

CELEBRATING
42
YEARS

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

VOL. XLII



ISSUE 1



JANUARY 2022



WWW.BLOOMINGDALE.LIFE

THIS MONTH

Happy New Year!

Strawberry Season is Here!!

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PLEASE  RECYCLE

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Strawberry
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WINNER

2013, 2014, 2016,
2018 & 2019

Hillsborough County
Neighborhood
Recognition Award
Best Communications
Newsletter Category

"Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man." – Benjamin Franklin

THE AWARD-WINNING

BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Jane Owen
Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette
3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33596 - (813) 681-2051

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The official publication of the BNA since 1980, delivered free to Bloomingdale residents on the first Wednesday of each month.



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**Tampa Bay
Times**

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

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

Email: Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com Website: www.Bloomingdale.Life

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BNA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Community Office.

President:
Suzy Watts

Vice President:
Sean Donahue

Treasurer:
Grace Lewis

Directors at Large:
Laney Balis
Bobbi Ferraro
Billy Hightower
Jane Owen

BNA BRIEFS

BNA CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 11, 7:00 p.m. / BNA Board Meeting Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road / Call 813-252-0252 for information. The community is welcome to attend! Email bl.neighbor1@gmail.com for more information.

Saturday, February 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. / Community Clean-up Day

Sunday, March 6 / Spring Picnic

Sunday, April 10 / Bunny Visit

Saturday, September 10 / Community Garage Sale

Sunday, December 4 / Santa Visit

JOIN TODAY!



JOIN THE BNA!

Just \$35 annually helps keep our community programs going. Please send your membership in today and be part of making Bloomingdale a great place to live!

Membership can be paid through PayPal!

Scan this QR Code or visit <https://bloomingdale.life>
At the bottom of the homepage, click Membership.



**January 2022
BSD Update**

By Kristine Schroeder

**BLOOMINGDALE
SPECIAL DISTRICT**

A new year and a new look in our community. Hometown Heroes banners will soon replace the holiday greetings on our light poles. One of our residents, DeAnna Ingram, is leading the effort to recognize our military veterans and first responders. Residents may purchase a banner that features their "hero" and it will be installed near one of Bloomingdale's major intersections. The program is not-for-profit and does not involve funds from the District. The District supports this program by allowing use of the brackets already installed for holiday and 9/11 banners. The cost is \$160 for the banner and annual installation/removal. For more information and to obtain an application, please reach out to DeAnna at bdaleheroes@gmail.com.

In 2022 the District will also continue its ongoing partnership with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department and the Off-Duty-Deputy security program. This successful program, started in 2019, will welcome additional deputies to patrol our streets and parks and help to keep our community safe and secure.

Here's to wishing you a bright 2022!

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BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

By Community Resource Deputy Clifford Fletcher
"One Team, One Family, One Community"

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE!

Welcome 2022! Our community has come together and overcome many challenges over the past two years. Let's reflect back on the memories of the old year and think about new challenges to come. Every one of us in the Sheriff's Office wants to wish each and every resident of Bloomingdale and the surrounding communities a very safe and secure New Year. We all want to especially thank each and every one of you who provided support and help to us during this past year!

The Sheriff's Office is committed to providing Bloomingdale and the surrounding areas of Hillsborough County with a safer and more secure place to live, to work, to run your businesses and to raise your families. The safety and security of the residents, their homes and businesses in your community and county is our very reason for being here. We will continue to work with concerned residents from these community which help make this possible. We will continue to seek active participation by the Sheriff's Community councils in helping all of us make even more improvements towards making our area safer and more secure.

SAFETY AND SECURITY EDUCATION

With the holidays over, it's time for all residents to take the time to insure their families, homes and vehicles are kept safe and secure. Make sure your **garage doors are locked, outside vehicles are locked** and all valuables removed from them. The vast majority of burglaries are open or unlocked doors. Please do your part to reduce crime. Take time to learn how you can make a difference in your community. Taking ownership of the neighborhood you live in can make a big difference. Just like weeds in your garden, we have to get rid of drug dealers, criminals and would be predators in our communities before they spread! Alerting law enforcement is something residents can do to help remove criminals from our neighborhoods. So if you see something let us know. We have tools to help make it easier. It's called tip411. All you have to do is download it to your smartphone or tablet. Tip411 is simple yet effective. You can find the app through the Apple App store or Google Play. Just type in "HCSOSHERIFF" (no space). Download it and keep it handy. To send us a tip, press "New Tip." You can also include a photograph or video. Just touch the camera icon at the bottom. All tips transmit instantly to our Communications Center. Remember, in the event of an emergency, always dial 9-1-1. We can also be reached at 3622 Erindale Dr. in Valrico. 813-635-8040 your local community resource office.

*Drive safe, obey the traffic laws
and please buckle up!*



Meet Our Newest BNA Board Member

By Jane Owen

Laney Balis has a heart for service. Helping others is one of her favorite parts of her job and it is also why she decided to be an active member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association.



"Being a real estate agent in the area I get to meet so many wonderful people while helping them sell or buy a new home. It is so rewarding to help my community even in such a small way. It's one of the reasons I reached out to join the board, to be involved and help in making a difference in our community," she said.

It did not take Laney long to join the BNA after moving to Bloomingdale from Pennsylvania in 2019 where her extended family lives. Laney joined the BNA Board in November as a Director at Large. Prior to becoming a real estate agent, Laney worked in the corporate world for over 20 years. She brings to the BNA Board a vast skillset including organizing events, marketing, and community outreach.

"In today's world, people don't really know their neighbors. Being a part of the board, I am able to meet more than just my immediate neighbors. I get to meet people that live in other sections of Bloomingdale too," she explained.

When Laney is not working, she enjoys doing crafts, reading and spending time with her daughter and mom who relocated to Brandon in December of 2020. Laney lives in Bloomingdale East with her adult daughter.

Laney has always considered Florida home. She was raised in south Florida after her family moved down when she was very young. She loves the Bloomingdale area because of the vitality of the people here and access to all the best recreation, amusement parks, and beaches.

Now is the Time to Join the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association!

2022 BNA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE BEGINS

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association will make 2022 a year filled with improved services and programs for our community! The \$35 annual membership fee supports community events and programs such as the community clean-up day, scholarship for seniors, the annual Bunny and Santa visit, and community garage sale.

JOIN TODAY!

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
3509 BELL SHOALS ROAD - VALRICO, FL
WWW.BLOOMINGDALE.LIFE - BLNEIGHBOR1@GMAIL.COM
BNA Membership Notices are mailed to the owner on file with the Hillsborough County Tax Collector.

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2022 BNA MEMBERSHIP
\$35.00 TO JOIN OR RENEW!
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BLOOMINGDALE

2022 Membership \$35.00
Community Scholarship Donation \$
Total Enclosed \$
Check Number #

Check your mailboxes in January for the BNA's annual membership drive letter and scholarship donation request. Your mailer will contain a letter, front and back, with details about the association's role, events, programs, and a scholarship donation request. A yellow membership card and a return envelope is also included.

Join the BNA today! Make checks payable to the BNA and mail them to 3509 Bell Shoals Road., Valrico, FL 33596. Another option is to use our PayPal. Go to www.bloomingdale.life. The PayPal link is at the bottom of the homepage.

Attention Bloomingdale Seniors!

IMPORTANT DATES

FEB 1 – APRIL 1
Applications Accepted

APRIL 1
Application Deadline

MAY 10
Winner Announced

Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association

Bloomingdale \$2,000 Community Education Scholarship

REQUIREMENTS:

Candidate

- Must be a resident of the Bloomingdale community.
- Must be a graduating senior accepted at a 2 or 4-year college or university. Proof of acceptance is required.
- Weighted 3.2 GPA

Candidate's Parent/Guardian

- Must be a resident of the Bloomingdale community.
- Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association 2022 membership dues must be paid prior to the scholarship application deadline. Membership drive begins January 2022. **Deadline is April 1, 2022.**
- Proof of residency is required.

Selection Criteria

- Community service
- Extra-curricular activities
- Well-written essay
- Academic Standing
- Reference letters

Scholarship information will be available February 1, 2022 online at Bloomingdale.Life, at Bloomingdale High School and at the Bloomingdale Community Office.

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The BNA Board Serves Bloomingdale

The BNA Board of Directors spearhead services and programs that work toward the goal of bettering the Bloomingdale community. Do you care about our Bloomingdale community and want to take an active role in its future? BNA Board meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Community Office at 7 p.m. The BNA encourages all interested residents to attend a few board meetings. Board members are residents, like you, who want their neighborhoods to continue to be a wonderful place to live. Call 813-681-2051 or email bl.neighbor1@gmail.com for more information about meetings or joining the board.

MEET YOUR 2022 BNA BOARD!

Suzy Watts, President

Suzy has served on the Board for 7 Years and previously served as the Vice President and Secretary. Suzy says what she most enjoys about living in Bloomingdale is: "My neighbors, walking distance to YMCA, library, and Bullfrog Creek Brewery."

Sean Donahue, Vice President

Sean has served on the board for 13 years. He enjoys making a positive difference in Bloomingdale: "I feel like it's my civic duty and I like to try to make Bloomingdale a better place to live."

Grace Lewis, Treasurer

Grace has served on the Board for 4 Years. She enjoys being on the board because she likes to give back to the community. Grace said her vision for the BNA is "to provide fun activities for the community to bring us all together."

Laney Balis, Director at Large

Laney became involved with the BNA in June of 2021 and became a board member in November 2021. Laney is enjoying meeting more people in our community through

the BNA: "Being a part of the board I am able to meet more than just my immediate neighbors. I get to meet people that live in other sections of Bloomingdale too."

Bobbi Ferraro, Director At Large

Bobbi has served on the board for 7 years. Bobbi's vision for Bloomingdale is "to keep the friendly, safe environment for our current and future residents."

Billy Hightower, Director At Large

Billy has served on the Board for 7 years. He enjoys being part of the activities in the community: "I really enjoy helping the community with anything we do for the kids, like the Santa Visit or when we celebrated the high school baseball state champions."

Jane Owen, Gazette Editor and Director at Large

Jane became the Gazette Editor in July 2021. Jane enjoys being part of the BNA because it has allowed her to make new friends in the community: "Working with the Gazette and BNA has given me a deeper appreciation for people in our community. I am more aware of all of the good happening around me."



Pictured at the December BNA board meeting- Front Row: Grace Lewis, Suzy Watts, Bobbi Ferraro; Back Row: Billy Hightower, Laney Balis, and Sean Donahue. Not pictured, Jane Owen.



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Bloomingtondale Neighborhoods Welcome Santa

Tropical Santa Brings Holiday Excitement to Bloomingtondale

By Michelle Colesanti



The weather on December 5 was more appropriate for the beach than a winter wonderland, but Bloomingtondale residents didn't mind as they waited for Santa Claus to make his annual appearance greeting both young and old alike.

Santa Claus loves to visit Florida to help him recharge for his upcoming Christmas Eve travels. He was headed to the beach, but before hitting the waves, he donned tropical attire and rode atop his red Camaro smiling and waving to excited youngsters and their families as he cruised slowly through both Bloomingtondale West and Bloomingtondale East.

More than 200 kids waited at designated stops as Santa made the neighborhood rounds. Even a few family pets got in on the act jumping at the chance to share a photo with Santa. Along the route, local elves gave the kids candy canes and the Bloomingtondale Neighborhood Association's (BNA) infamous duckies.

Tampa resident Alex Philips shines in his role as Tropical Santa, and has played the role of Santa for 45 years. He enjoys transforming annually into Santa and has done so since he was 19 starting his career at Sears and Roebucks. He said, "I enjoy seeing young and old with smiles and excitement on their faces seeing Santa."

A Santa event has been held in the Bloomingtondale community for the last 35 years. The event is sponsored by the Bloomingtondale Neighborhood Association. In previous years, kids could visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus (aka Bloomingtondale residents Joe and Pam Liguori), and do some craft activities as well as get candy canes and duckies. Tropical Santa took over in 2020 due to the pandemic and the new tradition continued once again this year.



On December 5, Bloomingtondale residents of all ages came out to greet Tropical Santa.



A Look Back at the 2021 BNA Happenings and Gazette Stories

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association (BNA) wishes everyone a Happy New Year!



JANUARY

Bloomingdale Music Department hosts the first annual Holiday Under the Stars Concert.



FEBRUARY

BNA hosts a Bulls Football Celebration. The Bulls had the best season in school history!



MARCH

BNA hosts the Community Bunny Visit.



APRIL

BSHS Wrestling Head Coach Kitko named Coach of the Year.



MAY

Lady Bulls Flag Football wins District Championship!



JUNE

BNA awards two scholarships to Rosie Harrison and Jake Kehrmeier.



JULY

BNA hosts a celebration for the Bloomingdale Bulls Baseball State Champions!



AUGUST

Local family part of the Tampa Bay Lightning Championship repeat season.



SEPTEMBER

Sue Burkett, former Bloomingdale High School principal, promoted to Chief of Schools.



OCTOBER

The Bloomingdale Gazette welcomes the BSHS Journalism Class as Gazette reporters.



NOVEMBER

The Bloomingdale Gazette honors Hometown Heroes.



DECEMBER

BNA hosts the Santa drive-through visit.

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Strawberry Season Brings 'Berry' Good Mouth-Watering Treats

It's Time to Get Your Strawberry Shortcake Fix at Local Farms

By Michelle Colesanti

Now that the New Year has begun, it can only mean one thing. It's time to indulge in those delicious fresh local strawberries. There are a few places locally where you can enjoy strawberry shortcake or other goodies. Each place has seating where you can enjoy a relaxing few minutes enjoying your treats. Local products as well as fruits and vegetables in season are available for purchase at each of the markets.

BERRY BARN

3931 State Rd. 60 E

Dover, FL 33527

813-643-1040

The Berry Barn is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The berries are picked fresh daily and there is an area for you to sit and enjoy fresh made-to-order strawberry shortcake. Located in Dover, this it is only about a 10 or 15 minute drive to enjoy these delicious berry treats.



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Parkesdale Farm Market has been serving its award-winning Strawberry Shortcakes and Strawberry Milkshakes for more than 30 years. It is served fresh from the fields, using sweet sliced berries on top of a bed of shortcake with whipped cream as garnish. After you enjoy your fresh treats, be sure to check out its fresh produce, local honey, jams, marmalades, preserves and candies too. It is open every day from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Visit www.parkesdale.com for more information.



**Parkesdale
MARKET**

GOODSON FARMS STRAWBERRY MARKET

12405 County Road 672

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813-634-7790

Locally renowned Goodson Farms Produce Market is now open through March. This family-owned farm offers delicious strawberry shortcake. You can also get farm fresh produce and a variety of sandwiches as well as other delectable 'berry' good treats. Goodson Farms is now open from Monday to Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.



Strawberry season has officially arrived, and it's a great time to enjoy treats such as Strawberry Shortcake at local farmer markets specializing in the fresh berries.

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Holiday Observances Available to Students Regardless of Faith

By Kylie Fridge, Bloomingdale Senior High School, Grade 9



Many religions have holy days for the faithful to observe or celebrate. Nevertheless, many widely accepted observances across the country, such as Christmas and Easter, are affiliated with Christianity. Florida is no exception. This is despite the fact that according to JewishVirtualLibrary.org, Florida is home to more than 650,000 Jewish people. The World Population Review website also indicates that Florida is among the top ten U.S. states with the largest Muslim populations – ranked 7th – having 877 Muslims per 100,000 people, or over 190,000 Muslims. Given these large numbers, there are likely many non-Christian students throughout Florida who do not see time off on their school calendars for their religious observances.

At Bloomingdale Senior High School, sophomore Ireland Newport had a bit of a struggle with this issue. Newport has been actively practicing Judaism for over a year, and she said having to take off days for services required some extra effort. According to Newport, she had to get a note from her rabbi and take it to the Student Affairs Office to take time off from school. “I think there is just an issue with the amount of work I have to go through for essentially a doctor’s note,” Newport said.

Bloomingdale High School Principal Dr. Marcos Rodriguez said he advises students to visit the Hillsborough County School District website at HillsboroughSchools.org to see the school district calendar for information about holidays and observances affecting all students.

To help students and staff take time off to observe holy days not listed on the calendar, Rodriguez encouraged them to speak to people in school administration, such as people working in student affairs.

Omar Erchid, a Tampa attorney and Muslim who graduated from a public high school in Florida, had a different experience. Erchid said that he just needed to give the school a prior notice before taking off to observe Muslim holidays. These notices were typically accepted, he said.

Given the number of people in the U.S. who identify as Christian, Erchid said he could see why preference is often given to Christian holidays on the school calendar. “It’s understandable that the big Christian holidays – Christmas, Easter, and the other ones – are holidays, because those people, whether religiously or culturally, will be observing those days,” Erchid said. “Would it be nice for schools to be closed on Muslim holidays? I’m sure it would be. But I think for Muslims, as long as they’re able take those days off with no penalty and be able to make up their work – I don’t speak for all Muslims, but for myself, I’m fine with that.”



BSHS Players Compete in the 2021 Hillsborough County All-Star Football Game

On December 20, at Hillsborough High School, the top senior high school football players in the area played against each other. Each player was selected by their coaches to play in the All-Star Game. This year’s East team was coached by Alonzo Ashwood from Sumner High School and included three Bloomingdale High School seniors: La’Montrae Banks (Defensive End), David Owen (Kicker), and Jackson Sykes (Defensive End). The game ended in a tie between the East and West; final score was 7-7.

Congratulations to Banks, Sykes, and Owen for representing Bloomingdale High School with pride!



Cimino Care Bears Program Provides Comfort for Families in Need

by Jane Owen

From December 8-10, Cimino Elementary collected new and gently used stuffed animals to support local first responders. The donations will be given to first responders to use to comfort children in traumatic situations.

Sergeant Shannon Ostojic was thrilled with the gifts from Cimino.

“Here at the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office, we are honored to partner with Cimino Elementary students, teachers, and parents to provide stuffed animals to families suffering from a traumatic event,” Ostojic said.



Early in 2021, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office received a federal grant for victim specialists to aid and support to victims and witnesses of serious crimes. The Victim Specialist Unit aims to be the first source of help to victims of crime.


Ostojic said that the Victim Specialist Unit bridges a gap between the trauma and need. The stuffed animals from Cimino families will make an immediate difference in difficult situations.

“The toys that were so generously provided by Cimino Elementary, were given to the Victim Specialists Section so they can in turn provide comfort to children and families experiencing hardship and loss. We thank everyone for their donations and generosity,” Ostojic said.



Victim Specialist Carrie Brown, Sergeant Shannon Ostojic, Victim Specialist Jena Rundus, Victim Specialist Madyson Pate and Captain Lee Raschke (left to right back row) with Cimino Students





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Brandon emergency department is part of AdventHealth Tampa. It is not an urgent care center. Its services and care are billed at hospital emergency department rates.


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Burns Students Compete at County Track Meet

On December 8, qualifying members of the Burns track team competed at Hillsborough County Middle School Track Championship Meet at Leto High School. Congratulations to all of the Burns track members that competed!

Picture submitted by Naome Poole



Run into 2022!

Get a good start on your New Year's Goals by lacing up for a cause!

BRANDON HALF AND 5K, SUNDAY, JANUARY 9.

Benefits: Muscular Dystrophy Association

Register here: <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Brandon/BrandonHalfMarathonand5K>

Sponsored by: The Brandon Running Association (BRA). BRA is a non-profit organization and member of the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA), whose mission is to promote running, walking, and general fitness in group settings. BRA hosts multiple weekly runs within Bloomingdale, starting at the Campo YMCA or the Bloomingdale East Park.

BRA website: www.brandonrunning.com

Race Information: www.brandonrunning.com/brandon-half-marathon--5k-race-information.html



RUNNING OF THE BULLS 5K, SATURDAY, JANUARY 15.

Benefits: Bloomingdale High School Rajun Bull Band

Register here: <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Dover/RunningoftheBulls5kFL>

Sponsored by: The Bloomingdale Band Boosters. Participants receive a shirt and are entered into a raffle for donated items from local businesses. Finishers receive medals and may win an age group award.

Bloomingdale Band website: www.bloomingdaleband.com

Race Information: www.bloomingdaleband.com/running-of-the-bulls



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