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## Chiefland Watermelon Festival is a resounding success



Chiefland Watermelon Queen Shelbi McCall (center) is shown with Teen Watermelon Queen Rielly Beauchamp (left) and Florida Watermelon Queen Aviana Liuzzo (right).

Story and Photos By Terry Witt

*HardisonInk.com* Correspondent © June 3, 2019 at 2:09 p.m.

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**CHIEFLAND** -- Shelbi McCall was crowned queen of the 65th Annual Chiefland Watermelon Festival Saturday (June 1).

McCall received her crown from 2019 Florida Watermelon Queen Avianna Liuzzo who was the 2018 Chiefland Watermelon Queen.

Shelby Kirton was first runner-up and Ashton Brown was second runner-up.

Rielly Beauchamp was crowned the Teen Watermelon Queen.

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**Moments before she was announced as the 2019 Chieftland Watermelon Queen Shelbi McCall, second from right, is joined by other watermelon royalty. Seen here are (from left) second runner-up Ashtyn Brown, contestants Bailee Everett and Kaley Clink Scales, Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen Taylor Skipper, first runner-up Shelby Kirton, Florida Watermelon Queen Avianna Liuzzo, McCall and 2019 Newberry Watermelon Queen Bethany Barfield.**

The largest watermelon, a 67-pounder was grown by Harold Tillis, sold for \$250 to Keith Maynard representing the Wild Hog Canoe Race.

The largest group of three watermelons, weighing 138 pounds, was grown by 9-year-old Hayden Henderson and sold to Jack Spann of Spann's Heating and Air Conditioning for \$200.

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Watermelon grower representative Sarah Smith is flanked by the buyer, Keith Maynard of the Wild Hog Canoe Race, and 2019 Teen Watermelon Queen Rielly Beauchamp. Smith is the girlfriend of watermelon grower Harold Tillis.



Hayden Henderson, who grew the first-place group of three watermelons, is pictured with buyer Jack Spann.

The crowning of watermelon royalty followed the annual Chiefland Watermelon Festival Parade. More than 75 units participated in the parade.

Thousands of people watched as hundreds of children scrambled for candy thrown from participants in the parade.

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The Levy County Sheriff's Explorer Post 939 serves as the Color Guard for the Chiefland Watermelon Festival Parade.



Chiefland FFA and Alumni offered one of the most colorful floats in the parade.

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**AmVets Post 42 proudly displays its colors.**

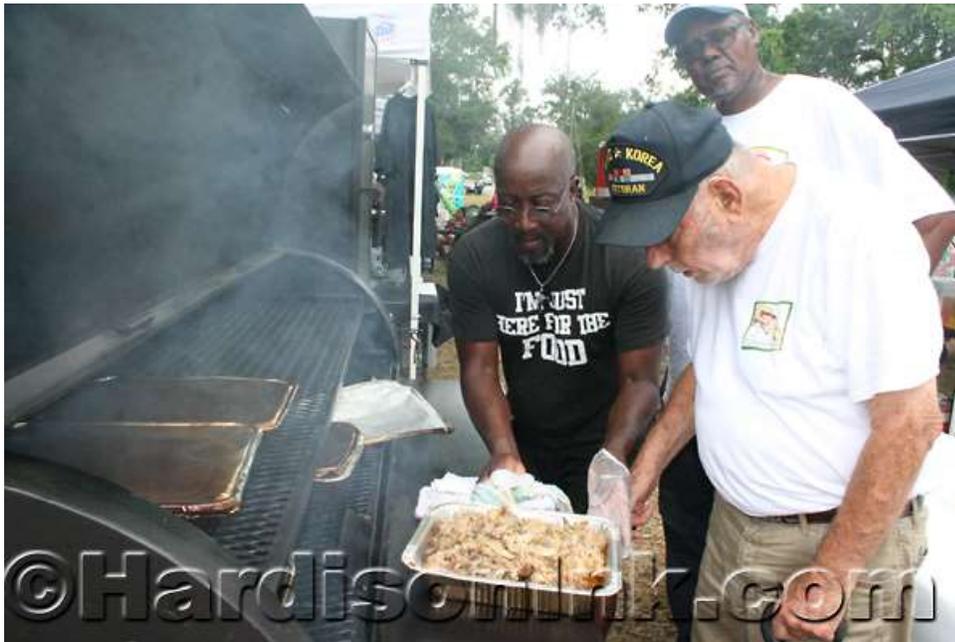


**Laurie Beauchamp and Reagan Hudson were part of the First Baptist Church team slicing watermelons for festival visitors.**

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Avie and Kadence Studstill savor their tasty slices of watermelon.



Children's Table Founder Bill Brown examines a pan of delicious cooked pork as two of the volunteer cooks for the organization, Mike Jenkins in white shirt and Leon Houston look on. The Children's Table was selling pork sandwiches at the watermelon festival as a fund-raiser.

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**Aubrey Gwinn of Tampa Bay Cannabis Company wears a t-shirt bearing the image of a marijuana plant as he talks to customers about CDB oil and its pain relieving properties. CDB oil is derived from marijuana. It is legal.**



**Riverlee Ann Auger, 2019 Tiny Chiefland Watermelon Queen, rides in the parade with her mother.**

The festival in south Chiefland attracted an estimated 2,500 individuals who browsed through the tents of 150 vendors.

Among the vendors was The Children's Table, an organization that delivered free food to 115,000 people last year. The Children's Table operates out of Bronson.

The Children's Table, founded 22 years ago by Bill Brown, also worked with disaster relief organizations in

Puerto Rico, Mexico Beach, Lumberton and Panama City.

Brown said the organization runs on donations but there are always challenges faced by any volunteer group. He said not long ago, both of the group's transport trucks broke down resulting in \$23,000 in repair bills.

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The bills were paid with a credit card.

The Children's Table gives away about one million pounds of free food annually with about one-third of it given to Levy County residents, Brown said.

One of the most popular vendors in the midway was Tampa Bay Cannabis Co. selling CDB oil and the tools to use it. CDB oil is derived from marijuana. CDB oil is sold at most health food stores.

Aubrey Gwinn said everything in the tent was legal. He said they gave paperwork to people who purchased what the company labeled at "raw CDB" oil and CDB flour which had .03 percent THC. The paperwork was to show police the sale was legal if the buyer was stopped with the product.

Medical marijuana is legal in Florida. It was legalized by a constitutional amendment, approved by voters. Gwinn was touting CDB's pain relieving properties. His tent was crowded most of the afternoon.