



# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

VOL. XLII



Issue 5



MAY 2022



WWW.BLOOMINGDALE.LIFE

THIS MONTH

## Blueberry Season is Here!

Berry Picking Info and more Mother's Day Activities on Page 14



Photo: Tampa Bay Times ©2019

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**Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette**  
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## BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

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**Email:** [Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com](mailto:Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com) **Website:** [www.Bloomingdale.Life](http://www.Bloomingdale.Life)  
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BNA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Community Office.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>President:</b><br>Suzy Watts        | <b>Directors at Large:</b><br>Laney Balis |
| <b>Vice President:</b><br>Sean Donahue | Kalyn Dukes                               |
| <b>Treasurer:</b><br>Grace Lewis       | Bobbi Ferraro                             |
|  | Billy Hightower                           |

# BNA BRIEFS

## BNA CALENDAR

- Tuesday, May 10, 7:00 p.m. / BNA Board Meeting** Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road / Call 813-252-0252 or email [bl.neighbor1@gmail.com](mailto:bl.neighbor1@gmail.com) for information.
- Saturday, September 10 / Community Garage Sale**
- Sunday, December 4 / Santa Visit**

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## A Note From the Editor

Jan Sedory was the first neighbor I met when my family moved to Florida. The backyard fence of our rental house bordered a house in the neighborhood behind us. One day not long after we moved in, I was outside when a lady stopped to say hello. It was Jan; she was walking her son's dog. She wanted to welcome us. I remember thinking that she was also, very obviously, curious about who was moving into the rental house behind her house. She was extremely kind. Two years after we rented that house, we bought a house in the neighborhood behind us and I became Jan's next door neighbor. We were friends. Her kids were grown and mine weren't. She'd support my kids' school fundraisers. We always exchanged Christmas cards. She would encourage me as a mom. She was there if I needed anything.

I became the editor of The Bloomingdale Gazette in July of 2021. My predecessor announced her departure and welcomed me as editor in the June issue. The day the paper came out, Jan came to my door. I hadn't seen her in a while. She was in the throes of fighting cancer. It was obvious that walking to my house took effort. She came to congratulate me. She handed me the article that she clipped from the paper. It was a sweet expression of friendship that I will never forget.

As I edit our community paper, I aspire to create a paper that highlights the people and businesses in our community and celebrates special moments. In short, I dedicate this issue to Jan and her care for others inspires me as I work on The Bloomingdale Gazette.

*Jane Owen*



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# BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

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

Find information about your neighborhood on the  
Hillsborough County Sheriff's web site:  
[www.teamhcsso.com](http://www.teamhcsso.com)

## TRACKING CRIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

You can track crime mapping for your neighborhood. Using your address, one can do a radius map 1 to 5 miles. The maps and data will keep you in touch to what is happening in and around your neighborhood. You can search for arrested persons and warrant information. Current traffic accidents in Hillsborough County. You can request copies records & reports on-line. Read the latest news about events and incidents in Hillsborough County. You can also contact us by using our on-line question and comments section for general concerns. For report request contact:

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## COMMUNITY SAFETY

Keeping our community safe is our top priority. So we have a tool to help you help us. 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, where the information is directed to the appropriate area, i.e. patrol, narcotics, warrants, etc. We monitor tip411 twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And all tips are anonymous. Our App tip411 has led to many arrest. Remember: in the event of an emergency, always dial 9-1-1. Also stop by and visit your local Bloomingdale station and speak to our Community Service Aid. We will be happy to assist and direct any of your questions and concerns. Stop by and see us at 3622 Erindale Dr. in Valrico. 813-635-8040

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 and put them in prison where they belong. The cooperation of residents is critical and we want anyone involved to be safe. Following is information on how residents can safely help law enforcement identify and eventually arrest criminals in our community. These include:

- Start a neighborhood watch. If you see something say something.
- Talk to your neighbors. Work together. They may have noticed things you didn't notice.
- Watch for suspicious activity. Look for warning signs like excessive foot traffic and lots of cars coming in and out of your neighbor's home.
- Keep an eye out for drug paraphernalia. Record as much detail as you can. Stay safe and don't approach potential criminals. Take note of license numbers, car models and types and colors.
- Contact law enforcement. Call HCSO at 247-8200 or 911. Call from a safe place.

Work with community councils and local deputies. Together we can help make a difference.

## AREA LAW AND ORDER

83 traffic crashes since January  
22 of those crashes were with injuries  
238 vehicle stops conducted  
6 vehicle burglaries  
7 residence burglaries



# YARD OF THE MONTH

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# Lots of Buzz Surrounding Local Valrico Resident's Apiary

Story and Photos by Michelle Colesanti (Unless Otherwise Noted)

When Gerald Simmons, President of Bloomingdale Ridge HOA, needed someone to help remove a honey bee hive on one of the street islands in Fox Run, he called the Tampa Bay Beekeepers for help. He was told to contact Robert Jones, who has a small apiary behind his Valrico home.

Jones has been beekeeping for about 15 years. Both of his grandfathers raised bees so he had some familiarity. When Jones read about declining bee populations, he decided to try to help by starting his own Apiary. He gets most of his bees through the removal of hives from homeowners who are thankful for his skills and services.

His passion for bees is evident when he talks about them. He will teach you plenty about these intelligent creatures singing praises about their amazing navigational skills among many other interesting attributes. For example, honeybees are the only insect on Earth that makes a product that humans use.

“I feel that education is a very important aspect of beekeeping,” Jones noted. To educate others, he enjoys talking to Scouting and other groups. Classes last about 45 minutes. “I love educating people about honey bees because so many are scared of them,” he added.

In order to properly remove a hive, Jones says that it is important to find the Queen and get her into a bee box. Once that has happened, the rest of the colony will soon follow. The Queen also produces a distinct smell which is helpful for Jones in determining if she has been caught.

Jones sells the honey that he retrieves from his bees. He produces about seven gallons each year. One bee, in its (approximately) 45 day lifetime, will produce just ¼ teaspoon of honey. There are about 385 varieties of honey in the United States. Two popular varieties locally are Orange Blossom and Wildflower.

Honey bees won't usually sting unless provoked in some way. Most times the sting may be painful, but harmless. Despite people's fear of bees, these tiny creatures are not only intelligent, but the use of the venom may prove helpful. Studies are being done on bee venom's ability to reduce inflammation in arthritis sufferers. Laboratory studies also show venom rapidly killed two types of breast cancer cells that are particularly difficult to treat leaving healthy cells unharmed.

Call Jones at 813-424-9252 if you need help removing a hive, would like to schedule a group session on bee education or would like some local honey.



Local beekeeper, Robert Jones, shares his knowledge with Jonah Sorrells while removing a hive in the Fox Run subdivision.



Photo by Gerald Simmons



Valrico beekeeper Robert Jones has a small apiary behind his home. The bees make their homes in bee boxes provided by Jones.



# BSHS Football Players Sign to Play Ball in College

Brief by Jane Owen, Photo courtesy of BSHS Athletic Boosters

Bloomingtondale Football players La'montrae Banks, DJ Griffin, Corbin Barnett, and Jackson Sykes signed National Letters of Intent on April 11 to play football at the collegiate level. La'montrae Banks is going to Carthage College in Wisconsin. Jackson Sykes is going to St Thomas University in Florida. DJ Griffin and Corbin Barnett are going to Bellarmine University in Kentucky.

Bloomingtondale Football Coach Jake Coulson had this to say about the players:

*"Really excited that these young men get to go fulfill their dreams of playing football at the next level. These young men have worked extremely hard to get to this point in probably the hardest times that we've ever been in as a nation. Can't wait to watch these young men grow and I'm excited to see what the future brings."*

Congratulations to the athletes and their families!



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MAY 2022

7



# Easter Bunny Visited Bloomingdale!

By Jane Owen

Much to the delight of children and families, the Easter Bunny visited the Bloomingdale East and West neighborhoods on April 10. The Bunny greeted over 390 people! Children and families coming out to meet the Easter Bunny were also met by Bunny assistants (student volunteers and BNA members) who loved sharing the excitement and handing out the BNA's signature duckies. A complete album of pictures is available on Facebook, see QR code to the right.



The Easter Bunny made its way through the Bloomingdale Communities on April 10 delighting young and old alike. The event was sponsored by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association.



Use your phone to scan this code and see the pictures.



# BNA Welcomes its Newest Board Member

By Amanda Ragan



Kalyn Dukes is no stranger to helping others, in fact, she has made a career out of it. So it comes as no surprise that she has elected to serve as the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association's newest director at large.

Kalyn views her ability to help others as a privilege and it is in this same spirit of servitude that she aids families in pre-arranging funeral, cremation, and cemetery plans at Serenity Meadows. It is evident that Kalyn's sense of empathy and compassion is what motivates her to be a part of the BNA board. Specifically, she feels that Covid has limited the neighborhood's ability to socially interact and she hopes to lead the effort in "restoring joy" to all ages throughout Bloomingdale.

While she is new to the board, having just been appointed in March, Kalyn has been an active member of the Bloomingdale community, residing in Augusta Village since 2000. Kalyn can often be seen walking her two golden retrievers, with her wonderful husband, John or her amazing son, Tyler. During these walks, Kalyn has gotten the

opportunity to meet many of her friendly neighbors and she has come to realize just how wonderful and safe Bloomingdale is for its residents.

For the past 21 years, Kalyn, a self-proclaimed theatre lover, has served as an usher for the Straz Center for the Performing Arts. When not taking in a show and helping other theatre patrons find their seats, she can be found soaking up the sun outdoors, either hiking, biking, or camping. She is also an active member at New Hope United Methodist Church.

It is clear that Kalyn will be a tremendous asset as she works to "help her neighbors better connect to each other and the neighborhood itself, because Bloomingdale really is such a great place to live!"



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# Gazette Welcomes New Writer

By Michelle Colesanti



The Bloomingdale Gazette welcomes Erin Arbor resident Amanda Ragan to its writing staff. A Bloomingdale resident for eight years, Amanda enjoys both writing and our community, so this is a perfect fit.

Ragan said, “The idea of getting to know my community and my neighbors by listening to their stories and getting to help share them with other community members is something that really interests me.”

Ragan has been teaching for more than 18 years, and is currently at Tampa Bay Technical High School, where she serves as the television and theatre director, student government sponsor and CTE industrial department head. She has also taught music, English, journalism, theatre, film and TV.

“As the adult in charge of school pep rallies, school dances, and school plays, I am often covered in paint and glitter, which often trails to some piece of audio-visual equipment I am running or fixing. I am also a freelance photographer and videographer,” she commented.

She has taught journalism for years and now currently teaches broadcast journalism. Her piano, singing and dancing talents often come in handy for the spring musical. Ragan also loves traveling, hiking, and exploring any place new.

She said, “Finally, on the rare occasion when I can find an ounce of spare time, I love to write. I recently finished a screenplay that I am hoping will be produced in the near future.”

She is also an avid reader and belongs to her neighborhood book club.

“I am excited to put my knowledge of hard and soft news to work for a printed publication.” She has been married to her husband Justin Ragan for 10 years and has a 9 year-old daughter named Rosie. Nugget, their French Bull Dog also resides with them.

Ragan loves Bloomingdale and its thriving community full of wonderful people.

“I love that I can walk or ride my bike to get an Acai Bowl, or to grab a drink at a true neighborhood bar. Perhaps my favorite thing about Bloomingdale is that it is still a community where neighbors really care about each other.”



Amanda Depin-Ragan, Rosie Ragan, Justin Ragan

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MAY 2022

11



# Visit Historic Downtown Plant City

By Michelle Colesanti

I have lived in Bloomingdale for almost 30 years and finally had the opportunity to visit historic downtown Plant City when an out-of-town friend wanted to visit antique shops. I had been to Plant City; the Strawberry Festival, movie theaters and other various locations, but never downtown. So I set out to do some research and learned that this nearby gem is a mecca for such an outing.

Within a two block radius on or near Collins Street, there are seven stores where you can browse for hours. I don't normally do this type of shopping, but loved all the booths and little nooks and crannies filled with memorabilia from the past, bringing back memories from childhood and other interesting items from years probably closer to the turn of the century. Even if you are not interested in purchasing anything, these stores are like walking through museums. You never know what you will find, and you might find yourself digging into your pocket to pay for something you didn't know you needed.

Along with its antique shops, Plant City has its rich history dating back to the mid-1800s. The city was incorporated in 1885. Originally it was named Ichepucksassa, which caused a lot of confusion. In 1884 Henry Plant extended the South Florida railroad into town, which was then eventually renamed in his honor.

Because of its rich railroad history, a visit to the Robert W. Willaford Railroad Museum might be of interest. It boasts a sizable collection of railroad memorabilia. Across from the depot which was built in 1909, you will find the train viewing platform which Trains Magazine rates as one of the top 75 best places to view trains in the United States. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday from 12 Noon-4 p.m. Visit [www.willafordrailroadmuseum.com](http://www.willafordrailroadmuseum.com) for more information.

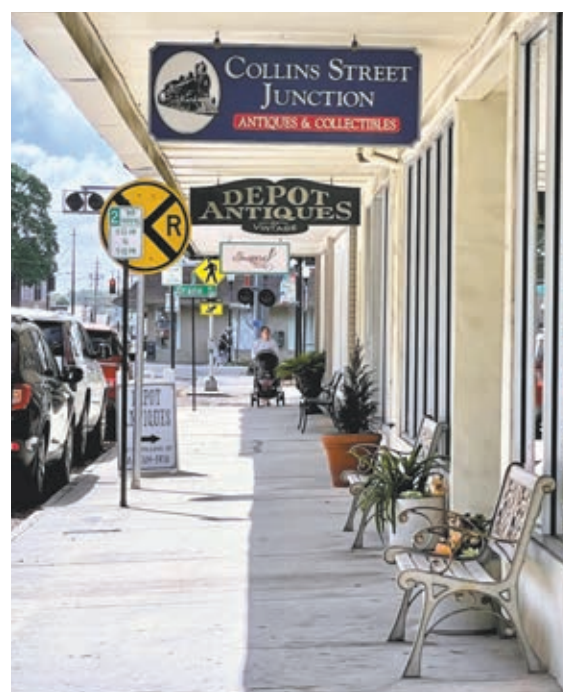
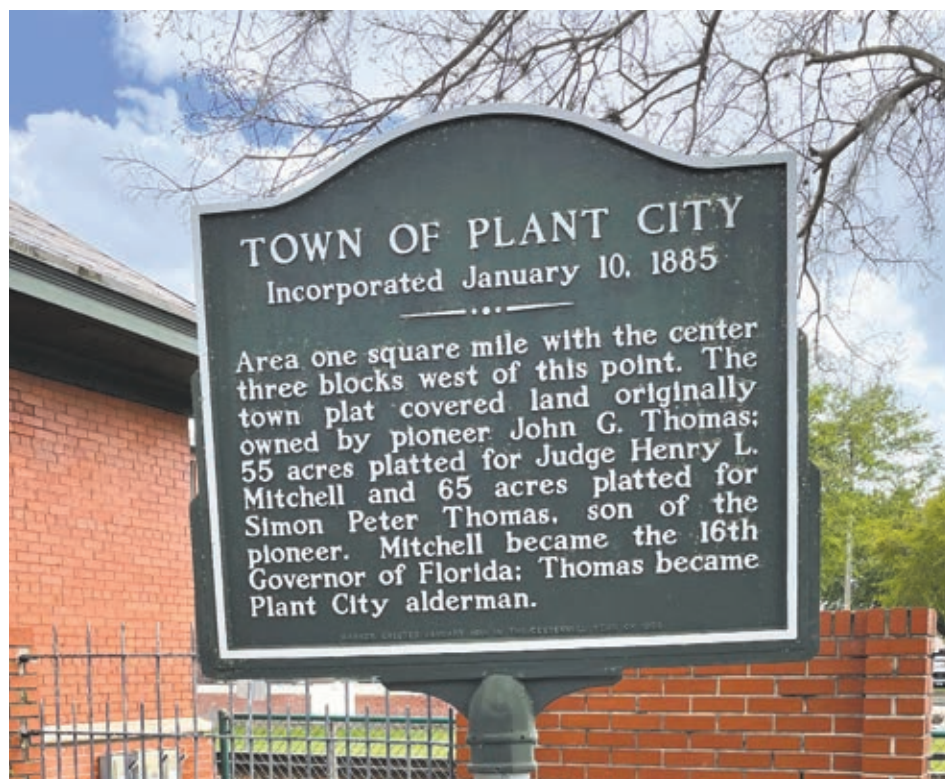
Before or after visiting the stores or museum, stop in for a bite at the Whistle Stop Gourmet Coffee & Eatery at 102 S. Collins Street. The restaurant is only open for lunch Tuesday-Saturday from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. The food was delicious and fresh. I loved the southern charm and real hometown atmosphere, which felt like entering bygone era. A piano player enhanced the experience playing old fashioned tunes.

For more information on history Plant City, visit [www.plantcitymainstreet.org](http://www.plantcitymainstreet.org).

Depot Antiques; 107 N. Collins St. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Sunday  
Rocking Horse Antiques & Collectibles; 114 N. Collins St. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Sunday  
Collins Street Junction; 117 N. Collins St. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Sunday  
Miss Ruby's Antiques & Collectibles; 119 N. Collins St. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Sunday  
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Visit the Robert W. Willaford Railroad Museum to learn about Plant City's rich train history.



Downtown Plant City is noted for its antique stores.





# Traveling on A Budget

By Amanda Ragan

In a time of inflation and rising prices, where a weekend stay at the beach can cost as much as a mortgage payment, it is easy to feel as if vacations are a thing of the past. However, there are a few tricks to finding incredibly affordable vacations, that don't require you to sit through an awful, time share, sales pitch. Here are four tips that have helped me travel on a modest teacher budget!

## Tip 1: Use Google Flights

Besides recommending cheap round-trip tickets for you, the best feature about this platform is that once you have typed in your departure and destination locations, there is a calendar feature that pops up showing when the cheapest flights are available. Therefore, if you have some flexibility on your flight dates you can easily see which days are cheaper or more expensive. Also, if planning international flights, you can look at what the cost of flying is from different destinations like Miami and New York. These international airports can often be hundreds of dollars cheaper than flying out of Tampa. A word of warning though, make sure to look if the flight includes baggage. Securing the cheapest flight may cost you more based on baggage fees, so make sure to read what each flight includes.

## Tip 2: Go Where the Dollar is Worth More

A teacher friend of mine recently traveled to Thailand and due to the value of the American dollar, the week spent there cost virtually nothing. The only major expense of the trip was getting there, and to cover this cost, refer back to tip 1.

## Tip 3: Go During the Off Season

Traveling to an area during its off season has many advantages including smaller crowds and cheaper prices. For example, Thanksgiving is an American holiday; subsequently, traveling in the states during that time of year can often be very expensive. However, planning a trip abroad during that time, will often yield cheaper flights and hotel stays, as it is not a holiday anywhere else in the world.

## Tip 4: Stay for A While!

If by chance you have the flexibility to work online, or take a longer vacation there are sites where you can do a month-long rental for the same cost as a one-to-two-week rental. Two summers ago, we found a cabin on the water in Maine, right next to Bar Harbor, for \$1,200 for the month. While inflation has driven home prices and thus rental prices up, at the time of this article, there are waterfront rentals in Australia, Columbia, Costa Rica, and England for this summer ranging in price from \$1,700 - \$2,500. In doing this research, I may have just found our next trip!

The key to making these tips work, is flexibility. The more flexible you can be in your location, duration, and travel times the more amazing deals and travel opportunities you will find! Good luck and safe travels!



Amanda Ragan and her family traveled to Venice on a budget over Spring Break.



#42 iron clothes

# BAD things to do in the dark



# GOOD things to do in the dark

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## Mother's Day Activities

### U-Pick Blueberries with Mom

Lyna Berry Farms  
17928 Bill Taylor Rd.  
Lithia 813-728-9132 Lyna Berry Farms  
is [www.facebook.com/lynaberryfarms](https://www.facebook.com/lynaberryfarms) or  
visit [www.lynaberryfarms.com](https://www.lynaberryfarms.com)



### U-Pick Flowers with Mom

Hunsader Farms  
5500 C.R. 675  
Bradenton, FL 34211  
Zinnias and wildflowers are \$5 for a cup  
worth of flowers (cup provided). Sunflowers are \$1 per yellow sunflower, and  
\$3 per red/purple/chocolate/orange sunflower. The fields are open Mon-Sat 8  
a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Painting with Mom

Pinot's Pallet  
2086 Badlands Dr. Brandon  
Mother's Day Weekend select Pinot's Pallet classes offer bottomless mimosas.  
Visit their Facebook page at @PinotsPaletteBrandonFL Class schedule is  
available online: [www.pinotspalette.com/brandon/events](https://www.pinotspalette.com/brandon/events)

### Tea with Mom

22 Moons Antiques & Tea Room  
3102 Lithia Pinecrest Road  
Special Mother's Day Menu, available Wed May 4th through Sun May 8th.  
Reservations are required and limited so call today to secure your spot 813-  
278-5213. \$35pp.

### Lunch with Mom

The White Oak Cottage  
10530 S County Road 39, Litha  
Special Mothers Day Menu. Limited times and seating. Call to make a  
reservation at 813-308-9994.

### Hot Air Balloons with Mom

Up Up and Away  
Florida Hot Air Balloon Festival  
4075 James C Ray Drive, Lakeland, FL  
May 6, 3-9 p.m., May 7 & 8, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
The annual event includes hot air balloon  
launches, twilight glows and tethered rides;  
live music, vendors, food, and a myriad  
of activities for attendees of all ages. For  
info, email [info@upupandawayflorida.com](mailto:info@upupandawayflorida.com). Tickets are available at: [https://  
upupandawayflorida.com/buy-tickets/](https://upupandawayflorida.com/buy-tickets/)





## 5th Grader Publishes Novel and Donates to Bloomingdale's Little Free Library

By Jane Owen



In February, Lithia fifth grader Kerem Topsakal published a book called *Monster Apocalypse*. The book tells the brave story of Liam and his friends battling a king of monsters to save Earth. Kerem's effort started during the summer of 2021. Kerem and his younger brother were encouraged by their parents to practice story telling to build creativity. Kerem's dad got him to start a story and continue telling it 10 minutes at a time day after day. They later transcribed it to text. Kerem edited the book during his school winter break. In the "How Did I Write This Story" introduction of the book, Kerem explains that he never had any intention of becoming an author. In fact, he laments that he did not enjoy the hard work involved.

"Editing a story is one of the toughest jobs you can imagine," Kerem wrote.

Last month, Kerem donated his book to Bloomingdale's Little Free Library, located in the Windsor Woods subdivision (On Facebook @LFLBloomingdale). *Monster Apocalypse* is available in paperback and Kindle versions on Amazon.



## Alafia Elementary Celebrates Earth Day with a Gardening Day



First Grader Ethan Wells enjoyed gardening.

In celebration of Earth Day, Alafia Elementary Kindergarten and First Grade classes enjoyed a gardening day. The students, teachers and parents came together to beautify the areas outside the kindergarten and 1st grade pods. Parents made a lot of contributions, donating mulch, plants, and flowers. They brought their gardening equipment and got to work. The results were beautiful!



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