



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

VOLUME XXXV ❧ ISSUE 12 ❧ DECEMBER 2015 ❧ www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com

Here Comes Santa Claus!



29th Annual
**Santa Claus Visit
& Charity Food Drive**

Saturday, December 5, 2015
10 a.m.- 2 p.m. • Bloomingdale Golfers Club

Continuing a holiday tradition started 29 years ago; the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association in partnership with the Bloomingdale Golfers Club (BGC) is pleased to announce the return of Santa and his merry band of elves to the community! The annual event features a visit with the "jolly one", photo opportunities, activities and a chance for participants to give to others less fortunate during the holidays. Visitors are asked to bring a non-perishable food item, which will be donated, to The Emergency Care Help Organization (ECHO). New this year, The BGC will provide a brunch for a fee. Pre-register and save. Adults (15 and older) - \$14.99 or \$12.99 pre-paid, Children- \$9.99 or \$8.99 pre-paid. To pre-register, contact the BGC at 813-685-4105. Come hungry and don't forget your camera and food donation!

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Santa Claus is anyone who loves another and seeks to make them happy. *Edwin Osgood Grover*

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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*Rajun Bull Band
Student Government Association
Academic Foundation
Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale*

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WINNER

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Hillsborough County
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Recognition Award

Best Communications
Newsletter Category

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

YOUR INSIDE CONNECTIONS

Bloomington Homeowners Association, Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road - Valrico, Florida 33596 - (813) 681-2051

Email: Bloomington.Homeowners@gmail.com

Website: www.BloomingtonHOA.com

BHA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Offices of Bloomington Special Taxing District:

3509 Bell Shoals Road
Valrico, Florida 33596

Directors at Large:

Sean Donahue
Billy Hightower
Bobbi Ferraro
Beth Smedley
Joanie Wilson
Charlie Woodcock

President: *George T. May IV*

Vice President: *Daniel Berkowitz*

Secretary: *Suzy Watts*

Treasurer: *Mary Galin*

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



JOY BOISSELLE

Editor - The Bloomington Gazette

3509 Bell Shoals Rd.

Valrico, FL 33596 - (813) 681-2051

Email: InBloomingtonNews@gmail.com

Website: www.BloomingtonHOA.com

Senior Staff Writers: Miriam Leech and Mack Austin

Staff Writers: Nicole Cluck and Deidre Morgan



TONY DEL CASTILLO

General Manager

Brandon & Southshore Times

11268 Winthrop Main Street, Suite 101

Riverview, Florida 33578 - (813) 661-2438

Email: tdelcastillo@tampabay.com

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The official publication of the BHA since 1980

The Gazette is delivered free to Bloomington residents on the first Saturday of each month.

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Yard of the Month



Photo: Joy Boisselle

Donald & Sallye Anderson 4325 Glendon Place Valrico, FL 33596 (Cambridge Cove)

Yard of the Month is sponsored by Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale. Send your Yard of the Month nominations to:
InBloomingdaleNews@gmail.com or call
(813) 681-2051

Winners will receive a \$25 gift card redeemable at Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale



Woof! 10 Pet Safety Tips for the Holidays

Excerpt courtesy of ADT Security Services

Follow these safety tips and help your pets enjoy the holidays, too!

1. **Secure, hide or cover all electrical cords and electronics.**
2. **Keep all holiday foods out of a pet's reach.** Remember that dogs can't eat chocolate so make sure this is out of reach.
3. **Keep your pet's daily routine as consistent as possible.**
4. **Keep your pets out of any rooms with a holiday tree.** Although this may be difficult, the fact is that decorated trees pose many dangers.
5. **Avoid using long strings, lights or décor in areas accessible to pets.**
6. **Keep an eye on candles and open flames.**
7. **Be careful with holiday plants.** Common items such as mistletoe, holly, poinsettias and lilies can be toxic to your dog or cat.
8. **Update vaccinations and ID tags.** A lost pet can literally ruin your holiday celebrations.
9. **Create a safe haven for your pets.** Pets need an area where they can retreat to if they are scared or overwhelmed.
10. **Keep a list of emergency phone numbers for your pet.** You should always have the contact information for your veterinarian, a 24-hour pet hospital, and the Animal Poison Control Center easily accessible.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Hotline: 888.426.4435

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) provides toxicology educational programs, consulting services, review of case data as an alternative to traditional animal research, and a 24-hour veterinary diagnostic and treatment hotline.

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BHA COMMUNITY CORNER



DON'T FORGET TO LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!



2015 Membership Drive concludes, 2016 drive starts Jan. 15

As the 2015 Membership Drive nears its end, The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association thanks all who joined this year making it the most successful membership drive yet.

The BHA still needs your support. When you receive your membership letter and scholarship donation request in January, we ask that you again support the Association. Your membership helps this dedicated group of volunteers continue to keep Bloomingdale a great community in which to raise a family, and a great place to call home.

Your dues fund all special programs and services including this newspaper, a part-time staff, today's annual Santa visit and the upcoming first-ever community yard sale and the community clean-up. Every member and dollar matter.

The BHA is the only community organization representing Bloomingdale's nearly 5,000 residences and over 40 neighborhoods in mandatory and voluntary Homeowner Associations. The BHA is an IRC 501(c) (4) non-profit organization, run entirely by volunteers who live in your neighborhoods.

Make checks payable to the BHA and mail to 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33596. An easier method is to use our PayPal option. Go to www.bloomingdalehoa.com, look for the PayPal link and follow the simple instructions. All membership money collected goes back to our community, and all residents are welcome at our monthly board meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Bell Shoals office.

2016 Membership Drive – Membership notices will be mailed by Jan. 15, 2016. Please consider joining and supporting your community. Note: Chadd's Ford residents will receive their notices in January after the final vote has been tallied for their bid to become a mandatory HOA community on Jan. 9.

Note: The BHA no longer has an active post office box address. Please update your automatic bill pay if applicable.



BHA EVENT CALENDAR



Courtesy Photo: Alex Philips

TODAY

Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. / **Santa Claus Visit and Charity Food Drive, Bloomingdale Golfers Club, 4113 Natures Way Blvd. Bring your camera and a canned food donation!**

Your Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, in partnership with the Bloomingdale Golfers Club, continues its holiday tradition for children benefitting an area food bank. Please bring a non-perishable food item for our charity food drive and don't forget to bring your camera!

Come meet our new Santa, pictured left. Each child will receive a special gift and candy cane from the "jolly one."

For more information, call (813) 681-2051 or email Homeowners@gmail.com.



Tuesday, Dec. 8, 6:30 p.m. / BHA Monthly Board Meeting, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Residents always welcome. Call 813-681-2051 for information.

Monday, Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. / Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Monthly Trustee Meeting, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Call 813-684-6667 for information.

No BACC Meeting in December / Bloomingdale Area Community Council chaired by Hillsborough County Master Deputy Curtis Warren, Bloomingdale Community Station, 3622 Erindale Drive, 813-635-8040. Learn about safety and security issues affecting our community.



BHA BRIEFS

November Board Meeting Highlights and Other Board News

Hillsborough County officials attended the November meeting to deliver an update on the upcoming improvements scheduled for Bloomingdale Avenue and Culbreath Road. Improvements include added turn lanes, upgraded signals and bus turn-in lanes on both sides of Culbreath Road. Construction starts in January and should finish in the summer of 2016. A public meeting was held at the Bloomingdale Library on Dec. 3 to inform the community of the upcoming construction. Details including an aerial diagram will be published in the January Gazette.

River Crossing HOA President Sean Donahue was elected to the board as its tenth member. Two seats remain as well as three alternate positions. Residents are encouraged to join the volunteer board.

Final plans were discussed for today's Santa visit and meetings were scheduled for the annual clean-up and yard sale events upcoming in February and March next year. Details will follow on Facebook and in upcoming Gazette issues.

Deed Update Initiative

The deed restriction update began with the mail-out of the new documents

to Chadd's Ford residents on Nov. 18. A town hall meeting for the neighborhood is scheduled for Dec.19 with the BHA board and attorney. Residents will have the opportunity to ask questions and raise their concerns prior to the tabulation of official votes on Jan. 9. The initiative requires a homeowner majority "yes" vote to pass – For Chadd's Ford, this means 25 of the 48 homeowners.

Regardless of the Chadd's Ford outcome, the BHA will continue the initiative with mail-outs to Windsor Woods and Bloomingdale Estates residents in the spring. The board's goal is to gauge support for the costly initiative in these three neighborhoods prior to moving forward with the remaining voluntary HOA neighborhoods. Currently, this update does not affect our neighborhoods where a mandatory HOA is currently in place.

To view the new document, visit www.BloomingdaleHoa.com and click on the pdf link. After the first town hall, a "frequently asked questions" document will be posted as well.





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Healthy Holidays / Now through Dec. 31 / Campo YMCA / 3414 Culbreath Rd. / Join before Dec. 31 and receive a \$25 gift certificate! Also, join with a friend and save 20 percent forever! Learn how at www.tampaymca.org or call 813-684-1371.



Gift of Hope Holiday Toy Gathering / Now through Dec. 16 / Campo YMCA / 3414 Culbreath Rd. / The Campo Family YMCA and First Baptist Church are collecting toys this holiday season for our local families. Please drop off new, unwrapped toys by Wednesday, Dec. 16. For information, call 813-684-1371.

GIFT OF HOPE

Holiday Toy Gathering

The Campo Family YMCA and First Baptist Church are collecting toys this holiday season. Please bless our local families with new, unwrapped toys by Wednesday, Dec. 16.

Thank you for your kindness!

Campo Family YMCA
3414 Culbreath Road, Valrico FL 33596
P 813 684 1371 www.tampaymca.org

Annual Menorah Lighting / Dec. 6 / 5 p.m. / Westfield Brandon Mall Outdoor Restaurant Courtyard / 459 Brandon Town Center, Brandon / Join us as we celebrate Chanukah at our annual Menorah lighting at Westfield Brandon mall. New this year - Glow in the Dark! Featuring: the Menorah's center flame will be kindled by State Representative Dan Raulerson; a glow in the dark Menorah; face painting; Tony the balloon guy; hot latkes; Chanukah music & dancing; glow in the dark Chanukah gifts for everyone in attendance; and chocolate gelt. Free admission! Come and bring a friend!

Walk through Bethlehem / Dec. 10-13 / Kings Avenue Baptist Church / 2602 S. Kings Avenue, Brandon / With the help of over 300 workers, Kings Avenue Baptist Church presents "Walk through Bethlehem," a re-creation of the town of Bethlehem, as it existed during the time of Christ. Open Dec. 10, 6:30-9:30 p.m., Dec. 11, 6:30-10 p.m., Dec. 12, 4-10 p.m. and Dec. 13, 4-9 p.m. For information, visit www.kingsavenue.org/WTB.



Santa's Holiday Revue / Dec. 11 / 7- approx. 8 p.m. / Center Place Fine Arts & Civic Association / 619 Vonderburg Drive, Brandon / Santa's Holiday Revue is a fast-paced, rollicking musical that takes a joyous, round the world tour of dances, songs, and stories from Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and more. Sing, clap, and tap along as you learn new and old traditions, customs, and folklore that instill the magic of the season. Ages Pre-K to 3rd grade. \$6 members/\$7 non-members. For information, call 813-685-8888 or visit www.centerplacebrandon.org.

Shop Local Holiday Expo Presented by the Valrico/ FishHawk Chamber of Commerce / Dec. 12 / 9 a.m.-noon / Park Square in FishHawk / Showcasing local business of Valrico and FishHawk, the Holiday Expo will include good old-fashioned fun with games, crafts, shopping, and Florida Santa with his holiday flock of flamingos. Sign up at www.valricofishhawk.org. Chamber member booths \$50; Non-chamber member booths \$100. All proceeds benefit local Meals on Wheels. For information, e-mail bridget@cardinalroofingandsolar.com.

2nd Annual Season of Giving Celebration / Dec. 12 / 10 a.m.- 1 p.m. / Noah's Ark Animal Hospital / 4338 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico

Second Annual "Season of Giving" Celebration

Saturday, December 12
10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Noah's Ark Animal Hospital
4338 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico
(813) 662-7275 / www.noahsarkanimal.com

Meet the Staff of Noah's Ark Animal ~ Hospital Clinic Tours
Refreshments ~ Face Painting ~ Holiday Pet Photos ~ Games
Movie presentation: Disney, "Santa Buddies"
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Blood Mobile...AND More!

FREE Holiday Fun for your entire Family and Friends

Holiday Book Sale / Dec. 12 / 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. / Bloomingdale Library / 1906 Bloomingdale Avenue, Valrico / Books for sale will include books for adults, children, videos, CD's, audio books, cookbooks, book bags, bookmarks, and much . All funds raised support programs at the Bloomingdale Regional Library. For information, call 813-273-3652.

Brandon Ballet presents The Nutcracker / Dec. 12 and 13 / Matinee and Evening Performances / Spoto Auditorium / 8538 Eagle Palm Drive, Riverview / Experience the thrill and magic of Brandon Ballet's The Nutcracker! Tickets \$25 for adults, \$15 for children under 12, and \$20 for seniors 55+. Tickets available at www.tututix.com/brandonballet. For information contact the Brandon Ballet at dance@brandonballet.org or 813-684-4282.



Michael W. Smith Holiday Concert / Dec. 16 / 7:30 p.m. / Bell Shoals Baptist Church / 2102 Bell Shoals Road, Brandon / Bell Shoals Baptist Church invites you to a special evening featuring The Imperial Symphony Orchestra (ISO) conducted by David Hamilton, the Bell Shoals Worship Choir, and award-winning icon, Michael W. Smith. Tickets purchased in advance at www.ticketfly.com range from \$28 to \$68. Tickets are also be available at the church the night of the concert. For information, visit www.bellshoals.com.

Winter Fest 2015 / Dec. 18 / 3:30-5:50 p.m. / The Village Early Learning Center / 3741 Canoga Park Drive, Brandon / Join us for Winter Fest 2015 - a celebration of everything that makes this season special. Enjoy performances by Village Early Learning Center students, sip some cocoa, get your picture taken with Santa, and nibble on refreshments. No holiday season is complete without a visit to Winter Fest at The Village! For information, call 813-651-0779 or stop by The Village and ask for Tami Howell.

BHA Rings in 2016 with New and Old "Traditions"



New! Saturday, February 27, 2016 / First-ever Community-Wide Yard Sale,
Stay tuned for details in the Gazette and on Facebook.

2016 Annual Clean-Up Day

March 5, 2016
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. **OR** until bins are full



Hillsborough County Parks Maintenance Facility
1629 Natures Way (behind Alafia Elementary School)

Visit our Facebook page or see the Bloomingdale Gazette for updates.

BHA Community Office: 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33596
Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (813) 681-2051

Saturday, March 5, 2016 / Annual Community Clean-up, Stay tuned for details
in the Gazette and on Facebook.



Bloomingdale Real Estate Update

By Ryan Brantley



The Chadderton Real Estate Group
Keller Williams Realty

813-924-8187

Ryan@RyanBrantley.org

www.chaddertongroup.com

Happy Holidays! 2015 is coming to a close very quickly so it's time to start thinking about the new year. If you're thinking about selling your home, now is the perfect time to get ready to show potential buyers why you fell in love with your Bloomingdale home in the first place. After all, this is one of the most sought after neighborhoods in Valrico/Brandon and even the Bay area!

Do you remember why you chose Bloomingdale? For most, one of the major reasons buyers choose this area is for the school districts, which means family is of the utmost importance to potential buyers. For parents whose kids attend Cimino or Alafia, being able to walk their kids to school is a HUGE plus. In addition, the neighborhood offers recreational areas, sidewalks throughout for running and jogging, community events, and close proximity to the Campo YMCA.

So where does your property stand within your individual neighborhood? Below is a breakdown of two neighborhoods. Each month a new featured neighborhood will be included.

The Greens

Over the last year, the average sales price in the Greens was \$290,575 with a high price of \$339,500 and a low price of \$180,000. All homes sold in the last year had private pools and had an average of 4 bedrooms and 2,550 square feet with the average home selling for \$114.50 per square foot. Best of all, many homes are located directly on the golf course!

River Crossing

Like the Greens, most properties sold in the last year in River Crossing had private pools - all except one. The average sales price was \$205,729 with a high sales price of \$239,000 and low sales price of \$141,000. The average property sold had 3.5 bedrooms, 1,939 square feet and sold for \$106.46 per square foot. Another huge selling point - some homes in this neighborhood have access to the Alafia River!

** MLS statistics were based on rough property lines for individual neighborhoods and in-cluded homes sold Nov. 29, 2014 through Nov. 29, 2015. Sales not entered into the MLS did not count in these statistics.*

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Ellen Bess has been writing for nearly as long as she can remember. Her humor columns have appeared in newspapers and periodicals in North Carolina, Georgia and central Florida. She lives with her husband, Frazier, a retired high school Chemistry teacher, one cat and two dogs (all rescues) in Bloomingdale West.



'Tis the Season

What happens to people this time of year? Never mind. I know what happens because it happens to me. The week before Thanksgiving, we're filled with a smug sense of well being. After all, Christmas is still a month away. There's plenty of time!

Immediately after Thanksgiving we compile "The Lists." Gift lists, card lists, invitation lists. Plenty of time! As the Big Day approaches, we begin dreaming, not of a White Christmas, but excuses to postpone shopping. Then comes that awful morning when we awake with the realization that "It's almost here and I've done NOTHING!" That's the stage I hit last December.

I mumbled to myself all the way to the mall. "Perhaps I'll find everything in one store! It's the Season of Miracles, right?" Wrong. Every department store I entered was so empty, they echoed. I was doomed. A victim of procrastination. As I was sitting and wallowing in self pity, I felt the bench shift as someone sat down. Glancing over, I beheld a furry white cuff attached to a bright red jacket which was just below a ratty fake beard affixed to a face so youthful I wondered if he was weaned yet. "Nifty. I come in search of a miracle and find Kinder Klaus."

"Merry Christmas," he grinned, flashing his braces at me. "Bet you never thought you'd be sitting next to Santa today, did you?"

"Never. Aren't you a little young for this?"



"Not really. See, I got this theory about Santa Claus. He's really ageless. He's either as young as the hearts of his believers. Or," he continued, looking straight at me, "he's as old and beaten as the spirits of his detractors. The kids who sit on my lap? They don't care how young I am. They're too busy believing. And it's not just kids. Lots of older people stop and tell me what they want for Christmas. Know why? Because even though their bodies got older, their hearts never stopped believing. Well, got a line of kids waiting! Merry Christmas!"

As he walked away, I thought about what this child had just taught me. Then I found myself thinking about another Child and what He taught millions of people. Somehow, both their philosophies came together to remind me what this Season is really about. Belief. And Wonderment.

"Hey, Santa!" I yelled. "Merry Christmas to you, too!" He turned and smiled, his braces catching the lights and nearly blinding me. "That's the spirit," he laughed. Yes, that's the Spirit. And may all of you find it every day of your lives. Merry Christmas.

Looking Back...



This month's, "Looking Back" features photos from the first-ever Santa visit to Bloomingdale on December 20, 1986. It is unknown if these photos ever made the community paper or who this Santa or children are, but 29 years later, this event continues to bring delight and smiles to children of all ages. Do you have any information about these photos? Contact inbloomingdalenews@gmail.com.



*Roby 12-20-86
7 1/2 yrs*



*Keely!
12-20-86
11 months*

Courtesy Photos: Susan DeLuca



Teri is the founder and practice director of Flourish Nutrition Center in Brandon. She considers it her joy and privilege to serve women in achieving their personal best. Teri has lived in the Central



Florida area for over 25 years and resides in the Somerset development of Bloomingdale. She has three lovely daughters, two great sons-in-law and twelve amazing grandchildren.

To learn more about Flourish Nutrition Center contact Teri at (813)309-3349, email teri@flourishdesigningwellness.com or visit www.flourishdesigningwellness.com. The center is located at 716 South Oakwood Ave. in Brandon.

Comfort and Joy to You "aka" Surviving the Holidays

The Holiday Season is full of fun and festive gatherings outside of our normal routines. Yet routine is such a stabilizer in our day-to-day lives. By January 1, we can feel pretty wrung out rather than ready to joyfully ring in a New Year.



Photo courtesy of pavilliongift.com

Here are three simple tips that will go a long way to keep you strong and well while enjoying the holiday season:

Step up your Vitamin C

Your body doesn't store Vitamin C so it needs replenishing each day for a strong immune system. Any one of these favorites will get you to your daily-recommended intake with ease: 6 strawberries, 1 kiwi, 1 cup of broccoli, or 2 clementines.



Photo courtesy of ifraorg.org

Commit to 4 or 5 days of sweet routine

Work, school, worship, balanced meals, regular bed times, neighborhood walks, grocery shopping. Events and meals out are more fun when we have had a few days of restful, stable normalcy.

Think it through before you commit

Sometimes roasting mini-marshmallows over a candle and reading a great holiday story together at home are much more meaningful than one more party with people you see regularly. What to wear, when to eat, how to get there, what to bring, how much this will cost- it can stack up to be quite an ordeal. Holiday gatherings have their place and are a great way to enjoy friendships. Just give it a second thought before you say "yes" to one more thing.



Photo courtesy of webelfamily.com

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As the holiday season approaches, this quick reference guide will help residents plan ahead to recycle the usual containers, cans, and cardboard boxes, and provide tips on what to do with those unique holiday items. Recycling and disposal options for Hillsborough County Solid Waste customers are available at www.HillsboroughCounty.org/RecycletheHolidays or by calling 813-272-5680.

Holiday Curbside Collection Changes; No Make Up Days:

- No curbside collection Friday, Dec. 25
- No curbside collection of trash or yard waste Friday, Jan. 1
- Recycling collection will occur Friday, Jan. 1

Recycling in Blue Curbside Cart:

Empty and rinse recyclable food and beverage containers. Recycling items include plastic bottle and containers No. 1-7, aluminum, tin, and steel cans; milk, juice, and broth cartons, and glass bottles and jars. NOT recyclable: plastic bags, film, or shrink wrap.

Paper and Cardboard should be clean and tear easily. Items include newspaper, office paper, junk mail, paperback books, magazines, paperboard food boxes, cereal boxes, and paper towel rolls; greeting cards and wrapping paper. Flatten cardboard boxes. NOT recyclable: gift bags, tissue paper, ribbons, and bows.

Recycling Electronics:

- Community Collection Centers for no additional fee will accept items containing a digital display or circuit board, including televisions, computers, laptops, mobile devices, stereo equipment, gaming consoles, VCR/DVD players and printers. Discard small appliances such as toasters, crock pots, electric skillets, blenders, hair dryers, and curling irons in your GRAY garbage cart.

Recycling Live Christmas Trees:

- Curbside pickup of live Christmas trees is available. Remove all decorations, lights, and tinsel. Cut the tree into sections no larger than 4-feet long and 6-inches in diameter and place curbside on your regular yard waste collection day
- Live tree drop off is available at several Yard Waste Processing Facilities, after removal of decorations, lights, and tinsel. The closest to the Bloomingdale community is at 346 Falkenburg Rd.

Complete details on Hillsborough County Solid Waste facility locations, hours, and disposal guidelines are available at www.HillsboroughCounty.org/SolidWaste.



Photo: arvada.org



Photo: Allison Colby-Campbell



Make Your Financial Future a Priority.

Unlike other chores that pile up in the driveway, clutter the garage or run wild in the front yard, your financial situation is a little less obvious. That's why it's so important to take advantage of our complimentary financial review at least once a year.

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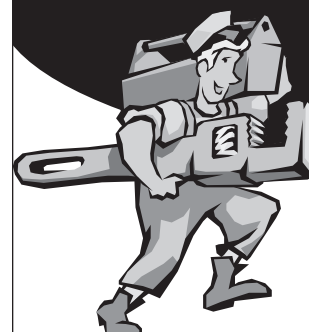
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Thank You to Our Fall Festival Gold Sponsors!

As we near completion of our Fall Fest sponsor thank you's, the last group we want to showcase are our Gold Sponsors. Gold sponsors contributed \$150 or more to this year's event. This month, we thank Adorable Pets by Dena, Marshall Pool Services, Noah's Ark Animal Hospital, 5/3 Bank and Magruder Insurance Agency.

From Green to Clean - Marshall Pool Services Deliver

Marshall Pool Services is Tampa's leading woman owned pool service company. Fall Fest Gold Sponsor and Bloomingdale resident Tia Marshall and crew are ready to help transform your pool into an oasis. Call Tia at 813-716-1325, email marshallpollservicef@gmail.com and visit her business website at www.MarshallPoolServices.com.

Photo: Nicole Cluck



5/3 Bank - Community Service is a Hallmark



Photo: Nicole Cluck

No matter where Fifth Third Bank is located, the company is always an involved community partner. The 5/3 Branch on Lithia Pinecrest Road is no exception as they took part in the community's annual festival as a gold sponsor. For all your banking needs, call 813-654-4464 or visit the website at www.53.com.

Adorable Pets by Dena - Free Belly Rubs With Every Groom



Gazette File Photo

Dena Craig owner of Adorable Pets by Dena in Valrico has been serving our four-legged friends since 1992. A long-time community supporter, Craig was a gold sponsor at this year's Fall Festival. The pet salon is open Monday - Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and is located at 3212 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. Call 684-5693 or email adorablepetsbydena@gmail.com for more information on various grooming packages to fit your pet's needs.

Noah's Ark Animal Hospital, Treating Your Pets Like Family



Photo: Noah's Ark Animal Hospital

At Noah's Ark Animal Hospital, Dr. Sharon Hunter and her staff provide first-rate pet care - both routine services and emergency care. A Fall Fest Gold Sponsor, Hunter and her team have regularly supported events in the Bloomingdale community. For information, call 813-642-7501 or schedule an appointment online at www.noahsarkanimal.com. The hospital is located at 4338 Bell Shoals Road.

For Peace of Mind - Call the Magruder Insurance Agency



Photo: Magruder Agency

Family owned and operated since 1989, Magruder Insurance Agency offers policies for auto, home, motorcycle, RV, watercraft and more. Patricia and her daughter, Stephanie make "personal attention" and finding the best coverage within a customer's means a priority. That philosophy is a major reason for the agency's success. Located at 655 W Lumsden Rd, contact the Magruder Agency at 813-654-3100.



Thank You to Our Fall Festival Platinum Sponsors!

We continue to profile our generous fall festival platinum sponsors. Platinum sponsors are those whose combined donations of cash, goods, and services total more than \$250. This month, we feature Heather Rose Photography, Get the Facts Home Inspection, Pilka & Associates, P.A.; Birthday's to Banquets and Jeremiah's Italian Ice.

Local Firm Offers Legal Service with a Personal Touch

By Suzanne Jones

Pilka & Associates, P.A. is a full service law firm conveniently located off Providence Road in Brandon. The A+ rated Better Business Bureau (BBB) company serves our Bloomingdale community as the law firm for the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association. So in a way, you could say it's your law firm, too.



In business for 27 years, Pilka & Associates aims to keep its 17 employees focused on providing personal service to clients. "Pilka & Associates, P.A. is founded on the principle that bigger is not

necessarily better," offered Dan Pilka, owner. "In the age of mega-banks, multi-national corporations, and large, impersonal law firms, the people who most often suffer by such growth are the customers and clients. Our goal is to provide you with the personal attention you and your company deserve."

Recently the firm participated in Bloomingdale's annual Fall Festival as an event sponsor. "This is our second year participating and sponsoring the event," commented Pilka. "It helps us to get to know the community better and to meet some business people with whom we can have a good working relationship."

Pilka & Associates provides a variety of legal services to individuals and businesses: consumer bankruptcy, business law, civil litigation, collection services, commercial and residential real estate, estate planning and probate, family law, insurance disputes, personal injury and military law. Contact the firm via phone at 813-502-1097 or visit www.pilka.com.

Pilka & Associates, P.A. is dynamic law firm ready to meet all your legal needs. Pictured (L to R) at the recent Fall Festival are Jeff Sirmons, and firm owner Dan Pilka. Not pictured are attorneys Joseph Reed and Dixie Brady.

Photo: Pilka & Associates, P.A.



Photo: Nicole Cluck

Heather Rose Photography Captures One Smile at a Time

By Nicole Cluck



An outdoor photo session on a hot, sunny day of a family with several young children and maybe a dog or two might be a photographer's worst nightmare. For photographer Heather Fenzau, owner of Heather Rose Photography, this is just one of her specialties.

Candid photography, portraits, posed photo sessions, props or no props, indoor and outdoor venues – Fenzau can accommodate most client wishes. In business for two years, her inspiration is simply creating a visual depiction of a subject's everyday joy and emotion.

In October, Fenzau returned to Bloomingdale's Fall Festival for the second time as a platinum sponsor. "This is a great community of people and it helps me to introduce myself and business," she explained of her participation at the fest. The talented photographer donates a free photo booth for festgoers. The Fall Festival's everyday ambiance fits right in with her photography style.

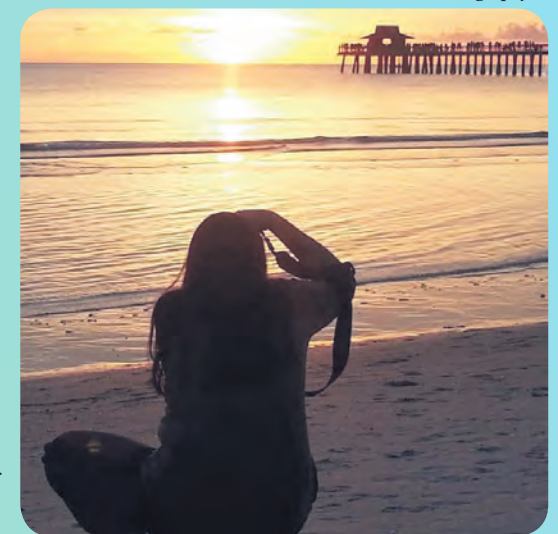
Heather Rose Photography, besides providing a wide range of photography services, also offers a flexible appointment schedule. Studio hours are Monday-Friday, 5-10 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, all day. After a session is completed, clients can view and purchase prints through the business website at www.heatherrosephotography.com.

For information or to schedule an appointment, call 813-431-6102, or email heatherosephoto@gmail.com.



At the BHA's Fall Festival in October, photographer Heather Fenzau donated a photo booth for family photos. Check out her work at www.heatherrosephotography.com/.

Photos: Heather Rose Photography



A photographer's passion does not end with the end of a workday... photographer Heather Fenzau of Heather Rose Photography aptly demonstrates that concept.

Local Company Checks Inside and Out

By Suzanne Jones



Get The Facts Home Inspection company is a one-stop shop for homeowners and buyers in need of thorough visual inspections of both the interior and the exterior of a home. Certified home inspectors are tasked with upholding its mission of ensuring that clients “Get the Facts” about the home in question so that they can “buy with confidence, and sell with pride.”

Located at 867 West Bloomingdale Ave., Get the Facts offers a variety of inspection services, many of which nearly guarantee confidence when making the largest purchase in a homebuyer’s life. From the “routine” roof, air conditioning and standard appliance inspections, Certified Master Inspector and owner Joe Svehla also checks for foundation, driveway, stucco and paint issues to name just a few.

Other services include termite inspections and wind mitigation inspections, which can save homeowners hundreds of dollars on insurance costs. A 90-Day warranty backs up Svehla’s commitment to getting the job done right and giving clients the peace of mind that his comprehensive inspections won’t disappoint.

Residents may have met Svehla at the recent Fall Festival where he made his mark as a platinum sponsor. He has lived in Bloomingdale for eight years and values the schools most of all. “I decided to get involved in this year’s Bloomingdale Fall Festival as a way to support the community,” the platinum sponsor said. “The event was also a way to get our name out. Not to mention that the food trucks were great!”



To learn more about Get The Facts, contact them at 813-785-4620, or visit www.getthefactshomeinspection.com.

Get The Facts Home Inspections owner and Bloomingdale resident Joe Svehla enjoyed a day at the recent fall festival with a young fest-goer. As a platinum sponsor, Svehla used the day as an opportunity to introduce his company and its services to the community.

Photo: Nicole Cluck

Birthdays to Banquets Brings the Party to You

By Miriam Leech



For Birthdays to Banquets owner Jeanne Baldi, community is an integral part of her business, and the reason she chose to be a sponsor of the annual Bloomingdale Homeowner’s Association (BHA) Fall Festival this year.

Photo: Jeanne Baldi



Birthdays to Banquets is an event planning business that celebrated its 1-year anniversary in September. Baldi offers planning from start to finish--providing all decorations, locating venues, and bringing in all the vendors. Services include everything from providing staff for the event to just providing decorations and letting the client run with their own event.

Baldi offers full party planning services at a reasonable cost, and also offers services for business functions, including luncheons, ribbon cuttings, and grand openings.

The BHA Fall Festival provided Baldi with the perfect opportunity to meet other local business owners and introduce Birthdays to Banquets to the Bloomingdale community. “We chose this event because being part of the community is ingrained in who we are.”

All of the entertainers, bakers, and caterers Baldi uses for her events are small, local business owners. “Our goal is to grow by supporting the community businesses,” says the event planner.



Photo: Nicole Cluck

Birthdays to Banquets created this centerpiece for the Riverview Woman’s Club Mad Hatter Tea Party, a fundraising event to support the organization’s scholarship fund.

To plan an event with Birthdays to Banquets, contact Jeanne Baldi at 813-856-9222 or e-mail jeanne@birthdaystobanquets.com.

Birthdays to Banquets owner Jeanne Baldi was a first-time platinum sponsor of the Bloomingdale Homeowner’s Association (BHA) Fall Festival this year. Her business offers event planning at reasonable prices using local vendors.

Keeping It Cool with Jeremiah’s Italian Ice

By Miriam Leech



Jeremiah’s Italian Ice opened in September and has given Bloomingdale the freeze—but in a very tasty way. Residents have been lining up to get their signature Italian ice, soft ice cream, and the Jeremiah’s Gelati, the perfect layering of Italian ice and soft ice cream.

Owner Jeremy Litwack was excited to be a first-time sponsor of the Bloomingdale Homeowner’s Association (BHA) Fall Festival this year because, “Jeremiah’s loves to get actively get involved and contribute to the community. We are one big family!”

Jeremiah’s Italian Ice is known for its outstanding customer service in addition to the tasty frozen treats. Customers also can expect an overall fun-night-out experience.

Litwack moved to the area in June to open the Bloomingdale store. Says the owner, “This community has been exceedingly welcoming of our business and we are all very excited to become part of your Bloomingdale family!”

The fall fest provided the business the opportunity to introduce their new location and meet the community while delighting fest-goers with samples of their Italian ice. With Best Frozen Dessert Awards to their credit, Jeremiah’s has been a huge hit at its location on Bloomingdale Avenue in the Publix shopping center.

Jeremiah’s Italian Ice is located at 825 East Bloomingdale Avenue, and is open Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. For information, call 813-324-8900.



Bloomingdale resident Haylee Merritt serves up Jeremiah’s Italian Ice at the Fall Festival on October 24.

Photo: Miriam Leech



Three products define Jeremiah’s Italian Ice: signature Italian ice, soft ice cream, and the Jeremiah’s Gelati, an ice and soft ice cream combo. Try them all at the Bloomingdale store.

Photo: Jeremiah’s Italian Ice

BLOOMING IN BLOOMINGDALE

Photo Provided By: Peter and Eileen Kadzielewski

...HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Editor's Note: A column for our green and brown thumb gardeners penned by local garden experts and amateurs from the Valrico Garden Club (VGC). To learn about the VGC, contact Mary Kay McMahan at 813-684-6323, email danmcmahan@aol.com or visit Facebook/Valrico Garden Club.

National Wreaths across America Day - Remember. Honor. Teach.

By Gwen Graverson



Photo: www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.com

Remember, Honor, Teach – The simple, yet profound, mission statement of Wreaths across America, a non-profit organization. Each December, the organization coordinates annual wreath-laying ceremonies across the nation in tribute to our fallen veterans.

Established in 1992 at Arlington National Cemetery, volunteers laid 5,000 donated wreaths at veterans' headstones. Last year, at Arlington more than 230,000 wreaths

adorned the headstones of our nation's heroes placed there by 50,000 volunteers. The observance has evolved through the years to include a "Veteran's Parade" between Maine and Virginia "where organizers "spread our message about the importance of remembering our fallen heroes, honoring those who serve, and teaching our children about the sacrifices made by veterans and their families to preserve our freedoms."

The observance began at The Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell in 2006, thanks in part to a group of military veterans who organized the cemetery's inclusion in the annual observance. From modest beginnings that year – seven wreaths were laid and 40 individuals attended – to a full-scale tribute in 2014 – 12,000 volunteers laid 10,000 wreaths – the ceremony continues to grow. With 108,000 veterans at rest in the Florida cemetery, organizers hope to one day adorn every grave with a Remembrance Wreath.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, the Florida National Cemetery will host their Wreaths Across America wreath laying tribute. A police and motorcycle escort from Lakeland will accompany the wreaths to the cemetery where they are scheduled to arrive at 10 a.m. Wreaths will be available for gravesite placement shortly thereafter. At 11:30 am, the Holiday Wreath Laying Ceremony begins and is timed to begin at all National Cemeteries at the same time.

On a personal note, my husband and I have attended the ceremony for the past few years. Arrive early and give yourself plenty of time to park. Seating is limited so bring a chair and some water. Onsite shuttles are available for those that need help getting to and from their cars.

The Florida National Cemetery is located at 6502 SW 102nd Ave. in Bushnell. For general information, call 352-793-7740. For ceremony information or to donate, visit the website at <http://wreathscrossamericabushnell.com>. The point of contact for Bushnell Wreaths across American is Randy Lewer. He may be reached at 813-690-2571 or via email at: Flankerusvmvc5@verizon.net.

"Don't say I should have. Say I did."

Marine Sgt. Jeffrey L. Kirk, awarded Silver Star, KIA Dec. 12, 2004

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Ned T. Johnston/Released



Donate Baby Items for Needy Families

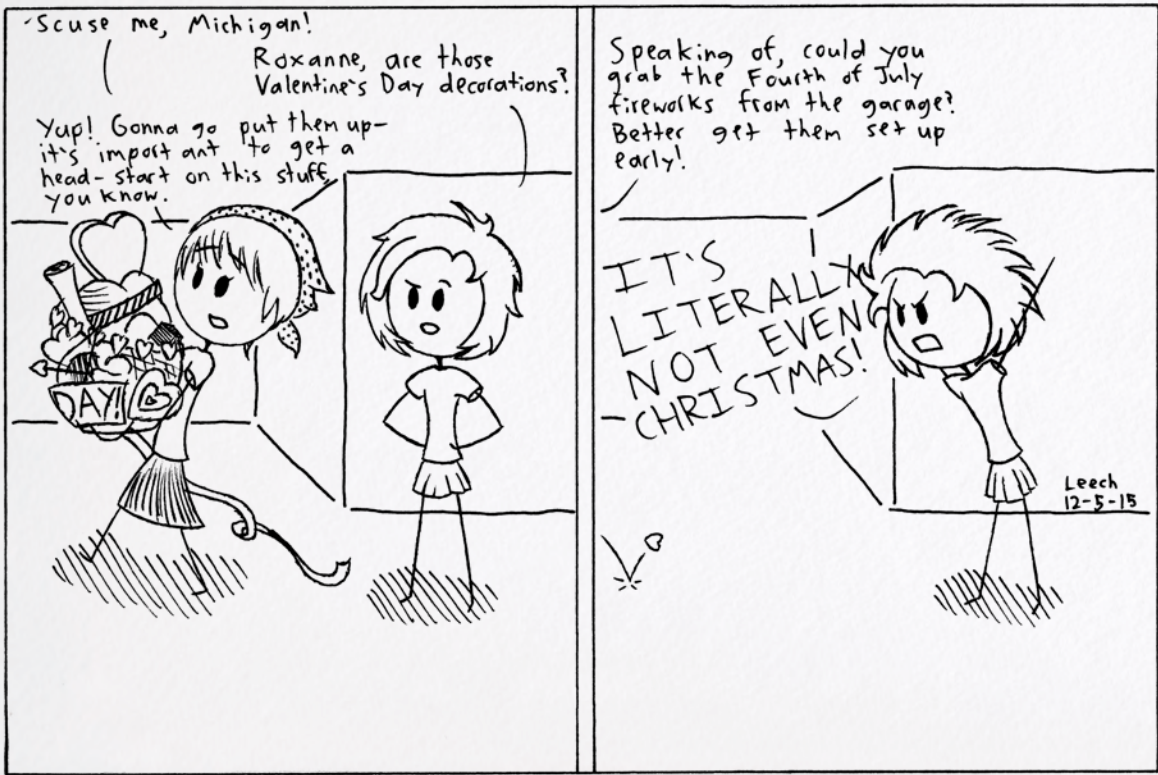
The Valrico Garden Club supports the Life Care Network each Christmas season in their efforts to support those in need. Life Care Network Client Services Director (Brandon) Kimberly Bishop said, "Baby Boutique donations such as maternity clothes, diapers, and baby supplies are always in high demand. Volunteers (Women, Men and Couples) are needed for life coaches, family coaches, and mentoring young fathers. Volunteers are also needed to teach classes, sort donations, administrative tasks, data entry and special event planning." Drop off baby supplies at 122 N Moon Ave. in Brandon. For information, call 813-654-0491 or visit their website at www.lifecarenetwork.net.



Michigan

Comic strip artist Will Leech is a Strawberry Crest High School senior. Through his creation “Michigan,” he shares his view of the world around us.

Michigan by Will Leech



Making more putts with better aiming...

By J.D. Carino (Bloomington CC campus)

Most missed putts from a short range (4-6 feet) are often a result of incorrect alignment of your body during the putting set up. We make similar mistakes of incorrect alignment during our full swing set up.

Here are a few guidelines for better aiming to make more putts:

Red Line- The line the ball travels on is your target line.

Yellow Lines - The other line we call the body line; consisting of your feet, knees, hips and shoulders. They need to all be square or even. Both red and yellow lines are aimed parallel to each other like a railroad track.



If you aim your body incorrectly (right at the hole), you will compensate by rotating your body or putter face to get the ball back to the left and get it in the hole.

Compensating is the main reason why your score varies from round to round. Aim better...putt better...no compensation.

Next lesson: Ball on the sidewalk, which way do I go? Any questions or for lessons, visit CochraneGolfSchools.com or call J.D. 813-957-3205.



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Speed, Alcohol and Distractions Make for a “S.A.D.” Holiday Season

By Mack Austin, BACC member and Honorary Deputy

With the holiday season comes the many catch phrases like Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Joy to the World and Peace on Earth. One word not often heard is “sad,” perhaps because it calls to mind people alone for the holidays or missing friends or relatives who have passed.

The word “sad” can take on a completely different meaning as the letters taken individually stand for “speed, alcohol and distractions.” Any of these actions can seriously take the joy, peace and happiness out of our holidays.

S.A.D. represents decisions we make every time we get behind the wheel of our vehicles.

First, “Speed.” We’ve heard the phrase “Speed kills!” Our community witnessed this truth when last month a 20-year-old Brandon man was killed at Bloomingdale and Springvale Avenues. Two other vehicles were involved in the accident, and three people were injured.

The cause according to deputies, a “high rate of speed and loss of control.”



Second, “Alcohol.” Too many drivers have lost their lives either because they were drinking and driving or because of others who were drinking and driving. Would you want your doctor to operate drunk? Of course not, but then why do people get in a potentially dangerous vehicle and try to drive while drunk? There is no logical answer except: “Don’t drink and drive.”

Finally, “Distractions.” Today’s drivers have more distractions than ever before. Talking to passengers, using a cell phone, texting, eating, putting on makeup and any other silly activity – these things take your mind off the task at hand – driving safely. Countless drivers have lost their lives because of distractions.

So, as you’re out driving this holiday season or traveling to see friends or family, think about the word S.A.D. and the three decisions they represent. Then, you choose – do you want a S.A.D. holiday or a happy one? The answer is an easy one.



**Drivers who text:
Are 8 times more likely to get into
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HCFL Alert Keeps You Informed Sign Up Now!

HC Press Release

HCFL Alert is Hillsborough County's official mass notification system, designed to inform you about emergencies and certain non-emergency events. This new system will send subscribers, including area visitors, messages on either their home phones, work phones, via text or email or on all available means that they chose.



Hillsborough County

HCFL Alerts include evacuation or shelter-in-place instructions, hazardous materials incidents, mandatory boil-water notices in unincorporated Hillsborough County, other public health and safety messages, tropical storm and hurricane warnings, major county road work and major service interruptions! You will always be “in the know.”

Registration is quick, easy and free. Go to HillsboroughCounty.org/HCFLAlert to register. Residents without Internet access can call 813-272-6602 to register. Note: Register now through June 1, 2016 to be eligible for monthly prizes that include weather radios and emergency kits. Visit www.hillsboroughcounty.org/staysafe for additional information.



Hillsborough County Expands Customer Service with At Your Service

HC Press Release

Hillsborough County is expanding its customer service capabilities with At Your Service, its online customer service center. The mobile-friendly website adjusts to all devices and allows residents to submit a service request and track the progress online 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

The website is arranged by service for easy use; for example if a resident wants to report a pothole or missed trash pickup, they simply click on the corresponding service in the online form and have the option to upload a photo of the request.

Requests are directly routed to the right team to provide prompt service, and replies are usually provided within one business day. Additionally, the website uses location tools to pinpoint service requests.

By creating an account, residents can view their service request history, and add comments to their previous requests. Visit www.hillsboroughcounty.org/AtYourService to learn more.



Photo: Hillsborough County



BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

By Community Resource Master Deputy Curtis Warren



Bloomington Area Community Council (BACC)

The BACC experienced a very good year in 2015 with several important crime prevention projects concerning safety and security in our community being addressed and important information shared with detectives and deputies working in our community.

The BACC is looking forward to 2016 and needs your personal participation on the BACC Council. Come represent your Homeowner's Association or community and bring your issues. The council meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Bloomington Community Station on Erindale Drive. As an organized and active group, we continue to make Bloomington a safer and more secure community! Call 813-635-8040 for information on how to get involved. .



Safety First this Holiday Season!

December and January are filled with holiday activities including shopping and parties. Those of us in the Sheriff's Office want all of our residents to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season. Following these tips will help you stay safe and secure.

Be extra cautious and stay aware of your surroundings and your actions. Don't get in a big rush and be careless. Shop in groups when possible. Do not leave your car unlocked. Do not leave packages or other valuables in your car. Lock them in the trunk. Protect your credit cards. Carry only those you will need each time. Be sure to check your credit card statements carefully for any possible fraud.

Take time to secure your home and any outside vehicles or other property before you head out for holiday traveling or shopping. Burglars watch for homes and vehicles that are "easy targets" – garage doors and vehicles left open. Don't advertise your shopping or travel plans on Facebook or other social media outlets. This information can get into the wrong hands!

Keep an eye out for any packages you're expecting. There are "porch pirates" following delivery trucks who strike quickly and take packages off porches. An increase in online shopping has increased the number of packages being stolen. Things to consider: have packages left with a trusted neighbor, require a signature when delivered, track your packages closely, insure your packages and report any thefts. Finally, monitor your security systems closely.

Have a safe and secure holiday season!

Residents are advised to take special precautions to protect packages they are expecting for the holidays. "Porch pirates" are looking for packages to steal!



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Drivers traveling by the new Fire Station #7 may or may not have noticed the “EMERGENCY SIGNAL AHEAD” signs located on both sides of Bloomingdale Avenue near the station entrance. If they missed them, it could be because the signs were located too close to the warning signals.

Fire Medic1 Brian Lancaster noticed the safety issue and quickly requested an inquiry through Hillsborough County Public Works. Public Works engineers investigated the site and according to construction plans, the signs were too close to the warning lights. The issue was addressed immediately by moving the signs further from the warning lights. Now, drivers have sufficient time to react when approaching the intersection. Special thanks to Public Works engineers Ben Kniesly, Michael Flick and Mansour Yazdi who acted promptly to address this critical safety project.



Photo: Mack Austin

The emergency signs at the new Bloomingdale Avenue Fire Station were too close to the emergency signal lights. A sharp-eyed medic brought the problem to the attention of county officials. The problem has been corrected.



Photo Courtesy: www.tbo.com



Photo: Mack Austin

Fire Station #7 Fire Medic I, Brian Lancaster, stands proudly beside “Q7.” Thanks to his attention to detail, a safety problem concerning the distance of emergency signs to lights at the fire station entrance has been corrected. Prepare to stop if the warning lights turn RED!



Events listed may be subject to change. Check with your school to confirm event dates and times prior to attending.



DECEMBER 21 - JANUARY 1 - WINTER BREAK JANUARY 4, 2016 - RETURN TO SCHOOL

ALAFIA ALLIGATOR ALLEY

Dec. 7- 11 – Holiday Shop opens at 7:30 a.m. so that the kids can purchase holiday gifts.
Dec. 7 – Craft Night sponsored by the PTA, 6-7:30 p.m.
Dec. 9 – McDonald's Spirit Night

Congratulations!

The following teachers and staff were recognized for their achievements:
Gail Robertson Ida S. Baker Award
Coach Janine Nelis: Teacher of the Year
Stacy Glidden: Non-Instructional Support Employee of the Year



CIMINO COUGAR CENTRAL

No Calendar Information Available At Press Time. Check http://cimino.mysdhc.org/Full_Calendar for updated events.

BURNS BRUINS BANTER

Dec. 5 – Poinsettia Delivery in the bus loop, 8-9 a.m.
Dec. 7 – Conference Night, 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Dec. 8 – Winter Chorus Concert at Bloomingdale, 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 9 – Track @ Newsome, 6 p.m.
Dec. 14 – Burns Band Winter Concert at Bloomingdale, 7 p.m.



The Best Leading The Rest!

Help Burns earn Microsoft Surface Tablets

Would you please help us win tablets for our school? All you need to do is use Bing as your search engine. Sign up for an account. (You will need to install the Bing Toolbar on your computer.) Next - donate the points that you earn to Burns Middle School (just look for the link that says, "Donate.") Thanks for helping Burns be the Best Leading the Rest!



First Annual Bruin's Picnic – Dec. 6 at Saladino Park, 2-4 p.m.

Burns Middle School and the PTSA want to bring students and parents together in a fun community gathering. We are looking for support from a Kona Ice vendor and a Dodge Ball Pen company. We are asking for water and Gatorade donations (any type/size) as well.



BLOOMINGDALE HIGH BULL BUSINESS

Dec. 7 – Bloomingdale Band Winter Concert, 7 p.m. in the Auditorium
Dec. 8 – Boys & Girls Soccer vs TBT, 6 p.m.
Dec. 8 – Herff Jones Ring Ceremony, 6 p.m. in the Cafeteria
Dec. 8 – Wrestling vs. Durant, 7 p.m.
Dec. 9 – Boys & Girls Basketball @ Riverview, 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 10 – Boys & Girls Soccer @ Lennard, 6 p.m.
Dec. 10 – Bloomingdale Chorus Winter Concert, 7 p.m. in the Auditorium

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Dec. 11 – Boys & Girls Basketball vs Lennard, 6:30 p.m.
 Dec. 12 – JV Boys Basketball @ Plant City, 9 a.m.
 Dec. 12 – JV Girls Basketball @ Durant, 9 a.m.
 Dec. 14 – Boys Soccer vs East Bay, 7 p.m.
 Dec. 15 – Boys & Girls Basketball vs Spoto, 6:30 p.m.
 Dec. 15 – Bloomington Orchestra Winter Concert, 7 p.m.
 Dec. 16 – Boys & Girls Soccer @ Gaither, 6 p.m.
 Dec. 16 – Boys & Girls Basketball vs TBT, 6:30 p.m.
 Dec. 18 – Boys & Girls Basketball @ East Bay, 6:30 p.m.
 Dec. 19 – JV Boys Basketball @ Riverview, 9 a.m.
 Dec. 19 – JV Girls Basketball vs Armwood or Sickles, 9 a.m.



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Rajun' Bull Band Does It Again!

Staff Report

The Bloomington High School Rajun' Bull Band and Crimson Guard are known throughout the state and nationally for their record of excellence. This year was no exception as the group posted straight superior ratings for the 29th time at the Florida Bandmasters Association (FBA) Music Performance Assessment held in November at Riverview High School. Always a fan favorite and crowd pleaser, the 220-member band took the field performing a strong "Survivors" program with a medley of songs including "Eye of the Tiger," "Nothing Else Matters" and "Survivor."

"Words cannot express how proud I am of the Rajun' Bull Band and Crimson Guard for their Straight Superior performance," long-time band director Jon Sever said in an email to the band "family," adding, "[I am] very proud and blessed to be the Director of such a fine group of young adults." Keep on marchin', Bulls!

Showing them how it's done! The Rajun' Bull brass section is picture perfect during the annual FBA marching band festival held at Riverview High School last month.

Photo: Ron English



Drum majors (l. to r.) Talei Turaga, Lindsey Bell and Abby Jones display their Superior performance plaque following their performance at the FBA marching band festival. Also pictured is band director Jon Sever. Not pictured is color guard director Billy Sullivan.



Photo: Kristin Witt



Photo: Ron English

Performing a "Survivor"-themed program at the annual marching band festival garnered the top-notch Rajun' Bull Band and Crimson Guard its 29th consecutive "Superior" rating.



BSHS SGA Food Drive Helps Needy Families

Staff Report

For anyone who has stereotyped today's youth as the "me" generation, the time has come to rethink that label. For three weeks in November, the Bloomingdale High School Student Government Association (SGA) spearheaded a Thanksgiving food drive benefitting the Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent effort in Tampa, which benefits needy families during the holiday season. Led by advisor Cara Diehl, the students epitomized selfless service and the holiday spirit of giving.

"I am so incredibly proud of and amazed by the selflessness demonstrated by our student body and Student Government," Diehl said, wanting to "share some of the wonderful things that are happening at Bloomingdale High School."

In what has become a tradition at BSHS, the student body donated more than 3,700 pounds of food in less than three weeks. For the SGA members, collecting donations was just the first step of the process. Two days prior to Thanksgiving, they packaged and delivered the donations to the Ministries' Holiday Tent.

Not content to drop and run, 28 SGA members then volunteered their vacation time to help families who are less fortunate. The students did a variety of jobs at the holiday tent including sorting the goods, assisting with food shopping, registration, delivering food to cars, childcare and clean up.

The Food Drive and SGA volunteer day was a revelation for many of its members. Students received an eye-opening experience as they witnessed first-hand the impact their donations had on families visiting the holiday tent.

"Our Student Government members are an astonishing group of students," commented Diehl, adding, "I am proud to be the Advisor of an organization of teenagers who are consistently seeking ways to make a positive impact on our community."

The BSHS Student Government Association collected more than 3,700 pounds of food from fellow students during the school's annual Food Drive and SGA Volunteer Day. Back row: pictured l. to r. are Liberty Dixon, Meghan Cerjan, Michael Tizzani, Katia Zavala, Frank Tavares, Samuel Steck, Cameron Robertson, Christopher Desmond, William Steck, Jacob Miller, Ryan Voyles, Hannah Baxter, Stephanie Schwartz and Helena Patane. Front row: Gabriella Hughes, Alysea Jackson, Natasha Neyra, Ashley Russell, Arianna Martinez, Allison Kagey, Allyson Jackson, Ryan Pena, Alexis Shepard, Abigail Hernandez and Katarina Safko.

Photos: Cara Diehl



SGA members, l. to r., Hannah Baxter, Helena Patane, Katia Zavala, Allison Kagey and Alexis Shepard performed a variety of volunteer tasks including childcare in support of Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent in Tampa on Nov. 24.

SGA students package and deliver donated food items in support of a holiday charity event in Tampa. Pictured l. to r. are Alexis Shepard, Helena Patane, Ryan Pena, Christopher Desmond, Allyson Jackson and Ashley Russell.





Academic Foundation Enriches Learning at BSHS

By Miriam Leech

Classroom supply lists are an expected part of preparing for back to school. Many times the needs go beyond just tissues, paper towels, scissors, or hand sanitizer. Recognizing that many teachers spend their own money to buy tools to enrich their classrooms, Bloomingdale Principal Sue Burkett, Assistant Principal Katie Rocha, and teacher Heather Hanks began an initiative to help teachers by creating the Bloomingdale High School Academic Foundation in 2014.

Burkett knew she needed a strong leader with the ability to fundraise and manage the newly launched foundation. Selecting a leader was easy as she tapped Bloomingdale resident and current foundation president Michelle Hernandez – an experienced community leader.

“The mission of the organization is to provide technology, specialized equipment, and supplemental textbooks to meet teachers’ needs and enrich the classroom experience. The motto is ‘A New Vision for our Academic Tradition,’” says Hernandez.

Fundraising is critical to the mission, and Hernandez, who is the current Honorary Mayor of Brandon, raised \$13,768.40 for the 501(c)3 non-profit foundation during the mayoral race in June. Considering the organization’s \$100 initial seed money and subsequent successful fundraising efforts, the foundation is well on its way to meeting its goals.

Already the foundation has purchased a Student Check-In system for the guidance department to streamline student access to counselors and track student needs. Students are now able to login to the system during lunch to request an appointment with their guidance counselor.

Additionally, the foundation purchased an entire set of books for Cynthia Leahy-Fernandez’s reading class, a throw rug and beanbag chairs for April Hunziker’s intensive reading class, scientific calculators for the math department, and a 3-D printer for the Media Center. During Teacher Appreciation Week, the foundation provided a mini-grant of \$100 or less per day for teacher wish list items.

Says Hernandez, “The funds are never used for individual students, and all requests have to be cleared through Sue Burkett. This is a checks and balance system to ensure that there are no other funds available through the county or in-school funds. We take the donations very seriously, and want to make sure they go where donors intended them to go.”

As it enters its second year, the foundation is looking for help from anyone who gets excited about education and technology in the classroom. Behind-the-scenes assistance with writing grants, seeking corporate sponsorships, and garnering small business in-kind donations is needed to continue the mission of the organization. For information, contact Hernandez at president@bloomingdaleacademics.org or Principal Burkett at Susan.Burkett@sdhc.k12.fl.us.

Photos: Bloomingdale High School Academic Foundation



From left, Heather Hanks and Katie Rocha, co-founders of the Bloomingdale High School Academic Foundation, and Michelle Hernandez, president, prepare for the 1st Annual Alumni Tailgate Party and Business Expo held in October to raise awareness about the foundation.

The Bloomingdale High School Academic Foundation presents a check to math department head Suzanne Guarisco for scientific calculators and a scholarship for tutoring at Mathnasium of Brandon. From left, Becky McDaniels, Mathnasium Director; Sue Burkett, principal and co-founder of the foundation; Katie Rocha, assistant principal and co-founder of the foundation; Michelle Hernandez, president; and Guarisco.





Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale Crowned; Healthy Lifestyles take Center Stage

By Nicole Cluck

The Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale title is earned through courage, finesse and strength. The annual BSHS bodybuilding competition is more than just striking a pose on the stage. It is a journey to become stronger physically and mentally through hours of training, healthy lifestyles and hard work.

On Nov.12 in the school's auditorium, Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale contestants took to the stage in a series of first round mandatory poses followed by second round fitness routines. Males and females compete in this friendly competition in two weight categories: lightweight or middleweight.

There are four category winners, but only two are chosen as the ultimate winners and earn the titles Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale. A lucky fan-voted favorite is also awarded a third trophy during the evening. Finalist were Anthony Werner (men's lightweight), Adam Faucett (men's middleweight), Rylie Smith (women's lightweight), and Dasha Hamilton (women's middleweight).

So, who wowed the judges and crowd and took home the night's top honors?

Miss Bloomingdale honors went to senior Dasha Hamilton, who is the reigning Miss Bloomingdale having secured the title last year as well. Confidence coupled with obvious fitness, Hamilton said, "I feel like I'm holding up the tradition" – she hopes her time on stage will inspire future contestants to reach high.

Senior Anthony Werner earned the Mr. Bloomingdale title. He considers his training "an obsession for a healthy lifestyle." While there can only be one Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale the fan favorite was men's lightweight competitor, Jonathon Gieger, aka "Eye of the Gieger."

This school tradition is not just about the titles and trophies. At the end of the day, all contestants walked away with a sense of accomplishment and well-being. While it is a fun event, it is more about living and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Photo: Nicole Cluck



Miss. Bloomingdale Dasha Hamilton and Mr. Bloomingdale Anthony Werner raise their trophies in victory after winning the school's annual Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale bodybuilding competition.

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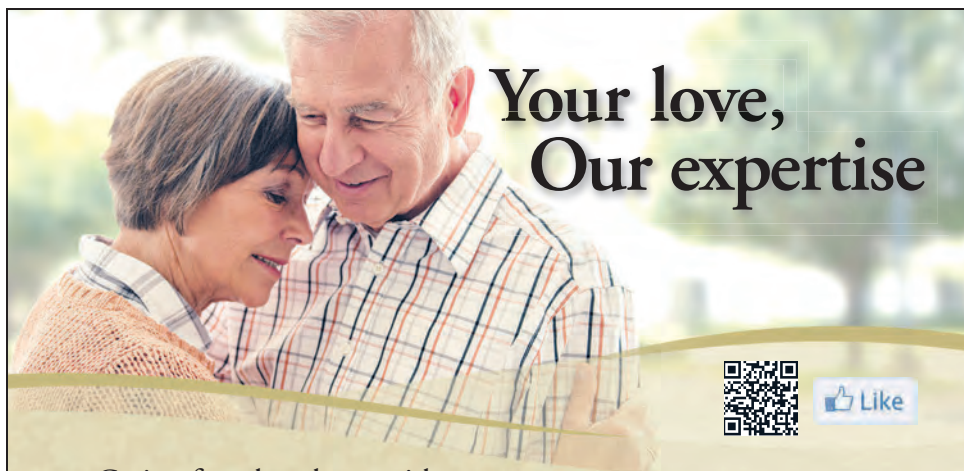
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Congratulations to Will Leach December's Best of the Best Student of the Month!

Many readers know Will Leach through his monthly Gazette comic strip "Michigan." While this alone is an impressive talent, it barely scratches the surface of this young man's numerous accomplishments.

Leach is a senior at Strawberry Crest High School where he is actively engaged in the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The program's mission is to "develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect." Leach embodies this mission.

This high achiever boasts an outstanding academic resumé. With a weighted 6.25 GPA, Leach is a member of the Senior Class Council, both the National Honor Society and Spanish National Honor Society and the school's *Pip Literary Magazine*, a student-run magazine that features art, poetry, and short stories. His numerous awards include AP Scholar with Distinction; Honorable Mention, Hillsborough Regional Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fair, and most recently, National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalist.

"I am most proud of my achievement as a National Merit Semi-Finalist, because I believe it is the culmination of my hard work over more than three years in the IB program," he said. Hard work is putting it lightly – a mere 1 percent of high school students in the state achieve this honor and SAT scores and high academic performance determine selection.

Academic excellence and awards don't define this multi-dimensional young man. A budding stand-up comic, he has shared his unique sense of humor performing stand-up comedy routines at his school's talent show. In addition, he is a gifted artist, who "loves to draw," and he enjoys a good read.

In his "spare" time, he is a community volunteer. He coaches soccer for the Tampa Dynamo FC, a team of eight- and nine-year-olds, teaches robotics at Tech Play Zone, and makes cards to send to our troops overseas in the Cards for Troops program. "Versatile" could easily be used to describe this busy student.

College is next on Leach's "To Do" list. He has applied to Wake Forest, The University of Virginia, High Point, and Florida State where he will major in studio art and psychology. Long-term, he hopes to pursue a career in graphic design, game design, concept art, or even freelancing.

Of his life's work, Leach said, "My passion is making art, and as long as I can do that, I believe I'll have met my goals."

His family includes proud parents Tom and Miriam, and older brother Jake. The family resides in Somerset.

Keep up the great work, Will!

The Leach family settled in the Bloomington community eight years ago after frequent moves with the military. "The friends, kind neighbors – this community really feels like home," said Leach of Bloomington. Pictured l. to r. are Will, Miriam, Jake and Tom.



Strawberry Crest senior Will Leach is Bloomington's Best of the Best Student of the Month. This multi-talented student was recently named a National Merit Semi-Finalist, an honor bestowed on a very small minority of students nationwide.