



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Santa and Mrs. Claus will make their 16th annual visit to Bloomingdale this year.

Santa Claus Is Coming To Bloomingdale

**FREE VISIT, PHOTOS
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A Gazette Report

Santa and Mrs. Claus will make their 16th annual visit to Bloomingdale this year to hear children's wish lists and to help collect food donations for local charities.

All children are invited to visit with Santa on Dec. 11 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Bloomingdale community office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, in the SunTrust Bank/Citgo station plaza.

In exchange for a donation of one or more non-perishable food items, each child can visit personally with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and will have their photo taken for free. Santa's elves will serve complimentary juice and cookies.

Bloomingdale residents can bring food donations to the community office through Dec. 11. The office is open Monday through Thursday from 7 to 11 a.m.

The annual event is sponsored by The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. For more information, call 681-2051 or e-mail Bloomingdale.Homeowners@verizon.net.

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Taxing District Fields Residents' Concerns

SOME ISSUES ARE RESPONSIBILITY OF COUNTY CODES DEPARTMENT

By D'ANN WHITE
Correspondent

It was a bigger audience than the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District has seen since it raised its assessment fee from \$80 to \$100 a year in 2003.

But residents attending the November taxing district meeting brought along a number of concerns the taxing district just couldn't help them with.

Helen Casey, chairwoman of the beautification committee for Bloomingdale Cove Homeowners Association, had several questions including the possibility of getting

lighting at the subdivision entrance, the maintenance of creeping fig at the entrance and the upkeep of homes on the east side of Culbreath Road.

Taxing district capital improvements chairman Joe Harless agreed to look at Casey's request for lighting at the entrance of Bloomingdale Cove. The district has appropriated \$2,100 for improvements at the entranceway.

But trustee David West noted that the district only maintains existing lighting. It doesn't install new lighting. The Bloomingdale Cove Homeowners Association most likely will have to pay for new lighting, he said.

Landscape committee chairman Paul Sims also promised to look into trimming the creeping fig that's overrunning the entrance walls.

But the trustees said their hands are tied when it comes

to Casey's other concern: tree and brush debris and untrimmed grass at the curbs along the east side of Culbreath Road south of Cimino Elementary School.

Thom Snelling, president of the taxing district, had an easy answer, but said there are no easy solutions to Casey's concerns. The non-deed restricted homes along Culbreath were never mandated to join the taxing district. Therefore, the district has no jurisdiction over how they are maintained.

Office manager Joni Hickle suggested Casey and her neighbors call the county's code enforcement department with their concerns.

Windsor Woods residents had some questions of their own about aesthetics.

Resident George May noted that, while the Windsor Woods sign at the south entrance had been replaced a year ago, the sign at the north

entrance had not. Now the signs for the neighborhood don't match.

"We were told they would both be done a year ago," said resident Cheryl Kehrmeyer. "Now we have two different signs for our development."

According to Snelling, sign and wall maintenance is on a rotating schedule every five years.

"Some neighborhoods don't have any signs at all," noted West.

"I live in a neighborhood with three different signs," added Snelling, who lives in Bloomingdale West. "But our goal is to eventually get all the signs stylistically consistent."

Kehrmeyer had other questions as well. She told the trustees that she walks her 6-year-old son to Alafia Elementary School and is concerned about a section of missing sidewalk between Treeline

See BSTD, Page 23

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Cardinal Family, Station 27 Winners Of BHA Drawing

NEXT DRAWING SET FOR JANUARY

A Gazette Report

The grand prize in the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. TV drawing was awarded Nov. 2 to the Cardinal family of Bristol Green.

The contest was open to all Bloomingdale residents who registered to receive BHA News alerts on the community web site before midnight, Oct. 31.

Barbara and Robert Cardinal were delighted with the prize, a 27-inch flat screen TV. The couple's 13-year-old daughter, Kelsey, a Burns Middle School student, couldn't wait to get home to watch "SpongeBob SquarePants" on the family's new set.

Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department Chief, Teddy

Biesecker, stopped by the association's Nov. 1 meeting to introduce himself and was invited to draw the winner's name.

Biesecker is one lucky guy. On the first shot, the chief drew his own e-mail address from hundreds in the pot.

Under the exceptional circumstances, the BHA board agreed to donate a new television for volunteers at the station.

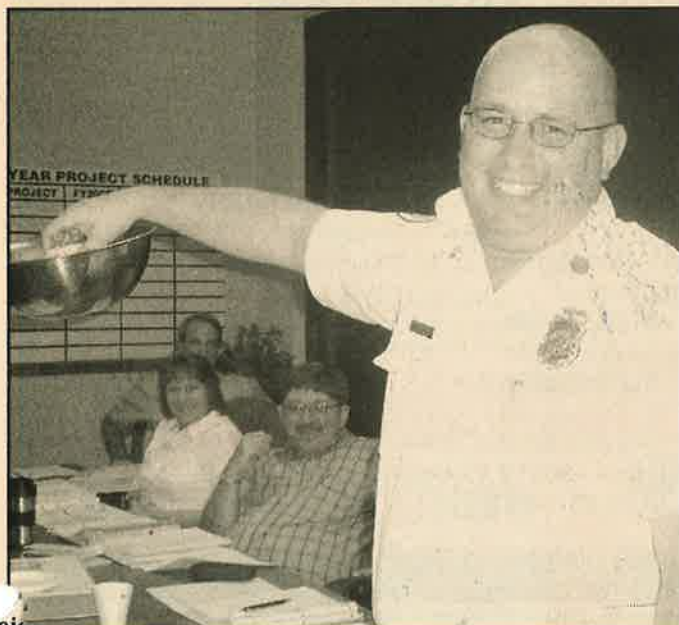
The association will hold another prize drawing in January. Contests will be announced in The Bloomingdale Gazette and on the community web site.

To become eligible for future drawings, log on to www.BloomingtonGazette.com and register your e-mail address in the top left corner. There are no forms to fill out. All e-mail addresses are kept in strict confidence and are used solely to send important neighborhood news alerts to Bloomingdale residents.



LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Barbara and Robert Cardinal, winners of the BHA's TV drawing, picked up their prize Nov. 2 at the Bloomingdale Community Office.



Teddy Biesecker, who became Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Department's new chief last month, drew the winner's name - and his own - from the pot.

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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
Treasurer — Pam Liguori
Director — Tony Diolosa
Director — Steve Heckel
Director — Jane Lee
Director — Stanley Lee

Vice President — Joe Hickle
Director — Lydia Harrod
Director — Dale Kahn
Director — Myron Magedanz
Director — Ken Pyse

Recording Secretary — Michael Buday
Trustee — David Steck
Trustee — Joe Harless
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

Patrol Member —
Brad Scharp, 643-5000

Patrol Member — Paul Warr, 685-7883



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 — David West
Correspondence Secretary — Paul Sims

Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

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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(813) 681-2051

Fax: (813) 684-2358

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'Tis The Season For Home Safety Tips

HAVE A SAFE, HAPPY HOLIDAY

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

The holidays are exciting times for many folks, especially for kids.

To help ensure you and your family have a safe and happy holiday season, please consider the following list of safety reminders:

Trees

Purchase only fire resistant artificial trees, and only fresh live trees. Live trees should have deep green needles that do not break or fall when the tree is tapped on the ground.

Place all trees away from heat sources such as fireplaces or heaters. Keep live trees well watered.

Lights

Check labels to make sure lights and decorations are approved for outdoor use. Use insulated staples — not nails or tacks — to secure lights. Check all lights, even new ones, for loose connections or frayed wires, and be sure to turn off outside lights when you go to bed or leave your home. They can short out and start a fire.

Decorations

Use only non-combustible or flame resistant materials to

trim your tree, and never use lighted candles on or near a tree or evergreen decorations. In homes with small children, avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, and keep the trimmings out of reach. Remove wrapping, ribbons and bows from near the tree or fireplace after opening gifts.

Toys

Select toys to suit the age, abilities and skills of the child. Check the instructions before letting your child play with new toys. Keep in mind that children under three can choke on small toy parts, and those under eight can choke on deflated or broken balloons.

Food

Fully cook meats and poultry, and wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly. Keep hot liquids out of the reach of children.

Make sure everyone washes his or her hands frequently. Do not leave foods requiring refrigeration out for more than two hours, and limit the amounts of sweets young children eat.

Fireplaces

Before lighting, remove all papers or items near the fireplace. Use fire salts with caution. Some contain heavy metals.

Do not burn wrappings in the fireplace.

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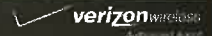
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Bloomingtondale Area Community Council Report

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

The following items were discussed at the November meeting of the Bloomingtondale Area Community Council.

3-Way Stop OK'd

Gary Tait from the Hillsborough County public works traffic engineering division gave council members the great news that the request for a three-way stop at the intersection of Natures Way and Culbreath Road has been approved (see related story in this issue). The sign will be installed in approximately 45 days. The project has required a series of traffic studies and evaluations over the course of three years

Council members expressed their personal thanks to Gary Tait and Mike McCarthy of public works for their involvement in the project, and thanked Deputy Maurer for his patient persistence in seeing the project through.

Tait also announced the speed limit on Culbreath Road from Erindale Drive to Natures Way would be reduced from 35 to 30 mph. In addition, public works will review possible expansion alternatives for the Cimino Elementary School entrance.

Erindale, Lithia-Pinecrest Traffic Light

A traffic signal for the intersection of Erindale Drive and



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Hillsborough County public works in November approved a three-way stop for this intersection near Cimino Elementary School.

Lithia-Pinecrest Road has been funded and is in the design phase.

Culbreath Street Lights

Additional lighting is needed on the east side of Culbreath Rd. near Cimino Elementary. Public works recommends school officials request additional lighting through school board channels.

YMCA, Little League Crosswalk

Coordination has been ini-

See BACC, Page 23

Community Council Needs Your Ideas, Input

The Bloomingtondale Area Community Council needs the support and input of more residents to continue to improve our community.

The council, known as the BACC, is a volunteer group of residents who monitor local safety, security and quality of life concerns. The council works with local law enforcement and government officials to

promote the best interests of the Bloomingtondale community.

The group meets at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at the Bloomingtondale substation, in the Beef O'Brady's plaza at the corner of Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven.

To find out how you can help, contact Deputy Pete Maurer, 635-8040.

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3-Way Stop Near Cimino Gets Green Light

**NEW SPEED LIMIT,
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TO BE ENFORCED**

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Perseverance paid off last month for one community group determined to improve traffic safety around Cimino Elementary School.

The Bloomingdale Area Community Council is a volunteer group of neighborhood safety advocates that meets monthly at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office substation on Bell Shoals Road. The group works with local law enforcement and county officials to address public safety issues in the greater Bloomingdale area.

Even before Cimino opened in 2002, the council asked Hillsborough County

public works to consider installing a three-way stop sign south of the school at Culbreath Road and Natures Way.

Concerned parents and school officials agreed the sign was needed to reduce the number of cars rolling through the intersection, where hundreds of students cross the road each day.

Over the course of three years, the county performed various traffic studies of the intersection. The request was denied twice when traffic volume and accident statistics were deemed insufficient to merit a three-way stop.

But the council, along with concerned parents and the community's resource deputy, Pete Maurer, didn't want to wait for grim statistics to mount.

At a community council meeting in October, the group again asked public works traf-

fic division director, Mike McCarthy, and senior engineer, Gary Tait, to reconsider installing the sign. Cimino interim principal Debbie Talley, along with concerned parents and a school crossing guard, attended the meeting.

Talley stressed the need for more safety measures all around the school. The crossing guard spoke of several near-miss incidents involving cars rolling through the intersection and driving up on the grass and sidewalks to bypass traffic backups.

At the subsequent council meeting on Nov. 18, McCarthy and Tait told the group their request had been approved.

Although the request took nearly three years to process, Maurer praised the public works staff for their commitment to see the project through.

"There are always the

required studies and limitations, and it's just a fact that it can take some time to get these things approved," Maurer said.

Speaking on behalf of the community council, Maurer said, "We can't thank Gary and Mike enough for their dedication to work with us on this for the past three years."

Tait said the sign was approved last week after a final study was completed.

"One of the last things we had to do was make sure that by installing the three-way stop, we're not going to create a new problem," Tait said.

"The traffic volume and flow have to be taken into consideration to avoid making the situation even worse."

Public works is now satisfied that the new stop will improve safety near the school without compounding

See STOP, Page 23

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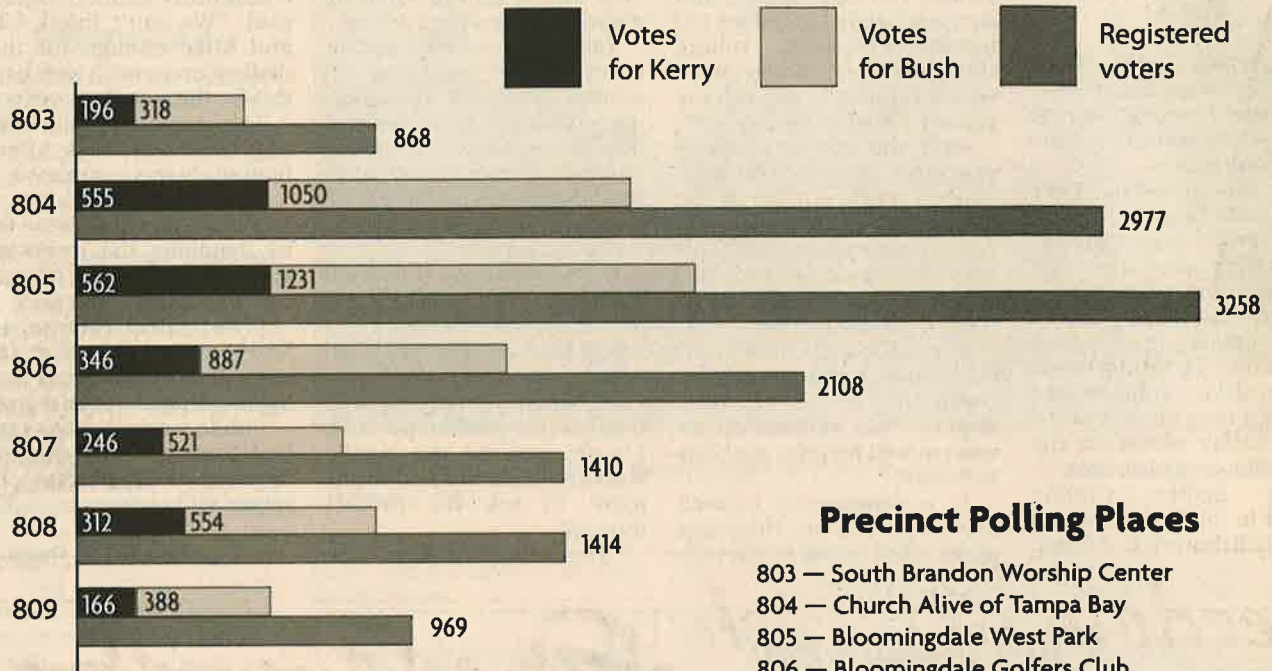
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2004 GENERAL ELECTION

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- 804 — Church Alive of Tampa Bay
- 805 — Bloomingtondale West Park
- 806 — Bloomingtondale Golfers Club
- 807 — Bloomingtondale Athletic Complex
- 808 — Campo YMCA
- 809 — Bloomingtondale Oaks Community Church

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Bloomingtondale Precinct Results

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A Gazette Report

Curious about how the

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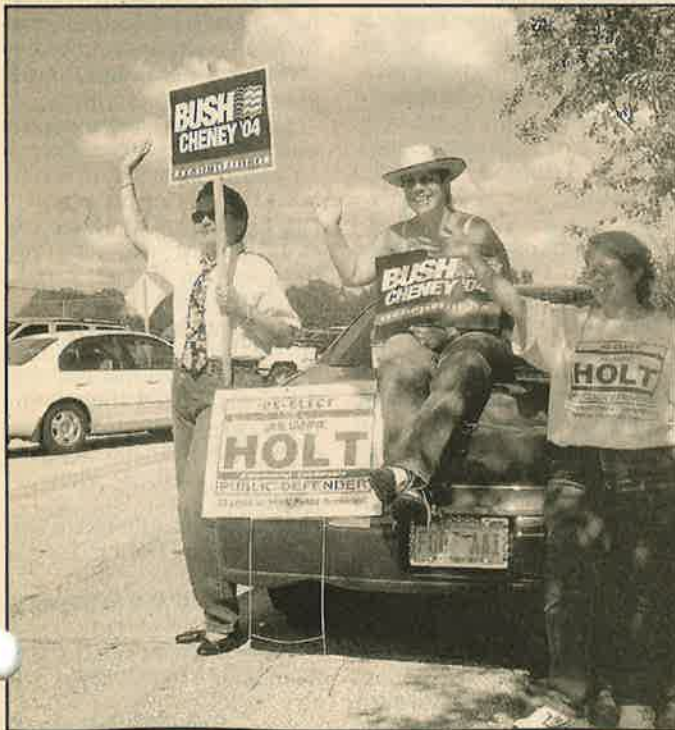
2004 GENERAL ELECTION



LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Freedom of speech

Bloomington area residents stumped for both presidential candidates at one of seven Bloomington area polling places Nov. 2, at Bloomington West's Stephanie Culbertson Recreation Center on Canoga Park Drive.



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D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Bloomingtondale East resident Cheryl Jorgensen has turned the living room of her home into a spacious studio where she spends six hours a day painting.

"I think I was born with a brush in my mouth. But in Trinidad, it wasn't something you did for a living."

CHERYL JORGENSEN
Resident, Bloomingtondale East

Bloomingtondale Woman Colors Her World

By D'ANN WHITE
Correspondent

She can't imagine what she'd do if she couldn't paint.

Cheryl Jorgensen of Bloomingtondale East said her life revolves her artwork — finding and photographing subjects, painting them and then displaying and exhibiting her work.

So it's difficult for her to believe there was a time when she didn't paint.

But growing up in Trinidad, Jorgensen said she was discouraged from pursuing art.

"I always wanted to paint," she said. "I think I was born with a brush in my mouth. But in Trinidad, it wasn't something you did for a living."

That changed when she moved to Denmark in 1981 with her husband and three sons, and began to study oil painting.

"But it was still just a hobby," she said. "I had my children to raise."

It wasn't until she moved to Brandon in 1988 that her hobby turned into a full-time passion.

"I'd been getting sick from the oil paints so I decided to try watercolors in 1990," said Jorgensen. "There are so many wonderful watercolor artists living here in Brandon. And I discovered that watercolors suit me. I love the

bright colors of my native land, and watercolors allow me to show those colors."

Her effortless style is expressed in a variety of subjects — from tropical landscapes to portraits to wildlife. Jorgensen is rarely without her camera, viewing the world around her as if it were one of her paintings.

That's evidenced in the thousands of photos she has stacked around the studio in her Monte Lake Drive home. It may be the color that captured her attention, the play of light and shadow or the poignancy of the subject.

She said she also enjoys the immediacy of watercolors.

"Eighty percent of watercolor is planning because you can't go back over it like you can with oils," she said. "You have to plan and get it right the first time."

For years Jorgensen painted on her kitchen counter until it occurred to her that they rarely used their living room, which sits at the front of the house flanked by sunny windows and a view of passersby.

"So we turned it into a studio, and this is where I am at least six hours a day," she said. She paints 50 to 60 paintings a year.

Her work is now exhibited from Maine to Barbados. She

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See PAINT, Page 22

Bloomingtondale Substation Notes

Let's Travel Safely Through Holiday Season

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER

We've made it through the Thanksgiving holiday. Christmas and New Years come next, two special times that should be lots of fun but can also bring trouble. Keeping our families, ourselves, our homes and our belongings safe and secure during the holiday season is a big priority. Being aware of our surroundings, locking up our valuables and following good safety practices are all habits that will help make our holidays safe and memorable.

Many holiday season activities involve traveling. Locally we go shopping and to parties. Visiting friends and family sometimes requires long distance traveling. This month, every type of driver imaginable will be on the road, from teenagers with limited experience to truck drivers with years of driving know-how. There are four types of dangerous drivers to watch out for.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, over half of the nation's drivers admit to driving drowsy, pushing themselves too far. Among those 18 to 29 years old, nearly one-quarter reported they actually fell asleep at the

Welcome Back, CSO Capitano

Sandy Capitano, Bloomingtondale's community service officer, recently had to miss a few weeks of work at the Bloomingtondale substation.

Capitano is now back on the job, providing the outstanding service and friendly smile we all missed in her absence. Welcome back.

wheel. Most of these drivers also admitted to being impatient, driving faster and feeling more stressed. Watch out for sleepy drivers. They usually speed up, then slow down or weave back and forth.

Driving while distracted has become such a serious problem that law enforcement officers may now note 'driver distracted' on accident reports.

This can seriously affect your auto insurance rates. The types of distractions noted could fill a book. They cover everything from using cell phones and PDAs, eating, putting on makeup, changing clothes, talking to passengers, reading, shaving and now even watching videos or working on a laptop computer. The mind can concentrate fully on only one thing at a time. Make yours concentrate on your driving.

These are some of the most dangerous drivers. Nearly 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related. These drivers are unpredictable, can be very aggressive and usually aren't the ones that get injured seriously. Watch for the signs of this type of driver — weaving back and forth, driving very slowly or following the emergency lane line. Avoid these drivers. Alert law enforcement if you see them.

The holidays put a lot of stress on some people. Some people are very aggressive drivers no matter what the season of the year. If you are driving near an aggressive driver, do not confront or aggravate them. They can be very unpredictable. You don't know if they are armed or drunk or on drugs. Some drugs will make drivers very aggressive. Just back off, avoid eye contact, do not flash your lights and don't let your fingers do the talking. You won't like the conversation.

Avoid all of these types of drivers, and definitely don't be one of them. Protect yourself and your family by wearing your seatbelts and ensuring your children are in properly installed car seats or booster seats.

Got Gazette? Here's How

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A Gazette Report

The Bloomingtondale Gazette, the official publication of the BHA since 1980, is delivered free on the first Saturday of each month to all Bloomingtondale households.

The Gazette is packaged and delivered with The Tampa Tribune. Households that do not subscribe to the

Tribune receive a complimentary copy on Gazette delivery day.

If you live in the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association area and do not receive your Gazette, please let us know. Send your street address and subdivision name to: Info@BloomingtondaleGazette.com.

Additional copies of the Gazette are available in the box outside the BHA office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, and the Bloomingtondale Community Substation, which is at Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven.

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County Dubs New Branch 'Bloomington Regional Public Library'

\$1 MILLION MEDIA COLLECTION ON ITS WAY

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

The new library under construction on Bloomington Avenue finally has an official name. The Board of County Commissioners on Nov. 4 approved the name suggested by the library board and petitioned for by residents — The Bloomington Regional Public Library.

The commission also approved multiple requests to name the facility's main meeting room The McLean Family Community Room in honor of the property's original homesteading family. The McLeans donated one acre of the library's 7.3-acre building parcel purchased by the county in 2003.

Swati Bose, a manager with the county's architectural services department, said the library is 85 percent complete and should be finished on schedule, around the last week of December. An opening date and dedication ceremony are not on the calendar yet, but are projected for late January.

The furniture, shelves and books will start arriving at the



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

The Bloomington Regional Public Library is 85% complete and on schedule for completion this month.

library over the next couple of weeks.

"We are waiting for the domino effect," Bose said, outlining the remaining work that needs to be completed before the library can be furnished and set to open.

"Once the sewer line goes in and water is available, we can get the air conditioning running. At that point, we can install the ceiling tile and carpet. Then we can move in the furniture and books. All these things are sort of waiting in

line, and it's all coming together nicely. Everyone is running very fast to get this done."

A problem with the sewer lines at the site last month proved to be a minor setback.

"In construction, you are always going to have some hiccups along the way, but the contractor and the engineers have found a solution. The completion schedule is still on track," Bose said.

The library staff has been hired and is eager to get to work.

Julie Beamguard, presently the supervisor of the Riverview Branch Library, was appointed this summer as Bloomington's head librarian. Pam Hoepner, currently the children's librarian at Riverview, will transfer to Bloomington as a full time assistant librarian, along with Robert Bernardez, Laurie Brown and Zandra Leverette.

Jillyann Sanchez, presently working in the circulation department at Brandon Regional Library, has been promoted to technical assistant in charge of computers

and computer classes at the Bloomington branch. Peggy Steinfurth will retire as head librarian of the Ruskin Library branch to work part time at Bloomington.

"We've got a great staff, a lot of very experienced people," Beamguard said.

More volunteers are needed at the library to assist staff and patrons.

"We are going to be very busy, and would really like to have more volunteers to help out behind the scenes. Even two or three hours a week can mean a lot to us," Beamguard said.

The new library will be open Sunday from 12:30 to 5 p.m., Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Pat Boody, president of the Bloomington Friends of the Library chapter, said the group is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the \$1,000,000 materials collection purchased for the library.



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LESLIE WHITE/Photo

The Ice Cream Man Cometh!

One sure sign of the winter season in Bloomington - the arrival of the ice cream man! We may not have snow, but with the heat index regularly registering below 90+ degrees, the mobile frozen confection peddlers have converged on our neighborhoods. Where were they in September, when we really could have used a nice, icy strawberry shortcake pop? Probably somewhere north where the daily temperatures allowed their wares to stay frozen. Oh well, like the Jimmy Buffet song says, "We have everything but snow."

Campo YMCA Has Busy December Agenda

SOME PROGRAMS OPEN TO PUBLIC

A Gazette Report

If you're not busy enough with holiday activities this month, there's plenty going on at the Campo YMCA in Bloomington to keep both adults and children active and happy.

Check out this list of events taking place this month at the Y. Some activities require YMCA membership; others are open to the public. For more information about programs and events, call 684-371.

Registration is currently open for Youth Indoor Soccer. The Garden Club meets on

Dec. 2 at 10 a.m.

Parent's Night Out is set for Dec. 3 from 7:15 to 11 p.m.

On Dec. 6, the Young At Heart group takes a field trip to St. Armand's Key. The group will also have a potluck lunch Dec. 16.

Breakfast with Santa takes place on Dec. 11 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., followed by Middle School Madness from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Teenagers enjoy Midnight Basketball Dec. 17 from 8:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.

The Coupon Club meets at the Y on Dec. 20 at 10:30 a.m.

Holiday Sports Camp runs from Dec. 20-23 and Dec. 27 to 30 from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A New Year's Eve sleepover for kids will be offered Dec. 31 from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. Jan 1.

Bloomington Community Meetings

Dec. 7

Bloomington Volunteer Fire Department

Board of Directors Meeting
The Bloomington Volunteer Fire Department board of directors meets the first Tuesday each month, 7 p.m., at Station 27, 4705 E. Bloomington Ave. Information: 744-5906 or visit www.engine.27.com.

Dec. 13

Bloomington Special Taxing District

Board of Directors Meeting
The Bloomington Special Taxing District board of directors meets the second Monday each month, 7 p.m., at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

All meetings are open to the public. Information: 684-6667.

Jan 3

Bloomington Homeowners Association Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
NOTE: The December meeting of the BHA was rescheduled to convene Nov. 29. The Monday, Dec. 6 was cancelled due to a scheduling conflict. The Bloomington Homeowners Association board of directors meets the first Monday each month, 7 p.m., at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. All meetings are open to the public. Information: 681-2051 or visit www.BloomingtonGazette.com.

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The LIBRARY of CONGRESS



Cimino Student To Appear On TV Book Talk Spot

GIFTED READER HID SIGHT PROBLEMS FROM DOCS

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Already an accomplished reader, Cimino Elementary School second-grader Mallory Hillary can now add accomplished speaker to her list of talents.

After reading more than 64 books over the summer and turning in eight reading logs for Barnes & Noble's Summer Reading Program, Hillary was chosen by Brandon Regional Library's Children's Librarian, Miss Carol, to do a Book Talk for the education channel.

"I talked about two books," says Hillary, "One was 'Geronimo Stilton' and the other was 'Bird Brain Amos.' It was about a bird that builds a nest on a hippopotamus' back. I like books that are funny," Hillary said.

But she's open to new literary experiences, and is reading "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," after already completing the first four in the series. Hillary's mother, Karen, said that Mallory has been reading since she was two years old.

A former teacher at Kingswood Elementary, Karen Hillary remembers the day her 2-year-old daughter read a book to her class.



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Cimino second grader Mallory Hillary sits in her room doing the one thing she loves most of all — reading.

"She's always loved books. She'd just sit in a corner and read," Hillary said.

By the time she entered kindergarten, Mallory was already adept at reading, much to the surprise of her teachers. During the course of that year the students were given an eye test. What they

discovered during that routine exam stunned her parents.

Mallory was blind in her left eye, and had fooled the doctors by continually reading the eye chart with her right eye first, memorizing it, then repeating it back when she was unable to read it with her left eye. It worked for years.

Finally, Mallory was able to convey that she could not see at all with her left eye. Upon further examination, doctors discovered that Mallory had a condition known as amblyopia, which normally causes one eye to cross. Mallory's had, instead, shut completely off.

Since that discovery, Mallory has been undergoing efforts to help force strength

A voracious reader, Mallory was blind in her left eye, and had fooled the doctors by continually reading the eye chart with her right eye first, memorizing it, then repeating it back when she was unable to read it with her left eye. It worked for years.

into her left eye through the use of an eye patch. The procedure has enabled Mallory to gain back some sight in her left eye.

Amazingly, none of this deterred Mallory's reading efforts. A voracious reader, she spends most of her free time with her nose in a book, whether it's reading alone, or to her younger sister Aryn, 3. Even at 8 years of age, Mallory wasn't intimidated by the prospect of an audience.

"I was very excited," said Mallory, "and a little nervous too because I knew it was going to be on TV. But Mrs. Dowdy (Cimino's media specialist) let me practice at school and do it on the morning show, so that helped a little."

Mom and dad, Karen and Brian Hillary, got a preview of the spot, which they're anxiously awaiting to air.

"I told her it was really a big honor," Karen said. "She's been going to the library for reading time since she was 18 months old. She just loves to read."

The community will be able to watch the book talk on Hillsborough County's public access channel on the Bright House cable network.



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Bloomingtondale Family Runs Italian Kitchen In Riverview

**FAMILY SIZE,
TO-GO ORDERS
AVAILABLE**

By **LESLIE WHITE**
Correspondent

Step into Italian Kitchen Cafe and it's like stepping into old world Italy, complete with fluent Italian and generational family recipes.

Bloomingtondale residents Frank and Rosemary Sirchia own the cafe, but Rosemary says, "My dad Joe and my mom Mary are the backbone of the business."

Now in their fourth year of business, the Italian Kitchen Cafe is growing and changing to meet the desires of its customers.

"We now have our beer and wine license," says Sirchia, pointing to the custom wine rack her husband is building behind the counter.

Other changes and expansions will come as time and space allow. But one thing that won't change is the caliber of food dished up inside the restaurant.

"We make everything from scratch. These recipes came from our families. Cooking has always been such a big part of our family history," shares Sirchia, adding "It all stems from the back," as she nods towards the kitchen.

"Our chefs Sal Varotta and Stefano Sciortino are like family. Without them, we couldn't do this. Sometimes they come in at 5 a.m. just to start cooking."

The slow-simmered sauce is a popular item at Italian Kitchen Café. Customers buy it by the quart and freeze it at home for later use, as they do with the restaurant's fresh baked bread, sold by the loaf.

The homemade Italian sausage and meatballs dish is also a popular purchase at the café.

"We know what it's like being a busy family and trying to find time to cook a great meal," says Sirchia, who has two kids herself. "We offer



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Italian Kitchen Cafe owner Rosemary Sirchia, at right, shares a hug with her parents Joe and Mary Bordieri, whom she credits with being the backbone of the eatery.

call-ahead family style dinners to go that feed a family of four to six."

The café also offers an extensive menu of Italian classic dishes, along with new twists on some of those dishes to incorporate healthy, low-fat alternatives. And yes, they offer low-carb choices.

Seasonal favorites like pumpkin crème mousse and cranberry apple cheesecake give way to Italian holiday treats, and an array of specialty coffees are always on hand.

With two week's notice, Sirchia and her staff offer a full line of catering services for anything from Christmas and New Year's Eve parties to corporate parties and lunches.

Italian Kitchen Cafe is at 6915 U.S. Highway 301 in Riverview, between Bloomingtondale Avenue and Boyette Road, in the Kash n' Karry Plaza.

Hours are Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., closed Sundays.

For more information call 671-0953.

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Moms Have A Flair For Cooking With Kids

**HOLIDAY CLASSES
SET FOR
DEC. 8, DEC. 15**

By **LESLIE WHITE**
Correspondent

What do you call 20 kids in the kitchen trying their hands at chef-hood? Bloomingdale residents Robin Carney and Tiffany Howard call it 'Cooking With Flair.'

These two brave Bloomingdale moms love to be in the kitchen, and wanted something they could do that would involve their kids. They found it — a cooking class for students in grades two through five.

Their biggest surprise?

"We always have more boys than girls," says Carney, who is a mother of two boys, as is Howard.

"Our boys love it," says Howard.

The class is broken down into five weekly 1-1/2 hour sessions. Each session is divided into two parts. Howard takes half the class into the kitchen for the cooking portion of the class, while the other half remains with Carney to hone math and science skills by focusing on the other side of meal preparation; shopping, planning, and measuring.

The students also learn basic table manners and how to properly set the table as well as serve the dinner.

"We do experiments with food," says Carney. "Last



Cooking With Flair teachers Tiffany Howard and Robin Carney with their class of chefs, Michael Cabeza, Emily Cardella, Joshua Bryant, Teri DeFrosia, Kennedy Cornelius, Anthony Petrilli, Kelli Weber, Jacob Webber, Brendan O'Malley, Allison Rainey, Daniel Carney, Timmy Carney, Tyler Howard and Trent Howard.

week we made volcanoes."

The culmination of the five-week course is a display of newly acquired talents for the parents.

The chefs, all adorned in an apron they personalized, prepare a meal for their parents and then treat them to service in style. "We've had a great response," says Carney, noting that many parents have

signed their chefs up for multiple classes.

Nancy Cardella, mother of Chef Emily Cardella, a second-grader at St. Stephen Catholic School, has been through two five-week sessions of the course, which is different each time.

"Emily absolutely loved this class," says Cardella. "She could not wait for Wednesdays. This is the second time she's taken it because she loved it so much. This is a wonderful program they offer."

Each student also takes home a recipe book filled with foods they prepared during that course, as well as their apron and some utensils to get them started at home.

Cooking with Flair is currently taught on the campus of St. Stephen Catholic School on Boyette Road, for which the two teachers are thankful.

"We are so grateful to the school for giving us the opportunity to come in and do this.

They've made our dream come true. They've been phenomenal," says Carney.

Howard and Carney plan to continue the classes at the school, but are open to theme parties, Scouts, birthday parties and will even do teas. They are also available to home schooling groups who would like to add a cooking class to their curriculum.

The next five-week session will begin in February.

A special Christmas With Flair class will be offered twice during December, in which students will prepare homemade gifts for family, teachers and friends. Parents can enroll their future chefs for either Dec. 8 or Dec. 15 from 3:15 to 5 p.m., at a cost of \$25 per student per class. All participants will take home six homemade treats.

Class sizes are limited, so call to reserve a spot. For enrollment or any other information, call Robin Carney at 651-5802.

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Organization Provides Gift Of Comfort To Kids

DONATIONS STILL NEEDED TO AID STORM VICTIMS

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

During the 2004 summer of storms, we all had personal concerns about being comfortable, not only in terms of losing power and living without air conditioning, but also about feeling safe and secure. Needless to say, our comfort levels went up and down for several weeks.

After the storms finally passed, many organizations provided a variety of relief and comfort to those who had become victims.

One special organization traveled through our community enroute to the disaster areas in south Florida. Comfort Express gets its name from the fact that it primarily works with children who have become the victims of disasters such as the recent hurricanes.

Comfort Express is a charitable organization started last year to provide aid to children involved in the fires in Southern California. It has proven to be very effective in helping children adjust after the fires.

The small gifts of comfort given to children by volunteers will be remembered for

many years to come.

The comfort packages contain items designed especially for children including storybooks, coloring books, grooming items, small toys and stuffed animals. These are very special items because so many children affected by the hurricanes have absolutely nothing left to call their own. The packages are designed to give each child some degree of comfort by knowing that someone truly cares for them and that everything, in time, will be better.

Volunteers from Comfort Express began their work in Florida by providing aid to children in the Punta Gorda area and are still working today in the Pensacola area. There, they have found many small towns like Jay, Milton and Gulf Breeze, where schools were severely damaged. They are currently working to provide children in those areas with comfort packages.

We in the Bloomingdale area were truly blessed to maintain our comfort level through this summer of storms. Any person or group such as PTAs, other school organizations or church groups who would like to assist children in our state is asked to please check out the organization's website at www.comfortexpressinc.org for more information.

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Bloomington Real Estate Sales



This 1,853-square-foot home at 3948 Applegate Circle in Bloomington Estates listed for \$205,000 by Amy McGill of Partnership Properties, Crumpler & Associates Inc., sold for \$205,000 in 42 days. The 4-bedroom, 2-bath home features a large corner lot, fireplace, renovated kitchen and baths and a lanai.

Above, this 2,473-square-foot home at 3902 Rosedale Drive in Bloomington Estates listed for \$269,900 by Amy McGill of Partnership Properties, Crumpler & Associates Inc., sold for \$280,000 in 53 days. The 4-bedroom, 2.5-bath home features a newly sodded and landscaped corner lot, new aggregate finish on pool, new a/c, Sentricon termite system and all new appliances. Below, this 768-square-foot Pine Grove condominium at 3504 Pine Knot Drive listed by Luana Russell of Keller Williams Realty for \$74,900 and sold for \$73,700 in 18 days. The condo, built in 1988, features 1 bedroom and 1 bath. Realtors are invited to send recent sales info and photos to the editor at LauraFrazier@tam-pabay.rr.com. Featured properties will appear on a space-available basis.







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Park Avenue Puppies Await Adoptive Families

STORE OFFERS 'SANTA SERVICE' PROGRAM

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Santa is making his list and checking it twice, but he's not the only list-maker.

Every child who can wield a pencil is power-planning what to ask for from mom, dad and Santa, and at the top of many of lists is a puppy.

Park Avenue Puppies in Bloomingdale helps meet Christmas pet needs by offering what they merrily call Santa Service.

Owners Dennis and Lisa Purnell want to help families make canine Christmas wishes come true in a way that benefits both the new puppies and their adoptive families.

Christmas morning is not ideal time to get a dog. A few weeks before or a few weeks after helps lower the stress for everybody involved," said Lisa Purnell.

To make the transition easier for everyone, Park Avenue Puppies has a plan. Starting the first of December, if you come in and find a puppy you just can't live without, the Purnells will board the puppy free for one week after it's purchased, and then will continue to house the puppy for \$7 a day for a Dec. 24 pickup.

Christmas Eve hours will be noon to 4 p.m., with a special training class from 4 to 6 p.m. to teach new Santa Service pet owners how to acclimate the puppy to its new environment successfully.

"A quiet Christmas at home would be good. Taking the puppy home to a houseful of people or traveling to a new location isn't the best idea," said Purnell.

Puppies need a lot of attention, care and sleep, all of which might be sparse during hurried holidays.

Puppies are just like newborns — they're up for short periods, then they need a

nap," said Purnell.

The Purnells advise new owners to puppy-proof their home before the puppy's holiday arrival. Remove poinsettias, which are poisonous to pets, and assure that ornaments, decorations, presents and ribbons are out of the puppy's reach.

With more than 20 years in the pet business, the Purnells have developed a trusting relationship with breeders in Texas and Oklahoma, and are working to cultivate relationships with local breeders.

Dennis Purnell relies on these trusted breeders because, he admits, "We're kind of nutty about the puppies we choose. The breeders we use know this about us. We don't accept puppies we wouldn't bring home ourselves. They allow us to hand pick the puppies."

It's this practice that ensures healthy puppies, because the Purnells make it their business to know the breeding, veterinary and vaccination practices of each breeder they use.

Thirty-eight puppies currently call Park Avenue home as they wait for someone to come along and give them a new place to call home.

Lisa Purnell wants to make sure everybody goes home with the right puppy.

"Find the puppy that steals your heart and that's the one you need to get," she said.

Families are invited to come in and spend time with the puppies, getting to know their personalities and temperaments and ask questions about the breeds.

But before the puppies go home, the Purnells offer a training class, included in the price of the puppy, which helps new pet owners better understand the breed they've chosen, as well as learn the basics of potty training, grooming, nutritional needs and the prevention of destructive chewing.

The Purnells want to equip the new owners with all the

See PUPPIES, Page 20



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Debbie deRochemont snuggles an early Christmas gift from Park Avenue Puppies, a 12-1/2 week old Maltese about to go home to her new family.

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Bloomington Starbucks Offers Java Boost For Plants

NUTRIENT-RICH COFFEE GROUNDS ARE FREE

A Gazette Report

Plants need a little pick-me-up? Well, what do we humans do when we need a boost? Head to Starbucks of course!

Though we take our java in liquid form, many plants can benefit from the nutrients left behind in used coffee grounds.

In a grass roots, earth-friendly effort nine years ago, Starbucks customers in Seattle began asking baristas for leftover coffee grounds, and Starbucks across the nation now make the grounds available year round to its customers for free.

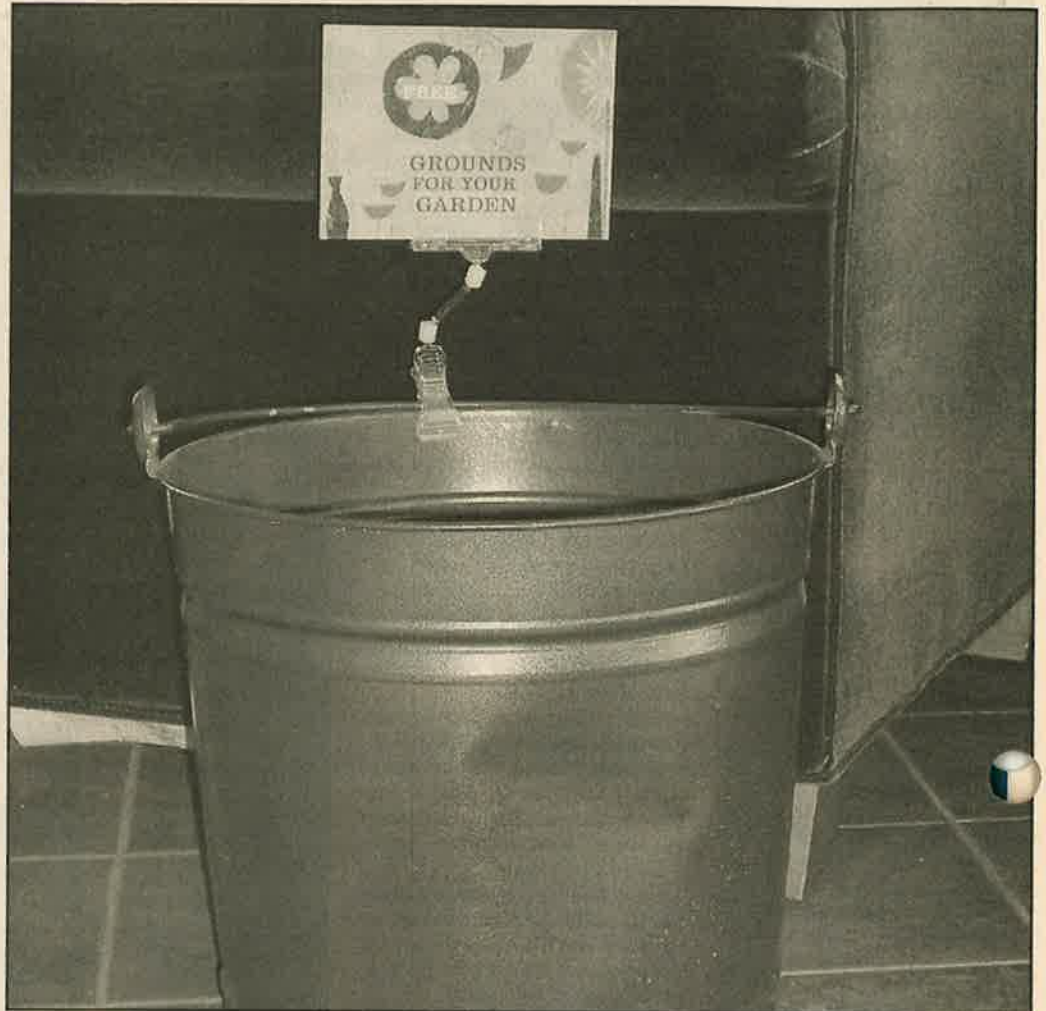
Bags of this rich soil enhancer are packaged and marked with compost stickers.

The grounds enrich the soil around plants, slowly releasing nitrogen, bringing vibrancy to both the health and appearance of the plant.

Azaleas, tea roses, hydrangeas, sunflowers, and houseplants all respond to a little dose of the grounds, sprinkled around the base, then watered into the dirt.

"I use it on my lemon tree," says Joe, a barista at the Lithia-Pinecrest Starbucks.

The grounds can also act as a natural pesticide, repelling fungus gnats and root mag-



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Bloomington area Starbucks customers can take home a "venti" bag of natural soil booster free of charge. Just visit the Grounds for Your Garden bucket right inside the door of Starbucks' Lithia-Pinecrest Road store.

gots.

Some gardeners prefer the finer grain espresso grounds to the coarser ground blends,

and Starbucks offers both. The grounds can be sprinkled, blended with potting soil or buried by the root ball.

A pretty popular feature, the bucket of free Grounds for

Your Garden is frequently empty, just waiting for another five pound bag and a green, caffeinated thumb. All that's required is a trip to Starbucks and a needy plant.



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PUPPIES

From page 19

information necessary to ensure that the new pet/owner relationship is a successful one. Dennis Purnell believes basic training sets the tone for the puppy later in life.

Park Avenue Puppies is at

Lithia-Pinecrest and Bloomingtondale Avenue, behind the Hess Station, and can be reached by calling 662-2592. Store hours are Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE
 THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE



ROBERT CONE/Staff photo

Tallahassee-bound

Bloomingtondale High School senior Brett Morris signs a letter of intent to play baseball at Florida State University. The Valrico resident, a pitcher and first baseman for the Bulls, was joined by, from left, Bloomingtondale assistant coach Jim Masson, Morris' father, Terry, mother, Laurie, sister, Chelsea, Bloomingtondale head coach K.B. Scull and Bloomingtondale Athletic Director Danielle Shotwell.

Watering Restrictions Remain In Effect

RESIDENTS CAN WATER ONCE A WEEK

A Gazette Report

The community of Bloomingtondale is part of unincorporated Hillsborough County, served by the county's South-Central service area. Under current watering restrictions, Bloomingtondale residents can water their lawns one day a week, according to the last number in their street address, as follows.

Addresses ending in the

number 0 or 1 may water on Mondays only. Addresses ending in 2 or 3 can water on Tuesdays. Those ending in 4 or 5 may water on Wednesdays. Thursday watering is permitted for addresses ending in 6 or 7. Street addresses ending in 8 or 9 may water on Fridays. Watering is not permitted on Saturday or Sunday in unincorporated Hillsborough County.

For more information, visit the county's water department Web site at www.hillsboroughcounty.org/water or call the customer service department at 272-6680.

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Storms' Aftermath Likely Skewed Labor Market Stats

JOBS LOST, CREATED AFTER HURRICANES

A Gazette Report

The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation in November released a report outlining preliminary labor market statistics for October 2004. The report includes employment statistics likely affected by this summer's hurricanes.

Florida's labor market statistics for the month of October, compiled by the workforce agency in cooperation with the U.S. Department of

Florida's October 2004 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent, slightly lower than the revised rate of 4.7 percent in September and down 0.4 percentage points from 4.9 percent a year ago.

Labor Bureau of Statistics, were submitted to the Gazette by Adecco, a nationwide staffing company. The report includes the following data.

Despite the destruction and chaos left in the wake of the storms, the report indicates Florida continued to lead the national job market in employment growth, while the rate of unemployment remained below the national average.

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percent, slightly lower than the revised rate of 4.7 percent in September and down 0.4 percentage point from 4.9 percent a year ago.

Out of a civilian labor force of 8,439,000, there were 376,000 unemployed and 8,063,000 employed Floridians.

The employment estimates could include an undetermined percentage of people who may have been temporarily absent or laid off from

their jobs due to weather related reasons, and those who became employed due to storm recovery activities.

The report indicates Florida's unemployment rate has been at or below the U.S. rate since February 2002. Both the national and the state unemployment rates have leveled off, with Florida's rate remaining about one percentage point below the national rate for the last year and one-half.

For more information, visit the Florida Agency For Workforce Innovation Web site at www.floridajobs.org.

To view the report in its entirety, log on to www.BloomingtonGazette.com.

PAINT

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returns to Trinidad every two years with 30 to 40 paintings to exhibit.

She also exhibits throughout Tampa Bay. Most recently, she brought home a second place from the Florida Sun-coast Watercolor Society show in Longboat Key. She's also garnered top honors at the Strawberry Festival, the Brandon League of Fine Arts Spring Festival and Members Show, from the Old Hyde Park Center and the Tampa Realis-

tic Artists.

She's had one-woman exhibits as well as exhibits with four fellow Brandon League of Fine Arts watercolor artists in a group called Aqua IV and Studio Friday, a group of artists who get together each Friday. Studio Friday has works on exhibit at TECO Plaza in Tampa through the end of December.

On Tuesday, Jorgensen teaches art classes at Center Place.

She said she's been a bit surprised at her commercial success, especially since she began painting for her personal enjoyment.

"I'm not one of those tortured painters. I like it when people look at my paintings and they can tell I was smiling with every stroke," she said. "I want people to be happy when they see my paintings."

Jorgensen's work also is featured on the cover of the commemorative calendar

published by The Brandon News and the Brandon League of Fine Arts to celebrate the 45th anniversaries of both organizations.

The calendar is available at The Brandon News office, 505 W. Robertson St., the Center Place gift shop, 619 Vonderburg Drive, and through league members.

Artists will have signed copies of the calendar available for \$10 each. Unsigned copies sell for \$5.

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LIBRARY

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"There are 53,011 volumes consisting of 70 percent printed materials and 30 percent audio-visual materials, and we can't wait to get them on the shelves," Boody said.

About 38 percent of the material is suitable for children under 18 years of age, a model based on community demographics and the usage of other libraries.

At the Friends of the Library's November meeting, Jan Stein, Hillsborough County's public art coordinator, said the county commission has earmarked \$23,000 for artwork to display at the

branch. Stein will work with the Friends group to select interior and exterior artwork for the branch.

The group's selections are subject to the approval of the county's public art advisory committee.

The Friends chapter will hold a gift wrapping fundraiser at Borders Books in Brandon Dec. 4 and 11. The group will wrap books purchased at the store in exchange for donations to support the Bloomingdale Library.

For more information or volunteer at the library, call Boody at 275-3642.

STOP

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the existing traffic jam. The sign should be installed in 30 to 45 days.

In another effort to increase school traffic safety, the 35 mph speed limit on Culbreath Road between Erindale Drive and Natures Way will be reduced to 30 mph.

"We're reducing the speed limit because that section of Culbreath, in addition to having no sidewalks and a number of residential driveways along it, is a lot narrower than it is north of Erindale," Tait said.

Talley is pleased with the planned safety improvements.

"So many drivers do a rolling turn at that corner. If every driver approaching the intersection has to come to a complete stop, everyone will have a better, safer view of the road, the crossing guard, and the children," she said.

The sheriff's office also plans to step up enforcement of traffic infractions occurring around the school.

"There is a double yellow line dividing Culbreath, and

you just can't cut around the traffic, period," Maurer said. Crossing the double line or driving onto the right of way are moving violations that carry fines of more than \$100.

The council and public works staff discussed other possible measures to deter illegal passing near the school.

A raised median curb or traffic bollards, a series of reflective posts, could be installed in the middle of the road.

Tait said the community

probably wouldn't support either of those two options.

"The posts are high maintenance and would certainly have some aesthetic drawbacks in what is now a very attractive area."

Maurer concurred. "I don't think we want those plastic posts in the middle of Culbreath. No matter what we do, two times a day it's still going to be a mess. If you can't avoid driving on Culbreath during school arrival and dismissal times, you just have to be patient."

BACC

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tiated to complete crosswalks between the Campo YMCA and Bloomingdale Little League fields on Culbreath Road.

Operation Patriot

Deputy Maurer expressed gratitude from the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the many veterans residing at Baldomero Lopez Nurs-

ing Home for the donations of personal care items provided through Operation Patriot. Maurer gave special thanks to all the Cimino Elementary School students who participated in the project. Way to go, kids!

Seat Belt Law Petition

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office is participating

in a project to amend Florida's seat belt law. As the law stands, only when a driver is pulled over for other violations can he be ticketed for driving without a seat belt.

The formal petition, titled "Traffic Safety Initiative to Provide For Primary Enforcement of Florida's Safety Belt Law," asks the Secretary of State to amend the law to allow officers to pull over and

ticket drivers primarily for not using their seat belts.

Studies show that making a seatbelt violation a primary enforceable violation would increase seatbelt use to at least 90 percent, resulting in hundreds of lives saved. Residents who would like to support this project can pick up a copy of the petition at the Bloomingdale Community Substation. Information: 635-8040.

BSTD

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Drive and Culbreath.

"I know the county has been connecting sidewalks and I was led to believe ours would be connected too," she said. "I don't know if it's an oversight that nothing's been done. But I've seen too many close calls there. A high percentage of residents walk their children to school."

Since the taxing district has never been responsible for the construction or maintenance of sidewalks, Snelling again referred her to the county.

Kehrmeyer and her neighbors also wanted to know what could be done about an empty lot, owned by an abutting homeowner in Windsor Woods, that's become over-

grown. "It's a huge problem," she said. "It's become an eyesore."

Once again, she was referred to the county's code enforcement department because the taxing district has no jurisdiction over private property.

The district, said Snelling, is strictly limited to maintaining Bloomingdale's common areas.

But Dale Kahn of the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association presented a concern that fell into even more of a gray area.

The Eagle Bluff Drive entrance wall has begun to crack due to the roots of a large oak tree behind it. While the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association is responsible for any improvements or replacements at the entrances to its subdivisions, the taxing district is responsible for maintaining subdivi-

sion entranceways and repairing them if, for instance, they are damaged by a car.

The district agreed to look into the problem further to determine who is responsible.

In other business, the trustees formed committees

for landscaping, capital improvements, budget, tax assessments and renewables.

"We're transitioning toward a board with more delegation," said Snelling, noting this is the first time the district is using a committee system.

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