



THE

BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

VOLUME XXXIX 🌿 ISSUE 3 🌿 MARCH 2019 🌿 www.BloomingtondaleHOA.com

BHA Annual Community Clean-up is TODAY!

**1626 Natures Way Behind
Alafia Elementary
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**



Photo: BHA Neighborhood Standards

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them." *Walt Disney*

This Month



BHA COMMUNITY CORNER
Pages 4 and 5

COMMUNITY CALENDAR
Page 6

**BSTD: THE COMMUNITY'S
COMMON AREA
CONNECTION**
Page 8

**CHARTER SCHOOL
OPENING**
Page 11

CLEAN-UP, BLOOMINGDALE!
Thank you, CPA Grace Lewis!
Pages 12 and 13

NEW! WILDLIFE COLUMN
Page 14

SCHOOL NEWS
Pages 20-23

PLEASE RECYCLE

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

**FREE
SHREDDER
ONSITE!**

See pp. 12 and 13
for community
clean-up details.

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

YOUR INSIDE CONNECTIONS

Bloomington Homeowners Association, Inc.

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

Email: Bloomington.Homeowners@gmail.com

Website: www.BloomingtonHOA.com

BHA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomington Community Office.

Directors at Large:

President: *Suzy Watts*

Vice President: *Sean Donahue*

Secretary: *Daniel Berkowitz*

Treasurer: *Grace Lewis*

Bobbi Ferraro

Carl Hallinan

Billy Hightower

George T. May IV

Beth Smedley

Charlie Woodcock



YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



JOY BOISSELLE

Editor - The Bloomington Gazette

3509 Bell Shoals Rd.

Valrico, FL 33596 - (813) 681-2051

Email: InBloomingtonNews@gmail.com

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Deidre Morgan, and Student Reporter: Jon Alfano

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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



ANDREA DALY

Community Development

Program Manager, Advertising

11268 Winthrop Main Street, Suite 101

Riverview, Florida 33578 - (813) 731-2490

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Yard of the Month



Photo: Wendy Knipp

Cliff & Cheryl Lee

3906 Buttonwood Court Brandon, 33511 Bloomingdale Estates



Yard of the Month is sponsored by Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale. Send your Yard of the Month nominations to:
InBloomingdaleNews@gmail.com or call
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Winners will receive a \$25 gift card redeemable at Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale



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BHA COMMUNITY CORNER



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JOIN!



BHA EVENT CALENDAR

If you have events pending in our community, email bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com, or call 813-681-2051. We will help you promote your event on our Facebook page.

Membership drive ongoing! Join TODAY!

Monday, March 11, 6:30 p.m. / Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Monthly Trustee Meeting, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Call 813-684-6667 for information.

Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 p.m. / BHA Monthly Board Meeting, Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Residents always welcome. Call 813-681-2051 for information.

Thursday, March 21, NEW TIME: 6 p.m. / Bloomingdale Area Community Council chaired by Hillsborough County Deputy Cliff Fletcher, Bloomingdale Community Station, 3622 Erindale Drive, 813-635-8040. Learn about safety and security issues affecting our community.

2019 BHA EVENTS

Community Clean-Up- March 2, That's TODAY, Folks!

Scholarship Deadline - April 1

2019 Community Scholarship Applications Available Now!

Don't let the opportunity for \$2,000 in college scholarship money slip through your fingers. Applications are available online at www.bloomingdalehoa.com, the BHA office, and via email at bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com. The deadline is April 1. Mail completed applications to BHA, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd, Valrico, FL, 33596. Or, drop off the application at the office. Good luck, seniors!



Garage Sale - April 6

Fall Festival - October or November, TBD

Santa - December 8

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Congratulations to former BHA President George T. May IV!

Former BHA president George May received two awards last month. The first was a Hillsborough County commendation presented on Feb. 4 by Board of County Commissioners represented by Stacy White and Sandy Murman. The commendation lauded his "outstanding tenure as president of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, a time of tremendous leadership, growth, and innovation for the community."



Pictured are l.to r. Commissioner Sandy Murman, George May, Commissioner Stacy White and School Board Member Melissa Snively.

Not to be outdone, the BHA presented George a small token of appreciation for his tireless service to our community. George continues to serve as a director-at-large.



Pictured are George May and BHA president Suzy Watts.

Community Garage Sale Approaching!



The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.
Serving the Community since 1979

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association
is happy to promote the

Fourth Annual
Community
Garage Sale
April 6, 2019
8 a.m.

FREE



Visit our Facebook page & read your Bloomingdale Gazette for updates.

BLOOMINGDALE HOA DUES PROVIDE THESE SERVICES AND MUCH MORE

- **The Bloomingdale Gazette:** look for it in your driveway on the first Saturday of the month
- **Website, Facebook and Email Alert System:** providing news, information and event announcements
- **Public Works & Public Safety:** The BHA works with Hillsborough County officials to implement traffic and roadway improvements in and around our community
- **Bloomingdale Cleanup:** Annual program providing residents a local drop off for junk
- **Fall Festival:** Free family event featuring local businesses, contests and food
- **Santa Visit & Charity Food Drive:** Free photo opportunity with Santa and collection of food donations for local charity

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



Email: bloomingdale.homeowners@gmail.com • BloomingdaleHOA.com



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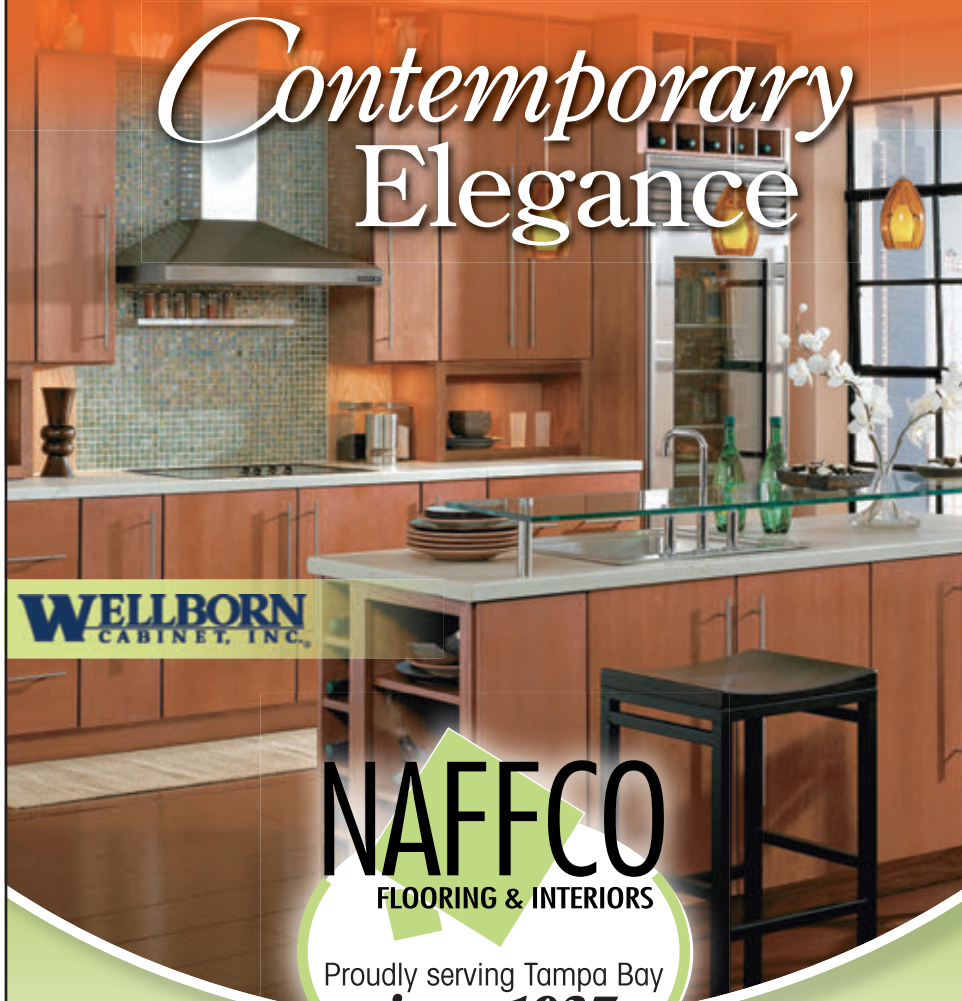


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March Community Calendar

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

Today throughout March, Every Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Bloomingdale Library, McLean Community Room / Free Tax Help From AARP Tax-Aide Foundation // AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is available free to taxpayers with low and moderate income, with special attention to those 60 and older. Assistance is provided by the AARP Tax-Aide Foundation on a first-come, first-served basis in cooperation with the Free Tax Preparation Program of Hillsborough County. Customers desiring assistance should review this list of recommended documents to bring to work with tax prep volunteers.

Today - March 31, Weekends, 10 a.m.- 6 p.m., Bay Area Renaissance Festival / 11315 N. 46th St., Tampa / www.bayarearenfest.com // Huzzah & Cheers! King Henry and Queen Katherine Parr invite one and all to their 16th Century European village featuring stages with live entertainment. Over 100 artisans fill the Festival marketplace to display and sell their handcrafted wares for a truly unique shopping experience.



March 7, 6 p.m. / G.F.W.C. Valrico Service League's Putting on the Ritz Bunco / Center Place Fine Arts Center, 619 Vonderburg Dr. // Come join us for a night of Bunco fun! Dinner starts at 6 p.m. followed by Bunco at 7 p.m. Tickets cost \$20 and include light dinner, drinks and prizes. Purchase tickets at Center Place or contact Claudia Yake at 685-7998. Proceeds support children and families in need in our community.



March 8, All Day, International Women's Day, Brandon Senior Center / 612 N. Parsons Ave., Brandon / (813) 635-8066 // Honoring our women throughout the day with a 60's style theme.

March 28 / Laughter Yoga: Laugh For The Health Of It!

Presented at The Bridges Retirement Community // Learn how therapeutic laughter benefits our physical and mental well-being by attending "Laughter Yoga: Laugh for the Health of It!" on March 28 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Dr. Tanya Gold, MD, family physician and integrative medical doctor who is also certified as a laughter yoga leader and registered yoga instructor, will explain the many health benefits of laughter yoga. Benefits include reducing stress, strengthening the immune system, and lessening pain. This interactive workshop will show you how to laugh even if you don't feel like it. Choosing to laugh is a tool to add to your medical toolbox. The workshop, held at The Bridges, 11350 Bloomingdale Ave., Riverview, is free to attend. Space is limited. Call Janet at 813.413.8900 to reserve your seat.



Master Gardener Library Program / March 6, 6:30-8 p.m. / Master Gardener Plant Clinic: Right Plant in the Right Place / Bloomingdale Library, 1906 Bloomingdale Ave.



// Turn your brown thumb green! Join master gardeners on the first Wednesday of every month through May 19. / Don't forget to bring a plant or other gardening item for our fun Plant Swap. This month's topic is presented by Master Gardener Peggy Reineking and covers the importance of research in identifying the "right plant in the right place", including the ability to search the internet on the formal (scientific) names. This will help gardeners be more precise in identifying the plants that best meets their needs like size, color, heat tolerance for our zone and sun/shade tolerance. We expect to have a list of local nurseries recommended by local MG's. We will also discuss how to buy plants through mail order, a way to buy a species or cultivar that is difficult to find locally.



April 3, 6:30-8 p.m. / Master Gardener Plant Clinic: Wonderful Begonias // Learn about the many different varieties of begonias and how to use them in your yard. Discover the history of this wonderful plant and propagating strategies, so you will be able to have many more in your garden. This presentation is from Master Gardener Susan Jewel.



May 1, 6:30-8 p.m. / Master Gardener Plant Clinic: Edible Flowers // We eat with our eyes. Try something different, plant an edible flower garden. Learn what types of flowers are edible. Take home some basic recipes that you can use to start cooking with flowers. Your hosts for this class are Master Gardeners Richard Seedroff and Barbara Glotzbach.



Your Bloomingdale Library Master Gardener Team includes Richard Seedroff, Elena Wright and Nancy Dulin.

FYI, Bloomingdale! / South Valrico Road Closed for Resurfacing Until March 8 // Drivers will experience delays in the Valrico area of Hillsborough County for the next week while South Valrico Road is resurfaced. Work began on Feb. 21. South Valrico Road will be closed from Lumsden Road to Brandon Boulevard for road work. Drivers are encouraged to use alternate routes including South Mt. Carmel Road, but be mindful of South Miller Road as a detour because Valrico Elementary School is on that route. South Valrico Road is expected to reopen by March 8. Drivers are urged to use caution in this area.





Open House

BayCare Fitness Center (Bloomingtondale)

Saturday, March 23 | 9am–3pm

Get a first look at our new fitness center, located inside the state-of-the-art BayCare HealthHub™. Equipped with the latest technology and staffed with supportive, certified trainers, our center is filled with exciting motivational resources to keep you inspired and healthy.

Join us for:

- Tours, fitness classes and circuit trainings, a nutrition seminar and fitness technology showcase
- Healthy snacks and refreshments
- Exciting giveaways and new member promotions and incentives

Free childcare provided for children age 6 weeks and older.

To register or for more information:
[BayCareFitnessCenters.org](https://www.baycarefitnesscenters.org) | (813) 994-0215

BayCare Fitness Center (Bloomingtondale)
BayCare HealthHub
2470 Bloomingtondale Ave., Valrico

19-666397-0219
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 **BayCare**
Fitness Centers



BLOOMINGDALE

Special Taxing District

THE COMMUNITY'S COMMON AREA CONNECTION

By Miriam Leech, BSTD Staff

(Editor's Note: The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District's (BSTD) monthly column will inform readers about the BSTD, its mission and ongoing and new initiatives. The BSTD meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of the month at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd. Questions? Call 813-684-6667 or email bstd@verizon.net.)

ROAD WARRIORS

By Tom Leech, President

The roadways in and around Bloomingdale are changing.

OFF-DUTY DEPUTY PROGRAM

Our community security program got off to a resounding success on Feb. 6 thanks to off-duty Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) deputies. On Day 1, three traffic citations were issued during the morning school hours. Remember, while these deputies are not on official duty, they are in uniform, drive their HCSO cruiser, and retain law enforcement authorities the same as if they were on duty. Based on the initial success of the pilot program, your Board of Trustees voted to continue the program. As I mentioned last month, patrol locations and times will rotate to blanket the community and to maintain unpredictability.

Off-Duty Deputy photo: Bloomingdale Special Taxing District (BSTD) President Tom Leech (left) and Vice President Bob Meginnis (right) meet with Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Master Deputy Christopher Dina, the first off-duty deputy to patrol the community and a Bloomingdale resident.



BELL SHOALS ROAD WIDENING

Property Manager Rick Pitrowski and I met with Hillsborough County officials earlier this month and reviewed the progress and impacts of the Bell Shoals widening project. The tree removal, movement of gas and fiber optic lines, and the associated construction traffic are all part of this long-anticipated effort.

Much of the work affecting Bloomingdale has involved finalizing land acquisition or the rights to use land adjacent to Bell Shoals. These legal efforts are nearing completion, which will translate to another surge in activity along Bell Shoals.

Despite the quickened pace, the project has a long way to go to completion. Construction is divided into phases beginning at Boyette Road and running to just north of Bloomingdale Avenue. The county expects to have finalized plans in the next few weeks.

When complete, Bell Shoals will have four lanes of traffic stretching from Boyette to Bloomingdale. A landscaped median will separate the two directions of traffic. Along Bell Shoals, entrances at Glenhaven Drive and Greenhollow Lane will be moved back to accommodate the new roadway. And traffic flow will be much smoother.

TRAFFIC CALMING ON NATURES WAY

Thanks to the many efforts on the part of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA), the county is finalizing a traffic safety plan that will narrow from four lanes to two the stretch of Natures Way between Elba Place and Bell Grande Drive. Changes also include the addition of bike lanes in both directions and installation of medians. This new traffic flow is intended to lower the number of speed-related accidents that occur in our community. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2020. More information will follow in the coming months.

SIDEWALK REPAIRS

The next phase of sidewalk repairs being conducted in Bloomingdale by Hillsborough County begins May 1. This is the second of a three-phase, 3-year, \$1 million project to make the sidewalks in the community safe again. The project was approved on Feb. 1, 2017, thanks to the combined efforts of the BSTD, the BHA, and Commissioner Stacy White. The first phase was completed last year.

VACANCY

The BSTD Board is looking for a Bloomingdale resident and registered voter who is interested in serving the community as a new trustee! If interested, please attend the next monthly meeting of the BSTD on March 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Offices, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, Florida.

BLOOMINGDALE

Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Road
Valrico, Florida 33596
(813) 684-6667 Office
(813) 684-2358 Fax
BSTD@verizon.net

www.bloomingdaletaxingdistrict.org
Hours: 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Tom Leech, President
Bob Meginnis, Vice President
Charlie Woodcock, Treasurer
Jay Kittle, Secretary
Russell Jones, Trustee
Randy Kehrmeier, Trustee

Monthly Meeting

The residents of Bloomingdale are invited to attend the next meeting of the BSTD on March 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Offices, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. If you would like to speak at the meeting, members of the public are allotted 3 minutes to make comment or ask questions per Hillsborough County policy. Hope to see you there!

Park Renovations Scheduled For Completion in April/May

By Joe Harless

Renovation projects at both Bloomingdale parks will be completed in time for summer, but the renovations will look a little different from when they were first announced.

The original park plans, as reported in August 2017 by the Osprey Observer, included expanding the Bloomingdale West tennis courts into a \$600,000 tennis center and racquetball courts, restrooms, shelters and parking, while the Bloomingdale East project would have removed the tennis and racquetball courts in favor of the new nearby tennis center and a \$400,000 splash pad.

“There is no plan for a splash pad,” Kyla Booher, Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation, said.

The splash pad was reconsidered when County staff realized a fully staffed park would be needed to conduct daily water tests to ensure public health and safety, something the unstaffed Bloomingdale East and West parks lack.

“We shelved that project in favor of better amenities to incite more people to come to the parks,” Booher explained.

Renovations to both parks will be completed in stages. Booher confirmed new picnic shelters, water fountains, benches, and trash cans had been finished in the Bloomingdale East park. The Bloomingdale West park will also receive new water fountains, benches, trash cans, and a small modular public restroom.

The county also decided to resurface and update the tennis and racquetball courts. The Bloomingdale West tennis courts have a tentative completion date of early April 2019, while the Bloomingdale East tennis courts should be open by early May 2019. Resurfacing the tennis and racquetball courts will take 30 days so the acrylic sport coatings will have time to permanently set via a process called curing. Workers have started on the Bloomingdale West resurfacing and plan to begin resurfacing the Bloomingdale East courts while the West courts cure.

Factoring in the renovation costs to a Brandon park, Booher stated the estimated total cost of the renovations was \$600,000, excluding the costs to resurface the tennis and racquetball courts.



Photos: Wendy Knipp



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Bloomingdale Real Estate Update

(Editor's Note: Real estate columnist Ronnie has lived in Bloomingdale for eight years with her husband and two children, a son attending University of Florida and daughter at Bloomingdale High School. A productive Realtor, she is also active in the Girl Scouts.)

Is your Bloomingdale Fireplace ready for a makeover?

Like many homes in Bloomingdale, our featured neighborhood, Bloomingdale Point, boasts numerous fireplaces – over 75! Updating your fireplace can make a big difference. Pictured is a before and after update by Paige Smith, a fellow Chadderton Group Realtor. She used Valspar Chalky Finish Paint. What a simple but huge transformation!

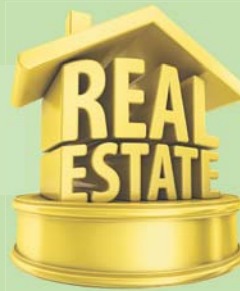
Here is what you will need:

- Vacuum brush attachment
- Chalk Paint
- Paint brush
- Painter's tape
- Black flat spray paint to paint brass finishes

For those of you who have redone your fireplace, please post “after” pictures on my Facebook page [#facebook.com/ronniekw](https://www.facebook.com/ronniekw). I would love to see what you've done!

Neighborhood Snapshot – Bloomingdale Pointe

Bloomingdale Pointe located between Springvale Drive, Natures Way Blvd, Green Hollow Lane and Bell Shoals Road is a non-mandated neighborhood consisting of approximately 207 homes, mostly built between 1979-1982. Roads are Briarpark Way, Casaba Loop, Greenford Street, Greenrock Place, Greenstone Place, Orange Crest, Orangepoint Road and Sand Pebble Drive. The three and four bedroom homes average 1,800 square feet and two car garages. Nine homes sold over the past 365 days at an average of \$130 per square foot. Three of the homes were pool homes. Average time on the market was 32 days.



By Ronnie McLaughlin

The Chadderton Group
Keller Williams Realty

813-601-5659

ronniemclaughlin@kw.com

www.chaddertongroup.com



Wanted: A Forever Home and Family!

Source: Hillsborough County



Hillsborough County's Pet Resource Center (PRC) has many cats and dogs looking for their “forever” homes. The PRC is the only open-admission facility in the county, meaning it accepts dogs and cats regardless of breed, size or medical condition. Residents can visit the center or search online to view hundreds of adoptable animals. All pets are microchipped, vaccinated, registered, and spayed or neutered before adoption.

The PRC, located at 440 N. Falkenburg Rd., is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For information, call 813-744-5660 or visit www.hcflgov.net/pets.

Here are just a few fabulous faces to choose from:

Sammy



Sammy, 1950618, is a 6-year-old people-friendly boy who likes to play with toys, enjoys attention and is friendly with dogs. He doesn't get along with other cats.

Tank



7-year-old Tank, 1963924, is a friendly, energetic boy who likes to play with toys, is housebroken; leash trained, knows basic obedience and loves to run.

Gaius



Gaius, 1967861, is two. He is a friendly boy who knows some basic skills, enjoys treats and loves to give hugs and get lots of attention.

Larry



8-year-old Larry, 1968333, had to come to us due to unfortunate circumstances. His previous owner wanted us to know that Larry is an all-around great cat. He loves to play with toys, dogs, cats and loves people. No. 1 tip is to get Larry a good scratching post, that's one of his favorite things to do!

Long-Vacant Valrico Sweetbay Supermarket To Become Charter School

By D'Ann Lawrence White, Patch Staff | Feb 12, 2019 6:48 pm ET
Reprinted with Permission

After years of sitting vacant, a Haines City-based charter school hopes to inject new life into the former Sweetbay Supermarket at 1101 Bloomingdale Ave., just east of Bell Shoals Road in Valrico.

Navigator Academy of Leadership has filed an application with the Hillsborough County School District to transform the old grocery store into a charter school for more than 1,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The Sweetbay Supermarket opened in 1997 and closed in 2009 when the parent company decided to shutter its low-performing stores throughout Tampa Bay.

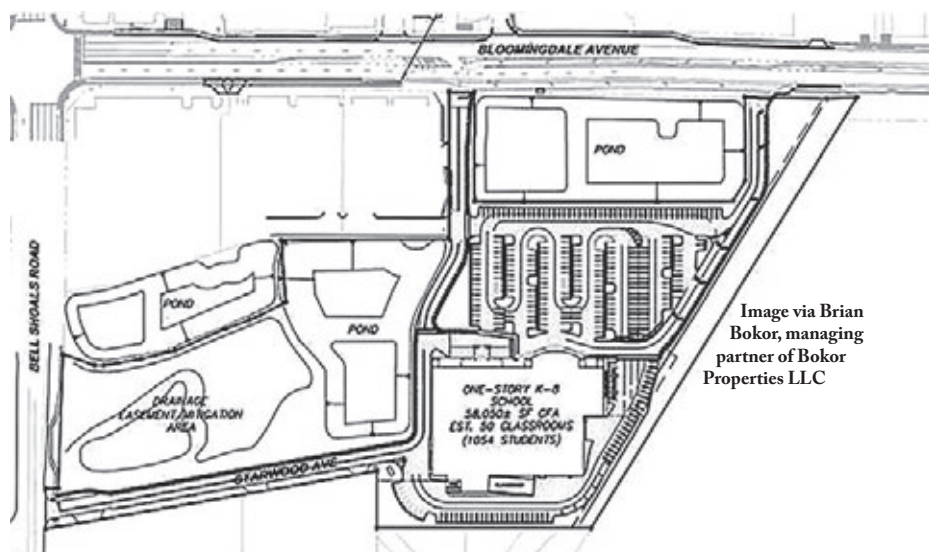
In the decade since, the property owner, Net Lease Realty Partners, has had no luck leasing the 58,505-square-foot building so it's now in the process of selling the property to MG3 Developer Group of Hollywood, Florida.

MG3 specializes in financing, designing and developing construction projects with a focus on charter schools. The company's portfolio includes the Hillsborough Academy of Math and Science, the Pinellas Academy of Math and Science, Independence Academy of Tampa, Bell Creek Academy in Riverview, the Kids Community College South East Campus in Riverview and BridgePrep Academy of Riverview.

According to its application, Navigator Academy of Leadership will focus on science, engineering and technology including the use of K'NEX to introduce basic building and engineering concepts and LEGO Robotics to introduce students to coding and technology.

Its target is to have an enrollment of 1,054 students within five years of opening.

The academy is currently accepting applications. Click here for more information, call 863-866-7566, or email info@navigatoracademy.com.



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“Clean Up, Clean Up! Everybody, Everywhere! C

Join the BHA at HC Parks and Recreation, 1626 Natures Way behind Alafia Elementary from 9 am to 1 pm!

The event, made possible by a grant from the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and Office of Neighborhood Relations, is a service the BHA has provided to residents for over 15 years.

We have a line-up of valuable services all provided free to our residents. If for no other reason, join the Association and help us continue to provide a level of service other neighborhoods just can't match!

This year:

eCycle Florida will accept electronic recyclables including Computers, Laptops, Networking Equipment, Cell Phones and flat screen TV's (NO Old Box TV's).

Thanks to our sponsor and fellow Bloomingdale resident Grace Lewis, a free Document Shredding service provided by Shred-it is back.

6th Medical Group from MacDill will collect outdated medications.



**DONATIONS
TO DEFRAY
THE COSTS
OF THIS
EVENT ARE
GLADLY
ACCEPTED**



Lighthouse Ministries will gladly accept serviceable donations!

We will have a large group of student volunteers and adults to assist with car unloading!



Clean Up, Clean Up! Everybody Do Your Share!"



Ten commercial trash bins will also be available.

Hillsborough County Roll-offs accepted items: Refrigerators, ovens, water heaters, Steel and other metals, Furniture (such as couches, chairs, tables and mattresses) and Construction debris (such as concrete, bricks, glass and roofing materials), and tires.

Not accepted in roll-offs: televisions, microwaves, computers or radios, yard waste, regular household trash, hazardous materials including paint, batteries, propane tanks, household chemicals and waste from commercials activities.

NOTE: NO old-style box televisions accepted! Do Not bring them, you will be turned away!



Photo: Wendy Knipp



Identity Theft - Protect Yourself on Community Clean-up Day: Free Shredding Thanks to Bloomingdale Resident and CPA Grace Lewis

By Wendy Knipp

Grace Lewis is a local resident who has called Bloomingdale home for more than 32 years. She and her husband have raised 2 children here and currently enjoy a beautiful grandson. She has owned her own local CPA practice for almost 30 years which assists individuals and small businesses with their accounting, payroll, and taxes. Grace loves this community and she enjoys giving back whenever she can.

Grace also serves as Treasurer on our Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Board. At a recent meeting discussing the Community Clean-up Day, she learned that a sponsor was still needed to bring in a document shredding service, Shred-It (www.shredit.com).

As a CPA, she has seen first-hand how identity theft has wreaked havoc on the lives of some of her clients, so she stepped up and volunteered to be the sponsor. Grace said, "We see identity theft all the time and so I thought offering the community an easy way to shred their documents was too important not to have."



While so much identity theft occurs online, many thieves still take advantage of unsuspecting residents throwing away sensitive documents into the trash. Those documents must be shredded. Grace says, "People will still go through your trash. You would think they don't do that, but they do."

In addition to shredding, Grace suggests obtaining an IRS PIN (www.irs.gov) which is linked to your social security number and prevents fraudulent tax filing. She also suggests using a credit/identity monitoring service such as LifeLock (www.LifeLock.com) for peace of mind, even after identity theft.

Grace C. Lewis, CPA, PA is located at 1440 Bloomingdale Ave in Valrico. Visit her Facebook page or call 813-681-4548.





Wildlife... Up Close and Personal

Article/Photos by Chris and Elizabeth Dennard



(Editor's Note: In our new column, Bloomingdale residents Chris and Elizabeth Dennard, profiled in last month's Gazette, will share their love of local and global wildlife.)



THIS MONTH: A FLORIDA FRIEND, THE PILEATED WOODPECKER

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker in North America. The male has a red stripe on his face and the female has a black one, both have a long neck and triangular red crest that sweeps off the back of the head with a heavy long black bill. Because of its size it is a most striking bird that can be heard at great distances with loud whacking as it strikes a tree in search of food. It is a very common woodpecker and is not an endangered species.

NESTING

Nest trees are typically dead and within a mature stand of trees, so the birds don't have to travel far for food. The male begins excavating the nest cavity and does most of the work, but the female contributes particularly as the hole nears completion. The nest construction takes three to six weeks and the birds will rarely use the nest again. They stay together in their territory all year and will defend it but will tolerate new arrivals to the area.



MATING AND BABIES

Pileated woodpeckers are monogamous, stay together for life, and are not migratory. The female will lay three to five white eggs, which will be incubated for 15 days by both the male and female birds. Both feed the nestlings and after about 24 days, the young will leave the nest. They only nest one time each year.



FEEDING HABITS

They often feed in one spot for long periods. They drill distinctive rectangular shaped holes in the wood to get their main prey, carpenter ants, and other insects from deep in the wood. They also eat beetle larvae, termites, flies, cockroaches and grasshoppers. They are very loud birds sounding like a jackhammer when they are pounding into trees.

PREDATORS AND MORE

Pileated Woodpeckers can live as long as 12 years. Their common predators include black snakes, hawks, owls and squirrels. The cartoon character woody woodpecker was created in 1940 after the Pileated Woodpecker.



Making More Putts with Better Aiming...

By J.D. Carino (Bloomingdale CC campus)

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

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

1. **Red Line-** The line the ball travels on is your target line.
2. **Yellow Lines** - The other line we call the body line; consisting of your feet, knees, hips and shoulders. They need to all be square or even.
3. **Both red and yellow lines are aimed parallel to each other like a railroad track.**

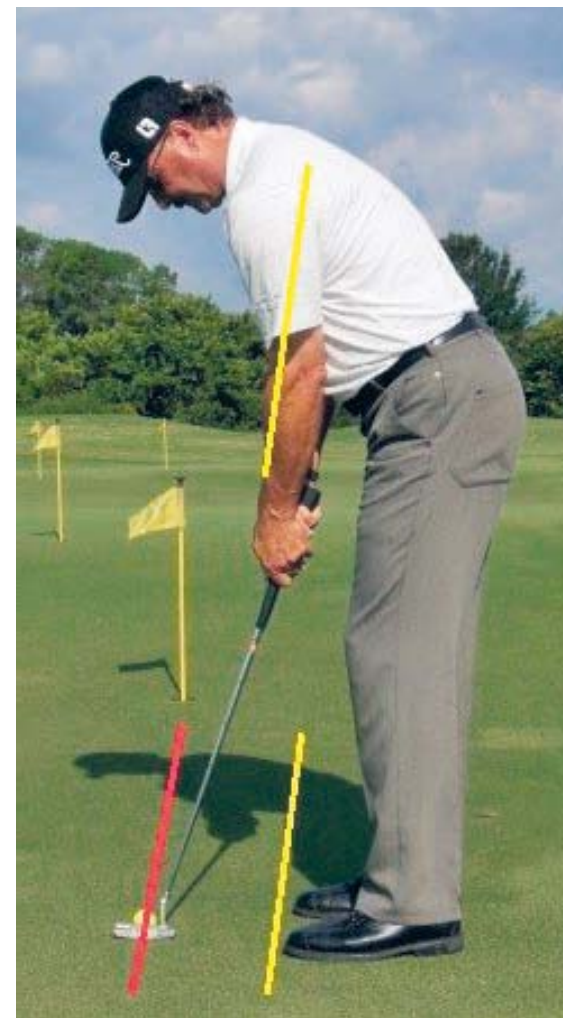
If you aim your body incorrectly (right at the hole); you'll compensate by rotating your body or putter face to get the ball back to the left and get it in the hole.

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

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



John E.S. Cochrane
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Making Family Connections

By Gwen Graverson

Have you ever wondered about your family history? With people moving farther away from home, it is harder to keep in touch with distant family. This was the inspiration for a family trip in August 2012. My sister Susan and I ventured to the northeast to learn more about our family heritage. We O'Neill kids grew up in Suffern (Rockland County), NY with extended family living in Hudson, Essex and Monmouth, NJ.

The first challenge: tracking family members before starting the trip. Our mother was the youngest sibling in her family, and there was a large age gap among first cousins. As we grew, family gatherings seemed to fade away... looking for relatives would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

Ancestry.com has been a major blessing for those researching family trees. Especially with a common family name (O'Neill/Finley), this website was the boost I needed to begin my journey in researching.

Even with limited information, it wasn't long before the little green "leafs" started popping up with other member trees with relevant information. Being a left-handed thinker, I didn't want this trip to be solely about visiting cemeteries; I wanted it also to be about making family connections. So, I started messaging owners of other member trees. This resulted in finding first/second cousins, and step-cousins.

The family trip was a success as we not only reconnected with first cousins but also met additional cousins for the first time. There have been other firsts since. I have a special bond with a McElwee cousin, Pat, whom I met in May 2014. Upon meeting Pat, the family resemblance to my father was so uncanny along with similar mannerisms... I started to choke up.



Thanks to my ancestry search, my basic life philosophy is to practice compassion, be friendly, be helpful and courteous... because we just might be related.

During our August 2012 trip, I connected with my Finley cousins. Standing left to right: Lois and Jean (sisters) and Anna (meeting for the first time). Seated left to right: my sister Susan, me (Gwen Graverson) and Robert (Anna's uncle, also meeting for the first time).

One fun part of researching family history is discovering celebrities in the family...

- Second cousin, Michael Patrick O'Neill won first place in the underwater category of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2018 "Night Flight (Flying Fish)." Michael has also written and photographed seven non-fiction marine life books for children and has given talks at school assemblies during the past 14 years at over 400 schools in 24 states. You can find more information about Michael at <https://www.mpostock.com/index>. The initial family connection was through Michael's brother Joseph, who contacted me 5 years ago, via. Ancestry.com.



Michael Patrick O'Neill winning a prestigious photography award in London.

- Katelyn Spinosa, a 2nd cousin, 1x removed has a degree in Vocal Performance from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. Katelyn has performed roles in regional theatre, film and television. Katelyn's beautiful voice singing "May The Angels Be Your Guide" is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6iqk5BBSu4>. To learn more about my cousin, there's an on-line interview by MilspoFAN (Military Spouse Fine Artists Network), dated 27 June 2018 (archives): <http://milspofan.com>.



Katelyn Spinosa, one of my talented cousins!

- And, last for now my husband's granduncle is Lawrence Welk and there's also a family connection with Johnny Appleseed.

The Florida Strawberry Festival is Here! Now through March 10th!

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From now through March 10, enjoy strawberries, shortcake, big-name concerts, rides, stage shows, attractions, food galore, exhibits, displays, contests, competitions and a berry sweet time for the whole family!

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Ellen Bess has been the Gazette's humorist for over four years. Her unique perspective on the world around us has been refreshing, amusing and at times, laugh out loud funny. She leaves the Gazette this month to focus on her family. Thank you for sharing with us, Ellen. See you around the neighborhood!



Bridges I Have Known and Loathed

I hate bridges. I am something less than devoted to the miles of concrete and steel spanning our nation's waterways and gorges. I do not get an adrenaline rush staring a mile straight down into a churning river. Instead, my eyeballs roll back into my skull and stare straight down into my churning stomach. Yes, I know and loathe some of the South's finest bridges.

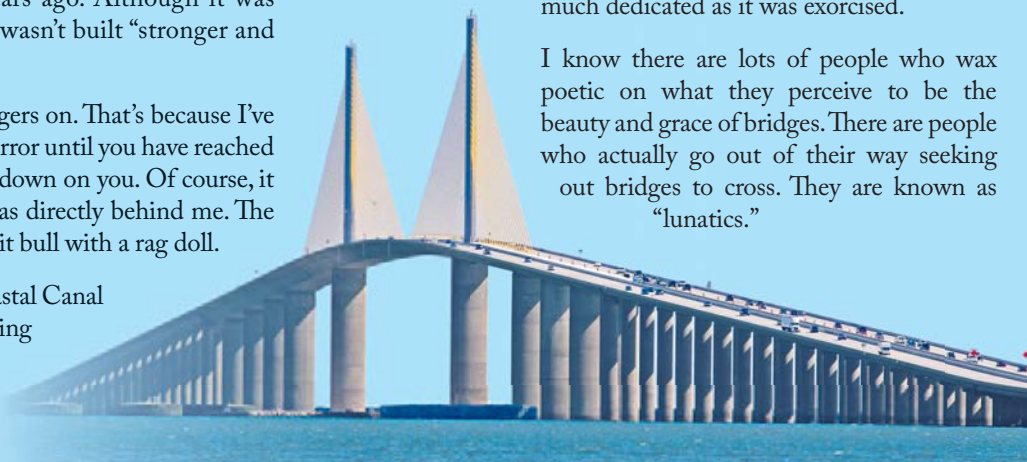
Nearest to home, of course, is the Sunshine Skyway, a gleaming monster with a somewhat checkered past, having tumbled into the Gulf of Mexico after being smacked by a freighter years ago. Although it was rebuilt and pronounced "much stronger and safer," I can't help but wonder why it wasn't built "stronger and safer" *in the first place*.

The name of the bridge on the South Carolina coast escapes me, but the memory lingers on. That's because I've never shared a bridge with a train before. You have never experienced pure, unsullied terror until you have reached the middle of a bridge only to glance in your rearview mirror and see a train bearing down on you. Of course, it was just a slight curve in the roadway that only made it *seem* as though the train was directly behind me. The train had its own safe trestle and, as it roared past me, merely shook my bridge like a pit bull with a rag doll.

My all-time favorite, however, rises above New Orleans. Benignly named "The Intracoastal Canal Bridge," it's a double-whammy. First of all, you can't even get to it without first crossing the Mississippi River Bridge (8 lanes of potential death). Secondly, it doesn't even have the decency to act like a normal bridge, simply rising up, then down. It

climbs out of the Mississippi mist, twisting and curling like a concrete dragon. It doesn't so much soar into the sky as it seems to attack it, veering to the left, then to the right before plummeting back to Earth. I have the feeling that upon completion, it wasn't so much dedicated as it was exorcised.

I know there are lots of people who wax poetic on what they perceive to be the beauty and grace of bridges. There are people who actually go out of their way seeking out bridges to cross. They are known as "lunatics."



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BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

By Community Resource Deputy Clifford Fletcher
and CSO Debbie Vijil

"One Team, One Family, One Community"

Area Law and Order

Between Jan. 12 and Feb. 12, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office had nine vehicle burglaries. Two business burglaries and two criminal mischiefs occurred. Deputies worked 18 traffic crashes and four traffic stops were conducted. Additionally, there were two DUI arrests.

Driving 101

I maybe preaching to the choir but here we go! Drivers, young and old, have a license, which means they had to take a test and pass a minimal number of questions.

The belief is the longer you drive the better you should become. As a teenager, you are just learning to drive. As an adult, you should become more seasoned and aware of the driving laws. What I see on a daily basis is distracted drivers zooming along completely oblivious to other people around them. Then there are the drivers being rude not using turn signals, cutting other drivers off and speeding. The list goes on.

Since Jan. 1, 2019, there have been over 70 driving violators stopped in the Bloomingdale area. There have been 28 traffic crashes, and 21 of those resulted in injuries.

So what can we do as drivers? You can help by understanding Florida driving laws. Know when you can turn right on red. Know that when you turn left or right, you must turn into the immediate or nearest lane, think Culbreath Road and Bloomingdale Avenue.

Always use your blinkers, especially when it could affect other drivers. Put down your cell phone. Deputies can tell when you're looking at it. Eyes looking down to your lap re a sure give-away.

Don't speed through our school zones. Remember the fast lane is for faster traffic, and passing. So move over let other drivers pass. If they are speeding, we will catch up to them.

Don't forget the Move Over Laws which applies to all emergency vehicle, Road Rangers, and tow trucks. Do your part and try to set a good example for our children and other drivers.



Next Bloomingdale Area Community Council Meeting (BACC)! Don't Forget Our New time!

Get involved; attend our monthly meeting as a neighborhood representative. Our meetings are on the third Thursday of each month – this month's meeting is **March 21 at 6 p.m.** at 3622 Erindale Drive. The BACC works directly with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to identify community concerns and find solutions to all types of problems. For information, call the Bloomingdale Community Station at 635-8040, or come by the station.



Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

CHAD CHRONISTER, SHERIFF

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REPORT SUSPICIOUS PERSONS/ACTIVITIES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT.

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For the Irish and Irish-at-Heart: Fun St. Patrick's Day Trivia

Sources: www.history.com, www.hellokids.com

March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. On this day even those not Irish wish they were. To expand your knowledge of all things Irish, we have compiled a few fun facts about the beloved tradition. Enjoy!

May your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow,
And may trouble avoid you Wherever you go.

—An Irish Toast

1. Over 33.1 million Americans claim Irish ancestry, 7x Ireland's population.
2. 13 million pints of Guinness will be downed on St. Patrick's Day. Make sure when you pick up your pint you put down your keys!
3. 83 percent of celebrators plan to wear green.
4. The world's first St. Patrick's Day Parade took place in Boston in 1737. Coincidentally, the largest percentage of Irish Americans call Massachusetts home.
5. Corned beef and cabbage is the celebratory meal of choice although it didn't originate from the Emerald Isle.
6. St. Patrick was born in Wales, not Ireland.
7. In Irish mythology, the mischievous leprechaun is a male fairy said to take the form of an old man. He is said to be wealthy and to keep his riches in "a pot of gold."
8. The shamrock is regarded as the national plant of Ireland and is always worn on St. Patrick's Day.

Mayor's River O'Green Fest

Mayor's River O' Green Festival
Saturday, March 16 @ 11am-5pm
Curtis Waterfront Hixon Park
www.RiverOGreen.com

Photo: Wendy Knipp



Rough Riders St. Patrick's Day Parade

Saturday, March 16 @ 7pm - 11pm
7th Avenue, Ybor City
www.tamparoughriders.org

Photo: Tampa Rough Riders



Tampa Y Offers Free Swim Lessons during Spring Break

Courtesy: Tampa YMCA

Recent data shows more children drowned in Hillsborough County last year than any other county in Florida. The number of drownings spiked to 11 in 2018. That's the highest in the state and more than the previous two years combined. That same year, another six children drowned in Pasco County — two more than in 2017. Statewide, the number of child drowning deaths was 88, up 7 percent from the prior year, according to the Florida Department of Children and Families.

The Y and the Florida Blue Foundation believe teaching children how to be safe around water is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Thanks to a Florida Blue Foundation grant, the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA will offer free Safety Around Water lessons to children March 18-21 to coincide with Hillsborough County's and Pasco County's Public Schools spring break.

The Safety Around Water program is free and open to the entire community, beginners and non-swimmers, ages 3-12 years. During the 4-day course, certified instructors teach kids a sequenced set of skills that will reduce the risk of drowning and give them confidence in and around water.

Classes take place Monday, March 18 - Thursday, March 21. Participants must be present on the first day of class and bring their own swimsuit and towel. AYMCA membership is NOT required; however, due to limited space, pre-registration is required at participating Tampa Ys. Contact Campo Family YMCA at (813) 684-1371 for information. Campo Y is located at 3414 Culbreath Rd.



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March 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



March 4 – Strawberry Festival – No School

March 18 – 22 – Spring Break – No School

March 25 – Non-Student Day



ALAFIA ALLIGATOR ALLEY

Congratulations!

March 5 – County SLAM (Student Literacy and Media) Showcase, Tampa Bay Convention Center

March 7 – Conference Night

March 8 – Spring Fling Carnival, 4 – 7:30pm (Public is invited to attend)

March 8 – End of Spirit Stick Contest

March 13 – FUN'D Run & Field Day

March 15 – End of 3rd 9 weeks

March 27 – Spring Pictures

Alafia SLAM Winners!

Insert Pic School - News March SLAM

Come out and support the following Alafia school winners at this great event on March 5 at the Tampa Bay Convention Center. Representing Alafia are:

Maia Munoz Santana (K-2 Art)

Madelyn Porter & Ava James (K-2 video)

Evelyn Sampson (representing Mrs. Paul's class for K-2 class video)

Micah Duncan (3-5 Art) and Kira Babtich (3-5 video)



Spirit Fridays! Show off your Gator Pride!

Remember to wear your Alafia shirts on Spirit Fridays! Shirts are sold in "The Mint" Wednesday mornings from 7:30 – 8 a.m.

Yearbook Sponsors

Yearbook Sponsors are needed. If you are interested or know someone who is, please contact the Yearbook Team at AlafiaYearbookPTA@gmail.com.



CIMINO COUGAR CENTRAL

March 8 – Family Night/General Assembly, 6 to 8 p.m.

March 15 – Wear Orange for Team Brielle

March 15 – Field Day, 8 a.m. to noon

March 26 – Chick Fil-A Spirit Night, 4 to 8 p.m. (Bloomingdale Ave location)

March 29 – All Pro Dad's, 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m., Multi-purpose Room

April 6 – Spruce Up Cimino



BURNS BRUINS BANTER

March 8 – Color Fun, PTSA, 2:40pm

March 27 – Flag Football vs. Barrington @ Bloomingdale High School, 7 a.m.

April 2 – Flag Football vs Rodgers @ Bloomingdale High School, 6 p.m.



BLOOMINGDALE HIGH BULL BUSINESS

March 5-15 – Spring FSA Writing/Reading/Algebra 1 Retakes

March 5 – JV/V Flag Football vs. Lennard, 6:15pm

March 6 – Track @ Brandon, 6 p.m.

March 6 – JV/V Flag Football vs. Riverview, 6:15pm

March 6 – Softball/Baseball @ Strawberry Crest, 7 p.m.

March 7 – Tennis vs. Durant, 3 p.m.

March 7 – Bloomingdale's Got Talent - Auditorium

March 7 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse vs Durant, 5 p.m.

March 8 – Softball/Baseball vs Sickles, 7 p.m.

March 9 – SAT Testing

March 11 – Tennis vs Plant City, 3 p.m.

March 11 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse @ Wharton, 5 p.m.

March 11 – JV/V Flag Football @ Strawberry Crest, 6:15pm

March 11 – Baseball vs Wharton, 7 p.m.

March 12 – Track @ Newsome, 6 p.m.

March 13 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse @ Freedom, 5 p.m.

March 13 – Softball/Baseball @ East Bay, 7 p.m.

March 14 – Tennis vs. Newsome, 3 p.m.

March 14 – JV/V Flag Football vs Durant, 6:15pm

March 15 – Track, Jack Rice Invitational @ East Bay, 4:30pm

March 26 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse vs. Newsome, 5 p.m.

March 26 – JV/V Flag Football @ Tampa Bay Tech, 6:15pm

March 26 – Softball/Baseball vs. Durant, 7 p.m.

March 27 – Track Western Conference @ Spoto, 1 p.m.

March 27 – Girls Lacrosse @ Holy Name, 6 p.m.

March 28 – JV/V Flag Football vs Newsome, 6:15pm

March 28 – Incoming 8th Grade Parent Night Meeting, Auditorium, 6:30pm

March 29-31 – FFCC JV/Varsity Winter guard Championship, Ocean Center Daytona Beach

March 29-31 – Track Pepsi Florida Relays, Gainesville

March 29 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse vs Robinson, 5 p.m.

March 29 – Softball/Baseball @ Plant City, 7 p.m.

April 1-12 – Spring FSA Writing (9th & 10th Grade)

April 1 – Tennis vs Arm wood, 3 p.m.

April 1 – JV/V Flag Football @ East Bay, 6:15pm

April 2 – Track Vernon Kohen WC Championship @ Wharton, 1 p.m.

April 2 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse @ Durant, 5 p.m.

April 3 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse @ Home, 5 p.m.

April 3 – Softball/Baseball vs Riverview, 7 p.m.

April 4 – Tennis vs Plant, 3 p.m.

April 4 – JV/V Flag Football @ Plant City, 6:15pm

April 5 – Boys/Girls Lacrosse @ Jefferson, 5 p.m.

April 5 – Softball/Baseball @ Plant, 7 p.m.

April 6 – Baseball @ Leto, 1 p.m.



BULL BRIEFS

Incoming 9th Grade Parent Night, March 28, Auditorium, 6 p.m.

Class of 2023 students and their parents are encouraged to attend. Presentation highlights include graduation requirements, school resources, course selection procedures, department information, clubs & activities, athletics, and registration information. For information, contact Joe Martino (Counseling Department Head), (813)744-8018 Ext 257, joseph.martino@sdhc.k12.fl.us.

Future Financial Fair, April 5

Hosted by: TD Bank and Avid

Seniors, are you ready for your financial future? Seniors will be given a "Career" and a "Credit Score" and will visit vendors from housing, transportation, furniture/clothing stores, cell phone providers, insurance, and vacations to learn how to live within their "budget." Like a real-world version of the game - LIFE. More information to come!

Bingo Night at Bloomingdale HS

April 12, 6:30 p.m., BSHS Cafeteria. Doors Open at 6 p.m. Open to the community! In addition to prizes for the winner of each game, there are great raffle prizes as well. This is a fundraiser for the Bloomingdale Chorus. www.BloomingdaleChorus.com/support-us.

Burns Art Student Wins "Art in the Capitol" Competition

Brief by Wendy Knipp

Angela Chen, an 8th grader at Burns Middle School, won the "Art in the Capitol" competition with her ink drawing entitled Simple Beauty. The winning piece will go to Tallahassee to be displayed in Senator Bill Galvano's office. Along with a ribbon, Angela also received a gift card and her art teacher, Ms. Pam Reeves, received a school gift card and educator's award certificate. Congratulations Angela!

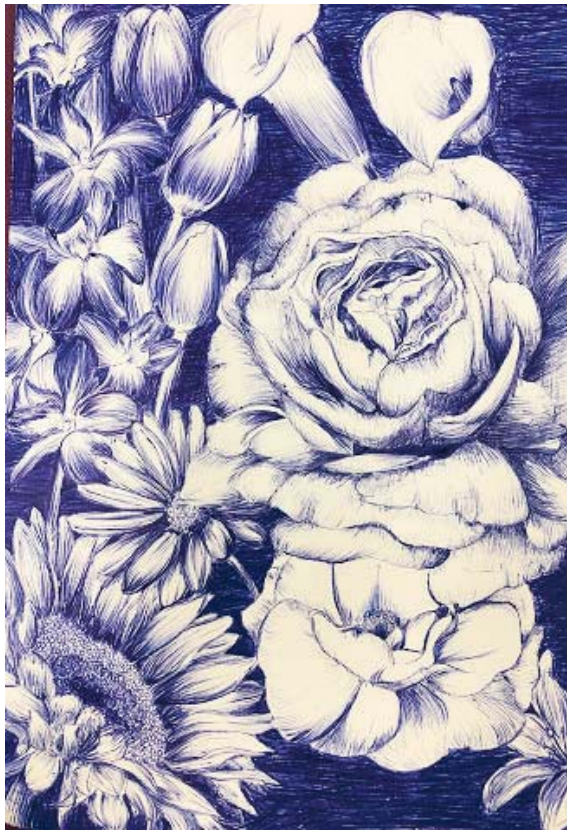


Photo courtesy - Hillsborough County Public Schools

Burns Middle School Hosts Valentine's School Dance

Brief/Photos by Jessica Hinson

Over 40 parent and faculty volunteers provided countless hours of planning, set up and breakdown so approximately 400 students could dance the night away on Feb.7. Burns PTSA hosted the dance in the school's gymnasium.

Students enjoyed pizza, drinks, cotton candy, popcorn, multiple photo booths, and a spectacular balloon drop to end the magical night. Universal Music Entertainment did an amazing job of accepting music requests and interacting with this large group of students.

Darinka Sablan, V.P. Ways and Means of Burns PTSA stated, "Through the effort of a great volunteer team, we were able to pull off a very successful event for the kids, even better than last year! This event is all about the kids and they had a great time. I want to thank everybody involved."

Events like this are only possible with the help of like-minded volunteers. Thanks to all involved for giving these students a fun filled night to remember.





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Bloomington High School Hosts 4th Annual IncrediBULL Games

Brief/Photos by Deidre Morgan

The IncrediBULL Games once again took over the field at Bloomington High School on Feb. 15. The Special Olympics Field Day was attended by 13 East Hillsborough County Schools and over 250 athletes.

The Rajun' Bull Band Drumline started the event with music for the Parade of Athletes. To make this annual event a success, Bloomington students volunteered to help the day run smoothly.

Clubs such as Best Buddies, Student Government, AVID and National Honor Society, just to name a few, escorted the athletes to their events. Some of the events and activities included relay races, distance throwing competitions, ring toss, face painting and enjoying a frozen treat from Kona Ice.

This day would also not be possible without the help of local businesses and the Bloomington culinary students who provided lunch. Congratulations to all the athletes on an IncrediBULL day!



Volunteers help an athlete with the ball toss.



Taylor Bryers, National Honor Society member, takes a picture with a participant from Lennard High School.

Second Annual Running of the Bulls 5k a Great Success

Brief/Photos by Jane Anne Owen

On Jan. 19, around 350 people met at Bloomington High School for the second annual Running of the Bulls 5k. The 5k, hosted by the Bloomington Band Boosters had over 200 race participants and featured performances by the Bloomington Band Drum Line before and after the race. The Bloomington High School "Voice of the Bulls" emcee made announcements and the Bulls mascot cheered on participants and posed for pictures.

The race was a tremendous success due to the support from our great community. Registrations increased by 60 percent from the previous year. With the profit from race registrations and sponsorships from over 20 local businesses, the race netted over \$7k for programs at the school. The Bloomington Rajun' Bull Band was the main beneficiary. Several high school athletic programs also opted to participate and use the event for team building and fundraising.

Mark your calendar now for next year's Running of the Bulls 5k to be held on Saturday, January 18, 2020!



National Letter of Intent Signing Day for Local Student Athletes

By Deidre Morgan

In what has been the largest number of Student Athletes to date, eight students from three different sports, signed their National Letters of Intent (NLI) on Feb. 6 at Bloomingdale High School. National Signing Day has traditionally been the first day that a high school senior can sign a binding National Letter of Intent for a collegiate sport with a school that is a member of the United States National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

With their families, friends and coaches present the student athletes are taking their dreams to the next level. From left to right; Landon Moody (Football) Furman University, Alyssa Gaston (Lacrosse) Ave Maria University, Jake Elliot (Soccer) Warner University, Terrel Ferrell (Football) The University of Toledo, Ethan Carde (Football) Coffeyville Community College, Corey Thornton (Football) Bethel University, Justin Keijers (Football) Coffeyville Community College and Rodney Roseboro (Football) Coffeyville Community College.



Photo: Bloomingdale High School Twitter

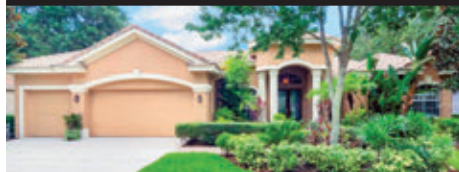
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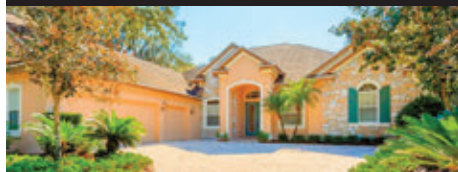


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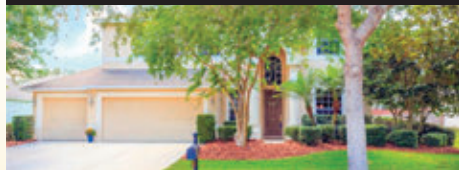
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