



# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

**VOL. XLIII**



**ISSUE 11**



**Nov. 2023**



**WWW.BLOOMINGDALE.LIFE**

**THIS MONTH**

## Alafia Ensemble Drums Up Support for Veterans

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Photo: Heidi...

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**PLEASE RECYCLE**



*"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." John F. Kennedy*

## YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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**Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette**  
3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33596 - (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](mailto:Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com) Website: [www.Bloomingdale.Life](http://www.Bloomingdale.Life)

Follow on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Bl.Neighbor1](http://www.facebook.com/Bl.Neighbor1)

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

**President:**  
Suzy Watts

**Directors at Large:**  
Laney Balis

**Vice President:**  
Sean Donahue

Kalyn Dukes

**Treasurer:**  
Grace Lewis

Bobbi Ferraro



Jessica Robertson  
BNA Office Manager

# BNA BRIEFS

## BNA CALENDAR

Tuesday, November 28, 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](mailto:bl.neighbor1@gmail.com) for information.

Sunday, December 3, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. / Santa Visit / Santa stops in Bloomingdale East and West neighborhoods and parks. For more information, follow the BNA at [Bloomingdale.life](http://Bloomingdale.life) and on Facebook: @ Bl.Neighbor1

## 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

## Charity Food Drive & Santa Visit

Sunday, Dec. 3  
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The BNA is thrilled to announce Santa is visiting Bloomingdale again this year! Santa is excited about his Florida vacation and will make stops in the Bloomingdale East and West neighborhoods and both Bloomingdale parks. Our elves will collect food donations and pass out Santa themed ducks and candy canes.

Follow the BNA online at [Bloomingdale.Life](http://Bloomingdale.Life) and on Facebook @Bl.Neighbor1.



For more information about the Santa visit, email [Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com](mailto:Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com).

# YARD OF THE MONTH

**PAT SANDERS**  
740 FORTUNA DRIVE, BRANDON



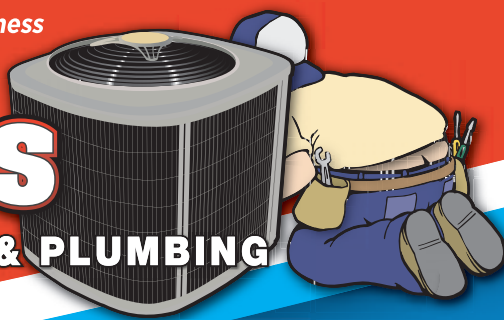
The Yard of the Month is sponsored by Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale and Campo YMCA.

Send Yard of the Month nominations to: [bl.neighbor1@gmail.com](mailto: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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Unveiling a canvas of possibilities, All Spun Up, a cutting-edge art studio, now resides within the walls of Bury The Hatchet - Axe Throwing, located at 939 Oakfield Drive, in Brandon. Owner Chris Hawkins and General Manager Christie Patterson have transformed a portion of the venue into a whimsical haven for art enthusiasts and thrill-seekers alike.

As soon as you step into All Spun Up, it becomes clear that this is no ordinary art studio. Instead, visitors are greeted with an immersive experience that seamlessly weaves together artistry and adventure. Five distinct painting areas, each with a unique flair, invite visitors to explore creative expression. These spaces include two hand-spun rooms, one bicycle-spun room, a playful splat room, and the free-flowing pour zone. Every space is equipped with black lights and ring lights, which not only elevates the ambiance, but also captures those Instagram-worthy moments.

Conceived by owner Chris Hawkins, All Spun Up was born from a simple realization, "after the excitement of axe throwing at Bury The Hatchet, visitors weren't ready for the night to end." Hence, the idea of a double down adventure emerged, seamlessly transitioning from the thrill of axe throwing to the joy of painting, extending both the night and the fun.

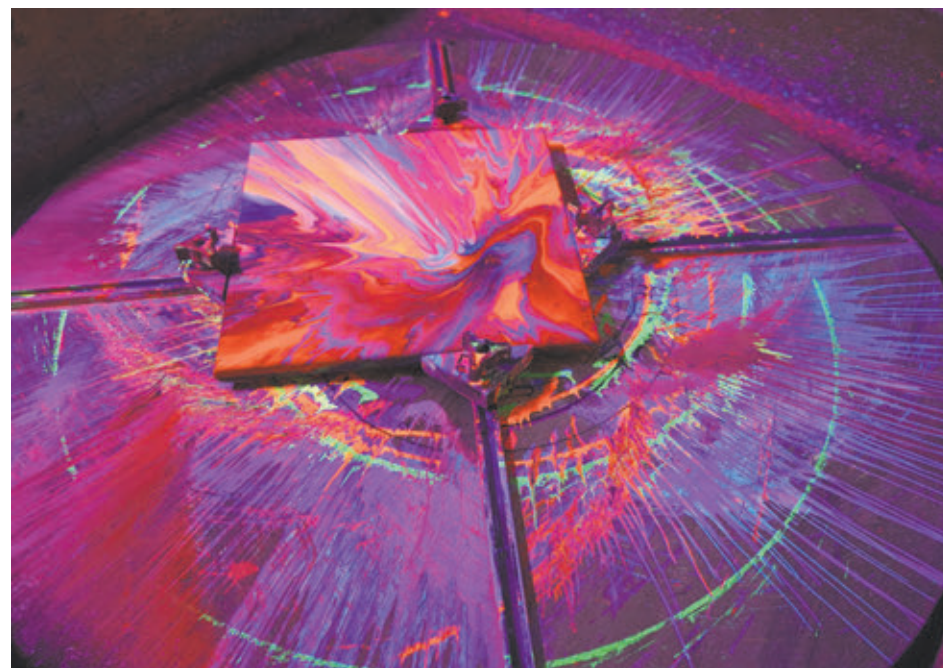
For those eager to embark on the Double Down Adventure, the cost is \$64.99 per person. This includes one hour of painting in the All Spun Up, Art Studio, followed by an hour of axe throwing at Bury The Hatchet. This clever combination not only keeps the night alive, "it also gives your artwork time to dry, ensuring you leave with a tangible memory of your creative journey," explains owner Chris Hawkins. The package includes two 16X20 canvases, six paint colors per person, and, most importantly, an abundance of laughs and memories.

For those who prefer to focus solely on painting, All Spun Up offers packages starting at \$45.95 per person for two individuals for one hour, and \$40.95 each for groups of three to four people. Groups of up to four individuals can enjoy a private painting room, creating a personalized and intimate experience. Whereas larger parties can book the entire venue making All Spun Up the perfect destination for celebrations and events.

With so many entertainment options available, there is truly something for everyone! However it is the amazing staff, led by the General Manager and Bloomingdale local, Christie Patterson, along with Axe and Spin Masters, Rose Doriski and Alex Land, that really makes All Spun Up, so memorable. The team infuses warmth and expertise into the artistic process, ensuring that every visitor, regardless of their background, feels at ease, inspired, and ready to have a good time. The most remarkable part of the whole experience is leaving with the feeling that you've gained a few new friends along the way.

All Spun Up and Bury the Hatchet are currently offering a special 15% discount for parties of 15 or more until December 1st 2023. The studio operates from 2 PM - 9 PM Sunday through Thursday and extends its hours to 2 PM - 11 PM on Fridays and Saturdays. Feel free to bring in your own food or snacks, but drinks, including beer, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages, are available for purchase at the on-site bar.

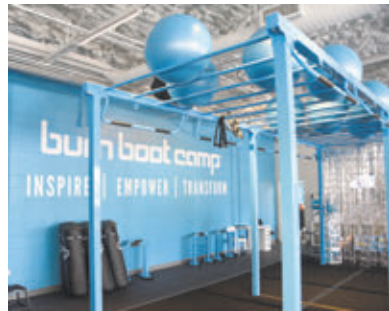
Both painting and axe throwing are accessible to various age groups, with painting open to individuals aged 6 and older and axe throwing open to those aged 14 and older. Ponchos are provided in the paint rooms, and closed toed shoes must be worn during axe throwing. For more information visit <https://burythehatchet.com/axe-throwing-tampa-fl/> or call 813-657-7746.



# WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Burn Boot Camp Brandon: Now Open!

By Michelle Colesanti



Burn Boot Camp recently opened on Bloomingdale Avenue in Brandon. Local owners Kariisa and Eric Hurley and Katie and Dillon Chalupsky partnered together to bring Burn Boot Camp to our area.

Burn Boot Camp's signature personal training in a group setting specializes in exercise modifications to meet you wherever you are on your fitness journey.

According to Eric Hurley, "We are a boutique fitness facility that offers challenging 45-minute workouts suitable for all fitness levels."

Each workout focuses on different types of training for different areas of the body, so you will never do the same workout twice. One of the features of the Boot Camp is its signature floating floor that acts as a shock absorber to protect joints and prevent injury. Included are one-on-one focus meetings which will help keep you on track with your goals. You will meet with your trainer to discuss mindset, nutrition, and fitness goals to get better results, faster. Complimentary Child watch is offered to parents during most of the classes.

With a goal to offer a supportive, inspiring, and motivating community, you will feel that you have become a part of the Burn Nation as soon as you enter. Sign up for 6, 12, or 18-month memberships. Single gym membership includes access to the Brandon gym, unlimited camps, unlimited Childwatch, focus meetings, and more. Get access to all Burn Boot Camp gym locations with the Universal Gym membership. You can also sign up for Burn on Demand, a digital-only way to experience Burn with month-to-month sign up. No-commitment Camp Packs, a five or eight-camp session bundle that automatically renews monthly, can also be purchased.

Burn Boot Camp is located at 107 West Bloomingdale Ave. in Brandon (in the old Forge Restaurant building). Sign up for a seven-day trial. Visit <https://burnbootcamp.com/locations/brandon-fl/>.



Burn Boot Camp Ribbon Cutting on October 23 with the Valrico FishHawk Chamber of Commerce.

November 2 - 12, 2023

Tampa Bay Times

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## Latinos Run Tampa Hosted 5k for Hispanic Heritage Month in Bloomingdale

By Jane Owen



Erik Adams, Operating Partner at Fleet Feet Tampa, is grateful for the partnership Fleet Feet has with Latinos Run and for all of the community members who came out to be part of the two 5ks.

“We had over 70 participants at the Brandon store. We had some great feedback. My favorite so far is the family that trained together to do their first 5k distance as a family (two adults and two children).” Adams said.

For more information about Latinos Run Tampa, email [tampa@latinosrun](mailto:tampa@latinosrun). Latinos Run Tampa is on social media: Instagram: @LatinosRunTampa, Facebook: [Facebook.com/groups/LatinosRunTampa](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LatinosRunTampa) and Twitter: @LatinosRun\_

On Saturday, October 14, the Latinos Run Tampa Chapter hosted a fun run 5k at the Fleet Feet Brandon store in Bloomingdale. This was the second 5k held by the chapter to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. The first 5k was at the Fleet Feet Flatwoods store.

Latinos Run was started in NYC and has chapters throughout the US. Monica Aguilar and Marta Portillo started the Tampa chapter in June of 2022.

“Marta and I started the Tampa chapter because we felt there was a need for a running organization within our Hispanic Community. As a minority-based organization, we’ve opened the door to highlight a community that largely is ignored in the health and fitness industry. Our goal is to inspire more individuals of color to change the way the fitness industry looks,” Aguilar said.



## Embrace the Spirit of the Season at Tampa Bay's Fall Markets

By Amanda Ragan

As the temperatures begin to drop, and everyone wants to be outside, Tampa Bay gears up for a season of vibrant fall markets that promise a delightful blend of crafts, treats, and festivities. The Tampa Bay Area is set to host a series of events that capture the essence of the season, offering unique treasures and experiences for visitors of all ages.

### Holiday Gift Market at Florida State Fairgrounds November 9 - 12

Kicking off the festive season is the Holiday Gift Market at the Florida State Fairgrounds on November 9th - 12th. Located at 4800 US-301, Tampa, FL, this four day market is a haven for those seeking the perfect gifts for loved ones. This market, held in the expo and entertainment halls, features a variety of vendors offering everything from handmade crafts to delectable holiday treats. This is a ticketed event, for more information and to view ticket prices visit <https://mytbtickets.com/events/holiday-gift-market-11-9-2023>

### Arts Annual 2023: DISCOVERY in Largo November 11th, 10 AM - 4 PM

Creative Pinellas invites you to explore the Arts Annual 2023: DISCOVERY on November 11th, running from 10 AM to 4 PM at 12211 Walsingham Rd, Largo, FL. This art exhibition showcases the diverse talents of local artists, providing a platform for discovery and appreciation. “Beginning with a special Veteran’s Day commemoration,” the event promises to be an enriching cultural experience for all.

### Dunedin Wines the Blues November 11th, 1 - 11 PM

On November 11th, from 1 PM to 11 PM, Dunedin Downtown Market celebrates the fusion of wine and blues at 420 Main St, Dunedin, FL. Dunedin Wines the Blues offers a unique blend of live music, exquisite wines, and the vibrant atmosphere of the downtown market. Sip on your favorite wines while enjoying the soulful tunes, creating a harmonious experience for all. For more information visit <https://dunedinwinestheblues.com/>

### Christmas Under the Oaks Holiday Market & Craft Show November 12th, 9AM - 4 PM

On November 12th, SPC - Clearwater Campus, 2465 Drew St, transforms into a magical holiday market with the Christmas Under the Oaks Holiday Market & Craft Show. With over 175 vendors this market features free parking, food trucks, and a wide array of holiday-themed crafts. It’s an opportunity to kickstart the holiday season and find unique decorations and gifts.

### Winter Village at Curtis Hixon Park in Tampa November 17th - January 1st

Get ready to immerse yourself in the festive magic of the season as Winter Village returns to Curtis Hixon Park in Tampa from November 17th to January 1st. Transforming the heart of downtown Tampa into a winter wonderland, the event features a glistening ice skating rink, inviting visitors of all ages to glide through the holiday season. Surrounding the rink, discover charming

holiday shops offering unique gifts, seasonal treats, and handcrafted treasures. The park comes alive with the spirit of the holidays, offering a myriad of activities, live entertainment, and a festive atmosphere that will warm your heart despite the winter chill.

### Haven Holiday Market in Winter Haven November 18th, 10 AM - 4:00 PM

On November 18th, from 6:30 AM to 3:00 PM, Central Park at 1-35 4th St NW, Winter Haven, FL, transforms into a holiday haven with the Haven Holiday Market. This market provides a charming setting for those eager to start their holiday shopping. As the sun rises, explore stalls filled with seasonal delights, handcrafted gifts, and gourmet treats, all set against the backdrop of Winter Haven’s picturesque park. Family Pictures with Santa are available from 12PM - 3PM.

### 30th Annual Downtown Dunedin Craft Festival November 18th and 19th, 10 AM - 5 PM

The quaint streets of Dunedin come alive on November 18th and 19th with the Art & Craft Festival at the Dunedin Downtown Market, 420 Main St. From 10 AM to 5 PM on both days, the market showcases a myriad of artistic expressions. Stroll through rows of stalls adorned with handmade crafts, paintings, and unique pieces created by local artisans. The festival’s charming setting provides a perfect backdrop for an immersive art experience, bringing together the community in celebration of creativity.



# NOVEMBER COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**November 9: Veteran's Day Concert, 7 -9 p.m.**  
Bloomingdale High School

**November 11: Veteran's Day Celebration, 12 p.m. – 11 p.m.**  
Bullfrog Creek Brewery, 3632 Lithia Pinecrest Road  
1st beer FREE for all veterans!

**November 11: Wonders of Wildlife Festival, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**  
Edward Medard Park, 6140 Turkey Creek Rd, Plant City

**November 11: Plaza Bella Plant Sale, 9 a.m – 1 p.m.**  
1031 Bloomingdale Ave

**November 12: Rosati's First Annual Italian Feast, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.**  
Chill Cawfee, 3407 Lithia Pinecrest Road

**November 18: Winthrop Pop Up Market, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**  
Sullivan St, Riverview

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



## Bloomingdale Special District Works Hard for Our Community

By Kristine Schroeder, BSD Community Relations

There's not exactly frost on the pumpkins, but we are beginning to see the signs of Fall all around us. Your Green Team recently completed the placement of fresh mulch throughout the community. They are also trimming up the fig on perimeter walls and replacing some of the Knock Out roses with Ixora. It won't be long before poinsettias will replace the sunpatiens and holiday banners will once again adorn the light posts.

If you are a frequent visitor to the Bloomingdale ball fields, please be advised that numerous vehicle break-ins have been reported. Police are investigating and remind everyone not to leave valuables in your vehicles and always lock the doors.

The Bloomingdale Special District does have an opening for a board member. You must be a resident and a registered voter. If you are interested in applying please come by the district offices at 3652 Erindale Drive. The office is open 8am – Noon Monday through Thursday. Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm and we would love for you to join us.

**BLOOMINGDALE**  
SPECIAL DISTRICT

**813-684-6667 • [bstd@verizon.net](mailto:bstd@verizon.net)**

## NATIVITY CATHOLIC CHURCH 52nd Annual Novemberfest

**Thursday, November 16  
4 – 10 pm**

• Chorus and Show Choir Night – 6:15 pm

**Friday, November 17  
4 pm - Midnight**

• Classix – 8 pm

**Saturday, November 18  
11 am - Midnight**

• Billy D Trio – 8 pm

**Sunday, November 19  
Noon – 8 pm**

• Military/Veterans, Law  
Enforcement and First  
Responders Appreciation Day  
• NCS Alumni Day

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# Thank you, Veterans, for Serving Bloomingdale!

By Jane Owen

The state of Florida has the third largest veteran population (behind Texas and California) of 1.4 million. Not surprisingly, Veterans are an integral part of our Bloomingdale community.

The Gazette would like to give a special thank you to veterans Sean Donahue, Joy Boisselle, Tom Leech, Randy Kehrmeyer, Rusty Jones, and Charles Woodcock. Sean is the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association Vice President. Joy served as the BNA Office Manager for 10 years and was the former Gazette Editor. Tom is the Bloomingdale Taxing District President, Randy the Vice President; Rusty is the Secretary; and Charlie is the Treasurer.



# THANK YOU



Sean Donahue  
Master Sergeant, USAF  
(Retired)



Joy Boisselle  
Major, US Army



Tom Leech  
Captain, US Navy (Retired)



Randy Kehrmeyer  
Captain, USMC



Russell C. Jones  
CMSgt, USAF (Retired)



Charles Woodcock  
Lieutenant Commander,  
US Navy (Retired)

# FOR YOUR SERVICE

## Navy Destroyer USS Jack H. Lucas Commissioned in Tampa

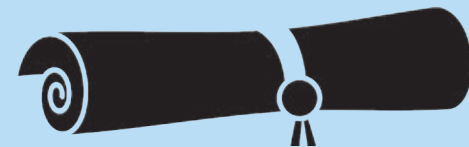
The Navy's first Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, USS Jack H Lucas (DDG 125), was commissioned in Tampa on Oct. 7. The Martin family from Bloomingdale East attended the commissioning ceremony. Pictured from left to right are Jackson, Wyatt, Cooper and Titus Martin. Their dad Clay Martin is a Navy Lieutenant Commander.



## \$2,500 Pool Troopers Invisible Hero Scholarship Available

The Pool Troopers Invisible Hero Scholarship is available for students whose parents are US Military Active Duty, Veterans, Retirees, or First Responders. Upon selection, Pool Troopers will pay \$2,500 directly to the award recipient's college or university on January 15, 2024.

The deadline to apply is December 8. To apply, visit <https://pooltroopers.com/scholarship/> Email [scholarship@pooltroopers.com](mailto:scholarship@pooltroopers.com) with questions.





# Blue Star Families Tampa Chapter Meets Monthly at Starbucks in Bloomingdale

By Jane Owen

Blue Star Families is a nonprofit organization that is committed to strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors to create a bond of mutual support.

The Tampa Chapter of Blue Star Families meets every second Tuesday of the month at the Bloomingdale Starbucks, 1920 Bloomingdale Ave, at 11 a.m.

Blue Star Families Tampa Chapter Director Suzy Malloy started the Bloomingdale Coffee Connects group in June of 2021. Sponsored through a partnership with Starbucks, there are Coffee Connects in over 200 communities in the country. Coffee Connects provide an opportunity for friendships to grow and connections to be made. Malloy says Blue Star Families supports the military by creating connections within the community.

“We welcome everybody. Everybody who has a military connection can be a Blue Star Family,” Malloy said.

Malloy is a military spouse. Her husband Ron is just shy of 33 years active duty in the Navy.

She knows from experience that when military families are connected in the community, the military member and their families are stronger.

“For some people this is a pass-through duty station. Other people settle here and they have made the Tampa Bay region home. Coffee Connects is about connections. People chit chat about upcoming events. Newer to the community members can ask questions about the area,” Malloy said.

The Tampa Bay area has a large military population, and the Tampa chapter regularly hosts events for members in the community. In 2022, the chapter hosted 114 local events, Malloy said.

Membership with Blue Star Families is free. To join, visit [community.bluestarfam.org](http://community.bluestarfam.org).

For more information about the Tampa Chapter of Blue Star Families, email [tampa@bluestarfam.org](mailto:tampa@bluestarfam.org) or visit the Tampa Bay Blue Star Family Facebook page: @TampaBayBSF.



# AMVETS Post 26 Awarded Florida AMVETS Post of the Year



As one of America's leading veterans service organizations for more than 75 years, AMVETS (American Veterans) has a history of assisting veterans and sponsoring numerous programs that serve our country and its citizens. Membership in AMVETS is open to anyone who honorably served, or currently serving, in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves.

AMVETS Post 26, located in Dover, won the Florida AMVETS Post of the Year for 2023. David Baca is the seventh post commander of Post 26, which was chartered in 2006. He was awarded 2023 Commander of the Year.

“We are all about Veterans supporting Veterans. I believe that one of the things that really highlights the post is that our organizations work together. We all work together on events. That creates community and camaraderie,” Baca said.

AMVETS Post 26 organizations include Ladies Auxiliary 26, Sons of AMVETS Squadron 26, AMVETS Riders Chapter 26 and Junior AMVETS Post 26.

For more information about AMVETS Post 26, email [post26flamvets@gmail.com](mailto:post26flamvets@gmail.com) or stop by AMVETS Post 26, located at 221 S. Dover Rd.





# Local 95-Year-Old Veteran Still Serving

By Jane Owen



Ralph Abenante has had a lifetime of service. Ralph served in the United States Navy for 30 years, retiring as a Chief Warrant Officer (CW4) in 1975. These days, at 95 years young, Ralph can be found serving at the pickleball courts every morning at Bloomingdale East Park.

Ralph is a good sport, sometimes going easy on beginner pickleball players. Everyone has a smile and a hug for Ralph. Ralph especially appreciates hugs.

“Let me tell you, hugging is science. When you hug someone there’s a release from your brain that gives you pleasure and makes you feel good. Your brain releases endorphins. Hugging really does that,” Ralph said.

Ralph will tell you over and over again that he has had a wonderful life.

“I’m extremely happy. My whole life - I’m lucky. I have great kids. I have my health. I can’t tell you how many times people come up and ask me what do I do, what do I eat? I don’t have a secret. I lift tough at times. I eat well. I sleep well,” Ralph said. “The thing is, if there is something that is why I am who I am. It’s because I exercise every single day. I have never ever stopped. I love it. It’s like eating breakfast. I have my coffee, do my crosswords - then I start exercising.”

Exercise has been part of Ralph’s entire life. He started playing tennis when he was young and didn’t stop until he was 90. He was tennis champion in the over 40 division in the Navy. In his 70’s he was the #2 ranked tennis player in Florida.

It makes sense that most people who meet Ralph think what is most outstanding about him is how active he is at the age of 95. Many, if not most, of his friends are unaware of where his life has taken him and what he accomplished in the Navy.

His long military career includes serving in the Korean War and Vietnam war. He was in the 2% of the Navy selected to be an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Officer. Ralph’s EOD job took him all over the world. His division of the EOD department handled everything all over the eastern hemisphere.

Ralph wrapped up his Navy career assigned as secret service for President Nixon. He was awarded The Secret Service Directors Honor Award, the highest award given to a secret service member for saving the lives of 11 secret service members that were trapped in a helicopter that crashed in the ocean.

Although he enjoyed all of it, he doesn’t like attention for what he did in the service. “I loved what I did. I’d have done it for nothing. It was exciting and dangerous. I am a civilian now.”

He believes it is important to be in the present moment.

“If you live in the past, you will never make it in the present.” Ralph said. “I am not the originator of that but it is very true. People have a tendency to say I wish it was this way or that way. If you live that way, you’re not going to make it.”

Ralph started playing pickleball two years ago at the age of 93. He credits the friends he plays pickleball with for reinvigorating him after his wife Trudy passed away.

“I love the people that are down there (at Bloomingdale East Park). More than the game itself, that’s what I like. They made a tremendous difference for me. I felt like I was alive again,” Ralph said.



Thank you for your service, Ralph!



L to R: Ralph Abenante, Jennifer McTigue, Ed McTigue, and Judy Newell.

# Lithia Author Kaliym Islam Holds Book Signing at Chill Cawfee

By Jane Owen



Dr. Kaliym Islam at his Pickleball Leadership book signing at Chill Cawfee.

On September 23, local author Dr. Kaliym Islam held a book signing for his new book, *Pickleball Leadership: Lessons from the Court to the Board Room* at Chill Cawfee in Valrico. Islam spoke and shared lessons he learned on the pickleball court. In his book, he parallels the lessons with real-life stories from his friends in the FishHawk Pickball Club, many of which were able to attend the signing.

you put it.' That was a lightbulb moment for me. Wait a minute, I control this. I didn't start thinking of it from the perspective of pickleball. I started thinking about it from the perspective of leaders. For leaders, a lot of times things happen largely because of what leaders do or don't do," Islam said.

Islam realized the fast pace of Pickleball and the strategies in the game mirror the everyday challenges leaders encounter. In his book, Islam shares life lessons from the skills needed to play pickleball. Individuals who want to improve relationships and professionals wanting to hone their business skills will both find useful tools in the book *Pickleball Leadership*.

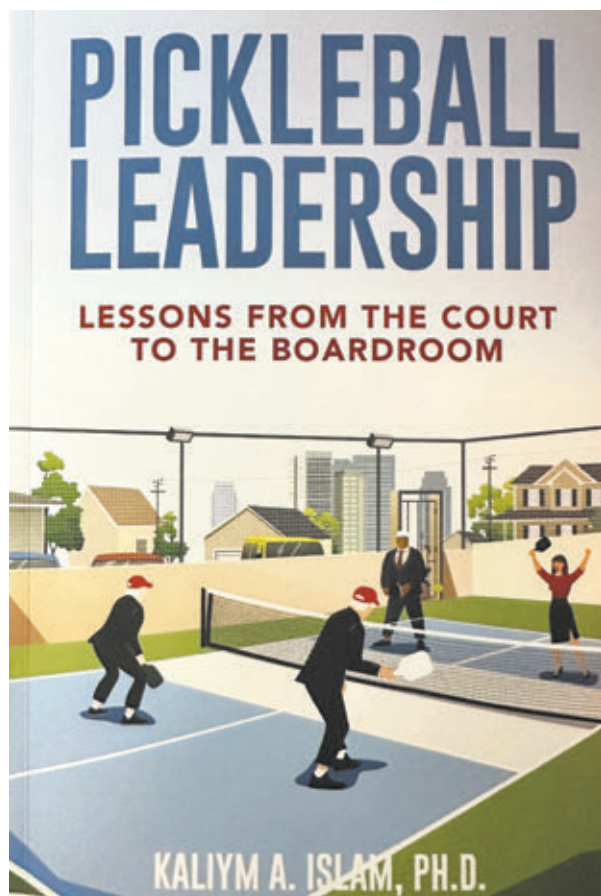
With all the practical life skills Islam has gained from the sport, surprisingly he will tell you that the best part of how Pickleball transformed his life is with relationships.

"The thing that I enjoy most about pickleball is the people that I have met. They have been strangers who have become friends. They've become like family," Islam said.

Kaliym Islam is an accomplished author and leadership development professional. His five books can be found on Amazon. To learn more about Kaliym and his books, visit [thetrainingproacademy.com](http://thetrainingproacademy.com). To learn more about Pickleball Leadership, visit: [pickleballleadership.com](http://pickleballleadership.com).

Sports has a way of teaching unexpected lessons. Dr. Kaliym Islam found a new perspective on leadership when he took up the sport of Pickleball a couple years ago. Just a few weeks after learning to play the game, Islam had what he calls a lightbulb moment after a conversation with another player.

"We were playing a game of mixed doubles. My friend Amber was just hitting the ball right in my chest. I said, 'Amber, I thought we were friends.' She said, 'Well, we are friends. But if you don't want the ball hit at you like that, don't put it where



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# Striking Debut for Alafia Elementary School Drum Ensemble

By Jane Owen

Alafia Elementary's drum ensemble performed October 21 at the Winthrop Pop Up Market. The ensemble is new this school year, meets twice a week after school, and features twenty eight 5th grade students who auditioned to be part of the group.

Music teacher James Hemphill created the ensemble to give students a chance for expression through performance, which builds confidence.

Students play one of four types of Tubano drums and the rhythms are a combination of high and low sounds as well as claps, taps, and movements. The rhythms played at the October performance were merengue rhythms inspired from Caribbean music. The four drums learn different rhythms that interlock and create a piece of music. Teamwork is required as the group sings and plays together as a unit.

"The kids are hard workers and songs can last up to 12 minutes long as they cycle through different parts. Students get up and solo during the pieces and cheer each other on. Every time we play the song comes out a little different. Maybe it goes on longer or more students solo or even stop playing and chant the words to the rhythms. The challenging part is to keep their part going while the other parts come in. Teamwork is a must where the students have to look and communicate while playing to keep their part going," Hemphill said.

Alafia Principal Lisa Jackson is grateful for the benefits the ensemble provides the fifth graders.

"It has been beautiful to see our students celebrate one another, celebrate and honor our diverse cultures and backgrounds, while aspiring to be part of a group who brings music and joy to others," Jackson said.

Perseverance is the theme for the ensemble this year. During the October performance, they played "Wavin Flag" and a Hispanic Heritage piece called "Palo Palo." For Alafia's school Veteran's Day program, they will play "Wavin' Flag" and a piece called, "Don't Give Up On Me," which will also feature the 5th grade choir.

"Wavin Flag" will be the opener for the Veteran's Day program. It is a piece originally written by K'nann for the Soccer World Cup. Hemphill added the chant, "Wave that flag ya'll, that flag ya'll" so the students could learn the beat. The drumbeat is an original that he wrote for the song. The song invokes national pride, as it was written for all people to take pride in their country, Hemphill said.

A few of the reasons that Hemphill decided to create the ensemble are learning and performance provides an emotional outlet, enhances memory and focus, and invokes a sense of pride.

"I wanted to have a group that got to perform entertaining music for the community to show off the talent of the kids. There are lots of community sports for kids to be a part of, and it's good to have an addition extra-curricular with an arts basis. Particularly if it represents their school and community. Music comes from the heart and it's not a competition," Hemphill said.

Hemphill added, "There is joy in making music with friends and a comradery similar to sports."



# Burns Middle Principal DiPrima Selected for the Distinguished Fellows Cohort

By Jane Owen



Burns Middle School Principal Matthew DiPrima was one of four principals from Hillsborough County Schools to be selected by the Cahn Fellowship program to be a 2023-24 Distinguished Fellows Cohort.

DiPrima will attend 6 weekend conferences throughout the yearlong program. A large contingency from Hillsborough County went to the first conference of the year October 6-9. The group included Superintendent Van Ayers, Hillsborough County Chief of Schools Sue Burkett, Hillsborough Director of Leadership Development Teresa Campbell, and Principal DiPrima.

The Cahn Fellowship program provides advanced leadership development, nationwide networking opportunities between school leaders in metropolitan areas with an end goal to

improve public education. One of the core beliefs of the program is that school leadership has an enormous impact on student outcomes.

Hillsborough County Chief of Schools Sue Burkett is enthusiastic about DiPrima's selection as a Fellows Cohort.

"Having the opportunity to see the program, I believe the relationships established and the support provided by other principals will not only make Mr. DiPrima an even stron-

ger, more effective leader, but I believe he will find new energy and be able to take his experience and share it with his colleagues here in Hillsborough," Burkett said.

DiPrima is excited about the opportunities for personal growth and connection. He said that he truly bonded with other principals at the first conference. They kicked off the conference on Friday with seminars and then from Saturday until Monday, each day was spent at Gettysburg with historians discussing leadership with the generals involved in the Battle of Gettysburg.

"We were on the actual battlefields. It was not only insightful from the aspect of being an American, but it was insightful from what you learn from these other leaders across the country," DiPrima said. He added, "One of the things about history is that you learn what to do based on what others have done before you or what not to do."

DiPrima knew he wanted to be an educator early in life, in 5th grade. He has been principal of Burns Middle School for ten years.

"My priority is making sure students' school experience is the best experience they can have," DiPrima said.

A Cahn Fellowship motto is "Because Strong Principals Make Better Schools". For more information about Cahn Fellowship and the ways it benefits schools, visit [www.cahnfellowship.org](http://www.cahnfellowship.org).

# Bloomington High School Collects Donations for OASIS Opportunities

By Jane Owen

OASIS (Outreach Assisting Students in Schools) Opportunities is an organization that provides necessities to students in need in Hillsborough County. The non-profit has six programs that serve students (PreK- 12) in all 250 schools within the Hillsborough County School District. It was established in 2001 and has grown to service over 11,000 students per year. Bloomington High School is a drop-off site.

OASIS Opportunities Executive Director Dawn Shulman is grateful for the difference that Bloomington is having.

"Partnerships with organizations like Bloomington High School ensure that OASIS Opportunities can provide all students with equal access to essentials like clothing and hygiene items for school. These items are critical to helping students build their self-confidence, feel like they fit in with their peers, and meet school dress code requirements," Shulman said.

OASIS Opportunities works closely with school social workers. The social workers identify students in need and ensure they get the necessary resources to overcome barriers for attending school daily.

Flossie Parsley, Bloomington High School's social worker, has utilized OASIS Opportunities on a routine basis to ensure students have clothes to wear to school. She is thrilled that Bloomington continues to partner with OASIS.

"Prior to the pandemic, Bloomington personnel wanted to start their own clothes closet which was way out of the school's scope, so I reached out to OASIS to partner as being a drop-off site so that we could help them fulfill needs," Parsley said.

Donations for OASIS can be brought to Bloomington's front office. The most needed items include:

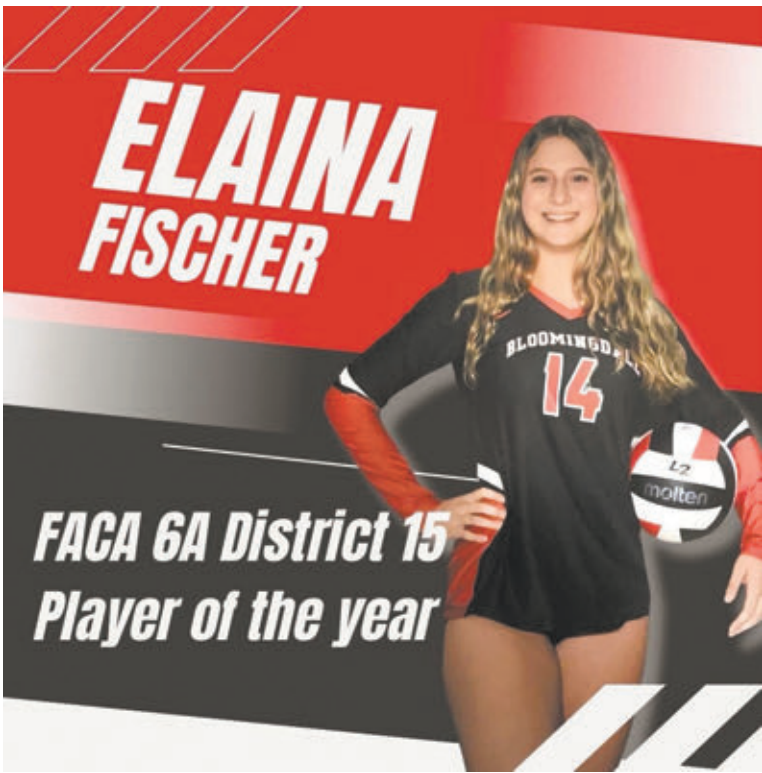
- **New or gently used clothing (uniform and non-uniform styles, including youth sizes 2T-Adult 5X)**
- **Tennis Shoes**
- **New socks and underwear (youth and adult sizes)**
- **Hygiene Items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, lotion, hair-brushes for all hair types and soap)**

Local families in need can get support for students by calling their school's office and requesting to speak to the school social worker. Businesses and community members can also help OASIS Opportunities serve students by hosting a clothing or hygiene item drive, volunteering at an OASIS site or sponsoring the OASIS Pop-Up Shop. For more information about OASIS Opportunities and how to help, visit [www.oasisopportunities.org](http://www.oasisopportunities.org). For questions about donating at Bloomington High School, contact Flossie Parsley (shown right): [flossie.parsley@hcps.net](mailto:flossie.parsley@hcps.net).



## BSHS Volleyball 6A District Champions

Bloomington High School's Volleyball team won the district championship game against Wharton on Friday, October 20. Junior Elaina Fischer was named FACA 6A District 15 Player of the Year.



## Cimino PTA Hosts Successful Cougar Challenge Walk-a-thon

Cimino Elementary's yearly fundraiser, The Cougar Challenge Walk-a-thon, was October 20th. The walk-a-thon is put on by Cimino PTA (Parent Teacher Association). The funds raised this year will be used to maintain the funding for teacher and staff events, grade level grants, club enrichment grants, media center support and appreciation for the Cimino staff.



Jessica Bussey-Woody, PTA VP Membership and Volunteers; Karen Steinke, PTA President; Lena Koshy, PTA VP Ways and Means; Rose Madison, PTA Secretary and Sara Solomon, PTA Treasurer

Thank you Cimino PTA for all you do for the school!

## BSHS Celebrates Homecoming with a new King and Queen and A Journey On The Nile Theme

Students, alumni, and community members made lasting memories at the Bloomington Senior High School Homecoming Game on Oct. 13 at Charley Harris Stadium. At halftime the Homecoming Court was presented and a new Homecoming King and Queen were crowned. The Rajun' Bull Band performed at the end of the game. The 2023 Homecoming dance took place Saturday night at BSHS with a theme of A Journey On The Nile.



Congratulations to 2023 Homecoming King Jacob Runyon and Homecoming Queen Madison DeJesus!

# Three Bulls Inducted Into Bloomingdale Athletic Hall of Fame

By Nick Nahas, Courtesy of the Osprey Observer



On October 13 before the football team's homecoming game, three Bloomingdale Bulls were inducted into the high school's Athletic Hall of Fame. The class includes current major league baseball player Richie Martin, former Lady Bulls soccer player Marissa Kazbour, and former Bloomingdale head baseball coach KB Scull.



Athletic Director Sara Bogue, with Hall of Fame inductees: KB Scull, Marissa Kazbour, and Richie Martin.

*"This is the first year having the Athletic Hall of Fame back since Covid. Dr. Peek started this tradition when he was the APA here, and I have the privilege to continue this great tradition! It was a great night celebrating our inductees and it was really special to see how many former coaches, players, and administrators came out to support them. When you talk about the hall of fame, it's not just about their amazing athletic accomplishments but also about the impact they have made on Bloomingdale as a whole. We have such a strong culture of community here and that is only possible through people like Marissa, KB, and Richie. It was truly an honor to recognize them.*

*I also have to say a big thank you to our Athletic Booster Club for all their work behind the scenes to organize this event!"* Bloomingdale Athletic Director Sara Bogue

Martin, a 2012 graduate, is currently a major league baseball free agent, and spent the last season with the Washington Nationals organization. He was selected by the Seattle Mariners out of high school, but decided to attend the University of Florida instead, where he was a three-year starter at shortstop. He was later selected 20th overall in the first round of the 2015 MLB draft, by the Oakland Athletics. Martin made his major league debut in 2019 with the Baltimore Orioles after being drafted by the organization number one overall in the Rule 5 draft. He is the only former Bloomingdale player that has made it to the major leagues. Martin was nominated by Bloomingdale baseball Head Coach Kris Wilken.

"I felt honored and very blessed," said Martin. "I felt very excited to get back and come and see everybody and just take it all in. When I was playing in high school, I just wanted to help the team win and be the best player and person I could be. I think things like this come as a byproduct."

Kazbour, a 2007 graduate, was a two-time County Player of the Year for the Lady Bulls. She led Bloomingdale to the 2006 state championship game and was a member of the U17 National team. She went on to play soccer for the Florida State Seminoles, where she helped lead her team to the national championship. She twice went on to become the Polk County Coach of the Year at George Jenkins High School and coached her team to a 2012 state final appearance. Kazbour currently coaches her daughter's U11 West Florida Flames team. She was nominated by her former high school head coach, Sue Peet.

"It means a lot. It's great that the school has this," said Kazbour. "I think it's great to be a role model for the kids growing up to say, 'hey, I want to be better than her.' I think it's wonderful. It's awesome for everyone to have a goal and see where the standard is."

KB Scull served as the Bloomingdale baseball head coach for 12 seasons, after being the head man for the Armwood Hawks the previous 10 seasons. In his 12 seasons at Bloomingdale, he led the Bulls to two state final fours and three district titles. He is the winningest coach in Bloomingdale history with 330 career wins. Scull continues to work as a teacher at the school, and can be seen at all athletic events as the Athletic Business Manager. He was also nominated by Kris Wilken.

"I was pretty shocked. I came in one morning and they said they wanted to see me and then they gave me an envelope and I opened it up and it was pretty cool. This is great," said Scull. "I got to see a lot of my former players and they were a big part of this."

Scull thanked former Athletic Director Donny Peek for starting this program several years ago. It was recently brought back after Covid. The inductees were selected by a panel of coaches, athletic boosters and administration.



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