

Palmetto Bay news

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Camping in the Park and Movie Night set Feb. 6-7

BY GARY ALAN RUSE

A different kind of event is scheduled for Coral Reef Park for Saturday Feb. 6, 11 a.m., to Sunday, Feb. 7, 10 a.m., when "Camping in the Park and Movie Night" takes place.

One of the first village events to involve camping out at the park, the overnight happening will feature two films, a campfire, bird watching and night hike, a kayak adventure, an animal encounter, telescope stargazing, team building activities and more.

The first movie is the documentary *Ghosts of the Western Glades* with live narration by film director Richard Kern at 7 p.m. The next movie is *Night at the Museum, Secret of the Tomb*, on the giant 20- by 40-foot screen, which starts at 8:30 p.m.

The online registration deadline is Thursday, Feb. 4. There is free admission and parking, and there are activities and food and refreshments for sale.

Coral Reef Park is located at 7895 SW 152 St.

For the camping, no alcoholic beverages will be allowed and there will be no smoking. Pets are not permitted.

If you are bringing a quick shade tent,

No Bull: These girls outlasted the guys



Pictured (l-r) are Michelle Horne; Todd Hardwick, owner of Pesky Critters; McKenna Andris and Amanda Virok. (Photo by Sheri L. Virok)

BY GARY ALAN RUSE

Three girls from the Cutler Bay and Palmetto Bay area won Grand Champion Awards at the Homestead Rodeo on Jan. 21 in the Mechanical Bull Rodeo Buck Off. The three were riding for Team Pesky Critters, sponsored by Todd Hardwick, owner of Pesky Critters.

The team included Amanda Virok, 14, who is a Cutler Bay resident; McKenna Andris, 17, of Palmetto Bay, and Michelle

Horne, 23, of Cutler Bay.

"They beat out 10 other teams including all-guy teams, some of whom actually ride bulls," said Sheri L. Virok, mother of Amanda Virok. "The Mechanical Bull Buck Off is an event held each year the week of the Homestead Rodeo."

The Buck Off event benefits three charities: Patches, This Is for the Kids, and This is the Dog. Keyes Realty in Homestead was an event sponsor.

Andris currently competes in Junior

FPL: A \$1.3 billion rate hike. Really?

BY GRANT MILLER

Publisher

I was mad as hell when I read that Florida Power & Light plans to raise our electric bills 24 percent over the next four years.

In this latest rate hike request, the company is asking for a whopping \$1.3 billion to build more power plants and increase its profits. As a captive customer of FPL, if you're not mad, you're not paying attention.

For Florida families already struggling to keep their heads above water, another FPL rate increase is the last thing they need. This is the company's third rate hike request in six years. FPL increased bills in 2012 when the Florida Public Service Commission allowed it to charge another \$358 million and get an 11.5 percent profit. Now they are back again asking for an



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CAMPING, from page 1



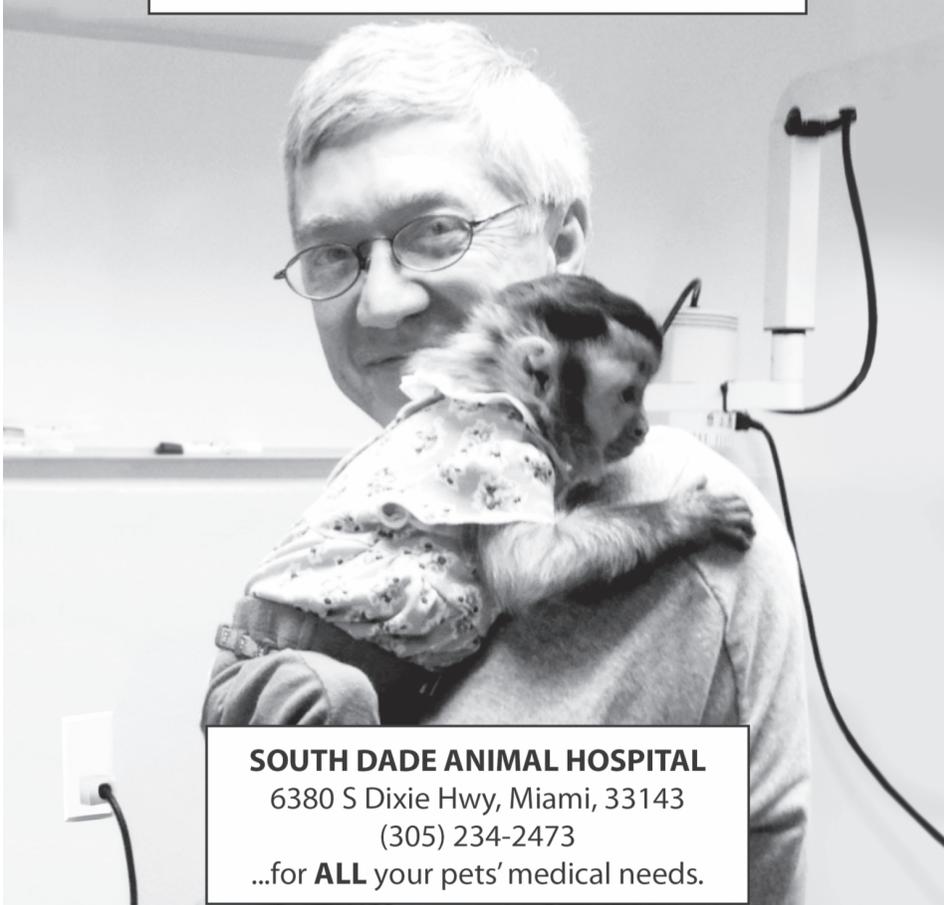
The movie will be *Night at the Museum, Secret of the Tomb* shown on the giant 20- by 40-foot screen

tents larger than 10-by-10 will not be permitted, and tents must be placed a minimum of five feet away from neighboring tents. Grills, individual pits and barbecues will not be permitted in the campsite area. RV's and pop-up trailers will not be allowed. This is a tent-only camping event. There will be an 8- by 8-foot fire pit open to everyone.

S'mores can be fixed, but all other food grilling and cooking over the community fire pit will not be allowed.

For information on the schedule, complete rules and online registration go to the village web- site at <www.palmettobay-fl.gov> or call 305-259-1234.

Kids under the weather ?



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FPL, from page 1

even higher profit margin of 12.5 percent — 12.5 percent! Know anyone doing that well on his or her investments?

How does FPL get this special treatment? FPL takes some of those ill-gotten gains and funnels campaign contributions to political committees and legislators to influence politicians in Tallahassee.

Remember, the legislature unseated four members of the previous Public Service Commission (PSC) — the very agency that will decide on the rate hike — when they rejected most of a \$1 billion rate increase request by FPL in 2009. Watch out because since July FPL gave \$2.3 million to legislators and over \$1 million to front groups to curry favors.

Meanwhile, FPL has bombarded us with ads touting low electric bills — while simultaneously filing for this enormous rate increase. The disingenuous flip-flop is what we can expect without any competition.

Big power companies make profits by building power plants and transmission lines. If you use less energy, that cuts shareholder profits. That's why FPL recently requested and got approval from the Commission to gut its already-anemic energy efficiency programs. Efficiency is the fastest and cheapest way to meet electricity demand. FPL ranks at the bottom of the list for helping customers reduce energy use and save money.

After killing energy savings goals, FPL got a rubber stamp by the PSC to build a new power plant. That plant is in this latest

rate hike. Plus, FPL already is charging you for two uber-expensive new nuclear reactors at Turkey Point that may never get built. You pay for those today but you won't get a refund if they abandon the project.

What's more, FPL continues to block cost-effective solar. We are one of only four states where the law prohibits a company — other than your utility — to put solar panels on the roofs of homes, apartments and businesses, and sell you the electricity. FPL, along with other power companies and front groups, cynically spent millions of dollars trying to confuse voters about a solar choice citizen initiative to remove that barrier, in part by launching their own sham petition.

What can you do? It's simple — call your state legislators; tell them you're mad about the proposed rate increases and that you want competition to protect consumers.

State Rep. Fred Costello and State Sen. Thad Altman have filed HB 687 and SB 1328 to allow competition so someone other than your utility can sell you solar energy. Florida families don't need higher energy bills, they need policymakers who watch out for their interests.

Don't wait. Call your state representatives and state senators and ask for information about FPL's rate increase. Not sure who your legislators are? You can find out here:

<www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx> and <www.flsenate.gov/senators/find>.

BULL, from page 1

Women's Professional Barrel Racing and was the 2014 Miss Teen Rodeo Florida. She will graduate from Miami Palmetto High in June.

Amanda Virok is a current rider for Goodman Performance Horses Team competing in the National Reining Horse Association and was the 2014 Miss Rodeo Florida Princess Runner Up. She attends Southwood Middle School.

Michelle Horne was born and raised in Cutler Ridge. An avid horse lover at 8 years

old, she began private riding lessons in the Redland. At age 17 she owned her own horse and when she was 19 was the youngest director of the Homestead Everglades Posse precision drill team on horseback.

Besides a trophy, the girls were each awarded a \$100 gift certificate to Sunset Western, and, of course, they got huge bragging rights with all the guys — one for the girls.

"We were determined to win," Amanda Virok said after the competition. "We are capable women. Together we can accomplish anything we set our minds to, even beating a bunch of guys — and we had a blast doing it."



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