



*Okeechobee County
Salute to Graduates*

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Lake Okeechobee
News
May 26, 2021

**CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS OF 2021!**

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Okeechobee Christian Academy

Okeechobee Christian Academy celebrates four graduates

By **Melissa King**
Principal OCA

OKEECHOBEE — Okeechobee Christian Academy is proud to introduce the four members of their graduating class of 2021. As a whole, the graduates have left an indelible mark on OCA, totaling more than 1,049 community service hours and receiving more than \$40,000 in scholarship money. In addition, the class of 2021 has also spent time this year helping to raise money for two local families who have endured medical hardships, gathered over 291 items for those being served by Martha's House and have raised awareness and funds to fight human trafficking in our community.

Finally, they have served at Okeechobee's Pregnancy Center, assisting in whatever capacity has been needed.

While each senior has served our community in various ways, the year hasn't come without hardship. Distance learning, adjusting to new technology, overcoming illness and even losing everything in a devastating house fire were just some of the obstacles they had to overcome. Class valedictorian, Caroline Crews, stated that it was the staff that helped them through this school year. "Our teachers value our well-being over test scores. They walk the walk; they don't just talk the talk. Their care means a lot."

Despite the turmoil of this school year, all four seniors are college-bound. The class valedictorian, Caroline Crews, has been accepted to the University of Florida and will pursue a degree in Speech Language Pathology. Sophia Hickman, the class salutatorian, will attend Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, TN in the hopes of dual majoring in psychology and music. Finally, Dylan DaSilva and Jasmine Lewis will both attend Indian River State College in order to seek degrees in criminal justice and education, respectively.

When asked what their time at OCA meant to them, each senior had a different perspective, but a common thread: the love

of the teachers and staff. "I have learned patience and perseverance throughout my years at OCA. Each teacher is arguably one of the best teachers I've ever had," said Dylan DaSilva. Jasmine Lewis agreed. "OCA has shown me how loved I am and the benefit of surrounding myself with people who love Christ." Finally, both Caroline Crews and Sophie Hickman agreed that the staff has taught them not how to simply take tests or complete assignments. "We have been taught to think critically," they said. Hickman summed it up by saying, "OCA has helped me discover WHAT I really believe and WHO I really am."

Congratulations to the Graduates!



Caroline Crews
Valedictorian



Dylan DaSilva



Sophia Hickman
Salutatorian



Jasmine Lewis

Congratulations to all 2021 Graduates

Okeechobee County Republican Party chose these 3 students as recipients of our scholarships.

Continue to DREAM BIG, and best wishes for your future.

OKEECHOBEE GOP

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

Local Republican Party meets the third Monday evening each month at Cowboy's Restaurant private room at 6:30. Come and join us.



Jake S. Bessey



Jaydon Egger



Mattie Garcia



Bailey Harden



Maria Castaneda



Raquel Todd

Melanie Urbana
Melissa Aponte

Claudia Anahi Vega
Daniela Gallardo

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Okeechobee Homeschool Students

Homeschool seniors make plans for the future



Hannah Stewart



Zoe Walther

Hannah Stewart was home educated beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school when she dual enrolled with Indian River State College, working on her Associates in Science degree. Hannah participated in 4H and raised a Brangus steer named Zorro.

She volunteers at her church helping with the children, and also helps in the puppet ministry & Vacation Bible School. Hannah's future plans are to finish her associates degree and then work from home.

Zoe Rebecca Walther spent her school years heavily involved in 4H. She also swam for Okeechobee High School's swim team. After graduating, Zoe plans on traveling and seeing the world! Zoe loves singing for her church and youth group, working on her photography, playing guitar, babysitting and helping her friends and family. Zoe plans on staying home and continuing to sing for her church and helping her family. When she "grows up," she wants to be an amazing Mom and wife and homeschool her own children.

★ ★ ★ Congratulations to the Graduates! ★ ★ ★



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Okeechobee High School



Elijah Busbin
Homecoming King

Priscilla Rodriguez
Homecoming Queen



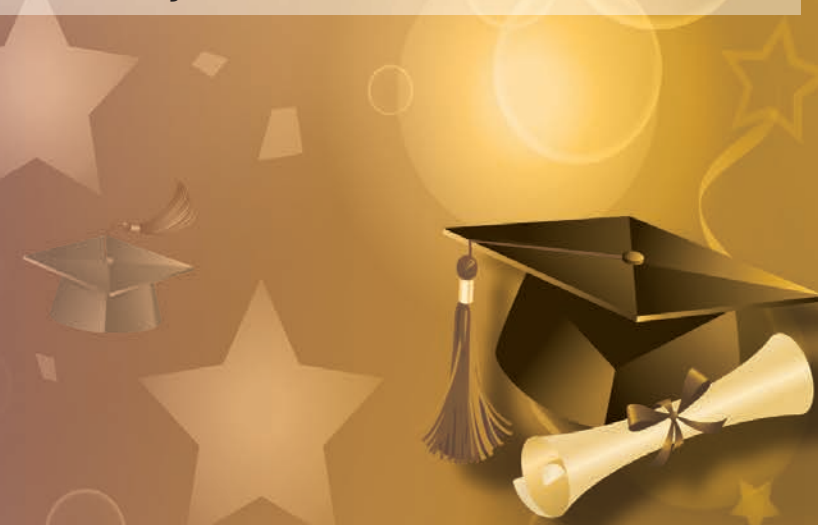
Kasey Maguire
Miss OHS



Tyrone Thomas
Mr. OHS



Class of 2021 Officers:
Mattie Garcia, Lauren Sills, Christopher Cobb Jr., Kasey Maguire and Yolanda Pelayo
Photo by Gianna Immerfall



Congratulations, Bailey and the Class of 2021!



Always remember you are **BRAVER** than you **BELIEVE** **STRONGER** than you **SEEM** **SMARTER** than you **THINK** & **LOVED** more than you know

Love, your family



Congratulations to Zoe Walther and all of the 2021 Graduates



Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths
Proverbs 3:5 & 6

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Okeechobee High School

Summa Cum Laude



Christopher Cobb, Jr.



Jaydon Egger



Jillian Johnston



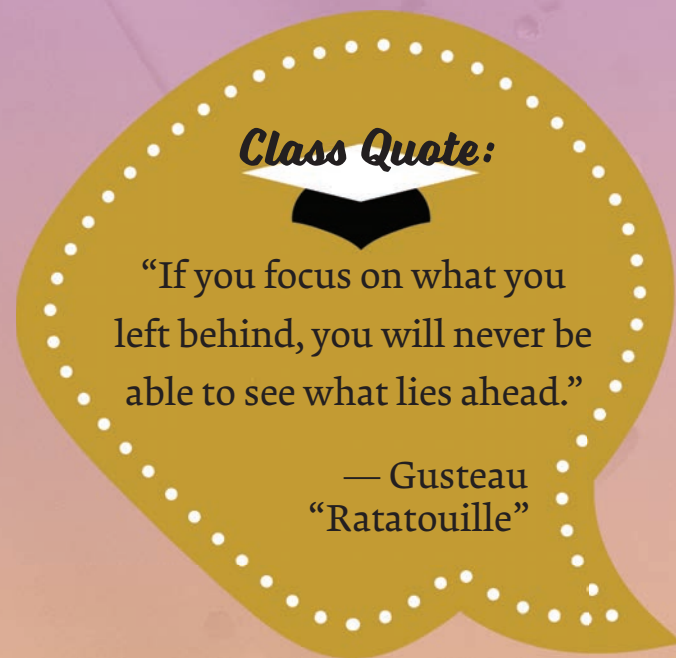
Cristian Trejo



Class Flower:
Marigold



Class Song:
"It's Time"
by Imagine Dragons



Class Quote:

"If you focus on what you left behind, you will never be able to see what lies ahead."

— Gusteau
"Ratatouille"

OHS Class of 2021 overcomes all obstacles

By Richard Marion
Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — The Class of 2021 faced a senior year unlike any other.

While the Class of 2020 had the second half of their year impacted by COVID-19, they were still able to enjoy a normal first half of the school year, with Homecoming, a bonfire, and many of the other great traditions that every student looks forward to in their senior year.

But seniors in the Okeechobee High School Class of 2021 knew from the get-go that school was going to be different this year.

That also applied to teachers and school administrators as well.

With the move to give students the option to attend school in person at the beginning of the year, district staff had to go above and beyond to keep things safe, for both the students and themselves.

"The extra steps that were taken were precautions we were all willing to take in order to have daily access to our students," said OHS principal Lauren Myers. "Teachers had to completely change the way in which

they taught; they were stretched in every way possible, and in the end they did it because their kids were worth the struggle."

"I am so very proud of the huge strides we have made this year in learning a new way of work because we did it as a Brahman family," continued Myers. "The amount of experimenting, problem solving, and collaboration that it took to get us to these last few days is nothing short of impressive."

Students adjusted to face masks and daily temperature checks and teachers began cleaning and wiping desks between classes to mitigate the spread. Movement on campus was adjusted and visitors and volunteers were limited. Administrators were thrust into the role of contact tracers, researching seating charts in classes and buses to figure out who might have been exposed to a positive case of the virus. Bus routes and capacity were adjusted, food service meal preparations were overhauled, and custodial cleaning was redefined and intensified. Everyone was affected and everyone played a role in fighting to control the virus.

By the second half of the school year vaccinations started ramping up. Slowly but surely, signs of normalcy started returning again. And, at the district level, conversations started happening about giving 2021 seniors a chance to experience some of the things that the COVID-19 pandemic had taken from them.

"These seniors have lost enough since March of 2020," said Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Dylan Tedders. "If we could ensure events could occur safely, making them happen became the mission. Lauren Myers, Ken Kenworthy, and all members of the School Board wanted to make it happen- safely. With that mission in mind, the staff at OHS stepped up to meet the challenges and give this outgoing class an ending to remember."

Homecoming, the annual bonfire, and Prom, all the things students assumed had no chance of happening suddenly had a spark of life. Staff at OHS got to work on squeezing a year's worth of activities into a two-month time span.

"Finally being able to hold events where students can be a part of a larger whole

has made all the difference these last two months," explained Myers. "Students need to belong to something that is bigger than the individual. I have had parents reach out to say that they have seen a physical difference in their student just since the first announcement of upcoming events were made. The OHS staff has been incredible; so many have stepped up and filled in where they were needed to pull off events like the traditional bonfire and make the entire Homecoming week happen with only 3 weeks lead time."

"This class has been a small cohort since they entered the 9th grade and they have endured more obstacles in the past 15 months than any class before them," concluded Myers. "They now have become a part of world history, and will be remembered as the class that overcame insurmountable odds on their way to the finish line is the legacy that they leave behind at Okeechobee High School. The Class of 2021 panoramic photo on display in the main office will serve as a beacon of resiliency and tenacity."

A Word to the Wise:

CONGRATULATIONS!

To the hardworking graduates of 2021, we salute your perseverance through a uniquely challenging senior year.

Best of luck as you take the next step!



Magna Cum Laude



Mattie Garcia



Zachary Reister



Lauren Sills



Chloe Soriano



Raquel Todd

Cum Laude



Jake Bessey



Abbigail Crespo



*Gisselle
Delgado-Gutierrez*



Kasey Maguire



*Jaqueline
Mandujano-Pena*



Lonna McClenithan

Congratulations Class of 2021!



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Congratulations Class of 2021



The Mixon Team
wishes all the 2021 Graduates
Congratulations and best wishes
for a prosperous future.

Reach for the stars and achieve your dreams!



Okeechobee High School



Raif Holmes (left) and Kase Myers were honored as graduating seniors at the OHS baseball banquet

To the right, Jihad Yamin's family escorts him around the football field at Senior Night.



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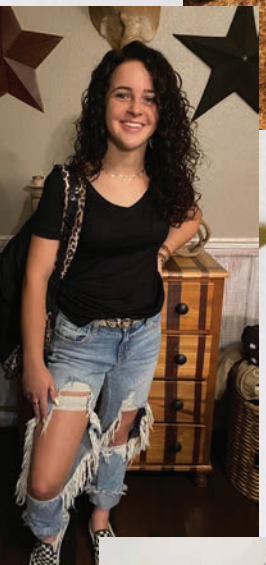
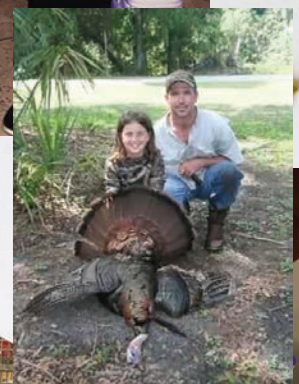
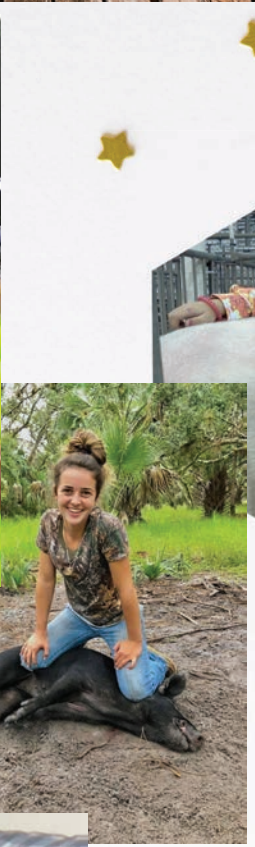
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Happy Graduation! **Class of 2021**

Wishing you a wonderful graduation day and all the success in the world! You all certainly deserve it. Congratulations on your important accomplishment!

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Jalyn Lightsey
Keep reaching for the stars. We are so proud of you!

Bebe, Papa, Dad, Sharonna, Mom, Brylee, Corri, Cody, Cohen, Cohle, Chloe & Heather

— FLORIDA —
TROPHY
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