



TODAY & Monday morning  
**HIGH 88** Partly sunny with isolated  
**LOW 66** thunderstorms in the  
 afternoon and evening.  
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# CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE

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Florida's Best Community

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## Tigers capture title

*Dunnellon victorious in Class 4A softball tournament*

JOHN COSCIA  
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 Chronicle

PLANT CITY — On Friday morning, they left the Dunnellon city limits with a dream. Eighteen hours later, the Dunnellon Lady Tigers softball team returned to the small bedroom community that they call home — as state champions.

During the team's postgame celebration, it was Jessica Altum, one of the two seniors on the team, who was the most vocal of the group. "Most people say they're going to Disney World after they win a

championship. We're going to Outback! Yeah baby, let's go," she screamed.

Dunnellon's 3-1 victory over Lake Wales, the 2007 state champions, was the first state title for the Lady Tigers in their first-ever state championship appearance.

Many people saw this day coming. And some even expected it. They just didn't know if it would ever arrive.

It was a journey that began for this special group

See TIGERS/Page A9

The Dunnellon Lady Tigers head coach Kevin Fagan hoists the Class 4A State Championship trophy.

JOHN COSCIA/Chronicle



## Riding into the future



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

Bicyclists ride along the Withlacoochee State Trail between Floral City and Inverness.

When it comes to solving local economic woes, some people think the answer might be as easy as riding a bike.

From sunup to sundown any day of the week, the 46-mile Withlacoochee State Trail draws scores, sometimes hundreds, of people on two and three wheels.

"Cyclists like to spend money," said Charlie Wade, owner of Suncoast Bicycles in Inverness, located right on the trail. "That's hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local businesses, and that's keeping the

### PEDAL METTLE

Everyone from bike shops to tourism development members are getting involved in turning Citrus County into a bicycle-friendly community./Page A3

economy going."

Wade also said what manatees are to Crystal River, cycling is becoming to Inverness.

That's not just good news for Inverness, but ultimately for Citrus County as a whole.

Fact: The housing market in Citrus County has declined significantly.

Solution: Bring in the second string. That's the recommendation of one local citizen, Chris Lloyd.

"Tourism has always been big in this county, but it's been second string," Lloyd said. "We've been dominated by a home construction mentality. We have a terrible economic situation in Citrus County, and we can either sit on our backsides and complain about it or we can do something. The obvious area for us to exploit is tourism."

Specifically, bicycle tourism.

—Nancy Kennedy

## Heavy rainfall just a drip on drought

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Daily rainfall this week showed a little impact on increasing the Floridan aquifer, but it will take more than a few afternoon showers to end the drought.

"It caused some slight rises in the aquifer, but we can already see them declining again," said Granville Kinsman, manager of the hydrological data section of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

In the district's aquifer resource weekly update for Friday, the level of the aquifer in the

northern region, of which Citrus County is a part, had risen to -1.74 feet, up from the previous week's -1.96 feet, following several days with rainstorms. However, for the same period last year, the level was 0.37 foot, within the acceptable range of 0 to 4 feet.

While Citrus County residents may have delighted to check their rain gauges, not all parts of the north region got as wet.

"The rain we had was not widespread," Kinsman said. "Some areas had a tremendous amount of rain, while others did not have so much."

Anyone thinking of celebrating the end of the three-year drought would be taking a premature action.

"We are still in the dry season, and we expect to see the water levels declining," Kinsman said.

A regular daily drenching for quite some time is what would be needed to get through this drought.

"It would take two to four weeks of rain before we could expect to see the aquifer start rising into normal levels," Kinsman said. "Starting in June, to get out of this drought, we would have to have substantial amounts of rain well into the next dry season."

In his 22 years with the district, Kinsman said he has seen three or four droughts, and to break those droughts the rainfall has to be well above normal, which is

about 7.8 inches during a four-month period.

"It will take more than that, and then some," he said.

"Lake levels are lower than the last severe drop in 2001," he said. "In the north region, lake levels are at least 6 feet below where they should be. That's pretty severe."

Lower lakes are slower to recover than rivers, he said. Even with extra rainfall, it would take up to two years to get the lakes back up.

"Rivers respond faster," he said, "because with the heavy rains they get the runoff. But to sustain normal flow, we would have to have 20 to 40 percent more rainfall."

### Something borrowed

In the world of real estate investing, what's old is new again./D1



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