

January 15, 2007

by Ken Grimes, Jr.

What are the foundations of a strong community when it comes to economic development and prospering commerce? In a traditional sense, the requirements are location, educated workforce and a strong quality of life. These three basic areas are not always progressing at the same rate and often do not exist in a cohesive nature with the same timing. South Baldwin County has experienced tremendous growth over the past couple of decades and continues to lead the southeast in new developments. The demands of our educational system are expanding daily and as we look to the future of our communities and our children, we must ask many questions and demand the best services possible for each and every student. The south Baldwin County region is blessed with many natural resources but also has one of the strongest tax bases in the state. One would expect the offering of programs, curriculum and facilities to match the level of success. Education is definitely a top priority for business organizations and to the entrepreneur base that is located in Orange Beach.

Tractors were running and dirt was moving as the foundation was begun on the new playground at Orange Beach Elementary School this week. After more than two years without any playground equipment the school and every student now has a smile on their face as work began to place the footings and the install should move rapidly thanks to the city crews from Public Works.



The work begins after more than 2 years without a playground at OBES

Watch the progress on the playground as the kids are ready to climb, jump, slide and swing. Sea, Sand and Stars progress also continues at OBES as the wait is on for the arrival of the massive aquarium, aka shark tank.



City of Orange Beach employee Carter Lowry moves dirt at Orange Beach Elementary as the foundation is laid for the new playground purchased by the PTO and other supporters.

The Orange Beach Business and Industrial Development Board will host a special presentation regarding "The Education Report" on Wednesday, January 17th at 9am in the council chambers at Orange Beach City Hall. This presentation by Dr. Connie Williams and Orange Beach Board of Education President John Davis will provide an overview of findings as related to forming an independent school district in the City of Orange Beach. Business owners, supervisors and business leaders are encouraged to attend this presentation and hear the facts while asking questions related to education initiatives and the future of the community. Chairman of the Development Board, Allen McElroy adds "the board members felt like we needed to take this proactive step in bringing facts and data to the business community and provide a forum for their questions to be answered. We ask the question, 'Where will your business be in ten years and what will be the needs at that time?' Having a well educated, diverse workforce is always critical to the success of business growth in any community and the Orange Beach Business and Industrial Development Board members just want to be sure we are maximizing our potential for the students of today and employees of tomorrow." The presentation begins at 9am with an overview of the report by Dr. Connie Williams, who compiled the findings with financial consultant, Michael Weaver. The report is available online at www.cityoforangebeach.com or at www.islandschoolboards.com with additional information listed as well. A question and answer section will follow.



Get in the car and drive on over to the "Big Yard and Craft Sale" this Saturday, January 20th at the Orange Beach Community Center. The building will be packed with locals and crafters from the area and plenty of bargains all under roof. Traditional yard sale items along with hot biscuits and gravy and coffee for a small donation to the Relay For Life cause. Doors open promptly at 7am and the sale ends at noon so get those elbow pads on and break out some cash. Hosted by the City of Orange Beach Relay Team, this is a great event to get a bargain while helping out fight cancer. Donations will be accepted on Friday, January 19th from 10am till 6pm at the Community Center and a tax donation form will be given. NO CLOTHES, please. For info call Jeanne Fitzgibbons at 981-1524. See you Saturday.

Regulars are stilling dealing and many new flocks are arriving daily at the Orange Beach Senior Center. Bridge scores for Thursday, December 28: 1st: Oliveth Archer; 2nd: Randy Laney; 3rd: Anny Poveromo; and for Tuesday January 2nd: 1st: Joan Nagy; 2nd: Mary Brown; 3rd: Marianne Grant; and for Thursday January 4th: 1st: Ruth Bishop; 2nd: Bob LaLance; 3rd: Barb Walters.

A packed house everyday down at the Orange Beach Senior Activity Center as many activities highlight the week. Bridge competition is heating up as here are the winners for Tuesday January 9th: 1st: Bo Schook; 2nd: Mary Brown; 3rd: Stuart Silvers and for Thursday January 11th: 1st: Fred Wiebusch; 2nd: Mary Brown; 3rd: Al Wylie. Great job folks. The Center hosted 26 seniors on their January 10th trip to the Malbis Greek Orthodox Church along with some quality shopping at the Eastern Shore Centre and Jubilee Square malls. The group from Orange Beach enjoyed their guided tour of the beautiful church with a true descendent of the original Malbis family. After some fact-finding and photography, the bus made some stops at area shops for those after Christmas sales. For more information call the staff at 981-3440.

The Alabama Credit Union in Orange Beach is moving! About ten feet as they move into their new office at 24254 Canal Road. This will occur from January 15th through the 19th so bear with them as they relocate and establish the new building in Orange Beach. ACU's Area Branch Manager Elizabeth Cole and her staff apologize for the inconvenience and appreciate your patience during their move to the long-awaited new building. Cole promises, "when you visit our new spacious office, you'll know the improvements are worth the temporary inconvenience!"

Be sure to mark those calendars for a few February events starting with the Annual Alabama Lifestyles EXPO on Thursday, February 8 at the Caribe. The Gulf Shores Woman's Club will hold the 30th Annual Tour of Homes on February 24th. The Orange Beach Lion's Club will host the Wayne and Shirley All Star Band dance on Saturday, February 24th at the Community Center and tickets go on sale soon. And of course there is the Mardi Gras weekend starting on February 16 and culminating on Fat Tuesday, February 20th. Watch in coming weeks for plenty of Mardi Gras dates and schedules.

The City of Orange Beach services was closed on Monday, January 15th in observance of Martin Luther King Day. Got some news around Orange Beach? Let us know what's going on by sending your community news to obe-con@gulftel.com and be sure to log onto www.cityoforangebeach.com and register to receive the weekly newsletter online which has much more detail and color photography on other events.



Thanks for reading the *Orange Beach Community News*. We appreciate your support and encourage you to tell friends and neighbors to register online to receive this weekly update on Orange Beach. *We apologize for the recent delay in getting the news to you each week. Holiday schedules and a heavy workload shifted some deadlines and we thank you for your patience!*