



# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

VOL. XLIV



ISSUE 4



APR. 2024



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THIS MONTH

## THE BUNNY STOPS IN



## BLOOMINGDALE!

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PLEASE RECYCLE



*"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." Audrey Hepburn*



**YOUR COMMUNITY  
NEWSPAPER**

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



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**Tampa Bay  
Times**

**BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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BNA board meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Regional Library.

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**Directors at Large:**  
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Jessica Robertson  
BNA Office Manager

**BNA BRIEFS**

**BNA CALENDAR**

April 23 / BNA Monthly Meeting / 7 p.m. / Bloomingdale Regional Library

May 5 / Inaugural Food Truck Rally at Bloomingdale Baseball Field

August 6 / Music Bingo at Bullfrog Creek Brewery to Support Seeds of Hope

September 7 / Community Garage Sale

December 8 / Santa Visit

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\$42 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!**

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**A Note from the Editor**

It never ceases to amaze me how things seem to come to you when you're ready.

When I first moved to Valrico from Maryland, it was Bloomingdale that called me. I was transferring jobs and found myself asking my new coworkers if the area I picked was a good one – and overwhelmingly, everyone around me said it was one of the best. My experience this past decade agrees with that sentiment.

When Jane asked me to consider taking over the Gazette, I was nervous – not because I didn't think I could do the job, but because I knew what this community was for so many people, and I knew the importance of the Gazette. How could I possibly live up to the expectations?

But this transition, while a little bumpy, has been wonderful, and I'm so honored to be around people who care as deeply for their community as all of you. I saw that firsthand during the Bunny visits and felt it in the smiles of kids and their grown-ups alike. Bloomingdale is truly a special place.

Spring is a time for growth and renewed dedication. For me, and for the Gazette, that means a more proactive approach in gathering what's important to you and getting the word out there about community goings-on. It means that I want to hear directly from you and what you need to help this community grow more than ever.

My inbox is always open. Thank you for giving me this chance to give back to the community I love so dearly.

**Elise Cruz Aragon**  
Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette



**Attention Home Owners**



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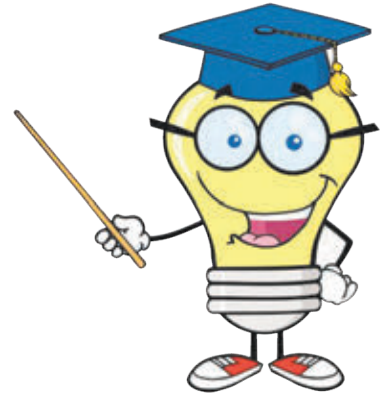
**Spotlight on Neighbor  
Elsa Morales**  
Meet Elsa Morales, the winner of our Membership Raffle. Morales won a basket valued at \$310 after our last BNA meeting. With her dues paid and a donation to the Bloomington Scholarship Fund, Morales is a model member of the community. She loves to frequent our local shops like Bloomington Pizza and Bump to Baby. Thank you for your continued support, Elsa Morales!



**Community Garage Sale at  
Providence Reserve**  
Mark your calendars for Providence Reserve's community garage sale. Located off of Bloomington and Providence, the sale will take place from 7 am to 4 pm on April 6th. Visitors can park near 10810 Talley Woods Ct to browse items for sale.



**Bloomington Smarties Stun  
with Their Academic Prowess**  
Last week, eight Bloomington students were honored with the Smarties Award. These students earned various academic distinctions, from perfect FSA scores, National Merit Commended and Finalist, to Sunshine State Math & Science Scholar. BSHS is extremely proud of the work these students have put into their academic journey and congratulate them on their achievements!





# YARD OF THE MONTH

**KATHY & SID ATWATER**  
**3503 SPRINGVILLE 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](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.

## NOT YOUR AVERAGE MUSIC SCHOOL!

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### UNIQUE SUMMER CAMPS ...

**Beginning to ROCK Camp**  
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**Songwriting Camp 3**  
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**6/17 - 6/28**

Want to write AND record a song? In this series, you'll workshop a song with a band and instructor, and get it ready for recording. You'll learn all about pre-production, song structure, and what kinds of things make a hit song. For rockstars with prior experience (nonrecording experience ok).

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**VOTING:**

- You may not take photographs or videotape inside or into a polling place on Election Day.
- Interviews with voters must be outside the polling place, after voters have voted. Poll workers are not authorized to do interviews. We are happy to arrange interviews with our Supervisor of Elections at our Elections Service Center at 2514 N. Falkenburg Rd. throughout the day.
- Each of our polling places opens at 7 a.m. and closes after the last person in line at 7 p.m. has voted.
- Voters must vote in the polling place assigned to their precinct. They can find their polling place at [VoteHillsborough.gov/FindMyPrecinct](http://VoteHillsborough.gov/FindMyPrecinct) or call (813) 744-5900.
- Vote By Mail ballots must be received in our office no later than 7 p.m. Election Day. Voters can drop them off at any of our five offices on Tuesday. Mail ballots may NOT be turned in at an Election Day polling place, but voters can have their mail ballot canceled if they want to vote in person instead.

**TURNOUT:**

- You can see unofficial turnout updates at [VoteHillsborough.gov](http://VoteHillsborough.gov) now and throughout Election Day.

**RESULTS REPORTING:**

- We begin reporting unofficial results at [VoteHillsborough.gov](http://VoteHillsborough.gov) after the polls close at 7 p.m. No results are reported before that time.
- We will open a media room in our Elections Service Center at 2514 N. Falkenburg Rd. at 6 p.m. and keep it open throughout results reporting. The results presented in the media room are the same results that appear on our website, [VoteHillsborough.gov](http://VoteHillsborough.gov).
- Follow @HillsboroughSOE on X/Twitter. We publish updates on the progress of our results reporting during the evening. If there are any technical issues during results reporting, that will also be shared on the platform.
- The election results reported on Tuesday are unofficial and will not include provisional ballots. Voters have until 5 p.m. March 21 to submit cure affidavits for Vote By Mail signature issues or additional information about provisional ballots. Overseas ballots dated on or before Election Day may be accepted up to 10 days after Election Day. Official results are scheduled to be certified by the Hillsborough County Canvassing Board on March 29, in accordance with Florida law.

**MEDIA RESOURCES:**

- Visit our newsroom (<https://www.votehillsborough.gov/About-Your-Elections-Office/Newsroom>) for:
  - Recommended polling places to visit on Election Day
  - Link to the 2024 Republican Presidential Preference Primary Election page, where you can find sample ballots, turnout and more
  - Link to public notices



**Prepare for  
Upcoming Elections  
with the East  
Hillsborough  
Democratic Club**

The meeting of the East Hillsborough Democratic Club will be on Tuesday, April 9 at 6:30 PM at Brandon Crossroads Bowl 609 Crater Ln Tampa 33619. You may also join on Zoom. The Club welcomes the candidate for the Hillsborough County Office of the Public Defender, Rocky Brancato and candidate for Hillsborough County Judge, Group 14, Linette “Starr” Brookins. Always go to the club calendar to register and check for updates at least an hour before meetings. For more information go to [www.easthillsboroughdems.org](http://www.easthillsboroughdems.org) or call (813) 645-6324.



# APRIL COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**April** is *National Poetry Month* and *National Humor Month*. Perhaps a limerick is in your future?

**April 1:** April Fool's Day

**April 9:** Eid al-Fitr

**April 13:** International Plant  
Appreciation Day

**April 15:** Last Day to File Taxes

**April 16:** National Librarian Day

**April 22:** Earth Day

**April 22:** Passover Begins at Sundown

**April 24:** Administrative Professional's Day

**April 30:** National Mahjong Day



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)

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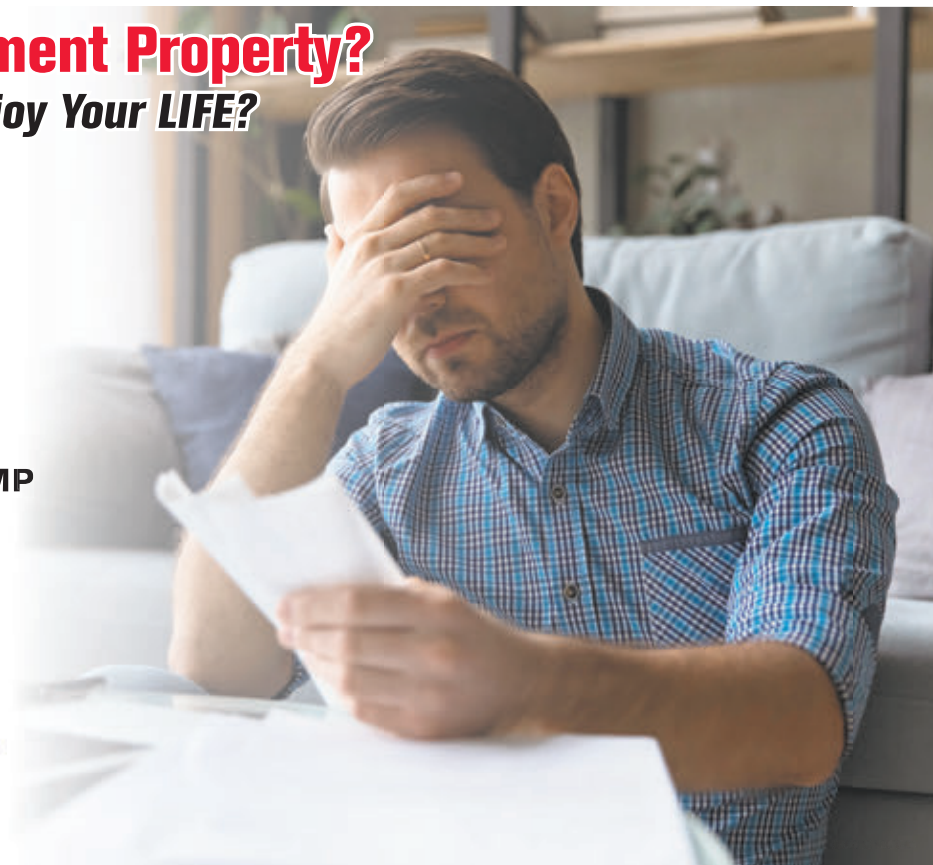


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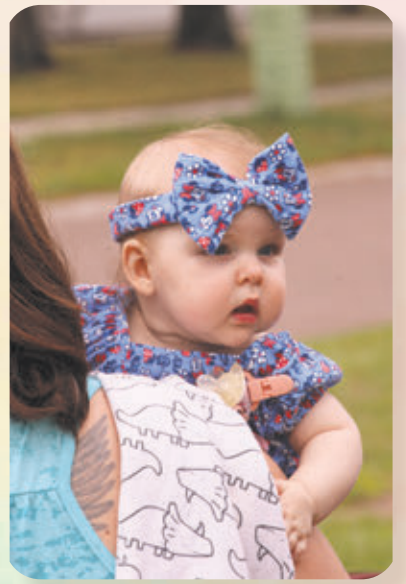
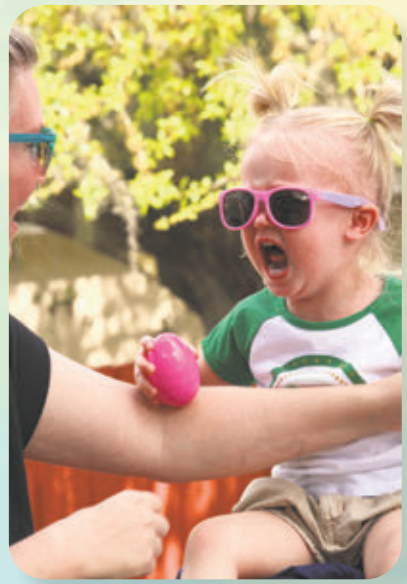
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On a warm, sunny St. Patrick's Day morning, the Easter Bunny graced Bloomingdale East and West with his presence. Accompanied by some friends who handed out eggs to young friends, the Bunny brought smiles to our residents as he hopped and stopped along the Bunny Trail.





# Recycling for a Better Bloomingdale this Earth Day

By Elise Cruz Aragon

With spring cleaning in the air and Earth Day just around the corner, residents are ready to refresh their homes and clear out those unused and much-loved items taking up space in the garage. We help with several ways you can clear out your clutter easily and reduce your impact on the environment.

## Schedule a Pick-Up

The simplest way to get rid of what you've got extra of is to schedule a Bulk Waste pickup with the county. This is a easy as calling the Solid Waste Customer Service line at (813) 272-5680. For this service, there's a fee of \$30 to \$50 for each item, and you must schedule the pickup before leaving your items at the curb.

## Take your Bulk Items to a Solid Waste Facility

Want to avoid paying the fee for pick-up? Take your items to one of the locations nearest us. Alderman Ford, located in Plant City, Hillsborough Heights, located in Seffner, or South County Landfill, located in Lithia, are open Monday to Saturday from 7:30 am to 5 pm. The Hillsborough Heights location also participates in the county's Donation and Waste Diversion Program, accepting items that can't be recycled for donation to reduce the environmental impact and save you a trip to Goodwill.

## Donate your Items

There's a lot that you can't recycle or throw away in your regular cans and need to find a new home another way. Local thrift stores such as Lighthouse Ministries are great spots to donate your gently used items to find a new home. With Lighthouse finishing their renovations soon, they've begun taking donations Monday to Saturday from 10 to 4. You can call (863) 687-4076 ext 261 to schedule donations of larger items.

## Reduce your Consumption

While not always easy, there's never been a better time to try to reduce your own consumption of landfill-bound items. Replace your single-use plastic bottle foaming hand soap with a glass bottle, and purchase tabs of foaming soap for a fraction of the price (and water used to make them). Bamboo tissues are excellent and sustainable substitutes to traditional Kleenex. And say goodbye to large plastic trash bags and hello to compostable ones that reduce the amount of waste in the landfills and help break down what's already there.

## Plant Something Beautiful

Of course, one of the best ways to positively impact the environment – and earn yourself a spot as Yard of the Month – is to plant something beautiful. This could be flowers, trees, or shrubs; anything local that encourages our fauna is great for the environment. You can even pick up mulch from the county at no charge to you! The closest center for Bloomingdale residents is the South County Solid Waste Facility located at 13000 U.S. Highway 41 in Gibsonton. Residents need to haul their own mulch and can get 2 cu-ft of mulch per year.



**REDUCE**



**REUSE**



**RECYCLE**

# Life at Bloomingdale

By Ava Cipriano



As a kid maneuvering through high school, there's this feeling of not belonging. Bloomingdale High school does an excellent job of finding activities and hobbies suitable for everyone's interests and making their experience as a whole a good one. This article is going to go through the different things that Bloomingdale has to offer.

Many teens have no idea what they truly want for themselves, but going to Bloomingdale can solve that. Many sports are offered which help students learn true healthy habits and how to work together. Going to Bloomingdale not only involves a school that teaches but involves life lessons as-well. Skills that you use in your everyday life are just as important as knowledge. Another well appreciated thing the administration does is adapt. Not every student is the same and they know that, so they create more opportunities in other areas. There are many clubs like Steering, Sga, Cancer Awareness, Best Buddies etc. These options help you find your people and feel extremely comfortable. Without the space to find yourself, you wouldn't be able to find others. Furthermore, you can't have school without having fun events. Sometimes there are contests or fundraisers where students are able to get out of their comfort zone and try new things. Bloomingdale overall teaches you how to find yourself and be the best version of you.





# Stylish Threads for All Stages Appear at Bump to Baby and The Purple Pear

By Elise Cruz Aragon



Finding the right maternity and new mother clothes has never been easier than it is at Bump to Baby Boutique.

Just off Lithia Pinecrest, Bump to Baby is designed to meet all design needs for woman and baby. As a woman-owned small business meant to bridge the gap between maternity and style, focusing their selection of pieces on high-quality fashion that lasts, Bump to Baby carries more than just your average maternity pants.

Owner and founder Paulette Wagner began her journey at the Brandon Mall, eventually moving into a full store in 2019. Wagner found that while her

daughter-in-law was pregnant, finding quality maternity clothing that kept her in style was a tall order. She quickly decided to solve that problem.

In addition to high-quality maternity clothing, Bump to Baby offers selections for baby and new mothers. As a joint home to The Purple Pear, there's gifts for everyone, including jewelry and accessories, baby essentials and shower gifts.

Open for all Wednesday through Saturday from 10 am to 5:30 pm and by appointment on Tuesdays, make your way down to Bump to Baby today to shop for the newest additions to the world and to make their mothers feel as special as they are.

BtB1 BtB2 courtesy of Bump to Baby



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# Eastern Hillsborough Community Band to Serenade with Songs from Around the World

By Elise Cruz Aragon

Photos appear courtesy of the Eastern Hillsborough Community Band at ehcb.org

If you're looking for a great way to hear beautiful music, look no further than the Eastern Hillsborough Community Band's upcoming concert. Set to take place at New Hope Methodist Church on Thursday, April 18th, EHCB's concert promises a night of music from around the world.

Director Kevin Lewis has been leading the band, comprised of 80 local musicians, since its inception in 2009. Weekly rehearsals help make the band performance ready, and the musicians range from professional and semiprofessional musicians to educators and amateurs who range in their professions.

This concert's theme is "Folk Songs from Around the World," and showcases tunes from all over. Lewis said in choosing the music that he looked for "great arrangements to do with the band that our audience would also enjoy." Selections will include multiple represented countries: England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Korea, Israel, selections from Latin America, the Caribbean, and America.

As always, all concerts are free to the public, but donations can be made at the door to help continue this beautiful tradition of connecting us through the common language of music. The concert will begin at 7:00 on April 18th.





# Ready, Set, Library! At Bloomingdale Public Library

By Elise Cruz Aragon

Get ready to celebrate a place for all of us this National Library Week. Running from April 7th to the 13th, the American Library Association's theme for this year's week is "Ready, Set, Library!" and it's to our own library you'll want to run.

Libraries are one of the most pivotal places for all citizens; the service they provide to the public is immensely important. With a return on interest of 3.66 to 1, libraries add much more to their local community than the dollars they use to operate. Service to the community is the cornerstone of their operations, bridging the gap for technology and education in ways that can't be delivered anywhere else.

Bloomingdale's library is home to more than just books – there's something for everyone in store. From late morning story time with librarians for different age groups to afternoon tech help, there's something for everyone at the Bloomingdale Library. And don't forget about the second-hand book shop, too! Funds from Friends of the Library go to help with special programs and events.

**NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK**  
**April 7-13, 2024**

**Ready Set Library!**

ALA American Library Association | Library Champions | CFP LANDSCAPE PRESS

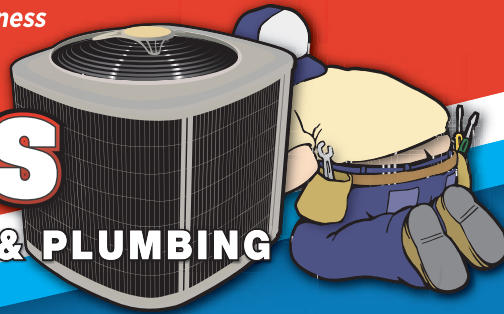
"Libraries connect our communities and enrich our lives in ways we may not realize, and one of my greatest pleasures is discovering the unexpected and beautiful things libraries offer. Join me in celebrating the gift of libraries everywhere and the adventures and opportunities they unlock for us every day. *Ready, Set, Library!*"



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# Bloomingdale Lady Bulls Basketball Team Reaches First State Championship Game In Program History

By Nick Nahas (Courtesy of the Osprey Observer)



Photos by Nicole Ferrante



Mengel reached 1,000 career points this season and will most likely break the school record for most career points before her career is over.



Izellah Kendrick made First Team All-Western Conference and the Florida Athletic Coaches Association All-State Team for the 6A division.



The Bloomingdale High School Lady Bulls basketball program had a dominant season, reaching its first state championship game in program history.



Noelle Mengel had the most points by a Lady Bull in one game with 36 and set a single-season scoring record with over 600 points.

The Bloomingdale High School Lady Bulls basketball program had a dominant season, reaching its first state championship game in program history. They ran into an elite St. Thomas Aquinas team and weren't able to pull it out in the end, finishing 30-1 overall.

Bloomingdale won its third district championships in a row, won its first Western Conference Championship in program history and was a perfect 30-0 going into the state championship. The team also won its second regional championship in three years.

"It's amazing to be able to know we made a mark, and for all our hard work to finally show, as we deserve, but I know it's not over, baby steps," said senior Tabitha Vega.

The team would not have been able to accomplish its goals without star Noelle Mengel. The junior three-year starter set major scoring records this season. She had the most points by a Lady Bull in one game with 36, and set a single-season scoring record with over 600 points. She also reached 1,000 career points this season, and will most likely break the school record for most career points before her career is over.

"It's something I'm really grateful to be a part of, and something I'll be able to remember and look back on," said Mengel. "It was great to be able to practice every day and be surrounded by a lot of great people and coaches."

Izellah Kendrick and Mengel made First Team All-Western Conference and Jatia Markes made the second team. Kendrick and Mengel also made the Florida Athletic Coaches Association All-State Team for the 6A division.

The Lady Bulls were led by 13-year Head Coach Joel Bower. Not only did the team win a record 30 games in a row, the head coach also recorded his 200th career win this season. He is proud of his team and how they battled back. They trailed in six games in the second half and were able to pull out victories. They avenged last year's regional final loss to Charlotte, beating them 49-47 in the regional quarterfinal.

"I just thought that as the season went on and we remained undefeated, I felt like every team that we played was playing their hardest and really gearing up for us," said Bower. "The way we hung in there and took everybody's best shot showed this team's resilience."

Bower thought the team was successful, not only because of the talent, but also the experience some of the players brought, along with leadership and work ethic. Bloomingdale has played deep into the playoffs the last three years, and has recorded an overall record of 82-10. Next year's seniors Mengel and Kendrick will most likely become the winningest players in program history. The team will return four of five starters next year. The Lady Bulls feel they have unfinished business and want to compete for the chance at a state championship again next season.

"The atmosphere of so many people caring for me such as coaches, parents, trainers, teachers, students, friends, and especially my family, was amazing," said senior Vega. "Everyone was always there for us no matter what. I will also miss the 82-10 record we had in the three years I was here, its always a nice little add-on."



# Sending off Seniors with Wisdom and Wishes

By Elise Cruz Aragon

As graduation season quickly approaches, the time-honored tradition of Red Letters arrives back at Bloomingdale Senior High School. Red Letters are often written by family members and teachers to wish the seniors off as they transition into the world, but any community member may take the time to write one. To write a Red Letter, there's no special requirements – only the best of intentions.

Towards the end of April and into May, the front office and guidance at BSHS will have a list of students who may need Red Letters written for them. These seniors are often the ones for whom community support is most important, as they may not have support from those closest to them. The best Red Letters are handwritten with as much love as possible. Community members looking to support our seniors can drop off their Red Letters at the front office. Envelopes can be left blank if not writing for a specific senior.



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# Bloomingdale Prom

Prom is April 20th from 7pm to 11pm at Westin on Harbor Island. Tickets will be available on MyPaymentsPlus.com beginning early April for \$65 and \$75 week of. Prom guest forms must be turned into Mr. Cummings in room 307 no later than April 9th.



Your Invited to the 2nd Annual Spring Cleaning

# Shred-A-Thon!



Date: April 20, 2024

Time: 9:00-11:00am

Location: Bloomingdale Golfers Club  
4113 Great Golfers Place, Valrico

**FREE TO YOU!** Bring your confidential documents for shredding in a secure and safe manner. All right here in your community!

\*Please do your part to prevent fires at this location by removing all non-paper items such as metal, lighters, trash and heavy plastics. This does not include paper clips, staples, binder clips or spiral notebooks.

I look forward to seeing you there!

**kw** SUBURBAN TAMPA  
KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY

**Mary West, Realtor®**  
GRI-ABR-SRS  
Cell: 813-763-9378  
Office: 813-653-9500  
Mary.West@kw.com  
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