

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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KIM WALLACE

Susan Daily, math teacher at BSHS, and survivor, flanked by students Sam Miller and Sam Braverman, listening to Mrs. Flaws speech

Another great Relay for Life

The Bloomingdale community gathers to continue the fight against cancer. See story, page 4.

INSIDE

Time for action?

Bloomingdale starts to mobilize against the proposed big box store aimed at Bloomingdale Avenue. See story, page 4

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Always turn a negative situation into a positive situation.”

Michael Jordan

Alafia Elementary students rock pajamas at literacy event

Pajamas were on parade at the Alafia Elementary Art & Literacy Night and Bedtime Story event held April 11. Sporting Sponge Bob PJs and Hello Kitty slippers the students enjoyed a selection of nine art-themed stories read by their teachers. The evening culminated with the featured bedtime story, "When Pigasso Met Mootisse," which was read by actor Eric Close on video and accompanied by milk and cookies.

Alafia Principal Lisa Jackson explained that the popular event takes on a different theme each year.

"Our teachers are so busy this time of year but still come out to read to the children because literacy is so important."

To tie in with the art theme, the event also provided students and their families one last chance to paint a tile to be used in the school's mosaic celebrating Alafia's 25th anniversary. According to art teacher Justin Terrill, the theme of the mosaic is "Leave Your Mark on our Future." Tiles cost any-



MIRIAM LEECH

Alafia Elementary Media Specialist Marcy Ringdahl, sporting pigtails and pajamas, shows off the featured bedtime story, When Pigasso Met Mootisse.

where from \$10 to \$25 depending on the color of the tile.

"The goal is for the mosaic to be completed by the last day of school on June 7, and with approxi-

mately 1,200 tiles every student will have an opportunity to place one," said Terrill.

The completed mosaic will be located in Willis Park.

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Bloomington Buzz

What are your plans for Mother's

This month the Gazette asked teens to share their creative traditions and plans for Mother's Day, which is coming up on Sunday, May 12. Instead of using the conventional breakfast-in-bed and bouquet of flowers idea, these sons and daughters decided to mix it up.

Kali Clemmer, 15, responded, "Every year I make coupons for my mom, like one free carwash, or her favorite—one free foot massage."

Brandon Larsen, 17, plans to take advantage of the chalkboard wall in his home to show his appreciation. "I'm going to write 'Happy Mother's Day' in huge letters and list all of the things she does for me that I'm thankful for on the chalkboard."

Hope Koutz, 13, and her

siblings are teaming up to compose a thoughtful gift. "My brothers and I all play instruments," said Hope, "so this Mother's day we are going to write a song for our mom about how much we appreciate her. My older brother, Kaleb, will play guitar; my little brother, Ben, can play the piano; and I'll play the banjo."

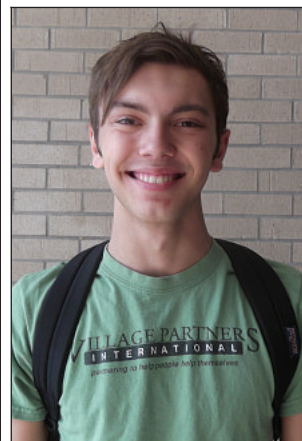
Anya Jain, 17, commented, "I've started a tradition where I create a scavenger hunt for my mom around the house. Each clue is a riddle that leads her to the next clue and eventually she finds her present."

Dyllyn Giles, 19, said, "I work at Starbucks, so in the past I've made my mom her absolute favorite Starbucks drink, a Venti White Chocolate Mocha."



Anya Jain creates a riddle for the third clue of the scavenger hunt for her mother.

Julie Dearbon, 17, responded, "This year I'm taking my mom out for massages, she needs a relaxing day off and we get to spend the day together."



Brandon Larsen



Hope, 13, and Kaleb, 16, with mother, Niki.

LISA KAUFMAN



Kali Clemmer plans to give her mother coupons, including a free carwash.



Julie Dearborn



Dyllyn Giles



Yard of the Month

Ruth Robinson
2609 Vinedale Avenue
Bloomingdale East

Yard of the month is sponsored by Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale.

Send your yard of the month nominations to inbloomindalenews@gmail.com or call (813) 681-2051. Winners will receive a \$25 gift card redeemable at Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale.

YOUR INSIDE CONNECTIONS

BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

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BHA board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Offices of Bloomingdale Special Taxing District, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. They are open to Bloomingdale residents.

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Relay for Life is a big success at BSHS

BY KIM MILLER

Cancer doesn't discriminate. It affects young and old, men and women; it crosses all cultural backgrounds; and cancer can wreak havoc on any body system. Relay for Life, an overnight fundraiser for cancer research, enables people across the United States to become involved in fighting cancer. On April 5, 51 teams, consisting of 649 participants, raised more than \$38,000 at the Relay for Life event held at Bloomingdale Senior High School. Cimino Elementary was awarded the top team prize, raising almost \$9,000.

Relay for Life teams and their captains work hard nearly year round to recruit team members and fundraise for this event. Each year at Bloomingdale Senior High School event coordinators come up with an overarching theme for the upcoming Relay. Relay laps are based on this theme, and teams bring it to life by decorating their campsites based on a supporting concept of their choosing. This year the main theme was chil-

dren's books so campsites situated around the track were decorated based on Harry Potter, The Chronicles of Narnia, Peter Pan and more. Activities, food, games and entertainment also helped build camaraderie, and a family friendly environment.

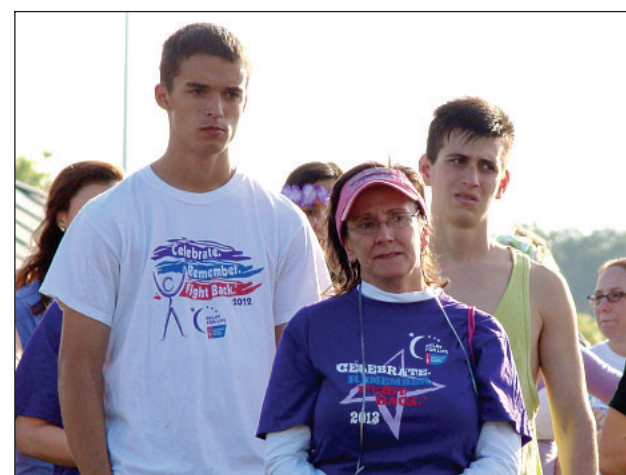
This year's opening ceremony speakers included BSHS math teacher and cancer survivor Susan Flaws who spoke about her fight with the disease. The first hour's lap for all Relay for Life events is dedicated to cancer survivors and the Bloomingdale survivor lap was led by the BSHS Rajun' Bulls drum line. Relay participants and visitors lined the track to cheer the first lap walkers who celebrated their victories over cancer.

A few hours into the event lights were extinguished for the luminaria ceremony. Candles illuminated personalized luminaria bags placed around the track; those on stadium seats spelled out "Hope" and "Cure." Each luminaria candle represented a person who has been diagnosed with cancer. A hush fell over the



KIM MILLER

Above, participants in the Survivors Lap take to the track. At right, Susan Daily, math teacher at BSHS, and a cancer survivor, is flanked by students Sam Miller and Sam Braverman, while listening to Mrs. Flaws speech.



BSHS stadium as participants reflected on the past, present and future for those they know who have fought or who are currently fighting cancer.

The last observance of the event was the "Fight Back" ceremony. Bloomingdale Relay participants were encouraged to take action by remembering those who have lost the

battle or are still in the fight by donating time or money to help with research, aiding a loved one, a friend, a co-worker, or a community member. Participants were reminded that cancer doesn't discriminate and their commitment is needed to fight and help save lives from this disease.

Bloomingdale community residents taking action against big box

Staff Report

Residents of the Bloomingdale East Lithia Oaks subdivision, off of Lithia, are leading the charge against the proposed big box development near Bloomingdale Avenue and Lithia-Pinecrest Road. They have started a petition on change.org, held meetings at the Bloomingdale library, and are encouraging residents to write to the county commissioners.

Approximately 50 people attended the first meeting in early April concerning the Lithia/Bloomingdale development. Many concerns were raised: increased overcrowding of over-capacity schools and the children's safety; increased traffic; too many

big box stores in the area already; effects on small business and library access; increased noise, poor community fit, negative quality of life impact, property depreciation, and numerous other worries and arguments. It was decided the next step in defeating the development plans was to set up committees to deal with individual concerns. Those committees formed were: Political, Environmental, Traffic, Residential Awareness, impact on Local Schools, Business, and Media.

At their second meeting on April 16, about 100 residents showed up to show their support and join the committees. Concerns and surprise were expressed by meeting attendees

about the building of the apartment complex along with the big box store. Those gathered suggested that this comes as a surprise to many area residents due to media coverage often excluding the anticipated 250-300 dwelling units. It was noted that little coverage also has been given to the mass transit stops that are slated to be placed within the development.

Residents leading the efforts

invite those interested in e-mailing the county commissioners about their concerns to visit the county's "Contact Your Commissioner" page which lists the commissioners' email addresses.

Those interested in attending a meeting or keeping up with the latest information may go to:

<https://www.change.org/petitions/walmart-stop-plans-to-build-a-supercenter-in-valrico-florida>

Your BHA wants to hear from you

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association wants to hear from residents. Are you "for" or "against" the proposed development of a big box store and apartments on Bloomingdale Avenue? Submit your response by May 15 via email to bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com.

Up for the challenge

BY KIM MILLER

Many in the community have fond memories of their little ball players on the fields of Bloomingdale Little League (BLL), but taking in a game by one special group of players makes a day at the ballpark a truly inspiring experience.

Every spring Friday and Saturday evening, a unique group of Little Leaguers participate in Challenger baseball. Established in 1989, Challenger baseball is a division of Little League that enables boys and girls with mental and physical challenges to enjoy the game. More than 300,000 children between the ages of 4 and 18 participate in more than 900 divisions worldwide.

Challenger baseball came to the attention of the Bloomingdale Little League board in 2008. It especially interested Mike McDermott who already coached his young daughter's BLL tee ball team. McDermott has a child diagnosed with both Down syndrome and autism. The parent of a special needs child, he offered to use his experience to set up the

Challenger division at Bloomingdale Little League and to take on the role of Challenger division coordinator. The first Challenger baseball season kicked off in 2009.

The BLL Challenger Division signed up 28 players the first year and grew steadily to 84 players in the 2012 season. Other area Little League organizations now have their own Challenger divisions enabling kids to play closer to home, but the BLL Challenger division is going strong with 60 players in the 2013 season.

Challenger division players are split into six teams and they play for about an hour. Everyone bats and everyone plays the field. The division encourages the use of "buddies," volunteers who are always nearby to assist players on the field, encouraging them to bat and make plays on their own. Theresa Mastella, has signed up her son Anthony (who has Down syndrome) since the division started.

"It is a great experience for Anthony and for us," said Mastella. "Also, Mike has worked it out with various sponsors that

none of the children are charged a fee to play. Bloomingdale is the only little league that does this."

According to McDermott, sponsorship coordinators at BLL work hard for funding. Sponsorship coordinator Mike Rivera's work made it possible for the Challenger division to be fully funded for the last three seasons covering costs involved to run the league. "Current BLL president Kenny Hawkins, and all of our volunteer board members insist on funding it by our league, and doing what they feel is a small part to help the families of our players," explained McDermott.

He also gives kudos to the men that have consistently been there to support him and the division, and to coach the players. Coaches Greg Feldman, Greg Harrell, Wayne Pillar, Ricky Vander Paauw, Jimmy Keifer, Tony Fiorita and Paul Foyt have helped to teach and coach these fantastic players. Also, he noted there are several young men and women from Bloomingdale Little League, Florida Fire Fastpitch, Bloomingdale Bandits Baseball, Blooming-

dale and Newsome Senior High Schools, and several other organizations that come out season after season to be volunteer "buddies" for the players of Challenger baseball.

Mike sums up his reasons for investing time in Challenger ball.

"I do it because it is the best feeling when I look around after one of the players runs into home as hard as they can, throws their hands up in the air, and starts jumping up and down on home plate with a huge smile on their face, and I can't find one dry eye in the stands or on the field. It really is an awesome feeling."

Nine-year-old Anthony Mastella attests to the excitement.

"I like to hit the ball. I like to catch the ball. I like to run bases, hit the ball, and catch the ball."



KIM MILLER

Anthony Mastella heading back to dug out after batting

Cleanup a success



The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association held its annual Neighborhood Pride Community Cleanup on April 20. BHA Board members and community volunteers assisted residents in disposing of a variety of household items. Free to the public, this year's cleanup was made possible through a Hillsborough County Community Clean-up Program grant, BHA volunteers and residents' annual membership dues.

Burns students ready to go the distance at Charlotte Motor Speedway

They may be too young to earn a drivers license, but Burns Middle School students who have a need for speed are racing to the finish this month at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. The Ten80 Student Racing Challenge: NASCAR STEM Initiative is a new program this year at Burns that enables students to learn about careers in engineering, mechanical engineering, graphics, marketing, public relations, future fuels, science, technology, and much more. Developed for middle and high schools nationwide, the Ten80 NASCAR program is based on the sport of auto racing, but also introduces students to the wide variety of career industries within the World of NASCAR.

At Burns, the NASCAR STEM Initiative is available to students enrolled in the school's Technical Education classes, which are part of the CTE (Careers, Technical, and Education) division of Hillsborough County Public Schools. The hands-on project-based learning program uses the S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum; is supported by networking; and uses a competition league created by educators, engineers and industry partners over the last decade. The curriculum is aligned with Common Core and Next Generation Science standards.

Student teams develop their skills with the aid of Radio Controlled Race Cars; the teams "showcase their work and compete over the internet, locally and nationally in categories including project management, race engi-



SUBMITTED

Burns Middle pits the school's Ten80 Student Racing Challenge NASCAR in front of the local Chili's to drum up support.

neering, aerodynamic design, alternative energy, creative engineering and graphic design." Applied science and math lessons support them in the understanding of the knowledge needed for passing their FCAT Test.

"This first year we have about 150 students involved, and 10 of the students will be representing Burns Middle School at the NASCAR Student Racing Challenge National Championships in Charlotte, NC, during the NASCAR Sprint Cup 'All Star Race' weekend on May 17-18," said Bobby Diehl. Diehl is a former race car driver and promoter who teaches technology at Burns. "In fact, the students will receive passes to the weekend event and can meet NASCAR Stars who stop by to see the future, our students."

"One of the most challenging things that the team had overcome was to develop the budget for expenses to get to the Championship," explained Diehl. "The students had to raise the funds themselves by contacting local businesses like Bloom-

dale Pizza and Brandon Chili's who offered to host spirit night fundraisers."

They contacted other businesses for sponsorship and were able to secure support from The Visiting Angels (a senior care company) and Fish Hawk Family Eye Care. Two other businesses with extensive backgrounds in motor sports offered to mentor students in the graphics aspect of the industry: Team MK Racing (signage and vehicle wraps) and CNC Screen Printing (a T-shirt and printing company). With their guidance the students have developed the Official "Team Burns Racing" T-shirts that are available for a donation of \$10. T-shirt sales help support their funding drive. Burns students heading to Charlotte have raised over half the money needed to go, and are still working on donations to help fund this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Persons interested helping or in obtaining more information may email Bobby Diehl at fastruck-inc@aol.com, or via phone at (813) 817-7223.

Ready, set...hike?

BY KIM MILLER

No, you aren't confused...but you will hear those words shouted this time of year during BSHS girls flag football practice. Girls flag football was sanctioned by the FHSSA (Florida High School Sports Association) in 2003, and the Bulls first took the field in 2008.

On March 5, Charley Harris Football Stadium hosted the first sanctioned Pre-season Flag Football Classic that included Strawberry Crest, East Bay, Steinbrenner, and of course, the Bloomingdale Senior High School Bulls. The Bulls were victorious over Strawberry Crest before being defeated by Steinbrenner. Coach Michael Lankford was very excited for this event. He commented that his team looked good, and pre-season play was a great way for him to gauge their strengths and weaknesses.

Lankford voiced that his biggest concern in the early season was getting senior Elaine Owens back out on the field.

"Elaine is the backbone of this team," he said.

Lankford was out with an illness and wasn't released to play early on. He hoped she would get released before actual district play began; although,

getting to see the game played from the coach's perspective was good for her.

"For me, I got to see how the girls stepped up and performed without her."

Last year the Bulls went 6-3 in their district, which of course includes their biggest rival the Newsome Wolves. Marissa Tonski explained,

"Our biggest challenge is going to be playing against Newsome, they have a great lateral offense," said Marissa Tonski. "We just need to adapt our defense to it."

Coach Lankford's early season goal was to improve on last year's record and to win districts. Coach Lankford and his team exceeded their goals this season. The team went 9-3, with two of their losses to former state champions. Owens' return to the field proved to be a record setting year for her, scoring 25 touchdowns. The defense had four shutouts, and in four other games allowed 7 points or less. Jessica Calderini led the team in receiving with 700 yards and 9 touchdowns. The team holds the school record for wins in a season and points scored. They head into district tournament play the No. 1 seed versus Spoto, at East Bay, on April 22. Good luck to the girls and Coach Lankford. Go Bulls!



Summer Camps

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Records are made to be broken

BY KIM MILLER

As the old saying goes, "records are made to be broken," and this year the BSHS girls and boys track teams have proven it. Three school records were broken by the boys medley teams: the 4x100m shuttle hurdle relay team beat the previous time of 1:19.61 (2012), with a time of 1:19.01; the distance medley relay team set a time of 11:01.94, beating the 2008 time of 11:18.53; and the 800m sprint medley team set a record with a time of 1:44.52. The girls distance medley team set a record with a time of 13:01.67. The girls and boys 4x800m teams also have had record-breaking runs this track season. Individually,

three boys school records were broken. Gerard Trott broke his 2012 record long jump of 20-feet-8-inches, by reaching 21-feet-10-inches. And, Andrew LeBlanc not only broke the 1600m school record of 4:26.97 set in 1998 by Sean Gillman, with a time of 4:25.45, but he broke the Charles Johnson Invitational meet record of 4:27.71. LeBlanc also broke the 800m record with a time of 1:54.95.

Coach James Booth voiced his enjoyment of the track and field season. Booth, who is also the varsity football offensive coordinator, explained that many of his football players come out for track, so he gets a chance to solidify his relationships with

them as well form new relationships with the athletes who don't play football. He also gets to work with the girls triple and long jumpers.

"Track is a different mindset (than football). These kids work extremely hard, and if I can encourage them and give them confidence to just improve their personal bests, than I did my job," said Booth.

The girls team proved themselves to be very strong this season, led by seniors Kendall Hayes, Julie Roggeman, Lisa Kauffman, and Annie Barrett. Roggeman and Hayes signed to continue their running careers in college.

In her 11th and last season, as the girls head

coach, Jennifer Beach, is finding this season to be bittersweet.

"This team is like my second family, I am really going to miss them," expressed Beach. "These girls are so strong mentally and physically."

Seniors Ryan Chadderton and Lisa Kaufman have been running Bulls since they were freshmen. Ryan says he likes to run because he likes being competitive; it keeps him in shape and he doesn't feel lazy. Lisa shared that she likes the feeling of accomplishment – meeting or sometimes surpassing goals she has set or the coaches have set for her. They both feel running has taught them mental en-



KIM MILLER

Andrew LeBlanc hands off to his brother Matt in the boys 4x800 relay at Feb. 23 meet.

duration, which carries over to dealing with academic and life stresses. They commented that confidence, and improved their work ethic off the

track as well. The FHSSA 4A district meet was held on April 17. The Bulls had two relay teams and 11 individuals qualify for regionals. Congratulations Bulls!



Summer Camps

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Local artist preserves history through stained glass

BY LISA KAUFFMAN

Twenty-six years ago Beth Kauffman and her husband, Robert, bought a house in Pittsburgh, Pa. For Beth, it felt as though something was missing in her home – perhaps a little home decor. So she took it upon herself to take a stained glass class at the local community college and filled her home with stained glass windows, lamps and night lights.

Now a 16-year resident of Bloomingdale, Kauffman's stained glass can be seen all over Florida, including Orange in Valrico, Gingerbread Square Gallery in Key West, Sea Glass Bay in Clearwater, Island Visions in Matlacha and Creations Gallery in Punta Gorda.

Kauffman's work ranges from traditional panels and windows to suncatchers, fan pulls, three-di-

mensional night lights and fused glass jewelry with hand painted images. Kauffman has also written four stained glass pattern books over the course of her career; however, the most important work in Kauffman's eyes is her "Legend Series" of stained glass panels.

"My Legend Series is the most artistic, most meaningful work that I do with glass, because I am able to preserve these little bits of history," she said. "My Legend panels are comprised of broken glass that I've collected from areas that hold a lot of history."

Kauffman created her first Legend panel in 2007 from a collection of broken beer bottles, windows, plates, and other glass items found in the Baltimore Inner Harbor. She foiled around each piece of glass and soldered the pieces together into a pan-

el. Kauffman positions the glass so that there are open spaces between the pieces, allowing spectators to see through the panel, creating holes that draw the viewer into the piece, encouraging observers to not only look very closely at the panels, but also to touch them.

"These panels are intended to be visual and tactile so that the history becomes more real, and people can really connect with the past," Kauffman said.

Since 2007, Kauffman has created a series of Legend panels including "Natures Way," "Ybor City," "Winthrop," and "Tampa Union Station."

"I've had conductors and engineers who used to work at the Tampa Train Station come to see my work, and I get to hear their stories from years ago; it really brings them

back."

Kauffman began working on her Legend panel of the Ferlita Macaroni Factory soon after Ybor residents began pushing to save the destined-to-be-demolished building. She photo-fused images of the families who lived and worked in the factory onto the glass she found outside of the 90-year old building.

"The building has now been revitalized, but the families whose ancestors lived and worked at the factory can look through the same glass window that their relatives did in this panel, and know that their history has been preserved," she said.

Recently, Kauffman has created Legend panels of the Temple Terrace Bat Tower, which burned down due to arson, as a memory for those involved in rebuilding the tower. She was also commis-



LISA KAUFFMAN

Kauffman with one of the first stained glass lamps she crafted.

sioned to do a panel by Greater Pine Island with the molten glass from the Chamber of Commerce building that burned down.

"I try to produce a progressive time capsule of that area from the glass left behind," said Kauffman. "It is moving for a lot of people to see their town's history."

Kauffman continues to find inspiration for the

Legend series as she plans for her next panel, "A Child's Cry for Peace," in which she will incorporate glass from Iraq, Iran, and Germany, with an image of a child's hand. The panel honors all children who have lost a parent or experienced trauma due to war.

For more information contact Kauffman via e-mail at bkstained-glass@msn.com.

Area senior bound for West Point

BY MIRIAM LEECH

Adam Reynolds, a Bloomingdale area senior in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Strawberry Crest High School, has received his appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Adam first began considering a career in the military during his freshman year of high school. When he heard how challenging it is to be accepted and attend a military academy, he decided he was up to the challenge. During his sophomore year, Adam decided to help prepare for the military by joining the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, an organization in which his grandfather has long participated. The mission of the Sea Cadets is to teach leadership skills, patriotism, courage, and self reliance to youth ages 11-17

in cooperation with the Department of the Navy.

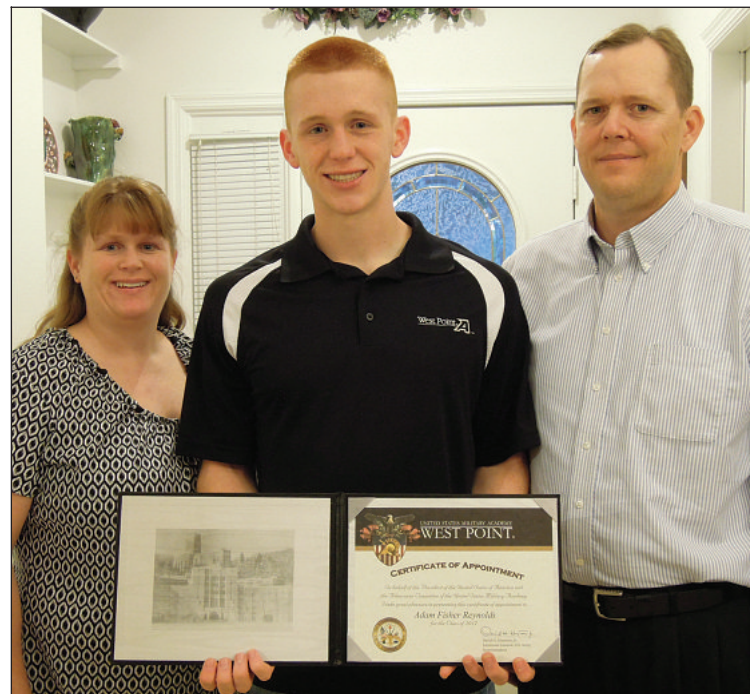
The Sea Cadets provided the opportunity for Adam to meet and talk to service members and learn from their experiences. He drilled with his unit once a month, attended a mock boot camp, and participated in community service activities. However, according to Adam, "My greatest preparation was personal motivation."

Last summer, Adam applied to and was accepted to attend summer camps at both the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, and West Point. He then began the lengthy process of applying to each academy. As with many colleges or universities, he had to provide essays and letters of recommendation. But with the academies' more rigorous application process, he also had

to pass physical and medical exams as well as apply for Congressional appointments to each USNA and USMA.

Along the way, it became clear to Adam that he really wanted to be an officer in the Army, preferring the land to the sea. He received his Congressional appointment from Congressman Gus Bilirakis, and at the end of February his dream was fulfilled when he received his appointment to West Point.

Between now and July 1, when Adam anticipates reporting to West Point, he is focused on keeping up his grades and keeping healthy. On June 6, Adam will speak as Salutatorian to his IB graduating class at Strawberry Crest. His plans for West Point include majoring in engineering and becoming an infantry officer.



MIRIAM LEECH

Lea Ann and Steven Reynolds stand proudly with their son Adam in celebration of his appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY.

Delicious and safe grilling tips from Land and Sea Market

BY MIRIAM LEECH

Grilling season is upon us, and as our thoughts turn to cookouts and get-togethers, Land and Sea Market offers some great tips to please our taste buds.

New Valrico store manager Gregory Conner, who joined the store just two months ago, has a strong background in restaurant hospitality and retail management. And, as he said, "I like the food!"

His No. 1 tip for great grilling is to cook "low and slow." According to Connor, safe grilling is the priority as consuming undercooked meat can pose health risks. Connor offers the following safe grilling advice:

- ◆ Make sure to pre-heat the grill.
- ◆ Use low flames and a medium heat.
- ◆ If you are a fan of flame/charbroiled grilling, the best results come from increasing the heat once you have the meat fully cooked.
- ◆ Make sure your food is cooked well and is safe to eat by checking the internal temperature.
- ◆ Chicken should cook at 165 degrees
- ◆ Pork should cook at 145 degrees (3-minute rest time)



MIRIAM LEECH

New Valrico Land and Sea Market store manager Gregory Conner looks forward to meeting area residents, lending preparation advice and helping them select items from the wide variety of delicious foods available in the store.

- ◆ Seafood should cook at 145 degrees or cook until flesh becomes opaque
 - ◆ Beef (steaks) should cook at 145 degrees (3-minute rest time)
 - ◆ Beef (burgers) should cook at 160 degrees.
- As for preparing delicious grilled foods, the store manager in Connor couldn't help but recommend the Land and Sea Montreal seasoning for steaks and the Greek seasoning for chicken.
- "And if you prefer, you can have your meat selection seasoned right

in the store," Conner says. "Our shrimp kabobs are an excellent complement to any of our tender steaks. Our thick cut pork chops grill nicely as well."

Land and Sea Market is located in the Lithia Crossing Shopping Center. Store hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The store has weekly deals available by e-mail just by signing up at the counter.

Sweet Grilled Steak Bites

(Recipe recommended by Land and Sea Market; Source, allrecipes.com)

2 pounds cubed beef stew meat
1/3 cup dark corn syrup
1/2 teaspoon Greek seasoning, or to taste
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1/4 cup soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt

1. Season the meat with Greek seasoning. In a large re-sealable bag or non-reactive bowl, combine the soy sauce, corn syrup, garlic, and seasoned salt. Massage the bag to blend, then add the beef. Press out most of the air and seal. Marinate for up to 24 hours, flipping over occasionally to evenly marinate.
2. Preheat a grill for medium heat. When hot, lightly oil the grate. Thread the beef cubes onto skewers.
3. Grill the meat on the preheated grill, turning occasionally, until they have reached your desired degree of doneness. Be careful not to let the flames get too high. These will darken quickly because of the high sugar content. Don't worry--they aren't burning!

Flag football and volleyball spring into action at Burns

BY KIM MILLER

Coach Hemphill confesses a love for the game of football; he played tackle football in high school and college.

"This is my sport," declared Hemphill with a huge grin on his face, and maybe a hint of underlying regret that it isn't tackle.

Burns' flag football program fuels Coach Hemphill's continued love for the game. Currently, the Bruins are 1-2, with tough losses to Rogers and Barrington, but a huge win against Randall. The Bruins players know the game and have a lot of talent; they just need to bring it all together.

When the Bruins come on the field, the other teams should be ready to lose. Drew Lindbeck has been playing flag football for Burns for three years, as quarterback and cornerback.

"I like playing flag football, it's a lot of fun and a good experience," declared Lindbeck. Having played three games

thus far, the biggest competition is yet to come from the teams at McClane and Eisenhower middle schools.

Burns' volleyball hasn't had a great season thus far; they are 0-3. The team consists mostly of sixth and seventh grade players. All of the players in the eighth grade are on club teams that interfere with the middle school volleyball season. Coach Gatz is in her second year at the helm for the Bruins.

"It would be nice to have those eighth graders on the team for their experience, but it just doesn't work out for them or us," expressed Gatz. "However, these girls love the game, they love to come out and play, and they play hard."

Seventh grader Noelle Collianni chimed in with her view of the team.

"We play well together. I love the aggressiveness of the game."

Hopefully, the Bruins can pull it together for the last part of their season and put some tallies in the win column.



VICKI ENTREKEN

Majestic beauty

Eagles perch atop a tree on Monte Lake Drive.

Local Nursery offers advice on spring planting

BY KIM MILLER

Armed with a degree in horticulture, Rolando Molave, a local resident for 40 years and owner of Kiwi Exotic Plants Nursery, enjoys sharing his knowledge with Bloomingdale residents and offers some tips on planting and sprucing up local yards this spring.

Kiwi Nursery is located at Erindale Drive and Lithia-Pinecrest Road near The Greens carwash. Though they have been here for only two years, the nursery's knowledgeable and friendly staff has worked closely with many residents to find just the right produce for their tables and plants to beautify their properties. Molave recommends planting hibiscus for awesome colorful flowers.

"Hibiscus bloom in an array of colors. You can choose one color for a uniform look, or different colors for more tropical feel," said Molave. "Dipladenia are also great to plant this time of year. These plants can handle the heat and keep flowering for most of the year."

Kiwi Nursery, located at 3623 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, sells yard essentials including plants, soil, and mulch. They also offer local farm fresh produce, raw honey, herbs and edible plants. Right now Rolando is especially excited to offer fresh local organic blueberries to his customers.

Couple warns neighbors about contractor scams

BY MIRIAM LEECH

As the weather turns warm, homeowners' thoughts turn to sprucing up their properties. However, as one Bloomingdale couple can attest, it pays to be careful when hiring a contractor to tackle your fix-up list.

Jo Shafer and her husband, Tim, recently hired a contractor to trim trees and remove bamboo on their property. Although he solicited their business door-to-door, he had performed a small job for them previously without issue so the Shafers hired him to do the larger job. However, as the job dragged on and the debris piled up, the Shafers began to become suspicious.

First there were payment issues. Initially the contractor was willing to take a credit card for payment, and then insisted that he had to be paid in cash. He pressured them to allow other work on their property, such as replacing pavers and power washing, before completing the agreed-to tree trimming and bamboo removal.

"He played on my sympathy by portraying himself as down on his luck," said Mrs. Shafer.

Soon the contractor was asking for more money but was not showing up at scheduled times. To avoid giving him cash, the Shafers paid him with gift cards that they thought would be helpful to his situation. All the while, the job remained incomplete.

Finally, reaching their breaking point with the excuses and the mess in the yard, the Shafers just wanted to be done with the contractor. They agreed to purchase a power washer at Home Depot for the contractor's use, and in return he would finish the tree trimming



MIRIAM LEECH

Bloomingdale residents Jo and Tim Shafer's yard was left full of debris after a contractor did not complete the job he was hired to do yet received multiple payments. The Shafer's are now pursuing legal action.

and bamboo removal and cleanup as well as power wash the pool deck. He would then keep the washer as final payment. The contractor offered to pick up the power washer since it would not fit in the Shafer's vehicle – he never returned with the washer or to complete the job. Then he disconnected his phone.

"We don't really expect to recover our loss, we just want to prevent others from having to experience what we have been through with this man," said Mrs. Shafer.

Before hiring any contractor, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) of West Florida offers the following tips:

- ◆ Hire a professional. Contractor licenses can be checked at the Hillsborough County website, www.hillsboroughcounty.org, or at the Florida Division of Corporations website, www.sunbiz.org.

- ◆ Be skeptical of door-to-door solicitations. Most contractors have business cards, uniforms, or trucks and are too busy to be bothered knocking on doors. Do not feel pres-

sured to say yes because someone is standing at your door.

- ◆ Get references. Ask the contractor for references and/or pictures of work completed, then follow up with the references to see if they were satisfied with the work.

- ◆ Get an estimate in writing. An estimate should be given after a visual inspection of the work area to determine the scope of the job, and should include all charges for labor, cleanup, and disposal.

- ◆ Sign a contract. A contract should clearly state the services to be performed, the length of time the work will take, payment terms and conditions, and any refund or cancellation policy. No money should ever be paid until work is satisfactorily completed.

- ◆ Verify insurance coverage. Be sure the contractor has coverage for property damage or personal injury.

According to Todd Eikenberry of the West Florida BBB, the agency processed over 25,000 complaints in 2012, and part of

their mission is to create a community of trustworthy businesses. The BBB, www.westflorida.bbb.org, is a great resource for researching contractors as well as reporting scams and receiving help when a situation goes awry.

Other resources for homeowners include Angie's List, www.angieslist.com, which provides reviews of local businesses when you join, and even the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C., www.ftc.gov, where you can report contractor fraud if you believe you have been a victim.

Residents should report fraudulent contractors by e-mail to the Bloomingdale Homeowner's Association, bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com, and to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Bloomingdale Substation at 622 Erindale Drive.

For the Shafers, the best outcome would be for other Bloomingdale residents follow these tips to avoid getting scammed. By coming forward with their story they hope to accomplish just that.

Disaster preparedness: Are you and your family ready?

BY MACK AUSTIN

Dangerous tornadoes and strong storms have already hit our area during the last two months. Were you and your family ready? When the power went out were you prepared? These storms, plus the unbelievable, destructive, life-changing storms that recently occurred across the U.S., are only part of more rough weather to come. It's only a few weeks until the start of the 2013 hurricane season.

We all must be ready, not just for hurricane season, but also for the summer storm season and the current fire season. Florida is currently under a serious fire watch. There have already been several large wildfires. When these disasters hit, you're either ready or you're not.

Following are some very basic guidelines to help you prepare, especially for those of you who are newcomers to our area. These include:

1. Include your family in all of your preparations. Make sure they get their things ready. Storms can have very a serious effect, especially on kids. Be sure your family knows what to do in case you are not available. Make sure they have plenty of the required supplies on hand.

2. Prepare and secure your personal documents and other important items that you may have to take with you in the event of a short notice evacuation.

3. Prepare your home as best as you can to minimize damage. Take photos in advance and store them in a secure area with your insurance documents.

4. Find out what preparations have been made at your place of work. Ensure your contact information is up to date.

5. Know the "Rule of 72." Depending on the level of destruction and the amount of damage after the storm, many emergency responders, including fire/rescue and the Sheriff's Office, may not be able to reach most residents for up to 72 hours or more. Be prepared to be on your own, not only with emergency supplies but also in case of medical emergencies. Have a good First Aid kit ready. Check the ones you have for items that have expired.

6. Work with your neighbors and watch out for one another. Many communities have residents who have completed Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) training. These residents have completed special training in areas such as CPR/First Aid and emergency communications.

As we all saw after the strong storms rolled across the Midwest earlier this year, disaster recovery operations involves community residents working together to pick up the pieces and supporting one another.

When the storms are rolling in is not the time to prepare. That time is now. The Sheriff's Office will do all it can to help protect and assist our residents, but each resident must do their part to help themselves, their families and their businesses.

Anyone needing detailed information on disasters and hurricanes, especially new residents in our area, can visit the Hillsborough County Emergency Management website at www.emergencymanagement.org/emergency.

BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

Concerned about your neighborhood? Join us.

Master Deputy Curtis Warren

The Sheriff's Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC) is made up of concerned residents from homeowners associations and neighborhoods in our community. They work directly with those of us in the Sheriff's Community Station as well as other local government representatives to help improve the quality of life in our community. The BACC meets monthly on the third Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Sheriff's Community Station on Erindale Drive. Your BACC needs your support and involvement. Come to the next meeting and discuss your concerns and those of your homeowner's associations!

SHERIFF'S CITIZEN VOLUNTEER PATROL PROGRAM

The Sheriff's Volunteer Citizen Patrol Program is currently very active and successful in the Bloomingdale area. With the continued growth in our area and the large number of Sheriff's deputies currently deployed on active duty with

the military, this program is a critical addition to the Sheriff's patrol programs. Many thanks to the Bloomingdale residents who have completed their training and are patrolling our community. This program is in need of additional volunteers. Anyone interested in information about the program can call (813) 247-8223.

EASY TARGETS

Are you helping criminals by giving them easy targets? One of the biggest problems in our area are residents who actually help out the criminals by leaving their garage doors open at night or leave their cars open or with valuables inside. These are open invitations to criminals. Please, do not help them. Several "professional" groups of thieves have targeted our area looking for these types of easy targets. They like to hit fitness center parking lots, YMCAs, little league parks, shopping centers and any other areas with large numbers of vehicles. HCSO detectives and deputies are asking that all residents be

very careful when they are at these types of businesses. These crooks will not hesitate to break out your car windows to get to your valuables!

Anyone owning a bicycle, please copy the serial # located on the bottom of the frame and take a photo. This significantly increases your chances of getting your bike back. Also, walkers and bike riders, please keep an eye out for bikes that have been dumped in vacant lots and other areas of our neighborhoods.

IN MEMORIAM DEPUTY JUSTIN HANCOCK

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office recently lost one of its youngest, dedicated deputies. Justin Hancock, 33, a Bloomingdale resident, a Bloomingdale High School graduate and a very talented Bloomingdale Little League player (pitcher) passed away on April 13, 2013. The thoughts and prayers of our community are with his family and friends. He will be truly missed!

Alafia Elementary cleans its campus

Alafia Elementary held its Spring Campus Clean-up Day on Friday, March 22. Parents, students and administrators came out to help lay mulch, weed, trim trees and put in new plants and trees—all to make their school home look wonderful. Students in all grades came out to participate throughout the

day, which the school hopes will inspire them to take ownership of the new plants' care in the future. Teachers plan to use this experience to teach their students about the life cycles of plants, how to care for different types of plants and trees, and the importance of keeping the campus clean. Principal Lisa

Jackson, Assistant Principal Teresa McGinnis and Guidance Counselor Andrea Carver were out throughout the day working hand-in-hand with the

students. Alafia is appreciative to Florida Wholesale Growers for donating their expertise plus the trees, plants and fertilizer for the campus.

CARTOONING WORKSHOP AT LIBRARY TODAY

Professional cartoonist Andre Frattino will be at the Bloomingdale Regional Public Library, 1906 Bloomingdale Ave., Valrico, at 10:30 a.m. to share tips and tricks of cartooning. Those wanting to attend need to get a ticket after 10 a.m. at the Ask Me Kiosk. Also, in honor of Free Comic Book Day, comic books will be given away between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. or until the supply runs out.