

**Today is Community Clean-up Day! It's F-R-E-E!**
Staff Report

Today is the day you can throw out that moth-eaten sofa, rusty fridge, or almost anything else cluttering your garage, home, and life! Gather your junk and come to the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Annual Community Cleanup located at 1626 Natures Way Drive at the Hillsborough County Parks Maintenance Facility near Alafia Elementary School.

The collection site will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. **OR until trash bins are full.** What does that mean exactly? It means arrive early as traditionally, the site has closed early due to overwhelming resident response.

Partnering with the BHA are the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners, Sheriff's Office Operation Medicine Cabinet, and UrbanErecycling to provide residents with a one-stop opportunity to get rid of their clutter for free.

**UrbanErecycling**, an organization that recycles electronics, will take the following items: computer keyboards, laptops, desktop computers, tower computers and servers, scrap computers, telecom equipment, rack servers, cell phones, laser printers, flat screen monitors and flat screen TVs, battery backups, ion lithium batteries, circuit boards, and computer cables.

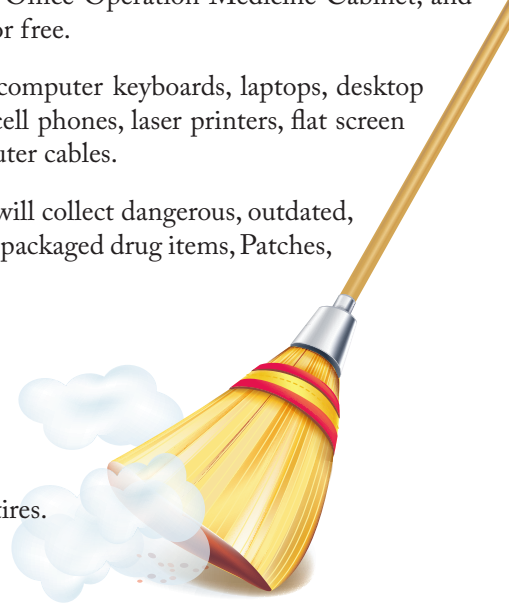
On site from 9 a.m. to noon, the HCSO's popular **"Operation Medicine Cabinet"** program will collect dangerous, outdated, unwanted prescription medicines and drugs. Accepted items include: Pill bottles, Boxes and/or packaged drug items, Patches, Powders, Liquids (properly sealed), Inhalers, and Veterinarian Prescription Drugs.

Trash bin acceptable items are:

- Refrigerators, ovens, water heaters
- Steel and other metals
- Furniture (such as couches, chairs, tables and mattresses)
- Resident's construction debris (such as concrete, bricks, glass and roofing materials), and tires.

Not accepted items are:

- Yard waste
- Hazardous materials including paint, batteries, propane tanks, household chemicals and waste from commercial activities.



## 2015 Annual Clean-Up Day

March 7, 2015

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. **OR** until bins are full

Hillsborough County Parks Maintenance Facility  
1626 Natures Way (behind Alafia Elementary School)

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

"Live long and prosper." *Spock*

## This Month

**BHA COMMUNITY CORNER**  
*Page 4*

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**  
*Page 6*

**INS & OUTS**  
*Page 9*  
Citizen Patrol

**GIVING BACK IN BLOOMINGDALE**  
*Pages 10 - 13*  
Creative Kids, Campo Y, Livingstone Autism Center, BHA Student Volunteers and K9s for Warriors

**COMMISSIONER WHITE SPEAKS**  
*Page 16*

**HCSO STATION NOTES**  
*Page 18*

**BEST OF THE BEST**  
*Page 19*

**SCHOOL NEWS**  
*Pages 20 - 23*

**PLEASE RECYCLE**



## YOUR INSIDE CONNECTIONS

### Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

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

Email: [Bloomingdale.Homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:Bloomingdale.Homeowners@gmail.com)

Website: [www.BloomingdaleHOA.com](http://www.BloomingdaleHOA.com)

BHA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Community Office:

3509 Bell Shoals Road

Valrico, Florida 33596

#### Directors at Large:

**President:** *George T. May IV*

*Billy Hightower*

*Joanie Wilson*

**Treasurer:** *Dennis Osborn*

*Mary Galin*

*Suzy Watts*

**Secretary:** *Daniel Berkowitz*

*Beth Smedley*

## YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



### JOY BOISSELLE

**Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette**

3509 Bell Shoals Rd.

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

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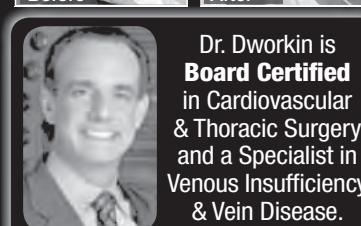
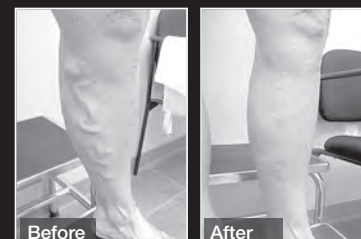
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## Yard of the Month



Photo: Joy Boisselle



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



**Sasi & Michael Harrigan**

4417 Swift Circle, Valrico, Florida 33596 (The Links)

## Living Well

By Teri Bartus, MA, CPT



Teri Bartus is the founder and practice director of Flourish Weight Loss Center, in the River Hills Professional Center of Valrico. She considers it her joy and privilege to help women design and achieve



their personal best in wellness. Teri has lived in the Central Florida area for over 25 years and now 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 Weight Loss Center, contact Teri at (813)309-3349, email [teri@flourishdesigningwellness.com](mailto:teri@flourishdesigningwellness.com) or on the web at [www.flourishdesigningwellness.com](http://www.flourishdesigningwellness.com).



CEO and founder of ESSTAR restocking a food station at a local Shell truck stop. Photo: Krista Anderson

### Mission Nutrition

If you have been on a road trip lately, I am sure you have dealt with the challenge of finding something healthy to eat at a convenient stopping point. Typical freeway fare includes microwave-ready service station options, fast food, chips and lots of candy.

Now, thanks to local woman Krista Anderson and her company ESSTAR, dietary-conscious travelers can navigate their way around the junk food and re-fuel with truly nutritious items. ESSTAR is a natural food sales and distribution company. They identify life-giving unprocessed whole-food products and position them for sale through high-traffic convenient stores.

**‘When you stare death in the eyes...’**

Krista's passion to provide better food options on-the-go began with a stage 2 kidney cancer diagnosis in 2007. Thankfully, doctors removed the large localized

tumor quickly. Doctors then recommended chemotherapy, but Krista decided to take better care of herself and hope for the best.

However, two years later she found herself at Moffitt Cancer Center with a prognosis of three months to live. Doctors discovered a new rapidly growing tumor in her lungs pressing against her heart and wrapped around her arteries. It was inoperable!

Krista faced two options: a year of chemotherapy or almost certain death. Krista chose the aggressive treatment plan. At twenty-two years old, she found herself hairless, unemployed and owning a stack of medical bills.

**‘When going through some of life’s greatest challenges, we can’t always see the plan of purpose and redemption on the other side.’**

Krista is now cancer-free. She has not only overcome cancer; she dramatically downsized to pursue her passion to provide quality nutritious choices for people on the road.

Her progressive company is spreading quickly across the southeast – look for her "Stay Healthy On The Go" displays at a convenience store near you. Krista hopes to expand into airports on her mission to get healthier food choices to traveling Americans. To learn more, visit [www.esstar.us](http://www.esstar.us).

## March is National Nutrition Month



Photo: [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)

# BHA COMMUNITY CORNER

**DON'T FORGET TO LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!** 

## Membership Drive Enters Third Month

Please consider joining and strengthening the one organization that represents the entire Bloomingdale community of over 5,000 homes and 23,000 residents. Many initiatives are planned this year, and we need your support.

For those that have already joined the Association and/or donated to the scholarship program, thank you for your support. 100 percent of collected dues are returned to the community through the myriad of programs and activities annually spearheaded by the all-volunteer board.

To help with planning and budgeting, join today. Make checks payable to the BHA and mail to 3509 Bell Shoals Road., Valrico, FL 33596, or stop by the office and drop off your check. The easiest way to join is to use our PayPal option. Go to [www.bloomingdalehoa.com](http://www.bloomingdalehoa.com), look for the PayPal link in the lower right corner and follow the simple instructions. **Note: The BHA no longer has an active post office box address. Please update your automatic bill pay if applicable.**



Photo: Joy Boisselle

## BHA BRIEFS

### February Board Meeting Highlights

Several guests attended the last monthly meeting. Issues brought forth included noise problems and courses of action, questions concerning the Walmart development and the development of a neighborhood dog park. Remember, monthly meetings are open to all.

The board initiative to develop a single deed restriction document for non-mandated sections in the community continues. The board is optimistic that the document will be ready for resident review in the next few months.

The board needs four new members. Interested residents are asked to attend a few meetings to see if joining the BHA board is a "good fit" for them. Contact 813-681-2051 for information.

### 2015 Scholarship Deadline Approaches, Few Applications Received!

Seniors, here is your chance to offset your continuing education costs! Important dates and deadlines for the \$2,000 Bloomingdale Community Scholarship are:

April 1 – Scholarship Deadline, No exceptions.  
May 12 – Winner announced at monthly BHA board meeting.

Applications are available online at: [www.bloomingdalehoa.com](http://www.bloomingdalehoa.com), in the BHA office, and the BSHS Guidance office.



## BHA EVENT CALENDAR

If you have events pending in our community, email [bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:homeowners@gmail.com), or call 813-681-2051. We want to help you promote your event.

**Monday, March 9, 6:30 p.m. / Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Monthly Trustee Meeting**, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. The BSTD is seeking new trustees to fill vacancies. Call 813-684-6667 for information.

**Tuesday, March 10, 6:30 p.m. / BHA Monthly Board Meeting**, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Residents always welcome.

**Thursday, March 12, 6:30 p.m. / Mandatory Board Member Certification Training**, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. RSVP required by March 10. Call 813-681-2051 or email [Bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:homeowners@gmail.com).

**Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m. / 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.

**Saturday, April 11, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. / River Crossing Community Garage Sale**, neighborhood entryways off of Natures Way Blvd are at River Crossing Drive and Oak River Circle.

## 2015 BHA Charity Golf Tournament

This year's tournament is Saturday, April 18 at the Summerfield Crossings Golf Club in Riverview. The BHA, again this year, selected K9s for Warriors to receive all funds raised. Why? This group trains service dogs (many from shelters) for our wounded warriors, and Bloomingdale has a large military population. We need sponsors, donations, players, and volunteers. Call the BHA at 813-681-2051 for information. See flyer and additional information this issue.



## Attention, Bloomingdale Military Residents!

The MacDill Air Force Base Family Resource Center off Oakfield Drive in Brandon is closed. Military families needing assistance or information can contact The Airman and Family Readiness Center located at 8105 Condor St (next to the MacDill Post Office). The A&FRC provides valuable information about military life and MacDill AFB.

Phone: 813-828-0145 Ext. 4  
website: <http://macdillfss.com>



# HEY BLOOMINGDALE!

Don't Forget to Spring Forward this Sunday!



## YoYo Juice Celebrates First Anniversary

YoYo Juice marked its first anniversary with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Feb. 4. Helping owners Scott and Rose Laviano (pictured front center) commemorate the occasion were the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce, former Tampa Bay Buccaneers wide receiver Maurice Stovall (pictured back left center), other Chamber members, family, and friends. Guests enjoyed free food and drink samples, wheat grass shots, chair massages, and raffles. YoYo Juice specializes in smoothies, wraps, and salads, and is located at 1044 Bloomingdale Avenue in the Plaza Bella shopping center.



Photo: Miriam Leech

## Bloomingtondale Real Estate & Housing Update

By Ryan Brantley



The Chadderton Real Estate Group  
Keller Williams Realty

813-924-8187

Ryan@RyanBrantley.org

www.chaddertongroup.com

Spring is creeping around the corner and so is a busy housing market. A surge in homebuyers as we head into our busy season has created a tight market in the Bloomingdale area. Buyers are ready to purchase but according to Realtor.com, patience will be key!

Inventory is still very low making it difficult for buyers to find what they are looking for in their price range. We are also experiencing multiple offer situations on properties that are priced well, so even if a buyer finds that home, he or she will likely be beat out when it comes to presenting an offer. This is especially true for FHA buyers. When a seller is presented with a conventional offer versus an FHA offer, they will likely go with conventional to minimize their risk of a transaction falling apart.

While 21 new listings came on the market in February, that still leaves only 52 active listings in the Bloomingdale area. This means we need more inventory to accommodate the abundance of buyers out there looking to move into our community or those making the move from renting to purchasing. The number of days on the market has decreased as demand has risen so if the property shows well and is priced right, it could be under contract in a matter of days. Sold homes in February reached 14.

Remember pricing is everything!

*\*MLS statistics include Bloomingdale East and West valid Feb. 1- 25. Sales not entered into the MLS did not count in these statistics.*



## IT'S OUR ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

To show our appreciation for all of the support we are holding a raffle during the month of March

**GRAND PRIZE: 12 FREE Haircut Vouchers**

**TWO RUNNERS UP : 6 FREE Haircut Vouchers**

One entry for every haircut received during the month of March. Winners will be drawn on April 1.

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**PLEASE CHECK THE BHA COMMUNITY CORNER FOR ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS RIGHT HERE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Bloomington Library Extended Hours / Thursdays 10 a.m.-9 p.m. / 1906 Bloomington Avenue /** The Bloomington Library is now open additional hours every Thursday. For information about library hours, locations, and programs, visit [hcplc.org](http://hcplc.org) or call 813-273-3652.

## Final 2 Days!

**Florida Strawberry Festival / March 7-8 / Festival Grounds at Alexander and Reynolds Streets, Plant City /** Each spring, the Florida Strawberry Festival® rolls out the red carpet to welcome visitors. Guests enjoy agriculture, commerce, industry, livestock, fine arts, horticulture exhibits and crafts. And, it's the



perfect time to enjoy eating ripe strawberries. Open from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Admission: Adults (ages 13+): \$10, Children (ages 6-12): \$5, Children (ages 5 and under): FREE. Discount Tickets are available at Publix Super Markets: Adults (ages 13+): \$8 and Children (ages 6-12): \$4.

Photo: Miriam Leech

## Starts Today!

**Busch Gardens Food and Wine Festival / Weekends March 7-April 26 / Noon-9 p.m. / Busch Boulevard and 40th Street, Tampa /** Feed your appetite for adventure with wild flavors and concerts for every taste. Busch Gardens invites guests to unleash their inner foodie with sample-size tastings of delicious cuisine and spirits. Sample more than 65 fine wines, 50 craft brews, and featured cocktails. The Festival is included with any Pass, Fun Card, or daily admission.

# 2015

## REGISTRATION

**AGES 4-18  
BOYS AND GIRLS  
BASEBALL  
& SOFTBALL**

## Pinecrest

LITTLE LEAGUE

**REGISTRATIONS ONLINE AT  
[WWW.PINECRESTLITTLELEAGUE.ORG](http://WWW.PINECRESTLITTLELEAGUE.ORG)  
SPRING BALL REGISTRATION THROUGH MARCH 19TH  
813-737-4052**

**SPLASH! Week / March 9-12 / Campo Family YMCA / 3414 Culbreath Road /** Campo Family Y will plunge into the upcoming swim season by providing free water safety lessons to children ages 3-12 years. SPLASH! Week is open to swimmers and non-swimmers grouped by age. Classes include a 40-minute water safety lesson taught by certified swim instructors. YMCA membership is NOT required; however, pre-registration is required due to limited space. Participants must bring their own swimsuit and towel. Call 813-684-1371 for information.

**The Adventures of Tom Sawyer / March 20 / 10:15 a.m. and 7 p.m. / Center Place Fine Arts & Civic Association, Inc. / 619 Vonderburg Drive, Brandon /** Mark Twain's classic tale comes to musical life in this adaptation of Twain's irresistible story of a young boy growing up on the banks of the Mississippi River. Ages 3-10. Members \$6; non-members \$7; advanced purchase required. Visit [www.centerplacebrandon.org](http://www.centerplacebrandon.org) for information.

**The Brandon Rotary Club's 39th Annual Wild Game Night / March 20 / 6-10 p.m. / Lupton's Boggy Bottom Ranch / 8407 Lupton Place off Keysville Road, Plant City /** Wild Game Night is a stag fundraiser for guys of all ages. Mingle with celebrity guests Jon and Gina Brunson, hosts of "Addicted to the Outdoors," sample wild game fare and have a chance to win prizes including hunting rifles, collectible knives, bows, fishing trips, outdoor gear, golf accessories and more. Proceeds are donated to local charities. Tickets: \$75. Available by calling 813-748-2076 and through Eventbrite at [www.eventbrite.com/e/brandon-rotary-club-wild-game-night-tickets-15504932671?aff=eac2](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/brandon-rotary-club-wild-game-night-tickets-15504932671?aff=eac2).

**7th Annual Winthrop Arts Festival / March 21-22 / 10 a.m.-5 p.m. / Winthrop Town Centre / 11252 Winthrop Main Street, Riverview /** The Winthrop Arts Festival strives to bring together the community through artistry and musical performances. The festival will showcase 100 artists, in categories ranging from oil paintings to ceramics to jewelry, musical entertainment provided by local musicians and schools. For information visit [www.winthropartsfestival.org](http://www.winthropartsfestival.org).

**8th Annual Spring Whistle Stop Craft Show/ March 21 / 9 a.m.-3 p.m. / Holy Innocent's Episcopal Church /** Over 50 vendors will be displaying and selling unique arts & crafts, novelties, and baked goods. Proceeds support Holy Innocent's upcoming mission trips to the Dominican Republic and Vero Beach. Located at Holy Innocent's church north of Brandon Blvd (Highway 60) near the railroad crossing at 604 N. Valrico Road. Free parking. Contact 813-689-3130 for information.

**4th Annual International Festival / March 28 / 10 a.m.-2 p.m. / The Village Early Learning Center / 3741 Canoga Park Drive, Brandon /** The 4th International Festival offers dancing, music, food, and crafts from all over the world. Enjoy live performances by The Philippine Performing Arts Dancers of Tampa, Giving Tree Music, The Village Bhangra Dancers, The Adventure Club, and more! Admission is free and furthers cultural awareness, understanding, dialogue, and cooperation. Any international community members, organizations, or groups that wish to participate should contact Tami Howell at 813-651-0779.



Photo: Village Early Learning Center

**Zoominations / Through May 31 / 6 p.m. / Lowry Park Zoo / 1101 West Sligh Avenue, Tampa /** Zoominations is one of the largest Chinese lantern festivals ever held in the U.S. A 2,000-year-old tradition, the festival features more than 30 dazzling displays of gigantic custom-made light structures, Chinese acrobats and an artisan market with unique handmade crafts. General single evening admission only: Adults (ages 12+): \$24.95, Youth (ages 3-11): \$19.95, Senior (ages 60+): \$22.95. Children 2 and under: FREE! Zoominations opens at 6 p.m.

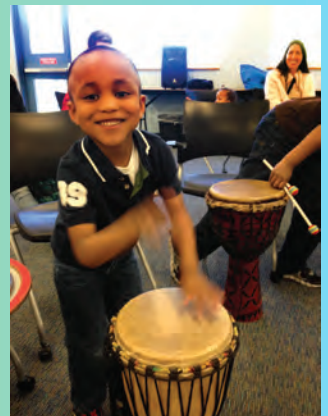


Photo: Lowry Park Zoo

Also, back by popular demand: FREE daytime admission to celebrate with 1,000 animal friends. Every birthday should be wild! Offer valid only on the individual's actual birthday with the exception of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Guest must present acceptable proof of birth date: driver's license, birth certificate, passport or military ID.

## Drum Circle Magic teaches the African Beat

At Drum Circle Magic, children of all ages celebrated Black History Month on Feb.19 by playing African drums led by Giving Tree Music at the Bloomington Library. They learned that "If you can say, it you can play it!" The African djembe drum was the primary drum of choice.



Joshua Lee (4) learned new rhythms and led the group in a "call and response" game at Drum Circle Magic.



Photos: Kayla Hayes

Smiles lit the Library's staff and volunteers' faces at the event, as they, too, learned the djembe drum beat.

## Dining With Dave



**Name:** La Septima Cafe  
**Cuisine:** Cuban and Spanish Cuisine  
**Location:** 702 W. Lumsden Road  
 (Corner of Lumsden and Kings)  
**Phone:** 813-685-0502

Tampa is known for many fantastic Cuban and Spanish restaurants, but most are in Ybor City or along the South Dale Mabry corridor. Fortunately, for us suburbanites, La Septima Cafe, one of the finest Cuban/Spanish restaurants in all of Tampa Bay, is located only a few minutes from our community.

For 20 years, this cafe has promised and delivered “a taste of old Ybor” and earned numerous Best of Brandon awards. From the Breaded Palomilla Steak, to the Ropa Vieja (my favorite), to the Lechon Asado, it is refreshing to visit a restaurant time and time again and not have a particular favorite because everything is so darn good.

La Septima purposely keeps the menu small so expertise and care can be tasted in every dish. Even the side dishes are a treat, with tender black beans and a yellow rice that is light and fluffy. The Croqueta De Jaiba (Devil Crab) is made fresh daily with blue crab claw meat and is as authentic as you can get east of 7th Avenue.

Not sure what to order? I recommend the “Walk around La Septima,” a sampling of house favorites: Ropa Vieja, Picadillo and Lechon Asado or the Cuban sandwich with a side of Spanish Bean soup. Then, treat yourself to an order of sweet and slightly caramelized Plantos Maduros that fall closer to a dessert than a side dish.

The bar is efficient and though the drink menu is limited, they do make a mean Margarita. However, a perfect food complement is a carafe of red or white Sangria for two. There is no set dessert menu and offerings change regularly. There does seem to be a fondness for cheesecake.

Though dinner is great for date night, the dining room is definitely family friendly. The service can be spotty, but on a busy weekend evening when a flamenco guitarist or keyboard soloist is serenading the crowd, it's easy to be whisked away in a Havana daydream of tantalizing tastes, lovely sounds and delicious smells.



## BLOOMINGDALE

### SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

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Exp. 4/15/15 BG030715

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**WAYBACK  
 BURGERS**

Limit one per visit. May not be combined  
 with any other offer. In-store only.  
 Valid at FishHawk Ranch Location only.

Exp. 4/15/15 BG030715

# 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.*

*This Month:*

### **Houseplants: Nature's Natural Air Purifiers and They Look Good Too**

**By Gwen Graverson**

The next time you purchase a new air conditioner filter, consider purchasing some houseplants as well. Both will improve the indoor air quality in your home. NASA research studies showed that many houseplants remove harmful elements such as trichloroethylene, benzene, and formaldehyde from the air. Who wants to breathe in that stuff? Not only do houseplants keep our air healthier, they are also resilient (meaning hard to kill).

Another added houseplant bonus is to enhance a room's décor. For a large area like a fireplace, try Areca Palms or Fiddle-Leaf Figs (species of ficus). Pothos and Heart-Leaf Philodendron work well in a hanging basket or as a climbing plant on a trellis, drift wood or other objects that will support it. For areas with only artificial lighting, consider a polka-dot-plant, nerve plant, aloe vera, spider plant or peperomia. Many varieties of houseplants are readily available at any garden store and most are easy to maintain.

Besides the basics of water and fertilizer, clean houseplants every few months. Dusty dirty plants can't absorb as much sunlight as clean ones. For cleaning, use a soft sponge like a baby sponge or cut up an old clean white T-shirt. Then, wipe your plants with plain tepid water, for extra dirty plants add a couple drops of liquid Ivory soap. If you own African violets, disregard all of the above. Clean your African violets with something like a feather duster instead.

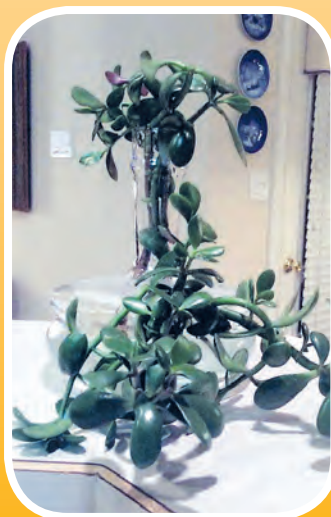
Misting your plants with tepid water will help cut out extra cleanings (dust in particular). A day in the sun will also do wonders for your houseplants, along with inspecting them for pesty bugs and removing dead leaves and flowers.

For Saint Patrick's Day, look for Shamrock Plants in florist shops or local garden centers. They thrive with plenty of bright indirect sunlight and depending on the species, flowers may be white, pink or red. Water once a week or as soil becomes dry.

Houseplants are a perfect combination of form and function in one delightful package. Bottom line: take care of your plants, and they will do the same for you.



Pictured left to right are Pothos, a Jade plant, Creeping Fig and English Ivy, and a Christmas Cactus.



Photos:  
Herb Pettway



The University of Florida and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) located in Hillsborough County provides a valuable monthly tool for the budding nature lover.

### **February "To Do List":**

- Plant annuals and vegetables
- Pinch off growing tips and old blooms of annuals. To increase branching and flowering – remove ½ to 1 inch of tip growth from each stem. Flowering annuals produce blooms on the new growth. The more branching that you encourage, the lovelier the flowering display.
- Prune landscape plants that require shaping and size reduction. Prune Azaleas and Gardenias after they bloom.
- Remove dead foliage from ornamental grasses and cut stems to 4-12 inches above the ground depending on the size of the clump.
- Use oak leaves as mulch or in a compost pile. A mulch of oak leaves around ornamental plants suppresses weeds, conserves soil moisture and adds organic matter to the soil. Cover with bark mulch if preferred.

# INs & OUTs

## WHAT RESIDENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE HCSO VOLUNTEER CITIZEN PATROL PROGRAM AND HOW IT SERVES OUR COMMUNITY

By Mack Austin  
Photos: Art Jorgensen

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office wants to ensure public safety and strengthen their relationship with Hillsborough County citizens. This requires the help and support of the community to assist with important administrative and non-intervention law enforcement activities.

One such program that uses volunteer talent and skill working as public safety partners is the Sheriff's Volunteer Citizen Patrol Program (VCCP). The VCCP is very active in Bloomingdale and surrounding areas. Citizen Patrol volunteers are specially trained by the Sheriff's Office to respond to non-emergency and routine calls in our community.

To give residents a first-hand look at the program in the Bloomingdale area, two volunteers, Rick Hafeman and Art Jorgensen shared their personal VCCP experiences. Both have served our community for the past seven years.

"I'm sure most of you have noticed the HCSO Citizen Patrol vehicles in the Bloomingdale area, and maybe have wondered exactly who they are and what they do," explained Hafeman, adding, "These are volunteers [from the Bloomingdale area] that assist the Sheriff's office with non-emergency type calls for service and other actions that do not require a law enforcement presence."

He further stated that Citizens Patrol volunteers patrol neighborhoods, conduct vacation checks, monitor suspicious activity, assist with road obstructions or disabled vehicles, issue parking citations when necessary, control traffic at traffic crashes and other functions as needed. Perhaps the most important aspect of this program is it relieves deputies from these type calls who can then respond to higher priority calls.

In Bloomingdale, 13 volunteers actively patrol the community. They serve on two-person teams and average seven to eight patrols each week and generally patrol in six-hour shifts. Volunteers range in age from 20 to 75. Some are retired while others have full time jobs.

For Jorgensen, being a part of the VCCP allows him to make a positive difference in the community. He said, "Being active in the HCSO VCP program keeps me from just sitting home and watching TV. I enjoy the interaction with other people, and I have the opportunity to assist them when they are not having their finest hour."

The Bloomingdale area needs more VCCP volunteers. If you can volunteer a minimum of 12 hours per month, possess a valid driver's license, pass a screening process and complete the 40 hour training academy, this can be your opportunity to become an active participant in crime control and prevention and help improve the Bloomingdale community. The program offers volunteers the opportunity to make a positive difference in our community!

For information, contact Master Deputy Lorraine Jordan at 813-247-8223. Program details are online at [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us) or pick up a VCCP brochure at the Bloomingdale Community Station at 3622 Erindale Drive.



It is not uncommon to see Citizen Patrol volunteers assisting at accident scenes. This mishap occurred on Bell Shoals Road.



Training is an important part of the Citizen Patrol program. Volunteers receive extensive training in many areas including proper driving techniques.



Citizen Patrol volunteers provide traffic control at a serious accident on Bloomingdale Avenue in August of last year.

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# NEIGHBORHOOD HAPPENINGS

## In Bloomingdale, the Giving is Good

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines charity as "aid given to those in need." A famous saying is "charity begins in the home." Over the next few pages, we proudly present stories about people and organizations in our community wanting to make even a small difference in the lives of others.

While charity does indeed begin in the home, readers will also see that charity begins on the back of a Harley motorcycle, in the dance studio of an instructor touched by personal loss, and by volunteers who selflessly try to make our community a better place.

## For Bloomingdale Family, Charity Begins at Home

By Miriam Leech

Ask Bloomingdale resident Kelly Diaz about her four children – she will tell you they each have a unique gift for helping those in need. The Diaz siblings Christopher, Nick, Cameron, and Taylor are part of the non-profit organization Creative Kids Count, Inc., a "for kids, by kids" organization whose mission is to help children who are sick, abused, handicapped, orphaned, or at-risk.

"Every one of them has a heart to serve," says Diaz.

A true family affair, Diaz cousin Jennifer Sasso founded Creative Kids in 1999 in South Tampa when she was 14 years old. When she left for college, the organization was taken over by her younger sisters, and has stayed in the family ever since.

Christopher, 19, Hillsborough Community College sophomore, was the first to get involved with Creative Kids. He began by volunteering at All Children's Specialty Center of Brandon/All Children's Outpatient Center and now helps Creative Kids whenever and however he can. Each Diaz sibling has their own creative club in the organization, benefitting both children and the elderly, and enlist their own volunteers to help.

Creative Kids donates 150 craft bags a month filled with supplies for children at All Children's and St. Joseph's. The crafts not only provide entertainment, but also have therapy uses. For children that spend more time in the hospital than at home, Creative Kids makes Trooper Totes filled with crayons, coloring books, stuffed animals, and a journal that they can carry with them wherever they go during their hospital stay.

This past Christmas, Creative Kids collected and donated 1,034 toys to All Children's Hospital's Winter Wonderland, and this spring, the Diaz siblings will run a book drive through their schools.

Parents Kelly and Chris host Creative Kids at their home once a month, and Kelly frequently can be found shopping at JoAnn's with a cart full of craft supplies or tote bag items. Grants and donations help with the cost of the crafts.

The siblings use their holidays and summer vacation time to deliver crafts, work with children and visit the elderly. Mom Kelly explained that volunteering with Creative Kids is never a chore for her children. "The volunteers are impacted as much by what they do as the children and elderly they are helping."

For more information on Creative Kids, or to make a donation, visit their website at [www.creativekidscount.weebly.com](http://www.creativekidscount.weebly.com).

Photos: The Diaz Family



Cameron Diaz's Creative Kids club For the Love of Maw Maw, named for his grandmother, made flower pots for the elderly at Meals on Wheels and Alafia Assisted Living.



Bloomingdale residents (from left) Christopher, Nick, Cameron, Chris, Taylor, and Kelly Diaz give back to the community through their non-profit organization Creative Kids Count, Inc.



The Boxers by Brothers club, run by Bloomingdale High School sophomore Nick Diaz, 15, and his brother, Cameron, 12, provides 15 to 20 pairs of handmade boxer shorts every month for young boys with cancer at All Children's Hospital. "Boys hate hospital gowns," says mom Kelly Diaz.



The youngest Diaz sibling, Taylor, 7, shows off Taylor's Treasures-- boxes filled with small items like crayons, books, and stuffed animals that help calm the nerves of children having blood drawn or in dialysis or radiology.



Creative Kids volunteers donate 50 Headbands from the Heart every month to young girls undergoing chemotherapy at All Children's and St. Joseph's Hospitals to help make them feel pretty.

# NEIGHBORHOOD HAPPENINGS

## Ballerinas Dance and Cut Hair for a Cause

By Miriam Leech

Ballet instructor Celeste Diaz has danced most of her life. Along the way, her passion for dance and her mother's cancer death focused her efforts into a new and important direction – teaching her young ballerinas to give back to their community through dance.

The longtime dance coordinator at Campo Family and North Brandon YMCAs allowed her dance students to cut 13 inches of her hair for donation to young cancer survivors. The event was held at the Campo Y on Feb. 11. Diaz has donated her hair for years in her mother's name since losing her to the disease. This year, she will make two donations in the names of her dancers from both Y branches.

The hair cutting also coincided with Give Kids a Chance – Get Up and Dance, a kick-a-thon to benefit the Y's annual community campaign. Diaz has hosted this event for the last 12 years during Valentine's week to reflect a time of showing

others charity. She encourages dancers and their families to use their love of dance to help others, and has raised thousands of dollars over the years.

Before cutting Diaz's hair, dancers donned super hero capes and gathered in a circle to see how many kicks they could perform in 30 seconds. Funds raised in the kick-a-thon will ensure other children get to enjoy the YMCA.

"The kids are my super heroes," said Diaz. "They impact me more than they know."

The ballerinas then each snipped Diaz's long locks, which took the dance instructor nearly two years to grow. The thick strand will be divided into two for donation to Locks of Love and another organization.

Reflecting on the Y tradition, Diaz told her students, "The Y is so much more than just a building, it is about the community."

Bloomington resident Ella Madison, 6, helped cut 13 inches of hair from her dance instructor Celeste Diaz at a charity event held Feb. 11 at the Campo Family YMCA. Ella also performed 66 kicks as part of the event's Kick-a-thon, which raised money to benefit children in the community as part of the Y's annual campaign. Ella has been dancing with Diaz since she was 2 years old.

Photos: Miriam Leech



Ballerinas from the Campo Family and North Brandon YMCAs took turns cutting instructor Celeste Diaz's hair at a charity event at the Campo Y. The hair will be donated to young cancer survivors.

Celeste Diaz, longtime ballet instructor at both Campo Family and North Brandon YMCAs, teaches her students to "dance through life" by giving back to their community.



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# NEIGHBORHOOD HAPPENINGS

## Bikers Rally for Charity at Livingstone Academy Autism Center

By Miriam Leech



Livingstone Academy Autism Center's Kristin Seltzer rode her own Harley-Davidson to the charity event held Feb. 21 at the school and organized by bikers from Florida Ride or Die to help purchase much-needed equipment for the students.

Bikers have big hearts, and nowhere was that better displayed than at a charity event organized by Florida Ride or Die in conjunction with Livingstone Academy Autism Center (LAAC) on Feb. 21.

The event raised \$1,140 to purchase equipment needed to help with student therapy. In fact, the need for one particular piece of equipment drove the idea to hold this year's charity event. Bloomingdale resident Ive Burgos' two children, 9-year-old Nolie and 7-year-old Jay, both attend LAAC. For Jay, hugs and squeezes are very calming. However, the piece of equipment most therapeutic for him—called a squeeze machine—was cost prohibitive for the school.

Burgos mentioned to LAAC Director Kristin Seltzer that her brother was involved with Florida Ride or Die, a group of bikers that organize charity events who might help raise money to buy much-needed equipment. Seltzer told Burgos that the school would provide the venue and the food if the bikers would organize and advertise the event.

### That started the bikes rolling, literally.

LAAC families donated baked goods for a bake sale, as well as provided hamburgers, hot dogs, and sodas for sale. Meanwhile, Burgos' brother, Antonio Hernandez, worked to bring in bikers from all over the area to donate their time and money. And raffle tickets were sold for items such as a flat screen TV, hand-painted motorcycle helmet, and gift baskets—all donated by Florida Ride or Die members.

Said Seltzer, "For a first-time event you never know how things will turn out. But everyone was so generous."

The LAAC centerpiece is its Sensory Gym. There, occupational therapists work with students on gross and fine motor skills; movement; and visual-spatial, oral, and auditory senses. Many students have breakthrough moments in the gym while using equipment such as a swing, rockers, body socks, and weighted blankets.

### Now, more equipment will be added.

Focused solely on the needs of children with autism, LAAC opened in August 2013 on Bloomingdale Avenue across from the high school in the space once occupied by Valrico Academy. In October 2014, it received a Small Business of the Year award from the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce.



Brother and sister, Antonio Hernandez and Ive Burgos, helped raise \$1,140 for Livingstone Academy Autism Center. Hernandez enlisted the help of his fellow bikers in Florida Ride or Die to organize the event and donate money to purchase equipment for students at the school—including his niece and nephew, Nolie and Jay Burgos.

For information on Livingstone Academy Autism Center, including how you can donate or help, call 813-438-8550.

Seven-year-old Jay Burgos, a student at Livingstone Academy Autism Center and Bloomingdale resident, will be helped by a new piece of equipment funded by the donations of bikers from all over the area. His uncle, Antonio Hernandez, helped organize the charity event.



Photos: Miriam Leech

## BHA Announces 2014 Student Volunteers of the Year

Staff Report

The backbone of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA) is the volunteer and without our student volunteers, the BHA could not accomplish the many events and programs we undertake. Last year, students amassed nearly 500 community service hours towards earning Bright Futures Scholarship funds while supporting the Association's mission.

The Board decided to award our most prolific volunteers with the community's Student Volunteer of the Year designation. This new program will serve to thank those students who have selflessly made our community a better place to live, work and call home.

This year, four volunteers were recognized. All had participated in three or more BHA events. Pictured are our 2014 winners at our community Santa event: Chris Santarlas (left of Santa), Bobby Michael (right of Mrs. Claus), Sam Berkowitz (second from the right) and Sierra Michael (bottom row, third from the left).

Gazette File Photo



# NEIGHBORHOOD HAPPENINGS

## BHA Charity Golf Tournament is April 18!

Staff Report

### Event to benefit K9s for Warriors

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association will host a Charity Golf Tournament to benefit a Florida-based charity, K9s for Warriors. The BHA needs your support to make this event a success.

Your support, either by playing, sponsoring, or donating, ensures this deserving organization receives the funding they need to continue to take care of our military service members suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, traumatic brain injury, and mobility issues.

#### When, where, and what time is the event?

Saturday, April 18 at Summerfield Crossings Golf Club in Riverview. Registration begins at 12 noon. Tournament start is 1 p.m.

#### What are the costs to play?

Single player - \$85, Team of 4 - \$300

#### What kind of tournament is this?

This is a best-ball scramble. There will be several contests ongoing during the event including: Longest Drive Contest, Putting Contest, 50/50 Raffle, and other door prizes. Be sure to bring extra cash to purchase raffle tickets.

#### Why should I participate?

The BHA routinely hosts charity events in the community. This charity, K9s for Warriors, was selected because of the large military presence in the Bloomingdale and surrounding areas. In addition to helping our veterans, K9s for Warriors gets 90% of their dogs from rescue groups and shelters. By being a part of the event, you will be supporting two great causes. Want to know more? Go to [www.k9sforwarriors.com](http://www.k9sforwarriors.com).

#### What do I get?

Besides the good feeling that comes from helping others, participants can win contests, raffles, and enjoy a catered dinner.

#### Where do I sign up to play, sponsor or donate?

Players and sponsors can register online and pay via PayPal at [www.bloomingdalehoa.com](http://www.bloomingdalehoa.com). Or, checks made out to the BHA may be mailed or dropped off at the office at 3509 Bell Shoals Rd, Valrico, FL, 33596. For donations, contact the office.

#### I still have questions, who can I contact?

Call the BHA office at 813-681-2051 or email to [bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com).

Remember, this is a charity event for a more than deserving organization. Let's make this an event of which the community can be proud!

## PROUD SUPPORTER OF



Dogs like Bouncer, a K9s for Warriors trained service dog, help military members suffering from debilitating conditions lead better lives. All proceeds from the BHA Charity Golf tournament will be given to this deserving group. Come out and play!

Gazette  
File Photo



Join the Fun and Support a "Dog Gone" Good Cause  
at  
The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association

## Charity Golf Tournament

to benefit  
**K9S FOR WARRIORS**

**April 18 • 1 p.m.**  
Shotgun Start • Registration begins at 12 p.m.  
**Summerfield Crossings Golf Club**  
13050 Summerfield Boulevard, Riverview

**Register by April 4 • \$85 per person, \$300 for a foursome**  
Besides fun and supporting a great charity, golfers can win great prizes and will be treated to an Italian dinner buffet. And, the whole event is tax-deductible.  
**All proceeds from this event benefit K9s for Warriors.**

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K9s For Warriors is dedicated to providing service canines, rescued from shelters, to our military troops and veterans suffering from post traumatic stress and brain injury as a result of conflicts and war after 9/11.  
Learn more at [K9sforwarriors.com](http://K9sforwarriors.com)

For more information:  
BHA office at (813) 681-2051, email at [bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com)  
Suzy Watts (813) 681-3474, email [suzy@dbsox.com](mailto:suzy@dbsox.com)  
Heather Michael (813) 340-6547, email [hgolf75@yahoo](mailto:hgolf75@yahoo)  
[BloomingdaleHOA.com](http://BloomingdaleHOA.com)  [facebook.com/BloomindgdaleHOA](https://facebook.com/BloomindgdaleHOA)

## On the Road with Ryan

### All Things Irish – Happy St. Patrick's Day

As soon as the candy hearts came off the shelves, chocolate eggs and pink bunnies fill their place. Every year, St. Patrick's Day takes place on March 17. It started as a feast honoring Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

Today it is a celebration with parades and green galore celebrating the Irish and Irish at heart. Did you know there are nearly 34.7 million U.S. residents with Irish ancestry? Perhaps this is why it is so widely celebrated throughout this country.

While Boston and New York City hold the most widely known celebrations, in the Bay area, there are many activities to get in the "green" spirit, literally. Every year the waters around Tampa Bay magically take on the Irish hue fascinating both kids and adults. This year's River O'Green Fest in Curtis Hixon Park will take place on Saturday, March 14 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. from featuring live entertainment, kids' activities and food trucks serving your favorite Irish faire or ice-cold brew.

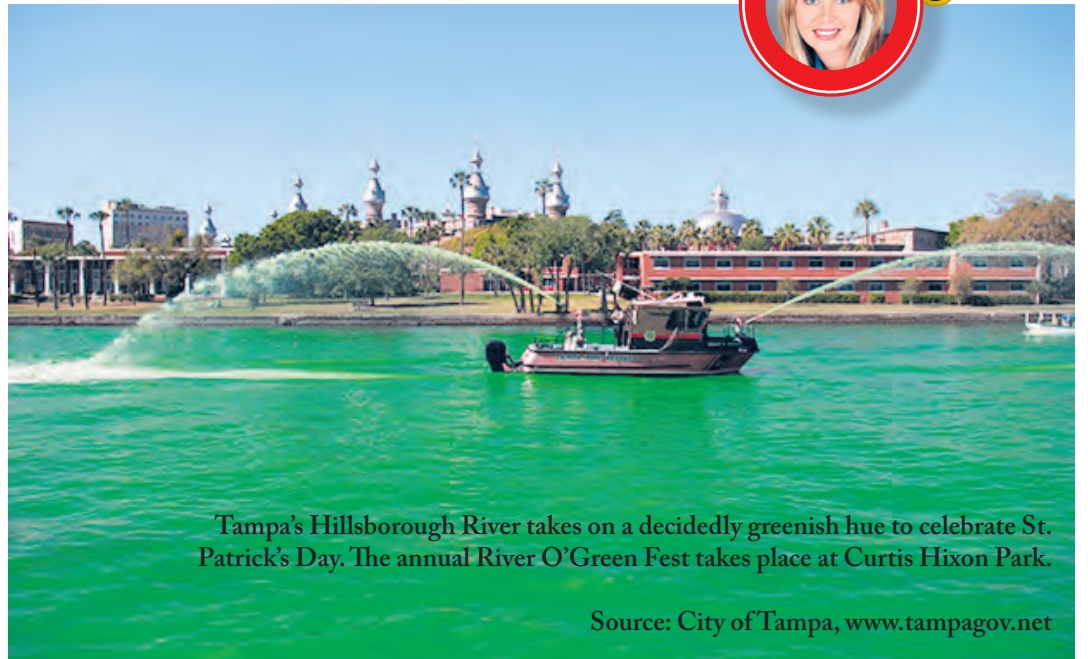


For a fun weekend getaway, take a three-hour trip down to Delray Beach for Florida's "premiere parade." While events started back in January, the main parade occurs on Saturday March 14 from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Make sure to get a seat early and spend the afternoon catching beads and making friends with furry four-legged leprechauns.

If all else fails, pack everyone up and head to the beach. Whatever you do, have a happy and safe Saint Patrick's Day!

*Ryan Brantley, a local Realtor and travel writer, has traveled extensively throughout Florida and the Caribbean. Put your seat belts on and enjoy the ride as Ryan shares her adventures with our community!*

**ON  
THE  
ROAD  
WITH  
RYAN**



Tampa's Hillsborough River takes on a decidedly greenish hue to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The annual River O'Green Fest takes place at Curtis Hixon Park.

Source: City of Tampa, [www.tampagov.net](http://www.tampagov.net)

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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.*



## Step on a crack...



Let's face it; superstition isn't what it used to be. Gone are the days when ladders and black cats were to be avoided at all costs and kids who were really hacked at their mothers went out in vengeful search of sidewalk cracks. Besides, superstition was always a good excuse to avoid anything unpleasant, e.g., "I can't cook today. It's Friday the 13th and the stove is liable to explode in my face. Nope, can't cook today." Now those days appear to be fading and I find that pretty sad.

You have to understand that I was brought up in an atmosphere delightfully charged with superstition since I had a wonderfully superstitious Irish grandmother. A broken mirror was good for at least a half-hour shriek fest as Gramma called upon sundry saints to ward off the seven years bad luck that would surely follow without their intervention. Gramma partied with St. Patrick, sailed with St. Elmo, traveled with St. Christopher, cuddled kitties with St. Francis and protected her throat with St. Blaise. She was on conversational terms with more saints than the Pope.

Dinner with Gramma was a real treat, too. You see, she enjoyed her before-dinner toddy and, upon occasion, would begin anticipating

dinner a tad bit early - like right after lunch. By the time dinner rolled around, you could pretty much count on a great floor show as Gramma and the salt shakers carried on a very entertaining juggling routine. Unfortunately, as you know, spilling salt is "bad luck," only overcome by hurling salt over the left shoulder and muttering. I can recall evenings when she'd be tossing so much of the stuff over her shoulder, small dunes would form behind her chair.

I was taught to never put a hat on the bed (never wear one in the house, either, but when you take it off, for Pete's sakes, don't put it on the bed). Never give anyone a knife as a gift without getting a penny in return from the recipient to prevent "severing the relationship." Never pick up a coin in the "tails up" position and always put shoes and slippers under the bed with the toes pointing out (wards off ghosts as well as ensuring a quick get-away, I guess).

Yes, those were the good old days. I feel sort of sorry for today's kids whose realism makes them worldly, wise and weary by the time they're 12. Their knowledge of "superstition" is limited to Halloween and the future's gonna be pretty grim for them. They won't have anything to blame their "bad luck" on but themselves.



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Photo: Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners

In November 2014, Dr. Stacy White won election as the sole new member of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, representing District 4 that includes the Bloomingdale community. Now that he has had time to settle in, he sat down to answer questions regarding his role on the Board, his goals, and issues specific to eastern Hillsborough County and the Bloomingdale area.

**As the sole new member of the Hillsborough County Commission, have you had a steep learning curve or has your experience from the School Board helped with your transition?** I have hit the ground running. My experience on the [Hillsborough County] school board definitely helped with my transition, and I feel settled in.

**What are some of your goals while in office, and have they changed any since you were "Candidate White?"**

My goals have not changed. My priorities are increased public safety; overseeing veteran's affairs, in particular the interests of Veteran's Memorial Park and Museum located on U.S. Highway 301; more parks and green space; solving traffic gridlock; and addressing transportation issues that will be up and coming over the next 18 months. *(See accompanying box with information on GO Hillsborough and a list of meeting dates and locations.)*

I am the commissioner who has pushed for more public meetings, resulting in a series of 36 open-house style meetings that will take place in stages to get input from as many citizens as possible on transportation issues. (See accompanying box with information on GO Hillsborough and a list of meeting dates and locations. I urge citizens to attend these public meetings.

I have been actively working with residents to make the Wal-Mart deal [new development next to Bloomingdale Library] the best that it can be, and have been pushing for increased landscape buffering in that area.

**Many Board members establish themselves as advocates for certain areas. Do you have any areas you are passionate about or any role you would like to fill?**

I am passionate about parks, green space, and conservation. We need more in eastern Hillsborough County. *(He had in fact come to the interview from visiting the Shultz Preserve, a 120-acre nature preserve that is part of the Alafia watershed and managed by the county—and is being considered for a high-speed ferry terminal.)*

I am also passionate about our traffic problems. We have to come up with a solution.

**What major issues do you see the board dealing with during your term?**

If I look into my 'crystal ball,' I would say the transportation plan will dominate the conversation, along with the proposed high-speed ferry project, and baseball and the potential for the Rays to relocate to Hillsborough County.

**In Bloomingdale, our parks are in dismal shape. Our playground equipment installed in 2007-8 needs pressure washing, all our courts need resurfacing (many are unserviceable); the grass is in poor condition, etc. Do you have any plans regarding parks and recreation for the Bloomingdale area?**

I have already gotten to work. I have urged county staff to give the Bloomingdale parks the special attention they deserve, and will make sure the staff follows through. I am not going to drop the ball in this issue. *(In fact, at the time of the interview improvements such as mulching, painting, and pressure washing had already taken place at the Bloomingdale East and West Parks.)*

**You are well aware of the traffic issues in the Bloomingdale area, both as an area resident and from constituent concerns. You mentioned during the campaign you would like to put together an informal committee on traffic issues—have you been able to take any steps toward its formation?**

I am beginning to lay the groundwork by reaching out to citizens, and I will follow through on forming a committee. I, or someone from my staff, will be present at all of the public meetings on transportation to hear the citizens' concerns.

**A 1-cent tax referendum will be proposed in 2016 for transportation. Do you think your community will support it?**

I want to be very clear that the planning for transportation is a blank canvas at this stage, and that is why the [GO Hillsborough] public meetings are so important. The meetings are a sincere effort to understand the desires of the citizens, and the decisions will be community-driven. The closest meetings for Bloomingdale residents will be at Bell Shoals Baptist Church. I believe the needs of eastern Hillsborough County include relieving traffic. Unless given a very specific plan of action, I do not think the community will support the referendum.

**Do you know if there are any plans for the vacant Sweetbay and/or Albertsons stores? And are there incentives the county can offer to encourage use of those properties and others like them?**

I am actively pursuing options for use of those locations, and investigating current incentives for reuse that I am ready to implement. I have already put in a request to address the overgrowth of landscaping at the old Sweetbay store. I am committed to addressing this issue. *(Landscapers were observed on Feb. 26 trimming overgrowth at the site.)*

**How will you communicate with Bloomingdale residents—are you planning on holding monthly meetings with local leaders, visiting the BHA, or holding town hall meetings with residents at the Bloomingdale library?**

I have already visited the Bloomingdale Community Substation [Sheriff's Office] twice, and am in the process of establishing office hours as well as town hall meetings in the area. I intend to be the eyes and ears for the Bloomingdale community.

**What is the best way for your Bloomingdale constituents to communicate any concerns or issues with you and/or the Board of County Commissioners?**

My e-mail is whites@hillboroughcounty.org, and my office phone number is 813-272-5740. I am also very close to launching an e-newsletter, so anyone interested in being on the distribution list can contact my office right away.



Commissioner Stacy White means what he says. In January, he met with BHA president George May for an informal discussion of Bloomingdale issues including the state of the community's parks. In February, residents noted vast improvements attributable to White's efforts at both east and west parks. Pictured, Bob Donnelly, Parks and Recreation Maintenance Division, provides a much-needed paint facelift to the tennis courts at Bloomingdale East Park.

Photo: Joy Boisselle

## GO Hillsborough Schedules Transportation Meetings: Let Your Voice Be Heard and GO!

Transportation affects everybody's life, every day. We are facing critical funding shortfalls as our population expands and congestion increases. With this pressure on our already declining transportation system, we must come together to deal with this before our standard of living diminishes.

We want to understand how transportation impacts you and your family every day. Join us for an upcoming interactive workshop. RSVP for any of the community workshops below to help us understand your issues, perspectives and experiences concerning transportation. We need your help to create a Community Transportation Plan that will make your life better.

Meetings in our area are at Bell Shoals Baptist Church at 2102 Bell Shoals Road from 6 to 8 p.m. Dates are: March 26 - Exploring Options, April 14 - Making Choices and May 11 - Finding Consensus.

Telephone Town Halls are scheduled for April 2 - Exploring Options, May 4 - Making Choices and May 21 - Finding Consensus. All telephone town halls are from 6 to 8 p.m.

RSVP online at <http://gohillsborough.org>. Source: Hillsborough County



The first in a series of GO Hillsborough public meetings on transportation was held on March 3 at Bell Shoals Baptist Church.

Photo: Miriam Leech

There are several vacant commercial properties in the Bloomingdale area and many have been vacant for a very long time. The largest, and most obvious, of those vacancies are the former Sweetbay on Bloomingdale Avenue (soon to be joined by the Walmart off Bell Shoals) and the former Albertsons off Lithia Pinecrest Road.

The longer these properties sit vacant the more the community is directly affected. Consider this:

- If the properties and area around them are not maintained, the whole community looks run down. This can seriously affect how visitors and prospective homeowners view our neighborhoods.
- The vacant stores provide convenient “dump sites” and create an environment for illegal activities and mischief.
- Sheriff’s Office Deputies spend valuable time patrolling these properties to prevent vandalism, crime and property damage.

If these properties had new owners with new businesses, jobs would be added to the community and the local economy would strengthen. Many residents would like to know just what the plans are for these vacant commercial properties.

Organizations, including the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA), the Sheriff’s Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC) and also Hillsborough County Commissioner Stacy White and his staff are monitoring these issues. Through the Bloomingdale Gazette, the BHA will keep residents informed as developments occur.



This property, which housed a Sweetbay grocery store, is located at the intersection of Bell Shoals Road and Bloomingdale Avenue. It is an outstanding location for a new business. The property has been vacant for years and many residents have expressed concerns over the continuing decay and vandalism. The site would make a great indoor sports complex, theater, or bowling alley – any of which would be preferable to the ghost town that exists today.



### Fire Station Progresses at Lightning Speed



Amazing progress continues on completing construction at the new County Fire Station #7 on Bloomingdale Avenue. Workers are pressing hard to finish this very critical construction project, and a June completion date is anticipated.  
Photo: Mack Austin



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# BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

By Community Resource Master Deputy Curtis Warren  
Photos: Joy Boisselle



## FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY MILESTONE

On March 22, I will have completed five years as the Bloomingdale Community Resource Deputy (CRD). I can't believe how fast time is flying by! Each year, I have seen many improvements in crime prevention and in our success in working effectively with residents in Bloomingdale and surrounding communities.

Sandy Capitano, your Community Service Officer, and I, along with the many detectives, deputies and Sheriff's Volunteer Citizen Patrol team members thank all of the many who have provided outstanding support to us. Our door is always open for residents to drop by and let us know about any safety and security issues they have.

I look forward to working with all of you and continuing the outstanding work that has been done to make Bloomingdale and the surrounding communities a safer and more secure place to live and work.

## HOW TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY AND PREVENT MAJOR CRIMES!

At our February Sheriff's Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC), Detective James Howell briefed members on recent criminal activity in our area. In reviewing the incidents, we noticed some obvious patterns as to the types of crimes and possible causes.

There were several vehicle burglaries. The first example - In many cases, the vehicles were unsecured. This is an open invitation for criminals. The second example - the vehicles were secured and broken into. In these incidents, personal items were left in locked vehicles giving criminals temptation and motivation to break in. The simple solution - "lock up your vehicles and remove all personal items!"

In a recent case, a homeowner with a very sophisticated security system was reviewing video and noticed potential burglars approaching his home and vehicle. They spotted the security system and left. However, his security system was good enough to provide outstanding detail of the burglars and their vehicle. Through hard work, one of the burglars was identified and arrested. This type of personal involvement makes a major difference in stopping crime.

Detective Howell and I agree that many residents don't realize just what is involved when a vehicle is burglarized and how the victims are affected. First, consider the time, money, and loss of use required to get the burglarized vehicle repaired. Second, think about the time and money involved in replacing all those personal items like driver's licenses, credit cards, and other expensive items as well as any personal information in your wallet or purse. Finally, how about the overall feeling and experience of being personally violated!

## ISN'T TAKING THE TIME TO LOCK UP YOUR VEHICLE AND SECURE YOUR PERSONAL ITEMS MUCH EASIER?

More of these types of crimes will occur and HCSO needs more residents to be aware and get involved! The responsibility for keeping your homes and vehicles safe and secure starts with you - the resident. Do not make it easy for criminals. Take time to lock your vehicles and remove your valuables. And, if you have a home, security system check the video frequently. What you see, may surprise you.



## HCSO CHARITIES, INC., THE POWER OF GENEROSITY WITH PURPOSE...

HCSO Charities, Inc. focuses on identifying and supporting organizations and events dedicated to those in need. From helping the families of our nation's Fallen Heroes and Wounded Warriors to assisting families of law enforcement officers to helping bring smiles to the faces of needy children, we are all about service to others.

Please visit our webpage at [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us/](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us/). On the bottom right of the homepage is a link to the HCSO Charities, Inc. site. Once there, you can make a donation, sponsor a special event or follow another link to purchase promotional items at our Marketplace. The Marketplace direct link is [www.marketplace.hcsocharities.com](http://www.marketplace.hcsocharities.com). Remember, all donations are tax deductible.



For information, contact Deputy Gerald Carey at 813-247-0924 or email [gcarey@hcso.tampa.fl.us](mailto:gcarey@hcso.tampa.fl.us). Thank you in advance for your support of HCSO charities, Inc.

## REMEMBER:

If you notice any suspicious activity or a crime being committed, get all the information you can - descriptions of individuals, descriptions of vehicles and license numbers and immediately call the Sheriff's Dispatch at 813-247-8200! Time is critical!

## Ladies, Ladies, Ladies...

By J.D. Carino (Bloomingdale CC Campus)

Men are from Mars and women are from Venus - a book by John Gray Ph.D., describes how different men and women are and how we can learn from that.

Physical abilities separate the men from the women in golf. One main difference is in swing speed. An average male golfer swing speed with a driver is 75 mph or higher, while a woman has a driver swing speed of 60 mph or less.

And that's why there are different clubs, balls and the dreaded red tee boxes for ladies.

Women's clubs typically have shafts made of graphite or carbon fiber. They are lighter than steel and are designed with lots of flex (L). Women with a faster than average swing speed may want to try "senior" flex clubs (A).



*John E.S. Cochrane*  
GOLF SCHOOLS

Irene Sandiego learns the impact position from teaching professional J.D. Carino

Of course, if Lexi Thompson (LPGA pro) reads this article, I'm sure she's chuckling. She hits the ball a country mile and needs no help in the swing speed department.

Next lesson: What does the golf term effective loft really mean? Any questions or for lessons, visit [CochraneGolfSchools.com](http://CochraneGolfSchools.com) or call J.D. at 813-957-3205.



Photo: J.D. Carino



This month's Best of the Best winner is BSHS AFJROTC 2nd Lieutenant Austin Boley. He is a junior with goals to serve others as a military first responder.  
Photo: The Boley Family

*The Best of the Best Student of the Month Program (BOB) recognizes outstanding students in our community. If selected, the student receives a \$25 gift card provided by our sponsor, Ray Chadderton of The Chadderton Group of Keller Williams Realty. Send your nominations to [bloomington.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:bloomington.homeowners@gmail.com) or call 813-681-2051. Nominees must be in home, public, or private school and residents of Bloomington. Include the nominee's name, address, phone number, email and school attending. In addition, provide a short paragraph detailing why he/she should receive the award.*

Congratulations to John "Austin" Boley, March's Best of the Best Student of the Month!

Bloomington High School junior John "Austin" Boley is a unique and selfless young man. While a good student, he earned "Best of the Best" recognition because of his demonstrated desire to help others.

Boley is a member of the BSHS Air Force Junior ROTC program where he was recently promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. With long-range plans to join the military, he is developing his leadership skills while serving as the program's color guard commander. Posting the colors requires a level of respect, responsibility and maturity that this student amply displays.

Serving others comes naturally to Boley. He is a member of Mulberry Post 72 Sons of the American Legion, volunteers at Brandon Regional Hospital's summer "Volunteer" program in the Emergency Room, and last summer, volunteered with Sea Turtle Protection Oversight (STOP) in Fort Lauderdale rescuing endangered sea turtle hatchlings on the beach.

Others describe this student as "the first to stop to render aid." That trait will serve him well in the future, as he desires to join the Air Force after earning a degree in the medical field and pursue a position in the elite Pararescue field. Twice in the last few years, Boley has responded to accidents where he was the first on the scene, and made crucial decisions affecting the outcomes of those involved.


When not helping others, this outgoing young man plays

drums (since age 2) and enjoys hunting, fishing, sailing and hanging out with friends. He also loves his Starbucks coffee.

Eddie and Teresa Boley are the proud parents of this remarkable Bloomington student. The family, including sister Autumn, live in Sandy Creek Manors.

*Keep up the great work, Austin!*

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

### March 9-13 – Spring Break, No School

### April 3 – Non-Student Day, No School

#### ALAFIA ALLIGATOR ALLEY

**March 27** – Talent Show, 6 p.m., school cafeteria.

**April 2** – Spirit Day, Stop by McDonald's on Bloomindale Avenue all day and be sure to mention Alafia when placing your order so that the school will get credit for your visit.



**Mint and Book Swap:** Every Wednesday from 7:30-7:55 a.m., come to Room 208 to swap out your books.

**Spirit Friday:** Be sure to wear your Alafia T-shirt every Friday to show your school spirit!

#### CIMINO COUGAR CENTRAL

**March 19** – Spirit Night, Chili's, Lithia Pinecrest Rd, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Be sure to mention Cimino when paying your bill so that the school will get credit for your visit.

**March 20** – All Pro Dad's: A monthly get together for kids and their dads. Meet in the Multi-Purpose Room at 7 a.m. Enjoy a great free breakfast and bonding with our kids, raffles and more.



**Copy Team:** Have a few hours to spare on Fridays? Interested in helping out our fantastic staff by becoming a member of the copy team? We are looking for a new member to join us on Fridays to help make copies and laminate. Flexible hours and no experience necessary. If you would like to help out, contact CiminoPTA@gmail.com

#### BURNS BRUINS BANTER

**March 24-26** – Middle School Band MPA, Spoto High School

**March 25** – Cross Country Trek, 9-10 a.m.

**April 2** – Conference Night, 4-9 p.m.



**Morning Tutoring:** Tutoring is available from 7:30-8:30 a.m. for Math, Science, Language Arts and Social Studies. Help is available for class and homework, FCAT Prep or to improve grades, in general. For information, contact Mr. Riley at 813-744-8383 ext. 235.



### BLOOMINGDALE HIGH BULL BUSINESS

Check out the BSHS calendar at <http://bloomington.mysdhc.org/> for more March events.



**March 17, 26, and April 2** – Flag Football

**March 17, 20, 28 and April 2** – Baseball/Softball

**March 18, 23, 27, 30** Lacrosse

#### BULLS BRIEFS

**Business Partners Wanted:** The Bloomington Academic Foundation is looking for business partners interested in supporting our great school and promote their businesses at the same time. We are also accepting donations for the upcoming semester. The foundation's goal is to put money directly back into the classrooms. Contact Michelle Hernandez [president@bloomingtonacademics.org](mailto:president@bloomingtonacademics.org)

**Casino Night:** The Rajun' Bull Band is hosting its second annual Casino Night, "A Night at the BULLagio," Saturday, April 18 at 7 p.m. at The LOFT (Lumsden & Kings). Tickets are only \$35 single/\$60 couple. The event is for adults only (must be over 18 years of age). Tickets are on sale NOW. Join us for a high rolling night of fun and silent auction!



**Scholarships:** New opportunities are posted daily at <http://www.bloomingtonguidance.org/>. There are over 85 scholarships available through the Hillsborough Education Foundation. Visit [www.educationfoundation.com](http://www.educationfoundation.com) to apply.

**Legacy Bricks:** Buy a brick to help us build our new field house. Leave your mark forever. Please notify all current and former students of this great opportunity. Forms are available at [bloomington.mysdhc.org/Files/legacybrick.pdf](http://bloomington.mysdhc.org/Files/legacybrick.pdf). Bricks cost \$100.

**Microsoft Student Advantage Program:** Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) is excited to announce the Microsoft Student Advantage program, which allows students to download and install Microsoft Office ProPlus desktop applications on their home computers FREE! For information on how to get this offer, visit the Bloomington HS website at [bloomington.mysdhc.org](http://bloomington.mysdhc.org). The information is located in the current bulletin.



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## Bloomington's Logan Crouse is a Triple Threat

By Deidre Morgan

If Seattle Seahawks Head Coach Pete Carroll wanted a dream player, Bloomington senior Logan Crouse would be it. Of student athletes, Carroll has said, "What other sports does he play? What are his positions? Is he a big hitter in baseball? Is he a pitcher? Does he play hoops? All of those things are important to me. I hate that kids don't play three sports in high school. I think that they should play year-round and get every bit of it that they can through that experience."

Crouse embodies the best of all-around athleticism. He is a star in three sports at Bloomington: in baseball as pitcher and 1st baseman, in basketball as a forward and in football as a wide receiver. When asked which sport is his favorite, he stated he likes them all equally.

For many sports enthusiasts, it's all about the stats, and this athlete fields an impressive resume. In football, the wide receiver finished his high school career with 1549 receiving yards, 102 catches and 12 touchdowns. In basketball, he averaged 7.5 points, 1.6 assists, 6.4 rebounds and averaged 1.4 steals per game. And, with the baseball season ongoing, so far, Crouse sports a 0.90 earned run average (ERA,) 16 wins, 140.1 innings pitched and 166 total strikeouts.

Great athletes help make history and Crouse has

been a part of two history making teams this year. The Bulls baseball team advanced to the Florida State 8A Championship and the football team made it to the district playoffs for the first time in school history, finishing with a 9-1 record.

While awards don't drive this superstar, he has earned his fair share: MVP pitcher for a perfect game, 1st Team All-Conference Football and Baseball, Pitcher of the Year by the Tampa Bay Times and he was nominated for 2014 Athlete of the Year.

Parents Terry and Melanie Crouse have instilled a love of sports in their family. Besides Logan, brother Cody pitches for the Florida International University (FIU) Panthers baseball team, brother Carson is an up and coming Bloomington football and baseball player and sister Mackenzie is a Brandon Bears cheerleader.

As he leaves high school behind, Crouse will continue to make a name for himself this time as a baseball player for Florida State University. He recently signed a Letter of Intent and explained he chose FSU because he wants to play with the best players and coaches in the country. The eyes of Bloomington will be watching this talented athlete as he continues to make his mark on.

Logan Crouse powers over a Plant High School defender. Crouse helped lead the Bull football team to a history-making 9-1 record and a district play-off berth.



Photos: Melanie Crouse



Crouse, (right) with younger brother Carson, has been a stellar athlete in football, basketball, and baseball.

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## Thank You, Bulls Fans!

Dear Community,

The 2014 Bloomingdale Bulls Football season was one for the ages! It was a season filled with milestones and history making.

The student athletes were the closest group I have ever been around, and it showed on Friday nights. Our seniors will never forget the journey, sacrifice, and commitment that it took to accomplish those wonderful feats.

Even though the kids put in all the work, I wanted to take time to thank the community that supported this program all season. Bloomingdale's fan base was unbelievable. Every Friday night and in every stadium, the stands were packed with Bulls' fans. You cheered loudly and supported this program with great pride.

As a Bloomingdale graduate, I was also very thankful for the alumni that came back and showed support from all over the country. You mean so much to our team.

In order to move forward with progress; it's important to reconnect with people that have the same vested interest in this school. The support was tremendous coming from parents, boosters, local businesses, faculty, and just fans in general.

We hope that we will continue to make you proud in the future, and hope to see you soon on Friday nights. Thank you all, and Go Bulls!

Sincerely,  
Coach Brian Surcy



Photo: Deidre Morgan



## Bloomingdale Athletes Sign National Letters of Intent

Some of Bloomingdale High School's best athletes signed their National Letters of Intent to play college sports on National Signing Day held Feb. 4 at the high school. Family, friends, coaches and teammates gathered to watch as this year's crop of highly recruited athletes representing softball, football, golf, baseball and soccer took a giant step forward in their athletic endeavors.

Pictured with their coaches are Bailey Stites - University of North Florida (Soccer), Elizabeth Jackson - Daytona State (Golf), Matt Chiarenza - Campbellsville University (Football), Kyle Williams - Campbellsville University (Football), Jenna Beswick - Hillsborough Community College (Softball) and Conrado Skepple - Alcorn State University (Baseball).



Photo: Deidre Morgan



## BSHS Counselor Helps Students Reach Goals

By Katelyn Massarelli

Students looking for advice on their future careers and college plans need look no further than Bloomingdale Senior High School's newest guidance department member, Nicole Usher. Usher joined the department at the beginning of the school year as the school's College and Career Counselor.

Her focus – help students prepare for life after high school. Having previously worked at a school where she served as guidance counselor to 800 students, Usher comes to BSHS with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

She immediately went to work helping students understand SAT and ACT college entrance tests and helping them prepare college applications and scholarships. To ensure student success, she manages numerous deadlines that if not met can affect student scholarship awards and college acceptances. In addition, the dedicated counselor regularly updates the school's online scholarship blog, coordinates college field trips and helps students find community service opportunities.

"The most rewarding part of my job is when students reach their goals whether it be getting accepted to a college or getting the SAT score they wanted," Usher stated, adding it is what makes her job at Bloomingdale worthwhile.

BSHS College and Career Counselor Nicole Usher (l.) assists students Abigail Wingfield and Douglas Sandberg with scholarship information. Photo: Mallory Hillary





## Bloomington Stars Shine

By Katelyn Massarelli

Three events this past month highlighted Bloomington High School's talented students. All events helped raise money for school student groups.

### Beauty and the Bull

Bloomington High School's junior steering club held Beauty and the Bull, a pageant to raise money for the junior class on Feb. 11. Juniors worked hard to make the event a success and many students, teachers and parents attended. Ashley Sepessy and her partner Robby Ross claimed first place, while second place went to Clara Hartman and her partner Joseph Lafauci.



### Bloomington Idol

The Bloomington Ambassadors, the school's highly awarded vocal group, sponsored Bloomington Idol, a talent show much like the ever-popular American Idol. A preliminary round took place in the school's auditorium on Feb. 16. The performances were stunning and judges picked the best vocalists to compete at the finals held Feb. 23. First, second, third and fourth place went to Savannah Cummings, Abbey Hernandez, Nicole Didona and Benjamin Braverman, respectively.

### Bloomington's Got Talent

Bloomington High School held Bloomington's Got Talent, a version of another popular television show, on Feb. 19. Talents on display included musicians, vocalists and dancers. Each competitor's performance completely impressed the judges and crowd. Judges selected trio Chris Desmond, Kaleb Ko, and Vincent Cassella as the overall winners while the fan favorite went to Taylor Vicente.

Bloomington Idol Savannah Cummings performs her final song. The freshman astounded the crowd with her highly emotional cover of Warrior by Demi Lovato.

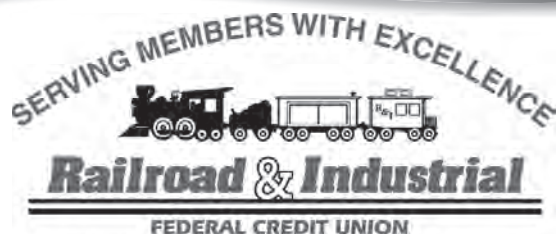


Photos: Mallory Hillary

Beauty and the Bull pageant's Dani Jaramillo and Chris Desmond perform in the talent event. With their sassy salsa moves, it was obvious why they won audience favorite.

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# **SURGICAL WEIGHT LOSS:** **Get Back To** **A Healthier, Happier YOU!**

Join us for a **FREE** Surgical Weight Loss Seminar

## **bar·i·at·ric (noun) –**

a branch of medicine that deals with the control and treatment of obesity and related diseases.

**Wednesday, March 11th**

**@ 6:00 p.m.**

presented by Keyur Chavda, MD  
Oakfield Medical Plaza • Classroom B, Suite 260 • Brandon

**Thursday, March 19th**

**@ 12:00 p.m.**

presented by Keyur Chavda, MD  
1901 Haverford Ave., Ste 106 (behind South Bay Hospital)  
Sun City Center

**Thursday, March 26th**

**@ 6:30 p.m.**

presented by Alfredo Fernandez, MD  
Oakfield Medical Plaza • Classroom B, Suite 260 • Brandon

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To register for these **FREE** seminars, call  
**1-855-227-4387** toll free.

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## **Florida Bariatric Centers**

Brandon Regional Hospital | Largo Medical Center  
Memorial Hospital of Tampa | Palms of Pasadena Hospital

[www.HCAWestFlorida.com/weightloss](http://www.HCAWestFlorida.com/weightloss)

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