

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

VOLUME XXXIV ❧ ISSUE 12 ❧ DECEMBER 2014 ❧ [www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com](http://www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com)

## Today! Santa and Mrs. Claus Return to Bloomingdale *Food Drive Helps the Needy*

Staff Report

HERE COMES SANTA! Nothing spells the beginning of the holiday season like a visit with Santa. Hosted by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA), the jolly fellow, Mrs. Claus and their holiday elves will welcome children, young and “young at heart,” today at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This beloved Bloomingdale tradition is in its 28th year, 27 of which have been presided over by community treasures...Joe and Pam Liguori aka Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Often referred to as the “best Santa and Mrs. around,” this is the Liguori’s last sleigh ride in our community. Having given the community’s children wonderful and lasting holiday memories, sadly, they are retiring.

The annual event features visits and photo opportunities with Santa and a chance for participants to give to others less fortunate during the holidays. To that end, visitors are asked to provide a donation of a non-perishable food item. Over the years, various charities have benefited from the collected donations.

Santa, his better half, and his band of merry elves are sure to bring a smile to your child’s face. However, there will be a number of activities ongoing as well as cookies and refreshments to keep your child happy while waiting for the big “visit.”

While the much-loved tradition will continue even after the Liguori’s last “Ho, Ho, Ho,” they are simply irreplaceable in the holiday roles seemingly tailor-made for them. Countless hours, money and effort given by the humble duo mark their dedicated and selfless contribution to the community they love. (See story on pages 12-13.)

Come see Bloomingdale’s own Santa and Mrs. Claus as they end an era of fostering joy and the holiday spirit in

the community. No kids? No worries. Stop by and just say thank you. The memories made today are sure to be priceless and cherished for many years to come.



“That ain’t no reindeer, Mrs. Claus.” Even four-legged furry kids enjoy time and a smile with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Come be a part of history; visit with the jolly one and his better half today at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Today marks the last time Joe and Pam Liguori will put their stamp on the roles they have filled for 27 years – that of Santa and Mrs. Claus. Don’t forget to bring your cameras and a canned food donation for ECHO, this year’s food drive recipient.

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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## Winner

2014  
Hillsborough County  
Neighborhood  
Recognition Award

Best Communications  
Newsletter Category

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love. *Hamilton Wright Mabi*





## 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 Offices of Bloomingdale Special Taxing District:

3509 Bell Shoals Road

Valrico, Florida 33596

#### Directors at Large:

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

*Billy Hightower*

*Joanie Wilson*

**Treasurer:** *Dennis Osborn*

*Mary Galin*

*Ken Smith*

**Secretary:** *Daniel Berkowitz*

*Beth Smedley*

*Suzy Watts*

## YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



### JOY BOISSELLE

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# Tampa Bay Times

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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

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*Located between Stowers Elementary and Mosaic*



## Meet Your BHA Board

By Kayla Hayes

Meet Director at Large, Billy Hightower! Hightower has been serving on the board for more than a year. Hightower and his family – Carlette (wife for 37 years), Ashley (daughter, age 32) and Heather (daughter, age 28) – bought their house in Bloomingdale West new 32 years ago when their eldest daughter, Ashley, was nine months old. Both of his daughters graduated from Bloomingdale Senior High School.

“I would like to see the same pride in our neighborhoods that I saw 32 years ago when all of the houses were brand new,” said Hightower, concerning his vision for Bloomingdale.

Hightower is a retired locomotive engineer. He worked for CSX Railroad for 32 years.

“My father worked for the railroad and both of my uncles, so it was kind of a family thing. My father had 40 years, one uncle had 30 and the other had 40 years,” Hightower said.

These days Hightower enjoys spending time with his family and working in his yard and around his house.

“My vision is [for Bloomingdale] to get better every day... to grow bigger and better for the whole community... it's a great place to live,” said Hightower.



Photo: Hightower Family

Billy Hightower and his family are the original owners of their house in Bloomingdale West. Hightower is retired and enjoys spending time at home with his family.

## Yard of the Month



Photo: Joy Boisselle

**William & Audrey Howze**  
705 Fenner Court  
Brandon, FL 33511 (Bloomingdale West)

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



## Library Happenings in December

Compiled By Kayla Hayes

Access the library's calendar online for all upcoming events and holiday hours at [www.hplc.org/hplc/locations/bdl](http://www.hplc.org/hplc/locations/bdl). The Bloomingdale Regional Public Library will be closing early December 22-24 and will be closed December 25, 26 and 31.

### FOR CHILDREN -

Puppet Show: Winter Tales on Thursday, Dec. 11 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. in Room 8. Winter Tales includes three favorite winter stories: 'The Shoemaker and the Elves' performed with hand puppets; 'Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates' with shadow puppets; and 'Scrooge's Sing-a-Long' with marionettes. These three stories will warm your heart... 'Tis the season for three great stories filled with good cheer. Call 813-273-3652 for information.



Photo: The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative

### FOR TEENS -

Movies 4 Teens on Wednesday, Dec. 10 from 3-5 p.m. in the McLean Community Room. Come enjoy watching an awesome movie just for teens.

### FOR ADULTS -

Brandon Area Historical and Genealogical Society Special Christmas Event on Tuesday, Dec. 9 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the McLean Community Room. Join us at this meeting of the Brandon Area Genealogical and Historical Society. This meeting will also be a special Christmas holiday event and is open at all interested in genealogy and family history.

### GOOD READS!

Read this library favorite in preparation for a book discussion on December 15.

*Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivey, an international bestseller and contemporary classic: a 2013 Pulitzer Prize Finalist

#### Young Adult

*Poison Princess* by Kresley Cole

#### Children

*A Sick Day for Amos McGee*  
by Philip Christian Stead



### TODAY! FOR ALL AGES -

Friends of the Bloomingdale Regional Library Holiday Book Sale on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bookends Bookstore will host a holiday sale with special gift items, a variety of holiday book titles, and many more books on different subjects. Join us in the library café and in front of the Bookends Bookstore.



# BHA COMMUNITY CORNER

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

## 2014 Annual Membership Drive concludes, 2015 drive starts Jan. 15

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association 2014 Membership Drive is nearly complete. There is still time to join as the 2014 drive will not close until Dec. 31.

For those that have already joined, donated to our scholarship fund, and purchased Bloomingdale Pride license plates, we sincerely thank you. For those that have not, please join today. Make checks payable to the BHA and mail to 3509 Bell Shoals Road., Valrico, FL 33596, or stop by the office and meet our office manager. 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 and follow the simple instructions.

Membership numbers grew from previous years, but the Association is hoping that 2015 will be a record-breaking year. Residents will begin receiving their 2015 notices after Jan. 15.

2014 has been an exciting year. The board gained new members whose passion and enthusiasm for Bloomingdale energized the association. These resident volunteers work hard to keep the community a place all can be proud to call home.

Major events this year included a spring community cleanup, the awarding of a \$2,000 scholarship, a charity golf tournament benefitting K-9s for Warriors, the fall festival and Santa's visit. Other events included several roundtable discussions with Bloomingdale mandatory HOA leaders designed to strengthen the community's collective voice, meetings with Can-Do and Big Box developers and meetings with county officials regarding the same as well as road conditions and safety in and around our neighborhoods.

For those thinking about joining, \$25 is a small price to pay. If you have ever called the office, read the Bloomingdale Gazette, looked at our website or Facebook page, submitted a complaint, attended a BHA event, these are all things that would not happen without the funds generated during the Association's annual dues drive.

Please consider joining the only organization that represents the entire Bloomingdale community. With your support, our voice will only become stronger.



## HOT! HOT! HOT!

BHA Closes Post Office Box 7221, Brandon, FL 33508; Please update your mailing lists!

Effective Aug. 31, the BHA post office box is no more. Please direct all mail to the Association's physical address at 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL, 33596. Residents using automatic bank payments for dues processing should update the mailing address accordingly.

## BHA EVENT CALENDAR

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

**TODAY/ Dec. 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. / Santa and Mrs. Claus, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Bring your camera and a canned food donation!**

Monday, Dec. 8, 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, Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. / BHA Monthly Board Meeting, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

No BACC Meeting in December / Bloomingdale Area Community Council chaired by Hillsborough County Master Deputy Curtis Warren, Bloomingdale Community Station, 3622 Erindale Drive, 813-635-8040.

**Correction: In last month's "Best of the Best" column, we incorrectly identified Tanner Chastain's father as Paul; his name is Alan. We regret the error.**

## BHA BRIEFS

### BHA November Board Meeting Highlights

The November Board Meeting focused on upcoming 2015 initiatives including BHA involvement in coordinating improvements with Hillsborough County for Lithia Pinecrest and Bell Shoals Roads and Bloomingdale Avenue. Specific improvements addressed were street light additions, bus stop cutouts, high visibility crosswalks, signal light timing, and the replacement/renewal of sidewalks. BHA president George May is actively involved with other HOA leaders and county officials to address these much-needed projects.

The board, also, reviewed a single source deed restriction document prepared by BHA attorney Dan Pilka. The document would replace, with resident majority vote, the over 30 separate and outdated deed restriction documents currently in place in Bloomingdale's non-mandated (voluntary HOA) neighborhoods. More information for residents in these neighborhoods will be forthcoming in next few months. When available, the BHA will post the proposed document online at the community website for resident review and comment.

Remember, monthly BHA board meetings are open to all. 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 more information.





## Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association Seeks New Board Members

**Do you care about our Bloomingtondale Community and want to take an active role in its future?**

Then, the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association (BHA) wants you to become part of "Team Bloomingtondale." The Board meets on the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingtondale Community Office on Bell Shoals Road at 6:30 p.m.

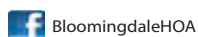
Board members serve our community through committees including:

- The Bloomingtondale Gazette
- Bloomingtondale HOA website and Facebook
- Santa and Mrs. Claus Visit/Charity Food Drive
- Annual Clean-up
- Charity Golf Tournament
- Fall Festival
- Scholarship
- Deed Restriction Compliance/Education/Information
- And More

Not sure you have the time? The BHA encourages all interested residents to attend a few board meetings to see the Association at work, and to determine if joining the Board is a good "fit." Remember, the current board members are residents, like you, who have the betterment of our community as their number one goal.

Call 813-681-2051 or email [bloomingtondale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingtondale.homeowners@gmail.com).

[www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com](http://www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com)



## BHA BRIEFS (CONTINUED)

### Annual Clean-Up Date Announced

The BHA's ever-popular annual community clean-up will be Saturday, March 7, 2015 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Due to last year's overwhelming response, additional trash haulers will be on site. In addition, we are looking forward to a return visit from Urban E Recycling, a computer and electronics recycling company, and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Operation Medicine Cabinet program.

### 2015 Scholarship Dates/Deadlines Set

Important dates and deadlines for the \$2,000 Bloomingtondale Community Scholarship in honor of former Bloomingtondale Senior High School principal, BJ Stelter are as follows:

Jan. 17 - Scholarship applications available.

April 1 - Scholarship Deadline, No exceptions.

May 13 - Winner announced at monthly BHA board meeting.

Detailed information will be posted in next month's Gazette, on Facebook, and online at [www.bloomingtondalehoa.com](http://www.bloomingtondalehoa.com).

### Editor's Note:

**"On the Road with Ryan" will return next month.**



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

## TODAY!

**Nick of Time Bazaar / 2-6:30 p.m. / The Village Early Learning Center /** The First Annual Nick of Time Bazaar is a fantastic opportunity to buy local at The Village Early Learning Center! Open to the community. Gift wrapping is available and proceeds benefit the Village Family Foundation, the non-profit parent and teacher partnership of The Village Early Learning Center. For information, call 813-651-0779.

**CARES Hero Tree Collections / Ongoing through Dec. 15 / CARES Adult Day Care at Bloomingdale West Center, 3940 Canoga Park Dr., Brandon / 813-330-7964 /** CARES (Community Aging & Retirement Services, Inc.) non-profit organization is collecting gifts for veterans living in area nursing homes. "Hero Trees" will be at CARES locations throughout Hillsborough County. Items such as men's and women's fleece jackets, sweat pants, bed jackets, shawls, cardigan sweaters, lap blankets, socks, slippers, large print books, puzzles, note cards, postage stamps, and calendars are being collected through Monday, Dec. 15.



**Christmas Town at Busch Gardens / Open Select Dates through Dec. 31 /** Busch Gardens Tampa's Christmas Town, the Bay area's biggest Christmas celebration, is returning this year and is now included with any annual pass, Fun Card, or daily admission to the park. Special entertainment, live music, festive treats, holiday shopping, and thousands of twinkling lights are at every turn. Christmas Town is open 23 select dates through Dec. 31. Park closing times will range from 8-9 p.m. throughout the event. Visit [www.seaworldparks.org](http://www.seaworldparks.org).

**Christmas Bricktacular / Weekends in December / LEGOLAND Florida / One LEGOLAND Way, Winter Haven /** Holiday festivities on Saturdays and Sundays in December during Christmas Bricktacular will feature tons of family fun, included with park admission! Visit <http://florida.legoland.com> for details.

**Pat's Corner Gift Shop Holiday Open House / Dec. 11 / 4:30-7:30 p.m. / Center Place Fine Arts & Civic Association, Inc. / 619 Vonderburg Drive, Brandon /** Storewide 25% Discount! Our boutique features many unique items including ornaments, handbags, wallets, jewelry, perfume bottles, wine holders, night lights, shawls, and many more holiday gift items. Gift wrapping and refreshments! Visit [www.centerplacebrandon.org](http://www.centerplacebrandon.org) for information.

**Santa's Holiday Revue / Dec. 12 / 7 p.m. / Center Place Fine Arts & Civic Association, Inc. / 619 Vonderburg Drive, Brandon /** 14 years running, Santa's Holiday Revue is a fast-paced rollicking musical that takes a joyous 'round the world tour of the dances, songs, and stories from Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and many more. Sing, clap, and tap along as you learn new and old traditions, customs, and folklore that instill the magic of the season. This wonderful jubilee celebrates the true spirit of cultural diversity. Ages Pre-K to 3rd grade. \$6.00 members /\$7.00 non-members. All shows are approximately 50 minutes. Call 813-685-8888 or visit [www.centerplacebrandon.org](http://www.centerplacebrandon.org) for information.



Photo: Center Place

**Season of Giving Celebration/ Dec. 13 / 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. / Noah's Ark Animal Hospital/ 4338 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico /** Meet the staff of Noah's Ark Animal Hospital as we collect non-perishable food items to benefit homeless veterans. We are also collecting food and treats for local animal shelters. Come and enjoy arts and crafts, a coloring contest for kids, hospital tours, refreshments and more! For information, call 813-662-7275 or visit [www.noahsarkanimal.com](http://www.noahsarkanimal.com).

**Queena's Holiday Shopping Fair / Dec. 13 / 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. / Winthrop Town Centre / 6037 Winthrop Commerce Avenue, Riverview /** A fundraiser to benefit the Bloomingdale Library attack survivor. A wide selection of specialty vendors, live music, hot cocoa, face painting, fire truck demo, gift wrapping, silent auction, and more. Free admission. VIP "Join Queena" wristbands are available for a \$7 donation if purchased ahead or a \$10 donation at the door (wristband includes hot cocoa, gift wrapping, and special gift bag and other unique goodies). All proceeds to benefit Queena and help pay for continued medical treatments, therapy, and homecare costs. Tickets available at [queenasholidayshoppingfairtickets.eventbrite.com/](http://queenasholidayshoppingfairtickets.eventbrite.com/).

**Brandon Ballet Presents The Nutcracker / Dec. 13, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 14, 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. / Spoto Auditorium / 8538 Eagle Palm Drive, Riverview /** Experience the thrill and magic of Brandon Ballet's The Nutcracker! With beautiful sets, costumes and glorious music enter the magical world of Clara and her Nutcracker Prince, waltzing Snowflakes, and the regal Sugar Plum Fairy. Tickets \$25 for adults, \$15 for children (18 and younger), and \$20 for seniors



Photo: Miriam Leech

(55+). Tickets available at <https://web.tututix.com/client/brandonballet/>. For information visit [www.brandonballet.org](http://www.brandonballet.org) or call (813) 684-4282.

**Christmas Festival 2014 / Dec. 13 / 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. / Music Showcase / 402 Oakfield Drive, Brandon /** Revolution Ice Cream fundraiser sales outside and student recitals inside. Free admission and free parking. Open to the public. For information, call 813-685-5998.

**Menorah Making Workshop / Dec. 14 / 10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. / Home Depot / 10151 Bloomingdale Ave., Riverview /** Have your kids make their own Menorah this Hanukah! Photo opportunity with Judah the Maccabee, hot latkes and drinks, and receive your own Home Depot apron. Hosted by Chabad Jewish Discovery Center of Brandon. Free of charge! Please RSVP on the Jewish Discovery Center Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/Jewishdiscovery](http://www.facebook.com/Jewishdiscovery).

**Annual Menorah Lighting / Dec. 16 / 5 p.m. / Westfield Brandon Mall / 459 Brandon Town Center, Brandon /** Join us as we celebrate Hanukah at our annual Menorah lighting, featuring decorate your own donut, Tony the balloon guy, hot latkes, Hanukah music and dancing, Brandon's tallest Menorah and chocolate gelt. Free admission so bring a friend! The lighting will be in the outdoor restaurant courtyard. Hosted by the Jewish Discovery Center.



Photo: Jewish Discovery Center

**Winter Break Camp / Dec. 22, 23, 26, 29, 30; Jan. 2 / 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. / Campo Family YMCA / 3414 Culbreath Road, Valrico /** Come join us for some winter break fun at the Campo Family YMCA. Activities will include arts and crafts, sports, indoor/outdoor games, fitness activities, our youth and teen center, and more! Ages 5-12. Cost per day: \$30 facility; \$45 program (Early drop off from 7 - 9 a.m. and late pick up from 4 - 6 p.m. are available at no extra charge.) Sign up at the Campo Y Welcome Center or online. For information, contact Kaliegh Hincman, [kaliegh.hincman@tampaymca.org](mailto:kaliegh.hincman@tampaymca.org) or call 813-684-1371.

**TechPlayzone Junior Engineer Robotics Camp / Dec. 22 - 24, Dec. 29 - 31 / 9 a.m. - noon / Brandon Sports & Aquatic Center / 405 Beverly Blvd., Brandon /** TechPlayzone will offer Junior Engineers Robotics Camps during the winter break for children ages 8 - 13. Costs are \$75 per child per week (no registration fees). For information or to register, visit [www.techplayzone.com](http://www.techplayzone.com).



## Links Block Party Brings Residents Together

Staff Report

For years, The Links neighborhood has celebrated fall with a highly anticipated Halloween parade for children. Wanting to build on that success, The Links HOA held their first-ever Block Party on Nov. 8. Organized by new resident, Kathee Ferguson, the party was an unqualified success. The event afforded residents the opportunity to mingle and meet their neighbors as well as enjoy an afternoon of finger lickin' good barbecue, contests, music and entertainment. Former Ringling Brother clowns, Bucky and GiGi (pictured), delighted the crowd with their antics.



Photo: Evelyn Cruz

Links HOA president Carlos Cruz said, "Our plans are to continue these types of events that help build neighborhood bonds and help show and grow the pride that we all have being residents of The Links."

## Bloomington Resident is Campo Y's Top Volunteer

By Miriam Leech

Photo: The Kehrmeier Family



Bloomington resident Cheryl Kehrmeier (pictured with husband, Randy) was presented the Laurie Ellis Mission Advocate Award on Nov. 14 at the Campo Family YMCA's "A Night in Venice"-themed Corks & Forks signature fundraising event. The award is presented annually to a volunteer of the Greater Brandon Area YMCA who embodies the YMCA mission, serves as an active ambassador, represents the efforts and vision of the YMCA, and promotes the healthy development of mind, body and spirit both personally and to the community.

"I am honored to be presented this award, and to join the amazing group of Y volunteers who have received this award over the past years. I am blessed

to be part of the Campo Family Y and our commitment to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility," said Kehrmeier. "It's so rewarding to serve the Y and strengthen our community through programs and resources that are available for every child and every family."



## Residents bring family tradition to Chadds Ford

Staff Report

Third year Chadds Ford residents Dale and Karen Koseck (pictured with their children, Kelsey, 15, and Cory, 17, are huge Halloween fans. Growing up in Chicago, Karen has fond memories of Halloweens past and the pumpkin carving tradition established by her parents. In every community they have lived, the Koseck family has shared that childhood tradition with their new neighbors and friends.



Photos: Vi Osborn

On Oct. 30, kids and adults gathered the pumpkins at the Koseck home and set to work carving new bonds and strengthening neighbor relationships. "This is our way of reaching out, coming together, and making new friends," explained Karen. Noting the military and transplant population in Bloomington, she added, "I think it helps give everyone a sense of home."

## Talk Around Town: Holiday Edition!

Welcome to "Talk around Town," a place to share your opinions and be heard. Each month, our reporters will ask residents a question; some questions are light-hearted, some are serious.

This month's question:

*"What is your favorite holiday tradition?"*

**Mason Ritenauer,**  
Bloomington East resident

"In the morning on Christmas Eve we go to Golden Corral with 60 to 70 family members, and we do a cool gift exchange that night. On Christmas morning, we cook a huge breakfast with our family. We make special homemade blueberry pancakes, eggs, bacon and more. We also put up a ton of lights!"



**Becca Tussing**  
Bloomington East resident

"This is the fifth year we've done the Jesse Tree with our family. We do a devotional every night, and every devotional has a matching ornament to put on the tree. The devotionals start in Genesis and finish in the Gospels, and cover all of the mentions of Jesus Christ."



**Andy Halecky**  
Bloomington West resident

*"I raised my three boys in New York where it snowed around Christmas."*

(Editor's Note: Halecky gave his holiday answer while attending an event at the CARES Adult Day Care Center. Originally from Czechoslovakia, he and his family came to the U.S. prior to World War II. He credits his wife as the chief decorator and creator of Halecky holiday traditions where normally 8-12 family members gathered to spread holiday cheer and make special memories. With his wife's passing, Halecky now lives with his daughter and son-in-law in Bloomington.)



Photos: Kayla Hayes



# BLOOMING IN BLOOMINGDALE

Photo Provided By: Peter and Eileen Kadzielewski

## ...HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

*Editor's Note: This monthly column is for our green and brown thumb gardeners penned by local garden experts and amateurs from the Valrico Garden Club (VGC). Topics include garden news and events as well as tips on how to make your garden the neighborhood showpiece. To learn about the VGC, contact Mary Kay McMahan at 813-684-6323, email danmcmahan@aol.com or visit Facebook/Valrico Garden Club.*

### Mike's Christmas Trees: Fresh Cut Pine Scents Herald the Holiday Season

By Gwen Graverson

Around this time of year, numerous Christmas tree tents pop up around our community. One in particular has been a familiar site on Bloomingdale Avenue near Winthrop Town Center for 14 years – Mike's Christmas Trees. A visit to Mike's has become a part of the community's Christmas celebrations. Moreover, for many, it is a treasured family tradition.

Owners, Mike and Cathy Roberts, hail from the Traverse Bay area of northern Michigan. They personally select all trees from growers for shipment to our area. Each year, the Roberts donate a tree to the Winthrop Center as their gift to the community. This year, the 20-foot plus tree is a Michigan Concolor Fir.

The Roberts are proud of their "full service" tree sales. Cathy stated making the process easy is important to them. Pick a tree and within minutes the tree has been through the shaker (removes loose needles and debris), fresh cut (ensures the base stays moist during transport), baled and loaded in or on your vehicle. Care tips are included on a care tag affixed to each tree.

Beyond picking the perfect tree, a visit to Mike's is much more. With each tree sold, the Roberts also provide a free seedling. The seedlings are about four years old and with care can be planted in your landscape. Another option is to decorate the seedling for added holiday ambience, in or outdoors.

Coming to Mike's is a special experience. It is the closest thing Floridians will get to a walk in the northern woods. The tent literally fills with the heady aroma of pine guaranteed to put even the Grinch in a festive mood. Kids are not left out either; each receives a candy cane and coloring book.

Trees are just part of the Mike's experience. Cathy has 35 years' experience as a retail floral designer, and her creations are showstoppers. Wreaths, swags, garlands, centerpieces and yule logs cover the tent's interior just waiting to become a focal point in your home. Don't see what you want? Items can be custom-made to your specifications and calligraphy services are available. Also available are handmade birdhouses and this year, birch reindeers by a Michigan artist, each with its own personality and character.

For information, call 813-297-8322, visit their website at <http://mikeschristmastreesoftampa.com> or check out their Facebook page at Mike's Christmas Trees.

Christmas trees come in all sizes. At Mike's Christmas Trees, the holiday spirit is as strong as the pine-scented air.  
Photo: Mike and Cathy Roberts



### National Poinsettia Day is Dec. 12 VGC Report

The Holiday Season – the time of the year when decorating our homes and gift giving take center stage. With more than 34 million plants sold annually, poinsettias play a major role in many traditional decorating themes and they make beautiful and living gifts.

Joel Poinsett, the first US Ambassador to Mexico, introduced the plant to the US in 1828. An amateur botanist, he established breeding initiatives that helped the plant gain acceptance as the holiday plant known today. National Poinsettia Day on Dec. 12 honors the man and the plant.

Poinsettias, with over 100 varieties, have come a long way from the original Mexican species. The Paul Ecke family took over Poinsett's work and they are credited with the transformation of the tall lanky species into the holiday stunner we know and love today.



The poinsettia is the number one holiday plant. The leaves of the plant are responsible for its many colors, not its flower.

Photo: Gazette File

Under the tent at Mike's Christmas Trees, many poinsettias are available in a variety of colors. Poinsettias are available at many home and garden centers. Priced at \$3 and up.

Photo: Mike and Cathy Roberts



Today's plants feature streaks, marbling, zigzags, speckles, creamy hems or dramatically curled bracts (leaves). Unlike most plants, the leaf is responsible for the vibrant colors associated with this festive beauty. Leaf colors range from the ever-popular red to peach, orange, cream, white and many hues in between. The small yellow centers are the flower. Tip: Choose a plant with a tight yellow center.

Poinsettias can last for weeks. Optimal conditions include giving the plants plenty of natural light and keeping temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees. Over watering can kill the plant and fertilizing is not necessary.

Poinsettias are not highly toxic, a common myth. They can cause minor allergic reactions of the skin and stomach. The plant should be kept from children and pets who are attracted to the brightly colored foliage.

For information on poinsettias, visit [www.poinsettiaaday.com](http://www.poinsettiaaday.com).

Along with their own "plant and learn" experiences, club members rely on information from The University of Florida and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) located in Hillsborough County. A valuable tool produced by the institute is the monthly "To Do List."

#### For December:

- Protect tender plants during cold weather with covers that extend to the ground. This helps trap heat from the soil. Rake leaves and use as mulch, or compost leaves by layering them with small amounts of fertilizer or manure.
- Mow and fertilize ryegrass. Frequent fertilization is necessary to keep ryegrass dark green and growing. Weekly mowing may be required.
- Trouble-shoot houseplant problems. Brown leaf tips or edges usually indicate too much fertilizer or too dry. Thin new growth or yellowing older growth means too little light. Wilting and yellowing mean too much water or poor drainage.





*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.*



## Let 'Em Eat Fruitcake

We're down to the final wire for Christmas. Anyone who is still "waiting to get into the spirit" best speed up the process before waking to a stocking filled with a heaping helping of bituminous.

I must say, though, that there are a few seasonal items that even I, the Ultimate Elf, find a tad distasteful. And they all involve Christmas comestibles.

Take fruitcake (Please. They're on the dining room table. Bring a winch and help yourself).

Fruitcake, in my culinary opinion, is nothing more than a bulky annual practical joke. Think of what's in it. Citron? Candied citron? Yech.

I was reared in rural Florida where citron was actually grown on purpose. Not, however, for human consumption. Citron was what is known in the trade as "cow food." "Fodder." "Moo mulch." And fruitcake aficionados expect me to eat it? Knowing what I do? Not likely.

Put the pineapple back in the upside down cake, dunk the

cherries in a double Manhattan and give the citron back to Elsie, I say. Besides, I have one basic rule concerning food: I refuse to eat anything that outweighs me or has the potential to outlive me. Fruitcake does both.

And mince meat? Let me see if I've got this straight: You want me to grind up a couple pounds of venison (Bambi? You want me to make Bambi burgers? Merry Christmas to you, too, Ebenezer.) and a pound of fat, right? Then you want me to mix in some apple, raisins, currants, orange peel, citron (again with the citron?) spices and molasses, yes? Then I'm supposed to soak this mess in a pint of brandy, surround it with pie crust and serve it to human beings? Ha, ha, ha, ha! No.

Oh, and let's not forget plum pudding, Great Britain's major contribution to holiday intestinal malfunction. I defy you to search

through a plum pudding and find one single plum. Oh, you'll find figs, all right. And raisins. And, heaven help us, more blasted citron (moooo-ooo). But plums? No way. Why eat anything that lies to you?

Fortunately, this season brings more than just varied tastes to recommend it. All the senses get a treat or two during the Holidays. The clean scents of bayberry and fresh-cut pine, for instance coupled with the tempting aromas of steamy hot chocolate and hot buttered rum. The sights of glimmering decorations lighting the night and the eager faces of excited children. The sound of distant carolers and the satisfying "crunch" of dried leaves beneath booted feet. The feel of ribbon and wrapping paper; tinsel and toys. And, best of all, the "sense" of love, happiness and inner peace.

No, you won't find that last "sense" on any biologist's list, but who cares? Let 'em eat fruitcake. Happy holidays to all.



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# DO IT YOURSELF. IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

By Theresa Clinton

I love receiving holiday greeting cards from those I care about, both near and far. My dilemma, what to do with all of those cards? Throw them away after reading them? Guilt keeps me from doing this! Keep them in a pile until the holidays have ended, then to the recycle bin? Well, that's what I usually do, no guilt then.

However, this year, I wanted to be able to display the many brightly colored and glittered cards for all to see. For this month's DIY project, I decided to transform an old window shutter into a holiday cardholder to deck the walls, fireplace mantle, or shelf. Simple, inexpensive and guaranteed to get you in a holiday mood!

1



First, find an old shutter, mark the halfway point with a straight edge between top and bottom of the shutter and cut in half. I used clamps to secure the straight edge to the shutter and used it as a straight edge while cutting. A jigsaw works best, but a handsaw will work too. Use a fine blade to help prevent cracking or splintering.

2



Then, use sand paper to scrub off any chipping paint or dirt and follow that with a simple cleaning with any cleaning product to remove cobwebs, old wasp nests, etc.

3



Next, paint the shutter or don't paint it for that rustic look many prefer. If the shutter is already painted, purchase paint with primer but it will still take a few coats. One quart of paint should be enough for an entire shutter.

4



Break out your trusty hot glue gun and apply generous amounts of glue on the back along the slats to adhere a thin piece of Birch plywood to prevent the cards from falling through.

5



Now, it's time to transform the look of your shutter into a festive cardholder for any occasion. I used holiday foliage I had on hand, but you could use anything from ornaments to floral sprigs.

6



I decided to add a little Florida flare to my cardholder by taking the remnants of a fallen palm frond and making it into a reindeer. Think googly eyes, pom pom ball and black Velcro. Let your imagination run wild and the creativity flow. There is no wrong here... Just decorate and have some fun with it. And remember, hot glue, hot glue, hot glue...

7

There you have it! A unique looking holiday cardholder for all to admire and talk about!



Now what to do with the remaining shutters in my garage?  
Find out in upcoming issues! Happy Holidays to All!

*(Editor's Note: Bloomingdale resident Theresa Clinton is the owner of Spotlight Home Staging Company, LLC. Her monthly column will focus on home improvement projects residents can accomplish in do it yourself fashion.)*

**Theresa Clinton**

Spotlight Home Staging Company, LLC

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Hidden in an ordinary Valrico strip mall on Bloomingdale Avenue and sandwiched between a bakery and sub shop is a small, yet, extraordinary martial arts studio—the World Champion Center Taekwondo (WCC). The WCC “dojang,” a Korean word used to describe a formal martial arts training hall, is doing great things and is the training place of many local, state and national champions, as well as two Junior Olympians.

Great martial arts studios are about more than just kicking, punching, and learning self-defense techniques.

Under the watchful eyes of WCC owner and Head Master Chang Jae Lee, students learn about “Respect” and “Responsibility”—Respect for yourself, respect for others and responsibility for your actions. In addition, he stresses discipline, health and family as the foundation on which great martial artists build their craft. For many, martial arts is a way of life.

Master Lee, a sixth degree black belt, exemplifies the best traits of a professional martial artist. Among his many prestigious awards, he won first place in the World Taekwondo Federation Championship (1998) and has a degree in Taekwondo from Keimyung University in South Korea (2006). Master Lee has been teaching the Korean martial art in the U.S. for more than 10 years, and for more than three years in Valrico.

“The atmosphere and his [Master Lee’s] concern for his students make this a unique dojang,” said Jaymie Perez, mother of Junior Olympian Ralph Perez (14).

“It’s like you are entering a family. The children help clean up after one another and help each other with their homework,” she said, adding, “We can honestly say we are a tight knit group. When I’m sick people will pick up my kids, the kids will sleep over at each other’s houses.”

Another unique aspect of WCC is that it caters to children with disabilities.

Junior Olympian Perez often helps one student, who suffers from neurological damage, with activities that cannot be performed with her walker. The student’s physical therapist is pleased with her involvement in martial arts, because the activity has helped create muscle memory.

For fellow Junior Olympian Samantha Stewart (8), the reason for being a martial artist is a simple one. “I like it [Taekwondo]. I’m on medicine for ADHD and it helps me focus more and, I get to help people that have different disabilities.” Stewart has her deputy belt, which is a black belt for students under the age of 15.

WCC is located at 1015 Bloomingdale Ave., and offers a free class for interested newcomers. For information, call 813-643-4262 or visit their website [www.worldchampioncenter.com](http://www.worldchampioncenter.com).



Head Master Chang Jae Lee (right) instructs Junior Olympians – Ralph Perez and Samantha Stewart – at the World Champion Center Taekwondo in Valrico. Perez and Stewart received Junior Olympian status this summer.  
Photo: Kayla Hayes



Samantha Stewart (8), one of two WCC Junior Olympians, receives eye-to-eye coaching from Master Chang Jae Lee during a recent sparring tournament.  
Photo: WCC



World Champion Center Tae Kwon Do Black Belts pose for a group photo after a recent black belt test. Head Master Chang Jae Lee (seated fourth from the left) and his wife, Master Hyo Jeong Lee (third from the left) are both sixth degree black belts. Head Master Lee’s resume includes duties as a former taekwondo training sergeant for Korean Special forces.



## WORLD CHAMPION CENTER



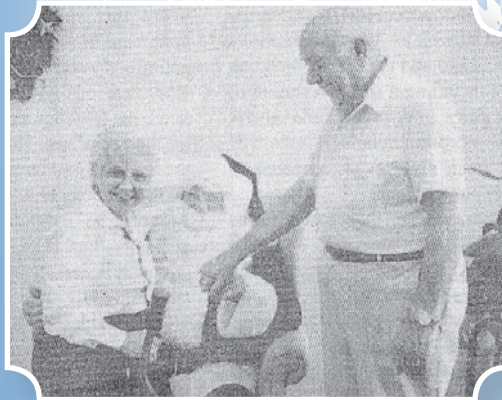
# Santa and Mrs. Claus aka Joe and Pam Liguori Hang up Their Jingle and Bells

*Beloved Couple to Retire after Delighting Children and Adults for 27 Years*

By Miriam Leech



**"1987, it begins."** Joe Liguori begins his 27-year reign as Santa Claus.



**"Believe."** Children of all ages have visited Santa. In 1995, Emily and Ted Low shared a special moment with the jolly one.

**"At the Ready."** Mrs. Claus, Santa and Rudolph pose for a pre-flight photo at the North Pole. Courtesy Photo by Santa's Elves



**"What's hiding in that beard, Santa?"** A young resident casts a wary eye on Santa while enjoying the best seat in the house courtesy of Mrs. Claus.



**"Two in the hand..."** Mrs. Claus beams while tending to newborn twins Zachary and Amber Caruso, in 2004.



**"His eyes—how they twinkled!"** Year after year, Santa and Mrs. Claus have journeyed to Bloomingdale. By their count, over 20,000 kids of all ages have enjoyed a magical moment with them.



**"Santa loves Mrs. Claus."** In 1993, visitors weren't the only ones making special memories. Here, the delightful couple communicate volumes without speaking a word.



Photo: Miriam Leech

**"2014, it ends."** Joe and Pam Liguori have been true community treasures. Thank you both for the 27 years as Bloomingdale's own Santa and Mrs. Claus and the lifetime of memories you have provided.

Joe and Pam Liguori are 73 and 70 years old, respectively; have been married 35 years; and have been Bloomingdale residents for 28 years. Impressive numbers no doubt.

However, the number they are most proud of is also the most impressive—the over 20,000 children and adults they have delighted for 27 years in the most magical of ways. The Liguoris find their greatest joy and reward during the holiday season when they don their wigs and red outfits and transform into Santa and Mrs. Claus!

When they moved into their River Crossing home in 1986, there were just 12 houses in their neighborhood and less than 1,000 in Bloomingdale. The couple moved from Texas when Joe was transferred with his job as a sales representative.

The move proved to be a happy one for the Liguoris, as they had family nearby in the St. Petersburg area. After arriving, they became volunteers in their new neighborhood, and have been a vital part of the Bloomingdale community ever since.

The Liguoris have established a long record of community service. They have been involved with the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA)—Pam was as a member of the Gazette Board then went on to serve on the BHA Board in various capacities; Joe served on the BHA Board as well as the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District (BSTD) Board.

Currently, they are members of the Bloomingdale Community Council, which works with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Bloomingdale Substation to discuss recent crime events, statistics, and prevention. The Liguoris also once patrolled the streets of Bloomingdale as members of Mobile Watch (known today as the Citizens Patrol).

Their long resume of community service would be a full one for most folks. Not so for Joe and Pam, who say they simply respond to a need when asked. The need years

ago was for a Santa and Mrs. Claus to appear as part of a BHA community-building event and charity food drive—and since 1987, they have made holiday magic happen for children from 6 months old to 106 years young. Not only have they been an annual presence for the BHA, but they have also made appearances for local churches, schools, nursing homes, and the Sheriff's department.

*Of the annual event, Pam said, "It is such a joy and so rewarding. It is a way for us to give back [to our community]."*

The Liguoris say they have greeted somewhere between 800 and 1,000 children a year, and adults love them too! Santa and Mrs. Claus have been delighting residents for so long that they are now seeing the children of "children" from year's past.

Authenticity is especially important to Joe and Pam. She wears a homemade costume, and he purchases a new Santa suit every three years. Joe even shaves his mustache to make sure his Santa beard looks real. And, each holiday season the Liguoris go through two to three beards and wigs to keep Santa and Mrs. Claus looking fresh—sticky hands and fingers can be rough on facial hair!

To ensure the magic of each child's visit, parents write the name and age of their child, as well as something special—maybe a gift wish, or an upcoming visit from a family member, or a deployed military parent—on an index card while they wait. Giving credence to the song lyrics "He sees you when you're sleeping; He knows when you're awake," children are literally dumbstruck by Santa's knowledge of their wishes and events in their lives.

*"The kids are just blown away by what Santa knows," explained Joe.*

The Liguoris give their time as Santa and Mrs. Claus freely, asking only for donations of canned food items that the BHA donates to community food banks. For them, the reward is in the reaction of the children. "They make us so happy," said Pam.

Recent health considerations have led the couple to the difficult decision to hang up their red suits after this year. As Santa and Mrs. Claus, they epitomize selfless service and neighborhood pride. As they pass the sleigh and reindeer onto next year's Santa, the Bloomingdale community sends its gratitude to Joe and Pam for all the smiles and warm holiday memories.



**"Two for one."** With plenty of lap to spare, Santa receives a whole lot of love from Erin, 5, and Alanna, 7, Brophy.



**"Santa and Company, 2013"** During last year's visit, Santa, Mrs. Claus and their merry band of elves took time out for a close up photo op. Many visits took place at the Bloomingdale Community Office.



**"Claus for a Cause."** While spreading holiday cheer is important, each year Santa and Mrs. Claus accept food donations for local charity food banks.



**"No Reindeer needed."** Several of Santa's annual visits included a drive-through of neighborhoods that won various BHA sponsored contests. For this neighborhood visit, Santa and Mrs. Claus traded their reindeer-powered sleigh for a horse-powered one driven by elf and current BHA president George May.



**"Whispered Wishes"** Santa listens closely as Grace Reny, 5, shares her Christmas wish list. In 2007, Santa's visit was held at the Bloomingdale Golfers Club.

**"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!" St. Nicholas (Twas the Night before Christmas)**



In most organizations, volunteers are the driving force behind programs and events. This is particularly true in the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association where volunteers are literally the backbone behind the organization.

BHA board members are volunteers of the highest order. They serve in their positions for nothing more than a desire to see the Bloomingdale community continue to be a place of which all can be proud.

This past year, the volunteer spirit has been alive and well among our community's young people and adults. Volunteers have served at all BHA events

including the annual cleanup in April, the charity golf tournament in May, the fall festival in October, and the Santa and Mrs. Claus visit and food drive held this month. Additionally, student volunteers worked at the BHA office this summer helping to organize a historical timeline of the association and the community. In total, the BHA provided over 500 hours of community service to students towards Bright Futures Scholarship requirements.

While thank you seems somehow insufficient, the BHA board wishes to thank all volunteers for their selfless contributions and for making Bloomingdale better.



Thank you, volunteers!

- |                  |                     |                    |
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| Sam Berkowitz    | Taylor Cona         | Rachel Bogel       |
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| Chris Santarlas  | George May          | Madelyn Penn       |
| Rachel Santarlas | Emily Highers       | Kelsey Penn        |
| Kevin Hayes      | Tom McGuire         | Bill Hightower     |
| Jordan Gugaria   | Austin Mills        | Raphael Restrepo   |
| Brittany Whaley  | Bethany McCullum    | Rachel Rosselle    |
| Marcus Butler    | Hunter Carlisle     | Kaitlyn Harper     |
| Dennis Osborn    | Tranae Robinson     | Joshua Martinez    |
| Clayton Weaver   | Koustav Dutta       | Mary Galin         |
| Matt Overly      | Jenna Fife          | Shelley Noel       |
| Sarah Overly     | Madison Anderson    | Suzette Harris     |
| Heather Michael  | David Abraham       | Debbie Sandberg    |
| Bobby Michael    | Mariam Higginbotham | Rachel DiBenedetto |
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THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE



## Service Forum Targets Student Volunteers

By Miriam Leech

### Volunteer Opportunities Are Numerous

Dann Berkowitz, Bloomingdale Homeowners Association secretary, explains volunteer opportunities to Bloomingdale High School (BSHS) students Devon Webb and Nicholas Lemar at the Community Service Forum held Nov. 12 at BSHS. The BHA was one of approximately 30 local non-profit organizations represented at the forum hosted by The Community Roundtable of Brandon.

Coordinator Janine Nickerson explained that the event brings parents, students, non-profits, and school guidance counselors together so that students can learn about local service opportunities and organizations can fill their volunteer needs. Community service hours not only help students become well-rounded citizens, but also help them earn scholarships for college including those offered by Florida's Bright Futures program. Volunteer service is also a critical component of many college entrance applications.

The BHA offers many opportunities for volunteers including at events such as the upcoming spring clean-up, the Fall Festival, Santa and Mrs. Claus visit and charity food drive, and support for various other community projects. Said Berkowitz, "My son knocked out most of his service hours right here in his own backyard."

For more information on volunteering with the BHA, call 813-681-2051 or email [bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com).

Photo: Miriam Leech



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# BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

By Community Resource Master Deputy Curtis Warren

## BLOOMINGDALE AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL (BACC) NOVEMBER MEETING

The BACC hosted a "Meet and Greet" to welcome Major Robert Bullara, incoming HCSO District IV Commander on Nov. 20 at the Erindale Road Substation. Bullara has over 35 years with the Sherriff's Office. He is a Tampa native and lives in the Bloomingdale area. He is looking forward to working with the Bloomingdale Area Community Council members and other residents in continuing the outstanding progress already made with improving security and safety and decreasing crime in our area.

BACC members also wish Major Ron Hartley, current HCSO District IV Commander, all the best in his upcoming retirement in January and thank him for his outstanding support and work to make our community safer and more secure.

Special guest newly elected District 4 County Commissioner Stacy White, also, attended the meeting. White stated that he is looking forward to working with the BACC to improve the quality of life for all residents in Bloomingdale and the surrounding area.

2014 was a very good year for the Council. Several important crime prevention projects were addressed. In addition, communications and information sharing between residents, detectives and deputies working in the community strengthened.

The BACC is looking forward to 2015 and needs more resident participation on the Council. You are invited to come represent your Homeowner's Association or community and bring your issues and concerns.

The Council meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Station on Erindale Drive. As an organized and active group, we will continue to make the Bloomingdale area a safer and more secure community! Call 635-8040 for more information.

*Note: There will not be a BACC meeting this month. We hope to see new faces in January.*



Photo: Mack Austin

Bloomingdale Master Deputy Curtis Warren welcomes Major Robert Bullara, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office District IV Commander, to the November Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC) meeting held Nov. 20.

## SAFE DRIVING DURING THE HOLIDAYS!

Last month I addressed the very important topic of teens and safe driving. One of the most critical decisions we make every day is whether to wear our seat belts and to ensure that anyone riding with us wears their seat belts. We all get in a hurry, but this one act is just too serious to take lightly.

**Bottom line: Buckle up.**

Those of us in law enforcement know buckling up must become a habit for everyone. We respond to the accidents and witness first hand what happens when drivers don't buckle up.

There is no magic answer on how to get every driver and passenger to buckle up. Each one of us has to make that critical decision every time we drive!

**Drivers – do not text, talk or be distracted** while you are driving! Just one text or conversation can cost you your life and the lives of any one riding with you. When you text while driving it is more dangerous than drinking while driving and 17 times more dangerous than talking on a phone while driving. It isn't that your hands and eyes are distracted; it's your loss of focus. Your mind is not focused totally on driving. There is no text or conversation worth a person's life!



## ENJOY A SAFE AND SECURE HOLIDAY SEASON!

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

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

**HOMEOWNERS** - Take the time to secure your home, vehicles and other property before you head out for holiday traveling or shopping. Burglars watch for homes and vehicles that are "easy targets" – garage doors and vehicles left open. Don't post on FACEBOOK or TEXT that you are out shopping or traveling. This information can get into the wrong hands!

**DRIVERS** - Do not drink and drive or ride with those who do! Talk to your teens about the dangers of drinking and driving. Set the right example! A few minutes discussing the dangers and setting strict rules can save a life – your life or your teen's.

**FROM ALL OF US AT THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
HAVE A SAFE AND SECURE HOLIDAY SEASON!**



## Dining With Dave

**Name:** Taqueria Doña Maria  
**Cuisine:** “Baja” Mexican, Lunch and Dinner  
**Location:** 865 Lithia Pinecrest Road  
 (Lithia Square Shopping Plaza)  
**Phone:** 813-655-9999



While Tampa is known for its Cuban cuisine with the occasional South American restaurant shining through, good Mexican food, not fast food or casual chain, is difficult to find unless traveling outside of Brandon and Valrico. Not so now, as about a year ago, Taqueria Doña Maria opened on Lithia Pinecrest Road just north of Lumsden Road.

My wife (and regular dining companion) and I soon discovered what has become one of our favorite local establishments. A born and raised [Los] Angeleno, my wife appreciates fine Mexican food whenever and wherever it appears, but prefers a traditional table service restaurant like the “Taqueria.”

The menu is “Baja Style” meaning a mixture of traditional Mexican and Spanish cooking with an emphasis on seafood, salsas and soups more so than is usually seen in a traditional Mexican restaurant. I recommend starting your dining experience with the “made fresh daily” tortilla chips and homemade salsa. Add a margarita or a beer from their eclectic offerings of American, Mexican and the occasional local microbrew and you have the start of a great meal.

Quality of the meat and the freshness of the vegetables are the keys to any good Mexican meal. Taqueria Doña Maria scores on both counts.

I am especially fond of Carnitas. Whether served wrapped as a burrito, stuffed into a taco

shell, or served as part of a larger dish, the kettle-fried pork is citrusy in flavor and falls apart with the touch of a fork. Both the grilled chicken and the shredded beef options will make you want to come back repeatedly to mix and match them in a variety of ways.

For something unique, give the Pozole stew, a family recipe of pork and hominy with cabbage, radish, and onions and lime, a try with a side of tortillas for scooping. Or, take advantage of \$2 Taco Tuesday by ordering a half dozen of these beauties with a homemade Horchata (a refreshing Mexican drink made with rice, milk, vanilla, and cinnamon) or Agua Fresca.

Taco varieties include Tinga (a Chipotle marinated shredded chicken), Carne Asada (Grilled Steak), Picadillo (made with Doña Maria’s own seasoned ground beef w/potato) and Al Pastor (a spiced marinated pork prepared with pineapple). The shrimp and fish tacos are especially tasty with an order of Jalapeno Fireballs on the side. For dessert, I highly recommend the “sweet as heaven” flan or the Churros with chocolate and caramel for dipping.

The dining room is comfortable with a good view of the kitchen area. Outside seating is plentiful; pooch friendly and on the weekends, there is usually live music (with the harp being in fashion). When first opened, there were some service issues and on the occasional weeknight, the kitchen can run a bit slow. Service has definitely improved and if you have not been recently or at all, you are missing a treat. My family and I absolutely loves this place!



Photo: Dining With Dave





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# INs & OUTs

## WHAT RESIDENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RULES OF THE ROAD MOTORISTS AND BICYCLISTS

Our Bloomingdale roads are a common space where we all interact daily. Our conduct on the roads influences the quality and livability of our community. Last month, Ins and Outs discussed rules of the road for motorists and bicyclists. This month's discussion focuses on rules of the road for *motorists and pedestrians*.

**PEDESTRIANS** — walkers, joggers, and runners —should, by law, be given the right of way. But like their pedaling partners, pedestrians also have responsibilities:

- **Run facing traffic.** This will give you more time to see or react to vehicles. One exception: blind curves with no shoulder. In such cases, cross and run with traffic until you can safely return to the other side of the road.
- **Use the crosswalk.** If there is a crosswalk, use it. Even if it means extra walking to get there.
- **Use the sidewalk.** If a sidewalk is available, pedestrians must use it. This includes runners.
- **Lose the noise.** Turn down the volume on your iPod so you can stay aware of what is going on around you.
- **Stay aware.** Motorists emerging from an alley or driveway that crosses a sidewalk are supposed to yield to pedestrians on that sidewalk. But practically speaking, pedestrians will want to do their own watching under those circumstances.
- **Be Safe.** Wear lights or reflective gear at night or early morning hours when walking or running.

According to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) records between 2008 and 2012, almost 2,500 pedestrians died in traffic accidents on Florida roads. Over 8,000 were seriously injured.

### MOTORISTS MUST REMEMBER:

- **Follow the speed limit.** The speed limit on the thoroughfares in Bloomingdale is 30 miles per hour (mph). In neighborhoods the speed limit is 20 mph. Driving 6-9 mph over the speed limit is a fine of \$118 (Source: Clerk of the Court of Hillsborough County).
- **Stop at crosswalks.** At crosswalks, you must stop if a pedestrian has signaled an intent to cross, whether by pressing a signal button, or simply by stepping one foot off the curb.
- **Follow school zone speed limits.** Bloomingdale has two elementary schools within its boundaries. The speed limit is 20 mph in school zones. Special speed limit signs are posted to alert motorists as they enter the zone. Driving 1-5 mph over the limit in a school zone is a fine of \$143 (Source: Clerk of the Court of Hillsborough County).
- **Watch for school buses.** Pay special attention when school buses are present. When a school bus stops you must stop. Never pass a school bus that is loading or unloading children. Passing a stopped school bus is very dangerous and is a 4-point infraction on your driving record.

Finally, **Relax.** If you are a motorist who can't negotiate these rules of the road without raising a fist and/or yelling, you might need some stress reduction in your life. We hear cycling, running, and walking work wonders.



Photos: Miriam Leech

The motorist traveling 46 miles per hour (mph) on Natures Way would be subject to a fine of \$243 (Source: Clerk of the Court of Hillsborough County). The speed limit on Bloomingdale's thoroughfares is 30 mph.

## Four County Commissioners Take Oaths of Office; Commissioner Murman Chosen as Chairwoman

### Hillsborough County Press Release

Three returning members and one newly-elected commissioner took oaths of office Nov. 18 at the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners' Investiture Ceremony held in downtown Tampa.

Commissioners Victor D. Crist, District 2, and Ken Hagan, Countywide District 5, returned to the familiar County Commission dais in County Center, as did Al Higginbotham, who previously held the District 4 seat and now represents Countywide District 7. New to the Board is Dr. Stacy R. White, who won election to serve District 4.

Commissioners held their annual organizational meeting following the ceremony, selecting Sandra L. Murman, District 1, as chairwoman, and Higginbotham as vice

chairman. Commissioner Lesley "Les" Miller Jr. retained his position as chaplain.

"We've got an important year ahead of us. It's going to be a great year and I'm looking forward to it," Murman said after receiving the gavel.

Commissioners also chose positions on various boards, committees, and councils. For a full listing, visit [www.HillsboroughCounty.org/OA](http://www.HillsboroughCounty.org/OA).

Flanked by his children and his wife, Barbie, Dr. Stacy R. White takes the oath of office at the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners' Investiture Ceremony held in Tampa on Nov. 18. The Reverend Roberto Chaple, Associate Pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Brandon, administered the oath of office to Commissioner White. Photo: Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners





## When can my child start learning to golf?

By J.D. Carino (Bloomingdale CC campus)

Determining the best age to begin golf instruction may seem complicated. However, the answer is very simple. When your child wants to go to the golf course or the driving range with you, it is time. Your children really just want to spend time with you and have fun. If they do not want to go or are not having fun, then it will be an unpleasant experience.



*John E.S. Cochrane*  
GOLF SCHOOLS

During the early stages of learning to golf, a child only understands the joy and laughter shared with their parent. Pars, birdies and eagles are totally irrelevant.

At this point, ensuring the young golfer has the right golf clubs for their height and age is crucial. The wrong size clubs can be too long or too heavy. Both will cause a child to develop bad swings by using the wrong muscles. The bottom line—the child must have the desire, the right equipment and ideally some instruction to learn the basics from the beginning.



Junior golfer Nolan Ryan learns how to grip a putter correctly under the watchful eyes of Coach J.D. Carino.  
Photo Credit: J.D. Carino

For those parents who do not golf or for those who would like another person to teach their children, we are starting a Little Linksters program at Bloomingdale Golfers Club in January 2015. The new six-week program will be held every Saturday from 10 -11 a.m. Cost is \$110.

Next lesson: Tee it up to launch it up. Any questions or for lessons, please visit [CochraneGolfSchools.com](http://CochraneGolfSchools.com) or call J.D. (813) 957-3205.

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## Bloomingdale Real Estate & Housing Update

By Ryan Brantley



The Chadderton Real Estate Group  
Keller Williams Realty

813-924-8187

[Ryan@RyanBrantley.org](mailto:Ryan@RyanBrantley.org)

[www.chaddertongroup.com](http://www.chaddertongroup.com)

The holiday season is in full force. With the change in season, we have seen a substantial change in the housing market. In Bloomingdale, 19 homes sold in November with only 18 newly listed. A whopping 23 properties went under contract in November compared to just 15 in October. Inventory is low, but buyers are out in full force attempting to purchase a home before the year's end.

Now is a great time to list your home. Why, you ask.

There is an increased urgency for buyers who have been looking since the summer months to close before January 1 for tax reasons or for the mere feeling of starting 2015 anew. Buyers are eligible for tax deductions if closing before the end of the year and for homestead exemptions in Hillsborough County. Buyers do not want to miss the opportunity to save potentially thousands of dollars over the next year.

Houses also show better when decorated for the holidays, allowing buyers to experience that homey feel. With holiday work schedules, buyers have more time to look for a home than the regular working week. On the same note, you [the seller] can always restrict access to your house during cherished holiday gatherings.

January is traditionally the month for employees to begin new jobs. Since transferees cannot wait until spring to buy, you need to be on the market during the holidays to capture that market!

Listing now may also help you on the buying side. There are not currently as many houses on the market, minimizing competition in the area. By selling now, you will have an opportunity to be a non-contingent buyer in the spring when more houses are on the market for less money, enabling you to sell high and buy low.

Finally, the number one reason for listing your home now – according to Forbes.com, homes listed in November and December are more likely to sell, and they will do so quicker and closer to asking price, which means more money for you!

\* MLS statistics include Bloomingdale East and West valid Nov. 1- 28. Sales not entered into the MLS did not count in these statistics.



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## SCHOOL NEWS A look at what's happening

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



Compiled by Deidre Morgan

### NO SCHOOL

Dec. 22 - Jan. 2 - Winter Break

Jan. 5 - Students Return to School

### ALAFIA ALLIGATOR ALLEY

Dec. 8 - 12 - Holiday Shop opens from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Students will have an opportunity to buy gifts for family and friends.

Dec. 10 - 12 - A Shoe Drive: New and/or gently used shoes will be collected for students in need at Gibsonton Elementary School. Shoes may be dropped off in the car line.

Dec. 11 - Craft Night: Families will have an opportunity to do holiday crafts, participate in a book exchange and shop at the holiday shop. Shoes for the shoe drive will also be collected on this night as well.

Dec. 17 - Papa John's Spirit Night: Mention Alafia Elementary when you place your order.



### CIMINO COUGAR CENTRAL

Dec. 2 - 8 - Book fair in the media center

Dec. 11 - Chili's Spirit Day on Lithia Pinecrest. Mention Cimino when placing your order.

Dec. 12 - 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.

Dec. 15 - 18 - Santa Shop: The shop will be open for students to buy gifts for their family.



### BURNS BRUINS BANTER

Dec. 8 - Winter Orchestra Concert at BSHS, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 15 - Band Winter Concert at BSHS, 7 p.m.

**PUT YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS:** Burns PTSA is excited to offer our families an opportunity to celebrate their students' special occasions and/or achievements with a personal "Name in Lights" message on the Burns electronic marquee! For just \$15, your student can be celebrated for the world to see. For information, contact Patti Rendon at jrendon@tampabay.rr.com or 727-580-7147.



### BLOOMINGDALE HIGH BULL BUSINESS

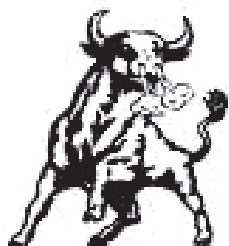
Dec. 9 - Chorus Winter Concert, Auditorium, 7 p.m.

Dec. 12 - Soccer vs Jenkins at BSHS, 6 p.m.

Dec. 18 - Orchestra Winter Concert, Auditorium, 7 p.m.

### BULLS BRIEFS

**Birthday Marquee:** Put your student's name on Bloomingdale Avenue. For \$20, the PTSA will run your child's name on the marquee for their birthday. For information, email bloomingdaleptsa@gmail.com.



## Bloomington's Best of the Best... Recognizing Excellence in our Community

Staff Report

*The BHA established the Best of the Best Student of the Month Program to recognize 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 bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com or call 813-681-2051. Nominees must be in home, public, or private school and residents of Bloomingdale. 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 Dana Dittfeld, December's Best of the Best Student of the Month!

Dittfeld is a senior attending Bloomingdale Senior High School and is a member of the Varsity Cheerleading Squad. For 14 years, she has cheered for others...10 years for the Brandon Bears Football program where she was part of an award-winning team and the last four years for the Bloomingdale Bulls.

Now, her community is cheering for her.

A rigorous cheerleading schedule leaves little time for other pursuits—Dittfeld spends two to three hours daily practicing or actively cheering for BSHS's various sports teams. She is part of the select competition squad and in 2012 was voted Outstanding Team Leader by her peers. In 2013, she was named a Team Captain. Those who know her cite her leadership skill as a strength.

What free time this busy lady has is spent working on her college prep curriculum, which includes AP subjects and Florida Virtual School classes. With solid academics, her plans are to study nursing and attend a 4-year college. After earning her nursing degree, Dittfeld's goal is to work with pediatric patients.

Her proud parents are Dave and Denise Dittfeld who reside in Somerset.

Keep up the great work, Dana!



Photos: The Dittfeld Family



For December Student of the Month Dana Dittfeld, being on the sidelines is where she feels most at home... cheering that is. The senior has been a Bulls cheerleader for four years and lettered in three of those years.

Dana Dittfeld proudly displays her BSHS letter for cheerleading. She has lettered three years in the demanding year-round school activity. Dittfeld, a Bloomingdale resident, is this month's Best of the Best winner.

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## Bulls Football Makes History

By Deidre Morgan

First-year Head Coach Brian Surcy and the Bulls football program had a phenomenal season. Under Surcy's direction, the team finished with a 9-1 season, the best regular season record in school history, and a trip to the a Class 8A region quarterfinal post-season play-offs.

Since Bloomingdale's 1987 founding, this is only the second time the football program has seen post-season play. Undefeated Orlando Dr. Phillips High School, the AP number one -ranked football team, dashed any hopes of taking the season further. The Panthers, a perennial football powerhouse, have seen play-off action for seven consecutive seasons.

On Nov. 14, the Bulls traveled to Orlando to square off in a game many thought favored the more battle-tested and experienced Panthers. However, the Bulls' raw talent coupled with an intense desire to win almost upset Dr. Phillips's eventual victory celebration. While the Bulls were ready for the challenge, they came up short in a heartbreaking 24-21 loss to the Panthers.

Though the Bulls did not win the game, they can hold their heads high and be proud of their success. Many will remember this season as the history-making year that put Bloomingdale Bulls Football on the map. Go Bulls!

Photos: Clark Sports Media



Ryan Voyles (42) takes down a Dr. Phillips High School player with Colin Errity (54) ready to assist during the Class 8A region quarterfinal held Nov. 14 in Orlando.



Junior running back Fred McCoy breaks tackles as he heads to the end zone. McCoy led the Bulls with 64 rushing yards and touchdown.



Quarterback Isaiah (Bobby) McIntyre (1) sets up a pass with help from offensive lineman Tyler Caudillo (70) blocking. During the post-season playoff game, McIntyre connected on 17 of 29 passes amassing 166 passing yards.



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## Lady Bulls Volleyball Ends Season as Undefeated District Champs

By Miriam Leech

### Heart-breaking loss ends post-season hopes

After enjoying an undefeated regular season and capturing the Class 8A District 7 Championship, the Bloomingdale High School Lady Bulls volleyball team's state champion dream ended with a post-season quarterfinals loss to Palm Harbor University (PHU) on Oct. 28.

Playing on their home court with strong fan support, the Lady Bulls were unable to secure the win despite Bloomingdale's heavy hitters Karissa Rhoades and Chelsea Chavers, both seniors. They were defeated in four close and hotly contested sets: 25-17, 22-25, 25-21, and 25-20. This was the second post-season in a row ended at the hands of the Lady Canes of PHU.

Their otherwise stellar season ended with an overall record of 25 wins and 2 losses. First-year Head Coach Claudia Cabrera and her Assistant Coach Tim Rovnanik could not be prouder as the team finished the season ranked 9th in Florida and 184th nationally.

The Lady Bulls' success can be attributed to their attitude. Said junior player Reagan Huet, "A lot of teams have great individual athletes, but our team plays together as one. We have a great bond."

Under Cabrera's guidance, the team's philosophy has been to give 100 percent and never give up. With ten departing seniors, including team manager Megan Conley, that philosophy will be tested in the coming seasons.



Photo Credit: Claudia Cabrera

The Lady Bulls 2014 District Champs are Rylie Smith, Angelina Wise, Erica Gonzalez, Kaitlin Towers, Emily Doyle, Maggie Roggeman, Abby Bernaldo, Natalie Mack, Kaitlyn Grice, Chelsea Chavers, Reagan Huet, Sally O'Keefe, Karissa Rhoades, Emilee Runnels, and Gabby Culhane.

The Bloomingdale High School Lady Bulls volleyball team secured a 10-0 regular season and won the Class 8A District 7 Championship on Oct. 23 played at BSHS. Their post-season hopes were dashed in a quarterfinals loss to Palm Harbor University.



Senior Chelsea Chavers jumps for the ball during the Lady Bulls quarterfinals game against Palm Harbor University. Chavers was a key contributor to the team's successful season.



Photos: Miriam Leech

Karissa Rhoades bumps the ball to set up Sally O'Keefe (12). Also on the court are Emily Doyle (5), Abby Bernaldo (7), and Chelsea Chavers (10). Rhoades was a "go to" player for the Lady Bulls.



## A Year of Firsts Define BSHS Volleyball Coach Claudia Cabrera

By Miriam Leech

When first-year volleyball head coach Claudia Cabrera started practices with the Bloomingdale High School Lady Bulls last summer, she already knew she had a strong team. Her challenge, she said, was to "mold them to my coaching techniques."

Cabrera was not only beginning her first year as a coach at Bloomingdale, but she was beginning her first year as a high school coach . . . period.

A native of Peru, the 23-year-old moved to Naples when she was 11. She later moved to Tampa, where she attended Hillsborough Community College (HCC) and then the University of South Florida (USF), graduating in May 2013.

As a volleyball player at HCC, Cabrera earned the Rising Star Award her freshman year and was named Defensive Player of the Year in her sophomore season. At USF her junior year, she racked up 212 digs at a clip of 2.12 per set, which ranked second on the squad. For her senior year Cabrera appeared in 28 matches, leading the team with 547 digs, and was named to the All-USF Tournament Team.

As a new high school coach, Cabrera shared that she had to overcome nerves, despite knowing some of the Bloomingdale players from her role as a coach with the Tampa United Volleyball Club. She relied on advice from her senior players, and received tremendous parental support. "My first year would have been so much harder without the help of the team parents. They assisted with everything from ordering t-shirts to providing food to communicating with all of the families," said the coach.

The Lady Bulls undefeated season and district championship was a nice way to begin a head coaching career. Said Cabrera, "I love being at Bloomingdale!"

Lady Bulls Head Coach Claudia Cabrera started her high school coaching career as well as her tenure at Bloomingdale High School by directing her players to an undefeated regular season and district championship.



Photo Credit: Claudia Cabrera

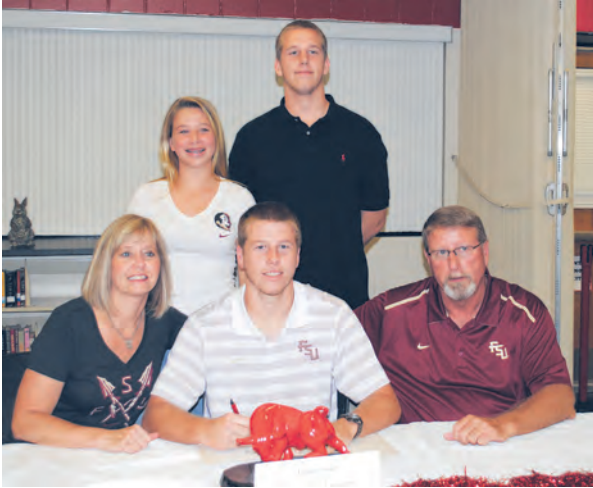




## BSHS Athletes Sign Letters of Intent

By Deidre Morgan

On Nov. 13, families, coaches and friends gathered in Bloomingdale High School's Media Center to celebrate the signing of letters of intent for college-level sports by four student athletes: Karissa Rhodes – Florida Gulf Coast University (Volleyball), Kaitlyn Grice – The University of New Orleans (Volleyball), Lace Smith – The University of Buffalo (Softball) and Logan Crouse – Florida State University (Baseball). Congratulations to the Class of 2015 athletes on their special accomplishments.



Logan Crouse (seated, center), a two-sport threat in baseball and football, will take the mound for the Seminoles at Florida State University to play baseball. Logan's family helped him celebrate the accomplishment. Seated are his parents, Melanie and Terry. Standing are Mackenzie, his sister, and Carson, his brother.



Another member of the District Champion Lady Bulls Volleyball Team, Karissa Rhodes (center) will use her exceptional talent at Florida Gulf Coast University. Celebrating with her at the signing event are her parents, Kathy and Robert, her brother Robert II (top row, center) and family.

Kaitlyn Grice (first row, second from the left), a member of the District Champion Lady Bulls Volleyball Team, signed a letter of intent to continue her stellar athletic career at the University of New Orleans. Joining her at the signing table are her parents, Scott and Patricia, sister Kaylee and other family members



Lady Bulls Softball standout Lace Smith (seated, center) will take her skills to The University of Buffalo in New York. Parents Tara and Mike, brother Zane and other family members proudly share the spotlight with their athlete.



Photos: Deidre Morgan



## BSHS Rajun' Bull Band Earns Superior Rating at Annual FBA District 7 Marching Band Competition

Staff Report

The Rajun' Bull Marching Band played host to the annual Florida Bandmasters Association (FBA) District VII Marching Proficiency Assessment at Bloomingdale High School on Nov. 1. Twenty-six bands representing nearly 2,600 students took part in the event. For the Bloomingdale High School Rajun' Bull Marching Band it was business as usual as they delighted fans, parents, and onlookers by closing the show with its "Bull's on Safari, Welcome to the Jungle" show. Their performance earned them a superior rating making this their 28th consecutive superior rating. FBA judges (photo right) tally scores on an unusually blistery day.



Photo: Bonnie Steele



Photo:  
Dann  
Berkowitz







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- Dedicated obstetrical suite is always prepared and ready
- You and your family will feel at home in a spacious, private room with private bathroom

To learn more about The Baby Suites at Brandon Regional Hospital or to register for childbirth education classes, visit [BrandonRegionalHospital.com](http://BrandonRegionalHospital.com) or call 813-653-1065.  
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