

IMMOKALEE BULLETIN

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Submitted photo/Avow

Love is a hula hoop and a smile

Aniah Posada, 3 (front) and her sister Aliyana, 5, take part in the hula hoop event during the Immokalee Children's Fair, Oct. 26. The event as sponsored by The Shelter for Abused Women & Children. See more photos on Page 5.



Butterflies signify lost loved ones

Light, bright and fluttery - butterflies always make people feel good. Perhaps that's one reason why crowds of people came to the Immokalee Airport October 17 to see the beautiful creatures and enjoy the afternoon.

Live butterflies were released in memory of loved ones at the Immokalee Airport Park. It was the third annual Butterfly Release event held by Avow. Members of the Immokalee community submitted names of loved ones for the ceremony.

Along with a live butterfly exhibit, children's activities and baked goods there were inspirational readings, music and the public reading of names of loved ones being honored. Avow named the 2015 Immokalee Butterfly - an award that recognizes individuals who serve as role models, exemplify car-

ing and compassion, and uplift and advance the lives of Immokalee residents. The Compassionate Caregiver awards went to:

Ellen Cordoba, nurse at Marion E. Fether and Paul Midney, diabetes nurse educator at Marion E. Fether.

Upon being notified of this recognition Ellen graciously acknowledged her colleagues and patients as her driving force in providing the best possible care to individuals with limited access to medical care. A former patient and provider described Ellen as a selfless individual who is always willing to go above and beyond for her patients.

Paul's colleagues and patients speak of his devotion and commitment to improving the lives of those living in the Immokalee community.

At the conclusion of the memorial service, the exhibit tent was opened to allow the butterflies to take flight.

Avow was founded in 1983 as Collier County's original, nonprofit hospice. Today, Avow's nonprofit companies provide palliative care consultations for adults facing chronic or serious illness, hospice care and bereavement support services for children and adults. To learn more about the scope of services provided by Avow, call 239-261-4404 or visit avowcares.org.

See photos on Page 4.

Immokalee Marine begins his life vision of service

by **Patty Brant**
Immokalee Bulletin

Immokalee has a lot of young people to be proud of. Great students, athletes - young people who are already making a difference in their lives and in their hometown.

One such young man, Hernan Villa, just 18 years old and a 2015 graduate of Immokalee High School.

He is also a United States Marine. Pfc. Villa recently graduated from Marine Corps basic training in Parris Island, South Carolina and cut his teeth on the military life. Home on leave for a time, he returned to duty last Monday.

Pfc. Villa was proud of how he accepted the challenges and obstacles of his initial training. "They really test you mentally and physically," he said.

This dedicated young man said he always wanted to be a Marine - since he was in the second grade when his dad took him to a Dolphins/49'ers football game in Miami and he noticed a trio of uniformed Marines - two males and a female there, just talking to people, but they caught the young boy's attention and he knew that was what he wanted to be. Of course, they also had a really cool Humvee there, but it was the Marines themselves that drew him. He said he always knew he wanted to be a warrior and looked up to those Marines.

In high school he took graphic design but realized it wasn't for him and in his senior year he focused on the military, taking a two-class block in JROTC. It taught him some of the discipline, the marching and drilling. He learned military jargon and about the chain of command. And he met Army Sgt. Major Porter, a 20-year veteran and successful man who became his role model.

Pfc. Villa said he did not expect all the knowledge he would have to take in to become a Marine, working hard in the classroom as well as out in the field. Being a US Marine is dangerous work, but it also requires brains and initiative. You are trained to save lives, he said, and the job is selfless. "It's never about you," he said.

He also said he didn't really realize or fully appreciate the change in him over the last three months till he came home to Immokalee. At home, people have noticed his new maturity. He stands tall and proud - never looking down.

Pfc. Villa said a lot of kids are capable of being a success in the military if they want to take on the challenge, but it's not for everybody. It's a life of sacrifice, he explained, and "a lot of people don't want to sacrifice."

Basic training was grueling, but he said the hardest part for him was being away from his family. It was all worth it, though. "I'm proud of what and who I have become," he said, and hopes to make the Corps his career. In any case, he knows he has made the grade. With or without a uniform - you're always a Marine.

Back on duty, Pfc. Villa headed to Camp Geiger, NC School of Infantry Monday, October 26. He said he chose the infantry because he is a warrior - he always wanted to be in the fight.

The Corps provides a lot of opportunities and benefits, he acknowledges, but must be willing to make the sacrifice. As with anything in life, an individual always brings something with them. Pfc. Villa was very humble in estimating what he brought to the Corps. "Just one guy," he said, "but everybody counts. You're not just a number, you're another man."



Submitted photo

Pfc. Hernan Villa

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Submitted photos/Kadee Tuff
Avan Ruis and Jesus Garcia give Collier Parks & Recreation mascot Sonny a big hug during the Children's Fair, Oct. 26, at the Immokalee Sports Complex. The event was sponsored by The Shelter for Abused Women & Children.



Submitted photos/Kadee Tuff
Isabel Parra, 6, is joined by her little sister, Natalie, during the Immokalee Peace March, Oct. 26.



Submitted photos/Kadee Tuff
Divante Davis reacts to feeding a calf at the petting zoo during the Annual Children's Fair, Oct. 26, sponsored by The Shelter for Abused Women & Children.



Submitted photos/Kadee Tuff
The 17th Annual Immokalee Peace March attracted participants of all ages, Oct. 26, as the group paraded from the Sports Complex to downtown Immokalee and back. The march was sponsored by The Shelter for Abused Women & Children.



Submitted photos/Kadee Tuff
The Immokalee Community School Dragons dance team and coach Isabel Castro rally prior to their performance, Oct. 26, at the Children's Fair, sponsored by The Shelter for Abused Women & Children.



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