

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXIV
Number 4

APRIL 2007 • THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

The Special Taxing district board outlines its current budget and projects.

PAGE 12

SHOW OF SUPPORT

Hundreds turned out for Relay For Life to support cancer survivors and research.

PAGE 4

INDEX

Births	11
Law Enforcement	16
Letters	11



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff Photos

Dave Cooley scoops up a handful of duckweed at a neighborhood pond cleanup last week. The project was organized by Bloomingdale and Southoak residents in conjunction with Hillsborough County's Adopt-A-Pond program.

ON GREEN POND

□ On the surface, the problems were obvious. What lies beneath came as a surprise.

By LAURA FRAZIER
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

A massive slick of duckweed floating atop a neighborhood pond in Brandon recently prompted some Bloomingdale and Southoak residents to plan a cleanup of their backyard oasis.

Before the neighbors could begin to rid the pond of the slimy green muck, they had some preliminary cleanup and clearing to do, with the help of Hillsborough County's Adopt-A-Pond program and volunteer students from Bloomingdale High School.

The group was prepared to wrestle with tall tangles of brush and weeds around the banks of the pond. They

See POND, Page 14

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 6

*BHA Board Member George May Joins
The Race For Honorary Mayor Of Brandon*



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The King Of Sandy Creek Manors

□ Bob Gannon is always willing to lend a hand or shoo a squirrel.

By LYDIA HARROD

Some of us, if we're lucky enough, have a neighbor like Bob Gannon. Someone who watches out for others, anticipates needs, lends a handyman's help, and is a one-man citizen's crime watch. Someone with a big smile, who

waves when you pass on the street, even if he doesn't know you. Someone who becomes your neighborhood "family."

According to his neighbors in the Sandy Creek Manors section of Bloomingdale West, Bob frequently comes to the aid of others as he putters in his garage. Like the time he ran to help a neighbor he saw struggling two houses down to move heavy furniture into the house. Or the time he decided to get out his bobcat to hoist shingles onto a neighbor's roof, before the

neighbor got home.

Bob also watches out for Vicky, his neighbor across the street, whose husband Tom travels most weeks. One time he rescued a squirrel that had come down to the chimney into Vicky's house. Another time, he removed a woodpecker from Vicky's attic.

The neighbors also play practical jokes on each other. Last month, when Vicky and Tom were awarded Bloomingdale's



Photo courtesy of Lydia Harrod

Bob Gannon is always on call to help his neighbors while he putters in his garage.

See KING, Page 15

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LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photos

A Positive Spin

Hundreds of participants turned out for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life in March at Bloomingdale High School. Groups collected pledges and camped out overnight at the school to celebrate cancer survivorship and raise money for research and patient support programs. At left, a team from Cimino Elementary School dressed as Monopoly game pieces and created a jail cell to "put cancer behind bars." At above right, Brittany Irving and Stephanie Johnson help assemble paper bag lanterns for the evening's luminaria ceremony to honor loved ones lost to cancer. At below right, kids lined up for a chance to spin a wheel of chance created by the MOMS Club of Brandon.



Your Inside Connections

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Commissioner's Corner



Al Higginbotham

Working Together We Will Make a Difference.

By **AL HIGGINBOTHAM**
Hillsborough County Commissioner, District IV

It has been more than four months since I took my first oath of public service, and each day since has brought with it new and exciting opportunities for broadening my horizons about the issues that we share in east Hillsborough County.

There is a common thread through our concerns - how we can improve services, keep a watchful eye on growth and manage spending. The first step toward success is building relationships as we work together in finding solutions.

These first days in office have been an opportunity for us to continue the conversation we started before I was elected and to begin laying the foundation for achieving results as we try to balance providing services and infra-

structure while keeping taxes low and Hillsborough County a great place to live, work, worship and raise a family.

Over the last several weeks, I had the great pleasure of touring the Bloomingdale neighborhoods with the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association. I also invited residents of FishHawk and Lithia to visit with me over lunch as we discussed the complex and dynamic forces shaping and changing eastern and southern Hillsborough County.

Through them, I heard you. I heard you on managing growth and transportation issues. I heard you on maintaining our parks and improving our libraries. I heard you on preserving our lifestyle and quality of life.

In the coming months, I hope to use Commissioner's Corner as a way to report to you on these issues and more. I will write on decisions facing the Board of County Commissioners and the impact of those decisions. Together, we will explore the intricacies of the issues we tackle.

As a native of Hillsborough County, your issues are mine too - our backyards are the same. The issues we face are complex and involve many competing interests. Sometimes people with similar goals will arrive at different conclusions on how to achieve them, and I usually hear from all sides.

The nuances of each issue are not always present in the headlines or captions, but I will confront each issue with an open mind and values-driven approach.

Please know that my office is always open to you. I can be reached by phone at 272-5740 or by e-mail at higginbothama@hillsboroughcounty.org. Additionally, my aides, Deanna Franklin and Jess Johnson, bring experience and expertise ranging from matters of statewide public policy and working with constituents to financial and real estate analysis and urban planning.

I look forward to continued learning and to working with you to find solutions to our most pressing issues. Working together we will make a difference.

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LINDA CHION KENNEY/Staff photo

George T. May IV, left, and Wayne Otto, left announce their candidacies for honorary mayor of Brandon at the Presidents' Roundtable meeting March 14 at Center Place.

May, Otto Announce Bids For Brandon Honorary Mayor

□ Additional candidates are welcome in the race.

By LINDA CHION KENNEY
lchion@mediageneral.com

The race for honorary mayor of Brandon got off to an early start with the announced candidacies of two men with good spirits.

"We got one good-looking one and one funny one," said candidate Wayne Otto, founder of Stagedoor Performing Arts Inc. and a longtime

Brandon resident and businessman.

"And we'll turn this town upside down," countered his opponent, George T. May IV, who refused to disclose which man fit which description.

Added Otto: "That's a good quote to start with."

And so the race is off to replace this year's honorary mayor, Billie Smith, even though it doesn't officially begin until June 1.

The mayor's race is run by the Roundtable

See MAYOR, Page 18

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Moms Spell Relief 'K-E-Y-S'

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE • APRIL 2007

□ Keys to the restrooms at Bloomingdale East Park are available for the asking.

A Gazette Report

The doors will remain locked, but access to the restrooms at Bloomingdale East Park is just a key away.

About a year ago, much to the relief

of park patrons, the Hillsborough County Parks Department installed new bathrooms at the Natures Way facility.

Less than a week later, however, the doors were locked to keep out vandals.

Jeff Mauch, area parks maintenance supervisor, said his staff tried for awhile to keep the building open during daylight hours. Mauch works out of the parks maintenance facility on Natures Way about a mile down the road from the park.

"We were keeping it locked at night, and one of my supervisors would come to

work at 6 a.m. and open it up," he said.

But the vandalism continued, even during the daytime.

"The problem was so bad, we had to lock it again," Mauch said

A group of moms at the park called Gazette staff last week to complain about the perpetually locked doors.

Mauch said anyone who uses the park can stop by his office and pick up a key -- for keeps.

"We don't like to build a nice bathroom like that and have people unable to use it, but the vandalism was just horrible. We

could keep it open all the time, if that's what the community wants, but believe me, you wouldn't like that either."

Mauch said he would put a sign on the restroom doors with instructions on how to obtain a key. "We (parks staff) will clean 'em, stock 'em and keep 'em locked, and anyone who wants a key is welcome to sign one out. We as a community can work together on this."

The parks maintenance office, at 1626 Natures Way, is open weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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Crash Victim's Family, Friends Continue Fight For Legislation

□ In the year since Katie's death, hundreds of students from Durant, Bloomingdale and Newsome High School have signed a "Cross Your Heart" promise to always wear seatbelts.

By D'ANN WHITE
dwhite2@mediageneral.com

A year after her best friend was killed in a car crash on Interstate 75, Lindsey Atkinson is still too heartbroken to share her memories of 16-year-old Katie Marchetti.

On March 4, the one-year anniversary of the Durant High School junior's death, Atkinson gathered with Marchetti's parents, Laura and Vin, Marchetti's younger brother, Andrew, Marchetti's grandparents, Dianne and Dick Sipes and more than 50 other friends at River Hills Country Club to remember the vivacious teen.

The friends, most are now seniors, sat around eating a picnic lunch, discussing college plans and a future that will not include Katie Marchetti. Then they formed a circle in a field and, one by one, shared a memory of their friend. When



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Wearing their Katie Marchetti Memorial Foundation T-shirts to remind people to "cross their hearts and buckle up," friends Jenna Taylor, Brittany Zink, A.J. Padron, Heather Ewing, Barbara Bricker and Chris Dohey were on hand to remember their friend on the one-year anniversary of her death in a car crash March 4, 2006.

See SEATBELT, Page 19

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Photo Courtesy of Rotary's Camp Florida

Anna Maria Group Donates \$10,600 To Rotary Camp

At Rotary's Camp Florida in Brandon Feb. 26, from the left, Rotary Club of Anna Maria Island representatives Barry and Dantia Gould, Ed Misner, Pamela Schlueter, Don Fernald and, seated, Stephen Schlueter, present a check for \$10,600 to camp directors Richard Reymeyer, Mike Edenfield and Colin Campbell. The Anna Maria Island group raised the funds at its annual Extravaganza. Rotary's Camp Florida, founded in 1982 by Brandon Rotary Clubs, is owned and operated by rotary districts throughout Florida. The non-profit camp provides happy and life-changing experiences for kids with overwhelming challenges.

SPACE WALK OF BRANDON

Inflatable rides are not just for children but the young at heart as well. That's why Tanya Doran, a Riverview resident for more than 35 years, recently opened Space Walk of Brandon, an affiliate of Space Walk & Inflatable Zoo, a name synonymous with quality, safety and -- FUN! Space Walk is the industry's originator and leader of inflatable amusement rentals in the United States and has been in business for 40 years. Tanya's husband, William, and their 9-year-old son, help operate this Christian-based, family business. Tanya loves seeing people having a good time. Space Walk of Brandon offers a variety of inflatables for parties or events at home, school, church or business. Whether you rent a large water slide or a super-kids inflatable clubhouse, Space Walk has something to keep every child or adult amused. The company is fully licensed and insured, and its inflatables are in excellent condition and fully sanitized.

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In A Glass House

Artisan Susan Ochenrider creates custom stained glass pieces of all shapes and sizes.

By LAURA FRAZIER
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

Susan Ochenrider sees the world through brilliantly colored glass.

Twenty-one years ago, a little stained glass box for sale at a shop in Brandon caught her eye. Delighted with the piece, but not its price, the high school teacher took a six-week class in stained glass making, and an artisan was born. She hasn't put her glass nippers down since 1986.

Back then, Ochenrider taught psychology and honors govern-

ment full-time at Armwood High School. She honed her craft in her free time, gradually transforming a spare bedroom into an art studio and her Dogwood Hills home into a stained-glass showcase.

Her earliest creations were small, decorative items she made for family and friends. But over the next 18 years, her hobby grew into a full-fledged business: Susan's Stained Glass World. Ochenrider retired in 2004 after a 35-year career with the Hillsborough County School District.

Today, she designs and creates commissioned stained glass pieces of all shapes and sizes. Her house is filled with a kaleidoscope of luminous color, from stained glass lampshades and small window hangings to permanent windows, doors and



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photo

Susan Ochenrider works in her south Brandon home studio, beneath a permanent window she designed and created.

See GLASS, Page 17

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Commission Proposes Free Ride For Seniors

HART to consider request.

A Gazette Report

At its March 7 meeting the Hillsborough County Commission unanimously voted to support free public bus service on regular routes in Hillsborough County for residents aged 65 and older.

The agenda item was introduced by Commissioner Brian Blair, who said, "Our seniors deserve a break."

The commission agreed to refer the proposal to the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit authority, known as HART, for consideration and possible implementation.

Chairman Ricardo Roig confirmed the authority's board will consider the change at an upcoming meeting.

HART spokeswoman Jill Cappadoro said, "Any decision to change fares would begin with HART board action, followed by opportunities to hear from the public on the proposal. If approved, implementation would not occur until late 2007."

LETTERS

Send letters to lfrazier@mediageneral.com or Editor, *The Bloomingdale Gazette*, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594. Submissions are subject to editing and will be published as space permits.

Don't Block Sidewalks With Parked Cars

I read with interest the article about parking on the grass areas within Bloomingdale (on www.bloomingtongazette.com). I think it would also be appropriate to mention that parking across the bottom of someone's driveway whereby your car is now blocking a sidewalk is not just inconsiderate, but illegal. Unfortunately the Sheriff's Office will not enforce this law, as it is "unpopular." Many Bloomingdale residents have children who are forced out onto the road in order to pass by vehicles that block the sidewalk. Others are in a wheelchair or have disabilities

that make it difficult to pass. The homeowner can be held liable for damages if they block a sidewalk and someone is injured while trying to get around the illegally parked vehicle. Pass the word!

Joe Bledsoe, Heritage Park

Pet Owners Must Do Their Duty

I am writing this e-mail both as a concerned citizen residing in the Bloomingdale community and an environmental toxicologist. I have lived in my home for almost three years now, but recently I've been noticing more and more pet waste along Natures Way and in my own front yard. I spend a lot of time out of doors, as do many others, walking my dogs, jogging, and bicycling. I always bring along grocery bags when I have my dogs to clean up after them. It is very easy to do, and there are

trash receptacles placed along Natures Way to dispose of pet waste as well as other litter. In recent months walking has turned into a dangerous attempt to keep ones shoes clean as many pet owners are not cleaning up after their pets. I have even seen it left on sidewalks and other hard-to-avoid areas. A public education campaign of some sort is needed to curb this activity. Not only is it unpleasant to walk around and attempt to avoid the waste, it is also a serious public health concern. Disease is spread by pet waste, and it increases the bacteria and nutrients loads to our many ponds and water systems in the neighborhood. We all want to keep ourselves, our children and our pets healthy. In order to do this, pet waste must be picked up and disposed of properly.

Jacquelyn Champion, Spring Lake

BIRTHS

Welcome To Bloomingdale

Birth announcements courtesy of Brandon Regional Hospital.

Marley Jade Lessard, a girl, born Jan 17, to Jennifer Lessard and Aaron Lessard.

Dailyn Ludon Wood, a boy, born Jan. 24, to Heather Collingwood and Jerry Wood.

Lauren Kate Slade, a girl, born Feb. 1, to Molly and Peter Slade.

Zachary Christopher Lewis, a boy, born Feb. 2, to Crystal Hood-Lewis and Christopher Lewis.

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Fiscal Year 2007 Budget

For information about the The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District or the Fiscal Year 2007 budget, call 684-6667, E-mail bloomingdale.district@verizon.net or log on to www.bloomingtongazette.com.

BSTD Revenues, FY 2007

Special Assessments: \$497,500
Donations: \$0
Interest: \$3,902
Total Gross Revenues: \$501,402
Minus 5%: -\$25,070
Plus Debt Proceeds: \$0
Plus Beginning Fund Balance: \$242,031
Total Revenues: \$718,363

BSTD Expenditures, FY 2007

Professional Services: \$2,000
Accounting and Auditing: \$13,100
Other Contractual Services: \$55,052
Travel and Per Diem: \$150
Communication Services: \$1,200
Postage: \$2,500
Utility Services: \$22,000
Rentals and Leases: \$19,298
Insurance: \$1,125
Repair and Maintenance: \$441,362
Printing and Binding: \$500
Other Charges and Obligations: \$1,475
Office Supplies: \$1,500
Operating Supplies: \$100
Books and Publications: \$70
Total Operating Expenditures: \$561,432

Capital Outlay, FY 2007

Land: \$0

Buildings: \$0
Improvements: \$0
Machinery and Equipment: \$5,000
Total Capital Outlay: \$5,000

Debt Service, FY 2007

Total Debt Service: \$0

Non-Operating Expenses, FY 2007

Budget Transfers: \$19,900
Reserve For Future Capital: \$0
Reserve For Contingency: \$0
Reserve Fund Balance Carried Forward: \$132,031
Total Non-Operating: \$151,931
Total Expenditures and Non-Operating: \$718,363

Line Item Descriptions

Professional Services: Attorney
Accounting and Auditing: Accountant, Audit, Consultant
Other Contractual Services: Property Management, Secretarial Service, Dumpster
Travel and Per Diem: Travel, Meals
Communication Services: Telephone, Postage
Utility Services: Electric, Water
Rentals and Leases: Office Rent, Office Cleaning
Insurance: Surety Bonds, Insurance
Repair and Maintenance: Painting, Lawn Maintenance, Pest Control
Other Charges and Obligations: Legal Ads, DCA Fees

PROPERTY MANAGER'S REPORT

A Gazette Report

Al Devney, Bloomingdale Special Taxing District property manager, reports the following maintenance and repair activities took place in the month of February 2007:

- The aluminum fence on the Erindale side of Heritage Park that had been vandalized was repaired.

- Three fence contractors looked at the heavily damaged fence on Erindale, by the Eagle Pointe subdivision. They were asked to submit a proposal for repairs.

- Handy Hands cleaned, repaired and painted eight trash receptacles in the area. This should make them last another year. They also removed two large limbs broken by tall vehicles.

- The eight American flags were raised to full staff after the mourning period for President Ford had been completed.

- ZK Construction repaired the broken pillar and wall at the corner of Canoga Park and Garnet.

- The Hillsborough County customer service department was called to remove the tree on Bell Shoals that had blown down in a storm.

- Valley Crest Landscaping trimmed oak trees on Garnet,

Glenhaven and Greenhollow to 13'6" to meet DOT requirements.

- Requests for proposals, to trim the trees on Natures Way from Culbreath in the south to Moondale have been mailed. The proposals are due March 13.

- The 156 oak trees that need to be trimmed on Natures Way were marked for the contractors.

- The walls to be painted next year have been identified; estimated cost has been determined.

- There are 40 locations where landscaping needs to be replaced this year. The estimated cost and a bill of materials for each location has been determined.

- A request for proposals to repaint various signs in the area has been mailed to numerous contractors. The proposals are due back in March.

- In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, there were 29 bags of trash, a new spare tire, 18 white pavers, two baby blankets, a shirt and \$.37 cents. Additionally, there were 35 light bulbs replaced (seven had been vandalized), and 37 snipe signs were removed. The beverages of choice were Diet Coke with lime for soft drinks, Sea Dog, Wild Blueberry Wheat Ale for beer and Black Velvet for distilled spirits.

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BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS Spring Jubilee Features Annual Traditions, New Attractions

□ The festival will be held April 12-15 on the grounds of St. Stephen Catholic School in Riverview.

By LAURA FRAZIER
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

The grounds of St. Stephen Catholic School in Riverview will be transformed

next week into an 8-acre festival replete with rides, entertainment, food and amusements.

The sixth annual Spring Jubilee, hosted by St. Stephen Catholic Church in Valrico, kicks off Thursday, April 12, and runs through Sunday, April 15, on the school grounds off Boyette Road at 10428 St. Stephen Circle.

Frank Wuco, Jubilee chairman, said a number of new features this year will complement the festival's established traditions.

In addition to the annual Saturday Chili Cook-Off, 5K race and fireworks display, the U.S. Special Operations Command parachute team will jump into the action around 2 p.m. April 14.

"We'll have a few members of the jump team parachute onto the Jubilee grounds. It's very exciting to see," Wuco said.

Also new this year, local restaurants will provide food under the big-top while Arnold's Carnival Favorites tempt appetites on the midway.

"Our food selection will be an ava-

lanche of flavors from some of our favorite local restaurants," Wuco said. Restaurants partnering with the Spring Jubilee include Westshore Pizza, Beef O'Brady's, Shell's Fresh Seafood, Moe's Southwest Grill, 40th Street Latin Restaurant, Jaymer-Q Southern BBQ, and Uncle John's Grilled Brats, Country Sauces and Turkey Legs.

Festival-goers also can reserve a seat for a sit-down dinner catered by Outback

See JUBILEE, Page 17

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LAURA FRAZIER/Staff Photos

Bloomington and Southoak neighbors gathered March 31 to clear and clean up their backyard pond.



Neighbors and Bloomington High School volunteers shove off to start clearing overgrowth from the banks of the pond. Below, Jordan Pulliam and Matt Cooley clear brush from property surrounding the pond.



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POND

Continued From Page 1

were't fazed by the bevy of beer bottles and fast food wrappers they pulled from the surface of the water. What they discovered beneath, however, came as a rude shock.

Lisa Pulliam, who lives in one of 17 homes surrounding the retention pond, described the group's disturbing underwater discovery.

"The whole bottom of this pond is absolutely covered with bags of dog poop," she said.

The neighbors did some asking around and discovered – to their disgust – where the knotted grocery store bags containing pet waste were coming from.

"Apparently some of the neighbors out walking their dogs in Southoak and Sandy Creek Manors in Bloomington are picking up the (waste) with the bags, which is great. But then they are tossing the used bags down the storm drains," Pulliam said.

Dave Cooley, who organized the cleanup, thinks the offending pet owners believe, "out of sight, out of mind," when they toss the bags and other trash into the curbside drains. But they're wrong, he said.

"The stuff does not just disappear," Cooley said.



Hillsborough County Adopt-A-Pond installed permanent markers on all curbside drains that feed into the pond.

"Whatever goes into those storm drains winds up in the pond and in my back yard."

As part of its Adopt-A-Pond program, the county recently installed storm drain markers in the neighborhood. The signs, posted on drains

See POND, Page 15

Hillsborough Recognized For Its Music Programs

A Gazette Report

The American Music Conference has named Hillsborough County Public Schools as one of "The Best 100 Communities for Music Education" for the sixth time in the survey's eight year history.

The nationwide web-based survey of public and private schools questions teachers, administrators, school board members, parents and community leaders in all 50 states. It

includes detailed questions about program funding, enrollment, instruction time, classroom facilities, community and district support for the music programs, and other related matters.

The survey was sponsored by NAMM, The International Music Products Association; the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation; the National School Boards Association; and the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, among others.

POND

Continued From Page 14

that feed into the pond, serve as reminders that whatever goes into the drains winds up in the pond.

Other wayward items the neighbors pulled from the pond include large pieces of lumber, freebie newspapers still in their plastic wrappers, submerged drink bottles filled with pond water and a chaise lounge.

The neighbors and volunteer students from Bloomingdale High School gathered at the pond on Cooley's Southoak property last weekend to clear some brush and to fish for duckweed.

They took advantage of the Saturday afternoon breeze, which blew the floating green slime to one end of the water.

"When it gets over to one side, we're going to use a silt fence to pull it out. It's wet and very heavy," Cooley said. The

group also planned to use grappling hooks to pull more doggie bags from the bottom of the pond bed.

Once the water is clear and the sunken treasure is removed, the neighbors will meet with Adopt-A-Pond staff to plant beneficial plants and flowers around the pond.

They plan to continue regular annual maintenance of the back yard pond.

"The duckweed and other invasive growth is the result of lawn fertilizer runoff," Cooley said.

"Everyone fertilizes their lawn, right? So when it rains, it washes into the drains and the pond. The runoff is so rich in fertilizer that the invasive stuff just takes off."

"If you don't have good plants, nuisance plants will grow."

For information about Adopt-A-Pond, contact program manager John McGee, 307-1785 or mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org.

Neighbors Thank Cleanup Sponsors, Volunteers

The Bloomingdale and Southoak pond cleanup group would like to thank the following persons and organizations for helping with their project:

John McGee, Hillsborough County Adopt-A-Pond
Shelley Blood, Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association
McDonald's
Sweetbay Supermarket
Papa John's Pizza
Carvel
Wal-Mart
Publix
Maggie Coker
Bryan Diaz
Taylor Merk
Mary Morgan
Taylor O'Brien



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Wild hair

Cimino Elementary School principal Debbie Talley, pictured with a group of kindergarten students, rewarded her staff and students' fundraising efforts by coloring her hair purple, on the school's live closed-circuit TV morning show. The school raises money each year for the American Cancer Society, and participates in the Relay For Life. Students and faculty raised more than \$14,400 this year. Since the school opened in 2002, it has raised more than \$70,000 for the American Cancer Society.

KING

Continued From Page 3

Yard of the Month, Gannon quietly went over, retrieved the sign and planted it in his own yard.

Bob also dog sits, lends out his tools, calls you late at night to let you know you left your garage door open, and, if asked, helps with everyday home repairs.

Bob lives with his wife, Shannon, and daughters Marlena, 14, and Meghan, 12, and four cats. The Gannons demonstrate good citizenship to their girls every day. Recently, when renters

moved in next door with few possessions, the Gannons came to the rescue with an air mattress, pots and pans, and dishes to give their new neighbors.

The Gannon's good attitude and willingness to help out is what makes Bloomingdale a great place to call home.

Lydia Harrod is a Bloomingdale resident and BHA board member.

Editor's note: If you have great neighbors, we'd like to meet them. Call 681-2051 or e-mail info@bloomingdalegazette.com.

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Hitting home

Travis Parker, 12, a third baseman for the Bay Area Bobcats, an AAU team based at Bloomingdale, hits an out-of-the-park home run Feb. 24 at the Rumble in the Jungle Tournament in Apopka. Parker, the only 12-year-old to hit a homer in the tournament, hit the ball about 340 feet over the towering 10-foot fence in left-center field. Coach Fred Campbell said, "He's developing into a power hitter." Parker, who has played about five years, is batting 500.



Photo courtesy of Fred Campbell

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Visit Buccaneers.com or TBO.com to nominate a Mother for this special event.

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Keep A Close Eye On Kids

By PETE MAURER
Bloomingdale Community
Resource Deputy

So much is going on in our fast-paced world today that sometimes we can get lost in the never-ending events of the world. Sometimes it takes tragedy to bring us back down to earth and makes us take the time to get our life's priorities straight.

One example was the recent kidnapping -- and thankfully the safe return -- of a young boy, just a short distance from his own home. This is just not something we think possible in this day and time, but it did happen.

While this senseless event was taking place, the months of grief and waiting finally came to an end with the trial of the cold-blooded murderer of Jessica Lunsford. The details of the events of this tragic story were like something out of a sick serial murderer movie, definitely not what we would expect to happen in a neighboring county, and not that far from our own homes.

Hopefully, justice will be carried out to the fullest extent. Some folks hope for closure for the family, but how can they really find it? They'll never forget Jessica and what happened to her, and neither should the parents of other young children. They should all remember every day that in only a few short minutes, the lives of their families can be changed forever.

Spring is here, soon to be followed by summer. In this beautiful state, that means kids want to be outdoors. That means open doors, parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, malls and many other areas that sexual predators are known to exist.

It's just a couple of short-months until school is out. Now is the time to be sure both you and your children are ready for the long days of summer. These seem to be the prime days for these vultures to come out of their nests.

Those of us who work in law enforcement come face to face with tragic events like these all the time. Even with our many years of experience, we still can't answer the inevitable question, "why?" Why do these criminals do what they do to others, especially those so young? We must keep on doing all we can to protect those we love. To do this, we need the help of every member of our community.

Have you taken the time to sit down and carefully explain to your children, boys and girls, how important it is to be aware of their surroundings, to be cautious of strangers and what to do if someone tries to harm or abduct them?"

If your answer is yes, please continue to know where your children are and who they're with. Build a relationship of trust and concern with them. Teach them to take care of themselves.

If your answer is no, then you must take the time to do what is needed as soon as possible. It only took a few minutes for Jessica to be abducted, and only with the hard work of hundreds of law enforcement workers was her final fate known.

We don't have to become paranoid and terrorized by these criminals. Most of the people around us are good, but we must all face the fact that some are not. It is critical that both parents and children learn more about what to do to protect themselves. Most of those who are abducted don't get second chances.

Many groups in our community are involved in helping parents and children prepare for the unseen dangers in our world. YMCAs offer special classes in self-defense. Many Web sites contain excellent information. It's merely a matter of taking the time to get informed and take action now!

One additional step that can

See LAW, Page 19



Brandon News file photo

The midway at Spring Jubilee 2007 will feature more than 35 attractions, from kiddie amusements to big-thrill rides.

JUBILEE

Continued From Page 13

Steakhouse and served by the St. Stephen Men's Club.

Debuting alongside the traditional Knights of Columbus beer tent, Bamboo's Martini Bar of FishHawk Ranch will offer full cocktail service.

On the midway, a new thrill takes up residence this year. One of 35 rides provided by Arnold Amusements, "Big Ben" is billed as a super-thrill ride reminiscent of the Tower of Terror at Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando. The Jubilee is third behind the State Fair and Strawberry Festival in having the most rides of any festival in the Tampa Bay area.

Along with new thrills, expanded dining options and added attractions, comfort and safety improvements are also in store.

"We have air-conditioned men's and women's lavatories, and a fully staffed, round-the-clock medical station manned by nurses and doctors, brought to us courtesy of Dr. Jacquie Dawson and Family

Medical Care of Riverview," Wuco said.

Festival organizers were excited this month to announce the grand prize up for grabs in their annual raffle: a 2007 Pontiac G5 Sport Coupe, courtesy of James-Rivard Pontiac-GMC on State Road 60 in Brandon.

"A car as our raffle grand prize -- now that's a great first," Wuco said.

Spring Jubilee proceeds benefit St. Stephen Catholic School, the Brandon Outreach Clinic, All Children's Hospital and the Don and Erika Comprehensive Breast Program at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute.

Admission to the festival, including fireworks and entertainment, is free. Unlimited-use arm-bands (ride all the rides for one price during a session) are \$20, or \$17 with a Spring Jubilee ad clipped from The Tampa Tribune or The Brandon News. Information: 689-7174 or www.springjubilee.com.

GLASS

Continued From Page 10

kitchen cabinets with custom-made inlays.

One of the smallest pieces she created was a Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity paddle -- for display purposes only, of course.

"The paddle was the hardest because the pieces of glass were so small. They were awkward to cut and difficult on the hands," she said.

The largest piece she's crafted was commissioned in 2005 by the Brandon Chamber of Commerce.

"It was really neat when they asked me if I would build a piece for the new chamber building (on Pauls Drive). I thought it was going to be a small piece."

At no cost to the chamber, Ochenrider created a large, two-panel beveled glass piece with clear glaze. The panes, roughly the size of sliding

glass doors, serve as a partition between the chamber's lobby and library.

"They allowed me to have all kinds of artistic freedom, which was wonderful. It took me a couple months, and all my energies went into those pieces. I came up with a design that incorporates the chamber's logo."

Tammy Bracewell, Brandon Chamber president, said Ochenrider's creation is a dramatic focal point inside the building's main entrance.

"It is beautifully simple and elegant," Bracewell said.

"When she offered to create a piece for our new building, we were just thrilled."

Likewise, Ochenrider was thrilled to create the piece, and delighted with the positive reviews she received from chamber officials.

"I enjoy making things and making people smile. It makes me feel good."

Information: (813) or www.susansstainedglassworld.com



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SAY YOU SAW IT IN
THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Continued From Page 6

Charities of Greater Brandon Inc., more commonly known as the Presidents' Roundtable. The group also sponsors the Brandon Fourth of July Parade.

The mayor's race is won by the candidate who raises the most money for charity from June 1 to the morning of the parade. Ten percent of all proceeds are given to the roundtable, whose membership is open to representatives from all greater Brandon area charities and civic organizations.

"This promises to be a banner year for the mayor's race," said longtime roundtable member and past president, Steve Saunders. "Wayne Otto is neat as can be and just a real character and he's bringing to the race

a group that traditionally has not been represented, which is community theater, and a cause that is noteworthy. And George is well-known, a past chamber chairman and board member of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association. He's been around for a good while and he's representing the Greater Brandon Community Foundation."

Otto, owner of Otto's Doors on Adamo Drive, is raising money for a Brandon Performing Arts Center building fund. He brought an artist's rendering of the theater, a \$5 million proposition, to the roundtable meeting March 14.

"I think it's evident that there's a lot of art in the community, a lot of dancers, musicians

and actors, and they all need a place to perform," Otto said. "Right now, it's catch-can where everybody goes. Dance studios, for example, go to Lakeland or the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, and we ought to have a space large enough to put on the recitals right here in Brandon."

Otto is not deterred that his race will raise only a smidgen of what's needed to fund an eventual building.

"We've got to start somewhere, and the mayoral campaign is where we're going to get started," Otto said. "To get state and federal grant money, you have to show commitment. You have to show that you are out there working to make this happen."

Saunders lent his support to the building, saying that the "arts are representative of the quality of life in your community."

"I hope some of our developers and the chamber will get behind it and support it. This is the kind of thing that has the potential for really bringing the community together," Saunders said. "Right now we go to Tampa for the chamber's annual banquet and the Center Place patron party. What's wrong with that picture? We need a big place, a ballroom, out here in Brandon. But we also need a big theater, which would be a wonderful place also for large town hall meetings."

For his part, May said he is raising money on behalf of the Greater Brandon Community Foundation and the American Business Women's Association, his sponsoring organizations.

They are raising funds to build a temporary home for children in need of emergency shelter in Brandon. The 48-bed home, he said, would give law enforcement a place to house children temporarily while foster homes can be found.

"Deputies go out and take custody of these children who are affected by domestic abuse, serial violence and (adults using) drugs and they need a place to go," May said. "At this home they can stay for up to 30 days, and if they come with a sibling, up to 60 days."

Saunders said he finds both causes commendable and stressed that additional candidates are encouraged to join the race.

The two candidates have already planned fundraisers.

Otto plans a June 17 dinner theater staging of "Love Letters" at Center Place, followed by a June 23 talent show open

to all ages. Otto said he hopes to have the finals broadcast on television. There will be a fee to compete and an admission to attend the finals. A June 16 golf tournament also is on tap, as well as additional fundraisers not yet determined.

May has invited Otto, and any other mayoral candidate who steps up, to a "Bribe the Mayor" kickoff June 1 at O'Brien's Irish Pub on Lumsden Road. Anyone interested in an administrative position, such as town dog-catcher, is invited to bribe his or her way into office, he jokingly said.

"It's a fun way to kick off the race," May said.

May is also planning a June 9 Baby Boomers' Birthday Bash and a June 30 bachelor's auction at the Palmetto Club at Fish-Hawk Ranch in Lithia. Other events include a golf tournament and a "Full Monty" show for which the Brandon Blues Brothers will open. May takes on the Dan Ackroyd character of Elwood Blues and Michael Meegan personifies John Belushi's portrayal of Elwood's brother, Jake.

Saunders said the candidates are not supposed to raise money before June 1, and that includes securing corporate sponsorships and donations.

"Technically, no, but by the same token the candidates have to plan things in advance, so that's happened before where people line things up and have things happen before the first," Saunders said. "You shouldn't manipulate the system, so they shouldn't be getting commitments for corporate donations before June. But if you get them, great. Remember, no one loses. All the money's raised for charity and it's all for the good of the community."



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- Chili Cook-Off: Texas comes to Florida
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- Win a New Car! Brand New 2007 Pontiac G5 courtesy of James-Rivard Pontiac-GMC

Schedule of Events

Thursday, April 12

- Opening Ceremony 4 p.m.
- Midway Rides Open 5-9 p.m.

Friday, April 13

- Midway Rides Open 5-10 p.m.
- Take Note Jazz Combo 7-9 p.m.
- The Moneypenny Band 9-11 p.m.
- Midway Rides Open 5-11 p.m.

Saturday, April 14

- Music Showcase 12-1p.m.
- Chili Cook-off 12-3p.m.
- Julestarz Dancers 2:30-3p.m.
- Village Players 4-5p.m.
- Taylor Taylor Band 7-10p.m.
- Fireworks 10 p.m.
- Midway Rides Open noon -11p.m.

Sunday, April 15

- Rob St. John Bagpipes 4-5 p.m.
- Midway Rides Open noon-9 p.m.

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SEATBELT

Continued From Page 8

it was Atkinson's turn, she found she couldn't speak.

"It's still too painful," she said later, wearing a pink shirt, Marchetti's favorite color, with the epithet "RIP Katie" on the back. Instead she cried with friend Nikki Hall while Thomas Hoffman attempted to comfort them.

Marchetti and her boyfriend, 19-year-old A.J. Lamantia, were traveling home from a family gathering in Sarasota at about 10:30 p.m. March 3, 2006, when Lamantia lost control of the car and hit first a guardrail and then a concrete wall. Marchetti was not wearing her seatbelt and was thrown from the car into the oncoming traffic. She died the next day.

"The simple truth is that my daughter died because she wasn't wearing her seat belt," said Laura Marchetti.

She said it was her determination to campaign for new seatbelt legislation and promote seatbelt safety among teens as her daughter's legacy that helped her cope with her grief.

"That and these kids kept me going," she said, gesturing toward the teens surrounding her. "They've been my greatest support."

"Laura and I spent a lot of time with these kids since her passing and they've been the biggest blessing we've had," said Vin Marchetti.

Following their daughter's death, the Marchettis founded the Katie Marchetti Memorial Foundation to promote seatbelt use and bring hope to other families who have suffered similar losses.

In the year since, the foundation has launched a seatbelt safety campaign that has brought together hundreds of students from Durant, Bloomingdale and Newsome high school students who have signed the "Cross Your Heart" promise to buckle up and wear their "Cross It, Click It ... Live" T-shirts on designated days to promote seatbelt safety.

In addition, a group of teens

traveled by bus with the Marchettis to Tallahassee last year to lobby for new seatbelt safety legislation and, when it didn't pass, continued their battle into this year's legislative session.

On March 14, state Rep. Rich Glorioso, R-Plant City, state Sen. Nan Rich, D-Sunrise, Laura Marchetti and a coalition of safety advocates held a press conference in the Capitol Courtyard in Tallahassee in support of the Dori Slosberg and Katie Marchetti Safety Belt Law, House Bill 27/Senate Bill 484.

The law would allow law enforcement officers to pull over and ticket people specifically for not wearing a seatbelt. Although Florida law requires all drivers to wear seat belts, officers are not currently permitted to pull over a vehicle solely because the driver is unrestrained unless the driver appears to be under the age of 18. The proposed law would allow law enforcement officers to pull over motorists of any age primarily for not wearing a seat belt.

Glorioso, who said his own life was saved through the use of a seatbelt, noted that the bill is named in memory of both Marchetti and the daughter of former state Rep. Irv Slosberg, who also died in a car accident because she was not wearing a seatbelt.

"This law will save the lives of hundreds of Floridians every year," he said. "I was especially moved hearing the personal accounts from members of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety, which gave it a unanimous vote, on how wearing a seatbelt saved their lives and the lives of their children."

Speaking at a recent Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce Government Advisory Council meeting, Glorioso said the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 200 lives could be saved and 2,600 serious injuries averted by enacting this bill.

From a practical standpoint to taxpayers, the state could reduce its Medicaid costs by \$117.8 million over the next 10 years, he added.

Both Glorioso and state Rep. Trey Traviesa, R-Brandon, were on hand March 16 when the Katie Marchetti Memorial Foundation and the Lightning Foundation teamed up for A Night of Seatbelt Awareness at the St. Pete Times Forum during the Tampa Bay Lightning vs. Buffalo Sabres game.

The Marchetti foundation purchased 250 tickets it distributed to teens who signed the "Cross Your Heart" pledge.

To learn more about the campaign or to contribute to the Katie Marchetti Memorial Foundation, visit the foundation's Web site, www.thekatie-marchettimemorialfoundation.com.

LAW

Continued From Page 16

be very important is having your children fingerprinted. This service is offered through the Sheriff's Office and other groups.

For information call the Bloomingdale substation, 635-8040.

And please, remember Jessica and the others who had their young lives taken away too soon. Make their lives count for something positive. Take the time to take better care of your chil-

dren by preparing them for life's dangers.

Check out these Web sites for additional information on "stranger danger" and other important child safety topics: www.childsafetyexperts.com, www.safekids.com, www.theparentreport.com. Also, please check out www.hcso.tampa.fl.us for a special section that lists all currently registered sexual predators living in our community.

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