



THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

Vol. XLIII



Issue 10



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THIS MONTH

Hurricane Brings Flamingos to Tampa Bay



Photo: Fred Ocasio

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PLEASE RECYCLE

WINNER

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2018 & 2019

Hillsborough County
Neighborhood
Recognition Award

Best Communications
Newsletter Category

American Flamigos at Fort Desoto - Story Page 8

“Sometimes we can only find our true direction when we let the wind of change carry us.” *Mimi Novic*

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette
P.O. Box 6313, Brandon, FL 33508 - (813) 681-2051

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Tampa Bay
Times

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

NEW ADDRESS: P.O. Box 6313, Brandon, FL 33508 (813) 681-2051

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

Follow on Facebook: www.facebook.com/Bl.Neighbor1

BNA Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Regional Library.

President:
Suzy Watts

Vice President:
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Directors at Large:
Laney Balis

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Bobbi Ferraro

BNA BRIEFS

BNA CALENDAR

Tuesday, October 24, 7-8 p.m. / BNA Meeting / Bloomingdale Regional Public Library - McLean Family Community Room /
Community is invited to attend. Call 813-252-0252 or email bl.neighbor1@gmail.com for information.

Friday, October 27, Campo YMCA Trunk or Treat, 6 -8 pm. Stop by the BNA trunk and say hello!

Sunday, December 3 / Santa Visit

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.



Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association

Annual
Santa Visit
Sunday, Dec. 3
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The BNA is thrilled to announce Santa is visiting Bloomingdale this year! Santa is excited about his Florida vacation and he will make stops in the Bloomingdale East and West neighborhoods and both Bloomingdale parks. Our elves will pass out Santa themed ducks and candy canes. Follow the BNA online at Bloomingdale.Life and on Facebook @[Bl.Neighbor1](https://www.facebook.com/Bl.Neighbor1).



For more information about the Santa visit, email Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com.

YARD OF THE MONTH

DAVID DAILEY
3820 POLUMBO DRIVE, VALRICO



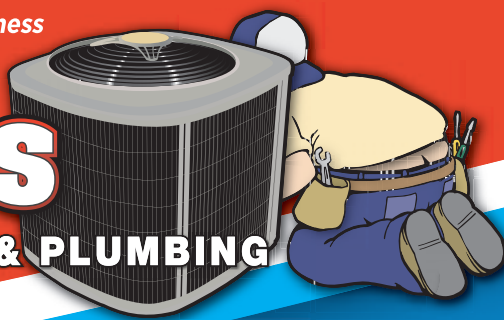
The Yard of the Month is sponsored by Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale and Campo YMCA.

Send Yard of the Month nominations to: bl.neighbor1@gmail.com or call 813-681-2051. Winners receive a \$25 Gift Card to Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale and a 1 month family membership, plus join fee to the Campo YMCA.

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Bell Shoals Road Improvement Update

By Michelle Colesanti

It looks like relief is finally in sight as residents of the area await the completion of the Bell Shoals Road widening project that began in late 2018.

According to Chris Wilkerson, Hillsborough County's Senior Media Relations Strategist, a ribbon cutting is planned for Thursday, October 19. As of print time, no specific details have been forthcoming, but the ribbon cutting will celebrate the official opening of the first section of Bell Shoals Road scheduled to open. This will occur on the south end of the reconstruction.

Currently, lanes along the entire corridor are expected to be open, although they will still be working on crosswalks and the other peripherals that need to be finished.

The Hillsborough County website notes that upon completion, Bell Shoals will be a four-lane divided road between Boyette Road and Bloomingdale Avenue. The 3.1-mile corridor will have two vehicle lanes on each side, a bike lane, and a sidewalk in both directions.

Other enhancements include widening the existing bridge over the Alafia River, upgrading existing traffic signals at Glenhaven Dr., Rosemead Lane, and Bloomingdale Avenue as well as adding a new traffic signal at Starwood Avenue, and improving stormwater drainage.

The cost estimate for this project is \$65 million.



Construction on Bell Shoals has been ongoing since late 2018. Relief may be coming as the road is scheduled to be completed soon.

Bloomingdale Special District October Update

By Kristine Schroeder

Several pine trees will be removed on Nature's Way between Elton Place and Culbreath Road.

Work to revitalize common areas throughout the district continues. Your Green Team is replacing bushes, laying sod and replacing palm trees in various areas in the community. The plantings in the medians in the districts portion of Bell Shoals has also been completed. In addition, the BSD has contracted with a tree company to remove several pine trees on Nature's Way. The trees to be removed are between Elton Place and Culbreath Road and are located between the sidewalk and the perimeter wall.

The BSD currently has a board vacancy. If you are interested in learning more about the BSD and the work we do for our community we would love to have you join us. You must be a resident and a registered voter. You can stop by our office at 3652 Erindale Drive and pick up a form during business hours, Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon. Monthly meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m.



Thank You Donna Jankowitz!

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association would like to express a heartfelt thank you to Donna Jankowitz. Donna graciously served our community as the BNA Office Manager for the last two years. In that role, she was the voice of the BNA, answering emails and calls from residents, realtors, and county agencies. She was a source of information for residents and an integral part of all the BNA sponsored activities including the annual clean-up day, bunny and Santa visits, food pantry collection and community garage sale. Donna is looking forward to spending more time with her husband Chuck and eight grandchildren.

Thank you for your support and dedication to our community, Donna!



Photo by: Donna Jankowitz

Donna and her grandson Nick.



BRANDON'S WONDER WOMEN

The Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce hosted Brandon's Wonder Women Power Hour September 13, 2023, at The Regent.

This month's topic of Human Trafficking was a heavy, but necessary subject. The remarkable panel of our local Sheroes explained the risk factors, educated on how to recognize and report signs of exploitation, expanded awareness, and helped attendees understand how our communities are being impacted.

Thank you to our Shero Panel:

Michelle Walker (Miracles Outreach Community Development Center)
 Dotti Groover-Skipper (HeartDance Foundation)
 Tami Kent (NoMore Foundation)
 Moderated by: Bernadette Pello (Livingstone Academies & Florida Trade Academy)

Upcoming Brandon Wonder Women Dates:
 October 11, 2023 at HCC-Brandon Campus Library
 November 8, 2023 at The Regent



RIBBON CUTTINGS & EVENTS



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LEADS GROUP

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 2020 W. Brandon Blvd, Brandon

FOR MORE INFO ON UPCOMING EVENTS VISIT:

www.brandonchamber.com



Hope Heals The Brain Charity Dinner & Auction To Benefit Queena

By Michelle Colesanti

Every fall for the last 15 years, Queena's mom Vanna Nguyen still dreams that Queena can go back to school, even though the truth is that she is still trapped in her hospital bed. It is still bittersweet, and some sores or scars may never heal. Queena suffered a vicious assault while returning books at the Bloomingdale Regional Library in April 2008.

According to Vanna, "Life is not always smooth sailing, and we were forced to accept the unacceptable. In more than a decade since, I've learned that 'What?' is a better question to ask than 'Why?'"

Vanna was able to hang on to hope for herself and her daughter through her faith in God and the support of others.

"Telling my story helped me heal. How amazing is it that God brings people together to us for a reason and we're blessed to know them and have them in our lives."

Vanna's book *The Life She Once Knew* was published in November 2020. It chronicles her deeply spiritual and emotionally powerful journey.

A celebration and fundraiser will take place on Sunday, November 5 from 4-8 p.m., at the Southshore Falls Ballroom, 5831 Cascade Falls Ln, in Apollo Beach. Proceeds will go towards Queena's ongoing medical needs as well as to Hope Heals The Brain, a non-profit.

The night will include cocktails, hors d'Oeuvres, full course dinner, and grooving on the dance floor to a live band. There will be raffles and a silent auction too.

Vanna said, "We're celebrating the harvest season, other blessings of Queena's 15 years since she was discharged from rehabilitation, as well as celebrating the three-year anniversary of our book. The event will also honor those who served in the military."

Individual ticket prices are \$75 for adults, \$60 for active-duty service members, veterans, and their families, and \$25 for ages 12 and under. You can also become an Event Sponsor for \$500 (table for eight). Sponsors are being sought at various levels: Gold, Silver, and Bronze. For more information on sponsorship or to purchase tickets, visit <https://hopedinner.eventbrite.com>.

Organizers are also still seeking the support of a catering food sponsor to donate all, or some of the dinner buffet or desserts for an estimated guest count of 100. Silent Auction donations are also needed.

Hope Heals The Brain Inc is a 501c3 non-profit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible. For more on Queena and her journey, visit www.joinqueena.com.



Queena holds a copy of *The Life She Once Knew*. A fundraiser will be held on November 5 at the Southshore Falls Ballroom to help offset her ongoing medical expenses.

Bloomingdale East Ten-Year-Old Starts Business to Serve Neighbors

By Jane Owen



Tristan Cartegena is a ten-year-old with a heart for service. In July, he decided he wanted to help neighbors. His parents Marvin and Trisha decided to dedicate time to help Tristan meet his goal.

Trisha posted on the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Community Facebook page that Tristan wanted to work to help others in need. He was willing to work hard and accept donations for his work. Neighbors took him up on his offer. By August, Tristan had a couple regular yards and in September, he named his business Lawn Buddies.

"I wanted to help people who maybe couldn't mow their yards or needed help and couldn't afford it. So, I offer to cut their grass or help them out and they can pay what they can afford – or nothing if they can't afford it," Tristan said.

With Lawn Buddies, Tristan offers light yardwork and handyman type jobs. His services include but aren't limited to mowing, weed eating, raking, cleaning trash cans, sweeping, washing cars and light house cleaning. His parents are onsite with him at each job to guide

him and ensure good work. In addition to projects, Tristan is eager for opportunities to be a friend, or buddy, to the elderly or anyone who may need company. He's willing to read, work puzzles and help prepare meals.

Tristan says the best part of what he is doing is getting to help people who need it. He loves meeting people and learning.

Neighbor Laurie Long-Ganter speaks highly of a job very well done.

"With the guidance of his father, Tristan mowed my grass and weeded and mulched the front of our house. He is such a pleasant, delightful, and hardworking young man. He's attentive to listening and learning from his father, not just about the skills but the importance of good work ethics," Long-Ganter said.

Lawn Buddies can be found on Facebook as a Gardener, Landscape Company page. Tristan is available to work throughout the week. As a homeschool 5th grader, his schedule is flexible. Have a job that Tristan can help with? Contact his mom Trisha at: 813-485-3476 and trisha8508@gmail.com.



Tristan Cartegena completes yard work, handyman projects and provides company through his company Lawn Buddies.

OCTOBER COMMUNITY CALENDAR

October 7: The Pink Bullfrog Walk for Breast Cancer, Bullfrog Creek Brewery, 3632 Lithia Pinecrest Road, 1 mile walk to raise awareness and fund research for a cure. Cost: \$10, each ticket includes a beer

October 13: BSHS Homecoming, Bloomingdale High School. Bloomingdale vs. Spoto

October 17: Advanced Searching in Ancestry Library Edition, Bloomingdale Regional Library, 7 – 8 p.m. Room 219

October 21: Alafia Elementary Drum Ensemble Performs at Winthrop Market, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. For info, email: winthroppopupmarket@gmail.com

October 22: Fall Festival at Chill Cawfee 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., 3407 Lithia Pinecrest Road, Market vendors, hot chocolate and games for the kids!

October 27: Campo YMCA Trunk or Treat, 6 – 8 p.m., 3414 Culbreath Rd. Stop by to see the BNA Trunk for treats!

Want to share a community event in The Gazette or on the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association Facebook page? Email inbloomingdalenews@gmail.com

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Hurricane Idalia Brings Flamingos to Tampa Bay

By Jane Owen

Floridians never welcome hurricanes, but Hurricane Idalia brought some welcome passengers. Since the hurricane hit Florida on August 30, Tampa Bay has seen an influx of American Flamingos.

Audubon Florida's Director of Research Jerry Lorenz, PhD, started tracking the birds about 15 years ago and maybe had 5 or 6 sightings a year. There were hundreds of sightings a day from all over the state of Florida after Hurricane Idalia.

"Monumental couple of weeks with this invasion, as far as I'm concerned," Lorenz said. "It's just unprecedented. We've never seen anything like this before."

Florida can sustain Flamingos. They are native to Florida but were hunted to near extinction for their feathers during the height of the plume trade near the turn of the 20th century. Lorenz said researchers are hoping that this "pink wave" from Idalia will be the re-establishment of a Florida Flamingo population.

If you are able to enjoy a Flamingo sighting, it's important to give the Flamingos space. 200 feet is about as close as you should be, Lorenz shared.

"Keep in mind, if they are paying attention to you, you are too close," Lorenz said.

Interested in birding? Join the flock- sign up with the Florida Audubon society at fl.audubon.org

Note: Audubon Florida's flamingo expert Jerry Lorenz, PhD, shares where the flamingos came from, why there aren't more flamingos in Florida, and how we can help them now and into the future in Audubon Florida's The Pink Wave: Flamingos and Florida Webinar, available on YouTube. Quotes from Lorenz in this article were used with permission from the webinar.

Are you on Facebook? Join the Hillsborough County Birds group!

Photos by Fred Ocasio



Etched Feathers: A History of the Printed Bird

Etched Feathers examines the works and artistic processes of John Costin and other bird artists and devotees, whose creations capture the essence of winged beauty. Birds have been the subjects and inspiration for the Tampa artist and other modern painters, ornithologists and illustrators. Costin's hand-painted etchings are created using a multi-step weeks-long process and a plethora of tools.

Etched Feathers will be on exhibit through Oct. 15 in the Wayne Thomas Gallery of the Tampa Bay History Center, 801 Water St, Tampa, daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



FLAMINGO FACTS:

The American flamingo averages up to 5 feet tall thanks to long legs and an elongated neck. Average weights are between 4-8 pounds. They get their mostly pink to red plumage color from pigment in their food, including aquatic invertebrates such as shrimp. They have webbed feet for wading in shallow water and a distinctive black tip on their bills.

American flamingos are social birds, often congregating in large flocks that can range from several pairs to groups numbering in the thousands. They are considered non-migratory but can easily fly large distances.



Florida Birding & Nature Festival: Oct 12-15

The Florida Birding & Nature Festival is coming to Apollo Beach in October! The four day festival offers seminars, keynote speakers, field trips, boat trips, and a free nature expo. Attendees can learn from renowned professionals including conservationist Carl Safina and woodpecker expert Stephen Shunk.

The birding and nature festival is an annual event that coincides with fall bird migration. The seminars, keynote presentations and free nature expo take place at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center, located at 6650 Dickman Road, Apollo Beach. Field trips include the Cross Bar Ranch in Spring Hill, Circle B Bar Reserve in Polk County, Egmont Key and Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve in Hillsborough County and Honeymoon Island and Fort DeSoto Park in Pinellas County.

If you are interested, sign up right away! Space is limited. For more information and to register, visit: www.floridabirdingandnaturefestival.org



BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE

Bloomingtondale's community wide garage sale on September 9th was a tremendous success.

Memphis and Phoenix Medford hold a yearly lemonade stand in conjunction with the community garage sale. Hard work pays off! They made over \$75 due to the generosity of the community.

Memphis (10) and Phoenix (9) sold lemonade and freeze pops during the community garage sale.



MEET OUR NEW BNA OFFICE MANAGER: JESSICA ROBERTSON

By Jane Owen

The Bloomingtondale Neighborhood Association is thrilled to welcome Jessica Robertson as the new BNA office manager. Jessica brings positivity, a creative approach to problem solving, an eagerness to work hard and a strong familiarity with the area.

Born and raised in Brandon, Jessica has lived in Bloomingtondale for five years. She resides in Bloomingtondale West. Her favorite parts of living in Bloomingtondale are the large yards, parks, and friendly neighbors. She can often be found at the Bloomingtondale Youth Sports Association (BYSA) fields watching her sons play baseball. She enjoys traveling, reading and spending time with her husband, Bobby and two sons, Maddox (6) and Blake (5).

Jessica says she is thrilled to be able to assist the community. As the Bloomingtondale Neighborhood Association's new office manager, Jessica is the person community members will interact with when emailing or calling the BNA. She is the BNA's resource for general community information and county services.

"I have developed excellent communication and problem solving skills and I am excited to join the BNA," Jessica said.



Jessica with her husband Bobby and sons Maddox and Blake

BURN BOOT CAMP BRANDON IS NOW OPEN!

Located at 107 West Bloomingtondale Ave.
For more information, email:
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BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY STATION NOTES

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

HALLOWEEN - LETS MAKE IT SAFE AS POSSIBLE.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office wants you and your children to be safe. If your children will be going out trick or treating, please ensure they are safe by going with them. Observe these guidelines when trick or treating:

- 1) Make sure they have light colored clothing or lighted accents on the apparel.
- 2) Only go to homes with porch lights on.
- 3) Cross the street only at an intersection and look both ways.
- 4) Check all treats before your children eat them.
- 5) Consider face paint instead of bulky mask that can limit vision.
- 6) Use a flashlight during nighttime activities.

Take time to educate your kids about safety. Do your part. Your children will learn by your own actions. Divers, be aware of more pedestrian activity during the evening.

Also consider attending one of several events that host a safe environment for children to have a costume contest and enjoy safe candy.

LAW AND ORDER

Over the past month within Bloomingdale east and west, the area had 4 drug related arrest, 9 traffic crashes with injury and 21 non-injury crashes. The area has had one vehicle, one home, and one business burglary. Please lock your doors and remove valuable items from your vehicles.

Stay in tune with your community. Want to know what is going on in your neighborhood?

The Hillsborough County Sherrif Office has a page that gives you call information that has occurred in your neighborhood. All information will be added after the call is cleared.

Visit Calls for Service on the Hillsborough County Sherrif Office website: gis.hcso.tampa.fl.us/publicgis/callsforservice/

Family-Friendly Fall Festival and Halloween Events

By Michelle Colesanti

Trunk or Treat Campo Family Y Parking Lot 3414 Culbreath Rd., Valrico

On Friday, October 27 from 6-8 p.m., come on out to participate in a safe and fun Bloomingdale neighborhood community event offering a night of 'trunk' or treating. This event is free. Come dressed in your favorite costume and enjoy the evening visiting decorated trunks. Candy and other goodies will be handed out. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association will be participating so stop by and say hello. If you are interested in decorating a trunk or volunteering, contact Michelle.Leahy@tampaymca.org. Canned and non-perishable foods will be accepted to support Sulphur Springs YMCA.



13th Annual Fox Squirrel Corn Maze 6151 Varn Rd, Plant City

A \$12 admission fee (ages 4 and up) includes unlimited access to the corn maze, jump pad, hayrides, and other games. Some activities such as face painting, pumpkin painting, and animal encounters require an additional fee. The Maze is open from 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays from October 7-November 5. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <https://foxsquirrelcornmaze.com>.



Harvest Days Keel & Curley Winery at Keel Farms 5202 Thonotosassa Rd., Plant City

A great way to spend your Saturdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. each weekend in October starting October 7. Join in for fall fun the whole family will love. There will be activities for all ages including Hayrides, Corky's Corn Maze, Camel Rides, Pumpkin Patch, 30 Craft + Food Vendors, Pumpkin Painting, Kid Zone by Rockin' Bouncies, and special releases of fall wines, ales, and ciders. Admission and parking are free. Visit www.keel-farms.com/festivals.

Halloween Walk the Lights Sunkissed Acres 2302 N Dover Rd, Dover

On select nights Thursday-Sunday, October 5-29 from 7 to 10 p.m., join this pirate-themed event for the whole family. Activities will include a 1/3-mile walking trail with hundreds of themed lighted

displays, pixel-animated props moving to the music, outdoor movies, a maze of lights, a scavenger hunt, games, and face painting plus a FOAM play area on select nights. Check out the calendar for the FOAM nights. The cost is \$8 in advance, and \$9 at the gate for ages 3 and over. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.showpass.com/shimmering-lights-fall-2023/>.

Creatures of the Night ZooTampa

1101 W. Slight Ave., Tampa
ZooTampa will hold Creatures of the Night from September 29 through October 29 on select nights. Join in for eerie family frights. Ghouls and goblins of all ages can enjoy howling outdoor experiences, spooky characters, creepy culinary treats, and more. Zoo Members and Pay For A Day ticket holders get free admission. There is a \$5 reservation fee for members and 'Pay for a Day' ticket holders, which will be reimbursed upon entry in the form of a \$5 voucher for food and merchandise. Visit <https://zootampa.org/events/creatures-of-the-night/>.



A Night at the Museum Tampa Bay History Center 801 Water Street, Tampa

When the museum closes on Sunday, October 22 from 4-7 p.m., the exhibits come to life. At this family-friendly Halloween event, guests will enjoy trick-or-treating in the museum galleries along with a costume contest, photo opportunities, crafts and games, and special characters roaming the museum. Advance tickets are required, and tickets are limited. Visit <https://tampabayhistorycenter.org/event/a-night-at-the-museum/> to reserve your spot and for pricing.

7th Annual Riverwalk Trick or Treat Event Riverwalk from Water Works Park to Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park

A free community event will take place on Saturday, October 28 from 4-7 p.m. Children in costume and their families are invited to come and trick or treat along the Riverwalk as well as enjoy fun activities. There will be more than 50 treat stations participating. For more information on all the activities taking place, visit <https://thetampariverwalk.com/events-news/events/trick-or-treat.html>.



Spine-Tingling Halloween Events 2023

By Amanda Depin-Ragan

Howl-O-Scream Admission Price: \$44.99 - \$146.99 *Pass Members save an additional \$5 - \$10.
Dates: September 8 - October 31

Undead in the Water

Prepare to set sail on a spine-chilling voyage as "Undead in the Water" returns to 705 Channel-side Drive, in Tampa. This unique Halloween experience offers visitors an opportunity to explore the 1945 WWII ship The American Victory Ship encountering frightful surprises along the way. From bloodthirsty creatures to vengeful spirits, every turn on this ghost ship promises an unsettling encounter. With elaborate sets, convincing actors, and a gripping storyline, this spooky maritime adventure has something for everyone. For more information visit <https://www.undeadinthewater.com/calendar-and-buy-tickets>

Admission Price: \$27 - \$29

Dates: September 23 - October 28



Tampa Theatre

A Nightmare on Franklin Street

Tampa Theatre, located at 711 N Franklin St, in Tampa, is a historic landmark known for its architectural beauty. However, for those who crave both cinematic chills and real-life ghostly encounters, Tampa Theatre is the place to be this Halloween. Throughout the month of October, audience members can revel in classic horror films while being surrounded by the theater's stunning, haunted ambiance. From Hitchcock suspense films to supernatural thrillers, there's something for every scary movie lover. But if real live ghosts are what you want, look no further, Tampa Theatre's ghost tours offer an eerie exploration of the theater's dark and mysterious history. Led by knowledgeable guides, visitors can experience a behind the scenes tour full of tales of the theater's legendary hauntings, while discovering secrets hidden within its historic walls. For tickets or to book a ghost tour visit <https://tampatheatre.org/> or call (813) 274-8286. Admission Price: \$10 - \$15

Dates: October 13 - 31



The Tampa Bay area is pulling out all the stops to ensure Halloween 2023 is the spookiest and most unforgettable yet. Whether you prefer the adrenaline rush of a haunted trail, tour, or ship, the heart-pounding scares of theme park events, or the darkly comedic charm of "Beetlejuice: The Musical," there's something for everyone this Halloween season. Get your costumes ready and prepare for a hauntingly good time!

As the fall season approaches, Bloomingdale residents are carving pumpkins, buying candy, and gearing up for all the spook-tacular Halloween experiences offered in the Tampa Bay area. This year, there is an array of hair-raising events, designed to scare and thrill even the most fearless and unflinching among us.

Sir Henry's Haunted Trail

Sir Henry's Haunted Trail, located at 2837 S Frontage Rd, in Plant City is set to send chills down your spine this Halloween season. With its immersive storytelling, elaborate sets, and a cast of terrifying characters, this haunted trail is a must-visit for thrill-seekers. This year, they promise even more bone-chilling experiences, making it a perfect destination for adrenaline junkies. Gather your courage and venture into the darkness to encounter the unknown. Be prepared for surprises around every corner, making this trail a true Halloween night to remember. Tickets for this event must be purchased in advance by visiting their website at <https://www.sirhenryshauntedtrail.com/about>

Admission Price: \$27 - \$57 depending on the type of ticket.

Dates: September 29 - November 4



"Beetlejuice" The Musical

For those looking for a different kind of spooky thrill, "Beetlejuice" the musical is on tour and making a stop at the Straz Center here in Tampa on October 24th - 29th, 2023. Based on the beloved film, this musical production promises a lively and macabre journey with everyone's favorite afterlife trickster. With catchy songs, dark humor, and spectacular production values, "Beetlejuice" is a must-see for fans of the supernatural and those who appreciate a good laugh with their frights. For information or to order tickets visit <https://www.strazcenter.org/> or call (813) 229-7827

Admission Price: \$106 - \$415

Dates: October 24 - 29

Howl-O-Scream

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay invites you to Howl-O-Scream, a night of heart-pounding rides and haunted horrors. With haunted houses, scare zones, and thrilling rides, this annual event offers spine-chilling fun for all ages. Brace yourself for unexpected scares as the park transforms into a playground for the supernatural. From classic jump-scares to psychological thrills, Howl-O-Scream is sure to get your heart racing. Tickets can be purchased at the gate or online at <https://buschgardens.com/tampa/events/howl-o-scream/tickets/>



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Healthy Kids Running Series Starts in Valrico

By Jane Owen



The Healthy Kids Running Series is coming to Valrico. Starting in October, the nationwide running program for kids ages 2-14 will hold a series of running events at Stearns Park in Valrico.

Founded in 2009, Healthy Kids Running Series (HKRS) aims to motivate kids to lead healthy and active lifestyles through a positive introduction to the sport of running. The five-week running program is held in both spring and fall for kids Pre-K through 8th grade. Thirteen years strong, HKRS has impacted over 500,000 runners and offers over 200 programs in 41 states.

Valrico's fall season starts Sunday, October 15 and runs consecutive Sundays until November 12. All runs will be held at Stearns Road Park, 3709 Stearns Park Road, starting at 3:30pm. Two and three year olds run 50 yards, four and five year olds run 75 yards, kindergarteners and first graders run 1/4 mile, 2nd and 3rd graders run 1/2 mile and 4th through 8th graders run 1 mile.

Kids compete each week for a chance to earn points. At the end of the series the boys and girls who accumulate the most points in their respective distances are awarded trophies. All participants receive a medal at the last race of the series.

Community Coordinator Elise Tanner decided to bring HKRS to Valrico after looking for a running program for her son.

"Within the last year, our oldest son, Henry, started showing an interest in long distance running. We were trying to find a way for him to start getting involved in the sport, but found he was still too young for the cross-country programs I contacted in the area. Through searching the web, I found Healthy Kids Running Series that was running down in Sarasota. We decided to give it a try this past spring, driving to Sarasota for 5 weeks. We enjoyed the events, loved



the mission, and felt like this would be a great opportunity for the families in our community," Tanner said.

Tanner says Stearns Road Park is the perfect place for the series.

"We're really excited about the ideal setting. Stearns Road Park is beautiful, has a nice playground, and most importantly the county did a great job of recently repaving the path around the park," Tanner said.

Course maps are on the website. Registration is \$45 and covers the five-week series, including race bibs for each week, runner shirts, finisher medals and trophies for top place finishers.

For more information, email ValricoFL@healthykidsrs.org and visit these sites:

HKRS Valrico webpage: <https://healthykidsrunningseries.org/race-locations/valrico-fl/>

Registration page: <https://runsignup.com/hkrsvalrico>

HKRSValricoFacebookpage: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092532438870>



Healthy Kids Running Series Valrico Community Coordinator Elise Tanner with her husband Chris and boys, Henry (8) and John (5).



Lace Up this Saturday for the Your Next Step is the Cure 5k

WHO IS READY TO RUN FOR A CAUSE?

The fifth annual Your Next Step is the Cure 5K is this coming Saturday, October 7 at Alderman's Ford Park in Plant City. Bernadette Boyle and Linda O'Brien, the race directors for the 5k, are extremely excited about the new location.

The mission of the 5k is to help bring awareness and raise funds for research for ocular melanoma! Ocular melanoma is a rare disease which affects six out of one million people each year. Currently, with no known cure, OM is referred to as an orphan disease. Of the people diagnosed, 50% of them will develop metastasis that usually travels to the liver and the lungs.

Visit the Facebook page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/cureocularmelanoma>

For more information, email: yournextstepisthecure@aol.com.

For registration for the race/walk and to donate, please visit: <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Lithia/YourNext-StepistheCure>



Cure Ocular Melanoma

Visit Kerby's Nursery this Fall

By Edward DeFreitas, Student Reporter

Looking for something fun to do this autumn? Interested in gardening? Well, Kerby's Nursery is just the right place for all your autumn needs. From looking for pumpkins to put outside your door to yoga in the garden and a seminars on pollinators and new-to-Florida gardening, Kerby's offers fun and informative activities. To see a list of October events, visit: www.kerbysnursery.com/upcoming-events/

Kerby's nursery has all your plant needs in one spot including flowers, fruits trees, houseplants, shrubs, and tropical plants amongst a beautiful scenic environment. These services also include home installation services if not possible on your own.

Kerby's Nursery is locally rooted. The family run nursery all started with Ruth and Mabry Kerby's love of gardening. Their son Larry and his wife Vicki founded Kerby's in 1980 and turned it into the thriving nursery it is. Later they passed down the business to their eldest daughter Kim. Kim and her husband Joey Bokor continue the family run business today with their two young daughters Abby and Maddy.

Kerby's Nursery is located at 2311 S. Parson's Ave. For more information, visit kerbysnursery.com.



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Cimino Elementary Hosting Cougar Challenge

Alafia and Cimino Elementary Start With Hello



Alafia and Cimino Elementary participated in Start With Hello Week September 18-22. Start with Hello Week is a national call-to-action week dedicated to teaching empathy and making social connections at schools. Spearheaded by the nonprofit organization Sandy Hook Promise, a national nonprofit started by families whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, Start With Hello is a program that teaches students to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other.



Cimino PTA President Karen Steinke and Media Specialist Katelyn Bristol

Cimino PTA is hosting the school's 11th annual Cougar Challenge Walk-a-thon on October 20th. This year they are raising money for classroom technology and teacher grants.

Alafia and Cimino dedicated the week to social inclusion at school.

Cimino welcomes community support! For information on how to donate, visit the Cimino PTA page on Facebook or email: ciminopta@gmail.com.



Alafia Kicks off Start With Hello Week with BSHS Drumline.

"Sandy Hook Promise "Start with Hello" week is designed to "Teach children and youth how to minimize social isolation, empathize with others and create a more inclusive and connected school culture". The second that Bloomingdale High School Drum Line began to play, there was an instant connection between the high school students and our elementary students. Students and staff came rushing from all over campus to watch them play. The best part was to watch former Alafia students as highly skilled percussionists, doing what they love as they were inspiring the next generation of musicians."

Andrea Carver, Alafia Elementary School Counselor



Merman (Coach) Macko on September 15 at the Cougar Challenge Kick-off. He hopes to get his legs after the Cougar Challenge!

••••• Bloomingdale High School National Merit Students •••••

BSHS has Two National Merit Semifinalists!

BSHS has Three National Merit Commended Students



Congratulations to Jackson Simoneau and Samuel Heilman, Bloomingdale High School's National Merit Semi Finalists! Jackson plans to study Computer Science in college and Samuel plans to study Civil Engineering.

BSHS National Merit Semifinalist: Jackson Simoneau (Samuel Heilman is not pictured, as he recently moved out of state.)

Bloomingdale Senior High School has three National Merit Commended students and two National Merit Semifinalist students for the 2024 graduating class.

Congratulations to Madison Diener, Barry Lucido and Emily Nichols for being National Merit Commended students! Post high school fields of study: Madison – Environmental Science or Obstetrics, Barry – General Math, Emily—Physical Therapy.



BSHS National Merit Commended Students: Madison Diener, Barry Ludico, and Emily Nichols

Brandon Witherow Breaks Bloomingdale School 5k Record

Junior Brandon Witherow broke the Bloomingdale High School 5k record on September 23 at the North Port Invitational XC Meet. Brandon placed 14th in the Elite Division.



BSHS 5k Record

Brandon Witherow

15:53

Congratulations Brandon!

Burns Principal DiPrima Selected for the Distinguished Fellows Cohort



Burns Principal Matthew DiPrima was 1 of 4 principals from Hillsborough County Schools to be selected by the Cahn Fellowship program to be a 2023-24 Distinguished Fellows Cohort. The Cahn Fellowship program began in 2002 and its mission is to provide advanced leadership development and recognition in large metropolitan areas to strong, talented school leaders to improve public education. One of the core beliefs of the program is that school leadership has an enormous impact on student outcomes.



The PSAT Is Right Around the Corner and with it Comes New Changes

By Amanda Depin-Ragan

While standardized testing has become a hotly debated topic over the years, there is still one low-stakes test that really benefits high school students, and it is free! The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test, more commonly known as the PSAT, often takes a backseat in the college admissions process compared to the SAT. However, the PSAT serves as a vital stepping stone on the path to higher education and plays a crucial role in preparing students for the challenges of college admissions and in addition to offering students scholarship opportunities!

One of the most compelling reasons to take the PSAT seriously is the potential for scholarship opportunities. High-performing students who excel on the PSAT may qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program. This program not only recognizes academic achievement, but also offers substantial financial scholarships for college-bound students. Earning a National Merit Scholarship can significantly ease the financial stress of higher education.

Another significant advantage of the PSAT is its similarity to the SAT as both tests share similar formatting, content, and question types. This means that when students take the PSAT, they are essentially engaging in SAT practice. Students can also use their PSAT score report to identify strengths and weaknesses in different subject areas, such as math, reading, and writing. For instance, if the student's PSAT math score is lower than expected, the student can invest more time in math instruction, practice, and study. Thus, allowing students to be much more prepared for the SAT, which is a pivotal component of the college admissions process for most institutions.

Starting this year, the PSAT will be administered exclusively in a digital format. This means that students across Florida will take the test on a computer, rather than using traditional pencil and paper. One of the most significant advantages of online testing will be the ability to receive scores in a much timelier fashion rather than having to wait for a score report to be generated and mailed to the school.

Bloomingdale High School will be administering the PSAT to their students on October 10th, 2023. Students wishing to prepare for this exam can find free practice tests and materials by visiting College Board's website <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt/preparing/practice-tests/paper> or by utilizing Khan Academy which students have access to through Hillsborough County Public Schools.

Local Schools Announce Excellence in Education Winners

BLOOMINGDALE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL'S 2023-2024 WINNERS

Teacher of the Year: Savanna Hamilton
(Reading teacher and Literacy Assistant Department Head)

Educator of the Year: Sajida Mirza (ACCESS teacher)

Instructional Support Employee of the Year: Jacqueline Argila (Custodian)

BURNS MIDDLE SCHOOL'S 2023-2024 WINNERS

Teacher of the Year: Lindsay Zielinski (6th grade reading teacher)

Ida S. Baker Diversity Educator of the Year: Abel Gutierrez
(6th-8th grade Math teacher)

Instructional Support Employee of the Year: Lourdes Cruz (Principal's Secretary)

ALAFIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S 2023-2024 WINNERS

Teacher of the Year: Michele Collier (Kindergarten teacher)

Ida S. Baker Diversity Educator of the Year: Sarah Balmes (ESE teacher)

Instructional Support Employee of the Year: Raddemir Quijanos (Head Custodian)

CIMINO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S 2023-2024 WINNERS

Teacher of the Year: James Rigby (2nd grade teacher)

Ida S. Baker Diversity Educator of the Year: Dori Creek (Access Points)

Instructional Support Employee of the Year: Lina Salmeron (Data Processor)

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