

Community



Prayer walk held in BC to commemorate Memorial Day

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The annual Memorial Day Remembrance & Prayer Walk was held May 23 at the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trail on the Big Cypress Reservation. Veterans from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and staff were joined by other residents and staff from the tribal community for a walk and prayers at the fitness trail.

Staff from the Integrative Health Department, Seminole Fire Rescue and Seminole Police were among those who participated. The event was organized by Integrative Health to honor and commemorate the sacrifices made by all veterans in the name of freedom.

After the walk concluded, veterans spoke about remembering those who have served in the Armed Forces. They also spoke about their experiences while serving in the military. The tribe’s Mitchell Cypress, Paul Bowers Sr. and Sallie Josh, and Recreation employee Marcus Thompson were among the veterans who spoke.

“All these people that we know, that have gone, you know so we appreciate their efforts and everything else that they did for the military and everything else. I appreciate myself, I’m still here. I enjoy talking to different people, different veterans and all the veterans and heroes you can see at Arlington Cemetery with all the crosses all over the field,” Bowers said.

In addition to the speakers, other veterans who participated in the event included Curtis Motlow, Paul Downing and Erik Hartl. Ruby Osceola, a Gold Star mother, was also honored.



The Memorial Day Remembrance & Prayer Walk drew about 30 people to the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trial.

Calvin Tiger



Calvin Tiger

Big Cypress Health educator Jamie Diersing, right, and Pastor Salaw Hummingbird, center, start the prayer walk at the Big Cypress Veterans Memorial Fitness Trail.



Calvin Tiger

Pastor Salaw Hummingbird, right, says a prayer to honor those who have served and given the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom.



Calvin Tiger

Standing behind Gold Star Mother Ruby Osceola are, from left to right, veterans Paul Bowers Sr., Sallie Josh, Curtis Motlow, Mitchell Cypress, Paul Downing and Erik Hartl.

◆ ANDERSON From page 1A

During the announcement, Anderson said being inducted is “probably the greatest honor I could ever receive.” He mentioned Hall of Famers Merle Haggard, George Jones and Loretta Lynn.

“Just the fact that I get a chance to be amongst this kind of greatness, words can’t really explain for me how important it is,” he said.

“Seminole Wind” was released

in 1992 and reached No. 2 on the U.S. Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks chart. The breezy tune pays homage to the Everglades and the “land of the Seminole” with somber references to outside greed and development that impacted the region, and “now the glades are going dry.”

The end of the third verse is:
“And the last time I walked in the swamp,

I sat upon a Cypress stump,
I listened close and I heard the

ghost,

Of Osceola cry.”

Anderson grew up in Apopka, about 25 miles northwest of Orlando. He and his family have lived in Tennessee for decades. He’s had five No. 1 Billboard hits and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1982 for Best Male Country Vocal Performance. His resume includes awards from the Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music.

The day in October for the induction ceremony had not been announced as of press time.

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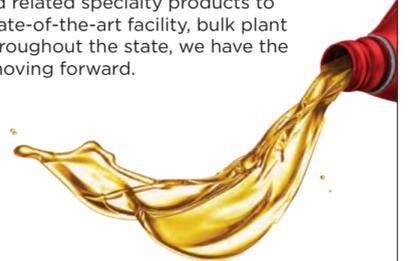
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Tribe shows appreciation for mothers

STAFF REPORT

Mother's Day celebrations were held throughout the tribe on various days leading up to the actual Mother's Day on May 12. At the Hollywood event, Board President Holly Tiger talked to the audience about how kids who grew up in a camp-style setting received a lot of support in addition to their mothers, getting help from aunts,

grandmothers, and sisters of grandmothers. "They all pitched in to help raise the kids. They all pitched in to make sure everybody was fed and taken care of. If you grew up in that lifestyle, and you come from a family that is rooted in that, you had a lot of 'mothers,' she said. "I think that's something we have that's rich in our culture that nobody else has."



From left to right, Desiree Smith and Danni Cypress with their mom, Jeannette Cypress, and Mary Jene Koenes attend the Big Cypress Mother's Day event May 9 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



From left to right, Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., Nancy Shore, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and Helene Buster share laughter at the Brighton Mother's Day event May 10 in the reservation's recreation gymnasium.



Eliza Mora with her daughter, Mayeli Hall, at the Hollywood Mother's Day celebration May 9 in a ballroom at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.



Kaylan Osceola with her daughter, Arianna Osceola, in Hollywood.



Ahnje Jumper and her daughter, Sawyer Jumper, enjoy their time at the BC Mother's Day event.



Donna Schaefer with her daughter, Amber Billie, in Hollywood.



Danielle Nelson and her daughter, Tehya Nelson, at the Big Cypress Mother's Day event.



From left to right, Caleb Burton, Micki Burton and Leilani Burton gather for a family photo at the Brighton Mother's Day event.



Acealyn Youngblood, left, from the Brighton Council office, hands out flowers to mothers, including Vicki Huff, during the Mother's Day event in Brighton.



Lindsey King and her mom, Betty King in Big Cypress.



Cheyenne Gonzalez and her daughter, Elianna Gonzalez, receive a visit from Board President Holly Tiger at the Brighton Mother's Day event.



Sonja Buck, standing, and Sarah Sampson smile in the photo set up area in Brighton.



Leslie Fish with her daughter, Ruth Cypress, in Big Cypress.

Upcoming events at Fairgrounds

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WEST PALM BEACH — The South Florida Fair will host the following events in June at the Fairgrounds in West Palm Beach:
 • June 8-9: Halfway to Christmas Craft Fair
 • June 14-16: South Florida Boat Show
 • June 14-15: 23rd annual Arrigo Extreme Rodeo
 For more information and a complete list of June events visit southfloridafair.com.

Country music band to play in Tampa, Hollywood

FROM PRESS RELEASE

The On back-to-back nights, country music star band Old Dominion will play at Seminole resorts. The band will play Dec. 12 at Hard Rock Event Center in Tampa. On Dec. 13, the band will perform at Hard Rock Live in Hollywood. Both shows start at 8 p.m. For tickets visit ticketmaster.com. Old Dominion has captured awards in just about every major country music organization, including Country Music Awards, Academy of Country Music and CMT.

EPA announces more than \$225M for tribal water improvements

FROM PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — On May 22, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced more than \$225 million in funding will go toward improving both access to safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure for American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. The funding is being made through President Biden's Investing in America program. "With this announcement, tribes will be able to access funding for critical public

health improvements ranging from lead service line replacement to get the lead out of drinking water to installation of wastewater infrastructure to protect public health and improve water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and oceans," said Bruno Pigott acting assistant administrator for Water, in a news release. The FY 2024 funding will be administered through the following programs:
 • \$69.4 million in Clean Water Indian Set-Aside through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and annual appropriation

funds.
 • \$133.8 million in Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants Tribal Set-Aside through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and annual appropriation funds.
 • \$19.3 million in Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Tribal Grant Program through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds.
 • \$2.85 million in Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities Tribal Grant Program through annual appropriation funds.

SEMINOLE SCENES



GOING, GOING, GONE: A large excavator makes quick work of the Brighton Reservation's old Boys & Girls Club building now that the new facility down the road is open.

Beverly Bidney (2)



Courtesy photo
STAR GAZING: Seminole artist Elgin Jumper shows his most recently completed work from his "Seminole Starry Night Series." He finished this piece in May.



COOLIN' OFF: These girls in Brighton are having a blast at the Recreation and Education departments' "End of the School Year Bash" on May 24, which included water slides, games and food.

Beverly Bidney



SMART TEACHER: PECS' Teacher of the Year Quenten Pritchard kept a promise to his students. To encourage them to do well on the state end of the year civics exam, he said he would get a tattoo if they all passed. The encouragement worked; 100% of 7th graders passed and the result is this tattoo celebrating their achievement. The tattoo was designed by student Zoey Bowers.

Beverly Bidney



POOL POSITION: Oracle Red Bull Racing drivers Sergio "Checo" Perez, left, and Max Verstappen try out remote control racing boats in early May at the Guitart Hotel pool in Hollywood. They were in town for the Miami Grand Prix F1 race. Verstappen finished second; Perez was fourth.

Oracle Red Bull Racing/Instagram



MAIL CALL: A new mail facility recently opened in Big Cypress at 30550 Josie Billie Highway.

Beverly Bidney



CHAIR FROM CHAIRMAN: Foldup chairs decked out in patchwork were among the gifts mothers received from the Chairman's office at the Hollywood Mother's Day celebration.

Kevin Johnson



SOUTHWEST SHOPPING: In the left photo, from left to right, Agnes Motlow, Loretta Micco and Louise Osceola spend some time shopping at the Indian Traders Market at Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on April 27. In the right photo, from left to right, Claudia Doctor, Mary Tigertail and Betty King enjoy their time at the market.



Beverly Bidney (2)

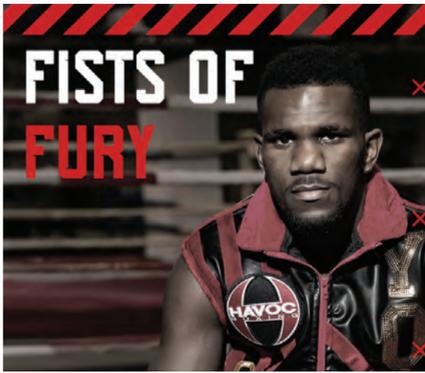
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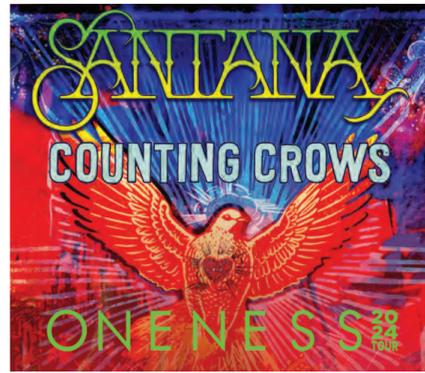
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YIYO SARANTE & SERGIO VARGAS



JUN 6
MEGAN THEE STALLION



JUN 7
FISTS OF FURY



JUN 14
SANTANA & COUNTING CROWS



JUN 15
BRYSON TILLER



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Education



Florida SouthWestern State College President Jeffery S. Allbritten hands diplomas to CeCe Thomas, left, and Saniya Rodrigues at the school's graduation ceremony May 3 in Fort Myers.

Florida SouthWestern State College (2)

Brighton high school students earn college degrees

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT MYERS — Seminole Tribe of Florida students Saniya Rodrigues and CeCe Thomas graduated from Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers on May 3, three weeks before they were scheduled to graduate from Moore Haven High School.

The students, both from the Brighton Reservation, were in the high school's dual enrollment program for two years, during which they did their high school coursework along with the college curriculum. Both graduated with an Associates of Arts degree before receiving their high school

diplomas.

"It's been tough, but it was a good experience," Thomas said. "I had time to get my AA degree and now I don't have to go to college for as long."

Thomas will attend Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, where she plans to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous and American Indian Studies.

"I'm not sure what I want to do, but I can do anything," Thomas said. "It's a broad program of study."

Rodrigues also took advantage of the dual enrollment program, which she saw as a great opportunity.

"It allowed me to get ahead

in my education," she said. "It's always better to be ahead and I knew my capabilities."

Rodrigues got all As and only one B during the two-year program. She plans to attend Florida State University in the fall, where she will study accounting.

"I love math," she said. "I want to come back and work for the tribe in the Treasury Department."

With their first graduation walk behind them, Thomas and Rodrigues focused on their second graduation, which was held May 24 with their Moore Haven High School classmates.

Beverly Bidney

It's graduation day for CeCe Thomas, left, and Saniya Rodrigues.



Big Cypress Preschool graduates honored by community

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — The Big Cypress Preschool held its graduation May 14 in the Ahfachkee gym, where 14 proud youngsters walked down the aisle as they received their well-earned diplomas.

Preschool center manager Andrea Jumper and lead teacher Tara Pruitt led the class in two songs, although some children couldn't resist the urge to wave to their families. Before the students went backstage to don their caps and gowns, tribal dignitaries spoke to them and the crowd of family and friends gathered for the occasion.

"You guys are the future for our tribe and our world," said Big Cypress Councilwoman Mariann Billie. "Thank you, parents, teachers and support teams for making the children feel loved and supported."

President Holly Tiger and Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers told the grads how proud they are of them.

"You showed determination," Rep. Bowers said. "We are so proud of you parents and thank you for trusting the preschool with their education."

After receiving their diplomas, the graduates ran into the arms of waiting families who embraced them lovingly and proudly.



Graduate Newton Shaffer sits with his great-grandmother Nancy Motlow after the preschool graduation ceremony May 14 in Big Cypress.

♦ See BC PRESCHOOL on page 4B

Beverly Bidney



Former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students Lexi Thomas, left, and Sydney Matthews participate in the school's grad walk May 17 for alumni who graduated high school this spring.

Beverly Bidney

PECS alumni walk halls as high school graduates

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Sixteen former Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School students returned to the school they graduated from four years ago May 17 and proudly walked the hallways in their caps and gowns as high school graduates from the class of 2024.

It was the school's sixth year holding the traditional alumni walk, during which the grads strolled through the hallways that were lined with students, teachers and school staff who cheered, applauded and hugged them.

Before they took the celebratory walk, the alumni met in the gym for snacks, a slide show of their earlier years and some words from Principal Tracy Downing and Education Department employees.

They were known as the PECS class of 2020 when they completed their 8th grade year virtually from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. High school began much the same way, yet these students persevered to get their education and earn their diplomas.

♦ See GRAD WALK on page 4B



Wyatt Thornton, at left in back, Zach Riley, center, and Marcos Reyna are doused with confetti as they take part in PECS' grad walk.

Beverly Bidney



Graduates Jakolby Lino Bear, left, and Nalanie Mae Bear-Rodriguez pose for a photo in front of a cool backdrop after receiving their diplomas.

Beverly Bidney

◆ BC PRESCHOOL
From page 1B



The Big Cypress Preschool class of 2024 proudly stand on the stage for the graduation ceremony in the Ahfachkee gymnasium May 14.

Beverly Bidney



From left to right, Big Cypress Board Rep. Nadine Bowers, Councilwoman Mariann Billie, Board President Holly Tiger and preschool center manager Andrea Jumper congratulate graduate Xylianna Rose Gutierrez as she receives her diploma.

Beverly Bidney



The Big Cypress graduating class performs a song for friends and family before the graduation ceremony. In center, with her arm up, is Lucianna Tiger.

Beverly Bidney

GRAD WALK
From page 1B

"You have worked hard to reach this point and you should be proud of all you have accomplished," Downing said. "Now is the time to take what you have learned and apply it to the real world. You will face challenges, setbacks and uncertainties along the way, but remember that these are opportunities for growth and learning. Life is a series of moments and it's important to savor each one. Celebrate your successes, learn from your failures and cherish the relationships you build along the way."

The graduates, wearing caps and gowns from their high schools – Okeechobee and Moore Haven – delighted in the attention and seeing each other again. The walk is meant to be an inspiration for current students.

"I'm so proud of you," said Nancy Jimmie, Brighton Education K-12 advisor assistant. "We have almost 100% graduation rate in Brighton. We want to see you all succeed."

The graduates have a variety of plans for the future including college, the military and trade schools. After posing for a few group photos, the graduates said another goodbye before they departed.



Former PECS students, now high school graduates from the class of 2024, gather in the school's gym before the annual grad walk

Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney



Beverly Bidney

PECS alumni in the high school class of 2024 gather before taking to the hallways of their elementary and middle school alma mater May 17 for the traditional grad walk.

From left to right, high school graduates Eric Puente, Nena Youngblood and Cece Thomas are joined by PECS principal Tracy Downing, far right, during the school's annual grad walk May 17.

Hollywood Preschool graduates soar to new heights

BY CALVIN TIGER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — The Hollywood Preschool graduation program featured an “Out Of This World” theme, including a space ship journey around the solar system.

Students performed space-related songs, including “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “Space Race,” “Eight Planets,” and “Climb Aboard the Spaceship” on May 10 at the Seminole Estates clubhouse. A slideshow highlighted the class’s school year and showed the students participating in different school activities and learning tribal culture.

Before the graduating class received their diplomas, Board President Holly Tiger and Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall spoke to the students and parents.

“We’re always here for you, all your tribe is here. We are here to support you in everything that you do, so just ask for help whenever you need it,” Rep. McCall said.

President Tiger also congratulated the class on its accomplishments and reminded the students and families that there were will always be support educating tribal youth.

Graduates Charlie Stewart and Daniel Josh were awarded the Outstanding Student Award.



Calvin Tiger

The class of 2024 Hollywood Preschool graduates gets ready to say goodbye during their graduation ceremony May 10 at Seminole Estates clubhouse in Hollywood.



Calvin Tiger

Preschool graduate Norrin Noah says a few words in the Elaponke language at the graduation ceremony.



Calvin Tiger

Hollywood Preschool graduates Kenzley Gentry, left, and Luis Escobar walk to the stage before they receive their diplomas May 10 at the Seminole Estates clubhouse.



Calvin Tiger

Hollywood Preschool graduate Alcie Bowers receives her diploma and shakes hands with Board President Holly Tiger as Hollywood Board Rep. Christine McCall and tribalwide Preschool Director Tommy Doud offer their congratulations, too.

Brighton Preschool graduates shine in the limelight

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Nineteen four-year-old preschool graduates proved they could put on a show before they received their diplomas from the Brighton Preschool on May 17.

The Florida Seminole Veterans Building was crowded with family and friends as the graduates recited the pledge of allegiance in Creek and English, sang a few songs and came out in costumes depicting various professions, numerous superheroes and one astronaut, who read a book to the audience. It was an ambitious, but successfully executed, program for these young graduates.

Before they received their diplomas, dignitaries spoke to the youngsters, including Brighton Councilman Larry Howard who told them he has known them from when they were babies.

“Grow up and go on to higher education,” Councilman Howard said. “Your parents and teachers will get you on the right path. Parents, cherish your little ones with everything you’ve got.”

Board President Holly Tiger noted that this ceremony is the children’s first big milestone.

“Make sure you pay attention and listen to your teachers,” President Tiger said. “Parents, our children are the best of us. Please show them respect, honor and trust.”

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge asked the graduates if they were ready for “the big school”, to which they all answered



Beverly Bidney

Proud grandma Emma Urbina holds her three graduating grandsons. From left to right are Nathan Gopher, Sam Gopher-Santibanez and Zwaylo Orozco.



Beverly Bidney

Jaxxon Gopher celebrates receiving his diploma.

with an enthusiastic “yeah!”

“These kids are our future,” Rep. Arledge said. “Parents, it all starts with you.

Guide them and be there for them.”

As the graduates went backstage to put their caps and gowns on over their colorful

patchwork clothing, parents were treated to a slide show of baby pictures. Then they joined the children on their walk down the aisle to receive their diplomas.

The graduates will attend Pema yetv Emahakv Charter School for pre-K in the fall.



Beverly Bidney

Preschool graduate Rosalie Tommie-Runkles helps her class sing an animated song at the graduation ceremony.



Beverly Bidney

Brighton Board Rep. Bryan Arledge, Brighton Councilman Larry Howard and President Holly Tiger celebrate with the Brighton Preschool class of 2024 after the ceremony May 17.

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