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WEATHER
92°/77°
(today/tonight)

Isolated storms,
mainly in p.m.
Forecast, B12

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NATION

Lee soaks southern Louisiana; Obama surveys Irene damage



Tropical Storm Lee moved slowly across Louisiana, sending a storm surge over levees in low-lying parishes and dumping more than a foot of rain on New Orleans. Also Sunday, President Obama pledged during a visit to New Jersey that help would come to Northeastern storm victims. **A3**

GREG DAWSON
'Seal' keeps businesses on toes. B1



CFB

South American visitors give boost to tourism

Brazil leads the way in bringing money into Central Florida, the latest records show. **B1**



FEDS RACE TO SAVE SOURCE OF GLADES



BY KEVIN SPEAR | Staff Writer

Between Central and South Florida are landscapes that, while not unpopulated or unexplored, have largely remained remote or lost to most Floridians who aren't cowboys.

This week, federal officials will unveil a strategy and a wish list for protecting those lands — which lie mostly within vast cattle ranches — along with their waters and wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been identifying important prairies, forests and wetlands in parts of a larger watershed that extends south from Orlando to Lake Okeechobee and ultimately through the Everglades to Florida Bay.

Agency officials want to buy 50,000 acres of those ecosystems in Osceola, Polk, Okeechobee and Highlands counties and want to secure partial ownership of an additional 100,000 acres. Officials on Wednesday will release a map showing these possible acquisitions, which would form the foundation for a proposed Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is also making big purchases: 26,255 acres since December and nearly that much acreage planned in months to come. The USDA's goal is to repair wetlands in the Everglades' headwaters that were impaired by ditches dug to

Please turn to **GLADES, A12**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARLTON WARD JR.
Cattlemen Buddy Adams steers a herd to pens at Osceola's Adams Ranch. He has been its foreman more than 40 years.



Rancher and conservationist Alto "Bud" Adams Jr.'s ranch is in an area officials are studying as a possible wildlife refuge.

OS Florida's fragile future

Read more about the ecological issues Florida faces at **OrlandoSentinel.com**.

STUDENTS 'SHUT DOWN'

It's tough to teach when kids come, go

BY LAUREN ROTH
Staff Writer

Beverly Bassett sees the turmoil every day in her classroom.

On the way out, good students realize they are going to be moving.

"They shut down," said the Osceola County fifth-grade teacher. Learning plummets, and sometimes they become a distraction to other students.

On the way in, kids arrive at Sunrise Elementary in the middle of the year. And it's a constant game of catch-up — for teacher and students — as Bassett tries to get to know their parents and make the children part of the classroom rhythm.

One student from two years ago sticks out in her mind.

Maria joined the class several months into the year. She lived in a hotel and didn't have a place to study, so Bassett tutored her every day.

After less than two months, Maria went home, thinking she would be back the next day.

But she never returned.

Bassett still has several of her folders, which she has held on to, just in case.

"That's a teacher's life," Bassett said. "They come and they go. You don't know how long you're going to have them. I want to be that teacher they remember and stay in touch with."

In Osceola County, the movement of students has left a permanent mark.

Please turn to **TEACH, A4**

OS Revolving-door kids

See which local schools have high turnover rates and read the first part of this series at **OrlandoSentinel.com**.

'Smart meters' may trim your big power bills

BY CHRISTINE SHOW
Staff Writer

New digital technology intended to deliver electricity more efficiently and help customers cut their power bills soon will come to thousands of Central Florida homes.

This month, Leesburg's Electric Department plans to start setting up a digital network, called a "smart grid," that will include installing high-tech meters in 23,000 homes by early next year. Florida Power & Light and Progress Energy also plan to implement smart-grid technology during the next two years, and other utilities in the region are strongly considering it, too.

"We want to partner with our customers in order to become more energy-efficient and more cost-effective," said Paul Kalv, director of Leesburg's Electric Department. "Most people won't look at their electric usage until they see there's an opportunity to reduce their bill by \$10, \$20 or \$30."

Smart meters allow customers to see real-time information on their energy use and the related cost. People can curtail the amount of electricity used at peak times, said Tim Lejedal, Progress Energy spokesman.

For example, if a customer notices that running the washing machine costs more in the afternoon than at other

Please turn to **POWER, A4**

Will smaller GFS make big splash in bulk shopping?

BY SANDRA PEDICINI
Staff Writer

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS — The buy-in-bulk crowd has a new store in town, and this one doesn't have a membership fee.

The first GFS Marketplace opened in Altamonte Springs last month. The company is planning another near Florida Mall soon and several more in Central Florida during the next few years.

GFS traditionally has supplied restaurants but also sells items such as 7-pound containers of ketchup and 10-pound bags of grouper fillets to average shoppers who hope to save money on stuff by purchasing lots of it at once.

The nation's struggling

economy has prompted millions of American consumers to buy big as they wring out as much as they can from each dollar. Warehouse clubs such as Sam's Club, BJ's and Costco have grown steadily, and last year revenues jumped 4 percent to \$370.8 billion, according to the National Retail Federation.

Enjoying convenience and good deals, "people are now conditioned to going and buying bulk-quantity items," said Steve Kirn, executive director of the University of Florida's David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research.

GFS Marketplace, a niche player in the market, has 144 stores nationwide. Each is

Please turn to **BULK, A6**



JOE BURBANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jordyn Marshall, 11 months, relaxes in the shopping cart as mom Jessica Marshall and aunt Diane Marshall, far right, peruse the new GFS Marketplace in Altamonte Springs recently.

From Page One

TEACH

Continued from Page A1

School Board Chairwoman Cindy Hartig said the instability “makes it very hard” for teachers.

“Your baseline is constantly changing. If you move a child up to level, they leave, and you get more in the bottom quartile,” she said.

The district uses virtual school and extra classes during lunch block and the summer months to help students catch up, she said.

The influx has already begun for this year, with about 1,300 new students starting classes. Hartig said many are in families doubling up with relatives because they lost homes elsewhere. And many may leave when their families find permanent places.

But the problem of frequent moves is not unique to elementary schools or to Osceola County.

According to U.S. census data, 11.5 percent of families with at least one school-aged child moved in 2009 and 2010.

Turnover also makes it much more challenging for teachers to ensure all students meet the course and testing requirements they need to graduate. For younger students, they must meet basic levels of performance to move beyond third grade.

Orange and Osceola hold back about 6 percent of their third-graders, slightly more than the state average.

In Orange County, where students move even more frequently than in Osceola, English teacher Dan Hayes has seen as many as 50 kids pass through his class of 24 students during a school year at Evans High School.

Although Hayes, like Bassett, has seen more students stay in recent years, the struggling high school still has more student turnover than any other traditional high school in the county.

Hayes, who teaches English to non-native speakers of the language, said the focus on graduation at his school is helping students stick it out.

The new Evans campus under construction on Silver Star Road will have features that will help students on the move. In addition to giving them a place to study, which can be a challenge when families are sharing space or living in small accommodations, the school will have community resources to help students. The school is expected to open in January.

Schools such as Evans and Sunrise, where some frequently miss school or change schools often, usu-



PHOTOS BY RICARDO RAMÍREZ BUXEDA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Some years, Evans High English teacher Dan Hayes' class has completely turned over in a year. Students in Orange County change schools at some of the highest rates in the state. Some students change schools multiple times a year. Teachers get creative to try to cope.



Dan Hayes works in July with incoming freshmen learning English at Evans High. The new campus being built on Silver Star Road will have features for students on the move.

ally are the same ones with high poverty rates. Poverty, in turn, tends to be associated with lower student progress.

In Orange, three high schools that have struggled with low performance for years — Evans, Oak Ridge and Jones — also have the highest turnover rates. At Oak Ridge and Jones, nearly 80 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, compared with about two-thirds at Evans.

The problem reaches across grade levels. In Orange, 413 students at Millennium Elementary joined during the school year. The school has only 750 students. The rate of movement is similar at Pineloch Elementary, near South Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando.

John Campbell, principal at A-rated Sunrise Elementary in rural Kissimmee, said his teachers have grown to expect turnover.

“It’s not a surprise to see a class start with 20 to 22 students and to see seven to eight leave and seven to eight new ones,” he said.

Teachers cope by separating students into three to four groups, based on ability, and spend the most time with the lowest performers. Often, that includes stu-

dents who have moved a lot.

“There’s an adjustment period for kids. That’s why it’s so important that they feel welcome.”

Elaine Gruber, principal of Wekiva High School in Orange County, said student moves are one of her school’s biggest challenges. Not only are there academic adjustments, but social ones.

Sometimes “students want to get involved in an activity, like a sport, but have missed the deadline,” she said. Or they may be interested in a club or an elective that doesn’t exist at their new school.

“The No. 1 reason students drop out isn’t because it’s too hard — it’s because he or she doesn’t feel connected to the school,” Gruber said.

The state gives districts some leeway on mobile students, excluding from school-grade calculations those students who arrive after October.

But few schools have programs specifically for mobile, transient or homeless students, all of whom move frequently.

Orange schools said their main efforts to help these students are by keeping the curriculum consistent throughout the district and

by enlisting the help of social workers.

Several shelters offer tutoring for students, and a number of schools send food home with struggling students on weekends.

But many parents, despite tough economic times, are managing to move within a zone — or not moving at all — to help their children stay in one place.

And others, such as parent Tanya Hoskins, are taking matters into their own hands. She said she drove her son to Killarney Elementary School for several months during a period when they moved among several apartments and a hotel.

Few parents take advantage of a national law that requires schools to bus homeless children to their former schools, or they don’t think they would qualify as homeless.

Hoskins said it’s “not right” to make a child change schools during the school year. Her son knew the teachers and students at his school and was comfortable there. When they moved into the zone of a school that was not as good, “I just didn’t tell them. I made sure he stayed.”

lroth@tribune.com or 407-420-5120. Follow her on Twitter @RothLauren.

Seminole County Department of Community Services-Division of Community Assistance

Public Notice of CSBG Advisory Board Meetings

Seminole County administers the Community Service Block Grant Program funds from the Department of Health and Human Services under 42 USC 9901-9921 and Florida Administrative Code Chapter 9B-22 through the CSBG Advisory Board. The Purpose of the Program is to provide assistance for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become self-sufficient.

Regularly, the Seminole County CSBG Advisory Board meets the third Thursday of every other month at the following location: Department of Community Services (Reflection’s Plaza Site), 534 West Lake Mary Blvd., Sanford, FL 32773, (407) 665-2360. Regular meetings are held in the Department’s Large Conference Room at 6:15pm, and are open to the general public. The next meeting is scheduled for 09/15/2011.

For more information please contact:

Carmen Hall-Program Manager

(407) 665-2360

Persons with disabilities needing assistance please contact the Human Resources Department ADA Coordinator at (407) 665-7941.

POWER

Continued from Page A1

times of day, he or she can do the wash at an “off-peak” time that will cost less.

The meters also will inform companies of power outages to reduce service disruptions.

“Those meters allow customers to have a two-way understanding of their home or business,” Leljedal said.

It’s paying off for Fruitland Park resident Margaret Miller, a Leesburg electricity customer who had a smart meter installed in her home more than a year ago as part of a pilot program to test the technology involving 140 meters.

Miller is sold on the technology. Her electric bill in August 2010 was \$202.14. Her bill last month — after monitoring and tweaking her energy use — was \$176.61.

“I consider that a good savings,” Miller, 83, said of the \$25 difference.

Progress Energy, which provides power for 1.6 million customers throughout Florida, including Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Lake and Osceola, will install 80,000 smart meters throughout the state by 2013 as part of a \$200 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

FPL, which serves more than 194,000 in Central Florida, has already installed about 2.3 million meters in South Florida. The company plans to begin installing meters for all its

Central Florida customers next year and have them installed for all its 4.5 million customers statewide by 2013.

The company also received a \$200 million grant from the federal agency, which handed out \$3.4 billion in 2009 in stimulus money to be used toward smart-grid projects. Florida is one of eight states leading the change to the smart-grid system, according to the Department of Energy.

In addition, Atheros Communications Inc., a California-based communications company that took over Intellon Corp. in Orlando, is developing a specialized power-line communications product that utilities can use for smart-grid technology from a \$4.95 million grant it received from the federal agency.

Traditional meters don’t provide a detailed account of the times when energy is used the most. Instead, a meter reader checks the overall usage during the month, and the customer is billed accordingly. Customers with smart meters will have more control, FPL spokeswoman Marie Bertot said.

“They can see what they consume [in energy] by the day or even by the hour,” Bertot said. “With a monthly bill in the mail, you really don’t know what you’re going to see.”

In Leesburg, a Web portal will be available for the city utility’s customers to check online exactly how

much energy they used at a specific day or time. The Department of Energy awarded the city a \$9.7 million matching grant for its smart-grid project.

Some Central Florida utilities are waiting to see how the new technology performs with other utilities first.

“We look at that every year at our budget sessions to see if we need to switch to that technology,” said Chris Gent, spokesman for the Kissimmee Utility Authority, adding that the costs associated with installing new meters outweigh the expected savings for KUA’s approximately 58,000 customers in Kissimmee and surrounding areas. “At this point, we’re not there.”

Orlando Utilities Commission doesn’t plan to overhaul its entire system to a smart grid. But the utility is replacing 1,000 meters a month with digital meters, which have provided a more reliable service for customers, said Tim Trudell, the company’s senior media-relations coordinator. OUC, which serves more than 221,000 customers in Orlando, St. Cloud and parts of Orange and Osceola counties, has already installed 44,000 of the meters.

“We’re closely watching and monitoring how the [smart] software and meters are working for other utilities,” he said. “We’re taking a step-by-step approach.”

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