

The Seminole Tribune

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Seminoles, Santa deliver holiday cheer to hospital

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
 Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — President Mitchell Cypress, with help from Santa Claus, brought much-needed Christmas cheer to young patients Dec. 8 at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital.

After collecting more than 900 toys during a three-day toy drive, President Cypress distributed gifts to children who might not be home for the holidays.

"What most children want is to be normal and not be in the hospital," said Don Eachus, director of development at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Foundation. "It's a semblance of normalcy when people bring presents. It brings them a smile and takes their minds off what they are going through for a little bit."

The toys were donated Dec. 3-5 by generous passersby at the corner of Stirling Road and U.S. 441 in Hollywood.

Local radio stations, nighttime klieg lights and Santa Claus helped draw attention to the collection event, where inside a cheerfully decorated tent, unwrapped gifts filled boxes labeled by gender and age.

The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood also showed generosity by donating an additional 1,200 toys for sharing with other children.

Several days later, a Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue fire truck substituted as Santa's sleigh to transport jolly St. Nick and his firefighter elves to the Hollywood hospital. President Cypress followed with vehicles filled with toys.

"I always like to see the smiles on their faces," President Cypress said. "This is the biggest joy I get from working all year long."

President Cypress hosted his first toy drive and drop off in 2007 when he was Chairman and carried on the tradition through his term. He decided to relaunch the event this year as President, he said.



President Mitchell Cypress and Santa Claus deliver a toy to a baby in the intensive care unit Dec. 8 at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood. President Cypress hosted a three-day toy drive prior to the delivery.

Inspiration for the event comes from his childhood Christmas memories. He said he remembers how much he looked forward to the fruit that missionaries brought to the

church at Christmas: "I thought that was something," he said.

President Cypress credits the community for the success of the Tribe's casinos, so

he aims to help as many needy children as possible during the holidays.

♦ See TOY DRIVE on page 8A

Chairman, governor reach compact agreement

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
 Staff Reporter

Chairman James E. Billie and Gov. Rick Scott signed a gaming compact Dec. 7 that will give the Tribe the exclusive right to operate blackjack and add craps and roulette at its seven Florida casinos.

In exchange, the Tribe will pay \$3 billion to the state over a seven-year period beginning in 2017.

The compact must be ratified by the Florida Legislature. The 2016 session runs Jan. 12 through March 11.

Chairman Billie said in a statement that the compact will "serve Florida well for years to come."

He said there is nothing more important than investing in Florida's economy and continuing to grow the workforce. The agreement, he said, will save 3,500 jobs and allow the Tribe to create thousands more.

"The Seminole Tribe of Florida's compact with the state has been one of 'promises made and promises kept,'" Chairman Billie said.

The 20-year compact also allows for the addition of slot machines at one additional pari-mutuel facility in Palm Beach County and another in Miami-Dade, if approved by countywide vote. Also included is a provision for adding limited blackjack tables to existing pari-mutuels in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, with voter approval.

In a letter to legislative leaders Dec. 7, Scott wrote the compact "represents an unprecedented level of cooperation between the state of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida."

Scott wrote that the compact will result in a more than \$1.8 billion capital investment by the Tribe and more than 4,800 new direct and indirect jobs with an additional 14,500 direct and indirect construction jobs.

The previous agreement, signed by former Gov. Charlie Crist in 2010, gave the

♦ See COMPACT on page 5A

Florida Seminole history explored at annual Tallahassee celebration

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
 Special Projects Reporter

TALLAHASSEE — Seminole Tribe members and historians gathered at the Florida capital Dec. 12-13 to defend the aboriginal ancestry of today's Seminole Indians during the annual Winter Solstice Celebration.

Hosted by the Florida Department of State, the celebration was held at the

Mission San Luis de Apalachee, a restored 1633 Spanish Franciscan mission built in an Apalachee Native area 2 miles west of the Capitol building.

Seminole Tribe members Marty Bowers and Bobby Henry, author Dr. Patricia Riles Wickman and Florida State University history professor Dr. Andrew Frank presented on Seminole history at the invitation of Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Director Paul Backhouse moderated the three-hour panel, which was followed by a dinner for all participants and a special inter-tribal Stomp Dance led by Seminole medicine man Henry.

"Misinformation regarding the Seminoles' equity in the state comes up all the time. Many people have believed the wrong history for so long; they can't seem to embrace the truth," Backhouse said. "That's why we decided to put on this event."

After errors related to Seminole ancestry appeared in a National Public Radio (NPR) story several months ago were traced back to incorrect information provided by the Department of State, which also had conflicting information on its website, Detzner offered a primetime slot on the Winter Solstice agenda to explore the equity issue. NPR's ombudsman also published an examination of the story, pointing out the failure of the reporter to reach anyone with the Seminole Tribe.

"Chairman (James E.) Billie did not want to call names or get anyone in trouble. He preferred for something good to come out of the NPR story," Backhouse said. "I think this has been very positive."

The Winter Solstice Celebration drew several hundred independent Native Americans, who joined members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Indians of Florida and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians for the festival of

Southeastern Indian culture. Other attendees included members of the Muscogee Nation, Choctawhatchee Creek Indian Nation, the Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe of Georgia and the Santa Rosa County Creek Tribe.

Tourists and Leon County locals of all ages joined the celebration of music, fine crafts and stomp dancing. Also on the agenda were stickball, drum circles and gazing at the pre-solstice sun, stars and planets with the Mission's powerful telescopes to observe the occasion of the "sun standing" at its southernmost position.

Opening the discussion was Wickman, who began the first Seminole Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) and is credited with developing the theory and providing evidence that today's Seminole and Miccosukee Indians are the direct descendants of Florida's aboriginal people.

Wickman revealed how, in reading a book on President Andrew Jackson by historian Robert Remini, her theme was born: "He said that by the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, all of the Indians of the Southeast were either transported to the West or buried under the ground."

Wickman said as a result of the book's statement, she questioned the legitimacy of "every other thing that I have ever read about these people."

Wickman described reading and re-reading every book, document and article she could find about the Florida Indians, many in foreign languages: "What I had finally concluded is that the image that we had conjured in our history books today of the Seminoles and the Miccosukees of Florida — who aren't really all one people, if anybody wants to hear that or not — that the image we have conjured of them is not supported by the documents."

"If you read English documents, you would believe that the first Seminole Indian,

♦ See WINTER SOLSTICE on page 6A

Brighton casino marks milestone birthday

BY EILEEN SOLER
 Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Thirty-five years ago Josiah Johns took a gamble when he added bingo tables to the combined hardware store and beauty parlor he owned and managed out of a modest red barn on Brighton Reservation.

"At the same time, high stakes bingo was already popular at Classic Casino in Hollywood and my father was toughening me for the real world," said Marty Johns who was then in his early 20s.

Little did the younger Johns know that he would take over the operation after the tragic death of his father three years later and that on Nov. 23, 2015 he would lead the Seminole Casino Brighton's 35th anniversary celebration as its longtime general manager.

Johns said he never expected to be in charge — ever — or that the casino would grow on his watch.

He was there in its humble beginning when he helped put the roof on the 50-foot-by-35-foot building with his own hands — but he didn't pay much attention or even care about the business. It took a year of soul searching after his father's passing for him to realize that the best times of his life were at his feet, thanks to his father, in his own backyard.

"I knew how the game was played, but I did not know the inner workings of casinos — the countings and the operations. So I

♦ See MILESTONE on page 4A



Peter B. Gallagher

The Henry family, led by medicine man Bobby Henry, leads an inter-tribal Stomp Dance around a bonfire Dec. 13 during the annual Winter Solstice Celebration. Seminole Tribe members and historians gathered in Tallahassee to correct inaccuracies about Seminole history.

INSIDE:

Editorial.....2A	Health9A	Sports1C
Community3A	Education 1B	Announcements....6C

Native Relief Foundation keeps on truckin'.
 See page 3A for full coverage.

Editorial

'Christ' will always be in Christmas

• James E. Billie

It's hard to believe that it's December! It feels more like summertime. If it weren't for the decorations on the town's street lights, you wouldn't know it was Christmas.

This year it has been interesting to watch the global issues that affect every human being – immigration, religion, the economy, politics, people getting shot and killed.

Our Christmas faith is being tested to its limits.

I saw on the morning news where some folks are, again, trying to eliminate "Christ" out of Christmas. It's Jesus Christ's birthday. Why would you take his name out?

What was more interesting is the news

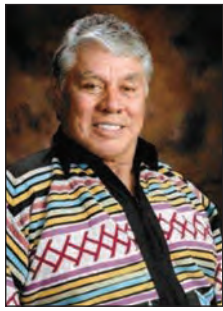
commentator never mentioned it was only one person who made that comment. But he got the publicity!

In my household, "Christ" will always be in Christmas.

This Christmas, stay safe, enjoy yourself and don't eat too much *la pa lee*.

Shoo cah mool kee. Sho-naa-bish.

James E. Billie is Chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.



Holiday greetings

• Mitchell Cypress

As 2015 draws to a close, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to our loyal staff for helping make our progress possible this year with the support of Tribal members. Our staff members worked very hard all year – now let's take this time to relax with our families and be grateful for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon us.

Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc.'s dedicated staff is our greatest asset, and this year, the team continued to provide the exceptional quality service that our Tribe and our Tribal members have come to expect from us.

I am proud to announce that this coming year shows some very promising opportunities for growth and profits. We are positioning Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. to fully utilize our advantages and resources to run profitable enterprises.

As always, we remain dedicated to our mission of helping our Tribe realize its financial dreams, grow our businesses and support the people who make a difference in our community. It is our pleasure to serve you, and we thank you for allowing us to continue supporting the economic development of our Tribe.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc., I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season and a joyous New Year. God bless everyone!

Sho-naa-bish.

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



Letter to the Seminole Tribe from Jean Fontana's family

We hope this finds all of you happy and healthy. As many of you know, Jean Fontana recently passed away at the age of 78. Jean worked for the Seminole Tribe of Florida for 40 years, over half of her life. As her family, it was so obvious to us that she considered her relationship with the Seminole Tribe and its Tribal members as one of the greatest blessings in her life. Jean loved to go to work every day and considered the members of the Seminole Tribe her extended family. There are many Tribal members who called her mom or grandma and our home has always been adorned with pictures of her tribal family. We have many wonderful memories of holidays spent in our home with our immediate family and members of her tribal family gathered together around the same table for one of her wonderful meals.

As much as Jean gave of herself to the Seminole Tribe, she always felt that she got so much more in return. The friends at work and at home were so dear to her and we know she felt blessed by God to have them in her life. As her family, we want more than anything to thank all of you for everything you have done for mom and our family over the last 40 years. The Seminole Tribe and its members have always found ways to show her love and respect and to let mom know that they appreciated her in ways far beyond the normal appreciation an employer shows

to a long time employee. You made her feel at home in your home and there is no way to thank all of you enough for the kindness you showed mom for all of those years.

During the last years of her life as mom battled the illnesses she faced, fellow employees and Tribal members always kept in touch with her and asked us how she was doing anytime we saw them at work. Mom lit up when she got those calls, or we relayed those well wishes to her, and that continued love from all of you was a great source of strength to her in her final years. We have refrained from listing any names in the letter, although we certainly could, because there are too many people to thank and we would never want to forget anyone. However, we can't write this letter and not thank James Billie, Mitchell Cypress, Max Osceola and Jim Shore for the love they showed to mom. As the central leaders of the Seminole Tribe for all of those years, the kindness, respect and love they showed mom was amazing and certainly was a testament to the culture of the Seminole Tribe and all of its members.

On behalf of Jean, thank you all for the wonderful contributions you made to her life and for being an amazing blessing in a life that was certainly blessed by God!

Sincerely,

Vincent Fontana, Vinnie Fontana, John Fontana and Anthony Fontana



Photo courtesy of the Fontana family
Jean Fontana

What the media says about the compact

The Seminole Tribe of Florida and Gov. Rick Scott reached an agreement on a gaming compact in early December. Here are a few excerpts about the agreement from Florida media blogs, editorials, opinions and articles:

Tampa Tribune

Lawmakers should look to Atlantic City and the economic promise casino gambling failed to deliver there. Unemployment and crime rose, and local businesses suffered.

The deal Scott brokered is guided more by the allure of easy money than by the reality of what unbridled gambling will mean to Florida's future.

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

When it comes to the Legislature approving a comprehensive gambling agreement, including a seven-year, \$3 billion pact with the Seminole Tribe, the safest bet heading into the 2016 session is there will not be a deal.

There's plenty of incentive to pass the agreement that Gov. Rick Scott announced earlier this week. Scott declared it a "good deal for the state" that could provide "the foundation of a stable and predictable gaming environment."

It would replace the previous five-year, \$1 billion agreement with the Seminoles that expired this year.

Despite the financial incentives, lawmakers, who will ultimately have to approve the agreement, know reaching a deal on a global gambling pact that would include not only the Seminoles but the existing jai alai frontons, dog and horse tracks, the state lottery and new entrants like daily fantasy sports websites, such as DraftKings, is in the words of House Speaker Steve Crisafulli "a heavy lift."

Palm Beach Post

Decoupling remains a thorny issue for lawmakers and the industry. Under current law, live races – or offering jai alai games – are required for tracks to have more lucrative operations like poker rooms or, in Broward and Miami-Dade counties, slot machines. The number of racing days varies widely.

Doing away with money-losing greyhound racing has drawn repeated legislative debates in recent years, as dog tracks are widely viewed as a dying industry, kept afloat by tax breaks and poker rooms — or slots — that put the facilities in the black.

But across-the-board decoupling of dogs and horses, as permitted under the compact, is more complicated, according to House Regulatory Affairs Chairman Jose Felix Diaz, the chamber's chief negotiator on the gambling deal with the Seminoles and the lead on gambling legislation.

Politico Florida

Any attempt at changing the state's patchwork of gambling laws could lead to a protracted policy fight because of the many fractured interests.

Incumbent stakeholders like things the way they are, while some aspiring players are ready to kill the deal if they don't get more. All the while, the tribe will be able to hold out the threat of withdrawing support for the deal if they believe the agreement has been cheapened.

Travel Weekly

An agreement completed between Gov. Rick Scott and the Seminole Tribe would give Florida more appeal for serious gamblers.

But it would also put to rest the

possibility of the Sunshine State opening up to megacasinos anytime soon.

"What it really does is kill off the destination casino movement," said Bob Jarvis, a professor of gambling law at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale.

Miami Herald

As Gov. Rick Scott on Tuesday touted the \$3 billion agreement he signed with the Seminole Tribe as a way to bring economic stability to Florida's constantly changing gambling environment, the deal faced an uncertain future in the Florida Legislature.

"I think it's going to be a really tough road," said Sen. Jack Latvala, R-Clearwater, noting that its "fatal flaw" is that it benefits only gaming operations in three South Florida counties. "If we're going to have to close down facilities that have been here 70 to 80 years so the Indians have a monopoly and can continue to expand their offerings, that's just wrong."

Even in South Florida, home to eight casinos that compete with the tribe, the criticism of the 20-year deal was strong.

"It's very impressive that the governor got \$3 billion to pick winners and losers and put longstanding family businesses like mine out of business," said Izzy Havenick, vice president at Magic City Casino in Miami.

His company won voter approval in Lee County for a slot-machine license at its dog track in Bonita Springs – something that would be allowed only in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties under the deal.

"From our standpoint, we get a new casino in Miami-Dade County – right next to us – and we lose any potential to be able to offer another product at our facility in Lee County," he said. "We're getting hit on both coasts."

School's racial mascot: 'It's who we are'

• Summer Wesley

It's really not surprising that, on Dec. 10, 2015, the school board of McLoud, Oklahoma voted to maintain their high school's racist mascot. All of the usual arguments were made, in support of keeping the R-word: "It's an honor," tearful pleas of "We've been the R** for generations," and, my favorite, "It's who we are." The latter is by far the most accurate and telling. Put simply, the events during the McLoud meeting were not only a by-product of American history, but an indictment of it.

The reality is that, even in 2015, it is possible to have a racial slur against Natives, as a mascot, when it would clearly not be tolerated if directed at another group. For the record, I believe residents of this town, and others, when they say that they aren't aware of problems stemming from their mascots. When something has been around for a long period of time, people tend to not question it, particularly if they are not the target of the hostility.

In this case, and others, even members of the Native community defended it, most likely because these stereotyped images of us, despite being inaccurate and frequently offensive, are often our only representation in the mainstream. However, racist mascots cause actual harm and, when people learn better, they have a responsibility to do better.

A decade ago, the American Psychological Association called for "immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations ... based on a growing body of social science literature that shows the harmful effects of racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals, including the particularly harmful effects of American Indian sports mascots on the social identity development and self-esteem of American Indian young people. Research has shown that the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities has a negative effect on not only American Indians students but all students ..."

So, asking whether or not to change such mascots is the wrong question. The real question is "why has it taken so long to do so?"

Understandably, studies can seem distant and lacking relevance, even for school administrators, who are presumably

educated to understand such things. However, what is not distant is the conduct taking place in their school, on a daily basis, as well as the blatant hostility and disrespect that was exhibited in their chambers.

Despite statements from school staff outlining harassment and bullying of students, community and board members continually made statements that such incidents don't happen. A representative from Native American Guardians Association, a group whose members are infamous in Native circle for harassment and threats against Native leaders like Suzan Shown Harjo and Amanda Blackhorse, was applauded for telling Natives "R*dskins is who you are and you should be proud of it." Quite frankly, I've never heard a racial slur uttered so many times in such a short span, as I did during that board meeting.

The most disturbing and misconstrued part of the evening, though, came when a teenage girl spoke about the racist history of the R word, as well as racial harassment that she had experienced in her school. Local media (KFOR-TV) characterized her as an emotional child who broke down and stormed away from the podium, failing to explain the much more insidious elements of the situation.

Numerous speakers went over the extremely limiting two-minute time frame throughout the meeting. One after another, as mascot supporters concluded their thoughts, after their time had elapsed, the room sat quietly, listening respectfully. Admittedly, I was the first of those who was speaking against the mascot, to exceed my time. When I heard the tap on the microphone, which signaled the end of the two minutes, I quickly completed the sentence that I had already started, despite being shouted at by a large man, exceeding the time by a matter of seconds.

The next speaker, Sarah Adams-Cornell, had the same experience. When her time elapsed, she was taking a few seconds to complete the sentence she had already begun, just as all previous speakers had prior. This time, however, others joined the man in shouting at her. To which, Sarah took a deep breath and commented to the board that "the disrespect in this room is astounding," signaling them to maintain order, a request they ignored as the crowd began, once again, shouting as Sarah took her seat.

Despite this hostile atmosphere, this courageous 14-year-old girl took the

microphone to explain what it is like to be a Native student in a school with a racist mascot. She bravely told them about harassment, despite her voice shaking. When speaking about the killing of Native men, women and children, and the selling of their scalps (known as R*dskins), she became emotional and had to stop for a moment to compose herself. Because of this pause, her time ran out, but she tried to conclude her thought.

However, adults in the crowd began shouting at her. She courageously told them "I'm almost finished," to which someone in the crowd shouted "Get off the stage, squ*wl!"

You see, the emotional pleas from mascot supporters who tearfully said "it's more than a mascot" are absolutely correct. It is more than a mascot. It is evidence of a much deeper problem that continues to divide our communities, and plague our future generations. When towns like McLoud, and many others, are presented evidence of the harms, yet take the stand that "this is who we are," embracing the racism and accepting the resulting victimization of members of their community, the impact is not limited to only their closed-minded communities.

It is time we all take a stand and look for ways to fight racism and microaggressions wherever they are found. Striving to make this world a better place is our obligation, as humans, and the rent we all owe for existing on this planet. My sincere hope is that students and their families will feel empowered to fight back against the hostile learning environment created by having racist mascots in their schools, and will file grievances for violation of nondiscrimination policies, as well as complaints with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, if schools fail to act.

When they do come forward, we, as members of the larger community have an obligation to be there to support them in whatever way possible.

Children matter. We should all be working for their best interest by striving for a less racist, more inclusive, peaceful world, even when letting go of our "traditions" is temporarily painful.

Summer Wesley is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and a tribal attorney. To read the full version, visit Online.net: Celebrating Native Voices, where this column first appeared.

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Community

Native Relief keeps on truckin'

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

Hoping to bring Christmas cheer to a community in need, members of the Native Relief Foundation (NRF) ignored unrelenting rain Dec. 5 to load a 26-foot rental truck with boxes of donated clothing, blankets and food earmarked for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Designated driver and NRF member Bobbie "BJ" Billie left Hollywood, stopped in Big Cypress to collect more donations and then hit the road for the 2,150-mile trip to South Dakota, a journey she has made several times before.

Billie has divided her time between Big Cypress and South Dakota in recent years and serves as the NRF liaison between the Seminole and Sioux tribes. Her friend Kristie Thompson met the truck when it arrived in Eagle Butte and helped Billie deliver goods to the communities of La Plant, Cherry Creek, Takini, Bridger and Dupree. The task took three days.

"I wasn't expecting so much; I couldn't believe how packed the truck was," said Thompson, of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. "I haven't seen so many smiles in a long time. That's what the Seminole Tribe has done for mine. Usually when we get donations, it is recycled stuff. These were nice things; the clothing didn't have holes and wasn't worn out."

Jobs are scarce on the 4,267-square-mile Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. The unemployment rate is 88 percent and only a third of the nearly 16,000 Tribal members have high school diplomas. Median annual household income is \$22,094, but most individuals earn less than \$10,000, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

South Dakota has the highest poverty rate in Indian Country, where nearly half of Native American families live below the poverty line. Many of the 13 communities that comprise the reservation have no running water.

The reservation is so large that it takes four hours to drive from the east to west boundary. The most isolated community of Bridger, population around 130, is 60 miles from the nearest grocery store.

"Cheyenne River is more remote, so not



Native Relief Foundation volunteers, including Gloria Wilson and Esther Gopher, sort and pack donations Nov. 20 headed for the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

Photo courtesy of Wanda Bowers

everyone hits those communities," said NRF founder and spokeswoman Gloria Wilson. "It's already snowing there."

Average temperatures in January range from 4 to 26 degrees. During the delivery, the temperature was about 20 degrees with 50 to 70 mph winds. Despite the cold, residents in each community welcomed the truck's arrival.

"They were already giving us hugs before we even opened the truck," Thompson said.

"There were a lot of community members who needed food so they were excited and grateful. We got a really good feeling from [Bridger]."

Bridger is always the last to receive donations, Thompson said, because of their isolation. Often they receive very little or nothing at all.

"They were glad someone thought about them," she said. "They are always the forgotten town, but not this time. It was a real

boost for them."

Wopila, a Lakota word that means "much more than thank you," was all Thompson could say about the generosity shown by NRF to her Tribe.

She and her two children, ages 18 and 23, are homeless and appreciated being able to assist with the deliveries.

"On behalf of the people who have

Edward Aguilar graduates from TCD program

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Surrounded by about 70 friends, family members and colleagues, Edward Aguilar celebrated his graduation from Seminole Gaming's Tribal Career Development (TCD) program in style Dec. 17 during the annual Christmas party at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Sharply dressed in a suit and tie, Aguilar proudly accepted his certificate from Ervina Capricien, director of the program. After three years in TCD, Aguilar has worked in every department. Currently, he is the assistant director of slots operations at Seminole Casino Immokalee.

"I'm from Immokalee and I love that place," he said. "It's small, but it's my home and I'm proud of what we offer to the community."

Aguilar paid tribute to two men who greatly influenced his career in gaming. In 2000, he met Alan Jumper who wanted him to become a gaming inspector.

"I was so impressed by him that I wanted to be like him when I grew up: a smooth, well-dressed, older Indian man," said Aguilar, 37. "I also can't say Immokalee without saying Tony Sanchez; he left a big footprint."

The TCD program is designed to train the next generation of Tribal members to manage the Tribe's gaming business. Paid interns work their way through each department while receiving mentoring and on-the-job training. As they complete their training, the interns work with more senior members of Seminole Gaming. There are 14 interns in the program now, but Capricien said she would welcome more.

"I'm happy with the quality of the interns we have now. They are a great group," she said. "Edward is one of our superstars; he went above and beyond in every department."

A 2013 culinary graduate of the Art

◆ See NATIVE RELIEF on page 5A

◆ See EDWARD AGUILAR on page 4A

Everglades history, culture displayed at annual Swamp Heritage Festival

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

OCHOPEE, Fla. — More than 500 people gathered at the Big Cypress National Preserve Dec. 5 to celebrate the history and culture of the Everglades during the Swamp Heritage Festival in Ochopee, about 35 miles east of Naples.

The fifth annual event featured nearly two dozen organizations dedicated to safeguarding the 1,125-square-mile preserve and educating the public about its history.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum community outreach specialist Reinaldo Becerra manned a table overflowing with historical Seminole artifacts and relayed the history of the Seminole Tribe to festival attendees

during a presentation in the visitor center auditorium.

Tribal member Pedro Zepeda set up under a lean-to where he carved toy canoes and displayed other traditional Seminole objects, including bow and arrows, stickball sticks, ladles and cooking utensils, as he talked to attendees about the Tribe's place in the history of the Everglades.

"It's a laid back, local event and I like practicing the traditional ways," said Zepeda, who attended for the third year. "I want people to learn about the local history and culture, not just Seminole but the old-timers, too."

Speakers, music, food, crafts and a Micosukee alligator wrestling demonstration rounded out the festival.

According to the National Park Service, the history of humanity in the Everglades dates back thousands of years. Native Americans, explorers and settlers have lived in the region for years, but once the Tamiami Trail opened in 1928, people gained easy access to the Everglades. The preserve was created in 1974 as a result of environmentalists' activism to protect and preserve the land.

Results of the Tamiami Trail included development, agriculture and extensive logging for durable and rot-resistant cypress trees in the 1940s and 1950s. The threat to the survival of the ecosystem, the primary source of fresh water in South Florida, led environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas to publish in 1947 "The Everglades: River of Grass" which called for Everglades preservation.

That same year, Everglades National Park was established but without the land that comprises the preserve.

Environmentalists fought for the

establishment of the Big Cypress National Preserve after the 1968 groundbreaking of a jetport — slated to be the largest international airport in the world. Its designation as the country's first national preserve was finalized in 1974 during the administration of President Gerald Ford, the only U.S. president to have worked as a National Park Service ranger.

Today, more than 1 million people visit the preserve annually.

The festival included several speeches, some of which took place in the auditorium and others around a campfire. Topics included growing up in the Everglades, the mission and activities of the preserve, swamp buggy races and artifacts found in the preserve dating from the Seminole Wars. Speakers included Becerra, author Carl Hiaasen, artist Patricia Cummins and photographer Clyde Butcher.

Becerra told the audience about his first encounter with Chairman James E. Billie, which occurred when he was hunting on the Big Cypress Reservation. An expert falconer, Becerra used his raptor to hunt wild duck, which Chairman Billie had never seen. He offered Becerra a job. Five years later he took the Chairman up on his offer and has worked for the Tribe ever since.

"There is nothing like the Everglades; in the same day you can see birds, bears, panthers and alligators," Becerra said. "The Tribe is still fighting for the Everglades; not with weapons but with lawyers in court."

The proposed Florida Power & Light plant near Big Cypress Reservation will destroy about 3,000 acres of panther habitat, Becerra said.

"Roads are the biggest problem for panthers and the traffic will be a disaster," he said. "Seminole believe in having open, undeveloped land and to protect it for the next generation."

Hiaasen said his life inspires his work, in which he incorporates elements of natural Florida and eccentric characters. Born and raised in South Florida, Hiaasen, 62, is an environmentalist who regrets the effect of development in the area.

"My generation sold this place out," he said. "The environmentalist movement is not made of Florida natives. The most energetic people fighting to save this place came from somewhere else."

Hiaasen also discussed the effect of politics on the environment, specifically the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Amendment 1, which voters

◆ See SWAMP FESTIVAL on page 8A



Eileen Soler

A timber wolf, one of many new additions at Billie Swamp Safari, makes itself at home at the Big Cypress attraction. Dozens of new rescued and adopted animals, both native and exotic, have been added to the venue's vast menagerie.

Billie Swamp growth spurt includes baby critters, views

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Immersion into a world of wildlife beckons visitors at Billie Swamp Safari.

From the minute guests arrive at the tourist destination they are greeted by a cacophony of squawks, grunts, tweets and tribbles that welcome them to pop over and peek into animal pens that surround the parking lot.

"I went right over to see the baby animals," said Gladys Mateo, an administrative assistant in the Tribe's Executive Operations Office after attending a meeting Dec. 10 at the Big Cypress attraction. "The miniature horse and baby calves were so cute."

Much had changed since Mateo first visited with her family five months earlier.

At the place most known for airboats, swamp buggies and alligators, new additions abound.

Staff workers have built a petting zoo for more than a dozen baby critters (goats, calves, deer, ostriches); adopted another dozen homeless or injured creatures and placed them into fresh habitats (foxes, caracara birds, capybaras, porcupines); and built two large aviaries (for hawks, owls and a menagerie of macaws.)

Soon, animal food dispensers will be available for guests to hand feed most of the animals.

"It's always the goal here to have something for everyone to do and enjoy. People drive one or two hours to get here. We want to give them an experience to last a day, or at least a half day," said the attraction's acting operations manager Cory Wilcox.

So far, a boardwalk that runs a quarter of a mile over alligator-infested marshland between the site's cabin rental village has been refurbished and an outdoor herpetarium was raised to display an array of native and exotic venomous and non-venomous snakes.

Other new residents include an arctic wolf, timber wolf, African porcupine, African serval cat, zebra, two capybara, four Nile crocodiles, baby goats and a gaggle of toddler ostriches.

Newcomers join the attraction's older animal family members that include a romp of otters, two orphaned bears, a myriad of formerly loose raccoons and the resident Florida panther Liberty.

But not all that is new is furry or feathered. A long orphaned butterfly garden, left unkempt for months, has been strengthened with fresh blooming native plants, flowering

◆ See BILLIE SWAMP on page 5A



Beverly Bidney

Pedro Zepeda demonstrates his carving skills Dec. 5 during the Swamp Heritage Festival in Big Cypress National Preserve.



Gordon Wareham

Surrounded by family and friends, Hollywood elder Maggie Osceola celebrates her 95th birthday at the Hollywood ball field and airnasium.

Loved ones line up to mark Maggie Osceola's 95th birthday

BY GORDON WAREHAM
Freelance Writer

HOLLYWOOD — Heavy morning rains Nov. 22 threatened the activities for Maggie Osceola's 95th birthday, but as the day shifted to afternoon, the clouds disappeared and left a beautiful sky and cool weather for friends and family members to celebrate the milestone in the tribal elder's life.

A water-soaked Hollywood ball field forced the cancellation of a horseshoe tournament, but that didn't stop the kids from playing in the puddles. Jonah Cypress entertained guests by strumming melodies on his guitar that included a selection of country and Christian songs.

When it was time to sing "Happy Birthday" to Maggie, five generations of her children surrounded her.

Justine M. Osceola baked a special birthday cake topped with a chickee made out of chocolate frosting and "Happy Birthday Grandma!" written in red frosting on a white sheet cake.

As the celebration came to a close, the following birthday wishes were given by Maggie's family and friends:

Jimmy Hank Osceola: "Today I want to wish my sister Maggie, happy birthday at

the same time we gathered for Thanksgiving dinner. She's doing good, everything looking good and everyone is happy."

Maydell Osceola: "Happy that I have my mother still with me at 95 and I appreciate her. I know she's God's child that I see she lasted this long and I'm happy for her and many, many more."

Mabel Osceola: "Happy Birthday, mom. I love you and many more years to come."

Moses "Moke" Osceola: "I want to wish my Mom a happy birthday today and thank the Lord that she has been with us this long and many, many more."

Leslie Osceola: "I want to wish my grandma Maggie a happy birthday and I love her very much. She has five generations of kids and I want to wish her many blessings and many more."

Eric Osceola: "I want to express my most dearest happy birthday to my grandma. She turned 95 and she has been around a long, long time and she taught me a lot through the years. I appreciate everybody who helped put everything together."

Heather Osceola: "I just want to wish my grandma a happy birthday and I'm so thankful that she's here for me to see her and many more to come."

Jonah Cypress: "Thank God for letting her bless our lives."



Beverly Bidney

Seminole Water Commission Chairman Amos Tiger, left, presents commissioner Jack Smith Jr. with a token of appreciation for his 26 years of service Dec. 16 at the group's monthly meeting in Hollywood.

Jack Smith Jr. honored for 26 years of service

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Jack Smith Jr., who has served on the Seminole Water Commission for 26 years, was recognized Dec. 16 for his service during the group's monthly meeting at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

"We are recognizing his important contribution to the Tribe," said Amos Tiger, commission chairman. "He is the longest-serving member and was on Tribal Council when the water compact went through."

In 1987, the Tribe signed a water rights compact with the state and the South Florida Water Management District. Tribal Council created the Seminole Water Commission with seven commissioners in 1989, two each from Hollywood, Big Cypress and Brighton and one from Immokalee. Smith was appointed as a Brighton commissioner and has served ever since.

Smith said he believes communication between the Tribe and government is the most important thing the commission does. The compact gives the Tribe, as a

sovereign nation, water entitlement rights and the ability to make decisions about water management.

"We have control of our water," Smith said.

The commission operates under the auspices of the Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD), whose mission is to protect and evaluate the Tribe's land and water resources and to facilitate the wise use and conservation of them. The commission informs the district how it plans to use water and how much, within the parameters of the compact.

"It's a notification process," said Cherise Maples, director of ERMD. "We agree to submit a plan and wait for the state to approve it. They often have comments, but our plans are usually approved."

The commissioners all have backgrounds in natural resource management; some are cattle owners and in tune with the natural environment, Maples said. ERMD also holds workshops to enhance their knowledge.

"Water is an important resource," Tiger said. "We all have to work together to keep the quality up."

And the Emmy goes to: Tribe employee Reinaldo Becerra

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

FORT LAUDERDALE — Longtime Tribe employee Reinaldo Becerra won an Emmy at the 39th annual Suncoast Emmy Awards Dec. 5 for a show he hosted and produced for WLRN-TV about Florida panthers in the Everglades.

"Big Cypress National Preserve: Panthers," one of his six shows about the preserve, features Becerra with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioner "Alligator" Ron Bergeron as they travel through the Everglades in search of the elusive and endangered predator.

Another show, "Big Cypress National Preserve: Florida Deer," was also nominated for an Emmy.

Becerra's short video won in the Interstitial category, which is comprised of short segments that are shown between longer programs.

"Winning the Emmy has opened a lot of doors," said Becerra, 51, community outreach specialist at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. "Now we will get to do shows more often."

Becerra, who has worked for the Tribe for 18 years, makes the seven- to 10-minute videos on weekends and days off. An animal specialist, he chooses the topic, writes the copy and produces the show with director Felipe Marrou. They air in Miami-Dade County Public Schools on WLRN-TV, which is owned by the Miami-Dade School Board.

"People like Rey; they can see the passion he has on camera," said Marrou, who has worked with Becerra on projects for about 10 years. "He is very energetic and knowledgeable about animals. He's a natural, knows what he's saying and loves the animals."

A native of South Africa who grew up in Cuba, Becerra became a master falconer at age 22 and used his birds of prey to control bird populations at airports in Cuba,

Spain, Israel and on U.S. Air Force bases. In the 1990s he worked as an animal trainer and wrangler for a Miami TV production company and joined Billie Swamp Safari as an animal specialist in 1997, where he stayed for 14 years.

After working for Seminole Media Productions as a videographer for two years, Becerra joined the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, where he gives presentations about culture and wildlife, in 2013.

The award-winning show draws attention to the two biggest threats panthers face: loss of habitat and collisions with cars, which account for about 25 deaths per year. To illustrate the point, the show opens with a deceased panther in the grass off of County Road 833; it had been hit by a vehicle.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there were only 28 to 30 panthers in the state; today there are about 180.

"We need more fencing and underpasses, like the ones on Alligator Alley," Bergeron said in the show. "The panthers do use them. [U.S.] 41, [County Road] 846 and 833 are where they are killed."

During filming, Becerra and Bergeron spotted a panther in the wild sitting at the edge of the woods.

"What a rare thing to film a panther; they're so elusive," Bergeron said. "They are one of the most endangered species on the planet. I'm honored to protect the wildlife and the beautiful Everglades, which is one of the natural wonders of the world."

The show was shot on Bergeron's ranch that abuts the Big Cypress Reservation and the preserve. Bergeron narrates the show and talks about the "Big Five" animals in Big Cypress: the bear, deer, hog, turkey and panther. He explains how the Osceola, or Florida, turkey is found only in South Florida and how hogs became loose after brought to Florida by the Spanish 500 years ago, acclimated to the environment and multiplied by the millions.

All big five animals can be found on Bergeron's land.

Next on Becerra's schedule is to produce a film about pythons in the Everglades and continue his work at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

"I have passion for everything I do," he said. "It's my job and my hobby. Filming and producing shows is part of my fun and entertainment. The same thing goes for my work at the Museum; I'm happy going to a place I love to be all day."



Photo courtesy of Reinaldo Becerra

Reinaldo Becerra poses with the Emmy he won for 'Big Cypress National Preserve: Panthers' at the Suncoast Emmy Awards Dec. 5 in Fort Lauderdale.

◆ MILESTONE From page 1A

traveled casino to casino, watched, picked up pointers from the outside looking in, brought the ideas home and started making money," Johns said.

Once the money flowed, he was hooked and the casino began to grow.

The operation that was once manned by a staff of eight now boasts 220 employees. The building has since undergone renovations and one complete overhaul — it is now 27,000 square feet with top-tier dining at the Josiah Restaurant and Lounge.

Gaming has also evolved. "We became so busy with bingo in the early days that people would play on top of car hoods in the parking lot. When someone would holler 'bingo,' someone else would have to relay the calls inside," Johns said.

In about 1989, slots were added, making the casino a Class III operation and allowing more growth — from 20 games to 37 games. Today, the floor features 420 games that include slots, live action blackjack e-tables, a six-table poker room and high-stakes bingo action. Johns said the business profits annually.

"I always like to say, 'We are little but loud,'" Johns said.

Johns wants the future to be even louder. When word filtered to Brighton that Gov. Rick Scott and Chairman James E. Billie signed the gaming compact that could, if ratified by the Legislature, extend, enhance and ensure the Tribe's gaming interests through the next 20 years, Johns

said he was elated.

"It's the future. We're looking forward to adding blackjack, roulette and craps and also building on the building. I'd been saying it for years and I'll say it again — I'd love a hotel here. We need a hotel," Johns said.

Chairman Billie, Brighton Councilman Andrew J. Bowers Jr., Seminole Gaming's Chief Operating Officer Larry Mullin, Chief Financial Officer John Eder and Director of

Training & Development David MacAlpine attended the Brighton anniversary lunch.

Annual employee appreciation awards went to slot director Roger Hering for director of the year; slot manager Margaret "Angel" Craig for manager of the year; security supervisor Jay Fuld for supervisor of the year; Wesley Spivey for team member of the year; and the Security Department for department of the year.



Eileen Solor

Seminole Casino Brighton general manager Marty Johns takes a break from a busy day in the office Dec. 8 to pose in front of the casino his father, Josiah Johns, imagined 35 years ago and that Marty Johns expanded, renovated and rebuilt during the years since.

◆ EDWARD AGUILAR From page 3A

Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Aguilar recently earned his associate degree from Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers and is working toward his bachelor's. He aims to enroll in Florida Gulf Coast University to study hospitality management.

He accomplished it all while working as a TCD intern.

"I want to go and conquer the world, but I have to pace myself and not overdo it," he

said. "I have to be patient with myself."

The highlight of his TCD experience was working with team members, from the janitor to the general manager, he said.

"It's rewarding to have team members respect you; they know you worked for it and didn't just get it on a platter," Aguilar said. "I got bit hard by the Hard Rock bug; I love the brand."

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola congratulated Aguilar on a "job well done."

"TCD members are presented with a tremendous opportunity to work in Seminole Gaming, which is second to none,"

Councilman Osceola said. "Gaming is our livelihood, and we have the best team in the world."

Hollywood Board Rep. Steve Osceola and Big Cypress Board Rep. Joe Frank echoed his sentiments.

"It's easy to start things, but tough to finish," Rep. Frank said. "Anyone who completes the program is in a good position to lead the Tribe. With the expertise you learn here, you will be able to help on Council and the Board."

TCD was the brain child of Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International and Seminole Gaming CEO, who started the program in 2003.

"Tribal members said it would never work and in the early days it wasn't easy," he said. "It has grown through the years and it is now creating opportunities for Tribal members. As they go through the program they are truly qualified to work in the hospitality and casino industry."

Allen said Immokalee pulls in more business than any casino in Atlantic City other than the Borgata. Aguilar and his colleagues call the Immokalee casino "ImmokaVegas."

The TCD program is open to all Tribal members ages 18 and older who have at least a high school diploma or GED. Interns work in every gaming department including Table Games, Slots, Cash Operations, Poker, Marketing, Food and Beverage, Hard Rock Live, Hotel Operations and Hard Rock Cafe. They work every shift so they experience the casino at all hours.

Aguilar believes TCD is a great opportunity for Tribal members.

"They should give it a shot, stay open minded and bring their 'A' game every day," he said. "The program is what you make of it. All you have to do is open the door and start the program."



Beverly Bidney

Tribal Career Development Director Ervina Capricien presents Edward Aguilar his certificate of graduation Dec. 17 at the program's Christmas party at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki reception to celebrate historic exhibit

'Struggle for Survival, 1817-1850' on display through November

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — A public reception for what is deemed a landmark exhibit at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress is planned for mid-January. High-ranking officials in fields of anthropology, history, government and education are expected to attend.

"It is probably our most ambitious installation to date," said Museum Director and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Paul Backhouse.

"Struggle for Survival, 1817-1850" explores tactics used by tribal ancestors in armed resistance against the United States' eradication of Native Americans from Florida. The show, to run through November 2016, covers years that most Americans view as spanning three separate Seminole Wars but what Seminole Tribe historians know was one long battle against removal and potential extinction.

The reception, featuring food, music and entertainment, is set for Jan. 16.

The exhibit begins in a shadowy entrance amid three-dimensional walls that depict a wetland cypress hammock. Crickets and other creature sounds of the marsh become quickly replaced by sloshing footsteps and an eerie sense of being stalked.

"The display opens in an experiential environment where the viewer gets to feel like they are there. It makes you feel hunted; inside the horror that is about to happen," said Annette Snapp, the Museum's operations manager.

Further in, the exhibit showcases weapons and hunting tools used in the resistance, and it exposes superior guerilla warfare techniques used to endure the 50-year defense against Army troops.

A posted timeline illustrates battles, federal actions and Native resistance efforts over the five decades. A letter from early Florida pioneer businessman Jacob Summerlin, also known as King of the Cracker Cow Hunters who witnessed

much of the Seminole resistance, attests to Seminole endurance.

Another letter, by ship captain Silas Casey to his wife, notes, "It is almost unaccountable with what obstinarity (sic) they hold out."

Museum curator of exhibits Rebecca Fell said the letters are indicative of Seminole defiance and fortitude despite constant threats and skirmishes fueled by federal leader Andrew Jackson, who was determined to eliminate all Natives from Florida land. Jackson fought in the First Seminole War and then, as President of the United States, forwarded the Indian Removal Act and ordered the Second Seminole War.

According to the Florida Department of State website under the subtext Seminole Wars, the battles from 1835 through 1842 (dubbed the Second Seminole War) left devastating impacts on the U.S. Army: "The United States spent more than \$20 million fighting the Seminoles. The war left more than 1,500 soldiers and uncounted American civilians dead. And the obvious duplicity of the U.S. government's tactics marred Indian-white relations throughout the country for future generations."

Exact numbers of Seminoles transplanted or killed are unreliable but a document on display at the exhibit, plucked from the pages of a congressional report, lists government money paid to bounty hunters for the capture or killing of multiple Indians.

"You look at it and see a formal, well-typed, neat columned list and then stop and say, 'Wait a minute. This is a list of payment for the lives of people,'" Fell said.

The exhibit illustrates the depths that ancestors of many Native Americans in Florida went to in order to survive the onslaught, from silently making camp shelters under the cover of swamp wilderness to using the familiar environment to stage surprise and deadly attacks against the Army.

Fell said several Seminole Tribe historians, including Willie Johns, Moses Jumper Jr. and Pedro Zepeda, contributed to the exhibit by sharing history passed down

from family members and private research. All components were officially reviewed before opening.

Another section shows Seminole defiance even as families were loaded like cargo in the last forced removal, via the Grey Cloud steamer from Tampa to New Orleans where they continued on to internment on reserved Oklahoma land.

A small re-creation of the steamer allows guests a place to reflect on the plight. A ship plank then leads to a modern-day message of "hope and survival moving into the future," Backhouse said.

There, spectators learn Florida's first people, originally clumped as one group by the Spanish, eventually became the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Tribe of Florida Indians and the Independent Seminoles.

Lee Tiger, of the Miccosukee Tribe, hopes visitors will accept historically proven truths that have gone largely untold. He recalls school history classes from the 1960s that provided one-sided accounts of Florida history and skipped the Seminole story entirely.

"People can bury the truth and for many years they did ... I don't think non-Indians know about the wars against our actual living families with children, aunts, uncles and grandparents. They were not warriors; they were families who had to hide silently under bamboo in the marshes or be killed," Tiger said. "It was a long, terrible war that should never have happened."

The recently discovered Buckskin Declaration presented in 1954 to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by Lee Tiger's father, Buffalo Tiger, of the unrecognized Mikasuki Tribe of the Seminole Nations, caps the exhibit.

On loan to the Museum by the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, it is inscribed on a deer hide, signed by pre-Seminole and Miccosukee Tribe elders, and states that the Florida Natives wished simply to be left alone — with respect, dignity and honor — to live peacefully as they have for generations.

Tiger said his father instigated the declaration in the aftermath of a 10-year federal push (1940-1950) that stripped sovereignty and terminated more than 100 recognized Tribes throughout Indian Country. Around the same time, laws were created that forbid Florida Natives from hunting, fishing and cultivating plant medicine and food on their homeland.

Buffalo Tiger worked with elders and medicine people to interpret the message "eloquently and wisely," Lee Tiger said.

"Feelings were projected from the Buckskin that were of peace, respect and dignity. They wanted to share with the white men that we were not inferior; they were not inferior; we were just all humans on the Earth," Lee Tiger said.

Tiger imagined that if his father and other elders had money then, like the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes have now, they might have paid for a banner large enough to hang over Times Square in Manhattan, New York for all to see.

"Everyone in the world would have read it and the words would not have been hidden away for more than 50 years. But the message is just as important today as yesterday," Lee Tiger said. "The men who said the words are gone, but their words are alive with the truth, breath, energy and heart of our spirit."

nonprofit organization has sent trucks laden with donations to make the harsh Great Plains winters more bearable ever since.

"We've been going to Pine Ridge for so many years, we wanted to focus on Cheyenne River this year," said NRF member Wanda Bowers, who spearheaded a non-perishable food drive at Tribe Headquarters in early December.

A core group of active NRF members, including Esther Gopher and Alice Billie in Big Cypress, Charlotte Burgess in Brighton, and Wilson, Bowers and Jennifer "Ebo" Osceola in Hollywood, collects goods quietly throughout the year.

Wilson stores the clothing, shoes, blankets, household items and toys in a

"...To see their faces light up and have that sense of happiness again, I can't say thank you enough."

— Kristie Thompson,
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

storage unit in Hollywood. Volunteers recently spent a busy Saturday at the facility sorting and boxing items by category and readying them for the truck.

In the years since the television special depicting the need in Pine Ridge, the reservation continues to receive a lot of donations from various organizations.

Other Tribes have reached out to NRF, and Wilson wants to consider expanding the organization's reach to North Dakota, Nebraska and Arizona. She plans to hold a meeting in the spring to discuss the possibility with other NRF volunteers. She envisions holding a school supplies drive for the Flandreau Indian School over the summer.

"I want to make this a four-season effort," she said.



Eileen Soler

'Conversations' by award-winning Seminole Tribune photographers, showing through February 2016 in the Museum's Mosaic Gallery, consists of 14 images captured during the past three years.

Museum reception to shine light on two more exhibits

STAFF REPORT

BIG CYPRESS — Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's public reception, set for 2 p.m. Jan. 16 to celebrate the Museum's newest exhibit "Struggle for Survival, 1817-1850," will also herald two additional exhibits that opened in November.

"Conversations" by award-winning Seminole Tribune photographers, showing through February 2016 in the Museum's Mosaic Gallery, consists of 14 images captured while reporting live news during the past three years by Beverly Bidney, Kevin Johnson and Eileen Soler.

"The photography shows the complex depth and richness of what it means to be Seminole today. The images are true to the spirit where the people depicted are collecting sweetgrass for making baskets or playing basketball," said Museum curator of exhibits Rebecca Fell.

In 2013 and 2014 alone, Bidney, Johnson and Soler received 22 Native media awards collectively at consecutive Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) conventions. NAJA membership welcomes media department employees of all Tribes throughout Indian Country.

"Telling our Stories — Recording Seminole Traditions," in the Museum's NOOK Gallery through May 8, is an interactive exhibit that invites visitors to don headphones and hear 10 personal accounts of life from distinguished Seminole elders and others whose lives have been impacted by Seminole culture and tradition.

◆ COMPACT From page 1A

Tribe exclusive use of banked card games in five of its casinos in exchange for \$1 billion to the state.

The new compact adds banked card games to the Brighton and Big Cypress

"We have many oral histories. Some will never be heard by anyone, others only by family members or clan members. Every person can share different aspects of the culture with provisions and restriction on how the recordings can be used," Fell said.

The recordings in the exhibit were made available to the public with permission from the subjects themselves.

Highlights include timeless words from Tribal members Bobby Henry, Judybill Osceola, Shule Snow, Zack "Doc" Battiest and his father Henry James "Jr." Battiest (Choctaw) and Miccosukee Tribe member Lee Tiger.

Tiger said he concentrated on telling the story of his father, Buffalo Tiger, instead of his own. Buffalo Tiger, longtime Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe who passed Jan. 6, 2015, was an activist throughout Indian Country and Florida long before and after the creation of the separate Seminole and Miccosukee tribes.

"He was really good with dealing with people in political power because he knew how to tell the truth. It wasn't about politics when he spoke; it was about truth. That's why he got so much done and that is why I wanted him to be part of the oral history," Lee Tiger said.

Fell said the exhibit explains why the oral history library was created and the processes that make the collection successful.

"It's wonderful how different stories connect and how they capture and save history for future generations," Fell said.

casinos and bumps revenue sharing payments to \$3 billion, "the largest revenue share guarantee in history," Scott wrote.

"This was a Christmas present for the whole state," President Mitchell Cypress said. "Everyone will make money; it's a win-win situation."

The compact will take effect if approved by both the House and the Senate.

◆ BILLIE SWAMP From page 3A

bushes and obvious tender-loving hands. Located near the main entrance, it is now home to various butterfly species and occasional hummingbirds.

A vegetable garden that hugs the water's edge at a recreated Seminole village, which features cooking, sleeping and canoe carving chickees, has been replanted by students from Ahfachkee School's traditional preservation program. The children tend and harvest the garden as needed.

"There is still so much left to be done," Wilcox said.

In the works are a small aviary to anchor the butterfly garden and house a

flock of Lorikeet, a pen for wild warthogs and a natural alligator pit carved out of a shallow wetland bank. The new alligator pit will replace the current concrete pit outside the Swamp Water Café restaurant.

"The natural pit will be much more authentic and personal for the audience, alligators and wrestlers," Wilcox said.

The old pit will become a replica fresh water ecosystem complete with plants, fish and turtles.

Wilcox said most upgrades and additions will be completed by February, the height of tourist season.

Mateo looks forward to returning to Billie Swamp Safari with her family soon.

"There is so much to do there now. It's a great experience — serene, relaxed and even therapeutic. I want to go back. I have to go back," Mateo said.

◆ NATIVE RELIEF From page 3A

received donations, to see their faces light up and have that sense of happiness again, I can't say thank you enough," she said. "We are trying to get back on our feet so helping out took our minds off our situation and gave us a chance to do something good in the midst of what we are going through."

NRF, created in 2011 to provide assistance to non-gaming Tribes, collected donations from Seminoles on every reservation. Led by Tribal members who were inspired by a TV report about the abject poverty of the Pine Ridge Reservation, the



Beverly Bidney

Employee Leila Baksh donates cans of food to the Native Relief Foundation food drive Dec. 3 at Tribe Headquarters in Hollywood. Food, clothing, shoes, blankets and household items were collected tribalwide and delivered to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.



Eileen Soler

Young ostriches make loud trill sounds as they excitedly greet visitors to Billie Swamp Safari in Big Cypress. The ostriches are among many new creatures added to the tourist attraction's menagerie of native and exotic animals that thrive in the tropical wetland environment.



Peter B. Gallagher

In full view of diners, from the kitchen in the middle of the dining room, Grey Salt chef Dominick Sigiano preps while a roasting pig turns on a spit behind him during the November grand opening.

Hard Rock Tampa's Grey Salt restaurant opens amid fanfare

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER
Special Projects Reporter

TAMPA — Star owners and chefs from some of the area's best restaurants attended the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa's grand opening for Grey Salt in November. The stylish 250-seat Mediterranean-inspired restaurant, under the supervision of celebrity executive chef Marc Murphy, replaces the Americana fare's Green Room.

Murphy is a frequent judge on the Food Network show "Chopped." In New York City, he owns Kingside restaurant at the Viceroy hotel and Landmarc restaurants in Tribeca and Time Warner Center.

Other notable attendees at the grand opening included Ulele's Keith Sedita and the Ava duo of Michael Stewart and Chicago Cubs manager Joe Maddon. Hard Rock representatives included Tampa casino manager John Fontana, who also addressed the crowd.

With the prep chefs and the kitchen out in the open, a pair of hogs on a spit roasted as Seminole medicine man Bobby Henry presented a special invocation. Afterward guests approached buffet tables set up through the spacious restaurant's open verandas.

The restaurant's name is not meant to be symbolic of the extensive Tampa Bay coastal areas and wealth of salt water, Murphy said, but rather it derives from his roots.

"I grew up throughout Europe — predominantly in southern France and Italy where grey salt is a staple," Murphy explained. "When I was thinking about the menu for this restaurant, I decided to incorporate the finishing salt into some of my dishes to serve as a reflection of

my childhood and when it came to think of a name, I realized that the words 'grey salt' felt very much like what I wanted the restaurant to feel like — tranquil, soothing and calm. It's hard to explain, but it just felt right and the more we all thought about it, the more it clicked."

Coarse, moist, unrefined and gray, *sel gris* (grey salt in French) hails mostly from the Brittany region of France's Atlantic coast and is collected by hand using traditional Celtic methods and wooden tools. Not well known in America, grey salt is used extensively by chefs across Europe.

Grey Salt's menu features a variety of dishes, such as grilled Gulf shrimp spiedini with charred lemon and scallion; spicy Moroccan lamb and tzatziki grilled flatbread; thick wood-grilled Berkshire pork chop with Italian eggplant caponata; simple roasted duck breast cooked on a Himalayan salt block and served with dried fruit mostarda and baby greens; crema catalana, the Spanish version of crème brûlée; and margarita pizza.

Exactly 216 clear glass jars, each filled with 12 plump lemons adorn a wall, establishing a bright, relaxing tone for the high-ceiling space. Smaller booths and a series of huge, curved cubicles fill the center, as well as various tables near the open kitchen.

Like a Mediterranean seaside village, a boardwalk leads guests to a round zinc bar, while white textured walls and a sand-colored floor channel the beach. Spice jars, olive oil, wine and split log fuel add to the casual, elegant decor of the restaurant.

Grey Salt is open daily for lunch from 12-4 p.m. and dinner from 4-11 p.m. Call 813-627-8100 for reservations or visit www.GreySalt-Restaurant.com.



Peter B. Gallagher

Grey Salt executive chef Marc Murphy greets Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa President John Fontana during the November grand opening.

Prominent role for Seminoles in Fort Lauderdale art series

BY GORDON WAREHAM
Freelance Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — The Visual Arts Series, featuring Seminole artists Elgin Jumper, Jimmy Osceola and the debut of Stephanie Hall, opened Nov. 16 at the New River Inn in Fort Lauderdale. In celebration of November as Native American History Month, the Seminole artists worked with the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society on the exhibit, which will run until Jan. 15.

The exhibit includes a new offering of paintings from Jimmy Osceola that feature a mixture of scenes from the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations.

"Most of my paintings in my collection are acrylics but I've been trying to get away from it and been trying oils," he said. "It's called pioneer, going on site for two and a half hours and painting. Since they're done in two and a half hours you have to scale it down, then later touch them up in my studio. These paintings have been done in the last year."

Osceola also had a series of Seminole portraits using the same pioneer techniques used for his landscape paintings.

In her debut, Stephanie Hall, an aspiring artist and poet, recited her poem "Drive-thru" and an untitled piece during the reception. The poems reflect her life experiences while living on the reservation.

During the reception, Hall discussed what inspired her to write and paint.

"When I had a desire to learn to paint, I went to my uncle Elgin (Jumper) and it was open doors," she said. "He let me use his supplies and showed me what to do. It's a really supported Seminole artists community,

really encouraging. We are always looking for new artists. I just want people to reach out to Elgin and me if they want help getting started painting or writing or whatever."

Elgin Jumper gave the reception's closing remarks. He thanked everyone for attending the opening and supporting the artists and the event.

He said he looks forward to working with the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society and the New River Inn on a program to help

showcase up-and-coming Seminole artists.

"It's a long-term program over the next seven years that has to do with the next Seminole artist — the Seminole artist on the rise," he said. The Seminole writers, poets, the painters [will] have a place to exhibit."

Also on exhibit is the William D. and Edith M. Boehmer collection of photographs of Seminoles from 1938 until the 1960s. The collection captures the daily life of the Seminole people.



Gordon Wareham

From left, Jimmy Osceola, Stephanie Hall and Elgin Jumper pose in the artists gallery Nov. 16 at New River Inn in Fort Lauderdale.

◆ WINTER SOLSTICE From page 1A

or the first person the English wanted to call a Seminole, dropped in by parachute in 1765," Wickman said. "You would not look back into the Spanish documents. You would not look beyond the English documents. You would not look at the area of the Southeast, only part of which today is known as Florida. You would not see what an incredible heritage these Seminole people have."

Frank described political and financial reasons for the equity deception. He promised to explain "how Americans, white Americans and Creek Indians, for that matter, in Georgia, defined the Indians of Florida as 'Seminoles.'"

"They placed various unconnected bands and groups, some of which spoke different languages, had very little to do with each other, lived miles apart from each other and didn't know each other existed, and defined them all as a coherent nation, a centralized group, a coherent set of leaders in order to wage war on them and force them to sign treaties," Frank said. "They defined them as 'runaways' rather than sovereign. They defined them as former Creeks rather than as folks with policies of their own."

Frank said it was not uncommon for early 20th century Seminoles to "poetically" translate the Muscogee phrase *isti semoli* as "those who camp at a distance" or "free people at distant fires."

"Representatives of the United States, and then anthropologists after that, offered a rather different explanation ... that is runaways, fugitives and wild people, the horse that is a runaway horse that is out of control," Frank said. "One can see that as a disparaging trait, and one can see that as a free horse. The Creeks came up with the definition of 'wild,' as 'renegade,' as 'fugitive' for very particular reasons.

"Since then many have followed suit with the conventional wisdom that the terms originally began, as (Wickman) just mentioned, as *cimmaron*, the Spanish term for "runaway" or "runaway cow or domesticated animal." The early American definition remains largely uncontested today. The two often continue to describe the Seminole people themselves. Not only do we use the term, but we still imagine (Seminoles) to be runaways rather than sovereign.

"Not surprisingly, the Seminoles in the 18th and early 19th century did not consider themselves to be runaways, wild men or fugitives from justice."

The three Seminole Wars resulted in the death and removal of all but a few hundred Native peoples from Florida. "As part of this process of conquest," Frank pointed out, "the United States created and imposed a definition of Seminoles that was widely rejected by Native peoples themselves. This definition declared that the Seminoles were wild savages who escaped Creek laws, intermixed with African-Americans and ultimately formed an illegitimate nation of their own."

Frank said the definition defied reality but that it allowed the U.S. to treat the Florida Indians as if they belonged or remained connected to other Indian communities.

In its zeal to destroy the Seminoles, the U.S. government played dirty, Frank said.

"U.S. officials employed rhetorical devices that united their enemies in Florida to an 'inflammatory wild and savage' Seminole character. Typical of the American accounts, one explanation of the first war proclaimed that the Indian enemy 'combated with the unrestrained fierceness of barbarians.' They had 'the character of wild beasts fit only to be hunted down and exterminated.'"

By the 1840s, representatives of the United States routinely justified the conquest of the Indians because "it would relieve the

citizens of Florida of a savage population from which they have suffered so much in the form of rapine, conflagration and murder," Frank said. "The United States had no need to distinguish one enemy from another. They were at war in their eyes and in their words, 'with an enemy united simply by savagery.' It's a simple solution to a much more complicated issue."

Marty Bowers' intimate portrait of growing up on the Big Cypress Reservation enchanted the crowd. He told attendees how he was afraid of soldiers after hearing stories of how they hunted, captured and killed his ancestors 100 years before he was born.

"In growing up, that sentiment of removal, extermination, that fear, it was prevalent in my childhood," Bowers said. "We were told stories of caution that were born out of those war years with the United States government. It was sometimes difficult to be a kid."

Henry also shared his own stories. The medicine man spun tale after tale: He was 8 to 10 years old when he began his medicine training. He explained how he was taken in the woods and turned loose, given only a sharp stick and told to "get you somethin' and come back."

Henry said he learned only to keep medicine ways, never to go to school.

"I don't remember if I promised, but I never went to school. All my life," he said.

At dark, after a dinner for all participants, the medicine man set a fire outside and called for dancers to join him. The Tallahassee temperature finally dropped beneath 80. Dozens of men and women dressed in all manner of Indian-styled garb followed Henry stomp dancing around the fire as he called out melodic words, dancing until he was the last man standing.

It was the end of the dance. People silently disappeared into the darkness.

"Where is everybody?" Henry said. "Where are the runaways?"

Garage sale proceeds to help elders in Jerusalem

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Judybill Osceola was so moved by the story of the Jerusalem Prayer Team, whose causes include fundraising for the elderly in Israel, she held a garage sale Dec. 1 to raise money for the organization.

Led by missionary Mike Evans, the group encourages Americans to pray for peace in Jerusalem and to support humanitarian needs in Israel.

"He helps older people," Osceola said.

"I want to help as much as I can."

Tables in front of Osceola's Hollywood home overflowed with patchwork strips, rickrack, beaded jewelry and fabric. A rack filled with Christmas-themed patchwork skirts rounded out the selection. Neighbors stopped by all day.

Osceola has been learning about various missionaries through the First Seminole Baptist Church and vowed to help as much as she can.

"God said sell all you have and feed the poor," she said. "He has blessed me and I'm turning around and sharing with them."



Beverly Bidney

Rhonda Jumper looks through piles of fabric Dec. 1 at Judybill Osceola's garage sale in Hollywood to benefit the Jerusalem Prayer Team.



Peter B. Gallagher

Medicine man Bobby Henry shapes the smoke of the newborn fire, praying for it to last all night during the annual Winter Solstice Celebration hosted by the Florida Department of State in Tallahassee.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



Beverly Bidney

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola serves food to Wanda Bowers, while Hollywood Board Rep. Steve Osceola works the other side of the food line Nov. 24 during the Hollywood Thanksgiving dinner at Classic Gym.



Eileen Soler

Claudia Doctor reaches for locally grown red potatoes free for the taking at a colorful display of locally grown, freshly harvested fruits and vegetables during the Big Cypress Thanksgiving luncheon Nov. 20 at Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



Peter B. Gallagher

A chef carefully carves slices of roasted pig for Bobby and Annie Henry and Pat Lipari during the Tampa Thanksgiving feast Nov. 19 at Columbia Restaurant.



Eileen Soler

Alice Billie dines on green beans, meat and mashed potatoes Nov. 20 during a Thanksgiving luncheon at Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium. The meal was hosted by Councilman Cicero Osceola and his staff.



Eileen Soler

Scarlett Jumper, of Hollywood, celebrates a bingo win Dec. 8 during an all reservation senior Thanksgiving lunch at Big Cypress Senior Center.



Kevin Johnson

Jayveon Wyatt, 3, enjoys his meal during the Fort Pierce community's Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 18 at Chupco's Landing Community Center.



John-L. Voth

Mother and daughter Crystal Huff and Jaime Smith celebrate Thanksgiving at the Brighton community and employee luncheon Nov. 24.



Beverly Bidney

The Hanks family gathers at the Thanksgiving table in Hollywood. From left are Goldie Hanks, 2, Savannah Hanks, 6, Kevin Hanks, Savannah Huggins and Addison Huggins, 14.



Beverly Bidney

Tyra Jimmie, 9, Melinda Jimmie and Omar Bickel pose for a photo during the Hollywood Thanksgiving dinner at Classic Gym.



Peter B. Gallagher

Dominic Osceola enjoys ham and chicken during the Tampa Thanksgiving dinner at Columbia Restaurant.



John-L. Voth

Julissa Hardy eyes a forkful of mashed potatoes during the Brighton community and employee luncheon at Fred Smith Rodeo Arena.



John-L. Voth

Josiah Hardy grabs a piece of pie from a dessert table during the Brighton Thanksgiving event at Fred Smith Rodeo Arena.



Kevin Johnson

Shamy Tommie prepares turkey for serving to dozens of guests during Fort Pierce community's Thanksgiving dinner at Chupco's Landing Community Center.



Eileen Soler

More than 100 elders from reservations tribalwide gather Dec. 8 for an all senior Thanksgiving lunch at Big Cypress Senior Center. Seniors played rounds of bingo, won raffle gifts, listened to live music and feasted on hearty plates of chicken, beef and holiday fixings.



Clerk's Office donation sheds light on start of Tribe's citrus operations

SUBMITTED BY TENNILE JACKSON
 Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

In August, staff members from the Seminole Tribe of Florida Clerk's Office visited the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's Collections Division and brought a large collection of materials salvaged from a Brighton Reservation shed. While the Museum is always happy to assist other departments, we are especially delighted when those interactions result in significant additions to the Museum's permanent collection.

The collection of more than 300 items included several transparency slides, maps and other documents that all related to the citrus groves on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations. Once we began to process the collection, we received a look into the origins of one of the Tribe's successful business endeavors that remains in operation today.

Since its formal establishment as a constituted body, the Seminole Tribe has embarked on a number of business ventures that have grown exponentially over the years. One of its most notable agricultural enterprises was the development of its citrus groves. Among the items donated were several documents dating back over a decade; one of which was an interview for a magazine article that divulged information about how the citrus industry became an important part of the Tribe's commercial expansion.

In 1980, acreages on the Big Cypress and Brighton reservations were evaluated for potential agricultural development. The results of the study revealed that land on both reservations was perfectly suited for the cultivation of citrus. A few years later, following a soil survey conducted by the Soil Conservation Service, specific areas were pinpointed for citrus development. Upon receiving this information, Tribal members took it upon themselves to apply for a competitive grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs that would facilitate the formation of groves on both reservations. In 1988, the Big Cypress Citrus Orchard grant was awarded to the Tribe through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Once the grant was received, an outpouring of support was expressed by the Seminole Board of Directors and Tribal Council, who made further contributions both financially and managerially. These actions were the foundation of what would become one of the largest fresh fruit lemon operations in the eastern United States.

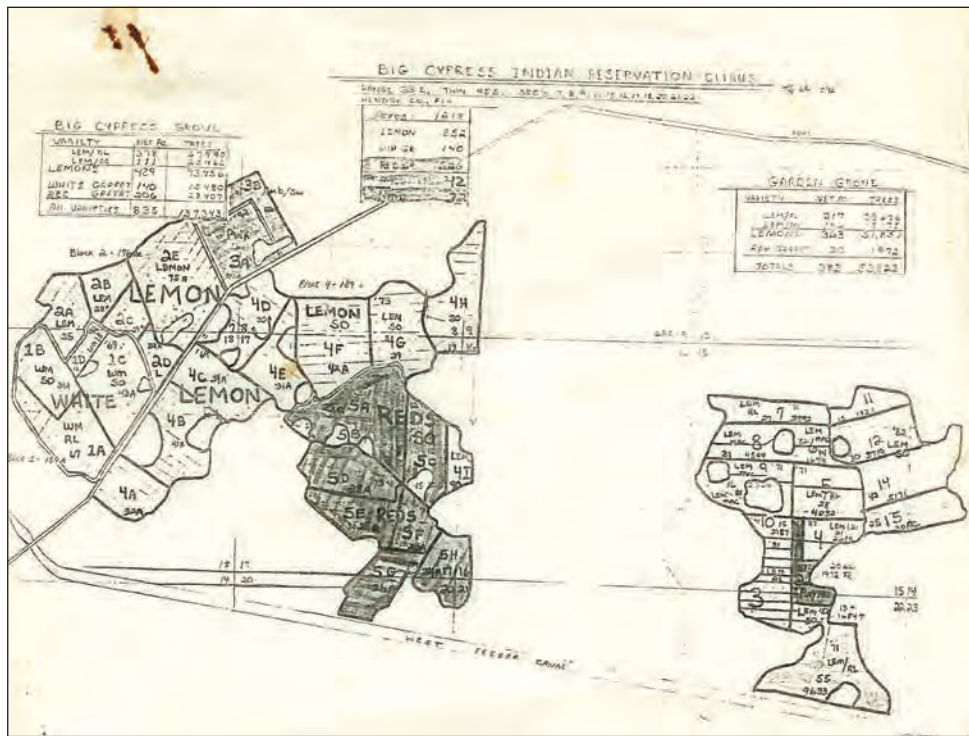


Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

A map shows the layout of the citrus groves on the Big Cypress Reservation.

The citrus grove documents tell us about the varieties of citrus grown, which included Valencias and Hamlins, and the names of specific Tribal members who played an integral role in the development of the groves. Individuals such as Jacob Osceola Sr., Joe Lester John and Wonder Johns were several of the people cited for their direct involvement.

Also included in the lot were survey maps and more than 200 images depicting everything from open fields of land and various construction vehicles at work to various men and women surveying land and laying irrigation tubes. Unfortunately, most of the people in the photographs are unidentified. At the Museum, we consider it our duty to preserve the history of the Seminole Tribe in any way possible. A collection such as this one, which comes from the community or from fellow departments, has a great deal of power to bring history to life. As always, we welcome the tribal community to assist us with further documenting these materials. If you would like to see them and help identify people and places in the photographs, call the Museum at 863-902-1113, and ask for the Collections Division.



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

An unidentified man stands in front of an open field.



Photo courtesy of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

A group of unidentified people work in a grove.



Beverly Bidney

This young Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital patient seems more interested in Santa Claus than the toys President Mitchell Cypress offers him during the President's toy delivery.



Beverly Bidney

These elves, aka President Mitchell Cypress' staff and firefighters, search through hundreds of toys for the right gift for each child at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Dec. 8 in Hollywood.



Beverly Bidney

President Mitchell Cypress, Santa Claus and Curtis Motlow pose together Dec. 3 during the toy drive in the Seminole Classic Casino parking lot in Hollywood.

◆ TOY DRIVE From page 1A

President Cypress hopes to make the toy drive an annual tradition.

Smiles and laughter filled the hospital halls as President Cypress and Santa visited patients and surprised them with presents; visiting siblings also received a toy from Santa. Even a child celebrating Chanukah enjoyed the visit as Santa crowded, "Ho, ho, ho, Happy Chanukah." A trip to the intensive care unit was more hushed, but it didn't stop the entourage from doling out Christmas tidings.

"Today was a special day; we lifted their spirits," President Cypress said. "I wish Santa would have come in my younger days but he didn't. Doing this helps make up for that."

The Seminoles and Santa handed out about 60 toys; Big Mama's Team of Life organization dispersed the remaining gifts at events in Florida City, Central Broward Regional Park and Santa's Enchanted Forest.

"Christmas is a good time of year to celebrate not only the holiday but the day Christ was born," President Cypress said. "I'd like everyone in the Tribe to take a moment and think about that. Don't leave Christ out."

Betty Mae Jumper

Wisdom from the past

Choctaws have come a long way

The following column was written by Betty Mae Jumper and printed in the August 20, 1999 issue of *The Seminole Tribune*.

A long time ago, I went to the Indian boarding school in Cherokee, North Carolina. I met a lot of fellow Indians from across the country and most of us were from the same background — we were poor.

We didn't have the money to travel to our homes during holidays. We wore hand-me-down clothes and spending money just didn't exist.

One of my fellow students from that time was Phillip Martin. If you don't know Phillip, he's the Chairman of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians based in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

Recently I visited Philadelphia to attend the 50th annual Choctaw Indian Fair. I have to give Phillip credit for transforming his community and his people. Under his guidance, the Choctaws have used Indian gaming to change their lives. The whole town is lit up to the sky. He has helped turn Philadelphia into a rich town from a poor folk's town.

I remember when there was nothing in

Philadelphia. Now today, I see people all smiling at Phillip when he comes around. Even Wal-Mart and McDonald's have come and many other food stands.

While I was there, I thought of all the jobs that have been created. In fact, the Choctaws are one of the 10 largest employers in the state, with more than 6,600 full- and part-time employees. And, the Tribe operates the largest unified school system in the United States with 1,700 students.

It's a far cry from the time Phillip and I went to school together at Cherokee. I never dreamed I would see the Indians in every office on the Choctaw Reservation. The day I was there I said to myself, "Thank God I've lived to see this Tribe come to the top."

It's nice to see that the Choctaws can eat steak instead of hamburger meat. Even the buildings and schools have every modern convenience.

I wanted to write this because I know where Phillip and most of us Indians come from. I know it hasn't been an easy trip. I remember when sometimes we went without because we didn't have anything.

Now, finally, thanks to leaders like Phillip Martin, Indians are getting a better chance at life. And for that, I say again, thank God.



Watch, wonder or make it happen

◆ Ted Nelson Sr.

Sometimes I wonder what happened when things aren't going my way. I begin to think something must be disconnected in my life. It may take a little longer these days before I realize various parts of life may be out of proportion at the expense of the rest. If I want to have a healthy life I must have balance and harmony. A wise colleague said to me, "Nothing in a person's existence can change without all other things changing as well."

If I'm not happy, and I don't know why, I have to ask myself, am I useful and serving in my community? Am I passing on to my children what I know about my culture? What am I doing to help my family and friends? Can I do better job at work, my school, and what am I doing to be a good neighbor?

I ask myself, could I have better judgment with the choices I make? Are my motives respectful? Is there something I'm keeping from my loved ones? I know many things but do I share my knowledge? Why can't I share

my emotions, my reactions (good or bad), and just what do I think of myself?

I wonder sometimes, was I born this way, and I wonder if any of my ancestors were like me. I wonder if I am being respectful of my physical body. Am I in good physical shape?

Do I sleep, and eat healthy, and is my body free of harmful substances?



When I was young, the uncles tried to teach me how to be a good human being, but other influences taught me the negative things as well. I ask myself, do I remember the spiritual and ceremonial teachings that were my guide?

Next time I feel things just aren't going my way I'm going to reflect on "what happened." Surely, I want to be re-connected and in harmony and balance. Welcome back!

Ted Nelson Sr. is a Seminole Tribal member and serves on the Board of Directors of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). He is a licensed clinical social worker with a master's degree from Barry University, Class of 1997.



Beverly Bidney

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum community outreach specialist Reinaldo Becerra explains the role of the Seminole Tribe to festival attendees Dec. 5 at the Big Cypress Swamp Heritage Festival in Ochopee.

◆ SWAMP FESTIVAL From page 3A

approved in 2014 with 75 percent of the vote. The amendment was designed to allocate 33 percent of all state real estate document excise taxes to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, which is tasked to acquire and protect wilderness, wildlife habitat, water resources and park land.

"More than 4 million people voted for it, more than for any other state vote," Hiaasen said.

Environmental groups claim the Florida

Legislature misappropriated \$300 million of Amendment 1 funds and in June filed a lawsuit to recoup the money.

Butcher has been shooting photos of the Everglades since 1980, when he moved to Southwest Florida from California. His photos have taken him deep into the swamp, but he said he often finds images close to home, even in the parking lot of his Big Cypress gallery.

"Nature is chaos; the trick is to make sense of it," he said. "The Everglades is the only place like it in the world. I call it a living, growing, creepy crawly place and I love it."

SEMINOLE SCENES



BFFS: Friends Marcela Osceola and Quifilryia Wilson pose Dec. 4 during the Big Ballers tournament at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center.

Aaron Tommie



SCREAM TEAM: Led by coach Cynthia Wilkes, Ahfachkee School cheerleaders react while cheering for the Warriors against Donahue Academy in a high school boys basketball game Dec. 1 at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress. The cheer team is comprised of 12 girls from grades one through four.

Kevin Johnson



WATER GIRL: Goldie Hanks, 2, shows her support for the Native Pride pro basketball team by coming onto the court to bring a drink to her father, Pride forward Kevin Hanks, during a break in an American Basketball Association game Dec. 9 at Broward College in Davie.

Kevin Johnson



MARKED HISTORY: A newly erected monument sign marks the approximate spot at Big Cypress Reservation where from about 1901 to 1908 William "Bill" Brown and his family traded a range of materials from ammunition to sewing machines with Seminoles for bird plumes, other hides and other goods. The sign is one of several to be erected to mark locations listed in the Tribal Register of Historic Places.

Photo courtesy of Shawn Keyte



JAMMING: Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, Paul Buster and Hollywood Board Rep. Steve Osceola appear to jam onstage during the Hollywood Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 24. Buster, the only musician in the group, played with his band Cowbone during the event.

Beverly Bidney



SEESAW TODDLERS: Brighton's littlest students enjoy a break from the Creek Language Enrichment House at Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School during a brisk November morning. The toddlers are part of a language immersion program at the school that teaches everything in the language of ancestors.

Photo courtesy of Brian Greseth



DECK THE WALLS: Workers don the entrance of Frank Billie Field Office in Big Cypress with festive lights, garland and Christmas figures.

Eileen Soler



BEADING FRENZY: Big Cypress Preschool student Tikara Hall sets her eyes and nimble fingers on making beaded jewelry during a special November culture activity. Elders, parents and teachers dressed in patchwork helped the children fashion pretty pieces that show Seminole pride.

Photo courtesy of Melissa Sherman



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS: Tribal Secretary LaVonne Rose treats the Secretary's Office and Clerk's Office staff to a holiday lunch Dec. 9 at Hard Rock Cafe. Pictured are Wanda Bowers, Naomi Wilson, Geneva Shore, Amanda Bouby, Phyllis Mendez, Leila Baksh, Jacob Ramos, Sheri Becker, Shelly-Ann Walker, Jean Philippe Valles and Shari Henriques.

Photo courtesy of Wanda Bowers



ONCE UPON A PRESCHOOL: Big Cypress Preschool children are treated at Willie Frank Memorial Library to a special story time Nov. 30 by the Education Department's tribalwide library supervisor David M. Blackard. All four of the Tribe's libraries host story time for the youngest students.

Eileen Soler



CHRISTMAS CHEER: Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola poses with Minnie Doctor on Dec. 11 during the elder's annual Christmas gathering at Seminole Estates.

Gordon Wareham



HAVING A BALL: Allekeao Billie, 2, has a ball playing with a billiard ball during the Fort Pierce community's Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 18 at Chupco's Landing Community Center.

Kevin Johnson



BIRDS ON A WIRE: Flocks of wild parrots are a common site in South Florida and this urban trio, part of a larger flock, huddle together on a utility wire on U.S. 441 in Hollywood.

Beverly Bidney



GLADES RAINBOW: After days of nearly continuous rain, the skies clear momentarily Dec. 5 over I-75 heading west toward Big Cypress and reveal a full rainbow over the Everglades.

Beverly Bidney

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KEB' MO', ERIC JOHNSON,
CHRIS LAYTON, MATO NANJI,
NOAH HUNT, HENRI BROWN

February 24
**EXPERIENCE
HENDRIX**



February 27
**THE BEACH
BOYS**



March 3
MOODY BLUES



March 6
**STEVE
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Living the ACD experience: State of amazement

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

R&B singer John Legend's song "Live It Up" talks of embracing prosperity after experiencing a life plagued with limitations that come with financial struggle. Throughout the song, he reflects on those arduous periods in the past, which help make it easier to appreciate success.



Beverly Bidney
Aaron Tommie

Long gone are the days where it's necessary to hunt to feed our families. Memories of picking oranges, walking miles to attend school and cutting palm trees to sell during Easter seem like ancient history. We've come a long way since our official recognition in 1957, but can you imagine how much further we can go?

Throughout my life, there have been times where I looked back and wished I would have put more effort into whatever it was that I was doing. That feeling of knowing I could have done more, but didn't, is very uncomfortable to live with, which is why I viewed working in the Advanced Career Development (ACD) program as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I didn't want to mess up.

When I walk through the doors of Tribe Headquarters, ride through the entrances of the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood or cover events throughout the reservations, I'm in a constant state of amazement and admiration. Not many people experience the privileges we have.

Prior to working for the Tribe, I had less than two years of work experience. During the majority of my freshman year of college in 2007, I had a work-study job. Two years later, I tutored at an intermediate school. Then during the spring 2012 semester, I interned for three months at a Christian-based vegan company. As a marketing intern, my input was encouraged as I sat in meetings next to the company's founder, marketing director and other employees with high-level positions. Despite my inexperience and youth, I was treated as an equal.

On Sept. 21, 2015, I began working for the Seminole Tribe of Florida as a manager trainee through the Education Department's ACD program. I began in the Executive Operations Office (EOO) to better understand how the Tribe functions. Most people see all the glitz and glamour but don't see the work it takes to make it happen.

During the first week, I was mainly in training, which made it easier for me to adjust to the routine of going to work. Gladys Mateo, the EOO's administrative assistant, was extremely helpful. I often referred to her as my work mother because she always gave me advice. Like my own mother, Gladys encouraged me to learn more about my Seminole culture. No matter how many questions I asked, she was always willing to answer them.

Within my first week or two, I visited Billie Swamp Safari in Big Cypress. It was important that I experienced the Safari for myself so that I could share my observations with my superiors. By doing this, I gained an understanding of a visitor's experience. I saw animals that I never even heard of. Water buffalo? Florida panther?

Eating at the Swamp Water Café, the Safari's restaurant, was a great experience as well. Anyone who knows me is aware of my affinity for food.

My next assignment, also at the Safari, came when CNN interviewed Chairman James E. Billie about an alligator who, years ago, was named after Donald Trump. My duty was to see how the Tribe conducts interviews with the public.

I met Chairman Billie several times in the past. Before the CNN crew arrived, he told stories of Seminole history. I listened in awe.

During the next few weeks, I continued to learn more about the Tribe's history. I read stories about The Seminole Tribune's founder, Betty Mae Jumper, and the Tribe's acquisition of the Hard Rock brand. I did anything I could to further immerse myself into the Tribe's activities. I attended Council and community meetings. I watched eye-opening and informative videos on effective leadership, communication and management.

I used my last few weeks in Operations to prepare working for The Tribune. Since I knew that I would be expected to write stories, I researched issues existing in Indian Country. Countless hours were spent learning how issues such as obesity, and substance abuse affect Native Americans throughout the States.

♦ See ACD EXPERIENCE on page 2B

Immokalee Boys & Girls Club uses federal grant for mentoring, fitness

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

IMMOKALEE — Shortly after the Immokalee Boys & Girls Club upgraded to a stand-alone club in February, it received a \$20,000 grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to provide mentoring and fitness activities to the club's 122 youth through the SMART Moves program.

"Based on statistics, youth are apt to do bad things between 3 and 7 p.m.," said Robert North, Boys & Girls Club director. "The Boys & Girls Club provides a positive place for youth, so the (Office) of Juvenile Justice passes the funds through to the club to provide mentoring services."

According to the OJJDP, juvenile violence peaks during afterschool hours. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) strives to enable all young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Per its website, the clubs provide safe places to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals, life-enhancing programs and character development experiences.

"Mentoring can be executed in different ways," said Bryan Granie, Boys & Girls Club assistant director and administrator of the grant. "We guide youth to a positive life through a variety of activities."

The SMART Moves program teaches children and teens how to say no to risky behavior.

Immokalee club counselors conduct weekly mentoring groups, during which they work in small groups to develop the children's assertiveness, decision making and critical thinking skills. Discussion topics include social skills, bullying and issues at school.

"The small groups give the youth the opportunity to engage with counselors," Granie said. "They feel comfortable expressing themselves there, rather than not being heard in a crowd. It's all about youth development."

Funding for the grant ends Dec. 31, but the fitness program, which was developed by the Immokalee club, will continue.

"Our programs are tailored to our youth and the specific needs of the community," Granie said. "Fitness is a homegrown program; the kids wanted to get away from



Immokalee Boys & Girls Club members play Fitness Monopoly Dec. 10 as part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention program SMART Moves. Counselor Patricia Saldivar organizes and monitors physical activities at each station of the circuit training course.

Beverly Bidney

Xbox and computers and get physically active and have fun. We want them engaged at all times."

The Immokalee program uses the five basic components of fitness: cardiovascular, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility and mind/body, which encourage healthy lifestyles. And because of the program's popularity, it was increased to twice a week.

A favorite activity is Fitness Monopoly, which is similar to the board game but instead of building houses and hotels, participants build muscle and coordination. An adult tosses large, inflatable dice to determine how

many spaces the group must travel around the board, which is a circuit training setup with different activities on each space.

Examples of the 20-second activities included skipping, dumbbell lateral raises, hurdles, step-ups, squats, push-ups and jump rope.

At the Free Parking space, participants had to sit with good posture; at Chance and Community Chest, they took a card and did what was instructed, such as high knees, butt kicks or straight leg kicks. If the child landed on Go to Jail, they had to jog to jail at the far end of the gym.

Each activity, whether Fitness Monopoly,

relay races or outdoor games, always includes warm-ups before and stretching afterward.

Patrick Shepard, assistant manager of the Immokalee club, said the children are excited to participate in the program. He said their numbers have been growing and the program is thriving.

"You have a lot of fun and at the same time you exercise and build muscles and burn calories," said Jaylah Garcia, 9, who attends the mentoring sessions as well. "I love it. I make a difference; one day we walked around and cleaned up trash. I feel like people can follow me and that gives them more ideas to help the community."

Call to charity tugs at PECS hearts, students respond with open arms

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BRIGHTON — Teenagers from Pemayetv Emahkv Charter School in Brighton sat in a campus chiecke on a recent Monday in December and discussed reasons why giving to others in deeds and charity is important.

"It shows leadership," said Kaleb Doctor, 13.

"It tells people they are loved," said Janessa Nunez, 13.

Kamani Smith, 14, and the school's Student Council Chairwoman Alaina Sweat, 13, agreed.

"Kids are especially thankful. They don't take anything for granted," Alaina said.

PECS students show generosity all year long, said principal Brian Greseth, but during the holidays, from November through December, they punctuate the point with

acts of kindness that come one right after the other.

"These months are pretty much a busy time for giving," Greseth said.

A schoolwide Food for Families collection drive reaped 1,109 canned food items for Big Lake Missions Outreach in Okeechobee just in time for Thanksgiving.

The organization's food pantry and hot food kitchen has been feeding an average 25,000 hungry and homeless people per

year for the past two decades, said Mary Anne Swinford, who co-directs the charity with her husband, Bruce. She said the group distributed 920 meals to the local poor on Thanksgiving Day this year alone. On any given day, they serve between 15 and 40 meals.

"We don't turn anyone away from the table. We learned that when we were little kids," Maryanne Swinford said.

PECS administrative assistant Michele Thomas said the holidays are perfect for encouraging children to care for others. Children gain exposure to all sorts of community needs, including fun ways to participate, and then they are encouraged to pitch in.

"We use the time for teaching moments," Thomas said.

On Dec. 1, the students hosted a party in the school cafeteria for foster children of Real Life Children's Ranch, a residential group home in Okeechobee for abused and neglected children who have been removed from their parents' care.

Greeted by PECS kids at the door, the foster children were treated to a chorus of Christmas carols sung by PECS students. Later, students shared a buffet of traditional Seminole foods that included Indian tacos.

"We played with the kids and made them feel comfortable," Janessa said.

Soon, Santa Claus appeared to spread more joy by giving away candy canes and books that were donated by PECS children during a November book collection. Kids also received school supplies and single strands of Seminole beaded necklaces.

A few days later, PECS students donned Santa caps and joined the Top of the Lake Christmas Festival & Parade in Okeechobee. There, they rode aboard the PECS parade float waving to spectators and they walked behind the float pulling red wagons filled with more books that were handed out to children who lined the street.

"It was fun and wet and rainy and cold. It felt like winter," said Kaleb, who is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Students.

But Kaleb said the holiday spirit actually



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Pemayetv Emahkv Charter School students sing Christmas carols Dec. 1 to children from Real Life Children's Ranch residential group home during a holiday party in the school cafeteria.

♦ See CHARITY on page 2B



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Students from Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School carry donated canned goods for delivery to Big Lake Missions Outreach in Okeechobee just in time for Thanksgiving.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Santa Claus and a little girl from Real Life Children's Ranch residential group home have a conversation about holiday wishes Dec. 1 during a holiday party hosted by PECS.

◆ **ACD EXPERIENCE**
From page 1B

After my six-week tenure ended with EOO in mid-October, I started working for the newspaper.

The more I learn about our culture and history, the more amazed I am. Meeting many people from various departments at Headquarters allows me to observe

how employees interact with each other, especially the way people in leadership conduct themselves. I observe and take mental notes of their mannerisms and actions.

Currently, there are three participants in the ACD program. I've never been around an organization that does so much for its people. Having the opportunity to be part of something that is ultimately of service to us is a wonderful opportunity.

Big Cypress Preschool gets early Claus call



Photos courtesy of Melissa Sherman

Big Cypress preschoolers enjoy a visit from Santa Claus Dec. 10. Santa read them a holiday story and then handed out presents. Students also decorated elf hats and feasted on ham, roast, turkey, green bean casserole and other delectable side dishes.

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Pancake snowmen make winter breakfast social snow-licious

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — Hollywood Preschool students answered “yes” to the Disney question, “Do you want to build a snowman?” thanks to a Dec. 11 visit from Olaf and Elsa of the Disney movie “Frozen” and edible snowmen fashioned from little pancakes, chocolate morsels, marshmallow drops and crispy bacon.

The hands-on winter activity was, after all, dubbed the Snowman Breakfast Social.

Parent involvement aide Latoya Parker said the event filled December’s bill for the school’s monthly Fun Day happenings that bring families, students and staff together for games, music, food, dancing and lots of love.

The hour-long celebration was highlighted by Olaf and Elsa conducted sing-alongs of nursery songs such as “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” and “Itsy Bitsy Spider (The Spider Song).” The characters also engaged children in physical fun via a rainbow parachute and dances like the hokey pokey.



Eileen Soler
Preschool dad Al Fludd joins in the pancake snowman building fun Dec. 11 at the Hollywood Preschool Snowman Breakfast Social.



Eileen Soler
Kids and parents create edible pancake snowmen that some children could barely wait to gobble at the Hollywood Preschool Snowman Breakfast Social.



Eileen Soler

Autumn Osceola can't help but dance, even before she can walk, with help from Allison Jumper during the Snowman Breakfast Social at Hollywood Preschool.



Eileen Soler

Preschool children have a blowout blast while using a parachute to dance and sing with Olaf and Elsa from the Disney movie ‘Frozen.’



Eileen Soler

Posing with Olaf the snowman from the Disney movie ‘Frozen’ is perfectly cool for Alizayah Alvarado and Alexandria Beasley at the Snowman Breakfast Social.

Students of the month



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School November elementary students of the month: Jalene Smith, Kulipa Julian, Karter Puente, Cherrish Micco, Dyani Kayda, Rylee Bowers, Jaliyah Kroepin, Joleyne Nunez, Truley Osceola, Bryce Trammell, Jessie Martinez, Jordan Johnson, Serenity Micco, Jana Johnson, Taryn Osceola, Kendra Thomas, Renee Ringer, Melina Steve, Austin Thomas and Steel Gopher.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

November middle school students of the month: Alliana Brady, Hyatt Pearce and Jathan Tommie.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

December elementary students of the month: Augustice Jumper, Ciani Smith, Liam Berry, Case Prescott, Ross Jones, Jace Johns, Clayson Osceola, Timothy Urbina, Kendrick Billie, Brandon Gabbard, Greyson Johns, Candice Melton, Preslynn Baker, Cakiyah Koger, Zach Riley, Josiah Johns, Mariana Mora-Lara, Dwayne Billie, Dylan Johns, Stanley Rodrigues and Lupe Mora-Lara.



Photo courtesy of Michele Thomas

December middle school students of the month: Joss Youngblood (not pictured), Nataly Solis and Kamani Smith.



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Hollywood preschoolers rock Christmas



Beverly Bidney

Ava-Jae Cypress and Irie Gowen perform during the Hollywood Preschool's Christmas show.



Beverly Bidney

Kendrick Osceola rocks out on an inflatable guitar during the 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree' song at the Hollywood Preschool A Rockin' Christmas show Dec. 17.



Beverly Bidney

Sitting on Santa's lap evokes mixed reactions from these siblings following the Hollywood Preschool's Christmas show, A Rockin' Christmas.



Beverly Bidney

Maddox Osceola revels in the applause after the 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree' number.



Beverly Bidney

Students from the Hollywood Preschool's 4-year-old class perform 'O Christmas Tree' during the Christmas show. The boys wore patchwork vests and the girls wore patchwork skirts made for them as gifts by the Hollywood Culture Department.



Beverly Bidney

Emmett Williams does not sit on Santa's lap empty-handed; he brought toys for jolly St. Nick to play with after the Hollywood Preschool Christmas show.

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Golden Christmas shines bright at Ahfachkee



Eileen Soler
Mohayla Billie sports a Christmas tree cap with jingle bells Dec. 11 for drumming with kindergarten classmates to 'Little Drummer Boy' during Ahfachkee School's Golden Christmas Concert in Big Cypress.



Eileen Soler
Ahfachkee School's fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade band performs a joyous rendition of 'Au Clair de la Lune' at the Golden Christmas Concert.



Eileen Soler
Ahfachkee high school student Troy Cantu plays 'Aura Lee' on acoustic guitar Dec. 11 with classmates (not pictured) Elisah Billie, Eyanna Billie and Matthew Bluebird during the school's Golden Christmas Concert.

BY EILEEN SOLER
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — Planning for the Ahfachkee School holiday pageant basically began at the same time Ja'Nia Harden started her first day as the Big Cypress school's new music teacher.

"I walked into a room filled with instruments and instantly wanted every child to experience every one of them," Harden said. "We've been planning the show since August."

She picked "Golden Christmas Concert" as the show's theme and title to encourage the children to shine.

On Dec. 11, inside the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium, about 110 students decked in holiday patchwork and dresses that glittered gold and silver lifted horns, drums and strings with confidence in a program that included 11 musical and choral acts.

Harden credited art teacher Ivette Lopez for helping children from kindergarten through eighth grade produce artwork that adorned each table where parents, grandparents and other loved ones sat to enjoy the show. Lopez said the children worked diligently to conceive and create the works that served as metallic gold centerpieces.

At the front of the gymnasium, guests were greeted with a large high school student-made Christmas card, also with golden highlights, that featured a crèche with only the hint of Baby Jesus beaming from the manger under a golden halo. Dalton Koenes created a nearly 6-foot stained glass painting inspired by French artist Henri Matisse.

Songs filled the room during the one-hour recital. Classics included "Little Drummer Boy" featuring pre-K and kindergarten drumming solos; "Au Clair de la Lune" by the fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade band; "Away in a Manger" with Sarah and Illiana Robbins; and "Aura Lee" starring Matthew Bluebird with backup high school guitarists.

Johnnie Sue Russell said she was "scared" at first to perform in front of the audience. Sarah Robbins admitted that she was also a little apprehensive.

"But the best part for us is when the people started clapping. It made us feel special," Sarah said.

Harden, a Miami mother of three, became a music teacher 10 years ago after graduating from Florida A&M University. A gifted singer and performer, her teaching "gig" began in Indianapolis where last year she directed a student cast in a production of "The Wiz" at Fall Creek Academy.

For Harden, leading children toward interests in music is always a welcome challenge. Some kids are more capable, talented or compelled than others. Almost every child needs reminders that practice makes perfect — or even good enough.

Ahfachkee students in pre-K through sixth grade take music class once per week for 30 minutes. High schoolers can get up to three 75-minute classes each week.

"At first, it's hard to get the kids to take the instruments home for practice, but it slowly happens and they say, 'I want to get it right and shine,'" Harden said. "Tonight was the great teaching moment come together. Everyone just clicked."



Eileen Soler
Faith Billie, 3, dances in front of a large picture board filled with Ahfachkee School student artwork created in metallic gold colors.



Eileen Soler
The grand finale of Ahfachkee School's Golden Christmas Concert features a student cast of more than 50 student voices with a special solo by Solomon Cypress in 'Do You Here What I Hear?'



Eileen Soler
Kindergarten voices blend in sweet sound for 'I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus' at the Dec. 11 Golden Christmas Concert featuring Ahfachkee School students.

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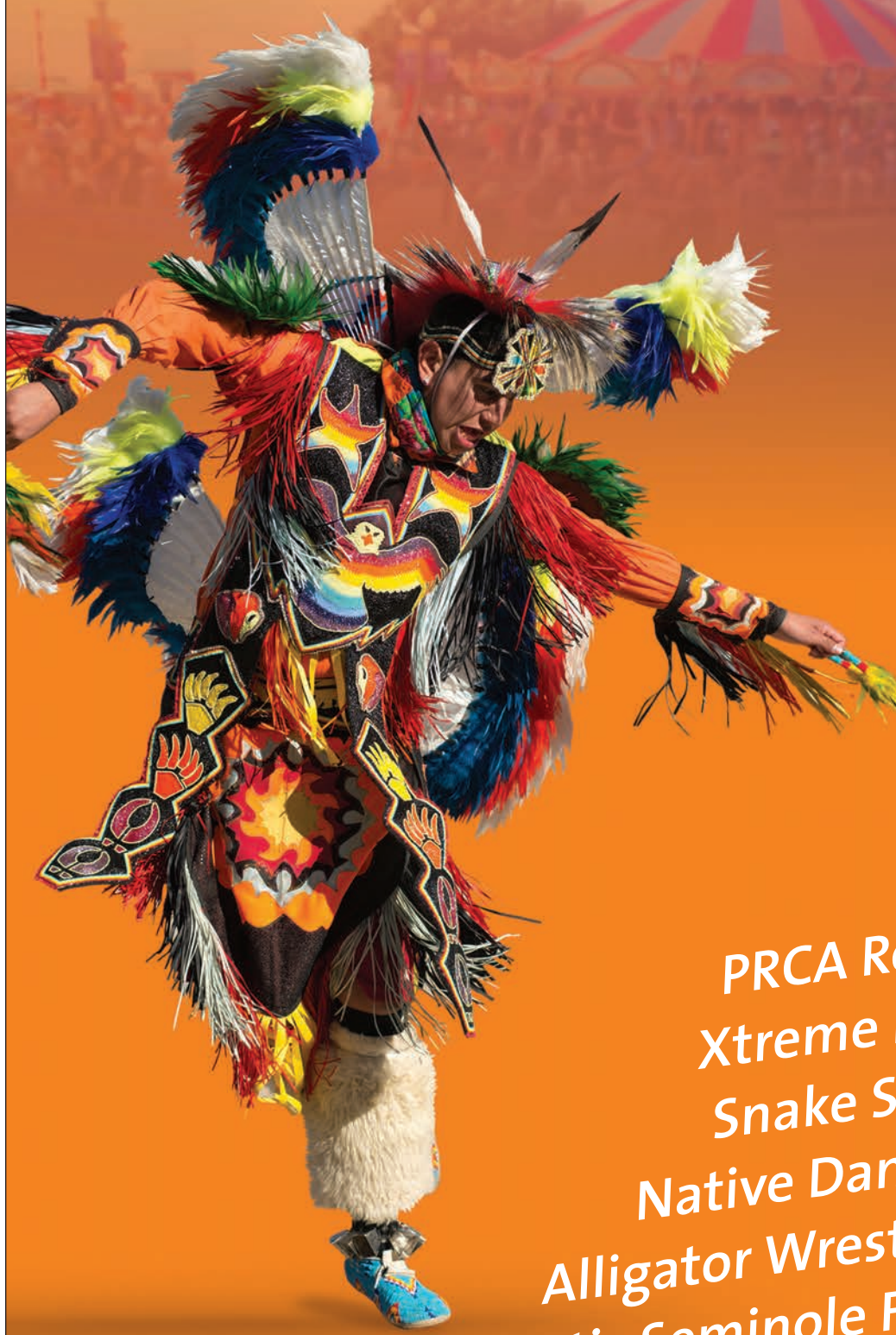
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Sports



Hollywood's Ethan Cypress making best of senior year

Hollywood Hills High School standout leads team in scoring

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

COOPER CITY — Before his team faced Cooper City in a district boys basketball game, Hollywood Hills coach Leo Green sat in the bleachers and described new addition Ethan Cypress as being an "all-around player."

Ethan proceeded to back up his coach's description with an all-around solid performance that helped Hollywood Hills post a 67-51 win Dec. 8 at Cooper City High School. The victory was the third in a row for Hollywood Hills and another sign the team was headed in the right direction after it lost six straight to open the season.

Hollywood Hills received a boost this year when Ethan decided he wanted to spend his senior year close to home on the Hollywood Reservation.

"He's fit in very well. He brings leadership to the team and a very calm demeanor," Green said.

The adjustment has been smooth for Ethan, a shooting guard/small forward who spent his junior year at Montverde Academy near Orlando. With one game left before the holiday break, Ethan led Hollywood Hills in scoring with 15.3 points per game. His best games point-wise came against two of Hollywood Hills' toughest foes: McArthur and Cypress Bay. Ethan scored a season-high 23 points in each game. He also dropped 21 in a win against Western.

"Being this is my last year, it's going pretty good," Ethan said.

A potpourri of Ethan's skills was displayed in Cooper City. From shooting to quickness to passing to defense, Ethan produced highlights in each phase.

His back-to-back baskets — including a 3-pointer — put Hollywood Hills in front early, 10-9.

In the second quarter, he faked out a defender on the way to a layup with a lightning-quick move done so impressively that it riled up fans on both sides of the court.

Cooper City could have trimmed its deficit to seven with less than three minutes left in the game, but Ethan made a steal in the defensive zone that led to a layup by Deron



Hollywood Hills senior Ethan Cypress brings the ball up court Dec. 8 in a district game against host Cooper City.

Kevin Johnson

Fulwood and an 11-point cushion.

With 90 seconds left, Ethan made a nifty no-look pass — ala DeForest Carter — for an easy hoop by London Williams that sealed the victory.

Following in the footsteps of Carter — who starred at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University — is a goal Ethan hopes to achieve.

"DeForest played college ball for four years and I really want to do that, too," Ethan said. "I've played against him in some men's tournaments on the reservation and it made

me more aware of my game and made me stronger."

Similar to the way Carter played in college, Ethan plays with an abundance of court awareness.

"He's a bright spot for our team," Green said. "I tell him all the time he's too unselfish because of how good of a player he is. He doesn't hog the ball; he's willing to pass it. He picks his time to shine."

Ethan, the son of Katherine and Jason Cypress, doesn't have a preference where he

plays in college, as long as he plays.

"If I get the opportunity to play anywhere, I'll go play. I want to play college basketball," he said.

This season Ethan is making up for some lost time. His first two years of high school were hampered by an injury. Being healthy and back home are two reasons why he's enjoying his senior year so much.

"I love playing in front of my family and

♦ See ETHAN CYPRESS on page 4C

Duelle Gore earns athlete of the week honor

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

Haskell Indian Nations University men's basketball guard/forward Duelle Gore was named the Association of Independent Institutions Athlete of the Week following his 33-point performance in a 94-83 win Dec. 12 against William Woods University in Lawrence, Kansas.

Gore, from the Brighton Reservation, hit 10 of 16 shots from the field and made 11 of 12 free throws. Gore also grabbed six rebounds and dished out five assists.

"Duelle has worked hard all year and is a leader on the court for us," said Haskell coach Matthew Downing on the school's website. "He's so deserving of the award and his performance on [Dec. 12] was amazing to watch."

Putting up big numbers is nothing new for Gore, who leads the team in several categories. The 6-foot-5, 215-pound senior reached the holiday break as Haskell's leading scorer with an average of 17.2 points per game.

Through 12 games, Gore hit double digits nine times, including a game-high 26 points against Fort Lewis College, an NCAA Division II team in Colorado. Gore sank 23 points against Colorado School of Mines and Baker University.

Gore also leads the squad in assists (41), rebounds (93), steals (18), 3-pointers (29) and is the co-leader in blocks (11).

Haskell, an NAIA Division II independent, encountered a slow start to the season with five straight losses before the Fighting Indians notched consecutive wins against McPherson and Bethel in mid-November. With 15 games left in its regular season, Haskell (3-9) will return to the court Jan. 2 to face Ottawa.

Maleah Isaac scores 12 in Belhaven victory

Duelle Gore wasn't the only Seminole who starred on the college courts Dec. 12. Maleah Isaac came off the bench to score a season-high 12 points for the Belhaven University women's basketball team in its 73-64 win against Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama.

Isaac was 5-of-7 from the field and 2-for-2 from the foul line. She also had three rebounds and two assists in 18 minutes.

Through six games as of Dec. 14, Isaac averaged 4.2 points and 12 minutes.

Belhaven reached the middle of December trying to rebound from a rough start. Belhaven dropped its first four games, but responded with back-to-back wins against Centenary College and Huntingdon.

Isaac is in her first season with the Jackson, Mississippi school. She played two years for Copiah-Lincoln Community College.

Arek Jumper's bowling career on a roll

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

SUNRISE — Just like the balls he zips down lanes, Arek Jumper's bowling resume is gaining momentum.

From delivering strikes at national tournaments in Chicago and Las Vegas to winning a youth state championship to serving as vice president of a bowling league, the 16-year-old from the Hollywood Reservation continues to excel in a sport he has experienced almost all his life.

"He grew up in the bowling alley. He used to watch us bowl," said Arek's mother, Tonya Jumper, while recalling those early days when the Jumper family — including Arek's father, Andre Jumper, and grandfather David Jumper — bowled in Davie at the Don Carter alley, now called SpareZ. "He was always in the bowling alley."

More than a decade later, Arek still spends a good chunk of his time in bowling alleys while carrying aspirations to play collegiately and professionally. After classes at Hollywood Hills High School, he practices

about five days a week, usually at AMF Pembroke Pines Lanes; Sunday afternoons he bowls in the Cecil Johns Youth Bowling League at AMF; and Wednesday nights he bowls and is second in command in the Strikers Youth Sport Bowling League at the Strikers Family Sportscenter in Sunrise.

"I make sure the league is run smoothly and make sure there is nothing going on between the bowlers, and if the president is not here, I've got to take charge of the league," Arek explained about his responsibilities in a league that helped land him in Chicago for

the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) Junior Gold Championships in July.

By finishing in first place in one of the Strikers quarterly seasons, Arek punched his ticket to the Windy City, where he competed with more than 3,000 youth bowlers. Arek didn't advance past the three qualifying rounds in the 20U division, but he hopes to earn another shot in Junior Gold next summer in Indianapolis.

Bowling on big stages is not new to Arek, who has competed in an annual Native American tournament in Las Vegas for several years. In 2013, he won a USBC Florida state youth championship with Brent Frank, Jonathan Frank and Justin Frank.

Accomplishments aside, Arek said the camaraderie that emerges from competitions is gratifying.

"Whenever you go to tournaments, you get to meet new bowlers and new friends. It's not like the same people every time," he said. "I've met (Native) bowlers from California, Oregon, Washington."

Similar to just about every serious bowler, Arek would like to light up the scoreboard with a perfect 300 someday. The closest he's come to the magical mark was a 276 in practice a couple years ago. In June, he bowled a 641 for three games in the Strikers league, which included a 254 in the middle game.

When he picks up his 15-pound Storm Hy-Road ball and eyes the 10 pins 60 feet away, Arek employs a simple strategy.

"Just take your time. If you bowl a bad shot, don't let it get to your head. Keep bowling," he said.

Always eager to learn and improve his game, Arek often exchanges advice with his grandfather when they bowl together.

"Me and him always give each other pointers on how to bowl better games," Arek said.

Arek also looks for tips while watching pro bowlers on TV. His favorite pro is Jason Belmonte.

Becoming a pro bowler is a future goal of Arek, who has no regrets that as a youngster he was more intrigued with a bowling ball rather than a football or baseball.

"I didn't want to be in the hot sun playing those other sports," he said.



Arek Jumper, 16, of Hollywood, warms up Dec. 9 prior to bowling in the Strikers Youth Sport Bowling League in Sunrise.

Kevin Johnson

Hollywood to host NASA basketball

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

HOLLYWOOD — Basketball and beaches are expected to draw hundreds of players to Hollywood for the annual Native American Sports Association (NASA) basketball tournament.

The tournament for ages 18 and up from Tribes in the Southeast and Northeast runs Jan. 15-16.

Joe Collins, Hollywood Recreation site manager, said the nearby beaches are "a big draw" in the middle of the winter for the visiting players from colder climates.

"We definitely expect 30-plus (teams)," he said.

Collins and Salina Dorgan, tribalwide recreation project coordinator, are organizing the tournament that will feature Seminoles and Miccosukees from Florida, Poarch Creeks from Alabama, Choctaws from Mississippi, Senecas from New York and Cherokees from North Carolina.

When the Seminole Tribe last hosted the tournament in 2013, nearly 30 teams filled what is now known as the Classic Gym on the Hollywood Reservation and the David Posnack Jewish Community Center's gym in Davie. Since then, the Tribe has erected the Howard Tiger Recreation Center whose gym will host a majority of the games along with Classic Gym.

Collins said depending on the number of registered teams, an off-reservation site might be needed.

Teams will vie for championships in men's and women's brackets and the legends divisions for ages 40 and older.



Native Pride guard DeForest Carter dribbles past a Miami Midnites defender during an American Basketball Association game Dec. 9 at Broward College in Davie. Carter, a former star for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, scored 11 points in the Pride's 130-119 loss.

Native pro basketball team debuts with plenty of Pride

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

DAVIE — Ever since the first pieces of a professional all-Native American pro basketball team were being assembled this spring, Federico Brodsky has talked about making a positive impact on the community.

As Brodsky sat in the stands at Broward College in Davie with about 100 spectators Dec. 9, a sense of community filled the gymnasium to watch the Native Pride — with all Native American players — play its fourth game.

In a corner of the gym to Brodsky's right, wives of the tribal players held a bake sale to raise money for team uniforms. To his left, Seminole youngsters cheered for the Pride as they battled the Miami Midnites.

"The Recreation Department from Hollywood brought about 25 kids. That's great. That's what we want to do, impact the community," said Brodsky, the Pride's co-owner. "Everybody's chipping in. The whole idea is to make an impact in the Native American community."

The aptly named Pride began practicing in the summer and debuted Nov. 21 with a 121-116 loss to South Florida Gold, one of the top-ranked squads in the 90-plus

team American Basketball Association. The Pride's 27-game regular season ABA schedule runs until mid-March. The league features teams from coast-to-coast and Canada. The Pride's reach extends well beyond Broward County.

"We're playing for all the Indian Country. We're all Natives. One nation," said Jerome Davis, who comprises the team's Seminole Tribe of Florida contingent with DeForest Carter, Corey Saunders and Doug Saunders.

Pride players represent more than 10 Tribes. Six-foot-5 forward Kevin Hanks, from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, had enough energy left after the grueling game to hoist his young daughters in his arms.

"We're playing for our whole community," Hanks said. "There's a whole (group) of Native Americans out there that don't get to show their talent off. We're giving ourselves an opportunity for them to come out and do it, too."

Despite 50 points from smooth-shooting Ronnie Battle, a guard from Comanche Nation in Oklahoma, the Pride fell to the Midnites, 130-119. Jess Heart, from Oglala Sioux Tribe in North Dakota, scored 20 points. Davis registered 13 points, eight assists and six rebounds, while Carter had 11 points and six rebounds.

The Pride features several players from Lords of the Plains and the Plainzmen teams that compete in tournaments throughout the country.

"With all the guys combined, this is probably the best Native team ever," said Jay Liotta, a Pride guard who runs Lords of the Plains. "You've got the top two Native American teams playing together, and we're starting to add in pieces from other guys across the United States to join us."

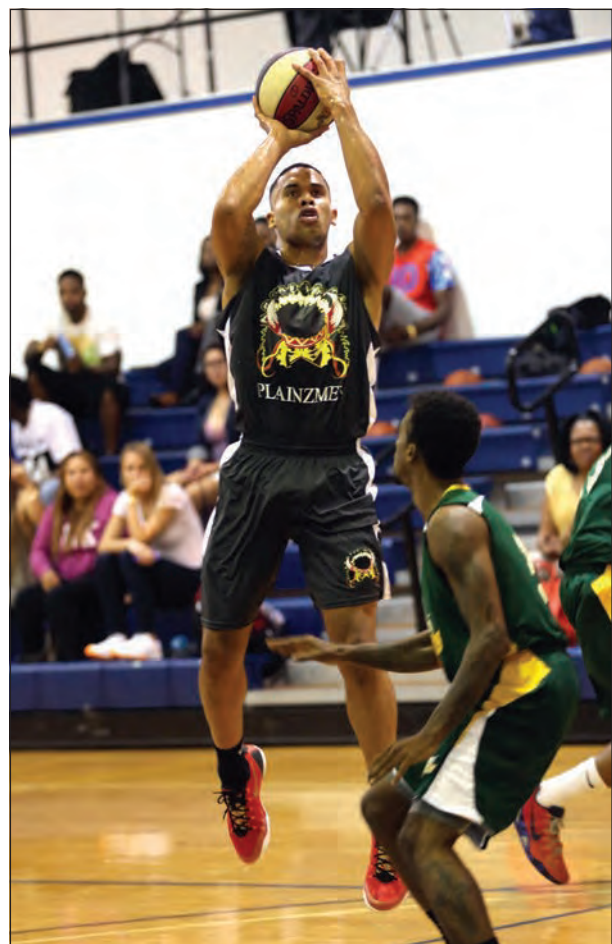
The Pride is coached by former Florida Memorial University head coach Kenny Bellinger.

As a newbie, the Pride is still a work in progress. The team is using the Plainzmen's uniforms until enough money is raised to buy its own. The team also does not have a permanent court in Broward County to call home.

"We're still homeless," Brodsky said. "We're still looking for sponsors and community help."

Even without its own uniforms and home, it's no surprise that the Pride plays with pride.

"They love the team. They love the idea, the concept," Brodsky said. "They play with heart and soul."



Native Pride guard Ronnie Battle lines up a shot against the Miami Midnites in an American Basketball Association game at Broward College in Davie. Battle scored 50 points, but the Pride fell to the Midnites, 130-119.

Big Ballers tourney draws players from throughout Indian Country

BY AARON TOMMIE
Contributing Writer

HOLLYWOOD — The two-day 11th annual Randall Huggins Memorial Big Ballers basketball tournament tipped off Dec. 4 as players from across Indian Country vied for a shot at being crowned champions while also honoring the late Randall Huggins.

Boisterous spectators filled the stands at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center and Classic Gym. Rap music blared through speakers during intermissions while the players prepared for games.

"There's a lot of good competition out here," said Joe Collins, Recreation site manager in Hollywood.

Using his own money, Tribal member Randall Huggins started the basketball tournament more than 15 years ago. After his passing in 2000, Randall's father, Norman Huggins, and other family members teamed up to continue the legacy that Randall left behind.

About 20 Native teams with eight-player rosters featured Seminoles and Miccosukees from Florida and players from as far as Arizona, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Canada. Average ages ranged from 23 to 27 years old.

"They've been showing love from day one," said Trail Liaison Norman Huggins when asked about players' participation and support.

The tournament also provides players with meals and other accommodations.

"We're known for our hospitality," Huggins said.

Next to the Classic Gym, Iona's Fry Bread supplied tournament attendees with euphoric aromas and mouth-watering foods and drinks. A fundraiser for a Bird Clan Tribal member featured homemade desserts.

Inside, Big Cypress Seminole Media Productions secretary Esther Gopher held her grandson while one of her daughters played. Young friends Quinlirya Wilson and Marcela Osceola also watched the games.

"It's fun. We're girls and we like to watch the women play," Osceola said.

"Yeah. Boys play ball. It's more interesting to see women [play]. You usually only see boys [play]," agreed Wilson.

Hollywood Councilman Chris Osceola, who spoke during an intermission, thanked the crowd and wished players good fortunes throughout the tournament.

After a one-year hiatus in 2014, the tournament returned in good shape and will continue next year, Norman Huggins said.

"Overall, [the tournament] went really good," he said. "We just want it to keep

getting bigger and better."

In the championship tilts, Lords of Plains captured the men's title, while the Lady Ballers won the women's crown.

Led by Ronnie Battle's 25 points, Lords of Plains outlasted Plainzmen, 80-68, in a championship clash that featured players on both sides from the American Basketball Association's Native Pride.

Battle set the tone early by making four 3-pointers in the first half. The champions also received 18 points from Milton Garner, 13 from Kallan Glasgow and 11 each from Jerome Davis and Craig Foster.

"It was a good tournament," said Lord of Plains' Jay Liotta. "There wasn't as many teams as there usually is, but it's always a good tournament to go to. It's one of the biggest ones and one of the toughest to win."

Jess Heart led the Plainzmen with 20 points.

In the women's title match, Mystee Dale scored a team-high 15 points as the Lady Ballers edged New Mexico's ABC. The Lady Ballers' victory was aided by Chantay Frazier (10 points), Jenna Plumley (9 points) and Katie Plumley (8 points).

ABC's Ashley Mitchell was unstoppable from beyond the arc. She made seven 3-pointers and finished with a game-high 31 points in one of the tournament's top performances.

Despite the loss, ABC departed in good spirits.

"Big ups to the Huggins family for a

great tourney once again," ABC's Autumn Monteau-Nabors wrote on her Facebook page.

Copy editor Kevin Johnson contributed to this report.



DeForest Carter, of New Breed, blocks a shot of a Weeknd Warriors player during preliminaries.



Players position themselves for a rebound Dec. 4 during the preliminary rounds of the 11th annual Big Ballers basketball tournament in Hollywood.



Defenders try to prevent a player from scoring as he dribbles the ball down the court Dec. 4 at the Howard Tiger Recreation Center in Hollywood.

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Small roster, big effort for Ahfachkee boys in basketball season opener

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BIG CYPRESS — The young lungs that belong to the energetic Ahfachkee School cheerleading squad did not quit. Neither did the five players they cheered for on opening night of the boys basketball season.

Despite playing with no substitutes, Ahfachkee enjoyed a productive offensive night Dec. 1 in a 79-41 loss to Ave Maria's Donahue Academy.

"They did way better than last year," said Ahfachkee coach O'Bryan White. "We put up 40 points this year. I don't think we had a total of more than 40 points for the whole season last year."

Unlike last year when it belonged to a district, Ahfachkee is playing as an independent with an abbreviated schedule that includes two games each against Donahue and Everglades City. Ahfachkee does not have a girls team this season.

Under the guidance of Cynthia Wilkes, 11 cheerleaders from grades one through four provided ample vocal support from the bleachers with a "We Will Rock You" chant and other tunes. They screamed when Ahfachkee made baskets and cringed when Donahue scored. In a corner concession stand, Horacio Smith's hot dogs proved to be a popular choice for spectators.

On the court, Ahfachkee's small team and short four-game season started on a positive note in the first quarter. Sixty seconds into the game, eighth-grade guard Ricky Garza dished a nifty pass to Ethan Balentine, who made a layup for the first points of the season.

Ricky sank a free throw that gave Ahfachkee a 3-0 lead.

The Ethan-Ricky connection was just getting warmed up. They shared point guard and shooting guard duties. The result: a combined 28 points, with Ethan's 16 leading the squad. Ricky's 12 points included a pair of 3-pointers for a team that almost didn't have enough players to field a squad this season.

"I'm glad we have a team," Ricky said. White said initially nine players came out for the team, but the number dwindled to five because of transfers and grades. No seniors are on the roster.

Ahafchkee also received a big night from 3-point sharpshooter Graysun Billie, whose hot hand from beyond the arc resulted in a trio of 3s.

"He loves the corner," White said. Troy Cantu, a 6-foot-1 center who is still growing, scored four points and battled Donahue's big players all night in the paint

along with assistance from Elijah Billie. While Donahue had four substitutes to give its starters breathers, Ahfachkee's vacant bench meant all five players played the entire 32 minutes.

"It's tough with five players," Elijah said, "but we did pretty good."

"Hard, tiring. No one to switch out with," said Troy, who opted to play basketball this year after the golf season never started in the fall. "They didn't have golf this year because there was no coach, so I decided to play this."

A pair of free throws late in the first quarter from Ethan knotted the game at 10-10 before Donahue shifted into a higher gear and reeled off 13 consecutive points behind a well-executed press that gave Ahfachkee inbound headaches.

"Their press is pretty good. I got tired because I kept running everywhere," Ricky said.

Before halftime, a coast-to-coast layup from Ethan brought Ahfachkee to within nine points at 34-25, but Donahue went on another surge to go up 45-25 at the break. The visitors from Collier County maintained a comfortable lead throughout the second half.

Even with the score out of reach, Ahfachkee continued to fight for rebounds and loose balls, right up to the waning seconds as Ethan and Troy made sure Donahue wouldn't depart with any easy points in the paint.

A decent scoring performance and playing a full game with determination left a good opening-night impression on White.

"They put a lot of effort in," said White, whose team's only other home game is scheduled for Jan. 14. "They surprised me, to be honest, because they don't hustle like that at practice."



Kevin Johnson

Ahafchkee center Troy Cantu battles for a ball Dec. 1 against Donahue Academy at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium.



Kevin Johnson

Ahafchkee guard Ethan Balentine goes for the rebound during Ahfachkee's season opener against Donahue Academy at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium on Big Cypress Reservation.



Kevin Johnson

Ahafchkee guard Ricky Garza drives to the hoop Dec. 1 in the team's season opener against Donahue Academy.

Pemayetv Emahakv boys reach holiday break undefeated

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

BRIGHTON — If the second half of the season is anything like the first half, the Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School boys basketball team will have a winter to remember.

PECS reached the holiday break with a 6-0 record with wins against Moore Haven, Yearling, Osceola, West Glades, Clewiston and LaBelle.

"For the most part we have played great middle school basketball," said PECS coach Kevin Jackson. "Even in the games we don't get our shots to fall, the kids have fought hard and found a way to win."

The perfect record remained intact Dec. 15 when Silas Madrigal scored 15 points — including a pair of 3-pointers — in a 38-29 win against LaBelle. Robert Harris netted nine points and blocked five shots. Robert's brother Donovan Harris scored six points, and Jaylen Baker added four points.

In a 43-34 win against Clewiston Dec. 9, Silas (15 points) and Robert (10 points) paced a balanced attack.

"Jaylen Baker showed a lot of hustle making several steals and scoring eight points. Kamani Smith was aggressive on the boards and scored seven points," Jackson said.

PECS' closest victory came Dec. 7 when the Seminoles edged Osceola, 38-35. Robert was a force at both ends with 12 points, more than 10 rebounds and a few crucial blocks in the fourth quarter. Late in the game, Donovan hit two free throws that gave PECS the lead. Silas (11 points) preserved the victory with two free throws in the waning seconds.

Jaylen and Kamani teamed up for a dominating performance in a win against Yearling. Jaylen scored nine points, pulled down 11 rebounds and made seven steals. Kamani was also a force on the boards with 14 rebounds to go along with nine points. Donovan and Alex Valdes each scored 10 points. Robert snagged 11 rebounds. Silas contributed six points and four steals.

PECS returns to action Jan. 7 at LaBelle for the start of the final six-game stretch that includes the home finale Jan. 19.

In junior varsity games Dec. 5, PECS' white team thumped Yearling, 51-25. Ramone Baker led the team with 11 points. Dakoya Nunez, Alex Armstrong and Jayton Baker each scored 10 points and Tavis Jumper scored seven points. In the second game, PECS' black team lost to Osceola, 30-16. The black team was led by Dathen Garcia with six points.

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Kevin Johnson

Hollywood Hills senior Ethan Cypress soars between Cooper City defenders.



Kevin Johnson

After driving to the lane, Ethan Cypress dishes the ball to a Hollywood Hills teammate.

◆ **ETHAN CYPRESS**
From page 1C

friends. They root for me to do good things in my career. I'm grateful for that," Ethan said.

In June, Ethan played for the Tribe at the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI) in Phoenix.

"We went pretty far. We were hoping to win, but we got third place out of 87 teams. It was a great experience playing against

other Tribes," he said.

Ethan plans to return to NABI in 2016, but first he and his Hollywood Hills teammates hope to end a lengthy drought. Hollywood Hills hasn't advanced to the state regional playoffs since 2004. With a 2-1 district record, they're in decent shape to qualify for the Class 7A-District 15 playoffs, where they would have to win one game to move on to regionals.

"That's our main goal, going far, win as many games as we can, make it to playoffs and hopefully states," Ethan said.



Kevin Johnson

Ethan Cypress tries to get his hands on a Cooper City shot Dec. 8 during a game at Cooper City High School. Ethan, in his first season at the school, is the team's leading scorer.

Hollywood sisters team up to lead Heritage JV team

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

PLANTATION — Thanks in large part to the Stubbs sisters, American Heritage School's junior varsity girls basketball team exceeded expectations this season.

"We were supposed to have a losing season this year, and we're 6-2," Heritage coach Taylor Singery said with one game left in the season.

Tiana Stubbs and her younger sister — by 11 months — December Stubbs only started playing basketball about five years ago, but the rapid ascension by the eighth-graders from the Hollywood Reservation was evident this year as they formed a dynamic duo in their first season at Heritage.

"They play well together. Their chemistry is insane," Singery said.

At 5-foot-9, Tiana handles the power forward job while December, who is a bit shorter, runs the offense as the point guard.

"Tiana does a really good job rebounding, getting it out to her sister and running the court, and then December does a really good job looking for her," Singery said.

That scenario played often in Heritage's final home game Dec. 14 against Cardinal Gibbons. Time after time, Tiana snagged defensive rebounds and fed December, who used her speed and ball-handling skills to lead fast breaks that culminated with scoring chances for her sister.

"Usually I bring it down to the right and she goes down the left for the layup and I throw it to her, and she makes it," December said.

Tiana scored a game-high 20 points, which included a pair of 3-point plays that helped keep the game close. Heritage only had one bench player compared to seven for Gibbons.

Even though there were no subs for the Stubbs, the sisters combined to score all but four of their team's points in a 38-32 loss.

Tiana started racking up points as soon as she put on Heritage's white and black jersey for the first time. She scored 30 points in her debut. She notched 21 points in a win against Pine Crest that also featured 16 points from December.

The sisters' solid season earned them temporary promotions to varsity, where they made the most of their chances. In a varsity game Dec. 8 against Pompano Beach, Tiana scored 10 points and December contributed four points as Heritage cruised to a lopsided victory.

Seeing their daughters' names in box scores in the Sun-Sentinel newspaper the

following day brought smiles to Glenardo and Victoria Stubbs, who have watched Tiana and December fall in love with the sport.

"They started [playing] at home," Glenardo said. "They got so interested in it, they started going to the gym."

By the time the girls arrived in Plantation this fall, they had plenty of playing experience, having suited up for Seminole teams in NAYO, NABI and other Native tournaments.

"I'm so proud of them. They're making something of themselves," Glenardo said. "I'm encouraging them with their education because you need education and talent in order to achieve in college and then professionally."

If they want to attain their dreams of playing in college and the WNBA, Tiana and December realize there's plenty of hard work involved. That's why when their JV practices end, they head to the Howard Tiger Recreation Center for additional workouts.

As soon as Heritage's JV season ended before the Christmas break, Tiana and December were expected to be brought up to varsity for the remainder of its season. Singery said it's just a matter of time before the sisters have a permanent home on the varsity squad.

"They're going to do great," Singery said.



Kevin Johnson

American Heritage eighth-grader Tiana Stubbs vies for the tip at the start of the Patriots' girls junior varsity basketball game against Cardinal Gibbons Dec. 14.



Kevin Johnson

American Heritage eighth-grader December Stubbs runs the girls junior varsity offense as the point guard during a game against Cardinal Gibbons at American Heritage School in Plantation.

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Seminoles play vital roles for Okeechobee, Moore Haven High girls basketball teams

Cheyenne Nunez, Lahna Baker help lead Brahmans to best start since 2009

BY KEVIN JOHNSON
Copy Editor

MOORE HAVEN — Despite Tyra Baker dominating the inside game early and Sydnee Cypress finding a hot shooting touch from outside late, Moore Haven could not derail a resurgent Okeechobee girls basketball squad in the midst of its best season in five years.

Cheyenne Nunez and Lahna Baker ran the offense as Okeechobee pulled away from Moore Haven for a 52-37 win Dec. 11 at Moore Haven High School. With an 11-4 record as of late December, the Brahmans are all but assured of posting their first winning record since the 2009-10 season.

"This year we actually listen to what the plays are; we jell together," said Cheyenne, who scored 13 points, which included a pair of 3-pointers. "This is the year we finally got all the missing pieces put together and we're doing really good."

After playing for Lake Placid last season, Lahna joined Okeechobee this year to form a solid 1-2 punch with Cheyenne as both senior starters alternate duties between point guard and shooting guard. Familiarity was never an issue because they were teammates in NAYO tournaments.

"I was pretty excited when I heard she was coming to Okeechobee," Cheyenne said. "Me and Lahna work very well together. We know how to read each other. I know her like the back of my hand and she knows me like the back of her hand. We're like two peas in a pod."

Those peas — along with the addition of inside players with size — have helped Okeechobee sprout more offense. Last year the team hit the 40-point mark in seven games; this season, that mark was reached in all the team's first 12 games with another dozen games left in the regular season.

Cheyenne and Lahna combined for six of Okeechobee's 18 points as the Brahmans built an eight-point lead at the end of the first quarter against Moore Haven. When Moore Haven trimmed a 20-point deficit to 13 in the fourth quarter, Cheyenne responded by sinking the final dagger into the Terriers' comeback hopes with a 3-pointer.

Cheyenne and Lahna bring similar characteristics to the court.

"We're both aggressive; we're both athletic; we're both so ready to play," said Cheyenne, who scored 22 points in a late November win against Jensen Beach. "Sometimes we butt heads, then we'll get over it. We work perfect together."

"They're doing awesome," said Okeechobee coach Joseph Smith. "They've really brought talent to the team. They're leaders on the court. They're real good student-athletes in the classroom. I couldn't ask for anything else with those girls. They wear their jersey with pride."

In a couple months, that pride will shift to the softball field.

"I'm sure coach Mary (Huff) is thrilled to have (Lahna) there, too," Cheyenne said. "I'm pretty excited because she'll probably be catching and I'll be playing third base. The catcher and third have to talk a lot, literally like best friends. I'm excited because that will work perfect for us."

As for basketball, the vastly improved Brahmans hope to carry a strong regular season into the playoffs. The team has not advanced past the district tournament since 1989, long before any of the current players were born.

"This year districts should be interesting," Cheyenne said. "We want to go far."

Ditto in Moore Haven, where the girls have reached regionals two years in a row but face the daunting challenge of being a public school team in a district loaded with private schools. The Terriers' plight rests squarely on



Moore Haven junior guard Sydnee Cypress dribbles the ball near midcourt while guarded by Okeechobee senior Cheyenne Nunez during a game Dec. 11 at Moore Haven High School.

"They're leaders on the court. They're real good student-athletes in the classroom. I couldn't ask for anything else with those girls."

— Okeechobee coach Joseph Smith on Cheyenne Nunez and Lahna Baker

the shoulders of Seminole guards Sunni Bearden, Sydnee Cypress, Alicia Fudge, Aleina Micco and Caroline Sweat, and center Tyra Baker accounting for more than half the 11-player roster.

"They're good ballplayers. There are things they have to work on, but they're a big help for us," said Moore Haven coach Vincent Lewis, whose club fell to 4-5 with the loss to Okeechobee.

Tyra is the lone senior among the Seminole; the rest should be back next year.

"We're young. I'm happy about that," Lewis said.

Experience paved the way early against Okeechobee. Tyra, who scored a season-high 14 points three days earlier, was a force in the paint at both ends. She won battles for rebounds and scored six points in the first quarter on her way to finishing with nine.

Sydnee and Alicia provided glimpses of what Terrier fans can expect from their backcourt for the remaining season and next. The duo converted give-and-goes with each other that helped keep Moore Haven close in the first half.

With her sister and former Moore Haven standout Darlah Cypress in the stands, Sydnee displayed smooth shooting by hitting a bevy of short, mid and long jump shots in the second half on her way to a team-high 16 points.

"Sydnee is a tremendous leader for us," Lewis said.

Sydnee, who twice scored 18 points in games in the first half of the season, is the team's only junior. Even younger contributions come from Sunni, a sophomore, and the freshmen trio of Alicia, Aleina and Caroline.

Similar to Lahna in Okeechobee, Alicia has made an immediate impact with her new team since transferring this year from Admiral Farragut in St. Petersburg.

"She's real good," Lewis said. "She's still learning the game. She gets a little frustrated with herself. She's hard on herself and when she does that, she loses herself during the game at times. If we can keep her focused, she's going to be great."

Sunni missed the Okeechobee game because of illness, and the team missed her.

"The record doesn't show how good we are. We're a pretty good team," Lewis said. "We're much better when Sunni is playing. She makes it work. They feel more comfortable with their passes. It builds confidence with the whole team when Sunni is in there. She's the cornerstone for our team."

As of Dec. 13, Sydnee led the team in scoring with an average of 11.1 points per game, followed by Sunni (10), and Alicia and Caroline (8 each).

"It's going good," Sydnee said. "We're starting to work better as a team and starting to shoot a lot better."



Moore Haven freshman guard Alicia Fudge tries to move past Okeechobee senior Cheyenne Nunez during a game at Moore Haven High School.



Okeechobee senior Lahna Baker soars through the air while guarded by Moore Haven freshman Alicia Fudge during a game at Moore Haven.

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The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should be based solely upon advertisement. Guy J. Seligman worked as a Certified Legal Intern in both the State Attorney and Public Defenders offices in Dade and Broward County; he has been in private practice for 16 years. He graduated from Nova Southeastern University Law School in 1987, and was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1988.

Announcements



BIG CYPRESS REZ RALLY REGISTER NOW!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16TH

Online Registration: www.semtribe.com/rezrally

Registration deadline, Tuesday, January 12th, 2016 at 12:00pm

Contact your local team captains:

- Big Cypress: Nadine Bowers, Marlin Miller, Cathy Cypress, Alvin Buster Jr.
- Brighton/Tampa: Joyce Jumper, Grace Koontz, Lewis Gopher, Bridgette Koontz
- Immokalee/Naples: Amy Yzaguirre, Cecilia Martinez, Juanita Martinez, Marylou Alvarado,
- Hollywood/ Ft. Pierce/ Trail: Jo North, Bobby Frank, Francine Osceola, Diane Buster

Poetry by Elgin Jumper

BEGIN

within the visual
 You see
 ART! - hin-chic-sha
 Alternate from August brush
 to August pen
 and back again
 and chrome words crawl
 I blitzkrieg then crying rejoicing
 across prismatic borders
 of spectrum song
 of lovely lady lullabies
 in the early dawn
 Mid flight
 Sweet and Wondrous
 I have
 wings now Me a
 Permanent Green Light
 to fly by twilight reciting
 Do you see ? Words
 On fragments of paper
 Painting pictures
 Of multiple views
 Simultaneously

--Elgin Jumper, 11/29/15

**NATIVE AMERICANS
 in OUTER SPACE**

O I sing
 a Native Song
 of Native Americans
 in Outer Space !!
 Hey
 How come
 Why come
 We never see
 ever see
 Native Americans
 in Outer Space
 without a trace
 O do Imagine please
 The starlight warrior
 excelling at war
 even in deep space
 All right
 Star fight
 Stardust
 Warpaint Glitter
 Stars aloft
 Mm-hmm

On-Nug-Shin
 Hin-chun-gul-li

((smile))

--Elgin Jumper, 11/29/15

SEE

I wish
 text messages
 to your spirit now
 postings to your soul
 (to be of service)
 (to boost morale)
 crying out
 in the wilderness
 For I wish
 always never
 disrupt you
 in the ever-changing
 earth
 of your poetry
 never always
 enchant me
 always never
 and forever and ever
 hither and thither
 for a spell
 and so,
 fare thee well

--Elgin Jumper, 11/29/15

O PAINT

in a
 pleasant sunlight
 if golden dream
 right, my love,
 and capture
 Light
 accentuated
 for effect
 as wildflowers appear
 in a painting
 within a painting
 and seasons changing
 you and I
 embracing

--Elgin Jumper, 11/29/15



Photos courtesy of Elgin Jumper
 Pictured is a drawing Elgin Jumper is working on in classical drawing class at Nilda Comas' art studio in Fort Lauderdale. The study is rendered in charcoal and is a detail of Michelangelo's 'David.' Jumper will also incorporate Michelangelo's poetry into the drawing.

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 Place: Big Cypress
 Conference Room 113

Please contact your local K-12 Advisor to register by January 15th.

Are you ready