



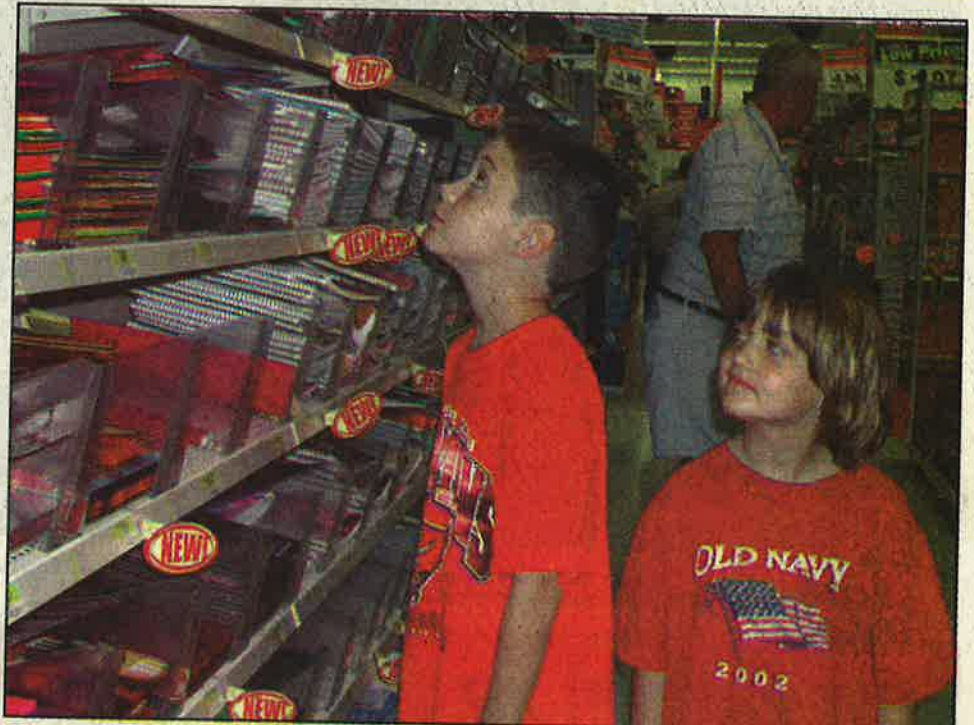
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Featured Story:

**PRIDE:
Cleanup set
for Aug. 16**

SEE PAGE II



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Hitting the books

David Dittfield, 9, and his sister, Dana, 6, look over the back-to-school offerings at the Bloomingdale Wal-Mart. The two children, along with their mother, Denise, residents of Somerset, were hoping to get their back-to-school supplies before the rush. Both children attend Cimino Elementary School where their mother is the Parent-Teacher Association vice president of membership. Denise Dittfield expects to have 100 percent membership in the PTA this year, just as it did last year, Cimino's inaugural year.

Bloomingtondale Lauded For PRIDE

By D'ANN WHITE

Being an innovator is nothing new for the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association.

Formed in 1980, the BHA was the first in the county to have its own newspaper (the Bloomingdale Gazette), the first to have its own mobile watch and, 15 years ago, the first to participate in the county's Neighborhood Involvement Program (NIP).

ment Program (NIP).

It's a program initiated to help neighborhoods police themselves when it comes to enforcing the county's codes.

"We're the only successful NIP in Hillsborough County and among just a half dozen in the state," said BHA President Ted Grable.

Now, as an extension of the Neighborhood Involvement Program, Blooming-

dale has another first.

It's the first community to launch a neighborhood PRIDE program, encouraging residents to clean up, fix up and maintain their properties.

Following its first cleanup in April, in which County Commissioner Ronda Storms participated, the county commission lauded the BHA for taking

See PRIDE, Page 31

Alafia Elementary Has 'Locke' On Reading

By D'ANN WHITE

She's admittedly a hands-on type of person.

So don't be surprised to find Pam Locke pulling weeds from the gardens in front of Alafia Elementary School or see her husband, Fred, scrambling up a ladder to fix the gutter on the school's roof.

"We don't mind getting dirty," Locke said, laughing.

That hands-on attitude extends to the students. That's one of the reasons Locke was so anxious to return to school after spending 10 years at the school district.

"I missed the kids," she said.

A graduate of the University of Indiana where she grew up watching the Indianapolis 500 and fostering a love of NASCAR, Locke



Surrounded by her favorite collectibles, NASCAR mugs, children's books and schoolhouse decorations, Pam Locke settles in as principal of Alafia Elementary School.

See LOCKE, Page 30

Tournament To Benefit Injured Bloomingdale Soldier

By D'ANN WHITE

It's the phone call every mother with a son or daughter stationed in Iraq dreads.

For Donna Ballou of Bloomingdale, the call came on a warm summer day.

Her 24-year-old son, Mark Ballou, an Army combat medic volunteering for guard duty in Baghdad, had been critically injured June 5 after being approached by an Iraqi citizen who offered the young soldier his hand in friendship.



Ballou

Instead of shaking Ballou's hand, the civilian pulled out a gun and shot Ballou in the neck. Fellow servicemen, witnessing the attack, quickly disarmed the Iraqi.

But the damage was already done. The bullet perforated Ballou's esophagus, paralyzing his vocal cords. The bullet then damaged 80 percent of his right lung before exiting his back.

By the grace of God, Donna Ballou said, a thoracic surgeon based at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., happened to be a few blocks away when the attack occurred.

He was able to stabilize the young medic and get him on a plane headed back to the United States. It was touch-and-go the entire trip. Twice they lost Mark Ballou's heartbeat and had to resuscitate him.

"I didn't know what was happening to him. They just called and told me he was critically wounded. I didn't have any details. I just had to wait," Donna Ballou said. "I would never wish this on my worst enemy. It's been agonizing."

It the week's since the shooting, Donna Ballou and Mark's fiancé, Leia Anderson, have flown to Washington, D.C., repeatedly to be with Mark as he's undergone

multiple surgeries including vocal cord thoroplasty, involving a plastic prosthetics piece to replace the damaged vocal cord, a right thoracotomy with two chest tubes, a right neck dissection and a chest tube for his left lung, which collapsed as a result of the injury.

And the ordeal has only begun, said Donna Allen, an office administrator for Mediflex Patient Care Services on Brandon Boulevard.

In the coming months, he'll need to return to Walter Reed to have his esophagus dilated, chest tube manipulated and speech and vocal cord replacement.

"For awhile, all he kept talking about was when he could go back to his unit," Donna Ballou said. "Now he's beginning to understand exactly what's happened."

It's been a difficult adjustment for the young soldier who's always been healthy and active, said his mother.

Ballou, who has lived in Valrico since he was 6 years old, played ball for the South Brandon and Bloomingdale Little Leagues and, after graduating from Bloomingdale High School, decided to follow in his mother's footsteps and go into the medical field.

He joined the National Guard for both the educational opportunities and the chance to serve his country, Donna Ballou said.

Mark Ballou was in his second year of college and working for Mediflex when the war in Iraq broke out. He was deployed from Plant City to Pensacola Jan. 1 with the Third Battalion, 124th Infantry, as a medic. He was then sent to Kuwait.

Donna Ballou said she was worried because she knew her son would go into Baghdad behind the Marines, but Mark told her he'd be fine. He said he was proud to help defend his country and help his fellow soldiers in need.

"It's been a rough journey for him and his family," said

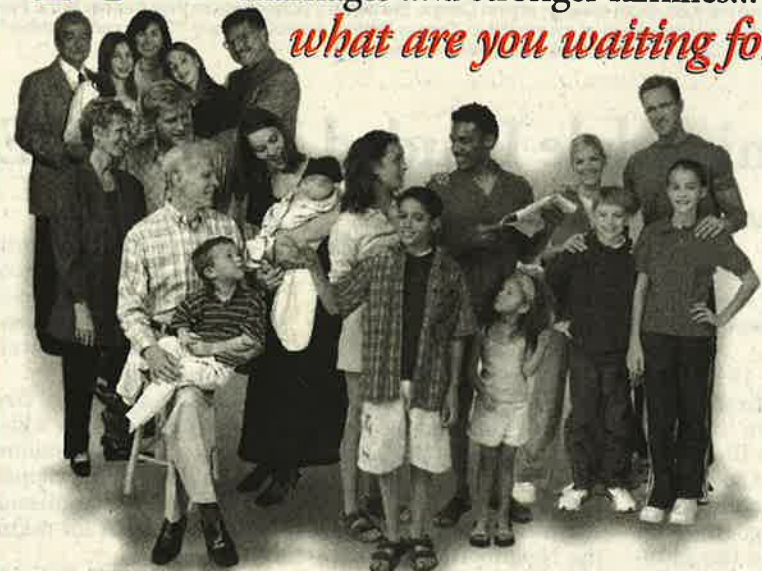


Photo courtesy Donna Ballou

Pictured with his mother, Donna, Mark Ballou recovers from massive injuries at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C.

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See SOLDIER, Page 29

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The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. (813) 681-2051. Fax: (813) 651-1129

E-mail: Bloomingdale.Homeowners@Verizon.net

Web Site: www.BloomingdaleGazette.com

BHA meetings are at the community office on the 1st Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President — Ted Grable
Vice President — Joe Hickle
Treasurer — Pam Liguori
Director — Tony Diolosa
Director — Steve Heckel
Director — Cheryl Kehrmeier
Director — Michele Caballer
Director — Billy Hightower
Director — Jane Lee
Director — Stanley Lee
Director — Lydia Harrod

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594
(813) 684-6667

BSTD meetings are held at the community office on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President — Thom Snelling

Vice President — Russell Jones
Treasurer — Dale Kahn
Recording Secretary — Alice Burleson
Correspondence Secretary — David West
Trustee — Myron Magedanz
Trustee — Michael Buday
Property Manager — Al Devney

Bloomingdale Mobile Watch Coordinator/Equipment Manager —

Tony Diolosa, 681-1146

Treasurer — Paul

Kelmer, 681-9701

Patrol Member —

Steven Heckel,

654-4266

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P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132. (813) 685-2817

BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

President — Bill Grace
Treasurer — Fred Englehart

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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Valrico, FL 33594
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Fax: (813) 651-1129

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Executive Director — Joe Liguori
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Correspondent — Shannan D. Powell
Correspondent — Leslie White
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Property Manager's Report

By AL DEVNEY
Devney Property
Management Inc.

Irrigation

Thunder Irrigation added six spray heads to Zone 6 of the Rosemead system to correct a cycling problem with the pump, added two spray heads to Zone 8 of the Garnet system to correct a coverage problem and replaced the timer for the Gotham system that had been hit by lightning.

Brandon Irrigation repaired a separated main line at Greenhollow and Orangecrest.

During the monthly main-

tenance inspection, 44 spray heads and three rotors were replaced and five risers were adjusted or repaired. Additionally, 22 lights and one light receptacle were replaced.

Landscaping

Greenturf trimmed the palm trees as required by its contract.

Three soil samples from Natures Way and Greenhollow were sent to the University of Florida Extension Department for pH analysis. The results indicated the sulfur that had been applied had lowered the pH to a favorable level that would sustain the

St. Augustine grass and jasmine.

Other

There were three accidents in June. Two were car versus TECO light pole (one on Erindale and one on Culbreath) and the third was a car versus two trees and a wall on Natures Way and Elton. In all cases, the cars lost and the drivers were very lucky that there were no serious injuries.

ZK Construction installed 47 24- by 24-inch caps on the tops of the columns on Natures Way.

DPMI trimmed the sycamore trees between

Rivercrossing and Oak River, cleaned the eggs off the directory sign at Culbreath and Erindale and met with the Greenturf president to discuss the palm tree trimming, fluffing, mulching and trimming the crape myrtle trees, provisions of the current contract.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, 27 bags of litter were picked up, two towels, a leveling leg for something, two shirts, a hubcap, a large birthday cake, three lawn mower blades and 46 cents. The beverages of choice were Diet Coke for soft drinks, Bud Light for beer and Everclear Grain Alcohol for distilled spirits.

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Cimino Elementary Prepares For New Year

NEW SPIRIT SHIRTS AVAILABLE

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

With the opening of school just days away, Cimino Elementary Principal Sandra Frost said she and her staff are eagerly anticipating the beginning of their second school year.

"We've grown since last year. Anticipated enrollment for August is 900, up from 800 a year ago."

Due to the increase, Cimino has added a KELP unit, a kindergarten early learning program, and extra units in kindergarten, first, second and fifth grades, which will help decrease class size.

Three portables have been moved on campus, and Frost assured, "No homeroom classes for K-5 will be housed in the portables — just one

ESE unit and two resource classes."

Another change making the news of late is the cutting of kindergarten aides across the county. With six kindergarten classes this year, Cimino currently has four aides and a floater who will go from class to class. Compensating for the absence of the aide, Frost "hopes that the parents will remember how important those first few weeks are to the kindergarten and volunteer their time in the classroom to help the children as they learn all of these new skills."

As expected, this year has a different focus.

"Last year we were a new school," said Frost. "This year we have some baseline data on our students and know where we need to focus. We'll be raising the bar in all areas and continue our emphasis on developing character."

The staff has chosen a



Sandra Frost

theme for the upcoming year that will have students embarking on a "Learning Safari," studying each of the continents. A schoolwide assembly is planned for the first day to welcome the students and introduce the theme.

Parents can expect class assignments to arrive via mail any day.

Preview Day is Aug. 5 from noon to 1 p.m. for last names beginning with A-L, and 1 to 2 p.m. for last names beginning with M-Z.

Uniform shirts will be for sale Aug. 4 and 5 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the multipurpose room, with extended hours on Preview Day.

This year there will be a new spirit shirt designed by

Parent-Teacher Association member and local muralist Denise Brooks. It's a red T-shirt with a patriotic theme reflecting the character traits students will work on this year.

Also new is a hunter green T-shirt with the logo. The white and navy polo shorts with the school's logo are \$15, while the navy, gold and hunter shirts bearing the logo are \$10 for children, \$11 for adults. Spirit shirts are \$10. And all XXL shirts will cost an extra \$2.

The PTA also will sell a cougar-themed zipper-pull for \$3 each.

Open house is planned for Sept. 4 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. for kindergarten through second and 6:30 to 8 p.m. for grades three to five.

The PTA has planned its budget approval meeting for the general membership Sept. 11, and PTA President Sherri Meredith is looking forward to a great year.

"We hope the parents will get involved and we'll accomplish our goals together."

This year's national PTA theme is "Every child. One voice." Membership Vice President Denise Dittfeld encourages all parents to take part in Cimino's PTA. "We're working to obtain 100 percent membership again this year. It benefits the school as well as the students."

Registration Set For Bloomingdale Winterball

Gazette Report

Bloomingdale Little League will hold winterball registration for baseball and softball Aug. 9 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Aug. 13 from 6 to 9 p.m. and Aug. 16 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Little League Civic Center at the corner of Bloomingdale Avenue and Lithia-Pinecrest

Road.

Boys and girls born between Sept. 1, 1986 and July 31, 1999 are able to register.

Registration for first child costs \$60 with additional siblings costing \$30. Must have original birth certificate and proof of residency. Practices begin week of Sept. 8.

Information: 684-8422.

Culbreath Sewer Line Project Gets Under Way

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

By MACK AUSTIN

A special notice in last month's Gazette gave a brief description of a short-notice sewer line project that is currently under way in Bloomingdale. Some of the questions asked about this project follow with current information:

QUESTION: What exactly is this sewer line project?

ANSWER: This is a FishHawk development project. The developer, Newland Communities, is required by the county to construct an off-site forcemain to connect FishHawk to the county's wastewater transmission system. The developer is pay-

ing for the project.

QUESTION: What county offices are involved in monitoring this project?

ANSWER: Several county offices are very involved in monitoring this project. The Planning and Growth Management Department reviewed the project and issued the required permits. It also provides inspection of the infrastructure and gives final acceptance. The Sheriff's Office will be actively involved in monitoring all phases of the project as they affect traffic and safety. The Environmental Protection Commission will monitor project activities that affect areas near the Alafia River.

QUESTION: What route will the sewer line take?

ANSWER: The line will

begin on Lithia-Pinecrest Road near the new Stein Mart store, run along Lithia-Pinecrest Road and go west onto Erindale Drive, then turn south onto Culbreath Road all the way to the end of Culbreath Road, go under the Alafia River and terminate in FishHawk near Randall Middle School.

QUESTION: Why doesn't the line go south on Lithia-Pinecrest Road and then turn west onto FishHawk Boulevard instead of going through the Bloomingdale community?

ANSWER: That route was the first one considered. Major problems were found with this route including the fact that there is no buildable space for the large (24-inch) forcemain in the existing right of way. Existing lines already in the right of way

include a 36-inch water transmission line, a 24-inch raw water line, an ammonia line, plus fiber optics and other lines. There is also an Alafia River crossing on Lithia-Pinecrest with no room on the bridge for another large line and there is no place to reroute traffic on Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

QUESTION: What condition will the Bloomingdale community roads be left in?

ANSWER: All roads affected will be totally resurfaced, not just patched.

QUESTION: How will the construction affect traffic by Cimino Elementary School?

ANSWER: The Sheriff's Office and Public Works Traffic Engineering Department will insure all routes to Cimino remain open to traffic.



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Meet Your Neighbors

John and Claudia Yake

By D'ANN WHITE

A few years ago, Claudia and John Yake briefly considered moving.

After all, their daughter, Jennifer, was grown and starting a family of her own, and their four-bedroom home on Murry Dale Drive seemed too big for just the two of them.

But it didn't take Claudia long to reconsider.

"I looked around but I couldn't find anything I liked as well as this house," she said. "It's so convenient to shopping and such a great value."

And John said he would especially miss the conservation area that runs behind their lot. He and Claudia have spent countless hours on their screened lanai

watching the birds and squirrels frolic and listening to the symphony of frog chirps.

In fact, John became an overnight community activist a few years ago when that conservation land was threatened with development. A company had purchased the 11-acre property in a county tax sale and wanted to fill in a portion of the wetlands to build a home. John, with the help of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, successfully fought the conservation area's development.

An Air Force family, the Yakes moved to their home in 1983 when John was transferred from Maine to MacDill Air Force Base.

"Murry Dale was just a dirt road and Natures Way ended just past the park," recalled John. "This was considered the end of the road in this part of the county. There wasn't much here."



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Claudia and John Yake say they enjoy their 20-year-old Murry Dale Drive home, which backs up to a conservation area filled with birds, squirrels and singing frogs.

There were no McDonald's or Wal-Mart, no real commercial development of any kind.

But fellow military personnel had recommended the area, and John liked the rural atmosphere that reminded him of Maine. They'd also heard good things about the school system. Jennifer was in seventh grade at the time and went on to set a school track record and receive a soccer scholarship to the University of Louisville.

After moving in, John, an aircraft maintenance officer, was sent to Ankara, Turkey, for 2 1/2 years to help train the Turkish Air Force in how to assemble F-16 aircraft. Claudia and Jennifer stayed in Bloomingdale so she could attend high school here.

Following his stint in Turkey, John retired from the Air Force in 1989 with the rank of major.

In the meantime, Claudia, an education major who had only worked as a substitute teacher, began looking into a career of her own. She met Bloomingdale artist Sue Allen at their children's soccer game, and Allen told her Center Place Fine Arts and Civic Association was looking for an executive director.

"Center Place was just going through some transition and I came amidst its

first major fundraiser, the Patron Party," said Yake, who joined Center Place in 1984. "We raised close to \$30,000 that year."

Claudia was also involved in the construction of the Sandy Rodriguez Center, which houses both Center Place and the Brando Regional Library on Vonderburg Drive. The original Center Place was housed in the old Blount Funeral Home building that had been moved to the site donated by the Clayton family.

In 1990, in a first-of-its-kind private-public partnership anywhere in the country, Center Place and the library moved into its current building. Center Place donated space on the 3.5-acre site to the county and, in return, the county built the building and is leasing space to Center Place for \$1 a year.

In the years since joining Center Place, Claudia said she's had an opportunity to see artists come into their own and children who came to Center Place for theater productions return with their own children.

Once, she was in the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport when she noticed two children staring at her. It turned out, they were from Brandon and recognized her as the "theate

Bloomingdale Yard Of The Month

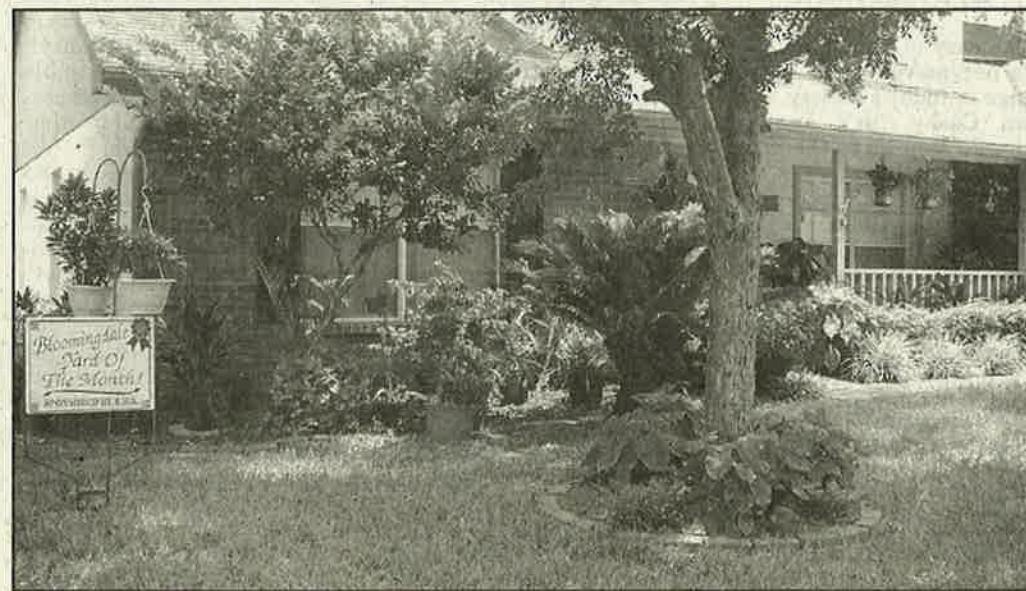
Gazette Report

Although they only purchased their Bloomingdale East home in April, Loran G. and Helen T. Barnes have already transformed the yard of their house at 1302 Monte Lake Drive.

Loran said he grew up gardening in South Florida and enjoys getting outdoors and working in the yard. "I'm a country boy," he said. "I love being outside."

In fact, some of the plants he transplanted to his Bloomingdale yard came from his mother's home in South Florida. After replacing sod, Loran landscaped around the yard's abundant trees and mailbox with colorful crotons, coleus, caladium and Mexican heather — all hardy plants in Central Florida and relatively easy to maintain, he said.

The Barnes received a \$25 gift certificate to Wal-Mart as



Loran G. and Helen T. Barnes of 1302 Monte Lake Drive won Yard of the Month.

the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's Yard of the Month winners.

If you would like to nomi-

nate a Yard of the Month, e-mail your suggestion to Gazette editor D'Ann White at

dwhite2@mediageneral.com, drop your suggestion by the BHA office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road or call 681-2051.

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See NEIGHBORS, Page 30

Drug Prevention Program Focuses On Bloomingdale

By D'ANN WHITE

It's easy to complain about the pervasiveness of illegal drugs in today's society, said Dan Cosby. "It's another thing to step up to the plate and do something."

But the Hillsborough County Drug Alliance is hoping Bloomingdale parents, educators, business people, church leaders and interested residents will do just that. The alliance is asking people to volunteer for a project that could help alleviate drug use and accompanying social problems in their community.

Cosby, the father of a recovering cocaine addict who attended Bloomingdale High School and now a certified addictions counselor and member of the alliance, introduced the Communities That Care program to the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association at the July meeting.

The pilot program in

Bloomingdale is one of three being put into place in Hillsborough County. The other two communities are Seminole Heights and Town 'N Country.

"It doesn't make any difference where you live," said Communities That Care chairwoman Kay Doughty, noting that drugs affects all races and income levels. "There's a problem and we need to identify the reasons."

According to alliance general manager Jan MacLeod, the alliance is funded by the Hillsborough County Commission and is composed of law enforcement, court personnel, the State Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, churches, medical personnel, counselors and other members of the community interested in creating a network of drug prevention and treatment sources across the county.

Most recently, the alliance has received grants to initi-

ate the Communities That Care program. The program was started by then-Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge in his state and proved so successful that it has spread to other states, McCloud said.

The alliance is now in the process of putting together a volunteer committee to facilitate the program. The program will consist of surveying Bloomingdale High School students to find out the causes of high-risk behaviors such as violence, school dropout, drug use, teen pregnancy and crime. Once those causes are identified, the alliance will work on ways to discourage the high-risk behavior.

"Once we demonstrate a problem through a database, we can get the funding to do something," said MacLeod.

"We need a committed group composed of parents, elected officials, youth, law enforcement, business people, school staff, representatives of youth organizations and church leaders," said Cosby. "I want Bloomingdale

to take ownership of this program."

"We're just looking for people who are interested in making a difference in their community, added McLeod.

McLeod said the alliance is looking for five residents to serve on the Brandon Communities That Care committee. Those interested will undergo five training sessions and be available for weekly meetings lasting an hour or two. Training will take place Aug. 11-12 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Comfort Inn on Busch Boulevard at Interstate 75.

The alliance expects to begin surveying students this fall. Once the three initial programs are put into place, the program will be extended countywide.

"The better job we do at prevention, the less we need to do for enforcement and treatment," said Cosby.

Those interested in working on the project can contact Cosby at 626-5394, Doughty at 980-3866 or MacLeod at 276-2539.

Neighborhood PRIDE Cleanup Day Is Saturday, Aug. 16

By CHERYL KEHRMEYER
BHA director

Mark your calendar and don't miss out!

Our Bloomingdale Neighborhood PRIDE Program (People of Bloomingdale Revitalizing, Improving, Developing and Enjoying our great community) is gearing up for its second cleanup day, and another chance for you to do your part in cleaning up your yard and neighborhood.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association is inviting all Bloomingdale residents to bring your unwanted items from the yard and garage to our disposal site Saturday, Aug. 16.

We are also pleased to have a willing group of volunteers who are continuing to work in seven of our neighborhoods to ensure that our Bloomingdale community continues to be an enjoyable place to call home, and that

Regional Residential Household Chemicals and Electronics Collection

Gazette Report

Although you WILL NOT be able to bring hazardous waste (paint, household chemicals, batteries and propane tanks) to the Bloomingdale Cleanup Site Aug. 16, the following lists Hillsborough County Solid Waste sites and dates for disposal of these items:

Site hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. For the safety of the public and employees, collections may be suspended during periods of severe weather.

Household chemicals collections (no electronics will be accepted)

Acceptable items: paints

See SAFETY, Page 28

Bloomingdale remains one of the most sought-after home markets in Hillsborough County.

and all of Bloomingdale's 40 sections by the end of 2003.

Neighborhood Cleanup

Through this Neighborhood PRIDE Program, the BHA's goal is to implement the program in eight additional sections this quarter,

The BHA, with the cooperation of the Hillsborough County parks and solid waste departments and Liberty Waste, will provide a conven-

ient way for you to clean up your garage and yard without having to take debris to the solid waste facilities.

On Saturday, Aug. 16, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., you can deliver your unwanted junk to the Hillsborough County Parks Department Maintenance Unit II at 1626 Natures Way, just west of Alafia Elementary School.

Items you CAN bring to the Neighborhood Cleanup site include: old refrigerators, ovens, water heaters, televisions, steel and other metals, old furniture (such as couches, chairs, tables and mattresses), construction debris (such as concrete, bricks, glass and roofing materials) and tires.

We CANNOT accept any items normally picked up at the curb by Hillsborough County such as household trash and yard waste, solid waste from commercial activi-

See PRIDE, Page 28



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Watch Your Backwash

Gazette Report

If you are draining or backwashing your pool, please be sure the hose you have attached to the pump reaches all the way to the street.

Al Devney, president of DPPI, (the Bloomingdale property management company) has noticed some residents, particularly those with properties that back up to a common wall, draining only to the tree line. This

causes the chlorine in the discharge to kill the grass in the common areas and possibly damage the trees.

"Please help us spend your tax money wisely and take the necessary steps if you are not running your discharge line to the gutter," said Devney. "Your Bloomingdale neighbors will appreciate it and you will be helping keep the Bloomingdale common areas neat and attractive."

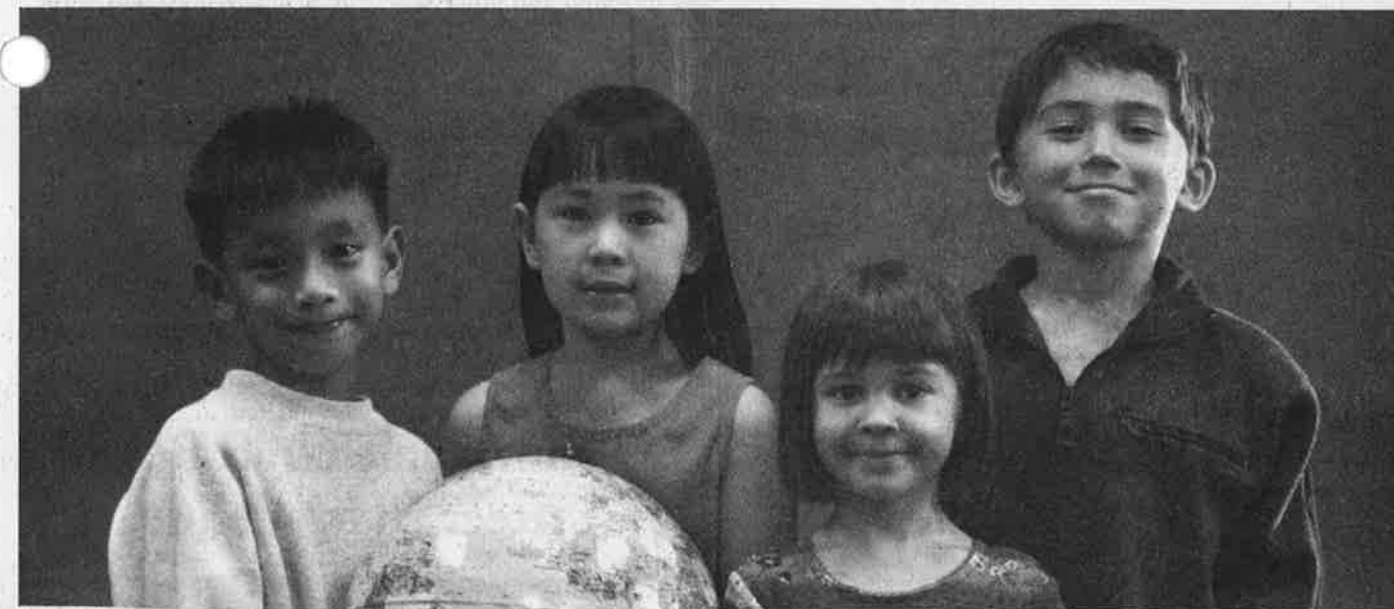
Hearing Set On Paddlewheel Traffic Problems

Gazette Report

Hillsborough County will hold a public meeting to discuss traffic problems along Paddlewheel Drive from Bloomingfield Drive to

Sweetleaf Drive in Bloomingdale West Aug. 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the Stephanie Ann Culbertson Center in Bloomingdale West Park, 3919 Canoga Park Drive.

Call: 272-5275.



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Bloomingtondale Woman Voted Honorary Mayor

By JOYCE MCKENZIE

All her life, the fifth-generation Brandon resident has aspired to be part of a community tradition begun when she was just a youngster.

Not only did her dream come true on the morning of July 4, but Becky Jordan, a Bloomingtondale resident and one of three candidates in this year's Brandon honorary mayor's race, played a major role in setting two all-time records.

When the "votes" were counted, Jordan racked up \$53,902.54 during her monthlong campaign, more than any other candidate in the history of the 44-year-old annual "competition."

Her "opponents," Pat Magruder and Rosalind Creager, respectively earned \$18,980.92 and \$17,182.32.

The \$90,065.79 total is the highest amount ever tallied in the history of the annual



Becky Jordan, Brandon's new honorary mayor, right, gives a hug to Grita Perry, the outgoing 2002-03 honorary mayor.

campaign, beating the previous record of \$66,235 set in the 2001-02 race.

As usual, however, there were no "losers" in this race since the real winners are the

candidates' designated charities.

"It's been a whirlwind, but I've had a lot of help. I applaud all my supporters, especially my employer and my husband and other people's husbands who've been saints," said Jordan, a real estate agent for Keller Williams Realty. "My ultimate goal was to promote our wonderful community spirit and what Brandon has to offer. I couldn't imagine living anywhere else."

As tradition stands, candidates are sponsored by local community and civic organizations and hold fundraising events throughout June. The money is disbursed among

the Presidents' Roundtable, the race's founder and overseer, the candidate's sponsoring organization and his or her selected charities.

The roundtable receives 10 percent for its community activities, which includes Brandon's Fourth of July parade and its annual public affairs dinner. The candidate's sponsoring organization is entitled to 10 percent and the chosen charities receive 80 percent.

Jordan's sponsor, the Brandon Sunburst Chapter of the American Business Women's Association, held a series of eight fundraising events. The beneficiaries are the Brandon Care Pregnancy Center, Brandon Outreach Clinic, the Bill Carey Brandon Boys & Girls Club, the Ophelia Project and Brandon-Hillsborough Young Life, both Campo Family YMCA-based programs.

According to Steve Saunders, a past president of the Presidents' Roundtable, Jordan has also offered to add an additional \$800 beyond her earnings toward a mayor's float she'd like to see included in next year's Fourth of July parade.

"She wants all the candidates to ride on it, because, as she said, we have no losers in this race," Saunders said.

The Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce's

See MAYOR, Page 30

Bloomingtondale Grad Begins Career In Medicine

Gazette Report

Natalie Ann Brown, daughter of Judy and Myron Magedanz, received her doctor of medicine degree from the University of South Florida College of Medicine May 10 at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

Brown, who now lives in Tampa, attended Alafia Elementary and Burns Middle School before graduating



Brown

from Bloomingtondale High School in 1995.

Her specialty is internal medicine, and she plans to do her internship in Tampa Bay, most likely at Tampa General Hospital.

On parade

Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association board member Joe Hickie and former Bloomingtondale resident J.R. Tabor greet those attending the Brandon Fourth of July Parade. Joni Hickie drove the truck provided by James Rivard of James Rivard Pontiac-GMC. "We really want to thank James Rivard for getting us a truck on such short notice," said Hickie. "He really came to our aid." This was the first time the BHA has had a unit in the parade. Next year, the board hopes to build a float based on the best design submitted by Bloomingtondale residents.



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Bloomingtondale Substation Notes

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER and OFFICER SANDY CAPITANO

Prepare Now — A New School Year Is Here

The 2003 school year begins this month. Our first concern must be for the safety and protection of the thousands of kids headed back to school in our community. Many will be walking or riding bikes to school for the first time. Some will be walking or riding in areas where sidewalks have still not been installed. Hundreds will be riding school buses. Many teens will be driving to school for the first time. All of these combined with drivers in a hurry make for some very dangerous situations.

Parents, please take the time to talk to your kids about the importance of being safe. Talk about safe bike riding - wearing hel-

metts, crossing only at crosswalks and obeying all bike-riding rules. Discuss the importance of being careful when approached by strangers. Walk or ride in groups. Cover the route they must take to school and emphasize the importance of taking this route. Walk the route with them before school starts. Note the seriousness of them staying at their bus stop and watching out for cars.

Some kids will be latchkey kids for the first time. Stress the importance of staying inside, knowing the emergency numbers and numbers for parents or friends, following the rules set for using kitchen appliances and not talking to strangers.

Parents, you have to prepare yourself for a new school year, too. Include extra travel time in your commute. Note where new schools have opened up. This means more

traffic, more delays, more kids and more buses. Buckle up everyone in your cars. Watch out for school buses. Your kids are watching you. Don't talk on the phone and drive. Pay attention. The safety of your kids and the safety of other kids are much more important than any phone call.

Stop Both Ways For School Buses

Thousands of children will be riding school buses and waiting at bus stops. Most of the school buses do not have seat belts.

Drivers must give full attention when driving near schools. Florida traffic laws require that all cars must stop both ways for school buses on roads without medians. This law applies to all traffic on Bloomingtondale Avenue west of Bell Shoals Road. Also, give yourself more distance between other vehicles and especially the buses in front of you. Slow down.

Bike Riders Be Smart

Your parents may think you are hard-headed, but you still need a bike helmet. Hundreds of you will be riding your bikes to school, especially to Alafia Elementary and the new Cimino Elementary. Florida law requires that you wear bike helmets. Be a smart bike rider and wear your helmet. Head injuries

are very serious and can be fatal. You want to really enjoy this new school year. Don't be one of the hundreds of kids and adults seriously injured each year, some critically because they weren't wearing a bike helmet. Parents, if you ride bikes with them, wear your helmets, too.

Speeders Beware

If you plan on speeding in school zones, you just got the only warning you'll get from the sheriff's deputies. This is very serious business. There will be no more warnings. You speed, you pay and you pay big. The average ticket in some areas last year was more than \$300. The same goes for running red lights. There will be special patrols watching for you. Speeding fines are doubled in school zones. Slow down. It is that simple.

No Cutting Through Neighborhoods

No one wants driver speeding and cutting through their neighborhood to bypass traffic. So don't do it yourself. It is totally disrespectful. Several streets have been identified and residents are watching for offenders. Sheriff's deputies also will be patrolling them. Allow plenty of time for your commute. Respect the lives and neighborhoods of others.

Make 2003-04 a safe school year.

Deputies Make Arrest In Pipeline Theft

News Report

A 29-year-old Valrico man has been charged with operating a methamphetamine lab at his home on Stearns Road and breaking into an ammonia pipeline that caused a toxic gas cloud to cover portions of FishHawk Ranch.

According to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Richard Erick Hansen Jr. of 2621 Stearns Road was arrested June 22 following a sheriff's investigation.

The sheriff's office received a complaint June 20 that Hansen was making threat-

ening calls to a relative. When deputies followed up on the complaint, they found that electricity was being stolen at the home and what looked like chemicals commonly used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, an illegal stimulant, stored outside the home.

Detectives conducted surveillance followed by execution of a search warrant with both sheriff's officials and Drug Enforcement Agency officials participating. The agents seized several items of evidence and later arrested Hansen at a home in Thonotosassa.

The sheriff's office said detectives also found materials used to manufacture methamphetamine and two guns in his car.

Hansen was charged with two counts of manufacturing a controlled substance, two counts of possession of a firearm, one count of manufacture, sale or possession of explosive devices and one count of trespass and theft of utilities.

Also, based on burns on Hansen's arms and legs at the time of his arrest, possibly caused by exposure to the ammonia, as well as items discovered at the Stearns

Road home during the execution of the search warrant, deputies believe he may be responsible for the anhydrous ammonia theft May 27 from a pipeline on the north side of FishHawk Boulevard.

The matter was referred to the U.S. Attorney's Office, and Hansen was indicted by a federal grand jury July 25. He is charged with conspiracy to possess and manufacture methamphetamine as well as possessing ammonia used to manufacture methamphetamine.

The federal charges could carry a sentence of life in prison.

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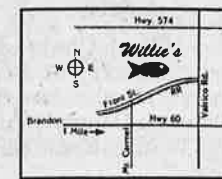
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Also we are famous for our **catfish and alligator.** Willie's has several Louisiana style dishes including **crawfish ponchartrain** over grouper and a **New Orleans** topping of shrimp and scallops sautéed in sweet butter served over grouper or catfish.

On the menu are several **pastas** (all made with fresh pasta) and a number of seafood and chicken **chef salads.** Prices range from \$6.49 to \$13.99.

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Bloomingtondale Area Community Council Report

By MACK AUSTIN

The Bloomingtondale Area Community Council is made up of residents from homeowners associations in the community who work directly with Community Resource Deputy Pete Maurer, Community Service Officer Sandy Capitano and other local government representatives to coordinate the resolution of community issues and concerns.

The BACC meets monthly (third Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Sheriff's Community Station) to discuss current issues that have been brought to the attention of a council member, Maurer or Capitano. Participation and inputs from residents is needed to improve the quality, safety and security in our neighborhoods. At the July 2003 BACC meeting, members discussed updates on the following projects:

Traffic

Drivers running red lights: The sheriff's office has increased patrols.

Illegal parking at Alafia Elementary School: The BACC will continue to educate parents on the importance of obeying the "No Parking" signs.

Speeding in neighborhoods: Residents from several neighborhoods are working with the county's traffic calming program.

An enhanced crosswalk at the Bloomingtondale Little League and Campo YMCA:

The BACC will coordinate with the Bloomingtondale Little League, the YMCA and the county to address this safety issue.

Recruiting crossing guards and school bus drivers: There continues to be a need for these services.

Obtaining a three-way stop at Culbreath Road and Natures Way is another safety project the BACC is working on.

Homeland security

Support for the troops is continuing.

Law enforcement support: Residents are encouraged to report suspicious persons, vehicles and activities.

Business Watch: The BACC will promote participation.

Worship Watch: Participation is encouraged among churches as well.

Citizens Academy: The BACC will encourage attendance.

Growth/construction

Developers are still pursuing construction at Bloomingtondale Avenue and John Moore Road.

The property next to Bloomingtondale High School is being considered for professional offices.

Lithia-Pinecrest Road and Bloomingtondale Avenue intersection: The BACC is monitoring changes development.

The BACC is coordinating acquisition of property off



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Direct coordination and communication with state Rep. Johnnie Byrd, R-Plant City, and his staff has resulted in several improvements in the Bloomingtondale area. The involvement of young people, such as Ian Hanchett, pictured with Byrd, is encouraged.

Springvale Drive for an access road to the proposed dog park.

The BACC is monitoring the widening of Boyette Road from U.S. 301 to Balm-Riverview Road.

The BACC plans to request bike lanes when turn lanes are adding to Bell Shoals Road.

The BACC is watching the sewer line down Lithia to Erindale Drive to Culbreath Road, which begin in July.

Security

Home burglaries: The BACC is educating residents on securing homes and closing garage doors.

The BACC also helps educate residents on taking proper security measures.

Residents are encouraged to lock up autos and valuables to discourage burglaries and vandalism.

Mobile Watch: A new program is getting under way and participation is needed.

Neighborhood Watch: Increased participation is needed.

Safety

Sidewalks at Cimino Elementary School: The BACC is awaiting coordination from Hillsborough County's Public Works Traffic Engineering Division.

Car seat program: Residents are asked to call the

Sheriff's Community Station for appointments at 639 8040. Sexual predator programs: The sheriff's office closely monitors convicted sexual predators who live in the area.

The BACC also is promoting additional stations in the area.

Library

Monitoring construction of the south Brandon library due to start in December.

Name for the library: Names have been submitted and the community is awaiting a decision by the Hillsborough County Library Board.

A Friends of the Library group has been started for the south Brandon library.

Legislation

The BACC is continuing to work directly with state Rep. Johnnie Byrd, R-Plant City, and his staff on legislative issues such as school budgets, growth, transportation, homeland security and health care.

Special notes

Maurer noted that there has been an arrest in a major crime near Bloomingtondale, due to calls to the sheriff's Crime Stoppers program. Sheriff's detectives and Drug Enforcement Agency official arrested a Valrico man and charged him with operating a methamphetamine lab on Stearns Road.

Maurer briefed council members on special law enforcement activities. These include the identification and confiscation of fake identification cards. Parents are asked to be alert for these. They give teens access to alcohol. Also, stores are being monitored for compliance with laws regarding properly checking IDs before selling alcohol.

All Florida law enforcement officers are participating in a special DUI Driving Reduction Program. No warnings are being given and fines are expensive.

Expansion Planned For Green Boutique

By D'ANN WHITE

It won't be Panera Bread. But the Creagers are hoping they can entice something equally tasty to the property next to The Green Boutique at 1014 Bloomingtondale Ave., east of Bell Shoals Road.

Roz and Mark Creager and son, Matt, have operated a gift shop and antiques shop on the property that was once their home for 12 years.

In addition, they own the property just east of The Green Boutique, which is currently used for boat stor-

age. The Creagers are requesting that the entire 6.62-acre property be rezoned for a planned development that would allow commercial and professional office uses.

A hearing before the county's zoning hearing master has been scheduled for Aug. 4.

A planned development, a more detailed type of zoning, would allow the Creagers to present a detailed plan of what they'd like to do with the property.

Matt Creager said they had previously negotiated

with Panera Bread to build a restaurant there but the restaurant decided to go into Lithia Crossing instead.

"We're keeping our options open," he said. "We'd love to get a restaurant here."

At the same time, the Creagers would like to expand their gift shop and antique shop, voted best in Brandon in the 2003 Brandon News Best of Brandon readers poll.

"We want to keep the character we have now but add to it," said Creager.

Creager said other possible

businesses on the property include a tea room and salon and spa.

Their plan has the endorsement of Ted Grable, president of the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association, who noted that the community's newest restaurant, Chili's in Lithia Crossing, is packed nearly every night.

"This is a business that fill a need in the community," he said. "We need places to eat. We'd prefer businesses that would serve the community to those that would draw outside the community."

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By ELTON DUMONT

Mrs. Dumont and I tried Brandon's newest restaurant recently.

I talked to the corporate office in Lakeland and found out that it doesn't work like this: You enter and are acknowledged by a greeter. You pick up your menu and child's menu if you need one, then proceed to the counter to place your order.

The cashier takes your money and gives you a number. You find a table and one of the floor servers brings you your food and anything else you want except drinks. Drinks are self-serve for the most part.

Crispers call this strategy, "fast casual." That means that the floor servers should be available if you want any additional condiments, napkins, silverware, etc.

The special board listed 12 soups including Chicken Dumpling, Veggie Rotini and

Cream of Spinach. There are three sizes; the cup is \$2.69, a bowl is \$3.29 and a quart is \$5.99. My wife had a cup of the Chicken with Wild Rice and I chose a cup of Veggie Rotini.

Both were really excellent — rich, tasty and just the right spices. (My first choice was Cream of Spinach, but they were out of it).

Salads are their signature items and the Summer Salad (\$7.25) is one of their best and most popular.

It is a fresh spring mix with honey-cured turkey, mandarin oranges, strawberries, apples, red onions, crumbled gorgonzola cheese and sugared pecans. There are about 20 types of dressing including lite and fat-free as well as standard homemade. Other salads include the Thai Fusion, Cobb, Greek, Crisper Nicoise and a host of others.

They range in price from \$3.25 for the small Garden Salad to \$8.95 for the Nicoise Salad.

The specialty sandwich board includes an East Coast Chicken with Bacon, Swiss and Honey Mustard (\$5.75), or the West Coast Chicken with Avocado Slices, Sprouts and Honey Lime Dressing (\$5.75). There are Reubens, Baked Tuna, Uptown Ham

with Turkey and Downtown Turkey with Roast Beef. They range from \$5.65 to \$6.95.

Classic-style sandwiches are a little less at \$4.95 and a Half Classic is available at \$3.95.

Mrs. Dumont chose the Reuben and I chose a Half Classic Corned Beef. The corned beef on both was very, very lean, but also bland.

If you have room for dessert, take a trip to the dessert counter for Brownies, Publix Premium Ice Cream, Carrot Cake, Chocolate Cake or Classic Cheesecake. Our total price for two small soups, one Reuben, one Half Classic and two soft drinks was \$19.32.

A tad pricey but well worth it for quality and absolute freshness.

The beverage list is also extensive. On the hot side choose from Mocha Cream, Caramel Java, Cocoa, Espresso, Cappuccino, Caffe Latte or Hot Chocolate. On the cold side, they offer frozen Caramel Chiller, Root Beer Float and a Mochaccino Blast.

The take-out counter is always busy so call or fax in ahead. Don't overlook the sampler and salad platters for medium and large groups. Each feeds six to 10 and

starts at only \$25.95 for the Garden Salad Platter or the East Coast Chicken Platter at \$37.95.

The "Lunchinabox" is great for picnics, golf outings and excursions. It is individually boxed for 25 or more and includes a sandwich, cookie and chips.

Our problem on this visit was the service. We were not greeted, they were out of children's menus, we couldn't get anybody on the floor to serve us extra napkins, condiments or silverware.

I understand they were new and busy, but if you can't keep up with the customers' requests, make that part of it self-service and be done with it.

As a matter of fact, I went back two days later to get a child's menu for this report and they were still out. Management, are you listening? My suggestion: When you go, make sure you know exactly how you want your sandwich or soup dressed when you order it.

It could be a real challenge to get what you want once you're seated.

Rating based on 5 stars:
 FOOD ★ ★ ★ 1/2
 AMBIENCE ★ ★ 1/2
 SERVICE ★ 1/2
 OVERALL ★ ★ ★

Cleaners Unveils Pickup, Delivery Service

By LESLIE WHITE
 Correspondent

Noticed the eye-catching van driving around Bloomingdale that looks like a closet left opened?

Good. That's just what the owners of Quality Dry Cleaners had in mind when they designed it.

Tom Copack and Rick Ehr Gott, co-owners of Quality Dry Cleaners, have established a new service: free home pickup and delivery.

They says they know how busy their customers are, and how cumbersome waiting in one more line can be. So, they found a way to alleviate that by plotting their customers on weekly routes, allowing them to simply hang out their dry-cleaning in a bright yellow bag on a door hanger, both provided by Quality.

"It's not just the ultimate in convenience, it saves customers time and gas by eliminating the weekly trips to the drop-off store," said Ehr Gott.

And the Quality team said the prices are the same or less than drop-off users currently pay.

Having just taken over the existing business in January, Copack and Ehr Gott want to deliver top-quality service while, at the same time, give their customers more value.

"I was sitting at a stop light watching the line at a drive-up window at a competitor's drop store. There were six or seven cars in line and, I thought, those people will probably be waiting for 10 or 15 minutes," said Ehr Gott. "I imagined that they were all very busy professional people that had things to do when



From left are Tom Copack, Quality Dry Cleaners co-owner and general manager, Rick Ehr Gott, co-owner and Monica Stidham, route manager

they got home. I was sure that they felt that they didn't need the aggravation. So, the light bulb went off and I thought, 'We'll take the cleaners to them.'"

One of the things the pickup and delivery service does is eliminate the overhead of operating multiple drop stores.

By cutting down the expenditures of rent, utilities, phone, insurance and other overhead costs, Quality has been able to provide the service for the same price or less, and even offer the convenience of a monthly billing system.

Getting started with Quality is simple. A customer calls the cleaners at 757-6200 and simply chooses a day to start pickup and provides all the necessary information. That day, a laundry bag and hook will be delivered and, on the chosen assigned day, all the customer has to do is hang out his or her bag of dry

cleaning, and the route manager will drive by and pick it up. The dry cleaning is delivered back to the home in two days.

Customers will receive a

monthly statement. Quality Dry Cleaners extends service to Valrico, Bloomingdale, FishHawk, Riverview, Brandon and Plant City.



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Home School Moms Open Mail-Order Business

By JOYCE MCKENZIE

For years, Eugenia Castaneda, the mother of four home-schooled children, has relied on catalogs for the materials she uses to teach her youngsters.

Until recently, the Brandon mother's primary source for obtaining those supplies came from vendors at the annual Florida Home-schooled State Convention in Orlando.

"I oftentimes found it difficult because I was always under pressure to get what I need and had to buy all my materials at once," she said.

Today, however, Castaneda no longer feels compelled to deal with that stressful experience each year. Instead, she uses the services of Joyful Hearts Homeschool Resources Inc., a business started in May by her friend, Donna Lynes, and former teacher Denise Steffan, both home school moms.

Located in Brandon at 912 E. Bloomingdale Ave. at the northwest corner of Bell Shoals Road, the company provides a wide selection of mail-order curricula specially designed for home-schooled youngsters. Materials are sold at discounted prices and shipping charges are waived on orders above \$100.

"It's been helpful for me because I do a lot of catalog shopping," Castaneda said. "I've now gotten used to getting the catalogs, bringing



Denise Steffan and Donna Lynes, owners of Joyful Hearts Homeschool Resources Inc., scan through one of its many catalogs that carry teaching materials specifically designed for home-schooled students.

them home and looking at them in my own time."

Another plus, she said, is that she no longer has to purchase all of her materials at once, but rather as she can afford them.

"It's very expensive to home school and I want to be able to have the best resources available," Castaneda said. "It's also more than their offering books — they also offer suggestions. It's just a great service they are offering in our community."

Fellow Brandon resident Jan Barker, mother of two home-schooled children, agrees.

"It's a really positive experience because they have a good attitude and good materials," she said. "They're not there to push a curriculum, but they're there to help you select what's best for my children."

The primary reason Steffan, a Valrico resident, and Lynes, of Riverview, made the decision to start their own business is because of the increasing number of families in the community who've opted to home school their children.

"We're seeing more and more mothers who are opting to sacrifice working outside the home to stay at home with their children," Steffan said. "Therefore, we found the need and we're striving to meet it."

According to Lynes, clients really appreciate being able to deal with people who've actually used the products they promote.

"Our customers tell us our own experience adds value to what we are doing," she said.

Lori Chirico expressed those sentiments in a recent e-mail to Joyful Hearts' owners.

"I was able to visit your store today and I absolutely loved it," she wrote.

"It was not only nice to get my hands on the curriculum but it was nice seeing how knowledgeable you were about all the curricula you carry."

Business hours are every Thursday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and the first and third Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon.

Call 684-5140 or e-mail joyfulht@tampabay.rr.com for more information.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE
THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Lithia-Pinecrest Corner Welcomes Third Supermarket

By LINDA CHION KENNEY

Sixteen years ago, Tana Welch was a cashier at Publix.

Today, Welch is store manager of the 54,000-square-foot Publix at Lithia-Pinecrest Road and Bloomingdale Avenue.

"This is my first store opening," said Welch, a career Publix employee who, over the past 16 years, has risen from cashier to store manager. "It's exciting and nerve-wracking at the same time. There's just so much to get done."

It was no easy task, said Welch about the July 17 opening. Welch said there were thousands of items to stock and that Publix is excited to meet the competition head on.

The corner is home to three supermarkets and an ever-increasing retail mix that is set to explode in the coming months with the likes of Panera Bread, Starbucks; boutique shops; a Cold Stone Creamery ice cream store; an Art Mart framing shop; a Petite Elite boutique for baby and children; Gallery Clocks; banks and a whole host of service offerings, such as a dry cleaners, nail salon and spa, hair salon, beauty supply store, fish and meat market, pizza store, liquor store, take-out restaurants, postal services and a wireless communications retailer.

Word has it that a steak house is coming as well, which would add even greater depth to the booming retail corner that is taking shape in the likes of two grand shopping centers: Lithia Crossing, anchored by Stein Mart, and the Shoppes at Lithia, anchored by Publix.

"It's all very exciting," said Amy Jennings who is in charge of leasing at the Shoppes at Lithia, under development by the Paradise Development Group. "It's good for the community to have so many choices and options available nearby."

Within 30 to 60 days after the Publix opening, the secondary stores will open. All but two spots had been officially leased last week, although there are contracts pending on a home interior shop and a family activity center, Jennings said.

Welch, who four weeks ago was named store manager in Valrico, said she is excited about her new store and its location. Previously, she worked at the Publix in New Tampa.

"I bought a house out here, so I live right in the neighborhood," Welch said. "I'm excited to be here and I think it's going to be a great store."

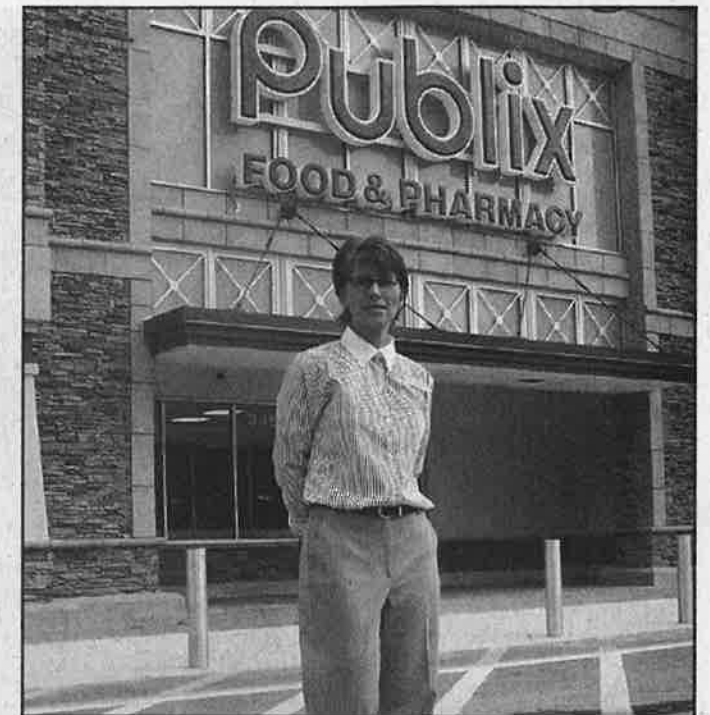
Of course, the opening begs the question of just how many supermarkets is enough for a booming residential market. Besides the Winn-Dixie and Albertson's that share the Lithia-Pinecrest/Bloomingdale Avenue corner, there's a Kash 'n Karry off Lithia-Pinecrest Road in FishHawk and another Kash 'n Karry and Publix down the road, a few miles away off Bloomingdale Avenue.

Welch is not concerned. As she put it: "Our Publix will deliver what we hang our hat on, which is customer service. The Publix niche is the service we deliver to our customers."

Indeed, the expansive Publix offers "a very extensive 'Green Wise' section of healthy food offerings, "much larger than the rest of the stores," Welch said.

Throughout the store, departments features what in Publix jargon is referred to as, "HMR," or "home meal resolutions," more commonly known as quick and easy meals.

In all, Welch is responsible for approximately 160 employees, many of whom will start out as she did 16 years ago, as an associate at the cash register. She hopes to serve as a role model to her employees, crediting for her success the mentors she had along the way.



Tana Welch of Valrico is the new manager of the Publix in the Shoppes at Lithia at Lithia-Pinecrest Road and Bloomingdale Avenue.

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Restaurant Offers Down-Home Cooking

By JOYCE MCKENZIE

There's a new restaurant in Bloomingdale that's here to please country-style food connoisseurs.

It's M & J's Country Kitchen in Bloomingdale Plaza at 147 Bloomingdale Ave., owned by Mari Jane "M.J." Valentino and Johnny Colvin.

Open Tuesday through Sunday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., the restaurant specializes in dishes that appeal to the "meat and potatoes-type folks," which Colvin believes make up the majority of the area's population.

"I just don't think everyone is ready for gourmet eateries," said Colvin who served as chef of Bec's Eatery, formerly located in the same facility.

The menu items, consisting of breakfast and lunch selections, are made to order and none is priced above \$5.99.

For example, the biscuits and gravy served with homemade gravy and freshly baked biscuits and home fries, including coffee, is priced at \$4.99.

Colvin, also a former cook in the Navy with 25 years experience in the field, prepares all the sauces, including the hollandaise, daily from scratch.

"Nothing ever comes out of a can," he said. "My specialties are eggs Benedict and potato pancakes I make from a recipe handed down in my family from Belfast, Ireland."



Owners of M & J's Country Kitchen Mari Jane "M.J." Valentino and Johnny Colvin high-five one another as they stand in front of their restaurant in Bloomingdale Plaza.

He's also proud of his Philly cheese steak that he calls "the real thing."

"Our hamburgers are 100 percent Angus beef, something you don't find at the chains," he said.

M.J., who worked as a waitress at the former Bec's, makes all the baked goods, including blueberry, banana, zucchini and chocolate chip muffins.

She's also responsible for creating the Texas toast's topping made with eggs, vanilla and cinnamon.

M & J's Country Cuisine

also does catering for lunches, dinners, wedding and showers.

They'll even host the event at the restaurant.

"Personally, I do a lot of Italian (cooking)," said Valentino, a native of Long Island, N.Y.

In addition to her love of cooking and serving people, Valentino has an affinity for helping people in need.

She's planning the M & J's Country Cuisine Golf Tournament Oct. 13 at 1 p.m. at River Hills Golf and Country Club to benefit the Marty

Lyons Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded by former New York Jets football player Marty Lyons to grant wishes to terminally ill children.

The cost is \$75 per golfer, which includes prizes and a dinner at the restaurant following the event. Valentino is also in need of hole sponsors at \$50 each and those who sign up at the restaurant will get one free breakfast or one free lunch. Her goal is to raise \$10,000.

For more information, call 643-4449 or 662-3334.

Computer Corner

By JIM JEUP

The most common computer question I hear lately: "Should I upgrade my computer to Windows XP?"

My first response is usually the same: "Does your computer currently meet your needs?"

If the answer is yes, then don't upgrade. If the answer is no, then Windows XP deserves a closer look. Three important questions about your computer and Windows XP are: "Will Windows XP run on my computer?", "How do I check my computer for XP compatibility?" and "Will my software run on Windows XP?"

Will Windows XP run on my computer?

Any new computer purchased since Christmas 1999 should run XP just fine, but here are the minimum requirements:

300 MHz Pentium II or compatible processor (or bet-

64MB of RAM
2GB of free hard-drive space

SVGA plug-and-play monitor

12X or faster CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive.

I have installed XP without problem on older machines that meet these minimum requirements, but the "64 MB of RAM" requirement makes computer operation slower when running more than one application. I recommend a minimum of 128 MB of RAM for normal users who want to do more while e-mail is open, and people who want to benefit from the new "eXperiences," like built-in photography and digital music support will want 256MB of RAM or more. Memory is inexpensive right now, so this is a worthwhile investment.

How do I check my computer for XP compatibility?

Microsoft's Web site offers "upgrade eligibility" information and distributes XP's "Upgrade Advisor" (free). Upgrade Advisor will check your computer's compatibility before you purchase an XP upgrade. Warning: The download is large (32MB). If you have a dialup, or slow Internet connection, downloading "Upgrade Advisor" can become a task. Another way to check XP compatibility is to seek help from a professional. A certified technician, or Microsoft certified

professional, will have knowledge of your computer hardware. They know what is compatible with XP, and will help find solutions to serve your needs when hardware is not compatible. Either solution will save you time investigating compatibility issues.

Will my current software run on Windows XP?

If you're purchasing new software, look for the Windows XP Compatible sticker. However, some older software may not work with Windows XP. Microsoft has built-in "Compatibility Mode" to help solve most issues. XP can fool your program into believing it is still running on your old operating system. Using "Compatibility Mode" requires you to know where the software is located on your computer, and some software won't accept this work-around. If you are unsure about your software,

Microsoft's Web site offers software compatibility lists, or again, seek help from a professional.

Example:

When using Outlook 2000 and upgrading to Windows XP, after XP Setup is complete, you must reinstall Outlook 2000 for the application to work properly.

Computer Corner is accepting questions. If you have a computer question of broad interest, or if you found these answers confusing, contact Computer Corner at cornerquestions@advancedmobiletech.com

Jim Jeup is with Advanced Mobile Tech - Onsite Computer Repair, and can be reached at 508-4378 or on the Web at www.advancedmobiletech.com. He is a Bloomingdale resident.



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Births

The following Bloomingdale births were reported at Brandon Regional Hospital:

April 24
Aiden Robert Preiss, son of Julie and Andy Preiss

May 6
Stephanie Michelle Dullum, daughter of Jodi and John Dullum.

May 7
Joseph Michael Skinner, son of Melanie and Michael Skinner.

June 17
Ethan Ricardo Nunez, son of Bridget and Richard Nunez.

June 20
Matthew Allen Hertz, son of Tabitha and Michael

Hertz.

Joshua Joseph Pitre, son of Madelyn and Joseph Pitre.

June 23
Rosemarie Hannah Harrison, daughter of Victoria and Richard Harrison.

Aiden Jayde Richards, son of Dana and Ricky Richards.

June 27
Ali Brooke Crosslin, daughter of Bettina and Michael Crosslin.

July 7
Joseph Anthony Avitabile, son of Jacquelyn and Daniel Avitabile.

Diana Michelle Faehn, daughter of Darla and Stephen Faehn.

Alafia Resident Forms River Watchdog Group

By CHRISTINA PELLETT

When Dave Cooley and his family had their Alafia River boat dock burglarized twice in the past four years, Cooley started thinking of ways he and his neighbors could prevent further thefts from occurring.

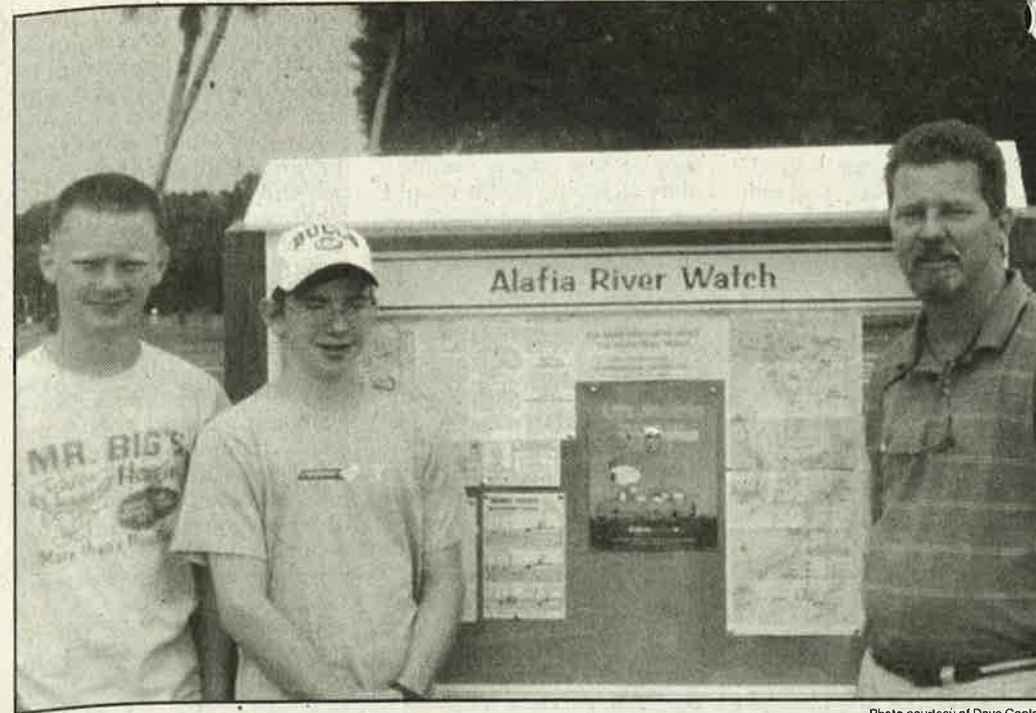
Now, Cooley has forged the beginnings of Alafia River Watch, a community-based watchdog group with the help of the Hillsborough County Neighborhood Relations Office, which aids communities in forming neighborhood associations to help curb crime and build community partnerships.

Cooley's group has begun working with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the Coast Guard to get tighter security and more public education for those who live and boat on the Alafia River.

"Between the sheriff's office, their marine patrol unit, and the Coast Guard, we're insuring we have security on the river most of the time," Cooley said. "But because they can't be there all of the time, we need a neighborhood river watch to be the eyes and ears. If there's a theft or an unsafe vessel, we can be there to look out for that."

Cooley began organizing his group two years ago, sending letters to the county commissioner's office and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office requesting a neighborhood and county partnership on the river. He said he was partly motivated by his personal experiences with dock theft, but he also noticed increased boating traffic was creating some potential hazards for both residents and boaters.

"The traffic on the Alafia River has increased tenfold in the past four years," Cooley said. "When you increase those numbers, you get the bad along with the good. On the weekends, there's a lot of speeding, some people partake in alcohol and there's some drunken boaters. The



Dave Cooley, right, stands in front of the informational kiosk he had erected with county support at the new Riverview Civic Center boat ramp. Cooley's sons Matthew, left, and Mike help the Riverview resident with the organization of Alafia River Watch, a community-based watchdog group Cooley began forming two years ago.

vast majority are well-behaved, but it's those few bad ones that ruin it for all the good ones."

Recently, Cooley has begun working closely with Neighborhood Relations Officer Shelley Blood, who has helped with publicity and organization. Both the sheriff's office and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission have pledged to help Cooley's group, both with public education and regular patrols.

In the past month, the sheriff's office has assigned three deputies to the Alafia River, including Deputy P.K. Williams, whose primary duty is to patrol the river and issue warnings and citations to those who are breaking the law. Williams said he primarily enforces idle and no-wake zones in designated areas of the Alafia River where boaters must slow to a crawl to avoid accidents and damage to the shoreline and docks.

"We handle the Florida statutes regarding boating safety and do shoreline patrol

for the residents," Williams said. "And we still do all the regular duties that regular deputies would on land. Things happen on the water just like they do on land — domestic situations and intoxicated people boating under the influence."

Williams patrols the river every weekend and most weekdays, and has issued 10 citations and 36 warnings. He said a large percentage of the citations that marine patrol issues are on the Alafia, largely due to the amount of traffic on the river.

Cooley's group worked with the county to have an informational kiosk with safe boating information and maps placed at the new Riverview Civic Center boat ramp, and he said he hopes to install similar signs at the Williams Park and Kings Avenue boat ramps. The kiosk also features new safety regulations that have been passed since Sept. 11, regulations Cooley said many boaters aren't aware of.

Alafia River Watch also partnered with Coast Guard

Flotilla 74 on Memorial Day weekend, inspecting vessels as they arrived at the Riverview Civic Center boat ramp. Cooley said they are working with the Coast Guard Auxiliary to set up monthly safe boating classes at several docks.

And in May, Cooley and Chuck Coleman, director of marine safety for Hillsborough County, conducted an audit of signage along the river from Tampa Bay to Kings Avenue. Cooley said they found more than 75 signs that needed to be replaced with larger-print signs that are easier for boaters to read.

Cooley said his main goal right now is to build the membership of Alafia River Watch. Ideally, the organization will rely on residents' manpower to keep an eye out for hazards on the river, and to act as first responders in an emergency situation. He said he'd also like to provide more information to residents and boaters, so they

See RIVER Page 25

Family Opens Produce Stand

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Inviting signs proclaiming "sweet corn," "seedless watermelons" and "Georgia peaches" have popped up at the end of Culbreath Road where Grandpa's Produce has opened up in the distinctive red barn across from the Campo Family YMCA.

The Resendez family runs this quaint produce stand.

"We opened about five or six months ago," said older son Cesar. "This is our only stand. We have local produce

and some from North Carolina and Georgia. We meet the distributor and buy it fresh from him daily."

Resendez said, once the season starts back in October, patrons can expect a larger selection of their favorite produce, and can also expect prices to go down. But, for now, supply is low because the season is ending.

Grandpa's Produce has fresh, in-season fruits and vegetables, along with a variety of landscape plants, and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day.



The distinctive red barn on Bloomingdale Avenue offers Grandpa's Produce.

Recycle Ink Cartridges At Community Office

A Gazette Report

Bloomingdale residents who wish to recycle their spent computer ink cartridges to benefit our neighborhood schools are invited to use the collection box in the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. The office is at the rear of the SunTrust Bank/Citgo gas station just south of Bloomingdale Avenue, and is open Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Tina Pietrzyk, a Bloomingdale resident and representative of A Smart Choice of Flori-

da recycling company, will collect the cartridges and issue checks to Bloomingdale area public schools including Alafia Elementary, Cimino Elementary, Burns Middle and Bloomingdale High, or the private school of your choice.

The most commonly used cartridges will yield from \$1 to \$7 each.

Residents can indicate the school they wish to contribute to by placing the cartridge in a baggie and marking it with the school name.

If you have questions about the recycling program, contact Pietrzyk at 625-9450.

RIVER

From page 24

know what to do in an emergency situation.

"Right now, we have about a dozen people in the group," Cooley said. "We'd like to have about 50 people in the group. With 50, we can have one member act as neighborhood captain once every six weeks. Any less than that and it would become a burden, and we don't want it to

become a burden. They don't have to be on guard or on duty. They just have to be around in case anything happens. I figure we're serving about 600 to 700 homes along the river, so we'd like to get at least 10 percent of those people involved."

For more information on Alafia River Watch, call 272-5860.

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