

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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SUSAN GREEN

A debate is shaping up over proposals to improve two-lane Lithia-Pinecrest Road, Bloomindale's main north-south artery on the east side.

## A growing problem?

There are two schools of thought when it comes to Lithia-Pinecrest Road – should it stay, or should it grow?  
See story, page 7.

### INSIDE

#### **Tournament to benefit library attack survivor**

The young Bloomingdale woman who survived a brutal attack at the Bloomingdale Regional Public Library continues to need medical care, much of which is not covered by Medicaid or other insurance. You can help her – by playing golf. See page 3.

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn.”

*Lewis Grizzard*



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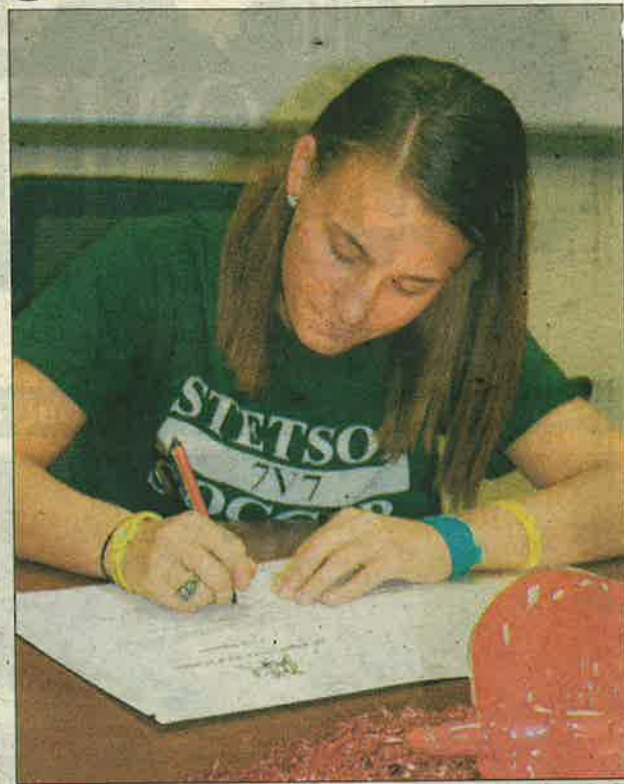


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## Oser signs with Stetson

On Feb. 1, Rebecca Oser made it official, signing with Stetson University to continue her soccer career. After coaching Rebecca for four years, Coach Peet, stated she is proud of her and her accomplishments over the years at Bloomingdale and looks forward to seeing her at Stetson University. Coach Peet has coached Rebecca's sisters as well.

Rebecca has been on the soccer field since she was 2 month olds, watching her sisters play. She started playing recreation soccer at Hanley Fields when she was 5. At the age of 9 she was recruited by Don Luke to play on the Boys U9 Select Team. She was the only girl on the team and played forward as well as defense. At the age of 11 Rebecca joined the Brandon Girls Select Team and from there joined the RSL Select Team where she played for several years. Rebecca was a member of the 94 Girls Florida ODP A Team in 2008-2011. Rebecca led her club team's, HC United, to the Final Four of the 2009 State Cup playing defense. Most recently she led her club team's defense to the 2012 Disney Soccer Showcase Finals,



PROVIDED

Rebecca Oser

which was live on ESPN 3. Schools. Most recently, Rebecca has been on the Bloomingdale High School team since her freshman year, playing as a defender, midfielder and forward. She was selected as captain her senior year. During high school Rebecca has been on the Honorable Mention Team for Hillsborough County High Schools. Most recently, Rebecca was chosen to the annual Bright House Sports 2012 High School Senior Soccer Challenge between Hillsborough and Pinellas senior All-Star player. Congratulations to Rebecca Oser in all her accomplishments and continued success in her soccer career.

## Jaszczak signs with Nova Southeastern

PROVIDED

Bloomingdale High School Senior Melissa Jaszczak has signed a letter of intent and soccer scholarship to attend Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. Proudly watching her is Coach John Mendpza who has been her keeper trainer for the past eight years. This year, Melissa has been starting keeper at BHS, where she earned First team All Western Conference Honors.



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Melissa Jaszczak and her coach.



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## Bloomingdale homeowners tournament to benefit library rape survivor

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association is recruiting players for its Spring Classic Golf Tournament, with proceeds dedicated to continued therapy for the young Riverview woman who survived a 2008 attack at the Bloomingdale Regional Public Library.

The young woman, then 18, had driven up to the library book drop after hours when she was dragged from her car, beaten and raped. Last year, Kendrick Morris of Clair Mel City was convicted of that crime and another rape and sentenced to 65 years in prison. His Bloomingdale victim was left with brain damage that took her vision and keeps her from walking, talking, or eating without a feeding tube.

Proceeds from the tournament will help pay for intensive therapy and rehabilitation programs for the young woman which are not covered by Medicaid or other insurance.

The tournament, which can accept up to 144 players, will start at 1 p.m.

April 14 at the Bloomingdale Golfer's Club, 4113 Great Golfers Place. The cost is \$80 per player or \$300 for a foursome, which includes a round of golf for each player and two golf carts per foursome. Dinner will be served at the end of the day for all players at the club's Legends Grill.

Association board member Jane Lee said the nonprofit homeowners' organization, representing about 5,000 households in the Bloomingdale subdivision, had been considering hosting a tournament at the golf club for some time. It was not difficult to choose a beneficiary, she said.

"This young lady went through a horrific ordeal that will continue to affect the rest of her life," Lee said. "Who better or more deserving?"

For information, call association board member Jane Lee at (813) 477-7120 or email [inbloomingdale-news@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:inbloomingdale-news@tampabay.rr.com). Checks may be mailed to the association at P.O. Box 7221, Brandon, FL 33508.

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# Happy Tomato puts produce back on Lithia-Pinecrest lot

By SUSAN GREEN

He's an information technology consultant; she's a chief financial officer for a company in New Hampshire.

But Ron and Tiffini Masessa, who moved to Bloomingdale from Boston in 2004, share a love of fresh produce. They said they really missed picking out fruit and vegetables at the produce stand that operated for many years at 3623 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, on the eastern edge of Bloomingdale.

"In this area, you would have to go up to (State Road) 60 or down Bloomingdale (Avenue)" to find a produce stand, said Ron, who likes to use fresh vegetables in recipes handed down by his Italian family.

"It's not a major drive, but it's not convenient," he said about driving to State Road 60.

After watching the bins and shelves at the vacated stand remain empty for months, the couple decided to open their own business there called the Happy Tomato Produce Market. They welcomed their first customers March 1.

In addition to several kinds of tomatoes, strawberries, melons, peppers and other produce, the market offers honey, wind chimes and garden ornaments. Ron has become an expert orchid grower and offers a number of his most beautiful plants for sale, along with advice for the novice interested in raising the exotic flowers.

The couple said they expect the produce to be the big draw, however, and whenever possible they sell locally grown fruits and vegetables. Ron said customers can expect to pay 30 percent to 50 percent less than supermar-



SUSAN GREEN

Tiffini Masessa, a co-owner of Happy Tomato Produce Market, adds a watermelon to a colorful display at the new produce market on Lithia-Pinecrest Road near its intersection with Erindale Drive.

kets charge.

He said he takes pride in keeping a clean, welcoming atmosphere with a quality product.

"I look at this stuff every day," he said. "We're not hiding rotten produce at the bottom of the bunch."

The couple launched a website, [www.happytomatoproduce.com](http://www.happytomatoproduce.com), where they post recipes and special events. In March, they hosted a demonstration from a local honey producer and harvester, and they hope to offer similar

workshops in the future.

The market is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends. It is closed on Mondays. For information, call (813) 653-1683 or check out the website.



Fresh lemons and limes, along with bell peppers, are among the colorful displays that welcome customers in the newly reopened Happy Tomato Produce Market at 3623 Lithia-Pinecrest Road.



Tiffini Masessa, who owns Happy Tomato Produce Market with her husband, Ron, adjusts a sale sign at the new business at 3623 Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

# Should Lithia-Pinecrest be widened to four lanes?

By SUSAN GREEN

With debate heating up over whether public officials should widen Lithia-Pinecrest Road or simply make improvements to improve traffic flow, we decided to pose this month's question to customers at Starbucks Coffeehouse at the Lithia Crossings retail center.

Do you drive on Lithia-Pinecrest Road and should that road be widened to four lanes?

Taylor Brents of Fish-Hawk, a college student, does not routinely use Lithia-Pinecrest but thinks it should be widened.

"It seems like everybody

wins. I certainly know when I get behind a bunch of cars and I need to get to class, my blood pressure goes up."

Sandra Belcher of Fish-Hawk, Brents' mother, does not routinely drive on Lithia-Pinecrest during busy periods but also favors widening.

"It's a major thoroughfare. Lithia-Pinecrest cuts through from [County Road] 39 and beyond all the way to [State Road] 60."

Jacqueline O'Steen of Waterford on the Alafia has mixed feelings, noting that planned road improvements near her neighborhood on Bell

Shoals Road will adversely affect residents by forcing them to turn right as they leave their subdivision.

"I try to do everything during off-peak hours if possible. But I have that flexibility in my work schedule. Most people don't."

Richard Junker of Valrico routinely notices a backup at Lithia-Pinecrest and Lumsden roads but also has mixed feelings about the widening.

"It's a nasty mess. You can be there going through that intersection a long time. But LA [Los Angeles] built tons and tons of interstate and the roads are still clogged."



SUSAN GREEN

Clockwise are Jacqueline O'Steen, Richard Junker, Taylor Brents and Sandra Belcher



# 10th annual Bloomingdale Relay for Life seeks support

By SUSAN GREEN

Last year, the annual Relay for Life at Bloomingdale High School raised about \$98,000 for research, education, and cancer patient support. This month, more than 50 teams are expected to walk, run and camp out around the school's track to raise money and awareness about the deadly disease.

The event will start at 6 p.m. April 13 and continue through the evening and Saturday morning. People can still sign up to participate at the American Cancer Society's website, [www.relayforlife.org](http://www.relayforlife.org), or go out to the event to buy food, cheer on participants or support other fundraisers going on during the relay.

Sara Vinzant, the cancer society's community rep-

resentative organizing the Bloomingdale event, said the sour economic climate of recent years has not kept the annual event from growing. She said people are eager to support the battle against cancer, probably because so many families are touched by the illness, either personally or through a loved one.

"We're still reaching our goals," Vinzant said. "That's not to say it hasn't been more challenging than in years past."

Last year, Bloomingdale's event contributed to nearly \$930,000 raised through relays in southeastern Hillsborough County, including Fish-Hawk, Brandon and five others in the area, Vinzant said.

This year's Bloomingdale goal is \$103,000. The

theme for the event is "Celebrations from Around the World." Teams can compete for prizes for the best decorated campsite and other competitions that match the theme, Vinzant said. She said she anticipates seeing some Mardi Gras and Chinese New Year themes.

All Relay for Life events include such highlights as the opening survivor lap, recognition of caregivers and the placing of memorial luminaries around the track after dark. Each local event has its own flavor, Vinzant said.

The relay idea started in 1985 in Tacoma, Wash., when one person used a marathon to raise money for the American Cancer Society and asked donors to join him on part of his run. The following year,

RELAY, Page 11

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# County choirs show their stuff at Bloomingdale High School

By SUSAN GREEN

Crooners from schools across Hillsborough County took the stage at Bloomingdale High School in back-to-back musical events in March.

First, hundreds of young singers from 67 choirs representing 32 middle and high school chorus programs mounted the risers for adjudication during the annual Musical Performance Assessments, known as MPAs. Chorus directors compare the MPAs to the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for vocal music, and choirs are evaluated by judges according to tone quality, technical preparation and musical effect.

A week later, many of those students were back in the Bloomingdale auditorium, this time in glittery gowns or glossy vests to show off song-and-dance routines in the school's annual Showcase of Show Choirs.

Organizing it all was a



**Jason P. Locker, NBCT, Director of Choral Activities, Bloomingdale High School**

tall order for Jason Locker, who took over directing the chorus program in the fall after longtime Bloomingdale chorus director Bev Sutherland retired.

"It went really well," Locker said after the MPAs. "We had really good student and parent volunteers from Bloomingdale. We got a lot of compliments from teachers that our kids were especially nice or helpful to them."

Locker said he wasn't particularly fazed by hosting two big musical events

two weeks in a row. He had been a chorus teacher for 10 years, first in South Florida and then in Atlanta, before joining the Bloomingdale staff. He said he was accustomed to similar events at his other schools.

He was teaching in Georgia when he learned of the opening at Bloomingdale through his longtime friend and former high school classmate Andrea Peacock, who is the chorus director at Burns Middle School. He was eager to return to the Sunshine State, he said, so he visited the school last spring and eventually landed the job.

The week of MPAs was the more stressful of the two events, Locker said, because music students were being formally evaluated. The showcase, which raises money for the Bloomingdale Chorus Boosters, is relaxed and noncompetitive. Ten high school song-and-dance groups and six middle schools signed up to perform, stretching the event over two nights.



SUSAN GREEN

**Students from Burns Middle School sing The Beatles' hit "Blackbird," during Bloomingdale High School's annual Showcase of Show Choirs.**

"This event is not judged," Locker said. "This is just for the love of singing and dancing, and they perform for each other and an appreciative audience."

Students from Bloomingdale show choir, dubbed the Ambassadors, serenaded visitors as they arrived at the school.

Peacock said Burns' show choir, Ovation, has been performing in the showcase since at least the year 2000. This year, the 34-member group performed several selections from music by The Beatles.



**Students from Randall Middle School's Encore singing group hit a high note during their performance at Bloomingdale High School's annual Showcase of Show Choirs.**



**Students from Bloomingdale High School's show choir, Ambassadors, serenade visitors as they arrive for the school's annual Showcase of Show Choirs.**



**Members of the King High School singing group Pride added a touch of drama to their song-and-dance rendition of "The Letter" during Bloomingdale High's annual Showcase of Show Choirs.**

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# Lithia-Pinecrest Road: Should it stay or should it grow?

By **SUSAN GREEN**

A debate is shaping up over proposals to improve two-lane Lithia-Pinecrest Road, Bloomingdale's main north-south artery on the east side.

Last fall, a \$2.5 million county-funded planning study was completed, and some community leaders say it supports their contention that at least the stretch between Bloomingdale Avenue and Lumsden Road should be widened to four lanes. Not everyone is convinced.

George May, a Bloomingdale resident and former homeowners association board member, said the road has been clogged the morning and evening since the 1990s, when he started commuting to his business on Robertson Street in the heart of Brandon. Even with people out of work because of the economy, motorists still spend too much time looking at taillights, he said.

"It's not eased up," May said. "If you try to make it starting out at 8 o'clock or 8:15 (in the morning), you'd better leave a half-hour earlier than you should otherwise."

May is among those trying to keep the widening project alive. He believes recent public meetings and workshops have led county officials to believe local residents don't want the project because people aren't making their voices heard. With the planning study completed, he said, the next step is to include a wider Lithia-Pinecrest Road in the county's long-range plans, a criterion for the project to attract feder-

al funding.

Instead, local officials seem to be leaning toward keeping the stretch at two lanes while adding turn lanes and other traffic control measures, May said.

With that option, "you're trying to put a Band-Aid on something that needs a tourniquet," he added.

On the other hand, Gladys Will, who has lived in a neighborhood near Lithia-Pinecrest and Bell Shoals roads for more than 30 years, said residents who live along the road have banded together to protest widening plans, fearing increased traffic and noise.

Some longtime residents also fear they would lose a significant portion of their yards to the expansion and have difficulty accessing the road from their driveways, Will said.

She said the growth of FishHawk Ranch south of Bloomingdale accounts for much of the overload on Lithia-Pinecrest. She said it would make more sense for county officials to expand the widening project already taking place on Boyette Road so that Tampa-bound commuters from FishHawk would have easier access to U.S. 301 and Interstate 75.

Opposition to the Lithia-Pinecrest project surfaced a few years ago, when initial discussion included widening the road from State Road 60 past FishHawk Trails through the rural community of Boyette. Some people feared homes and businesses would be torn down to make way for the project, while others wor-

ried that a bigger road would invite inappropriate commercial development.

Those concerns, in part, led to scaled-back widening plans supported by the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce. Late last year, chamber officials said their organization became a target for criticism, with opponents of the road widening accusing its leadership of pressing elected officials for improvements to make way for so-called "big box" retailers.

May is a former chamber chairman and remains active in the organization, but he insisted his championship of the road widening is out of concern for quality of life and safety issues.

Laura Simpson, a chamber vice president, said she has helped campaign for the improvements, not to accommodate any specific development interest but in response to business owners who happen to be residents along the road and want relief.

Bob Bivins, the chamber's board chairman, said he is concerned that county commissioners, who must approve any change to long-range transportation plans, are hearing only one side of the debate.

"All they're hearing from residents now is people who are opposed to it," Bivins said. "If people want to see it (the road widened), they're going to have to get re-engaged and come to these meetings. The BOCC (board of county commissioners) thinks the community view is changing."

Wally Blain, a principal

planner with the county's Metropolitan Planning Organization that is evaluating the project, said the issue tentatively is expected to go before the MPO's policy board April 17.

For information about the proposal or to share an opinion, e-mail [mpl@plancom.org](mailto:mpl@plancom.org), call the MPO at (813) 272-5940 or visit [www.hillsboroughmpo.org](http://www.hillsboroughmpo.org).

Supporters of the road widening may wish to visit H.E.L.P. - Hillsborough for the Expansion of Lithia-Pinecrest on Facebook. Others may wish to contact Will and her organization, the Lithia Pinecrest Resident Coalition, at (813) 689-6939.



SUSAN GREEN

Cars headed for Bloomingdale on Lithia-Pinecrest Road stack up around 5 p.m. on a Friday, waiting through several traffic light cycles at the Miller Road intersection.



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# Bloomington High senior heading to West Point

By SUSAN GREEN

As many of her college bound classmates study dormitory floor plans, Savannah Jo "S.J." Aversa is boning up on what it takes to get through "beast barracks" at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a program similar to basic training.

Aversa, 18, a senior at Bloomington High, heads to the prestigious school in New York this summer, one of only 1,200 cadets accepted from across the U.S. for the 2012-13 school year. The program for new students will include seven weeks of discipline and fitness training, culminating in a weeklong campout in the woods.

The recruit also will play on the academy's Division I softball team.

Though she does not hail from a military family, Aversa said she had her heart set on attending a military college program and entering the armed forces. After she finishes her education at West Point, she will serve a minimum of five years in the U.S. Army. Her family is supportive but wanted her to join as an officer, she said.

"I always wanted to be part of something bigger than myself and do something that matters," Aversa said.

"I want to see combat, but I'm a girl," she said. "I'm thinking about intelligence or possibly covert operations because at least that way I could get somewhat closer (to military action)."

Applicants considered for admission to West Point must be nominated by a senator or congressman. Aversa said she was nominated by U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis. But she figures her softball skills made her stand out and secured her spot at the academy.

Aversa has played ball since age 4, starting with t-ball. She has played for Bloomington all four years of her stint at the school and been a member of the



SUSAN GREEN

**Savanna Jo "S.J." Aversa figures softball helped her get into the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.**

ROTC for three years.

She joked that she and her twin sister, Amber, a member of Bloomington's Crimson Guard flag team, take turns twirling each other's rifles. Amber plans to study psychology in the fall at the University of South Florida.

Bloomington softball coach Melissa Gentile said Savannah stands out as a player who will do what is necessary to help the team. Though she is accustomed to playing an outfield position, where her speed and throwing abilities made her shine, Gentile needed her to fill in other spots on the team this year.

"Whatever role we give her, she gives it 100 percent," Gentile said.

The Aversa twins are daughters of Debi Ries and Joseph Aversa and have lived with their mother and stepdad, Robert Ries, in Bloomington for about nine years. They have a sister, Delaney Ries, 9,



KIM WALLACE

**Second grader Owen Donahue is so amazed at the new cover court at his school.**



**Mrs. Talley Principal of Cimino Elementary is cutting ribbon on their new covered court for her students.**

## New covered court at Cimino

By KIM WALLACE

On Friday March 2, before Family Night Festivities started, Principal Mrs. Talley had a ribbon cutting for the brand new cover court provided by the Cimino PTA and families.

Cimino Elementary School PTA was determined to provide their school with an outside covered court area, providing shade and cooler temperatures for students

while outside for PE. The school and PTA felt that this was a great safety investment for the children

PTA President Amanda Moore, along with her committee, helped with fundraising. The PTA was able to provide \$15,000

from last year's Hike-A-Thon fundraiser while the school applied for matching grants from the county from the rest. Moore commented that if it wasn't for parents they would have

never been able to provide such care for the school; she gave all the credit to the parents who helped raise these funds for such a great cause.

Cimino PTA and faculty want to give Cimino students the best environment and education they can give. Family Night consisted of a night with family games, book fair and movies on the lawn for all the students.

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## Beauty and the Bull

By KIM WALLACE

March 6, 2012, the Junior Steering presented The Beauty and The Bull contest at Bloomingdale High School. Beauty and The Bull is a two round pageant, in which couples compete to win a spot in the Bloomingdale Beauty and the Bull Calendar. Each couple is eligible to win one of the month's titles, the Cover Girl title and the People's Choice title.

Junior Steering worked very hard in putting the contest together, with the help of community sponsors, Oaklane Kennels, The Green Boutique, Osprey Observer, Bloomingdale Pizza, Synergy Salon, Pinecrest Printing and Taya Fagan Photography. The judges for the evening were Bloomingdale teach-

er Ms. Teague, Kim Hall and Charity Woods of Kim Hall School of Dance. The Kim Hall School of Dance performed during intermission before last round of questions and formal wear.

Winners of the calendar starting with March are Bri and Alex, February were Megan and Shy, January were Julia and Brian, December were Cassidy and Jackson, November were Clara and Joe, October were Ashley and Dominick, September were Gabrielle and Alex, August were Samantha and Taylor, July were Lauren and Demetrius, June were Megan and Daniel, May were Daniellé and Mark, April were Allison and Drew, People's Choice were Emma and Cory and Cover Girl, Annie Irish and Jeremy George.



Annie Irish and Jeremy George dancing during the talent part of pageant.



KIM WALLACE

Cover Girl Winner Annie Irish and Jeremy George.

## Adoption Eggstravaganza at The HOP

You remembered to spring the clock forward. Now, it's time for The HOP!

Join Hillsborough County Animal Services and local rescue partners for The HOP (Help Our Pets) adopt-a-thon and egg hunt Saturday, April 7, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dozens of local pet rescue groups, vendors and animal professionals will transform the county animal shelter at 440 N. Falkenburg Road into a festival of fun, adoption, and awareness. Children can line up for age-appropriate egg hunts and other activities starting at 11 a.m., and pet adoptions at the shelter will remain open until 3:30 p.m.

The HOP Eggstravaganza will feature a huge variety of hundreds of adoptable pets - from beagles to bulldogs, poodles to pinchers, cats, kittens, and

more. Prospective adopters should bring valid photo ID, proof of address, and cash or local check, with some rescue groups accepting major credit cards. Many pets will be offered at special prices, and adoptions from Animal Services will include spaying/neutering, vaccination, micro-chip, county tag, and health check.

Special guests at this year's event include Raymond, official mascot of the Tampa Bay Rays, and the Easter Bunny! Attendees to The HOP can also Ask-the-Vet, explore volunteer opportunities, tour the shelter, take a scavenger hunt, and win prizes in contests, such as The Bunny Hop. Food concessions will be available, plus music by DJ Pat George.

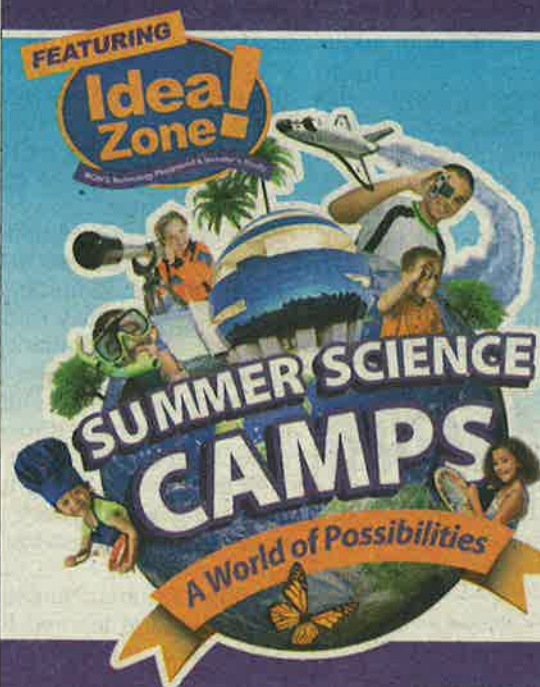
Additionally, professional pet pedicures for dogs and cats will be avail-

able on-site with all proceeds going to the medical needs of abused and neglected pets in the care of Animal Services. Owned pets on leashes or in carriers are welcome to attend The HOP, but may not enter the shelter's kennel area.

Admission to the event is free, and donations to participating rescue groups are encouraged. The HOP is sponsored in part by Direct Auto Insurance, Pet Supermarket, and Aussie Pet Mobile. Download the flier for more information at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/animalservices](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/animalservices).

For vendor opportunities or more information on The HOP, contact Hillsborough County Animal Services at (813) 744-5660 or email [info@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:info@hillsboroughcounty.org)

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## Be A Ham – A Ham Radio Operator That Is

Hillsborough County Amateur Radio Emergency Services/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (ARES/RACES) program is sponsoring two amateur radio courses this month: the introductory Amateur Radio "Technician Class" License Course and the General Class License Upgrade Course. These courses will be held over two Saturdays, Jan. 7 and 21, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Jan. 21, the licensing testing will begin at 3:30 p.m. Both classes will be held at the Hillsborough County Emergency Operations Center, 2711 E. Hanna Ave. in Tampa.

There are no training fees for these classes. However, there is a \$14 fee for taking the test, and the manual books are \$19.95 and \$29.95, depending upon which course you are taking. Participants need to pay for the test and the book at the start of class. Participants also need to bring a government-issued picture identification card.

Class size is limited. To register, email training@hcaresaces.org.

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# Sewing secrets: Library offers gift of learning

By SUSAN GREEN

For librarian Dottie Bradley, it's a fair enough trade: Her students learn how to sew, and she learns how to be 6 or 8 or 12 again.

Threading a needle leads to giggles. Stitching by hand leads to sharing secrets, and not always about sewing skills. Eventually, after several monthly lessons, the whole experience of learning to sew will lead to stuffed, handmade soccer balls that can be given to children facing stress or disaster "so they have something soft and squishy to hold onto," Bradley said.

That's the idea behind "Bloomingtondale Gives Back," a program offered at 6 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month at the Bloomingtondale Regional Public Library.

Older girls and adults often learn to crochet, and the program already has yielded dozens of stuffed, crocheted bunnies about the size of Beanie Babies. Those items also are destined to become comfort for tiny hands in need.

Once completed, the learning projects will be given to firefighters or

medical workers so they can offer them to children coping with crises such as illness, injury, or perhaps a fire destroying the family home, Bradley said.

For the sewing class, Bloomingtondale's Friends of the Library paid for colorful felt in a variety of patterns, and Bradley cut the material into swatches that could be mixed and matched and sewn together to make a stuffed toy.

The program may seem to have little to do with reading books, although Bradley pointed out to her students that she used reading skills to find a basic sewing project to suit her purpose.

"I found it in a crafts book that we had on our [library] shelves," she said.

"My programs aren't always reading a story," the librarian said later. "I believe we [the library] are becoming... a place where people can come and learn about arts and crafts. While they're here, they can read books, but we're becoming more of a [learning] center."

Circulation of traditional library materials has not slowed at the Bloomingtondale branch, Bradley said, but the growing popularity of electronic books could mean libraries will become less needed as repositories of books to be loaned out.

"I think we're trying to fill a niche where we see a need for public service," Bradley said.

While Tatiana Neblett, 12, of Brandon learned to hand-stitch, for example, her father, Brian, sat in on a master gardening class in the library's community meeting room. Other clas-



SUSAN GREEN

Brooke Wood, 6 (left), and librarian Dottie Bradley share a laugh at a piece of uncooperative fabric last month during the "Bloomingtondale Gives Back" program at the regional library.

ses have included manga art, computers, African dance and basket-weaving.

Tatiana said she had learned to sew clothing on a machine during an after-school program, but last month's library program was her first attempt at hand-stitching.

"I like helping and doing things for others," Tatiana said. "I love doing stuff at the library, especially when you're bored at the house."

Between instructions, the group shared stories about life at home or school and talked about other hobbies.

Brooke Wood, 6, of Luthia giggled and chattered her way through the lesson. She didn't complain when she accidentally pricked her finger, though she admitted later, "It did not feel good."

For information about library programs, call (813) 273-3652 or visit www.hcplc.org.



Tatiana Neblett, 12, pauses to listen to instruction as she sews pieces of felt together to make a toy for a needy child.

## Station Notes

# Want property back? Report the crime, first

At the March monthly meeting of the Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC), Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Det. James Howell, District IV Latent Investigations section, and CRD Master Dep. Curtis Warren, briefed members of the BACC on progress with returning stolen times that had been recovered from Bloomingdale area vehicle burglaries during December and January.

Dep. Warren noted that CSO Sandy Capitano had



Curtis Warren

received several calls regarding stolen property, but most of the calls were about other stolen items that had not

been reported. Both Warren and Howell agree that residents should report stolen property as soon as possible. This action will help detectives in their investigations and improve the chances of property being returned.

Deputy Warren and Detective Howell briefed members of the BACC on a home burglary that occurred just before the meeting. A FishHawk resident called the sheriff's dispatch to report seeing a burglar breaking into a home in their subdivision. Deputies were dispatched and a long chase followed, complete with a sheriff's department helicopter, as well as several deputies and detectives. The 41-year-old burglar was apprehended and arrested. He had a long list of prior charges. He had broken through a double pane window and climbed into the home to steal jewelry.

This case notes several important items. First is the thanks to the resident who took the time to call. Second is noting the importance of residents properly securing valuable items in safes or other special containers. Third is the fact that deputies and detectives are working hard to protect residents of our area, their homes and their property. But it takes a joint effort to continue to reduce crime in our area and arrest those that choose to break the law. Crimes will continue, especially with our economy as it is today. Do your part to help stop crime.

The instances of "car hopping" that took place earlier this year are still taking place and will continue. As long as residents make their job easy by leaving their valuables in their cars and their cars open, criminals will keep on stealing. You work hard to get the things you have, so don't make it easy for the bad guys to take them. Lock up your cars and garages.

## ILLEGAL DUMPING

Several cases of illegal dumping have been reported in our community. The latest is in the area around and behind the old Sweetbay supermarket on Bloomingdale Avenue. Anyone even thinking about illegally dumping trash or other items should know that increased alarm monitoring and surveillance of this area has been put in place. Those caught illegally dumping will pay heavy fines that can include charges for illegally dumping hazardous waste. Any residents seeing suspicious activity in

this area should call the Sheriff's dispatch at (813) 247-8200.

## PLEASE REMEMBER:

If you notice any suspicious activity or a crime being committed, get all of the information you can – descriptions of individuals, descriptions of vehicles and license numbers, and immediately call the Sheriff's dispatch at (813) 247-8200! Time is very critical!

## SPECIAL CHARITY EVENT

BACC member Tim Boone shared information on a charity event being held Saturday, April 14, to raise funds to help wounded vets and their families at the James A. Haley VA Hospital. Families are able to use the "Fisher House," which was established to provide special assistance to family members of seriously injured vets being treated at the hospital. Bloomingdale is a big military community. Come join in the fun, food, music and support a great cause! The details of the event include:

**DATE:** SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2012

**TIME:** 12 TO 5 PM.

**LOCATION:** WINTHROP, "THE POLE BARN"  
11349 Bloomingdale Ave., Riverview, FL

**ACTIVITIES:** "Pig Roast", Live Music, Food, Raffles

**CHARITY EVENT SPONSORED BY:** Nam Knights Westside MC

**COST:** \$10 Advance, \$15 at the door  
For information call (813) 766-1042

# Chipotle launches essay contest

Chipotle Mexican announced March 27 the launch of its "What Does Real Food Mean to Me?" essay contest. Five winners will be selected to attend the April 19 "Real Food Real Joel" farm-to-table dinner event with farmer and award-winning sustainable foods activist, Joel Salatin.

Participants are asked to submit an essay up to 500 words answering the question "What does real food mean to me?" to [MeetJoelSalatin@chipotle.com](mailto:MeetJoelSalatin@chipotle.com). Entries will be collected through April 11, and five Tampa-area winners will be

announced on April 12. Each winner will receive a ticket to the dinner event featuring a meal of locally grown ingredients prepared by Tampa-area chefs and a keynote address from Salatin. The evening, held at The Roosevelt 2.0 at 1812 N. 15th St. in Ybor City, will serve as a fundraiser for the Tampa Urban Food Forum and Tampa Bay's local food initiatives.

Essay participants must be 18 years of age or older. For more details on the contest go to [chipotle.com/meetjoelsalatin](http://chipotle.com/meetjoelsalatin).

## RELAY

From Page 5

the first organized relay fundraiser was held, and the event grew from there, according to the American Cancer Society website. Vinzant said more than \$3 billion has been raised through relay events in the U.S. and 22 other countries since the program's

founding.

Proceeds help pay for cancer research and education, as well as transportation and comfort for people undergoing cancer treatment, particularly those who must travel far from home. The funds also support college scholarships for cancer survivors.

Although earlier registration is advised, teams can sign up as late as the

day of the event with a registration fee of \$100, which reserves a campsite. Teams of more than 20 people are encouraged to reserve a second campsite. Each team member is encouraged to raise at least \$100 in sponsor donations.

To register or get more information, visit [www.relayforlife.org](http://www.relayforlife.org) and enter "Valrico, FL" in the sign-up field on the Web page.

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KIM WALLACE

Overall Winners in Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale Bodybuilding Competition, Rebecca Oser and Matt Benedix

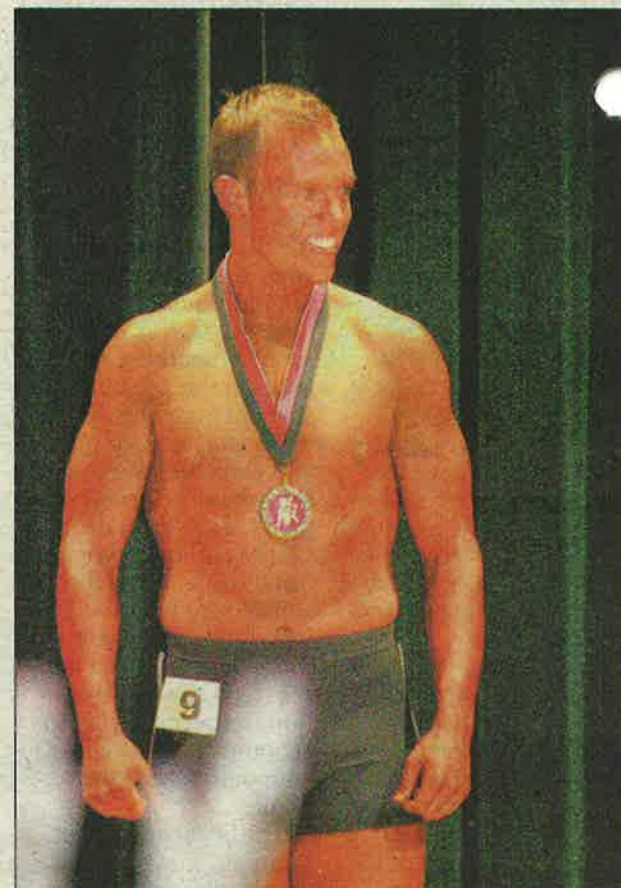
## Mister and Miss Bloomingdale

By KIM WALLACE

The sixth annual bodybuilding competition, "Mr. and Miss Bloomingdale," was held Feb. 21 and hosted by Senior Steering. Announcers for the competition were Cassidy Erickson and Megan Guerra. This competition was co-sponsored by Everest University, Costco Wholesale, Winn-Dixie, Publix, Tantra, Absolute Fitness and Nutrition, Pinecrest Printing, Sam's Club, GNC, Latin Grill, Robeks Juice, The English Rose, Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza, Bloomingdale Pizza, Perfection Prom & Bridal and Campbell's Dairyland.

These students worked every hard in getting fit to compete in this competition. The competition started with a first round

of mandatory poses, a second round of individual routines, and a final round of mandatory and spontaneous poses. Men's Lightweight winner was Matt Benedix, Men's Middleweight winner was Franklin Baldera, Men's Heavyweight winner was Michael Butler, the Women's Lightweight winner was Rebecca Oser and the Women's Middleweight winner was Lexi Gauslow. The winner's after Round 2 competed again for the Final Round and the audience voted for the "Fan's Favorite Bod." The overall Men's Weight Class Winner was Matt Benedix, Women's Weight Class Winner and Fans Favorite Bod for Women's was Rebecca Oser and the Fans Favorite Bod for Men's was Trenton Paules.



Trenton Paules Fan's Favorite Bod Award



Scott Arnold, DMD, FAGD

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