

Dan Culbert - Extension Horticulture Agent

## **Okeechobee Brain-Bowl team Earns Professors' Choice Award**

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — Eight students from Okeechobee spent last weekend at the races and earned the Professors' Choice award at this year's BioControl Brain Bowl. Team members include Brittany Carrier, Brittny Cutler, Septemberlyn Davis, Victor Gandarilla, Jessica Joles, Vick Patel, Corey White and Joy Burnham.

Cockroach races, insect hunts, a mini-Melapaleuza, and an art contest were among the public activities held at the University of Florida Biological Control Brain Bowl and Bash. The event was held last Saturday at the Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce



Okeechobee students not only helped UF Entomologist Dr. Phil Koehler conduct the Great American Cockroach race, but presented the results of their student research project on the Evil Weevil, a beetle that is destroying endangered native Florida Air Plants.

Seven Okeechobee Freshman Center students joined 14 other middle and high school students from St. Lucie and Indian River counties, plus IFAS research scientists, county Extension agents, teachers and other event organizers.

The event was established to help youth learn about BioControl, and then share this information with the public. They were introduced to biological control research being carried out at the \$3.8 million UF Biological Control Research and Containment Laboratory, situated on the UF Fort Pierce location.

Before the Brain Bowl, Florida Representative Rick Minton provided the audience with the background of how and why this University of Florida facility was established here on the Treasure coast. This past week the lab facility was dedicated in honor of Dr. Norman Hayslip, a former director at the UF research station in Fort Pierce .

The event culminated 2 months of preparation for the Biological Control Brain Bowl, a "quiz bowl," competition. Three county teams tested their knowledge of biological control and invasive species management. Game hosts were IRREC researcher Ron Cave, Ph.D. and UF Florida Medical Entomologist Roxanne Rutledge-Connelly, Ph.D., who conduct biological control research.

In addition to the Brain Bowl and Roach Race, other activities at the program included displays of maggots used in forensic entomology; Barn owl pellet dissections by Dr. Rick Raid of the UF Everglades Research Station, and a mini-Melapaluza, where St. Lucie Extension Agent Ken

Gioeli showed students how to use bug-suckers to collect insects at eat Melaleucas. Other public events included a chance to decorate a Mr. & Mrs. Air Potato, mosquito-art and face painting tables, ladybug carry-out containers, and a "Caterpillar Canter" relay race.

One of the Palmetto race winners was Tyler Winner from Okeechobee. His roach tied for first place in the championship heat of this fast passed event.

Three \$50 "Bug Master Art Awards" prizes were provided for art contest winners, and a "Bug Master Buggy Hunt Award" was given courtesy of Bug Master, a local pest management company that practices Integrated Pest Management.

The Biological Control Brain Bowl and Bash program was funded with a grant from IPM (Integrated Pest Management) Florida. Other program sponsors included the University of Florida; Bug Master Pest management; St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee 4-H Foundations; TAME, the statewide Melaleuca management program; Pelican Island and St. Lucie Audubon Societies; the Florida Mosquito Control Association; the Florida Research Center for Agricultural Sustainability, and Papa John's Pizza.

More details and photos of the event can be found on the event's web page: <http://okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu/BioControl.BrainBowl.2006.htm>. If you would like additional information on the 2006 Brain Bowl, please email us at [okeechobee@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:okeechobee@ifas.ufl.edu) or call us at 863-763-6469.



**Okeechobee Brain Bowlers:** the Okeechobee Freshman Learning Center team was the winner of the Professors' Choice award at the 2006 UF/IFAS BioControl Brain Bowl: Team members included (L to R, row 1): Honors Biology Instructor Mrs. Richonda Winner-Manson, Joy Burnham, Septemberlyn Davis, Brittany Carrier, Brittany Cutler, Jessica Joles, and Mrs. Kay Duke; (second row) Corey White, Victor Gandarilla, and Vick Patel.

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