



**'60s babes' hula happily
into seventh decade**
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The Seminole Tribune

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Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen, Florida Gov. Rick Scott and Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman James E. Billie answer questions from a swarm of news media Feb. 1 at Seminole Tribe headquarters in Hollywood.

Eileen Soler

Seminole compact gains traction, new obstacles

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Seminole Tribe's revenue sharing gaming compact with Florida Gov. Rick Scott moved closer to ratification in the Florida Legislature Feb. 17 when a Senate committee approved the deal to give Seminole Gaming the exclusive right to add roulette and craps at Tribe casinos and to keep blackjack tables.

The House Regulatory Affairs Committee also overwhelmingly supported ratification Feb. 9. The House Finance and Tax Committee is expected to meet in the first week of March. After committees meet and if both bodies of the Legislature approve the compact, the agreement will guarantee a \$3 billion boon to state coffers over the next seven years.

However, the Senate's Feb. 17 agreement

approved by the Senate Regulated Industries Committee was muddied by forwarding attaching bills to the compact that would allow horse and dog track venues in Palm Beach, Brevard, Gadsden, Washington and Lee counties to include slot machines — a compact violation which also infringes on the 1998 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA).

The House Finance and Tax Committee is expected to agree with and forward a mirror of the latest Senate plan.

"The good news is that bills are moving in both houses of the Legislature. Ultimately, the goals are to resolve differences that are significant," said Seminole Tribe spokesperson Gary Bitner.

The road to ratification is complicated, he said, "and never pretty."

"But the Tribe is fully engaged in the process and intent on seeing it through to the best possible result," Bitner said.

The Seminole compact passed in 2010 promised the state \$1 billion over five years in return for exclusivity on blackjack and baccarat games. The new deal adds roulette and craps laws that limit slot machines at certain pari-mutuels such as dog and horse tracks. It also allows slots at one venue in Palm Beach and a new facility in Miami-Dade County.

The Senate and House amendments to allow slots at gaming houses in additional counties throws a wrench in the compact agreement signed by Chairman James E. Billie and Scott in early December. The move may force changes to the new compact agreement or kill the compact all together.

During a Feb. 1 meeting at Tribe Headquarters in Hollywood, Scott, Chairman Billie, Seminole Gaming CEO Jim Allen

♦ See COMPACT on page 4A

Visitors wowed at 45th annual Tribal Fair and Pow Wow

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — A traditionally elaborate grand entry marked the opening of the 45th annual Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow. The Seminole Color Guard led the procession of Tribe officials, royalty and 234 dancers decked out in colorful regalia to the center of the Hard Rock Live arena. Eleven drum groups, with up to a dozen members each, set up their circles on the floor perimeter.

The three-day, public and free celebration of Native arts and culture, held Feb. 5-7 in Hollywood, offered much more than beautiful beadwork, patchwork, wood carvings, jewelry and Seminole cuisine; it was a spirited competition among Native American dancers and drummers from throughout Indian Country.

"I take pride in this," said Brighton Board Rep. Larry Howard. "The atmosphere of all the Native American dancers from all over the nation is great. I hope people leave here with more of an understanding of our culture."

HostdrumsTheBoyzandYellowhammer provided a soundtrack for opening festivities.

"It's good to hear the heartbeat of the drums," said first-time attendee and

Immokalee administrator Ray Yzaguirre III. With more than \$150,000 in prize money at stake, competition in the arena was serious but friendly. A lengthy list of rules outlined how the dancers and drums would be judged. Points awarded from the start of the grand entry included regalia.

"Should any major part of the regalia (bustle, eagle feather, etc.) fall to the floor during the contest, dancer must disqualify him/herself voluntarily or be dismissed by the head dance judge for that contest session only," the dance rules stated.

Drum groups were required to have eight to 12 singers, who also drum. Groups had to be ready to sing at all times.

Dancers and drums competed in two rounds, or sessions, during the pow-wow. Head dance judge Randall Paskemin and head drum judge Algin Scabby Robe did not actually judge the event; they chose five judges for each category from the contestants in house.

"We choose excellent people who know what they are looking at or hearing," said Paskemin, of the Plains Cree Tribe. "The judges need knowledge and fairness."

To keep the process impartial, judges could not be related to the contestants they judged. Dance judges looked for rhythm, style, unique regalia, steps, timing and

stopping on time. If dancers failed to stop at the exact moment the drum stopped, they were disqualified. Every song lasted two to five minutes and consisted of four verses, Paskemin said.

"They follow by ear and know when to stop," he said. "We try to get different judges for each session and if there is a tie-breaker, we get new judges."

Judges observed from the dance floor periphery or behind the drums and took notes on the performances. Verna Street, a fancy shawl dance competitor, was one of the chosen judges. She said she carefully watched the dancers' footwork.

"I'm looking for them to be on beat and dance their style appropriately," said Street, of the Cherokee Tribe of North Carolina. "I also look at their outfit and see if they stop on time."

Pow-wow, or pau wau, means a gathering of people coming together to trade. According to the Indigenous Institute of the Americas, the modern pow-wow formed in the early 1800s with dances that "allowed warriors to reenact their brave deeds for all the members of the Tribe to witness." With the advent of reservations in North America, tribal customs and religions were

♦ See TRIBAL FAIR on page 7A

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INSIDE:

Smith Family Cattle Drive & Ranch Rodeo.
See page 3A for full coverage.

Sacred Native American sites threatened by Florida bills

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
Special Projects Reporter

West Florida, in his blog "Topics in Florida Archaeology."

Critics claim the bills will make it easier for private groups and grave robbers to legally locate, destroy, pilfer and profit from the desecration of Seminole, Miccosukee and Florida aboriginal Native history and culture.

"It is absolutely shocking," said Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Director Paul Backhouse. "This would set back intelligent historical preservation and respect for Native American culture back to the Indian Wars where the bodies and possessions of Natives who died in battle underwent wholesale abuse. I can't imagine that such a measure which benefits only a few shady individual antiquities dealers – at the expense of the preservation of the state's archaeological heritage – could be given

♦ See ARCHAEOLOGY on page 8A

Thousands enjoy new blend of Brighton Field Day traditions

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

Attendance averaged 5,000 people per day for the event that evolved from a private Seminole picnic in 1938 to the current regional cultural festival.

Estelle Loud and her friends Tere Rancosett and Carmen Santo, all of Lake Worth, traveled 81 miles to attend what she called a "must do."

"I love Native American art so whenever and wherever I can experience the culture I am there," Loud said. Loud recalled her pre-retirement days when she worked in Michigan on several Iroquois and Onondaga museum projects.

Field Day celebrations kicked off

♦ See FIELD DAY on page 6A

PECS kids celebrate literacy, win statewide service project

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Elementary students collected more than 1,300 gently used books and distributed them to the Real Life Children's Ranch and during the Okeechobee Christmas parade.

The winning projects were planned before the school knew about the contest, Greseth said. The elementary school project has been ongoing for a couple years and will continue, he said.

"I'm very proud of what we do," Greseth said. "It's a very neat lesson on how to give back to the community and how it feels to give rather than to receive."

Daily themes throughout the week were diverse and fun.

Brighton firefighters ignited love for reading with a "Stop, Drop & Read" activity. Sunglasses were essential accessories for Monday's "bright, sunny stories" theme. On Tuesday, students and teachers dressed like 1980s rock stars and "rocked out to reading."

Students went "wild about reading" on Wednesday and showed it by wearing animal print clothing. A book character costume celebration added more fun. Favorite sports teams were in the spotlight Thursday, as students teamed up to read with a buddy. Friday featured funky socks and funny stories, followed by an afternoon



♦ See READ on page 5A

Beverly Bidney
Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School fifth-graders Renee Ringer, left, and Laci Prescott, right, read with kindergartner Bobbi Dale Johns-Osceola on Jan. 29 during Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida.

Editorial

Florida House Bill 803

An act relating to historic and archaeological artifacts; amending s. 267.115, F.S.; directing the Division of Historical Resources of the Department of State to implement a program to administer the discovery of certain historic and archaeological artifacts; providing program requirements; directing the Division to adopt rules; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (9) of section 267.115, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

267.115 Objects of historical or archaeological value.—The Division shall acquire, maintain, preserve, interpret, exhibit, and make available for study objects which have intrinsic historical or archaeological value relating to the history, government, or culture of the state. Such objects may include tangible personal property of historical or archaeological value. Objects acquired under this section belong to the state, and title to such objects is vested in the division.

(9)(a) The Division shall implement a program to administer the discovery of isolated historic archaeological artifacts from sovereignty submerged lands. The program shall include, at a minimum:

1. An application for an annual permit and an application fee of \$100.

2. A written agreement to report all discovered and removed artifacts to the

division within 14 days after the discovery and removal, along with a map indicating the location of the discovery and photographs of the artifacts, and to allow the division to inspect, analyze, and photograph any such artifacts.

3. A requirement that tools may not be used for the excavation of any isolated artifacts, except that a trowel or hand-held implement may be used to extract exposed artifacts from a packed matrix in a river or lake bottom.

4. A map of clearly defined areas and sites that are excluded from excavation activities. The map must be provided to 40 the applicant with the issuance of a permit.

5. Authorization to transfer ownership rights for discovered artifacts to the permitholder.

6. Penalties for violations of program requirements, including, but not limited to, an administrative fine of up to \$1,000 and forfeiture of the permit and ownership rights for any artifacts discovered under the program.

(b) The division shall adopt rules to administer this subsection. Such rules shall include, at a minimum:

1. Procedures for sending a notice of violation.

2. Procedures for imposing an administrative fine.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.

Open letter to the editor

RE: Florida House Bill 803/Senate Bill 1054

• Tina Marie Osceola

This is an appeal to the legislators in Florida to stop Florida House Bill 803 and Senate Bill 1054. The companion bills will provide private citizens with an administrative process that provides a permit to survey, excavate and remove cultural and historic artifacts in "sovereignty submerged lands." The cultural and historic resources of our nation are defined and highly regulated at the federal, state and local levels of government.

Under the proposed bills, the citizens do not have to be archaeologists, anthropologists or any other scientific expert in order to obtain a permit. The citizen must do two things: fill out a permit application and pay \$100. On the surface, both bills appear to be shoring up some administrative processes that may be absent or obscure.

However, it is in the practical interpretation of what will result that is a problem.

1. The proposed process is nothing more than the legalization of looting and grave robbing in Florida. Federal agencies have spent countless efforts at trying to prevent the looting of our national treasures, and for some reason, the state of Florida is considering an administrative legalization effort.

2. In order to issue a permit, the state is going to have to provide a map that identifies an area that the permit holder may not dig/survey. This by default provides the citizen with cultural resource data that is fiercely protected from public dissemination because of looting and criminal exploitation. The senate report even references a possible

conflict with federal law.

3. The proposed language also refers to the enforcement of the law and the possible penalties (a fine of \$1,000 and the revocation of the permit). The current cultural resource laws are enforced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Does the report or record show how many violations the FWC currently investigates/prosecutes per year? This is yet another unfunded mandate being put upon our already underfunded and understaffed law enforcement agencies.

Finally, but most importantly, as a citizen of a federally recognized Tribe (Seminole Tribe of Florida), I must remind everyone that we are the caretakers of our ancestors. The policy of the state of Florida specifically refers to the 10,000 years of human occupation that the resources represent. Only 500 years of that human occupation are non-indigenous. The scientific value of the artifacts that are collected, recorded and tested does not outweigh the value that our current traditional laws require of our people to care for those who came before us.

I ask, why is it necessary to study our people as we were 10,000 years ago, when we are still here and right in front of you, and you do not listen. Now is the time for all of you amateur archaeologists to debate our lineage to the ancient ... Again, no one listens to our indigenous people who have survived, but they will listen to the scientists who test the bones and belongings of our ancestors.

Tina Marie Osceola is a Seminole Tribe of Florida citizen and Seminole Tribal Court Associate Judge.

'Do not disturb the Spirits of the Water'

• Bobby C. Billie

Our Elders defended themselves against the aggressive attacks of the newcomers during the American wars against the Miccosukee Nation.

They Defended their Right to Live, as they have always lived on their own Land, and Right to follow the Natural Law given to them by the Creator (God) at the beginning of the Creation of Life. We are these people and we are still defending our Rights. It has never ended, the newcomers trying to get rid of us, but it is our right to Live on our Land, soil/territory and we will continue to Defend and Protect our Sacred (Holy) Burial Grounds, our Ceremonial Grounds, Village Grounds, Sacred Lands and Sacred Waters and the Natural Systems of Life against your intentional actions of aggression, vandalism

and desecration of our Sacred (Holy) Aboriginal Burial Grounds, our Spiritual Values and our Way of Life.

Our Sacred (Holy) Burial Grounds, Ceremonial Ground and Village Grounds have been there from generation to generation harming no one, but when you disturb these grounds, it will harm the human life and the cycle of Life. Therefore it is prohibited to disturb these sites. They must be left untouched.

Do not disturb the Spirits of the Water – this means also Aboriginal Indigenous Peoples Resting Places under the Water or Artifacts or other Belongings.

Bobby C. Billie is a Clan and Spiritual Leader with Council of the Original Miccosukee Seminole Nation Aboriginal Peoples. He writes in objection to current Florida House Bill 803/Senate Bill 1054.

Government contracts: Good business

• Mitchell Cypress

The federal government spends nearly \$350 billion a year on goods and services, making it the world's largest consumer.

Almost a year ago, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. (STOFI) Board of Directors made the decision to try to enter the federal government marketplace. We hired Dawn Houle, a Chippewa-Cree from Montana and former Chief of Staff of the National Indian Gaming Commission, who is dedicated and preparing key STOFI businesses for selling to the government.

What are the benefits of doing business in this sector?

One of the biggest benefits of offering products to the federal government is the set-aside of purchases for disadvantaged businesses, such as minority-owned, Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) commerce; service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses; and woman-owned small businesses. These set-asides provide small businesses an entry into government contracting without competing with larger companies.

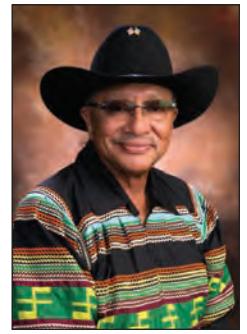
The targeted businesses that STOFI has identified as the initial products to offer the

government are Noble Juice, Askar Fuel, Seminole Pride Beef and OVV water. Selling to the government has tremendous potential but is very complex and time consuming. Before a company is able to offer products to the government, it takes certain certifications: vendor registration/approval, meeting size standards, employee standards and performance standards, to name a few.

Currently, STOFI is seeking certification as a HUBZone for Seminole Beef, has been invited for a product review by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for Noble Juice and has participated in a bid for fuel with the Coast Guard in Florida. These opportunities are exciting for STOFI and its businesses, and we hope to continue to diversify our revenue streams, offer our premium products to a new market and strengthen our businesses for future generations.

Many people are most familiar with 8(a) contracting, which is a business assistance program for small, disadvantaged businesses. This designation is appealing to STOFI and we will continue to explore this opportunity and find ways for our businesses to qualify.

For those individual Indian businesses interested in government contracting, there



are many resources available to you free of charge. These programs include the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC), Minority Business Development Centers (MBDC), local Small Business Administration (SBA) offices and the non-profit small business organization Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE).

STOFI has partnered with many of these programs for resources and technical assistance as we have moved forward in this new endeavor. As the new president of STOFI, I'm pleased to see the seeds that I planted for our businesses – from when I was in office before – are coming to fruition. Government contracting is the right boost that STOFI needs for our minority-owned businesses, and the STOFI board and I are excited to see where this leads.

Sho-naa-bish.

Mitchell Cypress is President of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc.



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USET SPF Resolution No. 2016:023

REQUEST FOR FLORIDA LEGISLATURE TO REJECT SENATE BILL 1054 AND HOUSE BILL 803

WHEREAS, USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) federally recognized Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, the actions taken by the USET SPF Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribal Nation, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribal Nation's leadership; and

WHEREAS, the cultural heritage of Tribal Nations represented by USET is manifest in the landscape of the ancestral, aboriginal, and ceded lands which they once occupied and still occupy; and

WHEREAS, this cultural heritage is fundamentally important to the core identity of Native people, as it connects us directly with our ancestors; and

WHEREAS, cultural heritage includes the artifacts and remains that our ancestors left behind which today comprise archaeological sites; and

WHEREAS, archaeological sites are places of special importance to Tribal Nations represented by USET and, wherever possible, should be protected from disturbance; and

WHEREAS, state governments have a moral and legal duty to Tribal Nations to protect both currently known and unknown archaeological sites located on lands within their jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 Florida Legislative session is considering two identical bills known as Senate Bill 1054 and House Bill 803 'Historic and Archaeological Artifacts', which, if enacted, would allow private citizens to obtain a permit, by application and payment of a fee, to excavate and collect artifacts from submerged state lands in Florida; and

WHEREAS, artifacts resultant from such permitted activities would be retained by the collector with the possibility that they could be sold to other private collectors; and

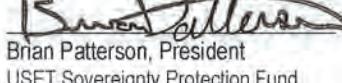
WHEREAS, the passing of the proposed bills represents a direct threat to the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of Florida through the unwarranted disturbance of our cultural heritage and has a high likelihood of disturbing ancestral burial sites; and

WHEREAS, in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it

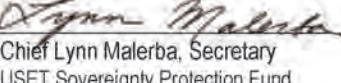
RESOLVED the USET Board of Directors calls upon the Florida Legislature to act now to stop the passage of Senate Bill 1054 and House Bill 803 for the benefit of all Tribal citizens in Florida.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the 2016 USET SPF Impact Week Meeting in Arlington, VA, at which a quorum was present, on February 11, 2016.



Brian Patterson, President
USET Sovereignty Protection Fund



Lynn Malerba, Secretary
USET Sovereignty Protection Fund

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Community



Landmark signs point to Seminole past

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

When Jack Chalfant visits the Micco Camp on Brighton Reservation he does not need a newly erected 6-foot monument sign to tell him the place is important.

For the Tribal citizen and Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) management trainee, every inch of the 1.5-acre area reminds him of his family history.

A dilapidated, rustic, wood-frame home built in the early 1960s by Jack Smith Sr. stands in front of a now abandoned block home constructed by Kody Micco in the 1980s. The camp's original cook chickie stood nearby where Charlie Micco and his wife, Emma, settled in Brighton circa 1940 after Micco was made one of the reservation's first cattle bosses.

A bench where Chalfant rested during carefree childhood days more than four decades ago is still wedged between the trunks of two of the largest and possibly oldest eucalyptus trees on the reservation. Family reunions are still held on the property.

"This was once a very busy place," Chalfant said. "Some younger people know that, some don't. We're here to teach them and everyone else what value is here on this land."

Called a heritage marker, the sign at Micco Camp brings to six the number of identified historical locations on Seminole land. The others are Brown's Trading Post in Big Cypress, the Council Oak tree in Hollywood, and the Red Barn, Billy Bowlegs III Camp and Tom Smith Camp in Brighton. All plus nine unmarked locations are listed in the Tribal Register of Historic Places. The Red Barn and Council Oak are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, under the Department of the Interior.

Established in 2011, the tribal registry protects and preserves the Tribe's unique history while maintaining control over how much information is shared with outsiders, said THPO Director Paul Backhouse, who also serves as director of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki

♦ See LANDMARK SIGNS on page 5A



From left, Hannah Billie, Jennie Martinez, Linda Beletso, Jeannette Cypress, Mary Jene Koenes, Deloris Jimmie Alvarez and Susie Jumper, aka the '60s babes,' are stars of the show Jan. 23 at a Hawaiian luau that not only celebrated each of their 60th birthdays but their 60 years of forever friendship.

'60s babes' hula happily into seventh decade

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Sixty never looked younger than when seven Big Cypress childhood girlfriends hula danced before a crowd Jan. 23 to celebrate 420 collective years of happy birthdays.

With shimmying hips and gracefully raised arms in the barn at the Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena grounds, they sent a message amid Hawaiian luau decorations that life is

full of surprises even after six decades of good living.

"We're still so young at heart," said Linda Beletso about the seven pals who grew up together and are still best friends. "But this might be the only time you will ever want to see seven 60-year-old ladies get lei'd."

The party erupted in laughter as Beletso, Mary Jene Koenes and the other birthday honorees Jeannette Cypress, Jennie Martinez, Deloris Jimmie Alvarez, Susie

Jumper and Hannah Billie each received Hawaiian flower leis to start the soiree.

Entertainment by No Ka Oi Productions provided ukulele music and Polynesian indigenous dancing. Pineapples and flowers decked the tables and tiki torches set the stage for about 100 guests dressed in luau garb.

"If it weren't for the Creator, we would not be here today for you or each other,"

♦ See 60s BABES on page 4A

Soggy fields do not dampen fourth annual Smith Family Cattle Drive & Ranch Rodeo

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — The fourth annual Smith Family Cattle Drive & Ranch Rodeo went off with only a minor hitch Feb. 20 in Brighton: Saturated pastures forced 68 cattle and herders to instead move along roads parallel to the soggy fields.

About 100 family members and friends rode horses, all-terrain vehicles, pickup trucks and swamp buggies and helped herd the cattle from the marsh pens to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena about 6 miles away. A few hard-working dogs kept the cattle in

line with barks and nips if they broke from the herd.

The event honors the Smith family patriarchs' contributions in the cattle industry and their lives of public service.

The sons of Jack Smith Sr., a pioneer of the cattle industry, followed him into the cattle business. Fred, Richard, Jack Jr. and Roger were all cattlemen and served the Tribe as elected officials.

Jack Sr. left his herd to his four daughters: Nellie Smith, Oneva Baxley, Linda Tommie and Mahala Madrigal, who keep it in Nellie's pasture. Roger's pasture is right next door and his widow, Diane

Smith; daughter Amanda Julian; and son-in-law John Julian take care of the herds.

"We are blessed to be able to carry on his legacy," Amanda Julian said about her late father, Roger. "He always loved his cattle."

Julian aspires to be a cattlewoman; her application is pending approval.

Nellie Smith, who was afraid of cows as a child, remembers going into the pastures to round up cattle.

"We used to go out and help my dad mark the calves," Mahala Madrigal said. "We had to gather them up and make sure they didn't get away."

The younger generation of Smiths is proud of the family legacy and hopes to make its own mark on the Tribe. Trisha Osceola, Roger's daughter, remembers her father working the pastures every day. She said each brother contributed to the Tribe in his own way.

"They were a great group of guys that a lot of people looked up to," said Osceola, of Hollywood. "It's nice to be part of the bloodline and hopefully carry on what they started."

Fred's daughter Camellia Smith Osceola, who manages her father's herd, is also proud of her lineage. She said the cattle drive respects and honors her grandfather and uncles, and it helps pass on their legacy to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"We want to make sure they know the story so they can carry it on when we aren't here," she said. "We share this event with the community because they were all community leaders and well respected. They set a good example for the family."

Some of the grandchildren are starting to take on leadership positions of their own. Jarrid Smith, Camellia Smith Osceola's son, teaches at Hollywood Hills High School and serves on the Gaming Commission. He said he did not realize the significance of his family until he was old enough to see it from an outside perspective.

"This is just the people they were and the role they played in the community," said Smith, 30. "The younger kids probably think this is a normal family, which is a good thing."

Smith made a conscious decision to follow in his family's footsteps. He has a strong relationship with his wife, Desirée; family; and God. He attends church regularly. A graduate of Florida Atlantic University, Smith formerly taught at the Ahfachkee School and believes in serving the community.

"At the inauguration last year, as I was sitting there, the thought occurred to me that I could put myself in those shoes," he said. "I want to be in leadership. Right now I'm a teacher and would like to one day be an administrator, which is still leadership."

To lead the cattle drive, the family chose Paul Bowers Sr. as trail boss. His brother Richard had the honor last year and

Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo reaches 20-year mark

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Cattle and cowboys will take over Big Cypress March 19 for the 20th annual Junior Cypress Cattle Drive & Rodeo.

The daylong tradition will warm up with a 7:30 a.m. breakfast roundup at Billie Swamp Safari and then hit pastures and roads with 200 riders and a herd of cattle at West Boundary Road. The route will feature a break for snacks, prayer and speakers at Cory Wilcox's pasture before its customary pass through the center of the community along Josie Billie Highway.

"Every year the cattle drive bonds our families. It reminds us what those before us sacrificed to make the cattle program what it is now," said Jonah Cypress, son of Junior Cypress, one of the first to help establish the Big Cypress cattle enterprise and for whom the cattle drive is named.

Almost 10 miles long, the drive will reenact the grueling work of the Tribe's cattleworkers circa 1940 who drove bovine 200 to 300 square miles through unfenced land for weeks until the cattle was corralled for screening, medicine and other reasons.

"Now, it is one day for people to come out and honor the ones who made it happen for us today and just to have a good time," Jonah Cypress said.

This year's honorary trail boss distinction goes to the late Bert Frazier, who was a Big Cypress cattle owner and medicine man. Frazier was born on Feb. 15, 1898. He passed away Feb. 1, 1984 at age 85.

Esther Cypress Buster, who rode as an honorary trail boss in 2005 to represent three generations of female cattle owners, remembers Frazier as a private man with a camp on the reservation's northeast border near the street now called Bert Frazier Road. Buster recalled visiting his home when she was about 8 years old.

♦ See CATTLE DRIVE on page 4A

Protest walk to defend fragile environment gears up

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

TRAIL — A consortium of aboriginal groups, environmental activist groups and independent citizens will stage an 80-mile protest walk March 20-25 from Miami to Naples to shed light on matters they say threaten to kill South Florida's unique, fragile ecosystem.

At risk are numerous endangered wildlife and plant species, Florida's only fresh water source and the Native homes and traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples.

The six-day march led by Miccosukee citizen Betty Osceola; Shannon Larson, of Ancient Trees; and Karen Dwyer, of the Stone Crab Alliance, will snake through seven national and state parks, a World Heritage site and the proposed site of the River of Grass Greenway (ROGG).

Dwyer, the acting spokesperson for the event, said the protest is strengthened by the alliance of people whose expertise serves different problems.

"We are in a time of so many threats against the Everglades. Too many problems are going on that building a large alliance helps to bring attention to everyone," Dwyer said.

Protesters aim to provoke local and state policy makers into standing against pro-fracking oil operations in the Everglades, permits that could allow amateur archaeologic collection, laws that prohibit medicinal and cultural plant collection by Tribe members and the construction of the government-funded ROGG.

Planned to include tourist stops, restrooms, traffic turning lanes and an electric light and power system, the road to run mostly parallel to Tamiami Trail will require destroying miles of archaeologically and culturally sensitive wildlands within yards of historic Miccosukee and Seminole camp grounds.

The protest is sanctioned by Bobbie C. Billie, the elder leader and medicine man of the Council of Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation Aboriginal Peoples. Billie is a long-standing and vocal opponent to human encroachment in the Everglades.

♦ See PROTEST on page 5A



A herd of 68 cattle and its entourage trek through the back roads of Brighton Feb. 20 during the fourth annual Smith Family Cattle Drive & Ranch Rodeo. The event honors the Smith family patriarchs' contributions in the cattle industry and their lives in public service.

Beverly Bidney

♦ See SMITH FAMILY on page 8A

5 ways Tribes can reduce taxes on citizens in 2016

BY PETER A. HAHN
Treasurer

Contrary to popular misconception, individual members of Native American Tribes do pay federal income taxes on their income, including on most of the income derived from Native American tribal or reservation sources. Some also pay state income tax on many income sources. Moreover, Tribal citizen income is generally subject to tax at full "ordinary income" rates – not the reduced rates applicable to capital gains or corporate dividends. Many Tribal citizens also have few deductions and limited options for deferring tribal income, such as through the use of a 401(k) or individual retirement account, unless they are actually employed by the Tribe.

However, there are a few actions that tribal leaders can take to reduce federal (and in most cases, state) taxes on Tribal citizen income. Thanks to the passage of recently enacted federal legislation, as well as some favorable IRS administrative rulings and procedures, tribal leaders now have the ability to structure programs and establish plans that can relieve some of the federal and state income tax burdens otherwise imposed on their citizens. Here are five things that tribal leaders can do in 2016 and beyond that should have a favorable impact on their citizens' tax bills.

1. Maximize excludable benefits and payments (general welfare and other exclusions).

With the passage of the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act in 2014 and the Affordable Care Act in 2010, there are now two Internal Revenue Code provisions providing exclusions specifically designed to exempt payments made by a Native American Tribe to its citizens (including Tribal citizen spouses and dependents):

- Section 139D (relating to health insurance payments and health benefits)
- Section 139E (relating to payments made pursuant to other tribal general welfare programs)

These two provisions allow Tribes to provide a wide range of excludable benefits (e.g., health, education, housing, elder care and cultural programs) so long as the tribal government programs comply with the specific terms of these Tax Code exemptions. To maximize the potential tax savings, a tribal program inventory should be undertaken to make sure that the existing programs comply with the statutory requirements for exclusion from income and to consider the establishment of new programs to meet the needs of the tribal membership. (See Holland & Knight's alert, "IRS Issues Guidance on Tribal General Welfare Exclusion and Safe Harbors," April 21, 2015.)

2. Maximize distributions made from nontaxable sources of tribal revenue.

Almost all types of revenue are free from federal income tax when earned by a Native American Tribe, but some are also free from tax when they are subsequently distributed to the Tribe's citizens. Based on recent IRS guidance interpreting the Per Capita Act of 1982, the following sources of income may be earned by a Native American Tribe and distributed to Tribal citizens free of federal (and state) income tax:

- income from leases, easement and other uses of federal trust land
- income from trust resources, such as timber, mineral deposits, oil and gas
- income from the sale of trust land or from damage awards related to trust land

(See Holland & Knight's alert, "Interim IRS Guidance Confirms Per Capita Distributions from Tribal Trust Resources Are Nontaxable," March 18, 2014 and also "IRS Confirms Per Capita Tribal Trust Payments Not Taxable," Sept. 21, 2015.)

As a long-term goal, all Tribes should be looking at opportunities to increase the amount of tribal land held in trust, particularly in light of the myriad tax advantages associated with leasing of trust land.

3. Promote home ownership and charitable giving.

For taxpayers who itemize their deductions, two of the largest deductions are those associated with home ownership (e.g., home mortgage interest and property taxes) and charitable contributions. While a

Tribal citizen's decision to own a home or to contribute to a charitable organization is a personal one, tribal leaders can facilitate opportunities for Tribal citizens to own a home and to obtain mortgage financing. Furthermore, tribal leaders can work to let their citizens know about charitable organizations that support Indian Country priorities.

4. Adopt a deferred per capita savings plan for elective deferrals of gaming revenues.

As previously noted, per capita distributions are fully taxable at ordinary income rates. Further, since such distributions are not considered "earned income," no portion of the revenues can be contributed by the Tribal citizen into a 401(k) plan or other type of deferred compensation plan. However, a longstanding IRS private letter ruling and more recent IRS revenue procedures confirm that general income deferral principles apply to the taxable per capita revenues. Applying the same principles utilized by rabbi trusts to certain tribal trusts, IRS administrative guidance provides a roadmap for Tribes to establish a deferred per capita savings plan that allows Tribal citizens to voluntarily defer receipt of a portion of their per capita distribution by having it placed in a grantor trust owned by the Tribe until a set date. Since this type of plan and accompanying trust can only be established by the Tribe itself, this is again a situation where tribal leaders can provide opportunities for Tribal citizen tax savings.

Of course, there are many reasons (in addition to current income tax savings) that a Tribal citizen might voluntarily decide to defer a portion of a per capita payment, including:

- as part of an estate plan (particularly where the Tribal citizen's spouse and dependents are not eligible to receive per capita payments after the member's death)
- as a hedge against a downturn in tribal gaming revenues
- as a means of savings to supplement a citizen's own income in retirement or to cover anticipated long-term care needs

Most tribal leaders have found that citizens appreciate having options, and this is one that a Tribe can establish for its citizens at minimal expense. (See Holland & Knight's alert, "A Tribal Financial Executive's Guide to Deferred Per Capita Plans," Sept. 14, 2015.)

5. Conduct a tax efficiency audit of the Tribe's minors trust.

Since 2003, when the IRS proposed safe harbor requirements for the creation of tax-deferred minors trusts, most Tribes decided to establish grantor trusts meeting the IRS safe harbor requirements for the following reasons:

- it simplifies tax compliance by the minor citizens and their parents by deferring taxation until actual distributions are made
- in so doing, it largely eliminates Kiddie Tax filings (at least for those who do not receive distributions until they are beyond the age when the Kiddie Tax applies)
- the tax-free compounding of investment returns generally offsets the potentially higher effective tax rates applicable to the cash distributions made at age 18 (or older)

Since 2011, when the IRS finalized its minors trust guidance (including provisions that allowed Tribes to stagger distributions made to minors over whatever period the Tribe selects), many Tribes have decided to restructure their minors trust. In some cases, the trusts are being restructured to delay the age at which distributions are made and/or to include special provisions applicable to minors with special needs.

If a Tribe has not already reviewed its minors trust to make sure that it is as tax-efficient as possible, now would be a good time to do so.

Kathleen Nilles contributed to this report, which first appeared on Law360.

Pete Hahn is treasurer of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. He has more than 10 years of experience working in treasury, finance and tribal/federal/state relations and compliance.

Kathleen Nilles is a partner with Holland & Knight. She has more than 25 years of experience advising Native American tribal governments on tax compliance issues.

permanent collection.

Spectators will be permitted to stand or sit along roadways to watch the cattle drive for free.

Guests are also invited to watch the Native kids rodeo at noon and the Eastern Indian Rodeo Association's all-Native adult rodeo at 7 p.m.

To ride along on a personal horse or Billie Swamp Safari swamp buggy, the cost is \$50 (ages 13 and up) or \$25 (ages 7 to 12). It's free for children ages 6 and younger. Cost includes breakfast, midway snacks and a barbecue dinner at 3 p.m.

For more information, visit www.SeminoleCattleDrive.com.



Deloris Jimmie Alvarez, Linda Beletso and Mary Jene Koenes show off hula dance moves they and (not pictured) Hannah Billie, Jennie Martinez, Jeannette Cypress and Susie Jumper learned for the lifelong friends' super 60s Hawaiian luau birthday party Jan. 23 at Junior Cypress Rodeo Arena. Eileen Soler

◆ 60s BABES

From page 3A

Koenes told the crowd. She said the party idea came from Beletso whose biological sisters passed away in recent years. Koenes said the group embraced the opportunity to celebrate "sisters in life."

Beletso called on the "sisters" to take center stage: first Cypress, whom she deemed "my partner in crime," and the others, whom she dubbed "the 60s babes." Cypress warned guests: "If you made a New Year's resolution to lose weight – forget about it tonight."

The barbecue meal featured ribs, chicken and sides with hints of Polynesian spices.

A three-tiered cake was layered in strawberries, bananas and pineapples.

Pastor Josh Leadingfox, of Immokalee First Seminole Baptist Church, gave a blessing and a nod to the youthfulness of the birthday ladies.

"You have smiles that are contagious. Maybe for you it's not sweet 16 anymore, but it's definitely the sweet 60s," Leadingfox said. He then asked the Creator to "rain

blessings upon them" and provide a fun-filled event.

"Your word says laughter is good medicine, Lord. Let that happen to us tonight," Leadingfox prayed – which some could surmise led to his win later in a hilarious all-male hula contest.

Born between the last months of 1955 and the first half of 1956, the "60s babes" consist of three Panthers, and one each of Otter, Big Town and Wind clans, who are forever friends. They have loved and supported each other as far back as their memories allow, Koenes said.

One summer, when the group was 13 or 14, they worked on horseback in the Tribe's cattle pastures as the first all-girl cow crew. The gang was never afraid of hard work – they toiled equally hard at harvesting tomato fields.

All Ahfachkee School kids, their lives took slightly different paths as their teen years ushered in high school days and their early 20s brought college and motherhood. Combined, they raised 23 children. Now, the "60s babes" also boast 53 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Cypress alone has 22 grandchildren.

But on the night of the birthday extravaganza they revealed one deeply shared secret: Weeks before the party night, they perpetrated a ruse – a downright lie – against their husbands, children and even grandchildren. For two months, the gang told their families they had to attend "meetings" but instead, they slipped off to Weston to practice hula moves with a Polynesian dance instructor.

Even Hannah Billie, who shattered her knee while driving her three-wheeled Harley Davidson motorcycle a few months ago, got in on the action, albeit seated in a chair with a cane by her side.

"I will be back on the bike in no time. Guaranteed," said Billie, aka "G-Mom." She joked that her friends should all buy motorcycles and black leather jackets. "We'll call ourselves the Hog Mamas."

Cypress said the friends will continue to support each other through thick and thin and into old age when health will likely fail them. Her feeling is shared.

"We love each other like sisters so we will always be connected but whenever we're together we feel like we're still kids," Koenes said.

◆ COMPACT

From page 1A

and others met with media, Tribal citizens and casino employees to reveal concurrent plans for a \$1.8 billion Hard Rock hotel and entertainment expansion should the compact deal go through.

The expansion includes an 800-room, guitar-shaped hotel in Hollywood with new restaurants and upgrades to Hard Rock Live and top-tier VIP guest accommodations, such as water entry rooms and butler service.

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa will also see major changes: a new 500-room hotel tower, rooftop swimming pool, 2,000 capacity entertainment center, additional poker room and several new restaurants.

But Allen said the Tribe's gaming business in Florida would not be the biggest winner if the compact is approved – job creation will come out on top. The expansion project is projected to result in nearly 19,500 jobs, which include 3,500 that already exist in Seminole Gaming, 4,900 new positions and 14,600 construction jobs.

"The compact is not all about adding new machines," Allen said. He said the ripple effect of the compact being denied will bring "severe repercussions."

When asked if legislators understand mandates set forth by IGRA, Scott, who ran for office in 2010 on jobs promises, said lawmakers try to be informed on issues that come before them.

The IGRA is complicated and much debated but it essentially provides tribal

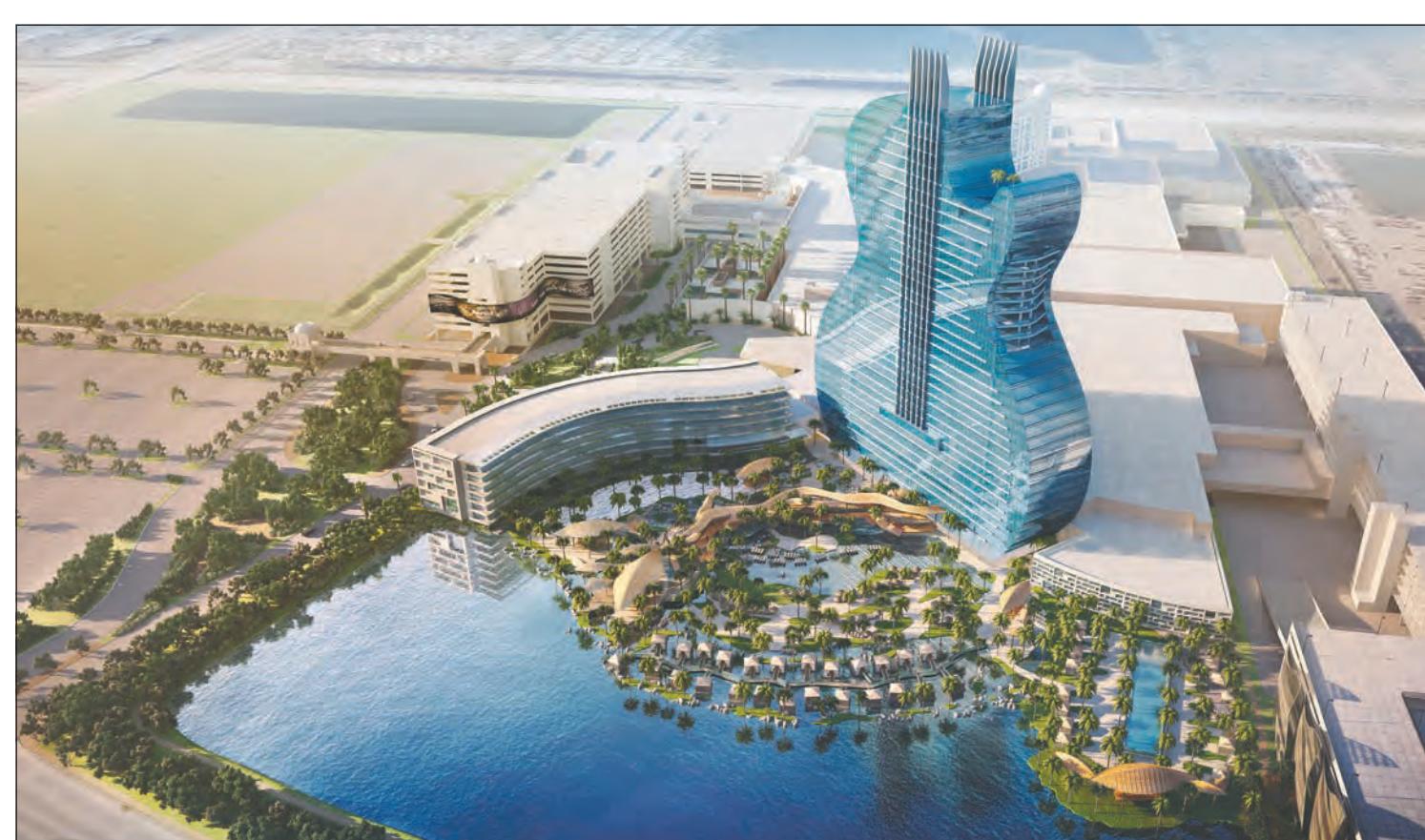


Florida Gov. Rick Scott views an artist rendering of the proposed expansion of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Eileen Soler

gaming ventures, through the National Indian Gaming Commission, a leg up in the gaming world in order for Tribes to achieve economic development, financial independence and self-determination. That means, the state must allow the Tribe above and beyond what is allowed for non-tribal gaming operations across the board.

"[Legislators] heard what impact the compact will have on people and they know that gaming gives the Tribe and all working people a chance. That is why, when I talk about the compact, the biggest issue is about jobs," Scott said.

As of publication Feb. 25, both sides of the Legislature had yet to put the compact issue to vote. The Florida legislative session ends March 11.



An artist rendering shows the Hollywood hotel and entertainment expansion plan, which includes an 800-room, guitar-shaped hotel with new restaurants and upgrades to Hard Rock Live and top-tier VIP guest accommodations, such as water entry rooms and butler service. Photo courtesy of Gary Bitner

◆ CATTLE DRIVE

From page 3A

"I might have had asthma so he put herbs in water and I had to use it when I got back to my own house," Buster said. "He was quiet – kept to himself."

Sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s, Frazier lent his storytelling talent to Ahfachkee School for a reading book used to teach Mikasuki.

The book, printed through the National Bilingual Materials Development Center, Rural Education at the University of Alaska, is now held in the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's

4-H kids parade pigs at South Florida Fair

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

WEST PALM BEACH — After about 100 days spent raising hogs, five Seminole 4-H'ers showed the results of their hard work during the South Florida Fair hog show and sale Jan. 22-23 in West Palm Beach.

The fair, which was open to all youth in the region, gave Illiana Robbins, Kylie Daum, Atley Driggers, Rylee Smith and Allison Gopher the chance to compete outside the Seminole 4-H club.

Atley competed for the first time in the show ring and took third in her weight class with her 253-pound hog.

"I was responsible for my pig and took good care of him," said Atley, 8, of Venus,

Florida. "The hardest part was walking him. Whenever he started to run, I couldn't catch him."

The 4-H youth received their hogs at 3 months old then fed, groomed and walked the animals daily to prepare for the event. The ideal weight for hog is less than 300 pounds; judges look for minimal fat with good structure and muscle, according to South Florida Fair organizers.

During the show, judges offered competitors showmanship tips, such as only using the utensils — or sticks — to guide hogs while keeping their other hand tucked behind their backs.

Illiana worked with a hog for the first time, which she described as "difficult." But she said she enjoyed teaching her hog how to

walk in the ring. Illiana was inspired to raise a hog because her older sister Edie participated in 4-H several years ago. Illiana's 236-pound beast took fourth in her weight class.

"I was excited and nervous in the ring," said Illiana, 10, of Big Cypress. "I didn't expect it."

About 175 hopeful youth from around the region waited with their hogs in the Agriplex for their turn in the show ring. A standing-room-only crowd cheered on favorite contestants.

It was Allison's first time showing at the fair; she is raising another hog to show at the Seminole 4-H Show and Sale in March. The Brighton youth's 280-pound hog wasn't the easiest to control, she said, but eventually the hog adjusted to the routine. Although she didn't place, Allison, 17, went into the ring feeling confident.

Rylee has been raising animals in 4-H for more than half his life; he started in the small animal club at age 7. The now 17-year-old is also raising a hog and a steer for the Seminole 4-H show and spends several hours every day working with his livestock.

"I like earning the money," said the Moore Haven High School sophomore. "The hardest part is getting to be grand champion, which I did during my first year showing a pig."

The 4-H hog project also entails learning about the costs of raising hogs and understanding the commitment it takes to see the project to fruition. Youth track expenses in a record book, which helps improve their math skills.

Because it's a business venture, the 4-H'ers hope to sell their hogs for a profit.

"The whole experience of raising a hog is a lot of fun," said Kylie, 17, of Venus, Florida. "I'm kind of nervous and it'll be hard letting go of him. You try not to get attached, but you do."

The sale took place the following night and all the 4-H'ers sold their hogs.

Tribal buyers included Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Brighton Board Rep. Larry Howard, Big Cypress Councilman Cicero Osceola, Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank and Seminole Pride Beef.



Atley Driggers walks her hog into the ring at the South Florida Fair hog show and sale Jan. 22. Atley competed for the first time and took third in her weight class with her 253-pound hog.

Kylie Daum, 17, waits in the holding area before entering the show ring with her hog during the South Florida Fair hog show and sale in West Palm Beach.



Illiana Robbins, center, maneuvers her hog in the show ring at the South Florida Fair hog show and sale in West Palm Beach.

students and 61 teachers. They read for 30 minutes per day, 15 more than usual.

Daily guest readers helped capture students' attentions by reading their favorite grade-appropriate books. Amber Thornton's first-grade class, comfy in their pajamas and snacking on milk and cookies, gathered around parent Peggy Nunez as she read "One Rainy Day" by M. Christina Butler.

Culture language instructors Marcus Briggs-Cloud and Jade Osceola read from Betty Mae Jumper's book "Legends of the Seminoles."

Older students took turns reading to younger classes. Seventh- and eighth-graders read stories in Creek to toddlers in the immersion class. Fifth-graders read with kindergarten students and each honed reading skills during the process.

Fifth-graders Renee Ringer, 11, and Laci Prescott, 10, made sure Bobbi Dale Johns-Osceola, 6, understood every page of "Barbie and the Secret Door" by asking questions about the text. The older girls also read to their younger siblings.

"They need to learn complicated words so they will get good grades when they get older," Renee said.

"It's fun to have the honor to come and read to them," Laci added. "They are little and we get to help teach them."

A door decorating contest included one standout door that featured a quote by the late Mason Cooley, professor at Columbia University and the College of Staten Island: "Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are."

Literacy Week at PECS was organized by instructional coaches Stephanie Tedders and Victoria Paige, who deemed the week a success.

"The week was very productive, lots of fun and filled with real enjoyment of good literature," Paige said. "Our staff and parents do a great job of embracing the love of literacy."

READ

From page 1A

pajama party complete with milk, cookies and bedtime stories.

Throughout the fun, PECS exceeded a weeklong 30,000 minute reading challenge with nearly 33,000 minutes read by 299



PECS principal Brian Greseth poses with one of two checks awarded to the school Jan. 28 in Tallahassee for service projects submitted by elementary and middle school students for Literacy Week.

Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas



A bronze monument sign on Brighton Reservation marks the location of the Micco Camp, which dates back to the early 1940s when the cattle boss and his wife, Emma, moved to the site just yards from the Red Barn.

LANDMARK SIGNS

From page 3A

Museum. More than 90,000 properties are currently listed in the national directory, which is available to the public.

"On one hand, the Tribe's heritage and history is incredibly important but gets muted when listed at the national level," Backhouse said. "On the other hand, the tribal registry honors the specific history without jumping through hoops or sharing information with the entire nation."

Backhouse said the landmarked sites will not become tourist attractions. Tribal and federal laws are in place to prohibit people, including curiosity seekers and archaeology buffs, from disrespecting the properties by entering uninvited to steal artifacts.

"It is a felony to excavate or tamper at all with the sites and the Tribe has cultural laws in place to keep it safe," Backhouse said. "This is something for the Tribe, not the outside world. It's for the community to go and celebrate and learn about culture and history and to remember the important contributions of their own families."

To protect the Micco Camp and Tom Smith Camp further, Tribal Council voted on Jan. 15 to set aside the land for preservation. Construction or development of any kind on the properties is now against tribal law.

Currently, THPO is standing with the United South & Eastern Tribes (USET) organization, comprised of 26 Tribes, to thwart the passage of Florida Senate Bill 1054 and House Bill 803 under consideration during this legislative session.

If passed, the bills will clear the way for anyone to obtain a permit for excavation and collection of artifacts found at historically sensitive sites.

All sites in the tribal registry are approved for designation by family members. Some sites are purposefully kept from outsider knowledge because of cultural sensitivity. Others are landmarked to be visited and used for teaching culture and history.

Each recently marked location, like the Micco Camp, is somewhat different.

The vast Billy Bowlegs III Camp includes old water pumps and locations where chickees likely stood. From a distance, viewers can spy neat lines of

various shades of green where vegetables, herbs and fruits were grown. Today, orange and grapefruit trees continue to yield though the fruit is tart and bees have taken over tree trunks.

Brighton became a reservation in 1937, but Chalfant said Billy Bowlegs III planted his garden long before that. Bowlegs is best known to outsiders for crisscrossing the state on missions with government officials to advance Native causes.

"I look at his land and think someday we will rebuild the camp to show what it was like then," Chalfant said.

At the Tom Smith Camp, nestled in a cypress dome, the rusted shell of an antique car circa 1943 rests under a canopy of overgrown trees. Plywood benches surround a fire pit in the former center of the camp and bottles that date back to 1929 still lay where they were tossed.

"He (Smith) worked with his hands, mostly with metals — he made his own bullets, in fact. But he was also a healer, a medicine man," Chalfant said.

Tribal archaeologist Maureen Mahoney said a handful of other sites are being studied to eventually list on the tribal registry and landmark with bronze signs. They include: the Josie Billie, Morgan Cypress and Morgan Smith camps in Big Cypress, the Betty Mae Jumper Camp in Hollywood and the Buster Twins Camp in

Brighton.

"Each site is treated differently according to what the family wants. Some families might even want the camp listed but the stories never told," Mahoney said. "Some sites are relevant for who lived there, what they did or what happened there."

In the case of Betty Mae Jumper's camp, the location that once housed the Tribe's first Chairwoman are now under concrete and dirt at the Tribe's Seminole Estates property off State Road 7. Backhouse said a marker with historic photographs that depict the site in its earliest state would likely be used mainly for educational purposes should the Tribe chooses to use the land for buildings.

Chalfant said he views education as one of the most important reasons for marking important sites.

"Basically our job is to show the young generations and generations later that we have places that are so important to our culture and history," Chalfant said. "If we preserve the past we will always have something to look back on."

PROTEST

From page 3A

According to a prepared statement, Billie said the most important concern is: "The destruction of the natural world that sustains us all: the earth, the water, the air, the trees the plants and the wildlife. These creations must survive in order that we may all survive. Nature has a right to live a life undisturbed by further development."

Stops along the walk will include focused information sessions regarding each location.

The protest will begin at Pump Station 335 where marchers will ask Miami-Dade Parks officials to withdraw plans for the ROGG; implore Florida legislators to reject a pro-fracking bill currently before lawmakers; and ask the same lawmakers to adopt another bill instead that calls for a total ban on fracking.

On day four, the march will seek to persuade state lawmakers to vote against another bill that calls to deregulate archaeological sites and will, in effect, allow poaching of sensitive artifacts, including human remains.

Dwyer said a similar march was held last year by up to 125 protesters per day who walked along the entire length of Tamiami Trail against the ROGG.

"This year we've expanded into something larger with daily focus issues, speakers and press conferences. It is a responsibility," Dwyer said.

Nightly fire circles will be held.

For a schedule of daily meeting

locations, meal plans, protest focuses and camping arrangements, visit Walk for Future Generations 80 miles in 6 Days on Facebook.



Archive photo/Eileen Soler
Miccosukee Tribe citizen Betty Osceola, who opposes the River of Grass Greenway, walks July 11 along bear tracks in a prairie that teems with birds and plants significant to Native culture and history that could be interrupted by a roadway or boardwalk to accommodate bicyclists and other non-motorized transport.

FIELD DAY

From page 1A

earlier in the week with a two-night rodeo that launched the 2016 competitive season for the Indian National Finals Rodeo. The INFR championships will be held Nov. 8-12 in Las Vegas.

The Friday-through-Sunday Field Day schedule was packed starting daily with grand entry parades that showcased Native dancers throughout Indian Country, flag bearers and Tribe leaders. Shows featuring snakes, alligators, horses and bulls provided thrills. Food and merchandise vendors hawked fare from gator bites and swamp cabbage to crafts from hand-carved tomahawks, hand-beaded jewelry and hand-tooled leather bags.

"I've been coming since I was a child and every year it gets bigger and better. I love it every year just like the one before," said Laverne Thomas, of Brighton, who competed in the first Seminole hair style contest.

Last year, organizers added horse racing to the excitement. The second consecutive races this year pitted Tribal citizens in revved up heats around a makeshift equestrian track. The race was followed by an Indian relay race starring three national award-winning tribal teams who compete bareback.

Brighton's new high-tech amphitheater, complete with professional lighting and sound plus backstage dressing rooms, was

christened with an entertainment roster that included hip-hop artist Supaman (Apsaalooke), the Osceola Brothers Band (Seminole) and country western singer Neal McCoy.

Some first-time Field Day attendees included alligator wrestlers in the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competitions (FAWC). Emceed and facilitated by Seminole alligator wrestlers James Holt and Billy Walker, the competition at Fred Smith Rodeo Arena drew hundreds of spectators.

"Part of the excitement is always that rare chance that something really bad can happen. People sit on the edge of their seats holding their breath," said alligator wrestler Daniel Beck, who worked at the Tribe's Native Village until his arm was nearly severed during a show in 2012.

Tribal citizens from all over Florida attended the weekend festivities.

James Henry said he always enjoys coming back "home" to Brighton although he has been a Tampa resident for decades. This year he visited with his wife, Lilla; son Dakota; daughter-in-law Kelsey; and newborn grandson Kenzie.

"I come back to this spiritual place to talk to family and people I haven't seen in a while. It opens my mind," Henry said.

Because Tampa residents do not live together in a private community as in Hollywood or Fort Pierce, they are not tuned in daily to Seminole traditions, he said. Lilla Henry said the family's disconnection makes

Brighton Field Day an intensely sweet event.

"It's more than a two-and-a-half-hour drive for frybread," Lilla Henry said.



Just minutes after winning the patchwork clothing contest for tribal girls ages 8-10, Angelina Yzaguirre, 8, of Immokalee, shops for pretty new patchwork.



Alligator wrestler Pharaoh Gayles kisses the snout of his reptilian opponent during a Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition Feb. 13 at Field Day. Gayles is a regular alligator wrestler at the Miccosukee Indian Village in Trail.



Tribal horse race competitors Greg Lewis, Kyle Murphy and Jimmy Long press the course Feb. 13 during the 78th annual Brighton Field Day.



A member of the Haskell Dance Performers, from Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, performs for hundreds of spectators Feb. 13.



Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., left, and Board Rep. Larry Howard watch the Brighton Field Day parade from seats high atop their horses.



Shyla Walker, 7, of Big Cypress, moves with delight in a showcase of shawl dancers.



Beverly Bidney

Steven DeWolfe, Oglala Sioux, comes out of the shoot on a bareback bronc during the Field Day rodeo in Brighton Feb. 10.



Eileen Soler

Kay Braswell models for judges during a traditional Seminole hairstyle competition Feb. 13 during Brighton Field Day. Braswell, of Brighton, won the contest.

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Spencer Battiest performs during the High School Nation Tour, which features rising stars in the music industry. The two-month tour last fall gave the singer-songwriter exposure to crowds in 25 cities throughout Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Spencer Battiest shifts career into higher gear

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

"Stupid in Love" may be the name of Spencer Battiest's new album, but it does not apply to how the pop singer-songwriter manages his budding career.

Battiest has worked diligently and deliberately to make a mark in the music industry by releasing the album, performing it live and creating music videos, two of which were screened at the Native Reel Cinema Fest during the 45th annual Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow Feb. 5-6 in Hollywood.

"It's all about promoting," he said. "I'm a brand new artist so I have to fight to get in front of crowds who don't know me."

To support the October release of the four-track extended play (or EP), Battiest toured with the High School Nation Tour, which features rising stars in the music industry. The two-month tour last fall exposed him to crowds in 25 cities throughout Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, Illinois and Wisconsin. Nickelodeon TV star Drake Bell, from "Drake & Josh," headlined the show.

"The tour was amazing," Battiest said. "It was great to get the instant gratification and know what people think about me."

Battiest wrote the songs for "Stupid in Love" in Florida and recorded the album at the historic Castle Recording Studios in

Nashville with producer Mario Fanizzi. He will return to Los Angeles in March for more writing.

The album introduces his musical style and songwriting, which revolves mostly around love, life and personal experiences. The songs are available online at iTunes, Amazon.com, Google Play, Spotify and other streaming services.

"We live in a digital world and the whole world is able to hear my music," he said.

Battiest, the first Seminole signed to Hard Rock Records, credits the label for putting him on stages around the world, including last year's Hard Rock Rising concerts in Miami Beach and Barcelona, Spain. More shows are planned for summer.

Battiest said he always performs wearing a Seminole item, usually a patchwork vest or piece of beadwork.

"I always carry my tradition and pride with me onto the stage," he said.

Battiest grew up singing gospel music and hymns in Mikasuki, Creek and Choctaw. He is primarily a pop artist who loves pop standards sung by Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett and Barbara Streisand, but his all-time favorite artist is Stevie Wonder.

"I'm an artist and I put out into the universe what I feel at the time," Battiest said. "If you listen, you learn about my heart and soul. I hope people can connect to it and enjoy the music."

TRIBAL FAIR

From page 1A

outlawed. The grass dance was one of the only celebrations allowed.

"They tried to take our language and our culture," said Richard Milda, of Minnesota, who is Pima, Crow and Oglala Lakota. "We use eagle feathers to hold onto our culture as best we can."

Milda, a prairie chicken dancer, uses both eagle and pheasant feathers in his regalia. The chicken dance mimics the jerky, birdlike movements of the prairie chicken. Judges search for those specific steps during judging.

"Dance tells a story," said Milda, who has been dancing since age 11. "We are supposed to walk in a humble way, but we are human. Dance is our avenue to show off."

The culture of dance is passed down to children at a very early age. At Tribal Fair, dressed in their finest regalia, children ages 6 and younger flaunted newly learned moves in the tiny tots dance. Babies still too young to walk, let alone dance, were carried around the floor as their peers performed.

Many dancers attend pow-wows across North America throughout the year.

Melvin and Rosa John, of Alberta,

Canada, attend about 22 annually.

"When I first started I was told we dance for those who can't dance anymore," said Melvin John, of the Cree Tribe. "So we dance for them and lift their spirits. Drums are the medicine and when you hear them, any aches and pains go away."

About 2,500 students from schools from around the state, including Fort Myers, Immokalee, Belle Glade, Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, attended opening day. The Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress also sent a contingent of students.

"I love to see the school kids here," said Hollywood Board Rep. Steve Osceola. "This should be the biggest crowd we've seen in the last 10 years."

Students and visitors throughout the weekend were treated to wildlife shows, alligator wrestling, Seminole storytelling, Seminole warfare tactics demonstrations and traditional hoop dancing.

Concerts by Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band, Elizabeth Cook, Derek Miller, the Osceola Brothers Band and Cowbone Band added to the festivities.

Tribal Fair also included for the first time the Native Reel Cinema Fest, which featured films by Steven Paul Judd and appearances by actors Gil Birmingham and Bronson Pelletier and musician Spencer Battiest.



Dancers in colorful regalia fill the Hard Rock Live arena floor Feb. 5 during the grand entry of the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow.



Clinton Billie, 6, adjusts his hat before the clothing contest during Tribal Member Day Jan. 30 in Hollywood.

Spotlight shines on Native film

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

HOLLYWOOD — The long line of moviegoers waiting to enter Native Reel Cinema Fest served as confirmation to Everett Osceola that the two-day Native American film showcase could be a success.

"It was almost like a dream," said Osceola, cultural ambassador for the Tribe. "That's when I knew we put on a good show."

Approximately 400 people attended the event held for the second night during the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow Feb. 5-6 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. Emcee Van Samuels welcomed Seminoles and others, including Comanche Native American actor Gil Birmingham, recording artists Spencer and Zachary "Doc" Battiest, and Plains Cree actor Bronson Pelletier. Appearances were made by Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola and Miss Florida Seminole Destiny Nunez.

With support from Councilman Osceola's Office, Everett Osceola teamed up with Gordon Wareham and April Kirk to bring Osceola's vision and passion for Native American representation in film to life.

"The response was great. We've fulfilled our goal of sharing Native American [art and culture] to a bigger audience," said Kirk, executive director of the historic Stranahan House. "[Tribal Fair] helped introduce our [Native Reel Cinema Fest] to people who wouldn't normally be able to participate in Native American culture."

Kiowa-Chocaw director Steven Paul Judd's short film "Ronnie BoDean" headlined the event at Paradise Live. With drinks, free popcorn and other food for purchase, moviegoers had a realistic cinematic experience.

"I really enjoyed the film," said attendee Regina Barnett, who said "Ronnie BoDean" reminded her of Quentin Tarantino's films, most notably "Pulp Fiction." Barnett attended Tribal Fair with her husband, Bradley, an actor in the Netflix series "House of Cards." Bradley Barnett said Native American film is improving.

"It's getting better and more diverse," he said. "[Native Americans] are in roles that we've never had the opportunity to play."

After previews of other Native works, the music videos "The Storm" and "Love of My Life" were shown.

In 2011, Judd approached Spencer Battiest at the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow and asked to direct a music video for the song "The Storm." Shortly after, Judd collaborated with Seminole Media Productions to film the music video, which was shot in iconic Seminole locations during half a day, was shown at Stranahan House.

At the time, Osceola was in contact with Judd on an upcoming project he was working on. A fan of his past work with the Battiests, he signed on as an executive producer to what would become "Ronnie BoDean." Wareham also signed as executive producer.

Known for his roles in "Dances with Wolves," "The Last of the Mohicans," "Avatar" and "Penny Dreadful," Cherokee actor Wes Studi plays the eponymous Ronnie BoDean, an antihero who babysits the children of his jailed neighbor and teaches them "survival skills." In an interview with the Oklahoma Gazette, Studi said he



From left, Bronson Pelletier, Gil Birmingham, Spencer Battiest and Steven Paul Judd answer questions Feb. 6 during the Native Reel Cinema Fest at Paradise Live.

36th annual American Indian Film Festival and is played in Hard Rocks throughout the world.

"Working with him has been a great thing for our career," Spencer Battiest said.

Osceola's passion for cinema began in his childhood. He recalled fond memories of watching "Revenge of the Ninja" with his family at a drive-in.

"The movie [exposed] another world to me," Osceola said.

Osceola wanted to see more positive and authentic portrayals of Native Americans in the film industry. In November 2014, he and Kirk hosted a well-attended Seminole Cinema Night to showcase Native American talent.

"The Exiles," a 1961 film documenting the activities of a group of Native Americans during half a day, was shown at Stranahan House.

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approved of the Ronnie BoDean character because he represented a more authentic portrayal of Native Americans.

Originally slated to be a graphic novel called "Six Pack and Gas Money," "Ronnie BoDean" turned into a short film project. It has been shown at events throughout the world, including Germany, Paris and Toronto. Judd hopes "Ronnie BoDean" will become a feature film or TV series.

"It feels good to feel validated. When I was growing up, I didn't see anyone that looked like me," Judd said. "My uncles and people I know are rough around the edges, so I wanted to have a character that represented that."

A question and answer session featured Birmingham ("Twilight Saga" film series, "The Long Ranger") Pelletier ("Twilight Saga" film series), Judd and Spencer Battiest. Questions included the current state of Native American portrayals in films.

"It's great seeing us popping up everywhere," Birmingham said.

"We've come a long way; we have a long way to go," Battiest said. "But we need to stand out more in the mainstream media."

Plans are already in motion to make Native Reel Cinema Fest bigger and better next year, Osceola and Kirk said.

"Film is very important and universal," Osceola said. "The best people who can tell our stories are us. Film has brought a lot of awareness to me. We are conserving history and conserving language."



Dancers give an exhibition on the casino floor of the Hollywood Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood Feb. 5 to garner interest in the Tribal Fair and Pow Wow at Hard Rock Live.



Jingle dress and shawl dancers compete at the Tribal Fair and Pow Wow Feb. 5 at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood.



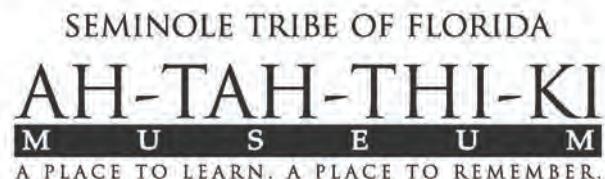
Beverly Bidney
The drum competition pits 11 drum groups against each other as they vied for prize money at the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow.



Beverly Bidney
Gordon 'Ollie' Wareham plays his flute Feb. 5 during a storytelling session for thousands of school children.



Beverly Bidney
A father and his baby join the festivities on the dance floor Feb. 5 during the grand entry at the Hard Rock Live arena.



Driving through rich history

SUBMITTED BY VIRGINIA YARCE
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

At the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, we like to say that your visit starts as soon as the drive here begins. History is everywhere, even in your own neighborhood, and along the scenic route out to Big Cypress. The scope of Seminole history and culture encompasses virtually every corner of Florida, and you may pass it on your way to the Museum.

If you are traveling from the Miami area, you will pass Snake Warrior Island, now a preserved natural area located in Miramar north of County Line Road off SW 62nd Ave. As you stroll along the half-mile loop around the park, you can read interpretive signs about Chitto Tustenuggee, who fought in the Second Seminole War under Abiaki. Imagine the land with its lush, traditional gardens, then surrounded by water, a small island and a large island, protected by a practically impenetrable circle of mangroves.

Coming from Hollywood Reservation, you will pass Sam Jones' Seven Islands along the Pine Island Ridge. The past can be experienced on these lands today by taking a serene walk along the trails at Tree Tops Park (located in Davie just north of Griffin Road off Nob Hill Road). Curtains of Spanish moss hang from enduring oak trees, swaying in the wind. This is the land where Sam Jones, also known as Abiaki, made his camp. Sitting on a bench overlooking the marsh lands, you can almost imagine the past in the present, as the sun gently sets against the woods circling the remaining waters. This is the land where the Seminole people held the higher ground while Major Lauderdale's troops approached through the undrained waters around Pine Island. The Seven Islands can also be experienced at Robbins Park, Flamingo Gardens and Long Key Natural Area and Nature Center, following the ridge to the west.

If you are coming from Fort Pierce you will pass beautiful Jupiter Inlet where the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse was built in 1860. Walking along Center Street south of the Loxahatchee River, you can imagine Seminoles arriving to camp, trade and visit with the lighthouse keeper and local settlers.

Coming from Brighton you will pass through Devil's Garden in Hendry County, an area now being restored from farmland back to Everglades. As you drive down CR 833 from Clewiston toward the Museum, you will travel along what is now called the Sam Jones Trail in honor of this great Seminole leader.

Coming from Tampa, there is Egmont Key out in the bay, where the steamer Grey Cloud left on its final journey from Florida in 1858, marking the end of the war. Currently in our West Gallery you can imagine the struggle of those who boarded and read about those who escaped.

Many of these places are marked on the new Seminole Wars Heritage Trail, just published in 2015. More than 75 dots on the map identify Seminole history spanning the length of Florida, even up into the panhandle and down into the Keys. When you visit the Seminole history page on our Museum website, there is a link taking you

Identifying the Past



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Snake Warrior Island Natural Area in Miramar, Florida.

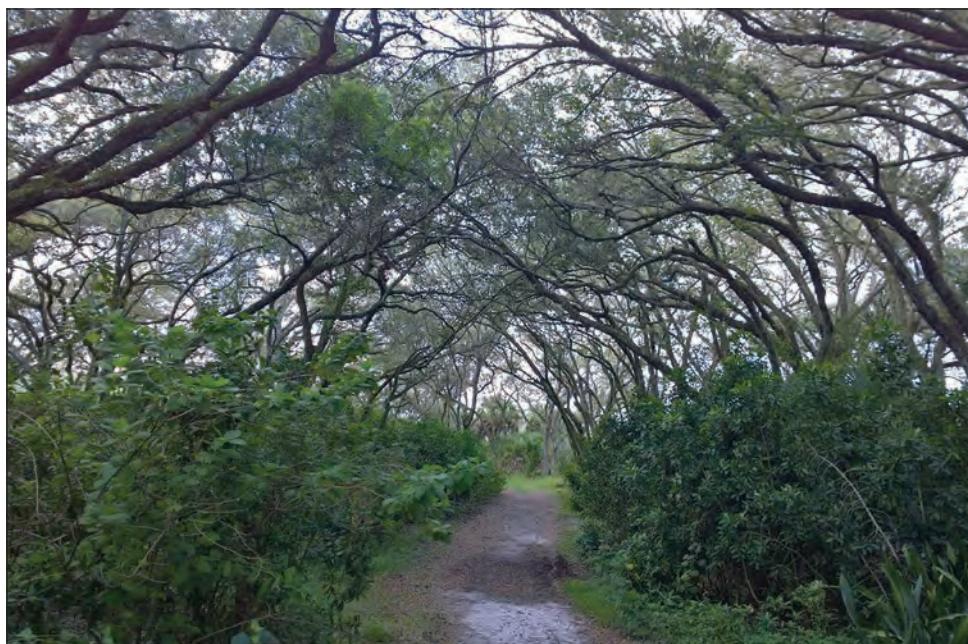


Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Tree Tops Park in Davie, Florida.



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Listen to Seminole voices at the oral history station in the 'Struggle for Survival, 1817-1858' exhibit.

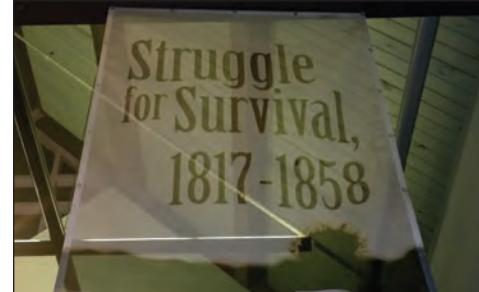


Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The First, Second and Third Seminole Wars are seen as one long struggle for survival in the Museum's current West Gallery exhibit.

to the online version of the Heritage Trail. Discover the places of the past near you, and what you might pass on your way to the Museum. When you get here, past and

present merge as younger voices share oral histories in our newest exhibit, "Struggle for Survival, 1817-1858." The exhibit is only here through Nov. 24, so visit soon.

competitive," said Norman "Skeeter" Bowers. "Richard wasn't shy about telling us to work harder and Roger was like a brother; he was a dear friend."

A few hours later, ranch hands showed their skills with cattle. Five teams from area ranches competed in team sorting, roping and branding, team tying, relay race and bronc riding events.

Plans for next year's cattle drive are already in the works.

Diane Smith said she wants the cattle drive to be an overnighter with camping along the way.

"The brothers were all athletic and

SMITH FAMILY

From page 3A

both were friends of the Smith brothers.

"I was surprised but honored," Bowers said. "It was rough when you haven't ridden for three years; I was glad when it was over."

After three hours on the hot and dusty trail, the cattle were led into a shady pen at the rodeo arena. Then the men, women and children enjoyed a hearty lunch and paid tribute to the Smith family.

"The brothers were all athletic and



Beverly Bidney
The hardest working dogs in town wrangle a wayward cow during the Smith Family Cattle Drive.



Beverly Bidney
Kulipa Julian, 5, gives Rylee Osceola, 16, a ride during a break in a pasture midway through the Smith Family Cattle Drive Feb. 20 in Brighton.

Betty Mae Jumper

Wisdom from the past

Save our children: Say no to drugs

The following column was written by Betty Mae Jumper and printed in the March 14, 1997 issue of The Seminole Tribune.

at a young age thinking, "My parents drink and use drugs, why can't I?" These are words you hear from them over and over again.

Some might ask why I am writing this in our tribal newspaper. But it hurts me deeply to see young people wasting their lives, even dying before their time, when they could all be living an enjoyable life with beautiful homes and kids to raise and educate the right way.

I remember back in the older days, it was said that our people were proud people. Today I wonder what the thoughts of those people would be if they could see the Seminole youth in the drug world of today. Our Indian people have forgotten how to say, "NO" to those things that will harm them today.

At times, if you turn to God and ask His helping hand you'll never regret it. As He is there waiting for you to call Him. Sometimes all you can do is pray.

"Seminole people come up to me all day long upset about this. They want to know how can they do this to us. I don't know what to say other than they're doing this because they can and we have to stop them."

Backhouse said the very nature of the bills would make public, for the first time, the location of hundreds of Native sacred sites – long exempt from Florida public records laws to protect sites from looters – under the guise of letting permittees know where they cannot dig.

"We're giving them a treasure map. It says, 'Don't go here.' But if you think about it, the map also says, 'Here is where it's at,'" Backhouse said. "The bill also leaves it up to the permittees to police themselves and report all findings to the state; yeah, sure..."

In addition to reporting finds to the Division of Historical Resources within 14 days, permit holders must provide a map indicating the location of the discovery and photographs of the artifacts. They must allow the Division to inspect, analyze and photograph the artifacts.

Lees also expressed skepticism.

"While some honest collectors would certainly follow the rules and be diligent in reporting their finds, the last time Florida tried to implement an isolated finds policy (1994-2005), only 22 percent of people who land managers observed collecting artifacts reported them," he said. "This dismal failure proved a lesson in how this sort of unenforceable program results in loss of artifacts, loss of information and loss of our heritage."

Rep. Charlie Stone, R-Ocala, is the sponsor of the House bill. The Senate bill is sponsored by Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, and co-sponsored by Sen. Denise Grimsley, R-Sebring, whose district includes the Fort Pierce Reservation and abuts the Brighton Reservation, including all Okeechobee County and parts of Polk, Highlands, St. Lucie and Martin counties.

As of press time, neither bill had shown movement through committees since late January, giving opponents optimism.

"It doesn't mean they are dead," Backhouse said. "They (legislators) can do what they want until the session is over."

The session ends March 11.



Bobby Yates, left, and trail boss Paul Bowers Sr. lead the herd from the marsh pens to the Fred Smith Rodeo Arena.



Bobby Yates and his daughter Morgan Yates share a moment during the Smith Family Cattle Drive.

Health



Fish fry serves up better years ahead for recovery community

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

SUNRISE — Age meant nothing at the 9th annual Hollywood Fish Fry hosted by Seminoles in Recovery at Markham Park. Participants at the Jan. 23 food, fun and fellowship event in Sunrise measured their years in time free from drugs and alcohol.

"I'm at 20 years," said Kelly Hancock, an addictions case manager of the Tribe's Center for Behavioral Health (CBH). "So I have a vested interest in this event and anything else that helps recovery."

Manning the fish table, Hancock sliced chunks of grouper and tilapia with Myron Azif, who boasted 32 years of sobriety. Azif began attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings on the Hollywood Reservation in the early 1990s.

At the fryer, with fish nuggets and hush puppies popping in oil, others busied themselves cooking the meal to the perfect point of crispy for nearly 75 attendees gathered for camaraderie plus AA and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings.

Charlie Tiger, a CBH supervisor who runs the Tribe's We Can Recover Program offshoot of the independently operated Seminoles in Recovery, said meetings are essential to recovery – one meeting at a time.

"People can learn from others who share their experiences; family members learn about how they can deal with it. People come for help, they ask for sponsors, they learn from our testimonies how they can stay sober, too. No one is alone," Tiger said.

To honor the AA and NA tradition of anonymity, only those who agreed to be photographed or speak on the record are identified in this report.

"The program is practice, not perfection," said Helene Buster, who started Seminoles in Recovery about 24 years ago with her husband, Andy Buster, a retired Miccosukee Tribe judge. The Busters are in recovery for 27 and 34 years, respectively.

"The battle is never won. You take it one day at a time. It's true that you won't ever be cured because addiction is a disease. But like diabetes, you can get it under control. Our medicine is going to meetings," Helene Buster said.

Jeremy Bowers, with eight years in recovery, described himself as an "active user" when he landed in trouble with the law in 2007. That was the day that changed his life for the better.

"It was an eye-opening thing for me, and I am so happy every day because I know some people just don't make it out of the pit," Bowers said. "It's better than being laid in the ground 6 feet deep."

Native Americans die more frequently from alcohol- and drug-related causes than any other race in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Related reasons can be overdose, accidents while under the influence and



Bruce Duncan, Paul Billie and Lewis Gopher are a fish-frying force Jan. 23 during the 9th annual Hollywood Fish Fry at Markham Park in Sunrise.

chronic liver disease caused by alcoholism.

The numbers are staggering: 12 percent of Native American deaths, or one in every 10 Native American deaths, is alcohol related. The rate is three times per capita than all other races combined.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health reported that chronic liver disease was the fifth-leading cause of death among Native men ages 35 to 64 and the second leading cause of death among Native women ages 25 to 54 during 2013.

Fred Mullins, a counselor for Tribal citizens in recovery and youth at risk, said AA and NA's 12-step philosophy, which is anchored in admitting addiction and placing faith in God's power to overcome the disease, leads to "keeping what you learn and giving it away."

"You demonstrate the (AA and NA) principals and doing it leads others to do the same. You start out as the person being helped and then you help others. That's what Helene does. She takes the message and shares it," Mullins said.

Meetings are held weekly at all reservations and communities. All are welcome, including people who want to stop abusing but continue to "get high."

"We have people come in drunk and high. They know they want help but if they don't come in, we can't help them," Tiger said.

Donations were collected at the fish fry to help pay for the organization's upcoming 8th annual Florida Native American Recovery Convention at John Boy Auditorium in Clewiston. The March 3-6 morning to nighttime activities, workshops,

meetings and entertainment will be based on the "12 steps and 12 traditions" of abuse recovery programs.

The steps help lead individuals through recovery one day at a time. Traditions, or guidelines for the support group, include promising to uphold the anonymity of others, not lending the AA name to endorse outside enterprises, and never bringing AA into public controversy.

Buster said about 100 people attended the first convention in 2009. This year, she expects about 500 participants from Tribes nationwide.

Mullins said all who struggle with or are in recovery from alcohol, drug, gambling and other dependencies are invited to the conference.

"Anyone can come. If a person is still using or in recovery or trying to deal with someone they love who is in trouble, it doesn't matter. We are all in the process," Mullins said.

There are no statistics available to the public that enumerate how many Seminole Tribal citizens currently battle dependency but community members acknowledge that too many known users have died young, suddenly and tragically in recent years.

"All we can do is help spread the word and let people in the Tribe know that a good time can be had without abusing. We don't have to be the macho man who can party the hardest ... We can relax, hang out, enjoy a concert, laugh a lot and come home alive," Bowers said.

For times, locations and contact information for weekly meetings, visit www.SeminolesInRecovery.com.

Heart health heralded tribalwide

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Since 1964, February has been designated American Heart Month to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease, the No. 1 killer of Americans, including Native Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Heart Association.

Throughout the month, the Seminole Health Department sponsored tribalwide events focused on heart health. Wear Red Day photos, walks, blood pressure checkups

and education made Tribal citizens and employees mindful of heart health.

The Seminole Pathways Wellness Program also helps participants stay healthy year-round with 5K walks and pedometer competitions.

"We've seen good outcomes with our programs," said Brighton health educator Terri Anquoe. "We want to make it fun and interesting to keep the enthusiasm and motivation going, which helps them make lasting lifestyle changes."

A report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of

Minority Health found that Native Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with heart disease than their white counterparts. Risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure, obesity and cigarette smoking, are more prevalent among Native Americans than whites.

"We try to spread the word that heart disease is the leading killer and is often overlooked," said Hollywood health educator Lauren Goas. "We give everyone the opportunity to get fit and get the education they need to protect their hearts."

Goas said the three most important ways to improve heart health are exercising, eating a heart-healthy diet low in fat and sodium and quitting smoking. Inactivity, eating non-nourishing fried and fast foods, smoking and heavy alcohol consumption contribute to heart disease, she said.

Some find individual ways to keep fit and healthy outside the formal programs. For 20 years, Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr. has watched what he eats and exercises regularly.

"I stay away from heavy food and jog every weekend," he said. "When I'm traveling I'll sneak in a few situps in the hotel."

After a brisk walk in Brighton, a heart conscious group dressed in red enjoyed a healthy picnic lunch behind the Florida Seminole Veterans Building.

"Exercise makes you feel good, gives you positive energy and is good for the spirit," Anquoe said.

Although cardiovascular disease kills more Americans than anything else, steps can be taken to reduce the risk and improve health, Goas said.

"No matter what kind of shape you are in, it's never too late to start taking care of your health," she said. "Our bodies are like a machine and the heart is at the center of it. It needs to be taken care of; it is the pump that keeps our bodies going."



Brighton residents Cierra Baker, Amber Craig, Shyla Jones and Andrea Holata join Health Department staff members Terri Anquoe, Lance Vaz and Kai Setty for a heart healthy walk behind the Florida Seminole Veterans Building Feb. 4.

Beverly Bidney



Prevent germs in kitchens

SUBMITTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPT.

thrive only in a moist environment, so drying them out helps avoid spreading germs.

Clean kitchen surfaces often

In addition to your regular kitchen cleaning routine, it's important to clean all the handles and knobs on faucets, cupboards and refrigerator doors. Don't forget about spices, other ingredient containers and trash cans, too. Use disinfectant sprays or wipes on these areas at least once a week.

Dry hands with a paper towel

After washing your hands, don't grab the hand towel that may be germ-laden. Instead, dry off with a fresh paper towel.

Disinfect cutting boards

Germs love to grow in the cracks of your cutting board. Studies have shown that there are more fecal bacteria on the average cutting board than the average toilet seat. Be sure yours isn't average by doing a couple important things: First, clean cutting boards thoroughly in hot, soapy water, rinse and air dry after each use; second, disinfect it once per week using a solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Cover the cutting board surface entirely with the bleach solution and allow it to stand for several minutes. Then, rinse with water and air dry. Another important tip is to use separate cutting boards for raw meat and produce.

Keep sponges clean

The No. 1 source of germs in your house is the kitchen sponge because the moist little crevices on the sponge make a perfect germ home. When you use a dirty sponge on your dishes and counters, you're essentially transferring bacteria from one item to another. According to the University of Florida IFAS Extension, the most effective ways to clean a sponge is to use the microwave or dishwasher. The easier and most effective process is the microwave: Wet the sponge to prevent fire before placing in the microwave for two minutes, but remember that the sponge will be hot when you take it out. The other process is to place the sponge in your dishwasher with a drying cycle.

Replace dish rags

Dish rags are about as dirty as sponges, so clean them at least once per week. When washing rags, use hot water and then dry on high heat. After each use, as they get wet, allow the dish rags to dry out. Most bacteria

Keep hands clean

Washing your hands before and after you eat is one of the best ways to prevent foodborne illness and cold and flu.

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.

References: Food Safety News, Stop Foodborne Illness and UF IFAS Extension websites.

Free dental sealant program for Broward County students

SUBMITTED BY BOB LAMENDOLA
Florida Department of Health in Broward

An estimated 10,000 school children will have their teeth protected against decay and cavities – for free – as part of a new dental sealant program.

Teams from the Florida Department of Health in Broward County (DOH-Broward) are mobilizing to visit 103 elementary schools this school year to apply the thin plastic coating to the teeth of children whose parents agree to the treatment.

Numerous studies have shown that dental sealant can prevent cavities for years, especially on biting surfaces of molars where most decay happens. The project was sparked by a \$1.27 million grant from the state Agency for Health Care Administration, operator of Florida Medicaid.

"The school-based mobile sealant program will improve the oral health of children and prevent absenteeism due to tooth pain," said Dr. Paula Thaqi, director of DOH-Broward. "We were very pleased to receive the grant."

In Palm Beach County, second-graders already receive dental sealant from the department at participating schools, along with fluoride rinses. (Call 561-840-4500 for more information.)

DOH-Broward has wanted to start the dental sealant program in schools for several years, Thaqi said, but had no way to make it happen until the state grant arrived.



Hygienists will give each child an oral health exam, cleaning, fluoride rinse and personal lesson in brushing and flossing. If appropriate, they will pain biting surfaces with the coating, which is tasteless, not visible and free of BPA (an additive some believe is harmful). The process is simple, painless and takes only minutes to complete.

The teams will see an estimated 120 to 140 children a day and at least 10,000 by June, said DOH-Broward dental administrator Scott Glincher. Kids who need further dental care will be referred to their own dentists or to DOH-Broward's free and low-cost dental clinics.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Dental Association urge all dentists to offer the protection in their offices but say less than half do so. Uninsured kids have little access to sealants.

"We have a lot of children and schools we can serve," Glincher said. "Broward has one of the highest percentages of uninsured children in the country."

For more information, call 954-467-4700 or visit www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/faqs/sealants.htm.



Big Cypress community members pose for a Wear Red Day photo Feb. 11 to show support for American Heart Month.

Photo courtesy of Jamie Diersing

SEMINOLE SCENES



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW: Adventurous children perch among the best seats in the house for a clear view of happenings Feb. 13 during festivities at the 78th annual Brighton Field Day.



SMELL THE ROSES: Chairman James E. Billie stops to smell a bouquet of roses before attending a meeting and press conference Feb. 1 with Tribe leaders, employees and Gov. Rick Scott to announce plans for a new guitar-shaped Hard Rock hotel in Hollywood and to discuss the importance of passing the gaming compact.



GATOR LEAP: Alligator wrestler Billy Walker demonstrates agility as he jumps over a gator Feb. 5 during a Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow show for school children at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood.



TOO HOT TO TROT: A Polynesian fire dancer from No Ka Oi Productions performs in Big Cypress Jan. 23 during a birthday party for seven Tribal citizens and girlfriends for life: Linda Beletso, Mary Jene Koenes, Jeannette Cypress, Jennie Martinez, Deloris Jimmie Alvarez, Susie Jumper and Hannah Billie.



BREAKING WIND: Destructive, tornado-strength winds that ripped through South Florida in early February leave the exit sign at the Big Cypress Reservation border along Snake Road torn and broken.



A REAL FIND: Surrounded by vintage treasures, Robert North Jr. plays original music Jan. 30 at Thriftarella's consignment shop in Davie. Although he continues to write songs, North, a sound engineering student at SAE in Miami, hasn't played in public for more than a year and was eager to get back onstage. Thriftarella's owners Christine Quatrini and Dominick Masi were proud to support local talent.



HAVING A BALL: Nnamdi Tommie poses on a basketball Jan. 23 during the Fort Pierce Tribal Member Appreciation Day inside Chupco's Landing Community Center.



BLANKET OF HONOR: Tribal citizen and president of American Indian Veterans Memorial Inc. Stephen Bowers and Juanita Mullen (Seneca), who is the liaison for American Indians and Alaskan Native veterans for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, flank veteran Roland Poncho as he is honored Feb. 8 at the United South & Eastern Tribes' Sovereignty Protection Fund Impact Week conference in Arlington, Virginia. Poncho is a Council member of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas.



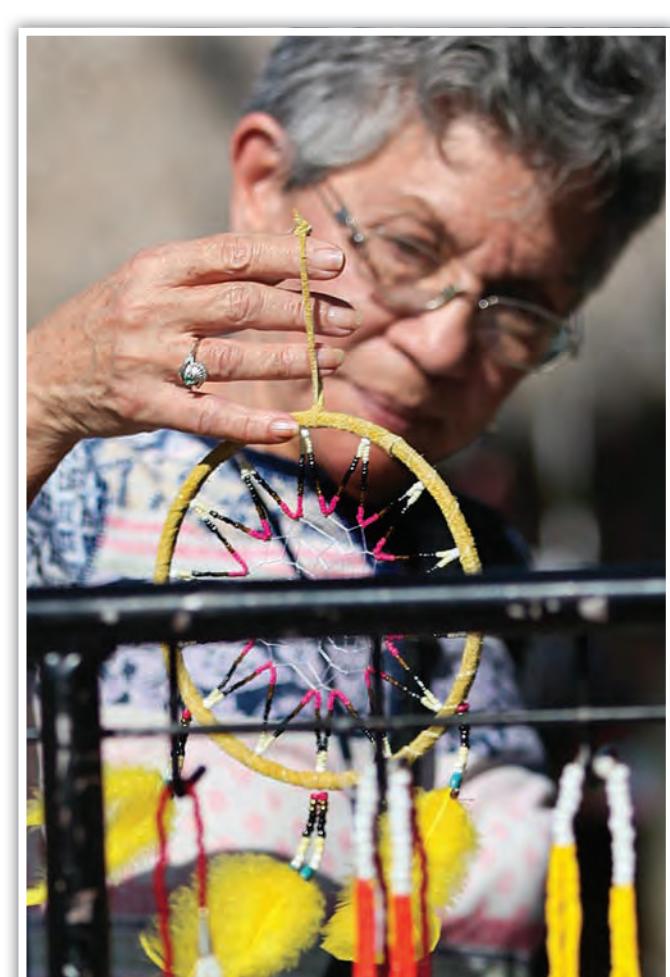
BINGO: Mary Wilcox, Mary Stomboli and Marty Tommie concentrate during a game of bingo Jan. 23 at the Fort Pierce Tribal Member Appreciation Day.



HEART HEALTH: Johnnie Jones Jr. catches his breath after finishing first in the male 18-35 age category during the Brighton Field Day 5K Feb. 10. The event, open to runners and walkers, celebrated American Heart Month.



NOT TOO CUTE: 'Otter' John Jones shows off his black vulture Feb. 5 to about 2,500 students from schools around the state attending opening day of the Seminole Tribal Fair and Pow Wow at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood.



ART DREAMS: Non-tribal art lovers flocked to purchase jewelry, crafts and leather goods at the 78th annual Brighton Field Day. Here, Tere Rancosett, of Lake Worth, has her eyes on a Native American dreamcatcher.

NATIONAL NATIVE NEWS

Native activist Bellecourt confronts Bernie Sanders

MINNEAPOLIS — White Earth Indian Reservation Native Clyde Bellecourt confronted Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders with a single question, recently, after Sanders finished a lengthy speech at a forum in Minneapolis, Minnesota about black issues.

"Are you going to honor the treaties?" asked Bellecourt, who co-founded the American Indian Movement in Minneapolis in 1968.

According to the Grand Forks Herald, Sanders assured Bellecourt that he will do whatever he can to make sure the treaties are followed, to which the newspaper reports, Bellecourt shot back: "You still have not answered the question."

Bellecourt said he had heard no discussion about Indian issues in the presidential campaign, but handlers quickly ushered Sanders to a waiting vehicle for a trip and another speech in nearby St. Paul. The forum moderator scolded Bellecourt, saying the forum was for black issues.

"This for people of color and I am one of those colors," retorted the well-known activist who has clashed with authorities and government leaders many times over the years. Always with the same theme: "They have taken everything from us. They have taken everything but our dignity and our pride."

— *Grand Forks Herald*

Assumptions about Natives and alcohol wrong

TUCSON, Ariz. — The widely held assumption that Native Americans drink more than other groups is not accurate, according to a recent study published in the journal "Drug and Alcohol Dependence."

In fact, researchers found that Native Americans are more likely than white counterparts to abstain from alcohol altogether, and the two groups had comparable rates of heavy and binge drinking.

Such findings "allow us to get rid of the stereotype of 'the drunken Indian' that has persisted for several decades in the media and in general public thought," said co-author Teshia Solomon, director of the University of Arizona's Native American Research and Training Center.

Lead author Jim Cunningham said this is the first in-depth study on American Indians and alcohol use, as a total population.

For this research, the team turned to two massive surveys: The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, spanning 2009 to 2013, included data from more than 4,000 Native Americans and 170,000 whites, and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, conducted between 2011 and 2013, covering more than 21,000 Native Americans and 1 million whites.

After adjusting for factors such as income and education levels, researchers found that 17 percent of whites and Native Americans were binge drinkers, meaning they consume more than four drinks on a given day. Rates of heavy drinking — sustained binge-drinking — were also comparable: about 8.3 percent of Native Americans and 7.5 percent of whites.

When it came to abstaining from alcohol, 60 percent of Native Americans didn't have a drink during the previous month, compared to 43 percent of whites. Native Americans may be more vulnerable to the risks associated with drinking because of other issues, including a lack of access to health care, safe housing and clean water.

Regardless of a person's identity, alcoholism is a serious problem that affects all populations, Solomon said.

"The treatment that's offered should be effective for that population, and that individual," Solomon said. "In regards to Native American populations, we think it's important that culture be a key component of the healing for alcoholism and other diseases."

— *The Washington Post*

Referee bans Navajo hairstyle, league apologizes

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — Native American Heritage Night at the local high school basketball gym began with the national anthem sung in Navajo. Then the Flagstaff Lady Eagles ran out onto the court with their hair in traditional Navajo buns.

Mothers, aunts and grandmothers had gone into the locker room and helped the entire team of mostly Native Americans put their hair up in a tsiyel, as it's called, a traditional Navajo bun tied with yarn.

The crowd cheered and the Lady Eagles began warming up. But, according to Laura Morales of NPR, "a referee told them they couldn't play because he

believed the buns broke regulation. He said the few inches of yarn could whip the girls in the eye or catch their hands." Co-captain Shayleen Toebe told the official they wore the tsiyel in honor of their culture.

The girls had to remove the buns. "It was embarrassing because we had to take it off in front of our parents, our grandparents," said player Shayleen Toebe.

Soon, the whole episode went viral on social media.

"(The incident) brought back stories of many Native people who have said when they were in boarding schools that they could not have their hair long. They could not speak their language. And they could not partake in any of their ceremonies," said Nikki Cooley.

Even Navajo President Russell Begaye got involved, telling NPR: "We are saying, never again ... We will stand our ground. We will defend our culture, who we are as a nation, because we are proud."

The Arizona Interscholastic Association quickly apologized, affirming the referee made an error. The organization promised to improve its cultural sensitivity training.

A few days after the uproar, the Lady Eagles prepared to face off against their cross-town rivals.

"Pauline Butler came to watch her niece play and to do hair. Equipped with a brush and yarn, Butler set up a folding chair next to the concessions stand," reported NPR's Morales. "Butler told the girls their hair represents their thoughts, their knowledge and their memories. And it wasn't just the Lady Eagles who wore them. Around the packed stadium, the buns were everywhere, Navajo women and men, young and old. Cheering. Even Maya Tijerri on the other team sported a bun."

"In the end, we're all Flagstaff kids. We're all playing the same game. And we just wanted to show, like, who we are, where we come from, because this is our home," Tijerri said.

Morales reported that "Native Americans across the country have taken to social media, posting pictures of themselves wearing the tsiyel to show their support for the Lady Eagles."

— *National Public Radio*

Cherokee Nation donates \$4.7 million to OK school districts

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. — The Cherokee Nation has given \$4.7 million to northeast Oklahoma schools to help alleviate the state's classroom funding crisis.

"As the state allocates less and less each year to public education, the Cherokee Nation is making a record-breaking contribution to area schools," Principal Chief Bill John Baker said in a press release from the Tribe. "That's something that every one of our Tribal citizens can take great pride in. We are investing in our children, investing in our communities and investing in our future as Cherokees and as Oklahomans."

The Tribe dedicates 38 percent of the revenue from its car tag sales to education. School superintendents can use the donations at their discretion.

"We are so short right now that we've put a block on (buying) supplies," Claremore superintendent Michael McClaren said. "This gracious award from the Cherokee Nation will help out our teachers and provide some of the routine resources they have not had this year."

Cherokee Nation Secretary of State Chuck Hoskin Jr. and his father, state Rep. Chuck Hoskin Sr., spoke at the Public School Appreciation Day event at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa, asking those in attendance to vote, encourage others to register and vote, and contact their legislators about the state of education in Oklahoma: "The reason I'm taking this opportunity to preach to you ... is that we are in a crisis, and this crisis can be turned into an opportunity ... they're even talking about school consolidation — those little schools that dot the landscape of rural Cherokee Nation in places like Adair County that are the lifeblood of communities ... We know that you're not going to solve this problem by closing down small schools. What you're going to do is hurt communities."

Since 2002, the Tribe has awarded \$40.1 million among about 100 school districts in northeastern Oklahoma. School districts receive \$165 per Cherokee Nation student enrolled this year, although the contributions benefit all students and classrooms in those districts, tribal officials say.

— *TulsaWorld.com*

U.S. to Sioux: This land was your land, but it's ours now

PIERRE, S.D. — The South Dakota State Affairs Committee voted 13-0 to reject a proposal from Rosebud Sioux tribal citizen Rep. Shawn Bordeaux to allow the Sioux Tribes to take control of vast regions of the Black Hills, as per the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.

Rep. Bordeaux, who is on the

Rosebud Sioux Treaty Council, says an 1868 treaty gives his Tribe and others "vast lands west of the Missouri River to the Big Horn mountain range, covering big parts of South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado."

The resolution called for "a full and fair resolution of the claims to the Black Hills by the Sioux Nation Tribes," claiming that previous court battles over the issue faced "statutory jurisdictional limits." Therefore, the proposal concluded "select federal lands in the Black Hills National Forest" should be returned to the Tribes. Private lands and some "essential" federal locations, such as Ellsworth Air Force Base east of Rapid City, would be exempted.

House Minority Leader Spencer Hawley spoke out against the change, noting the "open-ended" component of the resolution: "How much can you go back today and repair history that was done is the question," he said.

The treaty set aside the Black Hills for the Sioux, but when gold was found six years later, miners protected by Gen. George Custer moved in. Custer and the 7th Cavalry famously met their demise in the (June 25, 1876) Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The Tribes' fight to reclaim the Black Hills has been going on for decades.

— *Rapid City Journal*

Obama has 'big ambitions' for protecting land

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has used his authority to preserve more land and water than any other president. And, according to the White House, he still has "big ambitions" for more land protection in the final year of his presidency.

This is good news for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition — a group of Western American Indian Tribes urging Obama to defy Utah's six-member congressional delegation and use his authority to name the 1.9-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah, arguing that it would protect cultural and historic sites.

"Bears Ears offers something unique that we can't find anywhere else in the world," said Eric Descheenie, the Bear's Ear group's co-chairman. "There is the threat of looting, grave robbing and mineral leasing, to name a few — the list is extensive — we've already seen it in and around these lands. If this is something we lose, we lose it forever."

Utah's federal delegation, however, is opposed to a new monument designation and has voiced its objections by letter to Obama, saying the locally driven Public Lands Initiative would be a better way to protect sensitive areas and would not exacerbate the already divisive issues over federal land management.

"We have big, big ambitions this year, so let's see what happens," Christy Goldfuss, managing director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, told The Washington Post.

Goldfuss told the paper that the administration is focused on "local requests for action. It's really been driven by activities on the ground," adding that the main criteria the White House uses is the site's effect on tamping down climate change and sites that are "connected to people and communities that have not been historically represented" in national parks and other federal sites.

— *Salt Lake Tribune*

Scientists, Natives talk climate change realities

WASHINGTON — Despite an above average snowpack and several months of wet weather, drought and changing climate conditions continue to plague farmers and ranchers across Nevada and other western states.

For American Indian communities in these areas, consequences of a changing ecosystem are severe and will impact generations to come, according to new research and outreach presented, recently, at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

Led by Maureen McCarthy, Ph.D., Tahoe and Great Basin research director at the University of Nevada, Reno, a unique symposium titled "Climate, Water and the American Indian Farmer" explored the impacts of climate change, Indian land tenure and water rights, and changes in land use on American Indian communities dependent on farming, ranching and sustaining cultural and natural resources.

"American Indian Tribes currently possess some of the most senior water rights available," McCarthy explained, according to a report by EurekAlert.org. "Yet extreme, ongoing droughts in our region combined with changes in winter precipitation timing and form are complicating the allocation and use of water in the West and stimulating Tribes,

states and the federal government to negotiate equitable and sustainable water right settlements to ensure traditional and production agricultural practices are available to future generations.

"These issues are complex and transcend ecological and sociopolitical boundaries. Knowledge generated and shared through this program will build capacity among tribal and non-tribal organizations to respond to a changing climate."

The AAAS symposium highlighted work underway on two significant research and public outreach projects led by the University of Nevada, Reno and the Desert Research Institute, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and other institutions.

The "Water for the Seasons" project focuses on the Truckee-Carson River System as a model for snow-fed, arid-land river systems across the American West. Researchers are integrating science and water policy research with extensive community outreach to identify the expected impacts of climate change and solutions for protecting valuable water resources throughout northern Nevada.

"The Native Waters on Arid Lands" project is working directly with tribal citizens to identify challenges to agriculture from diverse and competing demands for water. Researchers and extension experts, in partnership with Native American scholars and community leaders from over a dozen Tribes in the American Southwest, are integrating western science and traditional knowledge to analyze how warming temperatures and reduced water supplies impact crop and livestock production and fish, wildlife, and ecological abundance.

— *EurekALERT.ORG*

New joint initiative is 'Putting First Kids 1st'

WASHINGTON — Native children form the backbone of future tribal success and someday will lead the charge to create thriving, vibrant communities, which is why four national Native organizations — the National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the National Indian Education Association and the National Indian Health Board — have come together to update the joint policy agenda for Native youth.

The goal of the policy agenda is to set specific recommendations to improve the social, emotional, mental, physical and economic health of children and youth, allowing them to achieve their learning and developmental potential.

The initiative calls on key stakeholders to put First Kids 1st.

The agenda is intended as a tool to assist tribal leaders and other policymakers in their work to create and implement a vision for a vibrant, healthy community. It is also intended to guide stakeholders as they prioritize legislation and policy issues that may affect Native children and youth. The partners have identified four overarching themes as guiding principles for improving children's lives and outcomes. Within each theme, the agenda sets forth tribal strategies and policy objectives to implement these principles.

Native Children's Policy Agenda: Putting First Kids 1st is the updated work of the 2008 National Children's Agenda, created by the same four organizations and supported by W.K. Kellogg Foundation. This joint work for Native youth is part of the First Kids 1st initiative, which was announced last year and focuses on changing federal, state and tribal policy to create conditions in which American Indian and Alaska Native children can thrive.

— *National Congress of American Indians press release*

Native singer Joanne Shenandoah needs liver transplant

ONEIDA, N.Y. — Grammy-winning Native American singer-songwriter Joanne Shenandoah is fighting for her life. After becoming ill with a bacterial infection — caught while visiting a local hospital this summer — doctors have informed her she needs a new liver.

Shenandoah, 58, a citizen of the Oneida Indian Nation, has appeared all over the world, including many times in Seminole events, in a career spanning four decades.

In an email interview with Syracuse.com, Shenandoah described her malady.

"My need is serious," she wrote. "The liver acts as a filter for the blood so when it does not function there is an overall diminishing of the body's ability to fight off infections and bacteria. A healthy liver is necessary for good overall health. Since New York has a relatively low number of donors, this affects the wait time. I urge everyone to consider becoming a donor as there are hundreds of people on the waiting list."

"I am trying to live a normal life but since I am a composer and performer this

has made it a challenge. I cannot fly right now so my concert schedule has been affected. I have to have lots of rest and be careful as to where I go outside my home."

Her family has set up a fundraising account to help pay for the costs associated with the transplant.

— *Syracuse.com*

March 11: screening of 'Big Cypress' film

EVERGLADES CITY — A special screening of filmmaker Elam Stoltzfus' 2009 film "Big Cypress: The Western Everglades" has been set for Friday, March 11 at 5:30 p.m. in the Jenkins Fellowship Hall behind Everglades Community Church in Everglades City.

Photographer Clyde Butcher and environmentalists Franklin Adams, Nathaniel Reed, Joe Browder and Mike Owen will be on hand to talk about the unspoiled nature of Big Cypress.

Producer and director Stoltzfus has won numerous awards for his documentaries about the Florida environment, which he celebrates with his photography and original music. The event is hosted by the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation and open to the public. There is no charge but reservations are required. For information and to save a seat, visit www.EvergladesHistorical.org.

— *Everglades Society for Historic Preservation press release*

New Sous Chef at At Hard Rock Tampa's Rock 'N Raw

TAMPA — Qing Dao, China native Zhong Bo "Bob" Zhang has been hired as Sous Chef at Rock 'N Raw, the sushi restaurant at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa.

Zhang started his culinary career at age 19 working at the five-star Debaob Gardens Hotel in his hometown, studied hotel management at the Qing Dao Hotel Management School where he received an associate degree. He later received his bachelor's degree from the Guangzhou Culinary Art School in Guangzhou, China.

His favorite dish to create? The surf 'n turf sushi roll served in Rock 'N Raw, which is made of wagyu and king crab.

Zhang, who reports to Head Chef Kim Pak Choi, will help oversee 25 team members at Rock 'N Raw, which also features Asian noodle soups, dim sum and traditional Asian dishes with three menus to choose from. The restaurant is located on the second floor next to Fresh Harvest.

— *Hard Rock Tampa press release*

Endangered ghost orchids to grow again

GAINESVILLE — A recent study from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) says biologists can now save the ghost orchid, the long and delicate pure white petalled symbol of South Florida's forests.

Like many ornamental plants, the orchid has become rare and endangered because of poaching or over-collecting. Recent reports indicate there may only be 2,000 ghost orchids remaining in Florida.

"We've successfully developed procedures to culture plants from seeds in the lab and then successfully acclimate them into our greenhouse," said Michael Kane, professor of environmental horticulture at UF/IFAS, in a news release. "We've also obtained a high survival and vigorous re-growth rate when they're planted back into the wild."

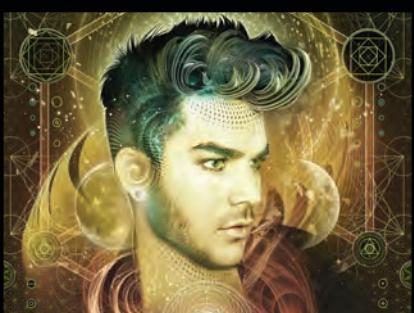
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April 17
WANDA SYKES



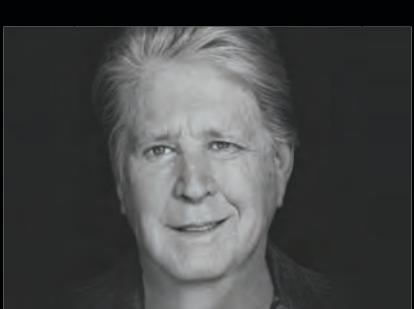
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Education

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FIU, Tribe enter partnership

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Big plans are in the works to put teens on a fast path to college degrees at Florida International University.

"This will allow our kids to take college courses without going into towns 30 or more minutes away. They can go to college on the reservation," said O'Hara Tommie, the Tribe's Executive Administrative Officer.

Tommie, who is in charge of the Education Department among other departments, announced plans Feb. 4 at Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress to nearly 130 students and parents for the new Seminole Tribal Scholars Pathway Program.

The multi-faceted program includes dual enrollment for high school juniors and seniors who are home-schooled or attending traditional high schools and for students who want to complete high school and attend college classes simultaneously on FIU campuses.

For younger academic achievers, the plan also includes opportunities for students beginning in sixth grade to start the college experience.

Summer enrichment programs, community service learning and continuing education opportunities are also available.

"By the time I become a senior citizen, you will be the leaders of the Tribe," Tommie said to about 60 teens at the meeting. "Now, instead of just spending time playing video games or riding four-wheelers, you have the opportunity to learn about science, math, technology, engineering ... we will build on our own resources, living off our land and under our own control."

Tommie then addressed parents: "We need to put education in the right place and get our kids in college earning degrees so they can come back and work for the Tribe."

Brenda Gillis, the Tribe's former assistant director of Education and now the official liaison to FIU, said several universities were approached to create a higher education partnership but FIU was the only institution to step up with a program practically fit to order.

Similar to the FIU Panther Pathway Program, the Seminole Tribal Scholars Pathway Program will provide preferential treatment and mentorship to each student. The programs also offer more concentrated academic support and advising; cultural enrichment; leadership and professional development; and financial assistance.

According to Sonja Montas-Hunter,



Courtenay McClain, Florida International University's director of Student Access and Success, speaks to students and parents Feb. 4 about the Seminole Tribal Scholars Pathway Program.

assistant vice provost of FIU's Student Access and Success program, about 50,000 Florida high school students are in dual enrollment or academic acceleration classes at various colleges and universities.

"We (FIU) have students who graduate from high school and enter FIU as college juniors. It saves a lot of money and students graduate quicker. It's very challenging but definitely worth the time and investment," Montas-Hunter said.

Applicants should have 3.0 GPAs and 1300 SAT or 18-19 ACT scores, but because the program is specialized, students can be considered for admission on a case-by-case basis regardless of grades.

"We're bridging our students with FIU,"

Gillis said. The only absolute requirement for placement in the program is tribal citizenship.

The newly established relationship with FIU also opens doors for teacher training and staff development at Ahfachkee School, Gillis said.

Additionally, students with goals of becoming teachers will be identified and mentored toward teaching degrees.

Andrea Jumper attended the meeting with her children Blevyns, 18, and Ahnie, 16.

"I'm really glad that a university is partnering with the Tribe. The best thing is that they will not use test scores as the only measure for student success," Jumper said.

Ahnie, a junior at American Heritage School in Plantation who is interested in

early childhood education, special education and linguistics, filled in a portion of the FIU application during the meeting though she is undecided about where she wants to study and what her major might be.

Elisah Billie, a sophomore at Ahfachkee School, is also undecided about his future career, but he knows that college is the only sure way to achieve it. FIU is an option, but he is also interested in California College of the Arts. For now, he is a strong proponent for making Ahfachkee the best place for high school.

"I want a school where kids don't wake up after the weekend and say, 'Oh no, I have

◆ See PARTNERSHIP on page 5B

Teen photographer Akira Billie wins gold

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

DAVIE — A triptych of images titled "Cozy" won Akira Billie a Gold Key in photography, the highest award in the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. A celebration of all the winning teen artists in Broward County was held Feb. 12 at the Young At Art Museum in Davie.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards have recognized student achievement in the arts since 1923. The awards give students in grades seven to 12 an opportunity to earn

recognition and scholarships, exhibit and/or publish their work.

"I've been doing art my whole life," said Akira, 17, a junior at American Heritage School in Plantation. "I love taking photos."

The artwork of 138 Gold Key winners was exhibited throughout the Young At Art Museum galleries alongside the art of professional artists already on display. As the Broward County affiliate for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Young At Art has hosted the awards program for three years. This year more than 30,000 Broward students submitted art to the contest.

"We are very proud to help cultivate the next generation of artists," said Mindy Shrago, Young At Art executive director and CEO. "Our mission is to teach kids how to think cognitively, dream and enjoy the arts."

Akira's favorite subjects are friends and family; Akira said she specializes in close-up portraits, adding she gets more emotion when she shoots someone up close, but she photographs a variety of themes.

Her winning submission depicts light and shadows created in her friend's Aventura home in late afternoon.

As a Gold Key winner, "Cozy" will



Akira Billie, a junior at American Heritage School in Plantation, poses Feb. 12 at Young At Art Museum with her photographic triptych 'Cozy,' which won a Gold Key in the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

"Her work comes from a deep place. She's able to tap into a part of herself that she isn't really aware of."

— Teresa Smith,
American Heritage
photography teacher

compete for national recognition. Akira, of the Bird Clan, started taking photography classes at school during freshman year and learned to use film and digital cameras to create photos. Digital is easier, but she favors black and white film because it captures more feeling, she said.

Akira also enjoys making videos and drawing. Her next goal is learning to paint.

"She is always looking to see things differently," said art teacher Susann Price, who has taught Akira since fourth grade.

Other awards Akira has received include best in show at the Broward Art Guild Youth Art Competition in 2014 and honorable mention in 2015. American Heritage photography teacher Teresa Smith considers Akira naturally talented.

◆ See AKIRA BILLIE on page 5B

Living the ACD experience: Words help keep dreams alive

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

Words are powerful. Although I majored in communications, my heart was always in English. I loved writing ever since I was a little kid. The power of words fascinated me.

When I attended the Brooklyn New School in New York City, I wrote a small book and even illustrated it. It's amazing how words can create images and stories that we absorb in our minds and then our imagination makes them reality. It all begins with a thought.



Beverly Bidney

Aaron Tommie

When I was a kid, my twin and I mimicked everything my older brother did. Anything my older brother would do or say, my twin and I would do. The way he dressed, the corny jokes he told, his mannerisms. Everything. One of the things that I copied from him was my love of hip-hop and R&B. I grew up in the 1990s, so I can't relate to a lot of the hip-hop and R&B played on mainstream radio today because it's so different now. While in high school, I listened to Kanye West, Nas and Lupe Fiasco a lot. I felt the words and related to the stories in their music.

I've encountered memorable experiences during my four months at The Seminole Tribune. Recently, I traveled to Brighton to cover an event that featured Native American hip-hop artist Supaman, who spoke to Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School middle school students. Although it was geared toward the students, I enjoyed listening to Supaman and Native American jingle dress dancer Acosia Red Elk deliver messages about being drug-free and respectful. They stressed the importance of keeping dreams alive through focus and hard work and used their words to convey a powerful message.

Reggae legend Bob Marley has been dead for 35 years, yet his music still resonates with many people because the words are transcendent. People relate to realness.

One of the nicest, most remarkable men I've ever known was my college marketing professor Dr. Charles Tichenor. A U.S. Navy veteran and Duke University graduate, Dr. Tichenor received his masters from Harvard University and doctorate from the University of Bern in Switzerland. He was a successful vice president of marketing for Kraft Foods and served as chairman and CEO of Champale Sparkling Beverages.

The marketing course lasted four or five weeks. There were only four students in the course. Dr. Tichenor would always encourage us to do well and push ourselves to be the best that we could be in life. He spread so much positivity when he spoke. When we received an 'A' on a test, he gave us chocolate bars. One of the most powerful statements he's ever said was that as successful as he was, we could have that same amount of success, if not more. The way he said it made me feel anything is possible. He looked each one of us in the eyes and stated that we were able to be CEOs and leaders in major companies.

I never had a professor say anything like that.

As I've mentioned in previous articles, when I was in college, my education was primarily my secondary or tertiary focus. I wasn't exactly the model student. My self-esteem had been low for a while because I found it very difficult to get on the right track with my education and other things in life.

When this man, who was successful in every facet of his life, told us those words, I began to believe.

In the past, plenty of people have questioned my sanity based on decisions I've made in life. Those decisions didn't make sense to them, but in my heart I knew they were the best thing to do. Now, I'm doing well in my professional career so far, and I'm truly happy.

We choose to believe and accept what we feel is truth within our lives. What's inside each and every one of us is greatness that's tapped or untapped. It helps to be optimistic and to dream. Dreaming keeps us growing.

Ahfachkee awards awesome student achievements



Eileen Soler
Surprise, appreciation and thanks flow from Solomon Cypress as he is awarded his first of several certificates Jan. 27 during Ahfachkee School's first semester awards ceremony at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress.



Eileen Soler



Eileen Soler
High school student Troy Cantu stands head and shoulders over younger kids who also held awards high and proud during Ahfachkee School's first semester awards ceremony.



Eileen Soler
Elijah Jovan Hall gets a huge and proud hug from his grandmother Celeste Billie.

Ahfachkee School's top elementary, middle and high school GPA earners are flanked by tribal and school officials during the school's semester awards ceremony. From left are Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank, Ahfachkee assistant principal Gwendolyn Coverson, Mikiyele Cypress (middle school), Sarah Robbins (elementary school), Eden Jumper (high school), Big Cypress Councilman Cicero Osceola, Executive Administrative Officer O'Hara Tommie and assistant principal Arniita Williams.



Eileen Soler

Billy Walker, his daughter Shyla Walker, 7, and his niece Vanessa Osceola, 8, check out the girls' academic awards collected during the Ahfachkee School first semester awards ceremony at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.

Pemayetv Emahakv students of the month



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School January elementary students of the month: Caysie Platt, Amalia Estrada, Zoey Bowers, Daliyah Nunez, Lucianna Banda, Kyler Jenkins, Harmony Urbina, Adarius Ford, Truly Osceola, Jetta Osceola, Jayleigh Braswell, Yauvani Beltran, Keena Jones, Valentine Martinez, CeCe Thomas, Saniya Rodrigues, Bryce Ward, Javaris Johnson, Cheyenne Lara, Shyllynn Testerman and Rozin Fish.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Middle school students of the month: Mariah Billie, Jacey White and Luzana Venzor.

PECS spelling bee is F-U-N

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — First- through eighth-grade students at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School fought butterflies in their tummies, stood tall and strove to spell words correctly at the school's eighth annual spelling bee Feb. 10.

The students knew there would be only one winner, so strategies such as asking for definitions or usages in sentences were used to get a leg up. Sometimes the tactics just delayed the inevitable sound of the bell and elimination.

Students participated in classroom spelling bees to qualify for the big event at the school gym, where the top two from

each classroom took the stage. It took the 36 students four rounds and approximately 144 words to reach the end.

Words came quickly and some, such as "fringe," "torrent" and "mustang," were spelled successfully.

"Bonkers" was the next word and a definition was requested. "Jed declared if he didn't get ice cream in the next 10 minutes, he might go bonkers," said second-grade teacher Dixie Ball.

The word was spelled precisely and no one went bonkers.

As the bee progressed, words grew more challenging. "Beverage," "origin," "trellis," "moxie" and "parable" disqualified five students. "Pedigree," "bewilder," "catalog," "median" and "curfew" were spelled

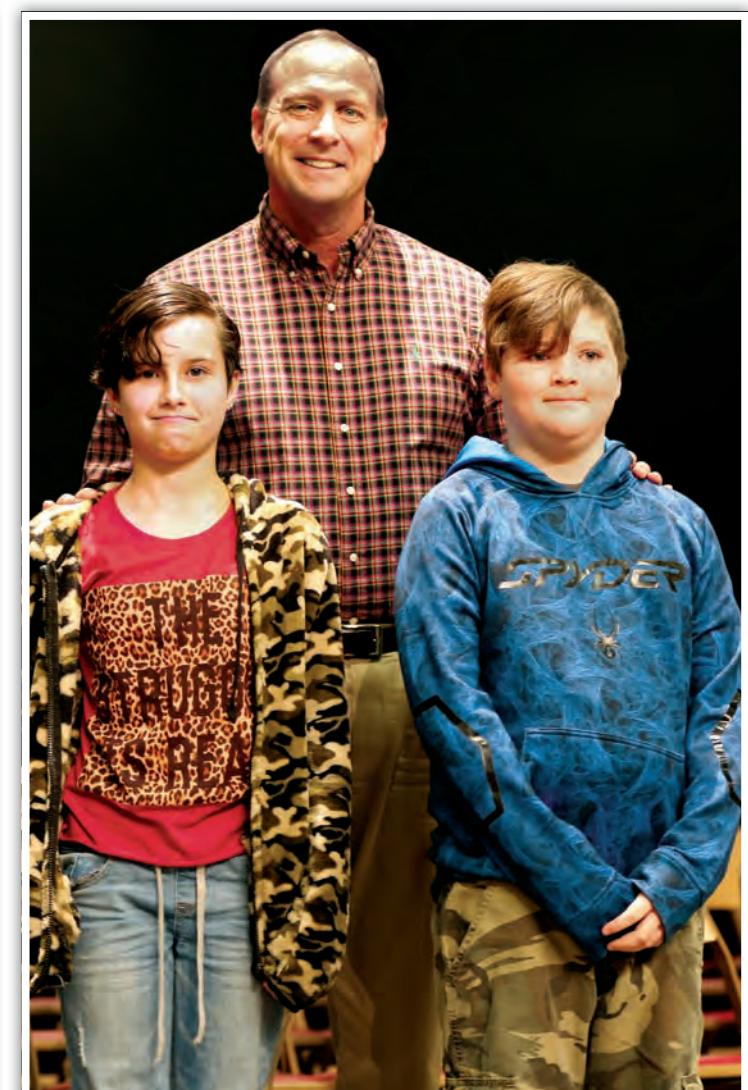
correctly by five others.

It took about an hour for the final two competitors to emerge: Josiah Johns and Hannah Wilson. Josiah spelled "swollen" accurately but Hannah was tripped up by "whiff."

The final word, "phrasing," made Josiah, 10, a winner.

"It feels pretty good," he said. "I think spelling will help me with other school work. If you have to write or read something, you have to know how to spell the words."

As the winner, Josiah competed Feb. 23 at the regional southeastern Florida Scripps Spelling Bee against 150 students from schools in Glades, Hendry, Okeechobee and Palm Beach counties at the Benjamin School in Palm Beach. He finished in the top 25.



Beverly Bidney
Josiah Johns carefully and correctly spells a word Feb. 10 during the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School annual spelling bee.

Beverly Bidney
PECS spelling bee runner-up Hannah Wilson and winner Josiah Johns pose proudly with principal Brian Greseth after the bee.

Hip-hop artist, champion dancer bring success stories to PECS

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

BRIGHTON — The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School community convened in the school cafeteria Feb. 12 to hear Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation hip-hop artist Supaman and jingle dress dancer Acosia Red Elk share messages of positivity and hope. For nearly two hours, the guests spoke about overcoming insecurities and unhappiness.

Supaman broke the ice by reciting popular catch phrases and pausing while students finished them. Laughs and cheers roared from the crowd. He then spoke to the students about the importance of making the right choices and staying optimistic.

Before Supaman, also known as Christian Parrish Takes The Gun, became a world-traveling motivational speaker and musician, he grew up in hard times on the Crow Nation Reservation in Montana. He was raised in foster care while his parents were in rehabilitation centers for their struggles with alcohol and drugs. Supaman said he wanted to take a more positive path in life.



Acosia Red Elk performs in her jingle dress for Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School middle school students.



Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation hip-hop artist Supaman rocks a crowd of middle school students Feb. 12 at the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School cafeteria. Supaman also spoke to students about the importance of making the right choices and staying optimistic.

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Aaron Tommie
Hoops for Heart contest winners pose after the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School fundraising event Feb. 5 in Brighton.

Pemayetv Emahakv hits court for heart disease fundraiser

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

BRIGHTON — Marking February's American Heart Month, Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School middle school students participated in the Hoops for Heart program Feb. 5 to help raise awareness about heart disease and stroke.

Sponsored by SHAPE (Society of Health and Physical Educators) America and the American Heart Association, Hoops for Heart originated at New Mexico's Albuquerque Academy in 1989. Through the program parents, teachers and students unite to raise money for research and educational programs that help battle heart disease.

"We try to make them aware of [heart disease], but with them being kids, they feel invincible," said Chris Goodwin, PECS middle school P.E. teacher.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, killing more than 600,000 people each year. In Indian Country, it is second only to cancer in term of deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

PECS students participated in five Hoops for Heart events at the school gym: knockout, free-throw shooting, half-court shooting, spot shooting and a slam dunk contest. The event ended with three-on-three basketball games that lasted three minutes each. With bags of popcorn and bottles of water, some students watched from bleachers while peers participated in the events. Students who raised at least \$10 were exempt two and a half hours from classes to participate.

"I think it's fun and important," said sixth-grader Jaytron Baker, who won the free-throw and knockout contests. He raised \$10 for the effort but said he wants to shoot for \$1,000 next year.

Hoops for Heart has raised more than \$50 million to battle heart disease. PECS students contributed to the success. Brothers Erik and Michael Garcia raised \$36,000 in just two years with their mother Rita McCabe's help. This year, PECS middle school students raised \$1,771. Kamani Smith, Leilani Burton, and brothers Kiowa and Sheldon Garcia each raised \$250.

For Kamani, an eighth-

grader, fundraising was personal. He has a cousin with heart problems and an uncle who underwent heart surgery.

"Most people think they're too cool to raise funds," Kamani said. "I think it's cool to do fundraisers because you can help someone and save lives."

Although people can be born with certain forms of heart disease, most problems result from unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as smoking, stress, excessive alcohol usage, diabetes and high blood pressure.

There are more than 10 types of heart disease, including coronary heart disease, heart attack and heart murmurs. They can involve constricted blood vessels or actual heart muscle complications. Although symptoms may vary for each specific heart disease, generic side effects are shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain and fainting.

Decreasing saturated and trans fats and sodium intake and eating grains, legumes and foods rich in fiber reduce the risk of heart disease, according to the CDC. Several hours of exercise weekly further help.



Aaron Tommie
Kamani Smith, Kiowa Garcia, Sheldon Garcia and Leilani Burton (not pictured) are recognized for raising the most money for the Hoops for Heart event.

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Sports

Productive high school basketball seasons for Seminoles

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

Winning follows Lauren Jim, no matter whose uniform she wears.

During the past two seasons, Lauren played for two Miami schools and helped her teams compile a combined 47-13 record and win two district championships.

As a junior last season, Lauren and her older sister Katherine helped Florida Christian School win a district championship.

This season, with Katherine having graduated, Lauren shifted to Gulliver Prep and fit right in with the Raiders as they captured the Class 4A-District 16 title.

"Lauren came in right away during the summer and fit our system perfectly. She already had a good basketball IQ, so she was able to learn our system quite quickly," Gulliver Prep coach John Zambolla said in an email response to The Seminole Tribune after the Raiders finished with a 25-5 record.

Lauren, a 5-foot-8 senior forward, averaged 7.9 points per game. Her highlights included 14 points in an overtime win against Doral Academy in the Gulliver Prep Lady Raider Thanksgiving Classic championship game and six 3-pointers in a triumph against St. Brendan in December.

"Lauren is a terrific shooter with good size. Her ability to space the floor was key to our success," Zambolla said. "She is a hard-working student-athlete who really fit well into our system. She was a great teammate who was very coachable."

In the Class 4A regional playoffs, Gulliver opened with a 44-29 win against Monsignor Pace on Feb. 4 in a quarterfinal but was eliminated five days later by Washington, 44-35, in a semifinal.

Seminole pave way to Moore Haven's success

Several Seminoles contributed to the first winning season for the Moore Haven High School girls basketball team in at least the past decade.

Junior guard Sydnee Cypress led the Lady Terriers in scoring with nearly 13 points per game, which included a season-high 25 against Imagine School in December. Sophomore guard Sunni Bearden was right on Sydnee's heels with 11.2 points per game.

Tyra Baker was one of three seniors. She averaged nearly four points per game and finished second in rebounding with six per game.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the tribal freshmen trio of Alicia Fudge, Caroline Micco and Aleina Micco made significant contributions in their rookie seasons. Alicia averaged 8.7 points and 3.5 rebounds per game. Caroline netted 8.4

◆ See BASKETBALL on page 2C

Jaryaca Baker smacks home run for Keiser

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

WEST PALM BEACH — Seminoles Jaryaca Baker and Darlah Cypress, of Brighton Reservation, have started their first softball seasons with Keiser University in West Palm Beach.

Both players saw action in an exhibition doubleheader against Barry University Jan. 24. Baker hit a 3-run home run that knotted game 2 at 4-4 in the first inning before Barry pulled away for a 10-5 win.

As a pinch runner, Cypress stole one base each in game 1 and game 2.

Baker's first action in the regular season came Feb. 18 in the first game of a doubleheader sweep against Vermont's College of St. Joseph. Baker started behind the plate and batted fifth in the order. She hit a two-run double in the third inning that gave Keiser an 11-0 lead. Baker went 1-for-4 as Keiser cruised to a 15-0 win. She did not play in game 2, a 7-0 win that upped Keiser's record to 3-5.

Cypress had yet to appear in a regular season game as of Feb. 19.

Keiser belongs to the Sun Conference, whose 11 members are spread mostly throughout Central and South Florida. The team plays its home games at Alumni Field in West Palm Beach.

Fast start on college diamond for Thomas

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

MIAMI — With darkness as the culprit, the Florida SouthWestern State College Buccaneers baseball game against Miami Dade College — whose field doesn't have lights — was abbreviated to eight innings Feb. 9.

The Buccaneers returned to the diamond this season after a 19-year absence with Brighton Reservation's Layton Thomas on the roster. The team will not have to worry about illumination issues at home. Their stadium is City of Palms Park in downtown Fort Myers, the former spring training venue for the Boston Red Sox that features plenty of lights and 8,000 seats.

"It's very awesome to know that the Boston Red Sox used to play there," Thomas said after he continued his hot start at the plate with a 2-for-2 day in the Buccaneers' 13-12 loss to Miami Dade.

Thomas plays in the same City of Palms Park outfield previously occupied by Johnny Damon, Jacoby Ellsbury and Manny Ramirez. The former Okeechobee High School standout takes left-handed cuts from the same side of the batter's box where Wade Boggs, Adrian Gonzalez and David Ortiz cranked out hits in front of thousands of snowbirds.

About 1,500 fans welcomed FSW back Jan. 29 on opening day as the school's athletics program — which last saw action in 1997 when it was known as Edison Community College — was reborn with a 5-1 win at home against ASA College. The stadium is 7 miles from campus.

"It's been a really good experience getting to be the first team for FSW in like 19 years," Thomas said. "It's been very fun."

Thomas didn't play in the opener, but the 5-foot-10, 185-pound freshman has since made the most of his playing time with a team-high .500 batting average through the first two weeks of the season. He had seven hits in his first 14 at-bats, including one double, five RBIs and six runs scored.

"Layton has a great approach at the plate and really attacks the ball to all fields," said FSW coach Jamie Corr. "He provides a good power left-handed bat and plays very solid corner outfield."



Florida SouthWestern State College freshman Layton Thomas, of Brighton Reservation, rips a single against Miami Dade College Feb. 9 in Miami. Thomas went 2-for-2.

Thomas said his preparation in the offseason "focused more on speed and watching the ball and coordination."

In his first collegiate at-bat, Thomas notched a clean single up the middle in a 12-7 loss to College of Central Florida Feb. 3 at City of Palms Park. The following day Thomas went 2-for-4 with a double, two RBIs and two runs scored in a 12-2 win against Weber International's junior varsity.

Thomas knocked in three runs with two

hits from the No. 2 spot Feb. 8 as FSW routed Ave Maria's junior varsity 21-8.

"I've been calm up there and just doing what I can for the team," said Thomas, whose two singles against Miami Dade were opposite field hits to left and left-center. He started in right field, batted eighth, scored one run and played four innings of a game that FSW led 10-3 through four and a half before Miami Dade rallied for the victory.

Off the field, Layton is eying a potential

career in optometry. He said he plans to stay at FSW, which belongs to the National Junior College Athletic Association, for two years and then perhaps transfer to Florida State University.

So far, the transition from high school in Okeechobee to college in Fort Myers has been smooth.

"Layton is doing a great job on the field, in the classroom, in the community," Corr said. "He is a first-rate young man."

Offering the art of jujitsu, and much more

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BIG CYPRESS — If Charlie Osceola could turn back time, confidence would have played a bigger part in his childhood.

"I remember being not necessarily the best one in a sport, or the first picked, and I didn't like that and it left a big shadow on my life moving forward," he said.

As he grew older, Osceola made sure confidence — boosted by his involvement in martial arts — became a source of embedded courage that he could draw upon. So it's no surprise that building confidence is the foundation to Big Cypress Martial Arts, a school Osceola bought three years ago while watching his three daughters and other tribal youngsters learn martial arts, including jujitsu.

"What I want the kids to take away is a sense of confidence in themselves," Osceola said as he watched eight barefoot kids — seven in white robes and one in black — practice on cushioned mats under the guidance of instructor Luis Gutierrez on a January evening.

Based at the Fitness Dome in Big Cypress, the program offers sessions for adults, too. Osceola said practicing an hour of jujitsu burns more calories than weightlifting and running.

"It's an all-around body workout, and it's not high impact," he said. "You come in, you roll around, you wrestle, you do the moves. It's low impact; anyone can do it. We've had seniors come in before."

Kids can start as early as age 5; the adult program starts at age 16. Osceola said he's open to expansion.

"We are trying to get the program on other reservations. Right now, it's only in Big Cypress," he said. "We've had people from Hollywood and we've had people from Immokalee and Brighton come and participate. They do really well, but after a while the ride after work gets tiring."

If Tribal citizens would like the program offered on other reservations, Osceola said they should contact their local leaders.

"We are contracted by the Tribe," he said. "It's a service that's provided. It's a very good service. Anyone who wants to take part in it or try it out, I encourage it because it will definitely change your mind on what you think about martial arts."

Last September, Big Cypress Martial Arts ventured off the reservation and broadened its scope by entering a competitive tournament for the first time.



Youngsters battle with gloves and helmets during a session in January at Big Cypress Martial Arts in Big Cypress. Based at the Fitness Dome, the program also offers sessions for adults. From left are Zayden Cypress, Clint Billie and Curtis Motlow.

"What we're focusing on is having better kids, better attitude, better confidence when they grow up."

— Charlie Osceola,
owner of Big Cypress
Martial Arts

Filled with youngsters, the team returned from the North American Grappling Association event at Florida Atlantic University with first-place winners, runners-up and positive vibes in the confidence department.

"We placed well," Osceola said. "Everybody did good and I was very proud of everyone, including the community that came out, the parents that came out to support their kids."

Competing against unfamiliar foes has its benefits, Osceola said. In the school, students practice against one other and eventually learn their "opponent's" moves. By facing outside competition, the kids do not know what to expect from the other side.

"You want to expose them to as many different techniques and different styles from every other kid. That helps them grow way faster," Osceola said.

But Osceola stressed that excelling in tournaments isn't the driving force to his program, nor is it the ultimate goal.

"This isn't necessarily a competition

◆ See JUJITSU on page 3C

BASKETBALL

From page 1C

points per game and Aleina had 2.4 points per game.

Moore Haven finished with a 12-7 record and earned the No. 2 seed in the district tournament, but the Lady Terriers were upset by Fort Myers' Canterbury in the district semifinals.

Ethan Cypress finishes as Hollywood Hills' top scorer

Ethan Cypress proved to be a model of reliable consistency for the Hollywood Hills High School boys basketball team. The senior guard from the Hollywood Reservation led the squad in several categories, including steals and free throw percentage.

Ethan was a double-digit scoring machine all season. He finished as the team's leading scorer with an average of 17 points per game and reached double digits in scoring in 21 games for the Spartans, who finished 12-12.

Ethan eclipsed the 20-point mark nine times, including 21 in the team's final game, an 80-65 loss to McArthur in the Class 7A-District 15 semifinals Feb. 2.

Ethan poured in a season-high 34 points in a 93-87 win against Taravella in late January. He also shined at the free throw line where he converted a team-high 80 percent of his shots.

Dennis Gonzales scores 20 in Vanguard's finale

Dennis Gonzales finished his junior season on a high note. The 5-foot-8 guard from Immokalee scored a team-high 20 points for the Vanguard School in its final game, a 58-50 loss to Orlando Christian Prep in a Class 2A regional final Feb. 20 in Lake Wales.

Vanguard won its district title in early February and knocked out Bayshore Christian and Academy at the Lakes in the regionals before the loss on its home court to Orlando Christian. Vanguard finished 18-4. Dennis averaged nine points per game.

Vanguard coach Dan Sheppard said Dennis stepped up this season, including late in the year when the team lost its leading scorer.

"Dennis became a much more rounded player this year," Sheppard said in an email response to The Tribune. "He was able to get himself in better physical condition and it showed on the court. He became the go-to shooter after the injury to Arin Taylor and was able to respond in the regional finals with 20 points."

With Vanguard losing seven seniors, Dennis should have ample opportunities to step up.

"We are excited about his returning next year as one of the captains of the team," Sheppard said. "I think he has a great future ahead of him in basketball."

Looking to future, PECS softball soars to victory

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

MOORE HAVEN—Facing high school pitchers and batters is one way for the middle school softball players at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School to acclimate themselves to the next level where several Lady Seminoles will likely play in the coming years.

Filled with sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders, the 10 players on PECS already get a taste of high school ball by playing against junior varsity squads that usually feature ninth- and 10th-graders.

Additionally, head coach Amber Thornton and assistant coach Brittany Osceola said part of the team's agenda this season includes a trip to an Okeechobee High School varsity practice where they'll see how Brahmans coach Mary Huff runs drills and the approach her players take on the field.

"We're going to take them to a high school practice so they get an idea what it's really like to play high school ball because sometimes they come out here and want to play; some days they don't, and you can't do that in high school ball," Osceola said after PECS notched its first win of the season, 16-5, against Moore Haven's junior varsity/middle school team on Presidents Day in Moore Haven.

After suffering setbacks to LaBelle and Imagine, the Lady Seminoles made a dent in the win column by generating 14 runs in the first three innings to up their record to 1-2.

"The girls needed this. They did better," Thornton said. "I'm glad."

PECS received a solid outing in the circle from eighth-grader Janessa Nunez. Normally the team's starting pitcher, Janessa entered the game in relief with PECS in front, 8-4. She tamed Moore Haven's bats by using good control and occasional tempting change-ups that kept the Lady Terriers off balance. Janessa's four strong innings included seven strikeouts and no earned runs.

"She comes out really aggressive. She comes to play ball," Osceola said. "She stays calm. She's a good pitcher."

PECS struggled in the field at times but made up for it with a productive afternoon at the plate that Janessa helped spark by scoring three runs from the leadoff spot.

With the game knotted at 4-4, Alaina Sweat put PECS ahead for good with a single that brought home her sister Julia Smith. The game featured an additional caveat for Alaina and Julia. They faced their older sister and former teammate, Caroline Micco, who caught for Moore Haven. Each time Alaina and Julia came up to bat, they exchanged good-natured verbal jabs with Caroline.

"When Julia would get on the bag, Caroline would really try to get her out," Osceola said. "She did get her out at home."

The play at the plate between sisters occurred in the fourth inning. Julia hustled to beat out an infield single that scored two runs. Later in the inning, she tried to score on a slide at the plate but was blocked and tagged out by Caroline. It was the second time Caroline recorded an out against one of her sisters. Earlier, she caught a foul ball off the bat of Alaina.

Julia and Jaycee Jumper provided early season power for PECS in its first two games. Julia smacked a home run on opening day; Jaycee drilled two home runs in the second game.

There were no home runs against Moore Haven, but

sixth-grader Elle Thomas ripped a double. Alyssa Gonzales drew four walks and scored twice. Karey Gopher had an RBI single.

For most of the Lady Seminoles, softball is their third sport of the school year. They racked up winning records in volleyball in the fall and basketball in the winter.

"They're strong; they're athletic," Thornton said. "These girls are talented."



Kevin Johnson

Janessa Nunez belts a single for Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School during its 16-5 win Feb. 15 against Moore Haven's junior varsity/middle school team.



Kevin Johnson



Kevin Johnson

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School's Haylie Huff delivers a pitch against Moore Haven's junior varsity/middle school team at Moore Haven.

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Improved Okeechobee High School basketball squad honors seniors

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

OKEECHOBEE — The Okeechobee High School girls basketball team won 10 more games this season than it did a year ago. Second-year coach Joseph Smith pointed to two Seminoles — seniors Lahna Baker and Cheyenne Nunez — as pivotal reasons for the turnaround.

"Cheyenne and Lahna were a big part of that. They're the foundation to what I've built here," said Smith, who guided the squad to a 16-8 mark compared to 6-16 the previous year.

Cheyenne and Lahna's contributions as the team's point guard and shooting guard — roles they handled interchangeably — were sorely missed late in the season. With both players out of action due to leg injuries they suffered during regular season games, Okeechobee struggled in the waning weeks and was eliminated in the first round of the Class 6A-District 13 tournament.

"We kind of limped into the playoffs," Smith said.

The injuries impacted both players' senior night Jan. 21 when the Brahmans hosted Moore Haven, whose squad is filled with fellow Tribal citizens. Lahna was on crutches and unable to play. As a four-year varsity letterman, Cheyenne had watched three other senior nights for the team and was determined to play in her own. She received a doctor's clearance to play in the game, but she wasn't at full strength.

"She called me and said, 'I'm playing my senior night,'" Smith said.

Cheyenne departed on a victorious note in her final game. She helped Okeechobee top Moore Haven, 57-39, with "a bunch of assists," according to Smith, but the injury limited her scoring ability.

"You could tell she wasn't the same athlete, but she still played outstanding," Smith said. "Her at 80 percent is most girls at 100 percent."

Before the game, the Lady Brahmans honored

Cheyenne, Lahna and two other seniors. Cheyenne was accompanied by her parents, Peggy and Daniel Nunez Sr.; Lahna was joined by her parents, Mona and Preston Baker.

Although season-ending statistics were not available, Smith said Cheyenne and Lahna finished among the team's top four scorers. Lahna, who played for Lake Placid as a junior, provided a newcomer's boost as did Pemayet Emahakv Charter School graduate Raeley Matthews. The 6-foot-1 freshman center made a favorable impression in her rookie season.



Photo courtesy of Peggy Nunez

Four-year Okeechobee High School varsity girls basketball player Cheyenne Nunez is joined by her parents, Peggy and Daniel Nunez Sr., during the team's senior night ceremony Jan. 21 against Moore Haven. In what turned out to be Cheyenne's final game due to a previous injury, Okeechobee won 59-37.



Photo courtesy of Peggy Nunez

Okeechobee High School senior Lahna Baker is joined by her parents, Mona and Preston Baker, during the girls basketball team's senior night Jan. 21. Lahna was honored during a pregame ceremony but did not play due to an injury.

"If she sticks with it, she'll be a Division I basketball player. She was one of the best centers in the district," Smith said.

As for reinforcements next season, Smith expects freshman Cady Osceola will step up in the varsity backcourt after she generated a strong season on the junior varsity.

"She had an awesome year. She will fill one of the positions of Lahna or Cheyenne," Smith said.

With the state playoffs in full swing in early February, Smith said his team would have been in the thick of it had the injury bug not bit Lahna and Cheyenne.

"I believe if we had both of those girls we'd still be playing," he said.

After the basketball season ended, Lahna and Cheyenne shifted their attention to getting healthy in time for softball season.



Photo courtesy of Dallas Nunez

From left, front row: Taryn Osceola, Kendra Thomas, Kashyra Urbina, Lexi Thomas, Tiyanni Anderson, Preslynn Baker. From left, back row: Jana Johnson, Nena Youngblood, Naleah Billie, Saniya Rodrigues, Talena Holata, coach Dallas Nunez.

Lady Seminoles shine in Fort Lauderdale

STAFF REPORT

FORT LAUDERDALE — The Lady Seminoles 10U girls volleyball team finished in second place in the gold division at the Fort Lauderdale Invite Jan. 30-31.

The Lady Seminoles won their first four matches without losing a set.

They reached the championship match against a team from the Palm Beach Juniors. Palm Beach edged the Lady Seminoles, 2-1, to claim first place. The match was as close as can be with the first two sets decided by two points and the third set decided by three points.

Dallas Nunez coaches the team.

◆ JUJITSU From page 1C

school; we will test our students in a competition whenever we want to, but we're not here to push kids into competitions; we're not here to win medals," he said. "What we're focusing on is having better kids, better attitude, better confidence when they grow up."

Before they grow up, the kids have plenty of opportunities just to be kids while learning jujitsu. Gutierrez, who has decades of experience as a martial arts instructor, teaches a system that blends sweat with fun.

"It's where you reward them with play if they do well. Go from intense drills, if they do well, then to a game for five minutes. They love it," Osceola said. "It's a very good system and it works on kids who

have a lot of energy, especially the younger kids."

At the end of the class in January, Gutierrez wrapped black tape around the ends of some students' belts as recognition for accomplishments. The beaming students proceeded to embark on a joyous victory sprint while high-fived by their peers and Gutierrez.

"He's very good at connecting with the children and making them feel confident and getting them out there to do things they probably wouldn't normally do and take chances," Osceola said.

Helping kids emerge from their shells while building a wealth of self-esteem they can use for the rest of their lives makes all the hard work worthwhile for Big Cypress Martial Arts.

"These kids won't show any nerves," Gutierrez said.

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Yo Osceola helps lead Moore Haven to success

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

MOORE HAVEN — Just when it looked like the Moore Haven High School boys basketball season couldn't get any better, it did, and Yopalakiyo Osceola was right in the middle.

"This was the best game," Yo said after his senior night Jan. 27 was capped by a stirring late rally that propelled the Terriers past rival Okeechobee, 77-74. "Pretty special."

Yo, who played his first season of football last fall on Moore Haven's offensive line, picked a good year to make his debut with the basketball team. The victory against Okeechobee epitomized Moore Haven's surge this season under first-year coach Matt Zinser, who guided the club to its first winning season (19-8) in more than a decade and its first appearance in the state's regional playoffs since 2003. Moore Haven ended its regional drought thanks to its runner-up finish in the Class 3A-District 9 tournament that sent the Terriers into the regional quarterfinals where their season ended Feb. 11 with a loss to Community School of Naples.

"It's my first year coaching in Moore Haven," Zinser said. "What I have learned is that basketball was a big tradition here. They used to win a lot of ball games and that's what we're trying to get it back to. We're trying to build on this year. This is a good foundation we've set. We just got to continue to get better."

Although this season marks his first and last year with the team, Yo has enjoyed every step in playing a part of that foundation.

"I like it," he said. "We have good coaching."

Being the team's sixth or seventh man, Yo has fulfilled his role as a 6-foot-2, 250-pound backup center who comes off the bench to battle on the boards at both ends. For a team that loves to run, substitutes play a vital role at Moore Haven.

"In basketball, you have six, seven, eight guys you depend on, and Yo is one of those guys we depend on," Zinser said. "Yo has been a joy to be around. Every time he steps on the floor we can always depend on him getting rebounds and giving us solid minutes playing defense."

Yo isn't known for his scoring, but he did register a season-high seven points in an 80-58 win against Lake Placid in January. He scored six points each in three other games. Rebounding and providing size for a small, quick squad are what the Terriers count on the most from Yo.

"Yo has a good-sized body," Zinser said. "He goes in and does his job on the rebounds. He doesn't really have super-duper spring off the ground, but he does what he's supposed to do and he uses his body and blocks out and gets rebounds."

Senior night for Yo and two other Terrier players from the Class of 2016 started in a pregame ceremony. As a few students in the crowd yelled out his first name, Yo was accompanied onto the court by parents Dana and Richard Osceola.

Instead of heading to the sideline after the ceremony, Yo received a chance to stay on the court as a starter at center with more than

a dozen family members in the bleachers. After exchanging pre-tip handshakes with Okeechobee, including Brighton Reservation resident Demetrius Clark, Yo helped stake Moore Haven to an 18-10 lead after one quarter.

Yo didn't score any points in the game, but he notched a nifty assist with an alert pass in the paint to Tevon Thompson for a layup that gave Moore Haven a 60-58 lead early in the third quarter.

Moore Haven's trip to victory lane only came after the Terriers erased a four-point deficit with a 7-0 run to end the game. Yo was on the bench in the waning moments, but he was a big part of the postgame celebration at midcourt with his teammates and classmates.

With his first seasons already in the books for football and basketball, Yo said he briefly set his sights on playing baseball but opted to take a break. Still, whether it was blocking for running backs on the football field or blocking shots on the basketball court, Yo made favorable impressions at every turn while helping both Terrier teams to winning seasons.

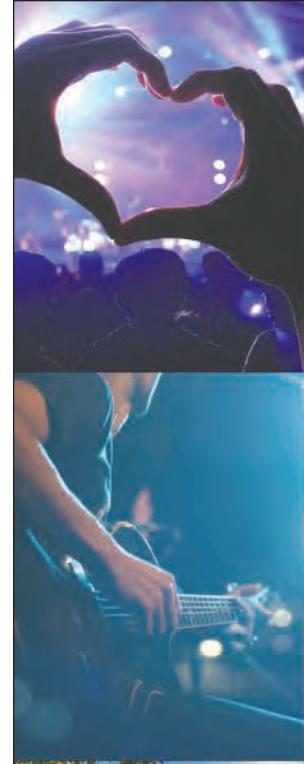
"He comes in, does his job and plays hard," Zinser said. "That's all I can ask of him."



Accompanied by his mom, Dana, and father, Richard, Moore Haven High School senior center Yopalakiyo Osceola is greeted by coach Matt Zinser during a senior night ceremony for the boys basketball team Jan. 27.



Moore Haven High School senior center Yopalakiyo Osceola, left, battles for position against Okeechobee during the Terriers' senior night victory in Moore Haven.



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Seminoles spark Moore Haven as Lady Terriers eye another memorable season

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

CLEWISTON — The first inning of Moore Haven High School's softball game against Clewiston Feb. 22 indicated how valuable Seminole players are to the Lady Terriers.

All three Seminoles in Moore Haven's starting lineup – left fielder Sunni Bearden, shortstop Sydnee Cypress and first baseman Calgary Johns – ignited the Lady Terriers to a fast start on the way to a 7-5 road victory.

Sunni led off the game with a single and scored on a sacrifice fly by Sydnee. Four batters later, Calgary drilled an RBI double down the left field line for a 4-0 lead.

In all, the Seminole trio combined for five hits and four RBIs as Moore Haven (6-1) continued its strong start to the season under new coach Clin Raulerson.

With Calgary (senior), Sydnee (junior), Sunni (sophomore) and Diamond Shore (a freshman who did not play against Clewiston), the Tribe has all four grades covered.

"They work hard. They're a bunch of good kids," Raulerson said. "I know a lot of their families. They're good kids, good people."

After winning Class 3A district and regional championships the past two years, Moore Haven is eager to add a state title atop its mantle. Two years ago, the Lady Terriers lost in the state finals. Last season, they were knocked out in the state semifinals.

"Right now they're hungry because our whole motto this year is 'finish' because they haven't been able to quite finish it," Raulerson said.

"They get deep in the playoffs ... they don't quite get that state title that they want. That's why I told them I came here to help them win a state title. It's not about me; it's about them, and I want to see these kids win a state title this year."

"We're determined to make it to state," Calgary said. "We have a good coaching staff this year and I think we'll make it."

Kalrgay said she got off to slow start with the bat this season, but two hits and three RBIs from the No. 7 spot against Clewiston showed she's back in the groove.

"I was struggling a little bit at the beginning of the season, but I finally got started. Tonight was a good game," said Kalrgay, who visited the left field corner again in the third when she blasted a first pitch fastball that brought home two runners. Kalrgay was caught in a rundown on the play, but that didn't diminish an otherwise satisfying evening for Moore Haven.

From the right side, switch-hitting Sydnee crushed a double to left-center – the hardest hit ball of the game – to lead off the

sixth and scored. Sunni notched her second hit with a single in the sixth.

Through the first three weeks, Moore Haven averaged nearly 10 runs per game. So far, the only hiccup came Feb. 5 with a 10-0 loss against American Heritage, of Plantation, a Class 5A powerhouse whose starting lineup includes the Tribe's Ahnie Jumper and Kiauna Martin.

Aside from the final score, Kalrgay said she enjoyed facing friends from the Tribe.

"It was fun," Kalrgay said. "We've all grown up together and played together on travel ball and everything, so it was fun to play against them. They're a good team, a stout team. They had good pitching, good hitting, good fielding, good everything."

Moore Haven bounced back from the defeat. The win against Clewiston was the fifth straight for the Lady Terriers, who turned a game-ending double play on a line drive back to pitcher Olivia Everett with the tying run at second base.

"They're working really hard and we're pushing them really hard," Raulerson said.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven High School sophomore Sunni Bearden sprints to first base on a single against Clewiston High School Feb. 22 in Clewiston.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven High School's Sydnee Cypress takes a cut during an at-bat against Clewiston High School. Sydnee had one double and one RBI.



Kevin Johnson

Moore Haven High School first baseman Calgary Johns applies a tag against Clewiston High School's Megan Pittman in the third inning of the Lady Terriers' 7-5 win Feb. 22 in Clewiston.

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May	Tuesday, May 31	Wednesday, May 11
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July	Friday, July 29	Wednesday, July 13
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Some memories stay with you. They reside in your heart of hearts. They never leave you and you can always call them forth.

Often I close my eyes and go back to younger days when my recently deceased brother, Joey, and I raced bicycle motocross. I just let those times reprise themselves again and again upon the tablet screen of my fondest memories. Yet I anticipate more years ahead of trying to come to grips with his passing. I write this down as a gift for him, and as a way to try to understand the loss.

"I just did a 'radical' over the tabletop!" Joey says during our practice runs. This is our first time racing, ever. So Joey's all smiles, keyed up by a jump that is reminiscent of a "cross-up," that is, performed in the following order: leveling out in midair, bike and rider, both with the front wheel aimed upward, that's a "cross-up" whereas in a "radical" the jumper levels out, too, but this time, turns the front wheel downward and his or her eyes are directed to the rear wheel. Oh, the poetry, the artistry!

"Make way, folks," I kid, "Mr. Evel Knievel, hisself, comin' through."

We're young Seminole racers, raring to go, and for the first time in our young lives we're on a real bicycle motocross track. No longer are we on dream-filled tracks thrown together by neighborhood kids. It's the bicentennial year this year, too, so there's energy and plenty of American flags out, lots of red, white, and blue, everywhere. Kids get hurt out there; it just goes with the territory, whether in practice or during races. But we are in search of a righteous path, Joey and I, and these bikes are fast-moving works of art. Indeed, there's a passion for bikes that's truly universal. I ride the tall edge of berms. "Joey," I say, "so I race first, and then, take the bike back to you, right?" "Yeah, don't forget, okay." Joey says. He walks the track, getting a better feel for it.

I have just gotten a new bike that day, my 11th birthday, and since Joey is a year older than me, and in a different age group of racers, I race first, and then, race on back to the starting hill and hand the bike over to him, so he can race. We have pretty much bugged our dad every minute of every day to give bike racing a try here at South Florida Kartway, the local go-kart track that was once located near Stirling Road and I-95. Oakwood Plaza and various hotels and fast-food places are there today. The go-kart and BMX tracks are both memories of the past. Change marches onward. But back in the day, BMX was a big deal to the youth in the area. Riders are everywhere. They're riding, they're jumping, they're popping wheelies up and down growing neighborhoods and roads.

"When are you going to buy us bikes so we can race?" is how we would pester our dad.

"Well, if y'all boys really want to race, then, we'll look into it," our dad would respond.

Mom would show a look of concern and eventually nod her head yes.

But that was it. Nothing more would be uttered on the subject - that is until my 11th birthday! But we can only have the one bike for now, our dad explains, to see how we like it first. Okay, sounds great! Come on! Let's do this!

The BMX track is so crowded. There are bright lights and camera flashes and a PA system blares out the business of BMX racing. I can feel the intensity, the urgency, the purpose. I can see Mongoose bikes, FMF and R&B racing frames, Ashtabula racing forks, Oakley visors, Scott goggles, motorcycle helmets, aluminum racing rims, chrome mags, elbow pads, and gloves. The accoutrements of bike racing. And I can see the faces arrayed for war, some serious war faces, too, as we do more practice laps. Our number plates - "9" for Joey and "00" for me, which I would invariably alter into eyeballs with marker or duct tape - are fashioned from flimsy white paper plates, but we don't care, we're just kids who have a lot to learn and just happy to be here! We are racing!

"Heavy bike," I say to Joey, referring to our bike. "Heavy-duty rims, too."

"I know, I know," he says, "but we just peddle like anything, like there's no tomorrow."

Later, when races are drawing near, my dad says, "Well, we're glad to see you boys out there, getting ready for your races. If you need anything - anything - we'll be up in the bleachers, cheering you on. Good luck, okay."

With worried expressions, still, my mom and sisters say, "Be careful out there. Good luck!"

We're approaching a kind of paradise out there. Joey picks up on the workings of the track right off. But he knows we definitely have work ahead. I'm on the bike now, and just like that, I'm a scout on a war pony, in competition with the cavalry. And it isn't going too pretty. No, wait, wait, I'm bulldogging a lightning-quick alligator that can race all across the muddied, perilous Everglades. Oh yeah! Good times! I could even prob'ly ride with the horse soldiers on the western Plains right now, if need be, they, on painted war ponies, me, on a birthday bike, and all of us advancing up and over green rolling hills.

We're pursuing our bliss, our long black hair waving in the breezes like flags and pennants in battle. Oh, how do we get to particular times in our lives? Memorable times. Dreams play a major role, and the heart, well, the heart has an imagination all its own, aspiring when so inspired. In flashes here and there, I can see American flags, banners, silhouettes and blurs of our family, of the cheering crowd. There's a magic in asphalt and dirt and the knobby racing tire over jumps and berms, traversing across a "no-man's-land," the excitement and thrill of a racing night. We ride and practice and all the rich history of the Florida Seminoles seems to pass before my eyes at once, like fast editing. I'm still trying to process it.

When practice first started, Joey, after taking the bike out, had reported back that for maximum speed we should try to avoid the tiny rolling mounds, surging, waving dips and rises of earth, called "whoop-de-dos" and stay to the edge of them which is more of a straightaway and hit the berm on the inside, never ride the crest, never grandstand over the tabletop, as in practice sometimes, but hug it close, embrace it, and try to stay close to ground. Excellent call.

"You remember that track we set up near the rez that time?" Joey asks. "Through those woods? It's something like that..."

We have on maroon football jerseys, worn and torn, with leftover padding on the elbows, blue jeans, work boots, and helmets, and yet, we are out there as though we are in fully-padded racing uniforms, just like the teams from the established bike shops have on. As if, to the manner borne, too! Smiling! Having fun!

Joey points up to the noisy highway not too far to the west. "Man, I could even race those cars on I-95 right now," he says, trying to hide his smile. "But once we hit like maybe 75 miles per hour, this bike here might start to shaking, I don't know." He's looking up as if watching it all play out on a giant drive-in movie screen. Racers are a tad wild, mind you. Just a tad.

Race time! I recall the start, the racers at the ready, the pressure on the raised board that holds them at bay, and then, the sudden drop of the board and loud command to "go!" I recall the frantic peddling, the noise and grunts and yells, the excitement of the crowd. I could feel elbows full of steam, brushing against me, and hear the ends of handlebars making contact, tapping hard on other handlebar grips. There's a whiff of muddy water and the smells of sweat and dirt and impending victory. But alas, we don't quite place that day, no, nothing to write home about, at least, being mere novices and all. Truth to tell, though, as far as my brother and I are concerned, we finish light-years ahead of those seasoned racers.

"You know," Joey says playfully, "Seminole warriors could've jumped over and around them blue troops, if they had bikes in those wars."

I smile and nod. "Yep," I say. "I know."

And I can still close my eyes and see him, especially nowadays. My racing days are long over, but I still see him in images, radiating first in black and white, then in grays, then in sepia, then blues. Later, we would grow into full-fledged BMX racers, seasoned veterans, racing for Pirkles Bike Shop, which had on its team some of the fastest racers in Florida. In time, the Seminole Okalee Indian Village would sponsor us, and we would go on to race in the Orange Bowl, the Miami Baseball Stadium, and at fairgrounds and on dirt tracks all across Florida, even becoming Florida state champions, in our own right. Later on, Joey would even open his own extreme bike and skateboard shop.

I call the memories forth and they appear. They stay with me, always, and together my brother and I merge into that magic, racing throughout Florida's rich history, with Seminoles, racing forward, and on track. We didn't understand back then, but we knew Seminoles were on the road of history, we need only look around us to see that, written there upon the racetracks of life, and lo and behold, how in action, how on the move. I can see us now as if in a vision. Often we face a storm, scanning the far horizon, for hope.

In our youth, we hold our heads high and brace ourselves to a struggle. And one fine day we make our way down to the land of the sawgrass, the pine, the live oak and Spanish moss, yay, the big cypress. Like those who've gone before us, oh so long ago, we know survival and hardship. When loved ones pass away, we stay with the loss and the tears. And so, with remembrances and dreams of early adventures, I stay in unrest to recount the unforgettable stories of yesterday. So they live on.

After this first night of racing, we would never be the same.

And as for my brother, well, I can see him now, in silhouette, on a racing bike, backlit by an orange-red sunrise.

"Peddle on, my brother," I say. "Peddle on."

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