

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 12, 2018**

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## **43rd Annual Pioneer Days Festival**

### **William F. “Bill” Johnson named Lake Wales Pioneer of the Year 2018**

**LAKE WALES, Florida** - The Lake Wales Museum will host the **43rd Annual Pioneer Days Festival** on Saturday, October 27 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sunday, October 28 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m in Lake Wailes Park. This event is a heritage celebration for the whole family with free admission and free parking on both days. During the **Pioneer of Year Celebration** the museum will honor William F. “Bill” Johnson as the 2018 Lake Wales Pioneer of the Year. The celebration will be held during the festival on Saturday, October 27 at 10 AM.



Known by his friends and family as “Bill,” Mr. Johnson was born in Florida on April 4, 1928. He ran a paper route at the age of ten years-old, and later bagged groceries at the Publix located on Stuart Avenue in Lake Wales, and was a bellhop at the Walesbilt Hotel. He made 10 cent tips.

Bill attended Lake Wales High School and played on the football team. After graduating high school, Bill enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he spent 4 years stationed at Pearl Harbor, and worked as an electronics technician. In 1951, he purchased the old Shakespeare’s Radio Shop, located in the Rhodesbilt Arcade. There, he was responsible for selling the first color television in Lake Wales in 1955.

In 1956, Bill married Henryetta “Retta” Pritchett at the First Christian Church on Sessoms Avenue in Lake Wales. They had three children. Retta passed in 2013.

Over the years, Bill has been very active in the community. He coached and sponsored little league baseball, was a member and president of the Lion’s Club, served as president of the Passion Play Amphitheater and Lake Wales High School Stadium. He was active in the Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, VFW, and has won many awards by these organizations, including Lake Wales Business Man of the Year in 1992.

Bill is a pillar of the Lake Wales community, has mentored many youth over the years, and modeled an outstanding work ethic. Please join the museum in honoring a true Lake Wales Pioneer, Mr. Bill Johnson, on Saturday, October 27, 2018 at 10 AM in Lake Wailes Park.

**Family-friendly activities** offered throughout the weekend celebration include historic architecture tours of downtown Lake Wales, Civil War reenactors camp, Talako Indian performers, antique car show and parade at 12 PM on Saturday, October 27, Flywheelers antique tractor and engine exhibits, old-fashioned family games, dunk tank, giant pinball machine, face painting, petting zoo, horse and carriage rides, and early-American trade demonstrations.

**More than 35 artisan and craft vendors** will showcase a range of goods & services including handmade, gemstone and silver jewelry, home goods, kitchen items, gourds woven with natural materials, essential oils, organic & natural clothing & hats, handmade holiday home décor items & candles, organic health products, nail polish, handcrafted Native American flutes, pet supplies and treats, fiber art & crocheted home goods, hand spun & dyed yarn, reclaimed and recycled art and wood décor and home goods, hair accessories, Teddy bears, photography artwork, bath & body care products, greeting cards, children's items, repurposed furniture, gourmet and homemade culinary & food gifts

**Community and business vendors** will have information about local real estate, churches, service clubs, health products, home services, financial planning, child health and safety.

**Food vendors** will have the following for sale: BBQ Ribs, Pork Sandwiches, Gator Tail, Hamburgers, Chicken on a Sticks, Hot Dogs, Chili, Pizza, Popcorn & Kettlecorn, Fruit Pies, Turkey Legs, Boiled Peanuts, Corn on the Cob, Nachos, Philly Cheesesteaks, Grilled Chicken Sandwiches, Greek Options, Coffee, Lemonade, Water & Sodas, Italian Ice, Fruit Smoothies, Baked Goods & Sweets, & Ice Cream

**Entertainment** will feature dance performances and live bands, guitarists, and vocalists playing familiar folk, bluegrass, country, 50's, 60's & 70's tunes, and performances by Polk Avenue and Hillcrest Elementary Schools. The Lake Wales High School Highlander Band will perform at the Pioneer of the Year Celebration beginning 10 AM on Saturday, October 27.

**Beers with Pioneers** specialty and craft brew event will take place on Saturday, October 27 from 4 - 9 p.m. This NEW offering as part of Pioneer Days includes 25 specialty and craft beers, live music, complimentary tasting glass and drawing prize tickets, a vintage photo station, domestic beer favorites and wine, and food from festival vendor will be available for purchase. Advanced tickets are \$25/person and \$30 at the door. Funds raised at the event directly support the Lake Wales Museum ongoing historic preservation, educational programming for all ages, museum exhibits and tours, and community programs. Tickets are now on sale at [www.lakewalesmuseum.org](http://www.lakewalesmuseum.org).

This year's Pioneer Days Festival and Beers with Pioneers events are made possible by the City of Lake Wales, Lake Wales Museum Association, Visit Central Florida, Lake Wales Medical Center, Citizens Bank & Trust, MAX 98.3, The Ledger Media Group, 90.7 WMFE, Haven Magazines, Polk News Sun, WUSF, 97.5 WPCV, WMFE, Sky Motorsports, Bernie Little Distributors, Florida's Natural and IHOP Restaurants.

**About the Lake Wales Museum** - The Lake Wales Museum is Central Florida's stop for history since 1976, and is open Tuesday - Saturday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission is free. The museum features historical exhibits, events, educational programs and tours. Parking is free and the first floor is accessible for persons with disabilities, wheelchairs and strollers. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the Lake Wales Museum.

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LAKE WALES MUSEUM

*Central Florida's stop for history since 1976*

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