

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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FEATURE STORY



BHA representatives and friends joined in the patriotic fun at Brandon's Fourth of July Parade last month.

PAGE 6

BUSINESS

A new Brandon business offers to keep an eye on your pets, and your home while you're away.

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A Giant Step For Bloomingdale



ROBERT CONE/Staff photo

After smashing the ball over the fence to deep left-center field for a two-run home run against Lutz in the Section 4 title game at East Bay Little League July 23, Bloomingdale National Major all-star Trey Oest prepares to step on home plate as teammates cheer his arrival. Oest also drove in a run with a double and pitched a perfect four-inning game as Bloomingdale beat Lutz, 10-0, to advance to the state Little League tournament in Fort Myers July 30-Aug. 1. Bloomingdale went 2-1 in pool play to advance to the semifinal round at state, but lost 2-1 in seven innings to Greater Dunedin. Coached by Robert Herald, Jon Pfeiffer and manager Bob Starke, the Bloomingdale National all-stars are Oest, Jordan Doyle, Chris Gauthier, Chris Herald, Steven McGuire, Joshua Langer, Salvador Lopez, Daniel Padron, Anthony Rivera, Nolan Schultz, Marcus Starke, Chris Webber and R.J. Zak.

Notary Service Now Available At Community Office

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A Gazette Report

Derry Wilson, Bloomingdale's com-

munity office manager and Certified Notary Public, now offers notary services at the office during regular hours (Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon) or after hours by appointment. Notary fees, per docu-

ment, are \$2 for BHA dues-paying Bloomingdale residents; \$5 for non-dues paying Bloomingdale residents; and \$8 for the general public. For information or after-hours appointments, call Wilson, 813-546-5639.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 4

BHA, County Code Enforcement Office Share Common Goals



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Raul Velasquez was named Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department's new Fire Chief.

New Chief Takes Helm At Volunteer Fire Department

STATION TO HOST
OPEN HOUSE AUG. 5

By DAWN ZAMANIS
Correspondent

Raul Velasquez has climbed more than his fair share of ladders during his career as a volunteer firefighter in Tampa.

Last year Velasquez was promoted to Assistant Fire Chief at Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department. He then served as acting chief when the department's former chief, Teddy Beisecker, resigned earlier this year. A few months ago, he climbed the ladder of success once again when he was named Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department's new Fire Chief.

With about 30 firefighters and administrative personnel to manage, Velasquez, who lives in Plant City, maintains a demanding schedule and plays a critical role in making certain that the department runs efficiently.

In addition to his administrative duties, the chief is responsible for training and recruiting new employees and responding to accidents, major fires, and trauma calls.

"It is my responsibility to make sure fire protection is delivered properly within our community and that the volunteer fire department has a positive effect in the community. That is of extreme importance."

Velasquez's commitment to public service goes back to his

years as a teenager, volunteering in New York.

"I've always enjoyed helping people," he said.

"I've been involved in volunteer work since the age of 14 when I was a youth action program volunteer in New York. I later worked as an auxiliary police officer in New York."

For 10 years, Velasquez volunteered at The American Red Cross in Florida as a team captain, providing all types of disaster relief, including responding to family emergencies such as house fires, facilitating programs to provide temporary shelter for fire victims, and working with other organizations to help victims of other disasters.

The Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department responds to an area that encompasses more than 18 square miles, from Valrico to Lithia Springs and surrounding locales.

"If an emergency call comes in and the fire trucks from other ladder companies are out responding to emergency calls, we will go outside of our designated area immediately to take action and respond," Velasquez said.

"We're here to serve the community in any way we can."

Velasquez's career in community service and disaster relief has spanned many years. He is presently on reserve as a security trainer with Security Consulting Group, a company

See FIRE, Page 18

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Is it True?

Good Looking People...

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By Jeff Winslow

I would never go so far as to say I'm a good looking person. However, I will say that I am a better looking person; better than just a few months ago. And what I want to say here is that my much improved appearance has given me many more opportunities. Let me explain.

I think my improved appearance has led to more opportunities because I have a new attitude. Now I look for opportunities. I have confidence in myself because I am proud of who I am and how I look. Believe it or not, this new confidence comes from a smile. My smile to be exact.

I recently had a smile makeover by a cosmetic dentist and it has changed my life. I used to be embarrassed by my smile and therefore didn't laugh or smile too much around others. I used to actually try not to smile.

Now, I can converse with anyone in complete confidence that my smile looks great. I get compliments on it nearly every day. I am dating more frequently and I have a new job. My friends and family tell me that I am a changed person. Lately, they've been calling me 'Smiley' because I'm always grinning from ear to ear whenever they see me and they're not used to that.

I have to admit that I am also taking better care of myself since my smile makeover. I can see how important it is to look your best and project self confidence in everything you do. People just respond better.



Dr. Scott Arnold takes care of many area families routine dental needs. And with his cosmetic training from the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Training, he can offer his clients the opportunity to do much more about their smile.

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Homeowners Association, County Code Enforcement Share Common Goals

ENFORCE HEALTH, SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Inoperable, unregistered vehicles parked in the street. Neglected homes sorely in need of structural repairs and paint. Dilapidated fences. Lawns sprouting knee-high weeds inviting snakes, rodents and myriad insects to set up camp.

Those are just a few examples of county code and neighborhood deed restriction violations routinely reported to the Hillsborough County Code Enforcement Office and the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

Fortunately, in the 5,000-home community of Bloomingdale, instances of severe household and property neglect are slim in comparison to other parts of unincorporated Hillsborough County.

In Bloomingdale — where property values remain high and civic pride perseveres — most property owners generally maintain their homes and yards in a manner that meets or exceeds the minimum standards required by county laws and neighborhood deed restrictions.

In any well-established, sprawling community, however, some residents fail to maintain their homes and yards to the satisfaction of their neighbors, homeowners association and county code enforcement officials. Bloomingdale is no exception.

BHA Volunteers Help Neighbors Resolve Deed Restriction Violations

Each of Bloomingdale's approxi-

To Report A Code Violation To Hillsborough County Code Enforcement

Due to state-mandated procedures, code violation cases could take up to three months to resolve.

Call (813) 641-6946, or log on to www.hillsboroughcounty.org/hcce. Click on the "code enforcement" link, then the "complaints" link on the menu at the left of the page. To report an anonymous complaint, do not include or mention your full or real

mately 40 neighborhood sections has its own set of deed restrictions. A handful of sections (Fox Run, The Greens and Cambridge Cove, to name a few) were organized by their developers with mandatory-homeowners associations.

Mandatory homeowners associations generally have the legal authority to aggressively enforce deed restrictions, impose fines and liens, and to independently file lawsuits in the most difficult to resolve cases.

Most sections of Bloomingdale, however, are represented only by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. The BHA is a voluntary, non-profit organization run entirely by non-paid volunteers who live in the community.

Voluntary homeowners associations like the BHA generally do not have the authority to take independent legal action against homeowners who refuse to comply with deed restrictions.

Nevertheless, BHA volunteers work with residents to the best of their ability

name, or an e-mail address that discloses your identity, in any correspondence or conversations with the code enforcement office.

To Report A Deed Restriction Violation To The BHA

Due to a limited number of BHA volunteers active in the Neighborhood Improvement Program, response times could take up to three weeks.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association requires all deed restric-

tion violation complaints to be submitted in writing on the association's official Resident Complaint Form. The forms are available to E-mail directly from the community Web site, www.bloomingtondalegazette.com.

Forms are also available at the community office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. Office hours are Monday — Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon, or call 681-2051. Mail completed forms to the community office or fax to (813) 684-2358.

to help resolve neighborhood deed restriction violations.

The BHA receives two or three dozen reports each month from residents concerned about potential deed restriction violations. Neighborhood volunteers respond to residents' written complaints by sending a courtesy letter to the problem address. In most cases, a written notice (or two) is enough to motivate homeowners to correct the reported problem.

The most frequently reported deed restriction violations are overgrown lawns, household junk stored outside visible from the street, trash and yard waste left at the curb for days on end, boats and trailers parked in driveways or yards, and cars parked on the grass.

Neighbors Must Get Involved To Help Resolve Serious, Ongoing Violations

In serious cases of deed restriction violations that go unresolved, BHA volunteers are available to privately discuss the situation with concerned neighbors,

to find out why the problem has not been corrected, and to determine the best course of action.

Some maintenance issues may be the result of the homeowner's disability, illness, divorce or serious financial troubles. In such cases, the BHA's Neighbors In Need program stands ready to find physical and financial assistance for those who are willing but unable to maintain or clean up their residences. All Neighbors In Need cases are held in strict confidence with the BHA.

One option to resolve neighbor vs. neighbor disputes — or in cases where homeowners simply refuse to comply with deed restrictions — is neighbor mediation.

BHA volunteers work closely with Hillsborough County's South Shore Community Justice Center to bring complainants and violators together to resolve contentious issues. The service is free and confidential, but all parties

See GOALS, Page 19

Say you saw it in The Bloomingdale Gazette

Your Inside Connections

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594
Phone: 681-2051 Fax: 684-2358
E-mail: Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net
Web Site: www.bloomingtondalegazette.com
BHA meetings are at the community office on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President: Ted Grable **Vice President:** Joe Hickle
Treasurer: Pam Liguori **Director:** Lydia Harrod
Director: Steve Heckel **Director:** Dale Kahn
Director: George May **Director:** Tim Shuman
Director: Myron Magedanz **Director:** Sheila Harris

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594
Phone: 684-6667
BSTD meetings are held at the community office on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President: Thom Snelling
Vice President: Russell Jones
Treasurer: David West
Recording Secretary: Michael Buday
Trustee: David Steck

Trustee: Joe Harless
Property Manager: Al Devney

Bloomingdale Community Security Program

The Bloomingdale Community Security Program committee meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m..

Coordinator/Equipment Manager:

Tony Diolosa, 681-1146
Treasurer: Paul Kelmer
Patrol Member: Steven Heckel
Patrol Member: Brad Scharp
Patrol Member: Paul Warr



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Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132
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BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.
President: Bill Grace
Treasurer: Fred Englehart

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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Executive Director — Joe Liguori
Editor — Laura Frazier
Correspondent — Mack Austin
Correspondent — Leslie White
Correspondent — Irene Buggy
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Publisher — Carla Floyd
Advertising, call: 627-1322

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Girl Scouts Host 'Kaleidoscope' Festival Aug. 26 At Fairgrounds

OPEN TO PUBLIC, FREE ADMISSION, PARKING

A Gazette Report

The Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council will host "Kaleidoscope," a day of family fun at the Florida State Fairgrounds on Aug. 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The family-friendly event, presented by the Girl Scouts and Publix Supermarket Charities, is open to Girl Scouts, their families and friends, and the general public. Admission and parking are free.

The Suncoast Council, local Girl Scout troops, and community partners will offer a variety

of hands-on activities at the fair. Community participants include Busch Gardens, Lowry Park Zoo, MOSI, and The Parent Guide.

Activities will include sports, crafts, horseback riding, and camping skills lessons. Scouts can also purchase the latest gear available from the Girl Scout Store.

Vendors will offer food and drink available for purchase.

More than 2,000 participants attended last year's Kaleidoscope festival.

For more information about Kaleidoscope, contact Cathy Proses or Pamela Qualls at the Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council, (813) 281-4475.

Center Place Undergoes Renovations

ACTIVITIES RESUME WEEK OF AUG. 14

A Gazette Report

Center Place, undergoing major renovations Aug. 1-14 along with Brandon Regional Library, will be outfitted with new carpet, tile, fresh interior

paint, new theater curtains, silk plants, updated furnishings and a resurfaced parking area.

The office will remain open during construction. Classes and all other scheduled activities are set to resume the week of Aug. 14.

Information: (813) 685-8888.



Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association, Inc. RESIDENT COMPLAINT FORM

To report possible violations of neighborhood deed restrictions and/or Hillsborough County codes or ordinances, mail or deliver this completed form (all fields are required to process your complaint) to: BHA, Attn: Resident Complaint Form, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594; or fax to 813-684-2358; or E-mail to: bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net.

Date _____

Your Name _____

Your E-mail Address _____

Your Phone Number _____

Your Street Address _____

Problem Address _____

Problem Details _____

Do you require a follow-up response from BHA volunteers?*

** BHA volunteers will follow up on your complaint as soon as possible. Complaint investigations and follow-up calls could take up to three weeks.*

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**BHA Reps, Friends
Joined Parade
In Grand Style**

Representatives of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. and friends joined in the patriotic fun at Brandon's Fourth of July Parade last month. The group rode in golf carts provided courtesy of Bloomingdale Golfer's Club. Pictured at left at the wheel, Joni Hickle, a Bloomingdale resident and former community office manager, treated her friend visiting from Dallas, Adel Kluger, to a ride through Brandon's 46th annual Fourth of July Parade. Below, Homeowners Association vice president Joe Hickle shows off his patriotic decorating skills. The group festooned carts donated by Bloomingdale Golfer's Club in grand style.

Photos Courtesy of BHA

Thousands of children along the parade route scrambled for beads and candy tossed to them by parade participants.



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A Gazette Report

The Tampa Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross has scheduled CPR, First Aid and other courses during August at its Brandon Branch Office, 410 Ware Blvd., Suite 306.

Red Cross CPR courses combine lecture, video demonstrations and hands-on mannequin training to teach participants how to recognize breathing and cardiac emergencies that call for CPR and



Firewise tip: Landscaping with water-retaining plants helps protect your home from wildfire. Find other useful tips at Firewise.org.



See RED CROSS, Page 18

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

BHA Helps Neighbors Plan Neighborhood PRIDE Activities

WINDSOR WOODS SEEKS PARTICIPANTS

A Gazette Report

Two homeowners in the Windsor Woods section of Bloomingdale East would like to hear from other neighbors interested in revitalizing its Neighborhood PRIDE group.

Neighborhood PRIDE groups plan activities to encourage neighbors to get together for social activities, neighborhood improvement projects and more.

One Windsor Woods resident would like to round up a few volunteers willing to distribute the section's deed restrictions door-to-door. High school students who participate in Neighborhood PRIDE projects are eligible to receive community service hour credits.

Another Windsor Woods resident also seeks neighbors willing to hold a fundraising effort to pay for "Deed Restricted Community" plaques to be added to the section's entryway signs.

Costs incurred to hold projects geared towards neighborhood improvement and open social activities — including block parties and garage sales— may be covered in full or in part by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's Neighborhood Improvement Program.

Residents of Windsor Woods or any other section of Bloomingdale who would like to plan or help with Neighborhood PRIDE activities are invited to call Laura, 643-2990, or E-mail info@bloomingtondalegazette.com.

Bloomingtondale Residents Can Sign Up For BHA News Alerts

FREE, PRIVATE SERVICE

A Gazette Report

All Bloomingdale residents are invited to join the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's private E-mail broadcast list, for free.

Through its broadcast E-mail service, the BHA provides residents with timely news concerning Bloomingdale area law enforcement, schools, county business, community volunteer opportunities, neighborhood events and more.

To receive BHA News Alerts, log on to www.bloomingtondalegazette.com and enter your E-mail address (no further personal information

required) in the space provided at the top left corner of the page.

The homeowners association and Gazette staff will keep all registered E-mail addresses in strict confidence. The addresses are undisclosed on sent messages, and are not sold or shared with any other organizations.

An effective-immediately, one-click "unsubscribe" option appears at the end of every message, for those who wish to discontinue the service.

For more information about BHA News Alerts, E-mail info@bloomingtondalegazette.com or call 813-684-2990.

'Life Story' Writing Classes At Bloomingdale Library

SPECIAL SERIES SPONSORED BY FRIENDS GROUP

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Regional Library will host a series of Life Story Writing classes on Thursday mornings from Sept. 7 through Oct. 12. This series is for beginners, and participants must be able to attend all six classes in the series. A class for Spanish

speakers will also be offered.

Life Story writing classes teach techniques for writing about memories of the past, with particular focus on childhood, family history, relationships, children, work, and personal sorrows and victories.

This series is sponsored by the Friends of the Bloomingdale Library. Space is limited and registration is required. To register, visit the library or call 273-3652, Ext. 2.

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LETTERS

Residents Report Serious Animal Control Issues

COUNTY LAW: PETS CANNOT ROAM FREE

A Gazette Report

To submit a letter to the editor, or to comment on any letters published in the Gazette, E-mail info@bloomingtondalegazette.com or send U.S. mail to Gazette Editor, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. All letters are subject to editing for clarity and length.

Resident Reports Pit Bull Attack On Glenhaven Drive

This letter is to report a dog attack that recently occurred in Bloomingdale East.

My wife and I were out walking our dogs at about 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 23. As we headed back to our home, off of Glenhaven Drive, I noticed a pit bull sitting in someone's front yard. I was carrying our small dog, and my wife was behind me around the corner walking our larger dog, which was on its leash. When the pit bull saw me, it began running very quickly towards me from about 30 yards away. It kept going around the corner and saw my wife walking our dog. The pit bull immediately attacked our dog.

I was able to fight the pit off of our dog by repeatedly kicking it. I then secured it to the ground and a man stopped to help me hold the animal down while we called the authorities.

The police came and secured the dog. Hillsborough County Animal Services control officers were not available at the time.

We are very disturbed by this event. We expect to have a great quality of life here in Bloomingdale, which includes a peaceful walk with our dogs. To be attacked by a loose pit bull is unacceptable.

We ask that you publish this story in The Bloomingdale Gazette to bring awareness to our neighbors and let folks know about this ongoing problem. My wife and our dogs have previously been attacked by less dangerous breeds. We know there are many dog walkers here in the neighborhood who share our concerns. Thanks for letting our neighbors know about this problem.

Animal Lover Reports Rude, Callous Treatment At Emergency Vet Office

On Monday, July 24, I let our dogs out into our fenced-in back yard in the Bloomingdale West area. By the time I noticed there was a cat in our yard, the dogs immediately went after it and caught it. By the time I got to the cat, which had apparently hopped over our fence, it appeared lifeless.

I yelled for my daughter to grab the car keys while I did CPR on the cat. We sped to our family vet's office on Bloomingdale Avenue only to discover they were closed.

I remembered hearing about several

after-hours emergency vet clinics in Brandon so we headed to one of them. This was certainly an emergency.

We arrived at the emergency vet's office a few minutes after 8 p.m. As I continued to try and keep the cat alive, we saw a sign that said the office closed at 8 p.m. People were still inside, so we continued to knock and ring the bell. After about a minute, a buzzer went off and they let me in the door.

I ran in yelling, "Hello, help I have a dying cat!" Finally a woman came to the front desk and saw what I had. She rushed around to let me into a room. At this point, a big gentleman came running behind us asking repeatedly, "Are you going to hold financial responsibility for this cat?"

I turned around, crying, and said, "It is not my cat. Just please help it. It is dying."

The gentleman offhandedly replied, "Lady we can't touch the cat unless someone takes financial responsibility."

I asked him where people are supposed to take sick or hurt animals they find, if not an emergency veterinary clinic.

His cold reply was, "Nowhere, unless you are willing to take financial responsibility."

Then he turned and closed the door and just left me there with the dying cat. Moments later, a woman came into the room and said that she called Hillsborough County Animal Services.

The man then came back into the room, flicked the cat between the eyes and said, "Yeah, it's already gone."

Then he held a stethoscope to its chest and said, "No, it still has a heartbeat. I'll put it to sleep and Animal Services will come pick it up."

With that, he carelessly picked the cat up by the scruff of the neck and carried it out of the room like a sack of garbage.

I am absolutely furious that this business had the audacity to treat myself and this poor cat in such a callous, uncaring manner.

They advertise their business as an after-hours emergency pet hospital. In my opinion, they should be shut down for that kind of treatment. There is a family out there somewhere that will be looking for that cat. I really feel things should have been handled differently. Please E-mail or write to The Bloomingdale Gazette if you have experienced similar problems with any of the emergency animal clinics in the Brandon area.

Editor's note: Hillsborough County's Animal Ordinance, adopted in June 2000, requires dogs and cats on public streets, roads, parks or other public property to be under the direct control of the owner. Violators could face up to \$500 in fines and a mandatory court appearance. To file a complaint with Hillsborough County Animal Services, call 744-5660 or log on to www.hillsboroughcounty.org/animalservices.

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BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY NEWS

A Gazette Report

The following announcements were published in Hillsborough County press releases issued in July 2006.

County Commission Seeks Citizen Board Applicants

Hillsborough County Commissioners are currently recruiting volunteers for a variety of citizen advisory boards and councils. Nominees must be registered to vote in Hillsborough County and be willing to serve without compensation. The application deadline date is Aug. 21, 2006.

Applications are available in the commissioners' reception area on the second floor of County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd. in downtown Tampa; by calling the Boards and Councils Coordinator at 272-5826, or through the County's web site at www.hillsboroughcounty.org. The form can be completed online, but cannot be submitted electronically. Options for submission are listed on the application. Appointments will be scheduled for meetings of the County Commission in September or October 2006.

BUILDING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, APPEALS AND EXAMINERS

— confirms the competency and integrity of applicants applying for building certification in the County and takes disciplinary action against those contractors that fail to comply with the Building Code. One vacancy exists. The position is specified as an "alternate" and nominees must be knowledgeable and experienced in the technical codes of the building industry. The term for an

"alternate" is two years. Meeting schedule: monthly, third Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

— examines and advises department management on the development and operation of programs that treat emotionally handicapped children, provides parent training, emergency shelter and residential treatment for the Head Start Program and children and families in the community. Four terms are expiring. Terms are for four years. Nominees should have a demonstrated interest in the welfare of children. A criminal background check is required. Meeting schedule: at least six times annually.

CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD

— hears violations of all codes and ordinances of Hillsborough County with most cases arising out of violations of the County's housing, building, zoning and sign codes and ordinances to maintain minimum health and safety standards. One vacancy exists due to a resignation. Appointment is for the remaining of term which expires Dec. 31, 2007. Applicants must be a resident of unincorporated Hillsborough County. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: monthly, generally second Friday, 9:00 a.m.

CONSUMER PROTECTION BOARD

— acts as a quasi-judiciary body to enforce the provisions of the Consumer Protection Ordinance. One position is vacant. Term is for two years. Position is specified as a Temple Terrace resi-

dent. Meeting schedule: monthly, second Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

ELECTRICAL BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, APPEALS AND EXAMINERS

— confirms the competency and integrity of applicants applying for electrical certification in the County and takes disciplinary action against contractors that fail to comply with the Electrical Code. One position is vacant. Term is for four years. Position is specified as a representative of an electrical utility company. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: quarterly, third Thursday, 8:30 a.m.

ENTERPRISE ZONE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD

— implements a strategic economic development plan for the state-approved University Area Enterprise Zone, which is generally described as being located north of the City of Tampa boundary along Fowler Avenue, south of Bearss Avenue/Skipper Road, and between I-275 and Bruce B. Downs Boulevard. One term is expiring. Term is for four years. Position is specified as a non-profit community-based organization operating within the Zone. Meeting schedule: every other month, at least annually.

FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME ADVISORY BOARD

— reviews and advises the County Commission on recommended amendments to the Family Child Care Homes Licensing Ordinance or the Rules and Regulations Handbook, including recommending and

assisting the local licensing agency in the development and implementation of training materials for child care personnel; advising the local licensing agency on matters of licensing policy, procedure, and priorities; and proposes additional rules and regulations regarding the intent and purpose of the ordinance. Two positions are vacant. Positions are specified as parents who have a child enrolled in a licensed family day care home. Appointments are for the remainder of the terms, which expire Dec. 31, 2006. Meeting schedule: quarterly, third Thursday, 7:00 p.m.

GAS BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, APPEALS AND EXAMINERS

— governs the certification of gas contractors doing work in Hillsborough County and enforces adherence to the standards set by the Gas Code. Three positions are vacant. Positions are specified as a liquid petroleum installer and two alternates. Term for regular members is four years and alternates' terms are for two years. Nominees for alternate positions must be knowledgeable and experienced in the technical codes of the gas industry. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: quarterly, third Thursday, 11:00 a.m.

HEALTH CARE ADVISORY BOARD

— improves accessibility and efficiency of care for medically poor residents of Hillsborough County through annual recommendations to the County Commission for fund allocation, coordination, planning and monitoring of health

See COUNTY, Page 17

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0001800759-01

Chamber Volunteers Work To Put Kids On 'A More Positive Road'

By SCOTTE RUPP
srupp@mediageneral.com

The 14-year-old girl and her father entered the boardroom filled with leather chairs and a massive table. The girl kept her eyes to the floor, glancing only briefly up at her judges: three women and a man sitting on the opposite side of the table.

She took a seat, sinking deeply into it as if to hide. Her father sat to her right, shoulders slumped, face set.

He waited for the questions to begin.

It wasn't the typical courtroom setting, but that's what the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce transformed into July 12.

The four "judges" were all volunteers and chamber members, acting as jury for the Heather Lakes girl. It was their duty to deliver a punishment worthy of the crime.

This was a case of domestic violence in which the girl battled her mother over a cell phone.

The first to speak was George T. May IV, immediate past chairman of the chamber and one of the people responsible for starting the Neighborhood Accountability Board last year. The board meets the second Wednesday of every month at the chamber and hears cases against juveniles who are first-time offenders and have committed lesser offenses such as petty theft.

It's unusual to for the panel to hear a domestic dispute case. However, last week there were two cases on the docket.

"We're business owners in the community who are volun-



From left, Sharon Glenn, Pat McGruder and Marilyn Collins, with George T. May IV looking over their shoulders, are part of a monthly program at the chamber called the Neighborhood Accountability Board.

teering our time to resolve issues with young people," May explained to the girl. "You may explain your situation and you can ask questions if you like. In your opinion, why are you here today?"

The girl said her mother called the sheriff's office because they were fighting over the use of a phone. "She took it and I was hitting her," the teenager said. It was 6 a.m., she added, and the phone had been ringing.

"You were struggling, let me use the word struggling, over a phone at six o'clock in the morning?" May said.

The girl moaned an affirmative, and said she didn't know why she was in trouble for the fight. The fights had been going on for months, nothing new, she said. "I get angry easi-

ly," she added. "I'm going to therapy for it."

Pat McGruder of the McGruder Agency, a Nationwide Insurance provider in Brandon, leaned forward and asked, "Are they giving you any guidelines to follow? Is anger the right way to resolve your problems?"

The girl looked down and grunted a "no."

The volunteers continued to question her and her father, asking about household rules and punishment for misbehavior, household chores (there were none) and the girl's passions (drawing, she said).

"I try to reason with her," the girl's father said. "Her mom is a little more strict. She's well past the age of spanking. She's never been grounded. I reason, not enforce punishment. It

worked for her older sister."

"Sometimes you have to try different things with different personalities," said May.

At the end of the hour-long session, the board delivered several requirements the girl has to complete within the next 30 days including writing letters of apology to her mom and dad, restrictions from television and the computer, serving on the jury of the teen court in Tampa, writing essays about honoring her parents and her family, writing about her strengths and goals, establishing an 11 p.m. curfew, having her parents assign four household chores a day, surrendering the cell phone at 9 p.m., attending peer counseling in Tampa and serving 10 hours of community service with the non-profit cat rescue group, Cat

Call.

"With her, it's got to be black and white," May said to the girl's father. "You've got to write the rules down so there's no misinterpretation, in black and white."

Turing to the girl, he added, "You act like the world owes you."

"I don't think the world owes me," she said in return. "I just have certain ideas. I'm just me."

"It's all right that you have ideas, but what makes the world function are rules," May said.

As the panel read the litany of responsibilities facing her, the girl slumped her head again and kept her eyes to the floor. When McGruder finished, the teen stood up and angrily escaped the room.

For the time being, the girl avoids going into the Hillsborough County court system.

A couple of members of the volunteer panel shook their heads and picked up the second case log, the other domestic dispute charge.

May said he's seen many kids take a turn for the better after appearing before the volunteer board, showing more confidence and maturity.

"I thought this program was something the chamber should embrace. It gives us a lot of creativity and keeps them out of the juvenile system," he said.

"This is very rewarding for board members," McGruder said. "I feel that no matter what you do, if you can change one life, it's that much more rewarding. The goal is to find a suitable requirement and put them on a more positive road."

Marilyn Collins of Riverview was part of the panel for the first time. She wanted to help some children get a second chance before being placed into the court system.

"I just thought maybe I could help out in some small way, maybe do some good in their lives," Collins said.

She'll have to wait until next month when the girl comes back for a rehearing and the panel of volunteers reviews her progress to verify that she completed all of her assignments.

That's when the volunteers see if they've made an impact. And, if so, the charges will be expunged from the juvenile's record.

A good thing, all the volunteer judges agreed.

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Bloomington Special Tax Funds Community Maintenance

**\$30/YEAR INCREASE
PROPOSED ON
SEPT. 5 BALLOT**By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

The Bloomington Special Taxing District, known as the BSTD, was formed about 20 years ago. In the mid-1980s, a group of homeowners successfully petitioned the Board of County Commissioners to create the district. Their goal was to establish a reserve of funds earmarked specifically for community property maintenance throughout Bloomington.

Every property owner in the Bloomington district — regardless of the value or location of their residence — pays the same special tax for community property maintenance. The assessment, indicated on each homeowner's annual Hillsborough County property tax bill, is currently \$100 per residence. There are about 4,700 homes in the district.

The funds are collected by the Hillsborough County tax collector, and are managed by the BSTD's board of trustees. All BSTD board members are elected, non-paid volunteers who reside in the district.

Taxing district board members recently contacted Gazette staff for assistance to educate the community about the \$30 per home annual assessment increase they are recommending. Bloomington residents can vote for or against the increase on a special referendum to be included on the Sept. 5 Primary Election ballot.

The taxing district also seeks to fill one seat currently open on its volunteer board of trustees. General information about the open board seat and proposed assessment increase is provided below.

For more information about the Bloomington Special Taxing District, call trustee and spokesman David Steck, 813-781-8884 or E-mail dsteck@tampabay.rr.com.

Other BSTD board members (listed on page 4 of this issue of the Gazette) can be contacted through the Bloomington Community Office; call 684-6667 or E-mail bloomington.homeowners@verizon.net

**Trustees Establish Budget,
Prioritize Maintenance Needs**

Bloomington Special Taxing District board member David Steck said the question he is most frequently asked about

the organization is, "What exactly does the taxing district do?"

The BSTD board of trustees is accountable for maintaining Bloomington's community property, including landscaping, irrigation and pest control along roads not fronted by private property. Repairs, pressure washing and painting of barrier walls throughout the community are also the board's responsibility.

In addition, landscaping, irrigation, spotlights and signage at eight major entryways (and most minor entryways), are maintained by the district. The district also incurs significant expenses to repair hit-and-run accidents and graffiti resulting in community property damage.

The BSTD board is in charge of creating an annual budget and prioritizing maintenance needs throughout the community.

In May each year, the board drafts a proposed budget and presents it to the community for comment at a series of public hearings. The final budget is then forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for review. Once approved by the county commission, the budget is put in line for capital expenditures approval, a process that can carry over into the next fiscal year.

The biggest misconception about the district's realm of responsibility, Steck said, is the maintenance of county-owned property.

"The taxing district does not oversee maintenance of coun-

ty-owned property such as roads, parks, sidewalks and street signs," Steck said.

**One Seat Open On Taxing
District Board**

The BSTD currently has one open seat on its board of trustees.

Steck said any homeowner who resides in the district can apply to the board, and that candidates with experience in finance, economics or law would particularly serve the board — and the community — well.

Trustees can expect to spend somewhere between three and nine hours a month on taxing district business, depending on the number of public meetings, committee meetings, projects and public hearings scheduled.

Elected to the board in 2004, Steck said he wanted to become a part of the democratic process in some way and to help maintain and improve the community he calls home.

"I'm most proud of being involved in those routine tasks that go into keeping the community neat and clean," he said.

"Litter and trash control, and the eradication of unsightly "snipe" signs are important issues to me," Steck said.

**Property Manager Oversees
Contractors, Much More**

Al Devney, owner of DPPI Property Management Inc., has served as Bloomington's property manager for the past 10 years. In addition to overseeing the contractor bidding process, job site supervision and

accounts payable issues, Devney spends countless hours each month inspecting irrigation systems and landscaping and responding to resident's inquiries about community maintenance.

His daily routine also includes picking up trash and discards that would otherwise accumulate on public roads and property. Devney also regularly removes illegally placed signs planted in the right-of-way or stapled to trees. While making his daily rounds throughout the community, Devney also reports law enforcement or county business issues to the appropriate authorities.

**Board Recommends \$30
Assessment Increase**

A referendum on the Sept. 5 Primary Election Ballot will give Bloomington residents the opportunity to vote on a \$30 per home annual special tax increase recommended by the BSTD board of trustees. A simple majority vote is required for the referendum to pass.

Steck said the board is asking residents to carefully consider approving the relatively modest increase.

"Bloomington is significantly under-assessed in comparison to similar communities in our area," he said.

"\$130 annually per home is really a bargain to maintain an attractive, neat and clean community."

As Bloomington quickly

approaches complete build-out, Steck said, the days when the district would automatically receive additional revenue each year (from new homes built in the district) are drawing to a close.

"Revenue from new homes has declined steadily over the past three years and will soon cap off altogether."

Another relatively recent financial impact the district is up against is one that most residents undoubtedly find themselves facing in their personal and business lives.

"Rising labor costs from the contractors we hire — combined with price increases for petroleum-based products and services — all add up to significant increases across the board for general maintenance services.

"And aside from the basic requirements like lawn mowing, irrigation, wall painting and pest control, we need funds approved, lined up and ready to go over the next few years to complete renovations of our entryways, landscaping and irrigation systems."

"We trust our residents will consider the financial impacts that our community is facing and is likely to continue experience in the foreseeable future.

"The \$30 increase is, in the opinion of the board of trustees and many Bloomington residents, a modest, reasonable and necessary increase."

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Burns Middle School Earns 6th Consecutive 'A' Rating

PRINCIPAL CREDITS DEDICATED FACULTY, COMMUNITY

By DAWN ZAMANIS
Correspondent

Brenda Nolte, principal of Burns Middle School for the past ten years, credits community and parent involvement — and a very dedicated staff and faculty — for earning the school's sixth consecutive annual "A" rating.

As an "A" rated school, Burns receives annual bonuses from the state based on students' achievements, in English, math and writing. Points are earned based on students' achievements and on how much standardized test scores and other measures improve each year.

"Last year, our teachers and faculty set aside funds from bonuses to invest in technology to help our students excel," Nolte said.

"Our teachers are constantly aware of their common goal; to challenge students and to maintain that "A" rating. They need resources in order to do that,

and we have the resources."

Nolte not only enjoys working at the school, but considers it an honor.

"I appreciate the fact that I work at Burns. This is a great community to work in, and our faculty lends itself to success."

"We're very proud of our "A" rating, but there's nothing accidental about that," Nolte said.

The community plays a large role in the fostering of education, Nolte said.

"We live in a community with high standards; one that values and respects education. We are very fortunate to have a good, strong faculty focused on academics to provide our students the opportunity to achieve their best."

Burns currently has 1500 students in attendance. The school's recently completed addition boasts 12 new classrooms.

"Now with the class size reduction law, our classes are not permitted to hold more than 22 students. We are very pleased that our new addition is ready for the first day of school," Nolte said.

After 10 years as principal at Burns,

Nolte has no plans to retire anytime soon.

"I really enjoy what I do," she said.

"I've been in Brandon since 1976, working in various schools. I've gotten to know many (now grown) students. Now I'm administering to their children who attend Burns."

Nolte urged parents of middle school students to stay involved at home with their children.

"They need quiet time for studies. Parents should make sure there is a study time, and should limit usage of technology such as computers, cell phone and video games," she said.

In Nolte's opinion, no child should have a computer, phone or television in their bedroom.

The biggest challenge she faces as principal, Nolte said, is motivating the unmotivated.

"We have over 200 students who make the honor roll every nine weeks. If we could motivate the students who aren't being challenged, perhaps that number would go even higher."

Many students, Nolte said, come to

school unprepared or turn in work late. The school has strict policies designed to bring out the best in every student.

"We do not accept late work. We are trying to teach responsibility to the students. In the real world, they would not be permitted to hand in their work late. Some may say we are overly-strict, but it won't do a student any good to turn an assignment in late. We give homework to learn and to teach responsibility."

"We just want the very best."

Nolte said the school can always use more volunteer help.

"We definitely need more help from parents to mentor and tutor students in reading and math.

"We always need chaperones for field trips, help with picture day, FCATS, and health screening day. We have wonderful parents supporting the student activities, but we always welcome more volunteers."

To mentor or tutor a student at Burns, call Beth Alexander, 744-8383, Ext. 242.

COMMENTARY

A Little Reverence Could Yield True Excellence In Education

DO CHILDREN RESPECT TEACHERS, PEERS?

By IRENE BUGGY
Correspondent

The new catch phrase in our educational system is "Excellence in Education." However, if you were to read John Stossel's January 2006 report from ABC's 20/20 show, there is little evidence of excellence in our public school system.

The state-mandated grading system in Florida ranks our schools from A to F, according to how well students scored on the latest round of standardized tests. This may seem like a cut and dry way to ensure excellence in education, but I beg to differ.

As school bells ring again this August, parents are smiling from ear to ear, but

many children are moaning and groaning. Wouldn't it be nice if all students came back to school with a smile and a heightened enthusiasm for learning?

I am sure teachers would appreciate a classroom full of excited little sponge brains just waiting impatiently for the teacher's next enlightening words. In a perfect world, students would intently listen to each and every word uttered in the classroom. They would pass every test, having comprehended all that was tossed their way.

Unfortunately, in this day and age, teachers are forced to spend much of their time disciplining unruly, uncooperative students throughout the school day.

Should there be year-round school? This topic frequently arises and dissipates faster than a Florida water spout.

Frankly, I think a three-week break three times a year sounds pretty darn good. For starters, parents could plan more vacations and space them out to help save up for the next one.

Would year-round school help students retain what they have learned? I think that is a definite possibility. Too much time is spent at the beginning of each school year re-teaching math skills, for instance. As far as student reading skills, studies show their comprehension ability drops significantly over the course of the summer.

Granted, some children love to read and continue this habit over the summer without being nudged by a parent or librarian. But, in too many cases, children do not pick up a single book all summer.

I heard a report not too long ago about education in Japan. For years, we have known that Japan is at the top of the educational rung when it comes to test scores. But what I haven't seen mentioned is a term I find quite interesting. It is said that Japanese students and par-

ents alike have a "reverence for education" in their country. Literally, that means they show honor or respect for education. It makes me wonder why so many of us don't see it that way here in the United States.

I would much rather see children develop a reverence for their education than to define the quality of their education by SAT test scores. If our students truly realized that it is an honor and a privilege to learn all they can possibly absorb, maybe they would have smiles on their faces and be anxious to return to the classroom each day. Maybe we, as parents, should instill in our child that it is their duty to be reverent in a classroom, not disruptive.

To be the best they can be at their job, which for now is to be a successful student; to respect all of their peers and — in particular — their teachers. Maybe if all of this fell into place in our schools, excellence and reverence would gel together for some pretty spectacular results.

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BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS

School District Of Hillsborough Outlines Changes To The Student Dress Code

FLIP-FLOPS OKAY IN MIDDLE, HIGH SCHOOLS

A Gazette Report

The School District of Hillsborough County issued the following information in a press release last week to educate parents and students about various changes to the public school dress code in effect this year.

Elementary students must wear shoes suitable for outdoor physical education classes.

Clothing that exposes the entire shoulder, tube tops, spaghetti straps, or similar type clothing, may be worn only with a blouse or shirt. Clothing exposing the torso or the midriff, either front, back or sides, shall not be worn. Underwear shall not be visible. Clothing shall not expose the mid-chest area.

The policy for sixth through 12th-graders was changed to allow flip-flops and prohibit bedroom slippers. Other changes affect both elementary and secondary students.

Specifically, language was added to allow students in all grades to wear head coverings for religious observance or health-related reasons, while still prohibiting hats and other items that cover their heads for any other reason while in school buildings. Another addition prohibits students from wearing clothing that exposes the mid-chest area.

Other changes include revising the guideline for determining whether a hemline is too high to "fingertip length" from "mid-thigh," and prohibiting garments and/or jewelry that display weapons or alcohol-related wording or graphics.

Consequences for violating the dress

code policy have also been amended. For all offenses there will now be a conference with the offending student. In addition, principals and site administrators have added discretion to enforce other consequences for students who violate the policy for a second and/or third time.

The dress code policy is included in the Student Handbook, which every student receives at the beginning of the school year. The superintendent and school board urge all parents and students to carefully read the handbook, which also includes information about attendance, student rights and responsibilities, transportation, and safety, among other things. The handbook, as well as examples of dress code violations, can be viewed on the school district website: <http://www.mysdhc.org>.

Wanted: School Stories, Photos

SUBMIT BY E-MAIL

A Gazette Report

Bloomingtondale school administrators, teachers, parents and students are invited to submit school news, stories and photos for publication in The Bloomingtondale Gazette and on the community's Web site, www.bloomingtondalegazette.com.

News and photos from Alafia Elementary, Cimino Elementary, Burns Middle and Bloomingtondale Senior High School — or any of the many private schools Bloomingtondale students attend — are welcomed.

Send photos and news by E-mail only to info@bloomingtondalegazette.com.

BLOOMINGDALE LAW ENFORCEMENT

School Back In Session; Watch Out For Kids

DRIVERS MUST STOP FOR BUSES ON BOTH SIDES OF ROAD

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER
Bloomingtondale Community Resource Officer

Where did summer go? One minute you're planning your

family vacation and the next you're at Wal-Mart buying school supplies!

Hopefully, you all had a nice, restful summer, but now it's time to get serious again about back-to-school safety.

Our first concern must now be the safety and protection of the thousands of kids back in

school in our community.

Many kids will be walking or riding their bikes to school for the first time. Several thousand others will be waiting at bus stops for their school buses.

Some teens will be driving to school for the first time.

Combine all of these different ways for kids to get to

school with thousands of drivers — most in a hurry to get to work — and you have a lot of very dangerous situations.

Parents, please take the time to talk to your kids about the importance of being safe going to and from their schools. Emphasize bike safety and insist they wear bike helmets. Teach them, and remind them again, to cross only at crosswalks, obey all bike-riding rules,

and watch for cars.

Have your kids walk or ride to school in groups with friends or classmates. Discuss the importance of being very careful if strangers approach them. Review the route they should take to school and walk or ride it with them. Make sure they understand the importance of staying at their bus stop, watch-

See SPEED, Page 14



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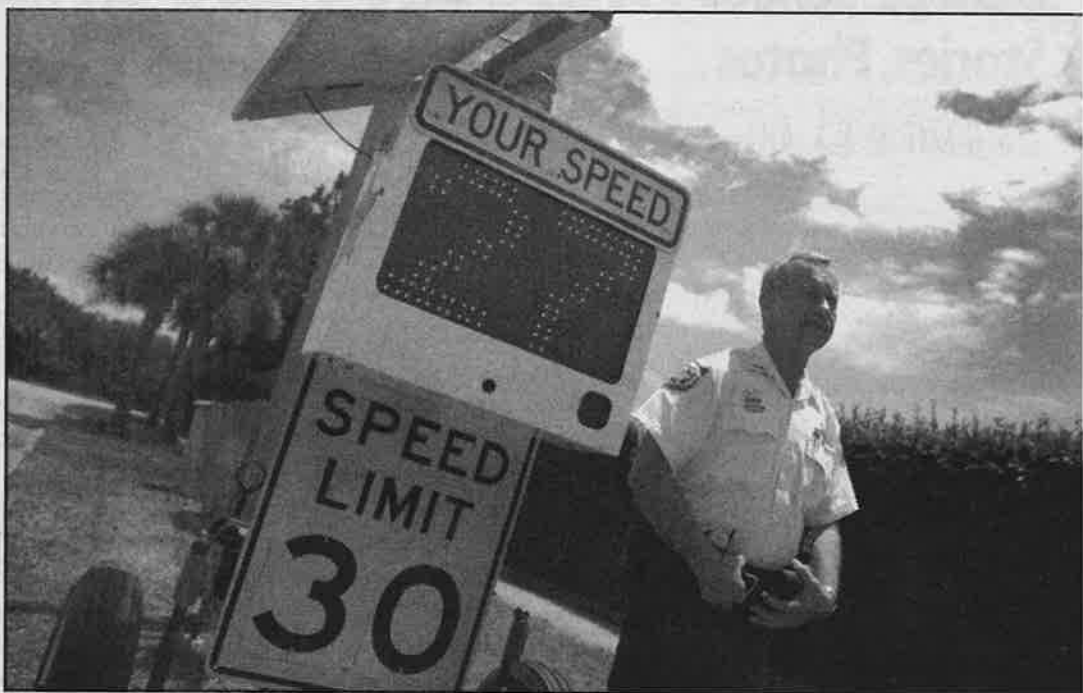
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BLOOMINGDALE LAW ENFORCEMENT



SCOTT RUPP/Photo

Bloomington Community Resource Deputy, Pete Maurer, built a portable, solar-powered speed monitor for use throughout the Bloomington community. Residents can call Maurer at the Bloomington substation to suggest set up spots for the traffic-calming device.

New Monitor Helps Curb The Need For Speed

CALL SUBSTATION TO SUGGEST SETUP SPOTS

A Gazette Report

A new speed monitor built by Bloomington's Community Resource Deputy, Pete Maurer, has been making the rounds throughout Bloomington.

The portable, solar-powered monitor tracks and displays the driving speed of approaching cars. It can also be pro-

grammed to display maximum or minimum speed limits, to flash at oncoming vehicles, and to operate only during specific hours.

Maurer said he tries to move the monitor at least once a week.

"The community response has been great. Folks are calling to request different locations for us to set up," he said.

The monitor was recently set

up on WarmSpring Way off Erindale Drive; Allwood Avenue west of Culbreath Road; and Canoga Park Drive near the entrance to Bloomington West Park.

To suggest a set-up spot for the monitor, call the substation at 635-8040.

Residents who observe any one tampering with the device should call the sheriff's office dispatcher, 247-8200.

Motorists Must Slow Down, Watch For Buses

BOTH SIDES STOP ON ROADS WITHOUT RAISED MEDIANS

A Bloomington Community Substation Notice

Drivers, it's the law: motorists traveling in either direction on a two-way road must stop for school busses on roads without raised median

dividers. This law applies to all traffic on Bloomington Avenue west of Bell Shoals Road.

All drivers must pay close attention when driving near schools and school buses. Driver please keep a safe distance between your vehicle and others, especially school busses. Most school buses do not have seat belts. Slow down.

No Warnings Issued For Speeders In School Zones

AVERAGE FINE IS \$360

A Bloomington Community Substation Notice

Most drivers don't plan on speeding, especially in areas like school zones. If you do speed in a school zone and get pulled over by a deputy, there will be no more warnings. If you speed, you pay — and you pay big. Speeding fines are dou-

bled in school zones.

Speeding control blitzes in front of Bloomington High during the last week of the 2005-06 school year resulted in more than \$14,000 — that's \$14,000 — in speeding citations. The average fine was \$360, with three \$560 tickets written. Special patrols will be watching for speeders. Slow down. It's that simple.

SPEED

Continued From Page 13

ing out for cars and behaving while they wait.

After school, some kids will be home alone for a while when they first get home. Stress the importance of staying inside, knowing important emergency numbers and numbers for parents or friends, following the rules you set for using kitchen appliances and not talking to strangers or opening doors for strangers.

Parents, don't forget to prepare yourself for a new school year too. Give yourself extra travel time for your commute. Check to see if any new

schools have opened up along your route to work. This could mean more traffic, more delays, more kids and more buses for you to prepare for.

Make sure everyone in your car buckles up. Watch out for school buses. Your kids are watching you! Don't talk on the phone and drive. Pay close attention. The safety of your kids and the safety of other kids are much more important than any phone call. Accidents only take seconds to happen.

Service Keeps Pets Safe At Home

CARES FOR PETS, KEEPS EYE ON HOUSE

News Report

She realizes her job is to protect people's most valuable assets — their homes — and their most precious companions — their pets.

So Brandon resident Kristina Miller, owner of Home Safe professional home- and pet-sitting service, takes her duties seriously.

"I really believe in this business," said Miller, who recently launched her business after deciding to leave her career as a corporate marketing director and strike out on her own.

She'd been considering starting her own pet-sitting service for a number of years, spurred by her lifelong love of animals and a tragic experience.

While on their honeymoon, she and her husband, Scott, opted to have a neighbor watch their pets instead of hiring a professional pet-sitter. When they returned, one of their beloved cats had vanished and, despite a prolonged search, was never found.

"We were devastated," recalled Miller.

The next time the couple went away, they hired a licensed, insured and bonded professional with references. They were able to relax, knowing their pets were in capable

hands.

"We were very pleased with her," said Miller.

That's when the marketing-savvy Miller began to realize the need for not only professional pet-sitting services but house-sitting services as well, especially in Florida where so many people only live in their homes during the winter months, leaving them vacant and vulnerable during the summer.

Whether the owners are gone for a week or months, Miller will give the house a lived-in look by turning on and off lights, watering the lawn and houseplants, picking up newspapers and even collecting the mail if the owners don't want to cancel delivery. These are some of the signs that a home is vacant burglars watch for when seeking potential targets.

As for the pets, Miller, who has four cats and two dogs of her own, said she knows from experience that animals feel more secure when they can remain in their own environment while their owners are away.

"Cats are very territorial, and like dogs, are especially traumatized when you take them out of their environment," she said. "In addition to the stress of being around strange peo-

See PETS, Page 18




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Fuego Features Unique Roving Service Style

INTERESTING EVENING, GOOD FOOD

By ELTON DUMONT
Restaurant Critic

Fuego Churrascaria Steakhouse, next to Pep Boys on Brandon Boulevard, offers a very unique dining experience, with more than enough variety and quantity to satisfy virtually any hungry palate.

The service style, Brazilian rodizio, is a cycle or carousel method where various types of meats are continuously brought around the restaurant and offered to diners.

Salad and bread are served

first, followed by side dishes. Next, roving servers cycle around serving many, many varieties of meat dishes sliced from skewers. Then comes dessert. Everything is included for one price — \$24.95 a person for adults and children 12 and older — actually a modest amount for all the food that was served. Children younger than 6 eat free, and ages 7 to 12 are charged \$9.

On a recent Friday night, Brandonites Monte and Lovey Queensbury, along with Harry and Sadie Rosenbloom, visitors from Dallas, joined Mrs. Dumont and I for an interesting dining experience at Fuego.

Rating based on five stars

Food: *** ½
Service: *** ½
Ambience: **
Overall: ***

Strangely enough, at 7 p.m. on a Friday night, the wait was non-existent and our party of six was seated immediately.

Our table was set in an area that doubles as a dance floor later in the evening. The décor gave no hint that this was a regional restaurant from South America; no pictures of Brazil or gauchos, etc. As a matter of fact, with the TV on the wall showing horse racing, we thought it was something akin to a sports bar.

After being seated, our waiter proceeded to tell us what was in store for us. There are no menus, so you have to listen carefully to your server.

We placed our drink order and then our server brought out mini rolls and a fresh salad with several types of lettuce, cherry tomatoes, olives, onion, avocado and a wrapped lemon half. The salad plates were extremely hot. The only dressing offered is olive oil. That's it, olive oil or nothing.

Harry decided on an ala carte Caesar salad for an additional

\$4.95. It was really great. There was so much grated cheese on it, you couldn't even tell the color of the lettuce.

According to the Web site, fresh soup of the day would be served next. We never saw any soup, nor was it offered to us.

Next came the six side dishes. I'll give the plantains an A+, fried yucca and black beans an A, yellow rice a B, garlic mashed potatoes a C- and white rice a D. Overall, the sides were great support to the main entrees.

Now the fun started. The roving servers with huge skewers and sharp knives came around to the table for you to pick and choose any or all entrée items; picana steak, flank steak, parmesan pork loin, Italian pork sausage, Bavarian sausage, parmesan chicken marinated in Brazilian wine, bacon wrapped chicken, sweet and spicy chicken, lamb, bacon wrapped filet mignon, parmesan encrusted picana steak and leg of lamb.

We had 12 different entrees, and we weren't even sure we got them all. The entrees weren't listed anywhere, and our server really wasn't sure what was going around.

Some of them were excellent, like the picana steak. Some, we should have passed on. There were six of us, and

we didn't all agree on what was good and what was less than appetizing.

Diners are furnished with double-sided coasters. You place the green side up if you want the servers to keep coming to the table. Turn it around to the red side if you are finished or taking a breather. The problem was that if you tasted something you wanted seconds of, it wasn't easy to find the roving server again. It wasn't that much easier for our waiter to find him either.

For dessert, they offer vanilla or coconut flan, carrot cake, chocolate cake or cheese cake. We ordered the vanilla flan (good), and the chocolate cake (above average).

Because the concept was so unique, I'd love to say it was a great dining experience.

Unfortunately, the distractions made it only fair. A dripping air conditioner constantly sweated on our table. We weren't sure if we were offered everything by the personable, but not fully trained, wait staff. The loud blaring music, the sports bar feeling and lighting reminded us more of a pizza place than a concept restaurant.

It was an interesting evening with good food. With a little more attention to detail; it could be the talk of Brandon.

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Produce Stand Provides Fruits Of Labor To Churches, Nonprofits

By SCOTT E. RUPP
Correspondent

James Rowell literally dishes out the fruits of his labor.

The co-owner of Star Produce, 3623 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, sells fresh produce for a living.

The leftover fruits and vegetables he gives to Brandon area churches and nonprofits that have the capacity to distribute them to those in need.

Rowell of Brandon, a retired Hillsborough County sheriff's deputy who served more than 30 years, opened his produce stand in March and named it for the sheriff's star he was given at retirement.

He and his partner, Nelson Barber, hate waste and say the fruit they don't sell is better put to use feeding the hungry than lining a Dumpster.

"Our specialty is a little bit of everything — corn, tomatoes and bananas, whatever we can

get our hands on. Every day we're removing the old stuff and want to give it to charities," Rowell said taking a slightly wrinkled cucumber from its bin.

Star Produce has given food to the Nativity Catholic Church Food Pantry, Brandon First Baptist Church's Meals on Wheels program, THORN (Thankfully Helping Others' Real Needs) Ministries in Riverview, among others. Inquiries for any church or registered nonprofit are welcome.

Working alongside Nelson at the stand is his wife, Brandon, shuffling watermelon and arranging tomatoes. Her father worked for Publix so she understands the rules for prepping the produce to make it inviting.

"Look at those watermelons," Rowell said, looking on. "It's been a really nice business and it's starting to pick up."

All items are fresh from the farm, direct from the farmer's markets in Sam Allen Road in Plant City. Fruit comes in about three times a week, Barber said, including lettuce, nectarines, potatoes, avocados, okra, apples and oranges.

Giving food away was Brandy's idea. When she started researching the need, she found it overwhelming. "It's perfectly good food, but people won't buy it," she said.

Rowell wants the idea of giving food away, like his political career, to take off.

He is vying for the District 4 seat being vacated by County Commissioner Ronda Storms on a platform calling for more school and road construction before more houses sprout up.

He said the campaign has gotten off to a slow start, but added, as a Democrat in

See FRUIT, Page 18

COUNTY

Continued From Page 9

care delivery systems. One term is expiring. Term is for four years. Position is specified as a community health care provider who is not a physician. Meeting schedule: monthly, third Thursday, 3:00 p.m.

HEALTH COUNCIL OF WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA, INC. (DISTRICT VI HEALTH COUNCIL) — develops plans for coordinating the delivery and improvement of health care services throughout its district. Consumer publications are prepared to help constituents make more informed choices for their health. One term has expired. Term is for two years. Position is specified as a health care consumer 60 years of age or over. Meeting schedule: bimonthly, second Wednesday, 3:00 p.m.

HILLSBOROUGH RIVER TECHNICAL ADVISORY COUNCIL — advises and makes recommendations to the Hillsborough River Interlocal Planning Board with respect to the development of the coordinated master plan for the Hillsborough River Corridor. One term is expiring. Term is for four years. Members must have a demonstrated interest in the protection of the Hillsborough River. Meeting schedule: as needed.

HISTORIC RESOURCES REVIEW BOARD — serves as an architectural review board for the protection of historic resources in unincorporated Hillsborough County. Also recommends archaeological and historical sites for landmark

designation and reviews alterations and new construction on landmark sites or districts. Two terms are expiring. Terms are for three years. Positions are specified as an architect or a property owner of a site listed in the Florida Master Site File. Citizens appointed to this board are required to reside in unincorporated Hillsborough County. Meeting schedule: quarterly, and as called by chairman, 4:00 p.m.

HOSPITAL AUTHORITY — monitors the lease with Florida Health Science Center, Inc. to provide for the delivery of quality health care by Tampa General Hospital and all other medical facilities operated by the Center. Also promotes Tampa General as a regional medical center for referral along Florida's West Coast. Two terms are expiring. Terms are for four years. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: monthly, generally fourth Monday, 9:00 a.m.

HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY — provides incentives to the private sector to relieve the shortage of affordable housing in Hillsborough County. Through partnerships with lenders, builders and developers, the Authority has assisted thousand of first-time home buyers through mortgage loan programs offering below-market mortgage rates and innovative down payment assistance programs. The Authority has also assisted renters through its Multi-Fami-

ly Bond programs featuring below-market rental rates to lower income individuals and families. One term is expiring. Term is for four years. Meeting schedule: monthly, generally third Friday, 9:30 a.m.

LAND USE APPEALS BOARD — hears decisions on appeals from the Land Use Officer on special use permits and variances from zoning regulations. The Land Development Code was amended which set specific criteria for membership of the Land Use Appeals Board. One member position and two alternate positions exist. Applicants for positions must be qualified as a Landscape Architect or Architect registered to practice in the state of Florida, a Professional Planner with no less than three years of experience in land use planning and zoning in Hillsborough County, or a Civil or Environmental Engineer registered to practice in Florida. Initial terms for full time positions are staggered per Land Development Code 9.03.01 and subsequent terms are three years. Terms for alternate positions are also for three years. Nominees must reside in unincorporated Hillsborough County. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: monthly, first Friday, 9:00 a.m.

MECHANICAL BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, APPEALS AND EXAMINERS — confirms the competency and integrity of contractors applying for mechanical certification

in the County and takes disciplinary action against those that fail to comply with the Mechanical Code. One term is expiring and two positions are vacant. Positions are specified as a Class "B" HVAC contractor, and two alternates. Term for regular member is four years and alternates' terms are two years. Nominees for alternate positions must be knowledgeable and experienced about technical codes of the mechanical industry. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: quarterly, third Thursday, 10:00 a.m.

PLUMBING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, APPEALS AND EXAMINERS — confirms the competency and integrity of contractors applying for plumbing certification in the County and takes disciplinary action against those that fail to comply with the Plumbing Code. One position is vacant. Position is specified as an alternate. Term is for two years. Nominees for alternate position must be knowledgeable and experienced about technical codes of the plumbing industry. Citizens appointed to this board will be required to file an annual financial disclosure. Meeting schedule: quarterly, third Thursday, 10:00 a.m.

PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD — works with the County Commission regarding the operation of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System, including future plan-

ning and policy developments. Four terms are expiring. Terms are for three years. Positions are specified as residents of Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4. Meeting schedule: monthly, fourth Thursday, 4:00 p.m.

WATER CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE — makes recommendations to the County Commission regarding water conservation issues. One vacancy exists due to a resignation. Appointment is for remainder of term, which expires Dec. 31, 2006. Position is specified as a hospitality and recreational representative. Meeting schedule: quarterly.

Hillsborough Installs Emergency Fuel Tanks

A severe hurricane or disaster can greatly impact one of Hillsborough County's most basic and needed resources—fuel. That's why Hillsborough County has installed an additional four above-ground fuel storage tanks, each holding 10,000 gallons of fuel. If the Port of Tampa — the area's major supplier — shuts down due to hurricane damage, these tanks will be able to supply Hillsborough County government with about 10 additional days worth of fuel for its disaster recovery operations. The tanks are located at the Hillsborough County Fleet Management site, 7824 Big Bend Road in Gibsonton, an area not affected by storm surge.

The \$570,000 project also allows direct fueling into a

See COUNTY, Page 19

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RED CROSS

Continued From Page 6

proper CPR techniques. First Aid training provides instruction consistent with OSHA guidelines.

The CPR course for Professional Rescuers, offered on August 26, presents information about avoiding blood borne pathogen exposure, CPR techniques, and Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) use in the cardiac chain of survival, and hands-on training consistent with OSHA guidelines.

The popular Babysitter's Training course, offered on August 19, is designed for boys and girls 11 to 15 years old who want to develop the skills to better care for infants and small children. The course presents information on First Aid, Rescue Breathing Techniques, Home Safety and Injury Prevention.

The HIV/AIDS Awareness

course, offered on August 9, presents information about preventing HIV transmission, how to respond in informed ways to people who have HIV or AIDS and how to apply facts about HIV to daily living.

The Red Cross also offers its Nurse Assistant Training at the Brandon branch. The 94-hour program includes classroom lectures and clinic practicum which teach students basic care giving skills for use in a hospital, nursing home or assisted living facility environment. The course prepares students to challenge the state-administered exam for Certified Nurse Assistant licensure.

There are no prerequisites for taking any Red Cross course. Participants successfully completing CPR courses receive certification for one year.

For more information or to register for courses, call toll-free 1-877-741-1444, Ext. 850, or log on to www.redcrossbc.org.

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ROBERT CONE/Staff photo

District champs

Bloomington resident D.J. Hess, the catcher for the North Brandon Junior all-star team, congratulates pitcher Zac Powers after North Brandon overpowered East Bay, 15-0, in the final of the District 13 tournament July 13. Hess, whose mother, Bonnie Hess, is the head volleyball coach at Bloomington High School, helped North Brandon to a runner-up finish at the sectional tournament.

FRUIT

Continued From Page 16

Republican territory, people have been receptive to what he's had to say.

"I think it's a pretty level playing field. It's up to the voters to decide," he said. He's running against fellow Brandon Democrat Lisa Rodriguez in the primary. "This is something I always wanted to do, just to give it a try."

His political passions also include preserving the wetlands, protecting natural habitats, reducing pollution and recycling, a concept he takes to heart with his produce.

Churches and nonprofits interested in receiving produce should call Star Produce at 654-2486.

PETS

Continued From Page 15

ple and animals, they run the risk of contracting bordetella, or kennel cough, getting fleas and other illnesses at kennels."

She adds that pet-sitting isn't expensive — \$18 per visit no matter how many pets.

A certified pet-sitter, Miller is licensed, bonded and insured, and is currently taking pet CPR-

training classes. She is willing to care for just about any pet, from fish to ponies, and is available for late-notice calls from customers who are stuck at work and can't get home to let Spot out.

She can be reached at 843-9453. Visit her Web site at www.homesafepets.com.

FIRE

Continued From Page 3

contracted by FEMA to provide assistance to disaster victims, including those most recently affected by Hurricane Katrina.

"I spent four months in Mississippi as a supervisor and security instructor, making sure the implementation of security was in place at different FEMA sites, as well as safeguarding disaster victims and their families in various locations. I also provided security for FEMA workers themselves during Katrina.

"It was a situation I took great pride in, and feel our work greatly helped the victims and their families."

Velasquez is also co-owner of Executive Safe-

ty and Security Academy in Plant City, a company that provides training in defensive tactics, CPR and related instruction to corporate security personnel. They also provide surveillance and private detective services for various businesses.

The Bloomington Volunteer Fire Department, at 4705 E. Bloomington Avenue, will hold an open house on August 5 to educate the community on the role of a volunteer fire fighter and to recruit new firefighters.

For more information about the open house or firefighter positions, contact Velasquez at the station, (813) 433-8206.

GOALS

Continued From Page 4

must agree to attend a private mediation hearing. The results of mediation are not legally binding, and cannot be used in a court of law.

In the most serious cases of deed restriction violations — such as severe structural deficiencies, businesses operating illegally at a residence, dangerous or violent nuisance behavior, etc. — BHA volunteers will assist homeowners whose only option is to take the neighbor to court.

Some Deed Restriction Violations Also Breach County Laws

Many deed restriction violations also breach Hillsborough County codes and/or ordinances. In such cases, the BHA — in addition to sending out its own “courtesy” notices to reported violators — advises residents to file a complaint with the county’s code enforcement office.

Unlike the BHA, the county’s code enforcement office has the authority to take legal action and impose fines

and/or liens against homeowners who refuse to comply with county code standards.

BHA volunteers recently spoke with several residents who registered complaints with the homeowners association, but resisted the advice to file a complaint with the county. Some complainants said they feared retribution from the neighbors they complained about.

County Accepts Anonymous Complaints Online, By Phone

Ed Brill, Hillsborough’s Code Enforcement and Inspectional Services Manager, said last week that while it is true that all correspondence received by his office — including phone calls and e-mails — automatically becomes a matter of public record, anyone can file a completely anonymous complaint with the county.

To file an anonymous complaint, Brill said, it is imperative that citizens do not use their full or real name, or use an e-mail address that would disclose their identity.

“Anyone who wants to submit a com-

pletely anonymous complaint to our office can do so by not using or mentioning their name in their initial contact with our office.”

The key to filing a completely anonymous report, Brill said, is to be certain your full or real name (or obvious E-mail address) is not used in any phone call or e-mail to his office — including the first call made or E-mail sent to his office.

“You cannot send an e-mail with your name and address on it and then add a note at the bottom that says, ‘please keep my name anonymous.’”

“Initial correspondence, whether it’s by E-mail or phone, immediately becomes a matter of public record.”

His office has always accepted anonymous complaints, Brill said, and his staff treats anonymous complaints no differently than those with personal information attached.

Although complaints involving health and safety hazards receive top priority, Brill said, “We respond to every single complaint we receive within two weeks.”

There are currently 43 inspectors assigned to the code enforcement

office. Another dozen or so are expected to come on board when the county’s next fiscal year budget goes into effect this fall.

Any Citizen Can Check Status of County Code Violation Reports

After a citizen files an initial complaint with the county, Brill said, any resident can call his office at any time — again, without using their full or real name if they wish to remain anonymous — to inquire about the status of the case.

Due to state-mandated requirements, resolution of county code violations could take up to three months.

“There is a process we must follow, so just because residents don’t see any changes right away, that doesn’t mean we’re not working on resolution,” he said.

“Our office responds to every single complaint we receive.”

The Hillsborough County Code Enforcement office conducts more than 35,000 complaint investigations a year, Brill said. About 11,000 of those complaints result in active cases.

COUNTY

Continued From Page 17

tanker truck that is powered by an emergency generator in case of loss of electricity.

It’s Not Too Late to Apply for a Special Needs Shelter

A hurricane can strike our area with little time to prepare, especially for those with special needs. These residents should register for a special needs shelter and not wait until an evacuation is called. Special needs shelters accommodate those who are not ill enough to require hospitalization, but need special attention from doctors or nurses. By registering, healthcare professionals have the time to evaluate each applica-

tion to make certain special needs citizens receive the medical attention they need in the event of a declared emergency.

To register, have personal and medical information ready and call the Hillsborough County Infoline at (813) 272-5900 to fill out an application over the telephone. An application can also be downloaded at www.hillsboroughcounty.org, click on the “A - Z Index,” and go to the Emergency Management section. Applications can also be mailed to the Hillsborough County Health Department, P.O. Box 5135, Tampa, FL 33675 or faxed to (813) 276-8689.

Hillsborough County has also conveniently included a special needs applica-

tion in August’s edition of the Communicator, a publication for residents included in Hillsborough County water bills.

Those who meet the following criteria should consider pre-registering for a special needs shelter:

- Inability to administer their own frequently required medications, such as injections.
- Require more frequent dressing changes because of medical conditions.
- Need assistance with catheters of any kind.
- Need assistance with basic functions because of immobility.
- Require daily, professional assessment of unstable medical condition.

• Require special equipment, which must be brought by the resident to the shelter.

• Require administration of heavy doses of pain medicine.

• Directed by a health department, HRS or social services nurse to go to a special needs shelter.

Those who meet the following conditions should go to a hospital, and NOT a special needs shelter:

- Pregnant women within six weeks of the estimated day of delivery.
- Those suffering from acute infection or infestation.
- Those who have an immediate medical or emergency condition.

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3BD/2BA \$319,900
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3BD/2BA \$269,900
Charming scr. pool beauty on 1/3 acre non-deed restricted lot. Updated kitchen & super location!



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