in her household to reach the state tournament this year. Anadarko's boys basketball team, which features her brother Curtis Osceola Jr., won its district, area and region before being eliminated by McLain in

♦ See CARA on page 7C

Record-setting college career finishes for DeForest Carter

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The avalanche of individual accolades didn't sway the perspective of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University senior DeForest Carter. His proudest accomplishment from the 2014-15 season came not from an award but rather his team's 35-2 record.

"We had the best record ever in Embry-Riddle history," he said. "Only lost two times this year; wish we could have kept it at one."

It was the second loss that stung, a 91-81 setback to Cornerstone College, of Michigan, in the NAIA semifinals March 16 at College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri.

"It was a tough one," Carter said. "They were great shooters and ended up winning the national championship, so it was that type of caliber game that we played, and it was every night we played like that and just one team got us in the end."

Carter's 11 assists and seven steals were game-highs, and he scored 13 points as his four-year career in an Embry-Riddle uniform — which won't be forgotten anytime soon — concluded.

The kid who began playing basketball barefoot on a Big Cypress dirt road next to his grandmother Mary Tigertail's house firmly carved his name into the record books at Embry-Riddle.

"He's going to go down as maybe our greatest all-around player of all-time," said Embry-Riddle coach Steve Ridder.

"All the basketball camps I took him to paid off," said Carter's mother, Myra Jumper, who proudly watched her son at the NABC-NAIA All-Star Game March 21 in Kansas City.

Robert Hill, Carter's stepfather, admitted he was surprised that Carter generated such a successful collegiate career.

"But I knew how hard he worked. He did better in college than he did in high school," Hill said.

Carter, a 6-foot-2 converted point guard who was recruited as a small forward out of Montverde Academy near Orlando, finished his career as Embry-Riddle's all-time leader in assists and steals.

His career numbers and all-time ranking at Embry-Riddle are: 836 assists (1st); 380 steals (1st); 176 blocks (2nd); 494

"He's going to go down as maybe our greatest all-around player of all-time."

—Steve Ridder,
Embry-Riddle coach



Photo courtesy of Brian Beard-CIP

Embry-Riddle senior point guard DeForest Carter soars to the basket during the second round of the NAIA Division II tournament March 13 in Point Lookout, Missouri.

free throws (3rd); 135 games played (4th); 1,786 points (5th); 710 rebounds (6th); and 589 field goals (9th).

In addition to the career marks, this year Carter set single-season team records with 262 assists and 149 steals. He led all NAIA Division II players in total steals and steals per game and finished second in total assists and assists per game. He also contributed 484 points, 161 rebounds and 41 blocks.

Those numbers helped Carter receive a bevy of honors, including NAIA First Team All-American and Sun Conference Player of the Year. Also, he was selected to play in the NAIA's All-Star Game and made Sun Conference First Team All-Conference and All-Defensive Team.

Although Embry-Riddle came up two wins shy of a national title, the Eagles departed their final NAIA season as Sun Conference champions. Carter scored 19

points, made a game-high seven steals and had two blocks to help rally Embry-Riddle past Southeastern University, 90-86, in overtime in the conference championship game March 3 in Daytona Beach.

"To win a conference championship in our home gym was simply amazing," said Carter, who also had six assists and five rebounds. "We didn't lose a single game at home this year and it's my senior year. There are just so many factors that go into how special that game and win was for us."

Embry-Riddle trailed by 14 points with 10 minutes left in the second half before mounting a comeback.

"The rally started on defense for us that's what we pride ourselves on as a team. We got stops and scored on those stops," Carter said.

In the final five minutes of the half,

♦ See DEFOREST on page 7C



Photo courtesy of Brian Beard-CIP

Embry-Riddle's DeForest Carter dribbles past Union College's Deante Johnson during the second round of the NAIA Division II tournament March 13 in Point Lookout, Missouri. Carter scored 20 points in Embry-Riddle's 89-75 victory.



Photo courtesy of Terence Young

Anadarko High School senior Cara Osceola eyes the hoop during a game in the 2014-15 season.



Daniel Osceola places a bass into a basket to be weighed by Hollywood Recreation site manager Joe Collins during the Bass Busters Fishing Tournament March 7 in Big Cypress. Other participants included Huston Osceola, right.

Kevin Johnson

Dash for bass

Triple Crown Fishing Series kicks off in Big Cypress amid rough weather

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BIG CYPRESS — Inclement weather might have altered the appetites of fish, but it didn't prevent nearly two dozen anglers from casting on the canals of Big Cypress March 7 as the Seminole Sportsman's Triple Crown 2015 Fishing Series kicked off.

Hollywood Recreation site manager Joe Collins, who oversees the three-tournament series with Moses Jumper Jr., estimated that wind gusts of 25 mph greeted fishermen following the 7 a.m. start of the Bass Busters Fishing Tournament.

"Then it was cold and then it rained. It was hard to turn over them fish, but we got it done," said Jumper, who placed third in the tournament with his son, Naha. The Jumpers returned with 10.99 pounds of bass.

The heaviest collection belonged to Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank and Frank Marrero. They teamed up to win first place with 18.99 pounds of bass, including the day's biggest fish, a 5.9 pounder reeled in by Marrero.

"That's a good bass for this kind of weather," Moses Jumper Jr. said.

"It was windy, but it was alright," Marrero said as he released all his team's fish back into the canal at the dock in front of Jumper's property.

Bryan Arledge and Wayne Williams finished runners-up with 12.21 pounds. All fishermen met the 3 p.m. deadline for fish to be weighed without a penalty.

The top three teams were awarded trophies and prize money by Collins, who also presented the Seminole Sportsman's Josiah Johns memorial plaque to Marrero for catching the largest bass. Every participant received a tournament T-shirt.

"I think we had some guys who did pretty good fishing," Jumper told the group. He also mentioned the series would not be possible without support from Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola.

The weather likely contributed to a lighter catch total compared to a year ago. The top three teams in last year's tournament accounted for nearly 54 pounds, about 11 more pounds of bass than this year.

The series continues April 11 in Big Cypress with the Howard Tiger Memorial Fishing Tournament. The final event is the Take a Kid Fishing Tournament May 9. Weights from all three tournaments will be tabulated to determine the overall winner. For those who missed round one, there's still opportunity to make up ground. Last year's overall second and third place finishers both missed one tournament.

Despite the poor weather, organizers were thrilled opening day attracted 12 boats.

"It's a tremendous turnout," said Jumper, whose son Josh and grandson Blevyns won the overall championship last year.



Kevin Johnson

Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank brings back a net full of bass that he and Frank Marrero caught in the Bass Busters Fishing Tournament in Big Cypress. They won first place with nearly 19 pounds of bass.

FGCU doubleheader serves up volleyball, golf instruction

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BIG CYPRESS — For the second time in six weeks, a golfer with PGA Tour experience shared his knowledge with youngsters in Big Cypress.

Florida Gulf Coast University men's golf coach Eric Booker, 51, who earned more than \$300,000 on the PGA Tour in 1999, was part of an entourage of coaches from the Fort Myers college that spent March 7 teaching kids about golf and volleyball during a daylong clinic.

"Keep your eye on the ball. Hold that balance," Booker instructed Avahny Jim as the 6-year-old used a 3-wood to hit a ball from a rubber tee implanted in an artificial grass mat at the Big Cypress golf practice range.

"You might be a natural," Booker told Avahny after she belted a few shots into the open range.

Booker was about Avahny's age when he first started playing golf.

"My dad owned a public golf course, so all of us grew up playing golf. We had a place to play. That's how we got started," he said.

Thanks to the new practice facility, kids on Big Cypress have a place to learn the game.

"This is a brand new facility. They'll come out here and practice. Who knows what it will build into," said Booker, whose pro career included a victory in the Nike Tour's Lehigh Valley Open in 1998 when he defeated Notah Begay III in a nine-hole playoff.

Begay, a Native American who went on to win four times on the PGA Tour and is now a commentator for Golf Channel, talked to a group of Ahfachkee School students at the range in January. Booker, who never won a tournament on the PGA Tour but finished in the top 10 three times, said Begay jokes with him about losing the sudden-death playoff. At the time, it was the longest playoff on the Nike Tour, which is now the Web.com Tour.

"I'd rather win (four) PGA Tour events and lost the playoff, so I'll swap you anytime," Booker said.

As Booker provided advice about stance, grip and swing on the mats, youngsters rotated through a variety of instruction stations. FGCU women's coach Sarah Trew taught chipping on a grassy area and Eagle players Sara Detlefsen and Georgia Price provided putting tips on the

practice green.

"It's not often we get to work with kids; we enjoy it when we do," said Price, a native of England who starred at Fort Myers High School before she joined FGCU.

Similar to Booker, Price became involved in golf thanks to her father.

"My dad played and he started taking me to clinics. I loved it," said Price, who started playing at age 11. The senior said she might give professional golf a shot after she graduates in May.

Nashoba Gonzalez and Troy Cantu, both from Ahfachkee's golf team, were among the participants. Troy, 14, said FGCU's coaches helped him with his stance and taught him how to generate more power in his swing.

"They helped me fire through the ball," he said.

Troy pointed to the sand trap area at the facility as a place that will benefit his game. He said playing golf with Big Cypress Councilman Mondo Tiger and Charlie Osceola has made him want to improve.

"I see them play and some of their chip shots from the sand, they hit it right close to the hole," Troy said.

Chilly and blustery weather hindered

those who wanted to launch long drives.

"I like driving because I like to hit it far," said Dothan Osceola-Rodriguez, 9.

The golf session ended in the late morning. After lunch, a few youngsters switched sports as they joined others at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium for an afternoon of volleyball instruction from FGCU head coach Matt Botsford and assistant coach Danny Mahy.

The program, which drew about 15 kids, started with Botsford telling everyone to toss a volleyball as high as they could and catch it behind their backs. Some were successful, others not so much, but the drill provided an icebreaker before the coaches formed small groups and provided basic instruction on hitting, passing, receiving and serving.

"If someone walks away from it with a rejuvenated view of volleyball, that's great," said Botsford, who will hold volleyball camps in July for ages 10-18 at FGCU's Alico Arena.

The golf and volleyball sessions marked the latest venture to the reservation by FGCU athletics. Last September, the men's basketball team held a clinic at the gymnasium.



Kevin Johnson

Florida Gulf Coast University women's volleyball coach Matt Botsford instructs Morningstar Osceola Rodriguez, 8, as Avahny Jim, 6, looks on during a clinic March 7 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress.



Kevin Johnson

Avahny Jim, 6, receives instruction from Florida Gulf Coast University men's golf coach Eric Booker during a clinic at the Big Cypress golf range.

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After hiatus, PECS baseball returns to diamond

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BRIGHTON — The 2015 baseball season is bound to be special for Harry Tewksbury.

The Pemayetv Emahakv baseball coach said he's excited that the Charter School's team is back in business after a year's absence. This season also marks the end of the collegiate careers of his twin sons, Adam, a catcher at Troy University in Alabama, and Cameron, a pitcher for Valdosta State University in Georgia.

"It's been a part of my life and their lives as we've come along. I just love the game," said Tewksbury, whose cousin Bob Tewksbury was a Major League pitcher for six teams.

PECS opened its season against Glades Day School's junior varsity March 5 in Brighton. Not surprisingly, the Glades team filled with ninth- and 10th-graders had its way against the smaller PECS squad whose white jerseys and black pants were occupied by mostly sixth- and seventh-graders. The outcome — Glades Day won 16-3 — wasn't a huge concern for coach Tewksbury. His main objective is to see improvements from the season's first pitch to its final out.

"We want to win every game we get in, of course, but if we can make them better than they were at the end of this thing, that's really what we want to get to," said Tewksbury, whose assistant coach is Kevin Jackson.

A year ago, PECS was unable to gather enough players to field a team. This season 11 players — nine starters and two substitutes — comprise the squad that is scheduled to play at least six games.

"The group of guys we have are very coachable; they listen, they hustle, they do everything you ask them to do, which, to me, is more important sometimes than having a guy that can do everything but doesn't want to listen to you," Tewksbury said.

Scheduling games against kids their own age isn't as easy as it used to be.

"We have to get JV games because there's not a lot of middle school baseball," said Tewksbury, whose team used to face middle schools on the east coast. "Those middle school teams on the coast, it's very handy for them to just play each other, and they don't have the budget to travel over here, so they kind of cut us out of their little deal."

"The group of guys we have are very coachable; they listen, they hustle, they do everything you ask them to do."

— Harry Tewksbury,
PECS baseball coach

PECS' starting lineup against Glades Day, from Belle Glade, featured southpaw Lucas Osceola on the mound and Conner Thomas behind the plate. Infield duties were handled by Kamani Smith (first), Kaleb Doctor (second), Silas Madrigal (shortstop) and Tanner Shore (third). The outfield consisted of Alex Valdes (left), Dante Thomas (center) and Hyatt Pearce (right).

Jagger Gaucin served as a substitute. Myron Billie, who is expected to be among the team's top pitchers along with Lucas and Silas, was unable to attend the opener.

It didn't take long for an example of players heeding their coach's advice to pay off. Lucas and Tanner combined on a perfect pickoff play to nab a runner at third base in the top of the first inning.

In the bottom of the first, Silas scored on Dante's infield single to knot the score at 1-1.

Glades Day eventually built a big lead, but PECS generated a few more highlights. In the third inning, Kamani had a single. Dante belted a two-run single that brought home Silas and Kaleb in the fourth.

Tewksbury said a handful of his players want to play high school baseball after middle school, which makes their years on the regulation-sized field at PECS so vital. The distances at Ollie Jones Memorial Park between the mound and home plate — 60 feet, 6 inches — and between the bases — 90 feet — are the same as high school.

"When they get there, it won't be such a shock to them. They'll already have a feel for this field and it won't be so intimidating," Tewksbury said.

This year's edition features just two eighth-graders, so a few growing pains might be expected as players adjust to bigger fields, larger opponents and heavier bats.

"We're awful young," Tewksbury said. "We have a lot of seventh-graders and three or four sixth-graders sprinkled in there."

The current crop only has to look about 30 miles northeast to see how former PECS students are faring in high school. Okeechobee High School's varsity squad has received key contributions this season from a handful of alums, including Elijah Finney, Sean Osceola, Zeke Matthews and Layton Thomas.



PECS base runner Dante Thomas and coach Harry Tewksbury watch a Glades Day pitcher wind up during opening day March 5 in Brighton.



PECS batter Lucas Osceola launches a deep fly to left field against Glades Day in Brighton.



PECS second baseman Kaleb Doctor fires a throw to first base for an out against Glades Day in Brighton.

PECS team faces former teammate Camryn Thomas

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

LAKE PLACID — Hand slaps and the muttering of "good game" are the typical, often unenthusiastic exchanges

between softball teams at the conclusion of games. Opponents usually don't offer hugs, but that's what Camryn Thomas received from her ex-teammates.

"I miss them," said Camryn after her former team, Pemayetv Emahakv Charter

School, beat her current team, Lake Placid junior varsity, 12-10 on March 9 at Lake Placid High School.

After playing three seasons for PECS, Camryn shifted to Lake Placid this academic year to begin her high school

career. The freshman right-hander from the Brighton Reservation has settled into her role as the team's primary starting pitcher. About halfway through the season, she had already posted complete game wins against Sebring and Frostproof.

"Camryn has been doing an awesome job for us. She has a good, positive attitude," said Lake Placid JV coach Todd W. Moore.

When PECS came up to bat in the top of the first inning, Camryn wasn't in the pitcher's circle, but she just about circled the playing field handling first base, third base and right field before being summoned for late-inning relief.

"My goal was not to use her today (as a pitcher) because that's a lot of pressure on a kid; she's a ninth-grader and having to pitch against her old school and her friends," Moore said.

When Lake Placid fell behind 10-2 in the fifth inning, Camryn was brought in to pitch. In three innings, she struck out seven of her former teammates and allowed two hits and one earned run. As Camryn kept PECS' bats quiet, Lake Placid's offense sprung to life with four runs in the fifth and four in the seventh before its rally was halted with the tying run stranded at second base.

"It was exciting, but towards the beginning we weren't doing so well," Camryn said. "I kind of got down a little bit because I really wanted to beat them. We starting coming together as a team and we did good towards the end."

Hitting the strike zone has been one of her strengths this season.

"She's consistently around the plate. Not a lot of walks," said Moore, who wants Camryn to use the offseason to get stronger. "Her biggest thing is she's going to have to work on her strength over the summer. She's going to have to get a lot of core strength going."

Batting in the No. 3 spot, Camryn drove in one run with an RBI infield single in the fifth.

On the other side, PECS hurdled adversity to boost its record to 5-3. Before

taking the field, PECS was already without Haylie Huff because of an injury and another player who couldn't play because she was tardy for school.

During the game, two more players were lost to injuries and another departed for 4-H duties.

"This game was crazy," said PECS coach Nancy Jimmie.

The injury bug bit in the third inning when PECS third baseman Krysta Burton collided with catcher Jacee Jumper while both were chasing a foul ball.

Krysta was helped off the field by coaches and attended to by Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue.

Late in the game, Luzana Venzor was hurt in a collision with a Lake Placid runner at first base and left the game.

Jenna Brown and Alaina Sweat were hit by pitches in what turned into a black-and-blue victory for the kids in the red and black uniforms.

Despite the dents, PECS generated plenty of highlights. Its defense turned three double plays, Jacee made a tough catch against the fence in foul territory and center fielder Jenna and shortstop Janessa Nunez turned difficult plays into routine-looking outs.

PECS pitcher Aleina Micco tossed a complete game and helped her own cause with a remarkable day at the plate in the cleanup spot.

Aleina hit the ball hard every trip as she went 5-for-5 with a double, triple and five RBIs.

She provided critical insurance with a two-run single in the fifth that gave PECS a 12-2 lead, a cushion which became less comfortable as Lake Placid mounted its late comeback.

Alaina ignited PECS' offense with an opposite field RBI triple in the third that brought home Janessa with the game's first run.

"We've been hitting. It saves us," Jimmie said.

The teams will meet again April 9 on the Brighton Reservation for PECS' eighth-grade parent night.



Kevin Johnson

Lake Placid junior varsity player Camryn Thomas tags Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's Luzana Venzor at first base during a game March 9 at Lake Placid High School. Thomas faced her former team for the first time.



Kevin Johnson

Lake Placid junior varsity pitcher Camryn Thomas delivers a pitch during a game against PECS at Lake Placid High School.

Sammy Micco Sanchez wraps up freshman season with trip to states

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

FORT GIBSON, Okla. — The momentum Sammy Micco Sanchez generated from winning a gold medal on wrestling mats in Canada last summer carried over into his high school season this winter in Oklahoma.

Sanchez, a North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) champion, finished his freshman season at Fort Gibson High School in late February with a 30-12 record and earned a spot among Class 4A's elite in his weight division by qualifying for the Oklahoma state tournament. The Seminole Tribe of Florida member was the only freshman out of eight wrestlers in 4A's 195-pound division at states in Oklahoma City.

Fort Gibson wrestling coach Sammy Johnson said only a handful of freshmen in school history have ever qualified for states.

"Finishing in the top eight as a freshman is really good," said Johnson,

who also coached Sanchez at NAIG.

After spending the fall as a linebacker and fullback on Fort Gibson's football team, which went 11-1 and won a district title, Sanchez shifted to wrestling, where wins continued to pile up. Fort Gibson wrestling won its district for the first time in five years, captured its conference tournament and the Bristow Duals, finished runner-up at a tournament in Louisiana and placed fourth overall at the state championship.

It was a satisfying season for Sanchez, who's only been wrestling for three years. This season he often wrestled up a division from his weight, which hovered around 180.

"It was a better season than I expected," he said.

"Sammy won some big matches for us," Johnson said. "He's a team player and will do whatever it takes for us to be successful. He's a tough kid. He's done a good job."

Sanchez won two consolation matches at regionals, including a 5-4 win that punched his ticket to the state tournament

with six of his teammates. A loss would have meant the end of his season.

Sanchez's reward for reaching states was a first-round bout against Tuttle High School senior Dustin Mason, a two-time state champion and the division's No. 1 seed.

"I was expecting to get pinned in the first period," Sanchez said.

But the low-scoring bout turned out to be close and lasted into the third period before Mason notched a pin.

"I was down and I got caught under," Sanchez said.

Sanchez's season ended with a loss in the consolation bracket, but the setbacks didn't dampen his coach's outlook for a freshman who has one state championship tournament under his belt and three more years on the mats at Fort Gibson.

"That's the best part of it. The sky is the limit for him," Johnson said. "Hopefully, he's a little more confident. He doesn't believe in himself as much as I do at times."

"Next year I hope to place at state, and I hope to be a three-time state placer by the time I graduate," Sanchez said.

Sanchez will return to the football field for spring practice. Johnson, who is the team's defensive line coach, said Sanchez could become a full-time starter this fall.

"He's a real athletic kid. He can play anything in the front seven," Johnson said.

Sanchez's brother, Jesse, a sophomore at Fort Gibson who won a silver medal at NAIG, didn't wrestle this season due to a football injury, but he is running track and field this spring and continuing to prepare for his junior seasons in football and wrestling.

"He's lifting. He'll be back next year," Johnson said.

Wrestling will still be a big part of the coming months for the Sanchez brothers, who were scheduled to compete in March at a non-high school tournament in Virginia with their younger relative Julius Aquino.

Young tennis ace serves up wins

Nigel Osceola shines on court

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BRANDON, Fla. — Two years ago, Brian Osceola had no idea the impact a summer recreation tennis program would have on his son. Up to that point, Nigel Osceola had never picked up a tennis racquet, but the program in Brandon, Florida helped him quickly fall in love with the sport and he's played ever since.

"It was just something for kids to occupy time during the summer," Brian recalled. "He's the one who wanted to keep going."

The program did more than occupy Nigel's time; it provided a spark that has led to lessons, practices, tournaments and trophies.

The fourth-grader at Brandon Academy works on his game during the week, competes in tournaments on weekends in the Tampa and Orlando regions and even has a personal coach.

After several top five finishes, Nigel and his favorite Slazenger racquet made it to the top in early February when he earned his first championship trophy after posting a 4-1 record in the 10U boys division at the Winter Park Early Spring Junior Grand Prix Tennis tournament. His only loss came against Jacob Immelman, who played in another age group and is also the son of 2008 Masters golf champion Trevor Immelman.

Nigel, 10, added the trophy to his growing collection at home in Brandon. Even though tennis has become a big part of Nigel's young life, he's not yet a big fan of watching it on TV.

"He'll sit there and watch it, but he gets bored," Brian said.

Nigel, who plays singles and doubles, said it's the competition on the courts that he enjoys most.

"I enjoy facing people that are evenly matched," Nigel said in early March, a few days after he finished second in a tournament in Clearwater.

The days of feeling nervous in tournaments have evaporated for Nigel, who competes in the Junior Grand Prix Tennis and for the Brandon Sports & Aquatic Center.

"Now I got used to them," he said. Under the tutelage of coach Rolland Miller, Nigel develops all aspects of his game.

"He's been improving very much and showing a lot of potential," Brian said.

In addition to tennis, Nigel, the oldest of four siblings, plays basketball, football and soccer. His flag football team at Brandon Academy went undefeated in the regular season.

Football vies with tennis as Nigel's favorite sport for a good reason. Nigel said he looks up to Florida State wide receiver and fellow Seminole Justin Motlow, who just happens to be Nigel's uncle and a Brandon Academy alum.

Nigel will get a taste of FSU this summer. He's been invited to attend the college's high performance tennis camp for youth.



Photo courtesy of Sammy Micco Sanchez

Fort Gibson High School freshman Sammy Micco Sanchez gains the upper hand on an opponent during the 2014-15 wrestling season. Sanchez compiled a 30-12 record and qualified for the Oklahoma state tournament.



Photo courtesy of Brian Osceola

Nigel Osceola, 10, of Brandon, holds the champion's trophy he won at the Winter Park Early Spring Junior Grand Prix Tennis tournament Feb. 7 in Winter Park.

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Pow Pow Panther wheels in power

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT LAUDERDALE — Growing up as a tomboy in Hollywood helped prepare Meredith Bullard for the fast-moving, aggressive contact sport of roller derby, her activity of choice.

Bumps, bruises and injuries are part of the game, but Bullard, aka Pow Pow Panther, shines on eight wheels as a member of the Gold Coast Derby Grrls team.

Gold Coast's roller derby season, which runs through October, started with a bout March 7 in Fort Lauderdale against Twin City Derby Girls, from the Champaign-Urbana region in Illinois. Gold Coast won handily, 148-96.

"It's challenging," said Pow Pow Panther, who tried other sports, but nothing piqued her interest like roller derby. "It's tough, fast-paced and I like the strategy. I also like the camaraderie and being part of a team."

Gold Coast plays in the Women's Flat

Track Roller Derby Association (WFTDA), which has 301 leagues around the world.

The original roller derby was played on banked tracks from the 1920s to the 1970s. The sport was revived in Texas in the early 2000s as a flat-track version of the game and has steadily grown in popularity.

Skaters take creative derby names to embrace the tougher, edgier side of their personalities. "When you step into the rink, your derby alter ego takes over," reads the WFTDA website.

"Pow Pow means hard hits, and Panther because that's my clan," Pow Pow Panther said.

Although it looks like chaos on the track, the basic rules of the game are straightforward. Two teams of five skaters each — four blockers and a jammer — vie for points. Only the jammer can score and does so by passing opponents after her first lap around the track. The blockers, who play defense and offense, block, shove, push and get in the opposing jammer's way while also trying to create an opening for their

own jammer to pass through and score.

"The hardest part is the amount of training and skill it takes, but I enjoy being out there on the track, training hard and working for a goal; it's the best feeling," said Pow Pow Panther, who mostly blocks but sometimes fills in as the jammer.

"She is a great asset to our team," said Gold Coast head coach Derrick DeRosa, aka Bare Lee Human, whose team finished fourth in the divisional playoffs last summer in Ontario, Canada. "She's always been a solid player. She is the second Native American to score points in the playoffs and she holds the record with 23 points."

Pow Pow Panther's teammates appreciate and rely on her skill on the track.

"She is quiet; you don't hear much from her," said training coach Mary Engleman, aka Lucy Lunatic.



Beverly Bidney

Meredith Bullard, aka Pow Pow Panther, center, pushes the Twin City Derby Girls jammer out of bounds during a March 7 bout in Fort Lauderdale.



Beverly Bidney

Meredith Bullard, aka Pow Pow Panther, second from left, plays defense as part of the wall of players meant to block their opponent's jammer during a bout between the Gold Coast Derby Grrls and Twin City Derby Girls in Fort Lauderdale.

Drayton Billie posts two wins at wrestling regional



Photo by Kevin Johnson

STAFF REPORT

JENSEN BEACH, Fla. — Okeechobee High School sophomore wrestler Drayton Billie notched two wins in the Class 2A-Region 4 wrestling meet March 6-7 at Jensen Beach High School.

Wrestling in the 138-pound division, Billie opened with a 17-11 win against Miami Norland's Aslet Jean. In the quarterfinals, Billie lost to Archbishop McCarthy's Brandon Miret, a district champion, 15-8. The loss sent Billie to the consolation bracket, where he picked up an 8-3 decision against Coconut Creek's Carlos Savoca. Billie's season came to an end in a consolation semifinal where he lost to Palm Bay's Dylan Perrow by fall.

Okeechobee had 12 wrestlers at regionals. Out of the seven who wrestled in classes less than 160 pounds, Billie was the only one who won more than one bout.

Two weeks before regionals, Billie finished as Class 2A-District 14 runner-up in 138.

"But she will always surprise you with her strength, really nail somebody and knock their lights out. She's the strong, silent type."

A formidable player, Pow Pow Panther is a force to be reckoned with on the track.

"She brings a [load] of power and stability," said Olga Montealegre, aka Bandita. "You can always count on Pow Pow."

"She's a powerhouse and can knock her way through a pack," added Gillian Sullivan, aka Barbwire Gordon. "She can play any position; I rely on her to be there when I need a brace when I'm a jammer."

But after five years of roller derby, Pow Pow Panther is ready to be Meredith Bullard again. The mother of Louis Billie, 7, and Tatum Billie, 6, said the sport takes too much of her time and this will be her final season.

Bullard plans to pursue her passion of filmmaking. She attended a film school in Miami and now wants to continue her studies in screenwriting and cinematography, possibly at Miami Dade College.

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Teams display 'heart' on basketball court

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Men's and women's teams vied for top honors Feb. 27-28 in the Big Cypress All Hearts Basketball Tournament at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium. The tournament was

open to players ages 18 and older. YDWI won the women's championship against runner-up Kelice's Team. Big Town captured the title on the men's side ahead of Team Shottaz in second place and J.U.S. in third. Winners received sweatshirts.



Photo courtesy of Dessie Thomas

The YDWI women's basketball team celebrates winning the All Hearts Basketball Tournament Feb. 28 in Big Cypress.



Photo courtesy of Dessie Thomas

Big Town celebrates after winning the men's championship Feb. 28 at the All Hearts Basketball Tournament in Big Cypress.

Duelle Gore makes most of second shot with Haskell

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

LAWRENCE, Kan. — From a basketball standpoint, Duelle Gore produced a decent freshman season at Haskell Indian Nations University in 2010-11. With about seven points and seven rebounds per game, his averages were fine for a rookie, but away from the court the kid who grew up on the Hollywood and Brighton Reservations struggled with the rest of college life, so much so that his next game in a Haskell uniform wouldn't come until four years later.

Gore's return this academic year — first to the classroom at Haskell and then to the team — made a believer out of his coach.

"I can't say enough about his determination," said Haskell coach Chad Kills Crow, whose first year at the Lawrence, Kansas college for Native Americans came in Gore's freshman year. Kills Crow recalled Gore being underprepared for college. "He came to Haskell and did well as a freshman, but he wasn't college-ready; he wasn't socially prepared."

There was no sophomore basketball season for Gore, whose woes in the classroom made him ineligible to remain with the team.

"He quit going to class. I was disappointed with him," said Kills Crow, who thought he might never see Gore again after offering two suggestions. "My advice to Duelle was, 'You need to get your grades up and you need to mature.' To be honest, I didn't think he was going to do it."

At first, those instincts appeared to be correct. Gore left Haskell, but he remained in Lawrence on a hiatus that turned out to be a game-changer. Left without a school or a team, Gore continued working out. He wanted to come back.

"It made me miss the game, and I decided I needed to finish school," he said.

First, however, he needed to get back into Haskell, which meant his grades needed to improve. He enrolled at Johnson County Community College near Kansas City and continued knocking on Haskell's door.

"Each semester, he kept applying to Haskell, but his GPA wasn't high enough," Kills Crow said.

Finally, last spring the GPA became high enough to open the doors.

"I worked so hard for that," Gore said. "To my surprise, he busted his tail and got his GPA up," Kills Crow said.

Gore's eligibility to return to the team started in mid-season. His debut in January featured no signs of rust as the 2010 Okeechobee High School graduate promptly drained 21 points in a 94-87 win

against College of the Ozarks. Three weeks later, he netted a season-high 28 points against Iowa's Waldorf College.

"I was getting open shots and everything was clicking for us," said Gore, a 6-foot-5, 220-pound guard who also recorded a double-double with 18 points and 12 rebounds in a win against York College in late January.

In 14 games, Gore scored in double digits 10 times on his way to averaging 13.2 points, third highest on the team. He was second in rebounds with 7.2 per game.

Described as "an impact player" by his coach, Gore sparked the team, which plays in the NAIA. Haskell had a 2-14 record before Gore's arrival but won three out of the first four games with him.

"He turned our season around. He got here and we started winning," Kills Crow said. "He's got the skills to play inside and play outside. He's developed a great jump shot."

Haskell's season ended with a conference playoff loss to Waldorf. Gore scored 15 points and was the go-to guy for a last-second desperation shot with Haskell down by three points.

"During the timeout, I told (coach) that I wanted to take the shot," Gore said.

Gore took the shot, but unfortunately for Haskell, which finished with an 8-23 record, a low ceiling in an opponent's small gym proved to be a sixth defender. Gore's shot from around midcourt never reached its planned destination because it hit a light fixture.

"I thought it had a chance," Gore said.

After finishing the winter semester, Gore remained in a learning mode when he arrived home in Hollywood just in time to attend the Miami Heat's game March 16 against LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

"I pay attention to what they do to get open, and how they get open running off screens," Gore said the day after he watched Dwayne Wade score 32 points in the Heat's victory. The mental notes Gore absorbed about Wade's performance could come in handy as he practices during the offseason.

"I like his post-up game. I want to work on my post moves versus smaller guards," Gore said.

Gore, who is in Haskell's American Indian Studies program, said he expects to graduate in slightly more than a year and



Photo courtesy of HaskellAthletics.com

Duelle Gore, a guard for Haskell Indian Nations University, controls the ball near the hoop during a game in the 2014-15 season. Gore averaged more than 13 points in his first season back with Haskell after four years.

might pursue a future degree in business.

"I've enjoyed it," he said about his time at Haskell.

During the offseason, Gore said he'll continue to rehab an injured ankle that he played with for most of the season. He might work out with a teammate this summer in Los Angeles, but he doesn't have to venture far to find sharpshooters for practice. His brother Trewston Pierce and sister Shae Pierce led their high school teams in scoring this season.

"They deserve it. They worked hard for it," Gore said.

Gore's hard work should continue to payoff next season, Kills Crow said.

"He'll be a force to be reckoned with next year," said Kills Crow, who described Gore as a "potential All-American."

The bottom line, as the coach noted, is that Gore is on the right path.

"He's doing everything right," Kills Crow said.



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More than a passing grade for BC's DeForest Carter at all-star game in KC

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A steal, a layup and a smile were the fitting components attached to the final two points of DeForest Carter's remarkable collegiate career that ended March 21 with an appearance in the NABC-NAIA Men's Basketball All-Star Game at Municipal Auditorium in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

Carter, whose affable personality carries over to the court regardless of the score, sported a wide grin while he made a solo trip from midcourt to the basket for the easy, uncontested hoop, which turned out to be his only points.

Instead of shooting, Carter displayed a generous amount of generosity, as the record-breaking Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University senior point guard opted to dole out first-class passes to his Division II All-Star teammates.

The result was a game-high seven assists for Carter, whose team fell to the Division I All-Stars, 100-96, in a basketball-rich structure that hosted several NCAA Final Fours from the 1940s to 1960s.

The game culminated a whirlwind week for Carter, whose playing career with Embry-Riddle ended five days earlier with a loss in the NAIA Division II national semifinals in the southern part of Missouri. He went back to Florida and returned to the Show-Me State the day before the all-star game.

"I felt it was another opportunity to go and represent my Tribe and represent my school and represent my family," said Carter, whose mother, Myra Jumper, and stepfather, Robert Hill, watched his final game from section 11, directly across the court from the Division II all-stars bench.

Through Carter's four-year career at Embry-Riddle — a span of 135 games — Jumper only missed attending a couple games during her son's freshman season.

"I can't play without seeing her face or talking to her at least once," said Carter, who already knows how he will handle

games if he pursues a professional career, perhaps in another country. "That's when FaceTime comes in handy. Right before the game, it'd be like, 'Love you mom, see ya.' Then I'm ready to go."

Jumper, Hill and the 400 or so fans who remained in the nearly 10,000-seat arena after a marathon day of quarterfinals in the Division I tournament witnessed some of the magic that belongs to Embry-Riddle's all-time leader in assists and steals.

Before the game's first five minutes elapsed, Carter made two nifty assists. First, he drove the lane while battling a defender and appeared ready for a layup attempt only to make a mid-air pass to a wide-open Timothy Mitchell, of Southeastern University, for an uncontested dunk. A similar scenario occurred moments later, but this time Carter delivered a behind-the-back, over-the-shoulder, no-look gem to Midland University's Marcus Franklin for another dunk.

"We got reminded tonight how good he is and how much he makes the game look so easy," said Embry-Riddle coach Steve Ridder, who watched from the stands with his assistant coach Chad Keller.

Carter had to get used to not having his usual pass recipient on the floor, 6-foot-8 Embry-Riddle teammate Cesar Pastrana.

"I'm missing my best and favorite target ever," Carter said. "Every time I jumped and looked, I had flashbacks, 'Oh that's not Cesar.' It was still great though. The players I played with were awesome."

Carter didn't attempt a shot in the first half, which led to good-natured ribbing from the sidelines.

"When he came to our corner, we said,

"You think we flew out here all this way not to see you take a shot?" said Ridder, whose program will join the NCAA Division II ranks starting next season. "Tonight, coach Keller and I decided to be here because DeForest has done everything we've asked him to do, and he's turned out to be a great human being, a great young man. Tonight is kind of our last NAIA event. We wanted

to be here for him and just celebrate the great career he's had, but more importantly celebrate the man he's turned into. He's going to be missed."

But Carter might not have to be missed for too long. Ridder says there's an invitation for Carter to be a student-assistant coach in the 2015-16 season as Carter finishes his degree in interdisciplinary studies.

"That might (happen) this fall," Carter said. "I'm going to go to class and help out the team as they're transitioning (to NCAA) and still try to be part of the team and helping them develop players. I just want to help any way I can and give back."

Carter, who grew up on the Big Cypress Reservation before he moved to Orlando with his family when he was about 10, roomed with Demetrius Perkins, one of two all-stars from College of Idaho.

"It's awesome to see that we could be all-stars from different places; me having the city and all that around me, and them having Idaho. I don't really know what's in Idaho," Carter said.

Earlier in the day, Carter and the all-stars watched the NAIA's 3-point and dunk contests.

"The dunk contest, I don't have that many tricks, but get me on a good day, I'll make 20 3's in a row if you need me to," he said, with a smile of course.

"I felt it was another opportunity to go and represent my Tribe and represent my school and represent my family."

—DeForest Carter



Photo courtesy of Matt Michlowitz

DeForest Carter celebrates while cutting down the net after helping Embry-Riddle win the Sun Conference championship game 90-86 in overtime against Southeastern on March 3 in Daytona Beach. Carter scored 19 points and had seven steals.

◆ DEFOREST From page 1C

Carter had two steals, two assists and scored six points, including a layup with two minutes left that gave Embry-Riddle its first lead of the game.

He assisted on a basket by Dalton Barnes (27 points) with 30 seconds left that sent the game into overtime tied at 73-73.

Midway through the five-minute extra session, a layup by Carter put Embry-Riddle ahead 82-75.

Embry-Riddle led by two points with seven seconds left when Carter made two free throws to clinch a memorable victory that he said ranks "at the top" of his career.

Before the loss to Cornerstone, Carter, along with his Embry-Riddle teammates, thrived in the national tournament with wins against Friends University (10 assists, six steals), Union College (20 points, 13 assists) and Southern Oregon University (11 points, 11 assists, five steals, four rebounds).

Carter said he expects to remain active in basketball — perhaps as a pro player or a coach — and he'll have four years of memories as an Embry-Riddle player to fondly recall no matter his future path.

"Every day, going to work with those guys, blood, sweat and tears; we embraced that, and it was great," Carter said. "That's the one thing I'm going to miss, just the whole family atmosphere and the great program that Embry-Riddle is."



Kevin Johnson

DeForest Carter enjoys a lighter moment March 21 during pregame festivities at the NABC-NAIA All-Star Game in Kansas City.



Kevin Johnson

DeForest Carter controls the ball against Marty Wilkerson during the NABC-NAIA All-Star Game at Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Missouri.



Kevin Johnson

DeForest Carter guards Craig Anderson during the NABC-NAIA All-Star Game in Kansas City, Missouri.



Photo courtesy of Terence Young

Cara Osceola, No. 11 in the front row, poses with her teammates from Anadarko High School after finishing runner-up in Oklahoma's Class 4A state championship March 14 in Oklahoma City.

◆ CARA From page 1C

the 4A state quarterfinals, 53-51, on March 12. Anadarko compiled a 25-2 record.

Curtis, a sophomore, also plays for the school's football team, which posted an 11-1 record last fall.

The Osceola family also made its mark in the collegiate ranks. Kaitlynn Osceola, who was a teammate of her sister Cara on Anadarko's state championship team three years ago, concluded her first

season on the Haskell Indian Nations University women's team in February. Haskell won 10 of its first 11 games on its way to a 20-9 record, by far its best season in the past four years.

Kaitlynn scored six points and had two rebounds in Haskell's 74-70 season-ending loss to York College in the Midlands Collegiate Athletic Conference North semifinals Feb. 27.

For the season, Kaitlynn averaged under 10 minutes of playing time in 24 games and had 32 rebounds. Last year Kaitlynn played for Broward College.

◆ More T-BALL photos from page 1C



Eileen Soler

Clinton Billie lands on home plate during the opening game Feb. 26 of the newly improved Billie Johns Sr. Ball Field on Big Cypress.



Eileen Soler

Adaleyah Hall practices catching and throwing before taking her place during opening games at Billie Johns Sr. Ball Field on Big Cypress.

Announcements



The Seminole Tribe of Florida Preschool Programs Summer Enrollment Announcement

Summer Enrollment Begins: Monday, April 1st, 2015

Summer Enrollment Closes: Friday, May 1st, 2015

Enrollment Applications will be available at your
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(239) 867-5303 ext.16446

NOTICE SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA GENERAL ELECTION MAY 11, 2015

In accordance with the Amended Constitution and Bylaws of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Amended Corporate Charter of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. a General Election is called for Monday, May 11, 2015 for the following offices:

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
TRIBAL COUNCIL

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN

PRESIDENT

BIG CYPRESS RESERVATION
Representative (1)

BIG CYPRESS RESERVATION
Representative (1)

BRIGHTON RESERVATION
Representative (1)

BRIGHTON RESERVATION
Representative (1)

HOLLYWOOD RESERVATION
Representative (1)

HOLLYWOOD RESERVATION
Representative (1)

Enrolled Tribal Members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida who have reached their 18th birthday on or before April 11, 2015 and who have registered to vote by January 31, 2015 are eligible to vote for the positions mentioned above.

The Chairman at-Large of the Tribal Council and the President at-Large of the Corporate Board are voted in by all Registered Voters of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The Reservation Representatives for Tribal Council and Board of Directors are voted in by the Registered Voters of their respective reservations.

Eligible Tribal Members who wish to become candidates may obtain a petition form from the Tribal Secretary's Office located at the Hollywood Headquarters, beginning March 17, 2015. The completed petitions must be in the Secretary's Office by 5:00 p.m., April 21, 2015. Announcement of candidates will be published by April 22, 2015.

Absentee registered voters are urged to contact the Tribal Secretary's Office for an absentee ballot request form at 954-966-6300 ext. 11463.

ALL REGISTERED TRIBAL MEMBERS ARE URGED TO VOTE

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3/2015

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O how I loved her so, I did
Not know.
I did not know how or why
She made me so happy
And peaceful,
I wish she was my
Girl again,
O how she makes my
Head spin.
I want to thank her for the
Good times
She gave me...
So the girl I once knew
This is for you,
You did not make me blue.

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WAY"

BY GATOR DOCTOR

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