

local news

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Don Simson, Village Santiago: Don and Donna Simson; Nancy and Harold Perkins, of the Village Palo Alto; and Kaye and Bill Tymann, of the Village of Country Club Hills, celebrated Christmas with a nine-day cruise on the Navigator of the Seas in the southern Caribbean.



Art and Charlotte Mattsson, Village of Piedmont: Art and Charlotte Mattsson visited Curaçao during a Christmas cruise on the Caribbean Princess. Their matching shirts are advertising the musical "South Pacific," which will appear March 22-24 at Savannah Center.

Cajun Food and Blues: A Winning Combination

The first Cajun, Cruise & Blues fundraiser drew thousands Saturday to support The Villages Charter Schools.

By PATRICIA STEELE
Daily Sun Senior Writer

A good portion of the rest of the country may be worried about snow, but in The Villages, Saturday was all blue skies, hot Cajun food and cool blues.

The Cajun, Cruise & Blues fundraiser for the Buffalo Scholarship Foundation drew thousands of people to Spanish Springs to enjoy the inaugural Cajun Fins, Furs & Feathers Cooking Competition followed by an afternoon of music.

Visitors could sample one or two dishes or get a taste of all the Cajun dishes prepared by 17 teams by purchasing a ticket. The selections were based on popular Cajun dishes, including fried gator, jambalaya, gumbo and etouffee.

The Cajun-themed event was a first for the scholarship foundation.

"When we decided to hold another event, we wanted something different," said Randy McDaniel, director of education at The Villages Charter School and nonvoting board chairman of the foundation. "There are lots of barbecues and chili cook-offs and those are great, but we wanted to offer Villagers something different."

The community responded well to the inaugural fundraiser, as hundreds of people strolled between tents where volunteers were serving food or enjoyed music by the Villages Middle and High School bands.

Entertainment on the square included Smokin' Torpedoes in the afternoon



Teresa Alvarado, of The Villages Charter School, serves a Cajun-inspired dish during Saturday's food and music festival at Spanish Springs Town Square.

and Selwyn Birchwood in the evening.

Shemekia Copeland headlined an evening performance at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center. Bobby Blackmon and the B3 Band was the opening act.

Copeland's concert benefited

the Buffalo Scholarship Foundation.

Tina Robbins, who helped organize the cook-off with Amanda Isaacs, considered the day a success.

"We sold 2,500 food tickets and the square was filled with people listening or dancing to

THE WINNERS ARE

Cook-off winners:

Fins (fish or seafood dishes): Waterfront Inn, first place; Properties of The Village, second place; TSG Solutions, third place.

Fur: Villages Charter School Culinary Arts Academy, first place; Fenney Grill, second place; Citizens First Bank, third place

Feathers: Tri-County Landscapes, first place; Villages Charter School Culinary Arts Academy, second place; ASG Solutions, third place

The Villages Administration team won the People's Choice Award for having raised the most money, after people voted for their favorite team with cash donations.

"I really like the quail, but all the food was good," Wilkins said. "It is such a nice day. How can an event like this go wrong? We have warm weather, blue skies, food and the blues."

McDaniel echoed Wilkins sentiments at the close of the cook-off.

"For a first event, we have had a great day," McDaniel said.

"Everyone I've spoken with has been positive about the food and the music — the entire event. We're looking forward to next year."

Patricia Steele is a senior writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5387, or patricia.steele@thevillagesmedia.com.

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Havana Country Club

Havana Country Club

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2484 Odell Circle
The Villages, FL 32162

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Limited Seating

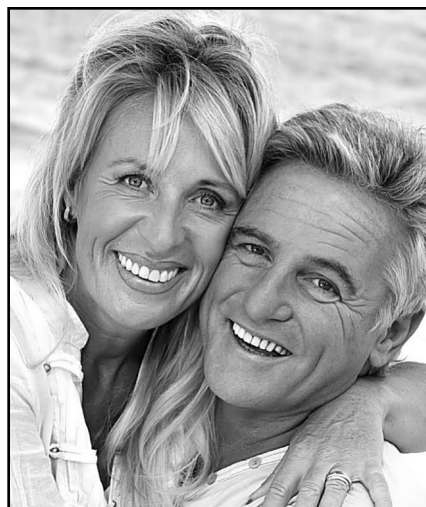
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