

IMMOKALEE BULLETIN

Serving Immokalee, Ave Maria and Eastern Collier County

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To Submit News

The Immokalee Bulletin welcomes submissions from its readers. Opinions, calendar items, story ideas and photographs are welcome. Call (239) 657-6000 to reach our newsroom. The deadline for all news items is 11 a.m. on Monday prior to the following Thursday's publication.

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Our Purpose...

The Immokalee Bulletin is published by Independent Newspapers of Florida. Independent is owned by a unique trust that enables this newspaper to pursue a mission of journalistic service to the citizens of the community. Since no dividends are paid, the company is able to thrive on profit margins below industry standards. All after-tax surpluses are reinvested in Independent's mission of journalistic service, commitment to the ideals of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and support of the community's deliberation of public issues.

We Pledge...

- To operate this newspaper as a public trust
- To help our community become a better place to live and work, through our dedication to conscientious journalism.
- To provide the information citizens need to make their own intelligent decisions about public issues.
- To report the news with honesty, accuracy, purposeful neutrality, fairness, objectivity, fearlessness and compassion.
- To use our opinion pages to facilitate community debate, not to dominate it with our own opinions.
- To disclose our own conflicts of interest or potential conflicts to our readers.
- To correct our errors and to give each correction the prominence it deserves.
- To provide a right to reply to those we write about.
- To treat people with courtesy, respect and compassion.

Masthead photo courtesy of Waddy Thompson
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FEMA

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order to press them for information on the delivery of those trailers. Yet, very next day Director Summers stated in an email that "FEMA's on-site housing coordinator, Donna Weise would be arriving on Thursday, October 12 and was slated to meet with County Emergency Management officials."

He also stated that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers should complete its assessment of available commercial travel trailer or mobile home pads within the next few days. These steps seem to allude to the conclusion that trailers or manufactured homes were never originally ready for staging at the Immokalee Airport by October 4 as residents in dire need were promised and hoped for.

The confusion about when FEMA trailers were anticipated to arrive spread throughout the county. Residents in one east Naples mobile home park were told by another County Commissioner to expect the arrival and placement of trailers in their park beginning Saturday, October 7.

Residents in that neighborhood started an organized effort to bring in volunteers along with food and supplies to help their neighbors get established in their temporary homes that never came.

Even if Collier County residents register for temporary housing, FEMA may only pro-

vide travel trailers or manufactured homes if the verified loss of value is greater than \$16,800 in an owner-occupied residence according to Director Summers. If they do not meet that dollar-value threshold, residents may have to seek alternative methods for assistance.

One of those resources is the SHIP program. The Collier County Board of Commissioners approved the use of State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funds to provide disaster relief to those who qualify. Currently, a limited pool of funds is available based on varying income levels. From now until October 18, Immokalee residents can apply for assistance through the program at the Roberts Center located at 905 Roberts Avenue West.

Collier County's Office of Business & Economic Development is also offering assistance to small businesses that suffered physical or economical damage related to Hurricane Irma through the use of interest-free loans. The deadline for applications is October 31. However, the EDO has stated that they are unable to set up a temporary location in Immokalee due to staffing issues and the lack of a feasible facility for which to hold a public meeting. For now, the EDO is offering this assistance at the Naples Accelerator located on Kraft Road just off of Pine Ridge Road.

A request was made to Collier County Emergency Management to find out how the information was released early which

alluded to the delivery of FEMA trailers being on Saturday, October 7 and where that information originated from.

Thus far, an answer to that question has not been provided. Instead, Director Summers reminded residents to register for assistance through FEMA as that is the only way residents are selected to receive housing assistance.

Several requests were also submitted to Governor Rick Scott's office for comment related to the miscommunication and lack of FEMA trailers. Thus far, the Governor has not returned the request for comment.

On Tuesday, October 17, FEMA backtracked on their original statement and notified the public that temporary housing trailers were starting to roll into Collier County. In fact, as of Wednesday, ten FEMA trailers had been delivered in Collier County according to Mike Wade, Media Relations Manager with FEMA.

"FEMA has placed 10 trailers in a mobile home park in Naples," Mr. Wade said. FEMA is currently working to deliver additional trailers to the remaining 56 families in need that FEMA has identified.

However, the confusion remains on just how many trailers FEMA will deliver as the county has said over 200 trailers were being brought in and FEMA is saying only 56 families have been identified. It is not known when or if any of those future deliveries will be for Immokalee families.

Debris

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areas were not immediately available due to flooding caused not only by the storm, but also by the historic rains we experienced through the summer.

- Low wires: Contractors are still experiencing delays getting into some areas due to low hanging wires.

As of close of business on Tuesday, October 10, a total of 399,714 cubic yards of debris had been collected. While debris collection began in the hardest hit areas including; Chokoloskee, Everglades City, Copeland, Goodland and Immokalee, AshBritt cur-

rently has 108 debris units collecting debris throughout the county.

Storm-related yard waste should be separated from construction/demolition debris, including furniture and appliances. Do not put yard waste in plastic bags. The yard waste is being ground into mulch and plastic cannot be in the mulch. When placing yard waste curbside, avoid blocking the road, driveways, sidewalks (especially near schools), mailboxes, water meters, backflow prevention devices, fire hydrants and utility poles. The debris will be collected using claw trucks that require room to maneuver. Placing debris pile to close to other objects could result in property damage. Do not block storm drains or swales with debris.

Students First

In our final edition of "Meet the Principal," we'll introduce you to Village Oaks Elementary School (VOE) principal Renee Hanson.

Tell us a little about yourself: I have worked for CCPS for approximately 18 years. I have served as a classroom teacher, instructional resource teacher, media specialist, assistant principal, and principal. During my years with the district, I have also worked as building technology coordinator, webmaster, and yearbook advisor. I have two children, Brianna, age 27, and Tyler, age 23, that grew up in Collier County and received their schooling through the Collier County Public School District.

What are you most looking forward to this school year? Making new con-

nections with our VOE Panther Family and watching our student's progress.

What is the most challenging part of your position? I don't really look at things as challenges but mere obstacles that we need to continuously work to figure out the

best way to tackle.

What are you hoping to achieve at your school this year? I hope to continue to support our school and the families connected with our school every way I can think of. I hope to support our teachers as they work hard to provide standards-based instruction for our students and then I hope to see our students' shining success stories.

Immokalee Peace Fair

The Shelter for Abused Women & Children will recognize National Domestic Violence Awareness Month with its annual Peace Fair from 3-6 p.m., Monday, Oct. 23, at the Collier County Immokalee Sports Complex, 505 Escambia St. in Immokalee.

"The Peace Fair is an annual highlight for our Immokalee Outreach Office," said Shelter CEO Linda Oberhaus. "In addition to bringing the community together for some family-friendly fun, this event embodies our mission to prevent, protect and prevail over domestic violence through advocacy, empowerment and social change."

Activities include children's games, entertainment, food, and prizes as well as information booths hosted by partner agencies. For more information, call The Shelter's Immokalee Outreach office at 239-657-5700.