

# Agriculture business has helped Webster grow

## STAFF REPORT

**WEBSTER** — The oldest incorporated town in Sumter County, Webster was first settled during 1855, according to the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce's 2006 Business Directory. Webster's economy was based on the citrus industry until the great freeze of 1894-95.

Webster then turned to the growth of vegetables for the town's main economy. This

eventually made the town grow once again. Webster became one of the largest vegetable producers in the state during the 1900s and came to be known as the cucumber capital and home of the Parson's Brown Orange.

Webster is also home to the Sumter County Farmer's Market, which was a result of a group of farmers who organized a co-op in 1938. The idea behind the market was to sell

their fresh farm products. The Sumter County Farmer's Market sells vegetables as well as livestock.

A flea market accompanies the farmer's market and has become one of the largest flea markets in Florida.

Throughout the year, Webster hosts a Halloween Festival, the Webster Cemetery Picnic in October and a Christmas parade in December.

## Webster

**Population:** 803

**Date Incorporated:** 1957

**Address of City Hall:** 49 S.E. 1st St.

**Phone number of City Hall:** (352) 793-2073

**Type of Government:** City Commission

**Mayor/Commissioner Seat 2:** Stephen P. Croft

**Vice Mayor/Commissioner Seat 1:** Patricia M. Ward

**Commissioner Seat 3:** Michael E. Alderman

**Commissioner Seat 4:** Dennis C. Johnson

**Commissioner Seat 5:** Charles L. Jordan

**City Clerk:** Sarah A. Snider

# Coleman rural, but correctional facility brings jobs



File photo

"Bobby's Corner" in Coleman.

## Coleman

**Population:** 653

**Established:** Settled in 1882

**City Hall mailing address:** P.O. Box 456, Coleman, FL 33521

**City Hall phone number:** (352) 748-1017

**Type of government:** City Council

**Mayor:** Lonnie G. Evans

**Council president:** Mary A. Bigham

**Council vice president:** Billie Marie Winkles

**Council member:** Virgie M. Everett

**Council member:** Cleveland Williams Jr.

**Council member:** Marilyn McCray

**City clerk:** vacant

Staff Report

**COLEMAN** — The most recent population count for Coleman is 653 residents, according to Coleman's finance manager, Akiko Teagle.

Teagle described Coleman, situated right on U.S. Highway 301, as a rural, quiet setting, perfect for people who are tired of the pace of big cities.

According to the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce's 2006 Business Directory, Coleman was settled in 1882. It states that the town was named after Dr. B.F. Coleman, who was listed in the *Florida Gazette* in 1886-87 as one of the early residents. The main source of revenue used to be selling

oranges, raising cotton, cattle and other livestock.

These days, however, Coleman is home to the Federal Correction Complex, which opened in December, 1995. It is east of Coleman on County Road 470 and has more than 1,000 employees, according to the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce's 2006 Business Directory.

The city is not far from Okahumpka, an unincorporated area in Lake County where a new interchange to Florida's Turnpike has been built. A commercial development is planned for the interchange area, also.

# Center Hill has shifted from agriculture to industry

## STAFF REPORT

**CENTER HILL** — More than a century ago, Center Hill became known as the Green Bean Capitol of the World. The town's history dates back as far as 1842, but it wasn't until 1900 that the town boomed, shipping nearly 400 railroad cars of string beans that year.

Center Hill was settled between the late 1830s and the early 1840s by the Mobley and Beville families, according to the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce. The little town was officially named when Major Lovell's wife, Carrie, named it Center Hill because of its location on top of a hill at the center of Sumter

County.

Center Hill is a rural area, home to businesses including Florida Fish Farms, Rinker's Material, Center Hill Lumber and the Center Hill Food Mart. The town is currently trying to revive itself and restore the downtown area. Many of the citizens of Center Hill have been living in the town all their lives; some are second, third and fourth generations.

The lighting of the town's Christmas tree is becoming an annual event, with a healthy turnout the past two years.

Center Hill has a Snowbird South RV Park, and the Florida Grande Motor RV Park is slated to open in October.

## Center Hill

**Population:** 904

**Established:** 1925

**Address of City Hall:** 94 South Virginia Avenue

**Phone number of City Hall:** 793-4431

**City motto:** "To the stars through difficulties"

**Type of government:** City council

**Mayor:** Ralph Barry

**Council Seat 1:** Bubba Hodge

**Council Seat 2:** Elsie Ramsey

**Council Seat 3:** J.R. Smith

**Council Seat 4:** Frank Moore

**Council Seat 5:** Jimmy Smith

**City attorney:** L.E. Taylor

**City Clerk:** Diane Lamb



File photo

Center Hill remains one of Sumter County's more rural towns.