Workers undertake annual dam maintenance

By Ben Abshire, NEWS-SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Six men, clad in long-sleeve shirts and waterproof rubber boots, worked systematically Friday afternoon down the line of 19 large air bladders at Woodbridge Dam as part of regular cleaning, inspecting and patching the bladders, which are used to hold the weight of Lake O' the Woods on their shoulders.

When the lake is full, the air pres- sure of the bladders is 20 to 25 pounds per square inch. “It’s one-third of what you have in a car tire,” Woodbridge Irrigation District manager Andy Christensen explained.

Now that the lake is empty, the pressure is down to 2 to 3 pounds per square inch, Woodbridge irri- gation technician Brandon Warmerdam estimated.

The pressure of the bladders is controlled by a computer, which constantly monitors changing air pressures and automatically makes adjustments to the water flow and eleva- tion.

“The higher you hold the lake, the more pressure in the air bladder and the less pressure is needed,” Warmerdam explained.

There are two modes of control- ling the pressure: automated and manual.

The first one is a computer program that determines the pressure. The second one is determined by the operator of the system.

“Both systems are critical,” Warmerdam said.

The Department of Water Resources at the El Dorado Irrigation District runs the station managing the flow of millions of gallons to the dam.

When the second mode is used, the water level can be measured five times per minute, and flow changes can be made every few minutes.

The flow downstream can be con- trolled within the width of a pencil, Christensen said, or “of a lot of ink.”

Listening to the constant sound of the river water flowing for 20 to 30 minutes, workers checked the bladders looking for cracks and squeezing themselves into the spaces between them. They removed some of the short branches and other obstructions.

“We don’t want a board with nails that can puncture the bladders in there,” Warmerdam said.

“We’ve had boards chew on the bladders before, it’s a part of nature,” Christensen added.

Warmerdam carefully squeezed in between four of the bladders, inspecting for damage to the thick inflatable rubber bladders, pre- sently made by a hose at the front of the bladders, a few minor cracks were inspected and cleaned.

By John Bays, NEWS-SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

The local youth sports commu- nity is rallying to help a Lodi athlete fight a cancer diagnosis. After approximately one month of painful back spasms, Rock “Rocky” Evans, 13, of Lodi, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Evans played in our organization, the young man who played on their teams and his family was involved, and we want- ed to do something,” Rocky’s dad, Rueben, said.

Rueben said in the email that Tokay High ad- ministrators and the Lodi Police De- partment investigated the rumors that someone might try to cause an incident at Tokay High during graduation, and that someone may have brought a weapon to the school.

Although he could not reach for further comment, Sandstorm said in the email that Tokay High ad- ministrators were able to substantiate the rumors.

“Being a part of Lodi BOBS, our tes- timonials and his family have been affirmed as they have been working onkeeping their son healthy,” Rocky’s mom, Marisa, said.

“Leukemia doesn’t have stages like other cancers. It’s not like diabetes or stages of progression or gets worse, it’s just a constant battle,” Rueben said.

Rocky returned home after 14 days in the hospital, according to his mother. Rocky has re- ceived four rounds of chemothera- py as of Friday along with multi- ple blood tests and a minor surgery to implant a port in his chest for medication to be administered.

“He’s doing great, he’s really strong. We’re just working on man- aging the pain in his back,” Marisa said.

When the Lodi Boosters of Boys and Girls Sports (BOBS) heard of Rocky’s diagnosis, current presi- dent Bill Mariam and former presi- dent Rich Shepard immediately be- gan brainstorming ways to help the young man who played on their basketball, football and soccer teams, according to Marisa.

“Being a part of Lodi BOBS, Rocky played in our organization, as well as his sisters. His whole family was involved, and we want- ed to find a way to give back to them in their time of need,” Marisa said.

Above: Ditch lender Jesus Gutiérrez smooths out rubber adhesive as he works to remove and repair the air bladders at Woodbridge Dam on Friday.

Below: Laborer Reeve Magallanes works by the air bladders at Woodbridge Irrigation District staff clean and repair the air bladders at Woodbridge Dam on Friday.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT 16

By Robert Mueller on Feb. 16, 2018, as he testifies before a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in Washington, D.C.

Mueller indicts 13 for election interference

By John Bays, NEWS-SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Following inside: Share the stories of Florida and Texas. Page 5

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller indit- ed 13 Russians and three Rus- sian companies Friday, accusing them of meddling in the 2016 presidential election in a secret grand jury indictment aimed at disor- dering the Trump cam- paign.

“The Trump indictment, the first charges by Mueller’s office in the Russia investigation, failed to identify anyone in the Trump campaign or to identify any Trump campaign activity,” said the special counsel.

It was not immediately clear whether the indictment was the result of a joint investigation by the FBI and the Justice Department or a separate probe by Mueller.

“We've had beavers chew on the bladders, a few minor cracks were possibly made by a beaver,” Warmerdam said.

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“We’ve had boards chew on the bladders before, it’s a part of nature,” Christensen added.

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