

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXVIII  
Number 12

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## FEATURE STORY



Robert Bernandez and Michelle Weinstein coordinate a plethora of free activities for kids at the Bloomingdale Library.

PAGE 6

## HOLIDAY SAFETY

Deputy Maurer urges residents to follow guidelines and keep families, homes and possessions safe and secure. Life doesn't stop for the holidays, and neither does crime.

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## Santa Claus Is Coming To Town!

BRING FOOD DONATION FOR FREE VISIT, PHOTO

A Gazette Report

Santa and Mrs. Claus will make their 17th 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 Saturday, Dec. 9, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, in the plaza behind SunTrust Bank and Citgo gas station.

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.

The annual event is sponsored by The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. For more information, call (813) 681-2051 or e-mail [info@bloomingdalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingdalegazette.com).



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Santa and Mrs. Claus will make their 17th annual visit to Bloomingdale this year.

## Luminaria Kit Fundraiser, Contest Starts This Week

SANTA TO VISIT SECTION WITH MOST PARTICIPANTS

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

Bloomingdale residents have an opportunity this year to light the way for Santa Claus while adding a little extra sparkle to the community's annual college scholarship fund.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, starting this coming week, will offer luminaria kits for sale exclusively to Bloomingdale residents. The kits, available for a donation of \$10,

include 20 votive candles, 20 white bags and enough sand to weigh down the outdoor paper lanterns.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will benefit the B. J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship Fund. The fund was established last December to honor Stelter, longtime principal of Bloomingdale High School, upon her retirement in 2005.

The scholarship is awarded each year to one college-bound student graduating from Bloomingdale Senior High School. Application forms and criteria for the scholarship are available at the high school, at the Bloomingdale

Community Office, and on the community Web site.

Bloomingdale resident Joni Hickie, who volunteered to organize the fundraiser, said the neighborhood with the highest percentage of luminaria sales in its section will receive a special visit from the man in the red suit.

"I spoke with Santa Claus this week and he agreed to visit the neighborhood section with the most participation in the fundraiser," Hickie said.

The drive-through visit by Santa is set for Saturday, Dec. 16. Community

See LUMINARIA, Page 14

## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 4

*BHA Needs Current Contact Information For All HOA's*

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# BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



Bloomingtondale "Team Nick" neighbors pictured standing are Karen Schiller, Jori Tomberlin, Kevin Schiller, Nancy Nahas, Mike Nahas, Monty Mann and, in front, Trina Whitson, Nick Nahas and Kristine Schroeder. Lynda Ratliff and Kirk Whitson, not pictured, are also on the team.

## Friends Make Marathon Effort To Help Neighbor's Son

### 'TEAM NICK' TRAINING FOR DISNEY EVENT

A Gazette Report

Bloomingtondale residents Mike and Nancy Nahas, along with a group of close-knit friends and neighbors, are literally pounding the pavement to help find a cure for their son, Nick.

Nick Nahas, 14, a Bloomingtondale High School student, was born with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. His parents and eight of the family's Bloomingtondale neighbors and friends, will participate in Walt Disney World's Marathon Weekend Jan. 6-7.

The group, dubbed "Team Nick," will be part of the Run for Our Sons team to benefit Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy, or PPMD.

The team has been training since September for the 13.1-mile half-marathon and the 26.2 mile full marathon. The group has taken on the dual challenge of training for the race and raising money for PPMD.

Nick, who was diagnosed with DMD when he was 5, has

been in a wheelchair since he was 9. DMD is a progressive muscle disorder that causes the loss of both muscle function and independence.

Nancy Nahas said it is the most prevalent of the muscular dystrophies and the most common lethal genetic disorder diagnosed during childhood. Each year, Nahas said, about 20,000 children worldwide are born with DMD (1 out of every 3,500 males).

The search for a cure for the disease is at a critical stage.

"We feel that now, more than ever, we need to be proactive in our approach to this devastating disease," Nahas said.

"We have always had hope that a treatment or cure would be found in time to help our son, but now that miracle is within reach. We would do anything in our power to get there."

To help Team Nick reach its goal, log on to [www.firstgiving.com/teamnickfl](http://www.firstgiving.com/teamnickfl). For more information, call Nahas at (813) 657-6010. More information about DMD is available at [www.parentproject-md.org](http://www.parentproject-md.org).

## 3 New Commissioners On Board

### HIGGINBOTHAM REPRESENTS DISTRICT 4

A Gazette Report

Three new Hillsborough County commissioners took the oath of office Nov. 21.

Al Higginbotham, a Plant City native, was elected in the November general election to represent District 4, which includes the Bloomingtondale area.

Higginbotham, who previously owned a real estate brokerage firm, has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida. According to the county's Web site, after being paralyzed from the waist down due to an accident and recovering from his physical limitations, Higginbotham is a staunch advocate for people with disabilities.

See BOARD, Page 14

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**Pam Liguori,**  
secretary and treasurer



**Myron Magedanz,**  
director



**Stan Lee,**  
director



**Steve Heckel,**  
director



**Lydia Harrod,**  
director

# BHA Board Invites Residents To Monthly Meetings

## SERVES ALL 40 NEIGHBORHOOD SECTIONS

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association board of directors invites all residents to attend its monthly open meetings, held at 7 p.m. on the first Monday each month (except when rescheduled for the second Monday due to holidays, including Jan. 1) at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. The office is in the strip plaza behind SunTrust Bank and

the Citgo gas station.

The BHA, a non-profit, all-volunteer 501(c)(4) organization, is the only homeowners association representing the entire Bloomingdale community. Annual membership dues are \$25 per residence.

To contact any BHA officer or director, e-mail [bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net) or call (813) 681-2051. For more information about the homeowners association and the Bloomingdale community, log on to [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com).

Current BHA Officers And Board Members, Updated December 2006

**Ted Grable, president**  
**Joe Hickle, vice president**  
**Pam Liguori, secretary and treasurer**  
**Directors: Lydia Harrod, Dale Kahn, Tim Shuman, Steve Heckel, George May, Myron Magedanz, Shelia Harris**

### Principal Objectives of the BHA

- To promote a spirit of neighborly relations and cooperation among the community's residents and property owners.
- To promote, coordinate and obtain

improved utilities, governmental services and other beneficial improvements for the community.

- To maintain high standards in the community and vigorously oppose any encroachment or conduct of any kind which may tend to lower the standards of the community.

- To promote physical improvements to the community for the common good of its property owners and residents, and to oppose any act which may tend to depreciate the property values in the community.

# BHA Needs Current Contact Information For All HOA's

## RESIDENTS CAN PHONE IN, E-MAIL INFO

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association is compiling a list of homeowners' groups active in various neighborhood sections of the community.

There are 40 neighborhood sections

within the community of Bloomingdale. The BHA is a voluntary, unifying organization that serves more than 5,000 residences in all 40 sections of the community.

However, some sections within Bloomingdale are also served by smaller, individual homeowners associations. Fox Run, Somerset and Cambridge

Cove are a few examples of neighborhood sections with their own (mandatory) homeowners associations.

Neighbors frequently contact the BHA and Gazette staff looking for neighborhood association contact information.

The BHA would like to compile a list of all HOA's, their board members,

contact names and numbers, e-mail addresses and association Web sites. The list will be on file at the Bloomingdale Community Office and posted on [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com).

Anyone with current contact information is asked to e-mail details to [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com) or call (813) 681-2051.

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](mailto:Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net)  
**Web Site:** [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://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:** Shelia Harris  
**Director:** Stanley Lee

### Bloomingtondale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594  
**Phone:** 684-6667  
**E-mail:** [Bloomingtondale.district@Verizon.net](mailto:Bloomingtondale.district@Verizon.net)  
 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

### Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Bloomingtondale Area Substation

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**Community Resource Deputy:** Pete Maurer  
**Non-Emergency Calls Only:** 635-8040

### Bloomingtondale Oaks Special Taxing District

P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132  
**Phone:** 685-2817  
 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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 Advertising, call: 627-1322

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

# St. Vincent De Paul Society Provides Thanksgiving Dinners

## FOOD PANTRY HELPS NEEDY FAMILIES

By DAWN ZAMANIS  
Correspondent

For more than 10 years, the food pantry at St. Stephen Catholic Church in Valrico has provided weekly boxes of food and basic necessities to countless needy families each Friday, rain or shine.

Generosity at holidays has also been commonplace, and this year is no exception.

St. Stephen Church, in conjunction with the St. Vincent De Paul Society, will provide 161 families with turkeys and all the trimmings for Thanksgiving. At Christmas, 323 children will receive gifts as a result of the generosity of the parish.

Camille Riggins, president of the St. Stephen Conference, St. Vincent De Paul, has been a volunteer from the beginning.

"It was ingrained in me as a child," she said. "We knew there were people who were in need. We have always been aware of the needs of others and, thanks to the blessings we've received, I'm able to give



DAWN ZAMANIS/Photo

Hundreds of families will have Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners thanks to St. Vincent De Paul volunteers.

back."

St. Vincent De Paul, the father of charitable work, was born in Gascony, France, in 1580 and founded the first conference of charity for the assistance of the poor in his country, as well as the Daughters of Charity and the Hospice of the Name of Jesus, a hospital for

the dying.

"He was a person of love. I love people, too, and have always been in contact with them, beginning with my first job as a flight attendant," Riggins said. "But I wanted to minister to the needy and I finally found my home here at St. Stephen."

Like Riggins, Graciela Langan, a volunteer at the pantry for many years, feels she was called to this ministry.

"I feel like I need to give back to society. I take after my mom," she said. "I was just brought up that way."

Riggins and the other volunteers work long hours to keep

up with the needs of the pantry's families. But they say their work wouldn't be possible without the support and donations of the members of the parish.

"The parishioners of St. Stephen are very giving people."

See FOOD, Page 15

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# Bloomingtondale Library Hosts Programs For Kids Of All Ages

FREE TO THE PUBLIC

By DAWN ZAMANIS  
Correspondent

The Bloomingtondale Regional Public Library offers a great variety of educational and entertaining activities for children of all ages, including teens. The library's calendar is chock-full of events offering magical nights, fun games, social opportunities and a change of scenery for kids and families — all free of charge.

Michelle Weinstein heads the library's children's department. Weinstein said the entire staff is dedicated to bringing kids together in a safe, friendly and fun environment. Their goal is to offer alternatives to television and video games in a stimulating environment.

Monday nights at 7, young children are invited to "Bed-time Stories." Families are encouraged to come and listen to stories and songs and participate in activities with their little ones. Kids are encouraged to wear pajamas and bring their favorite blanket or a cuddly toy. It's a great day to wind down after a long day.

The library also hosts two separate daytime story time



DAWN ZAMANIS/Photo

Bloomingtondale Regional Public Library staff, from the left, are Robert Bernandez, senior library assistant; Michelle Weinstein, children's librarian; Jillyann Sanchez, technical assistant; Karen Sagan, assistant; and Julie Beamguard, branch supervisor.

sessions. Tuesday and Wednesday at 10 a.m., toddlers ages 24 to 36 months, together with their parent or caregiver, are invited to join in stories, finger puppet plays, and songs during "Toddler Time." The activities last roughly 20 minutes; perfect for toddlers who may get a little bit antsy.

Children ages 3 to 5 will enjoy pre-school story time on Wednesday at 11 a.m. The 30-minute program includes stories, finger plays and interactive playtime.

Teens ages 12 to 18 are invited to "Teen Bored Games" once a month. The activity is for teenagers who enjoy a good

challenge and want to spend a few hours out of the house. Kids can bring a favorite board game from home, such as Chess or Clue, or they can choose one of many games available at the library. Snacks are provided.

A new "Teen Drama" program will hold its first class

Dec. 7 at 4:30 p.m. Reservations are required for the class, which consists of theater games and improvisation. Library staff said it's a great opportunity for teens to spotlight their talent and entertain their friends.

See LIBRARY, Page 9

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BLOOMINGDALE  
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

# Kiwanis Santas To Sing For Donations

AT LOCAL RESTAURANTS DEC. 8

A Gazette Report

The Kiwanis Club of Greater Brandon will host its fifth annual Santa Night fundraiser at various Brandon-area restaurants on Friday, Dec. 8, from 6 to 10 p.m.

Club members dressed as Santas and elves will sing Christmas carols for patrons while collecting donations for Kiwanis-sponsored youth programs. The singers will entertain crowds while passing the Santa Sack to collect funds at each stop. Singers must collect at least \$150 in sponsorship donations before the event in order to participate.

If you would like to be a singer, make a donation, request that the singers visit your restau-

rant, or become a sponsor for the event, contact Taffy Coleman, (813) 684-6511 or visit [www.santanight.com/brandonfl](http://www.santanight.com/brandonfl).

All proceeds from Santa Night benefit Kiwanis-sponsored youth programs, including Terrific Kids programs in 23 local elementary schools; an elementary school K-Kids Club; two middle school Builders Clubs; and three high school Key Clubs.

The Kiwanis Club of Greater Brandon is a member of Santa Night International, a worldwide event launched in 1998 in Burlington, Vt. Santa Night is held each year on the second Friday in December to raise money for community organizations. For more information about the Brandon group, log on to [www.brandonkiwanis.org](http://www.brandonkiwanis.org).

## LETTERS

### Grieving Pet Owner Thankful For 'Super-Vet' Care

Send letters to [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com). All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

Let me tell you about my veterinarian. No, make that my "super-vet." He has been caring for our pets for a long time. This is an appreciation letter to the doctor for his special kindness extended to me and my dog. I am writing this letter to the community on Thanksgiving weekend 2006 when this happened. We just recently

lost a treasured pet.

Dr. Raul Rivera, DVM, is a veterinarian in the Bloomingtondale community. Dr. Rivera cared for this dog like it was his very own. That is the kind of person he is and partially why I call him my super-vet.

My dog had been terminally ill for the last two years. Due to the skills of the super-vet, he was able to extend the dog's life with dignity until

See LETTERS, Page 14

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# Santa Thanks Sleigh Load Of Volunteers

## MORE OPPORTUNITIES IN 2007

A Gazette Report

Santa and Mrs. Claus would like to thank the many children, teenagers and adults who volunteered to help during the couple's Saturday, Dec. 9, visit to Bloomingdale.

The North Pole couple was overwhelmed with offers of assistance this year.

Unfortunately, due to space restrictions at the community office, volunteer opportunities for this event are limited.

Mr. and Mrs. Claus extend their thanks and best wishes to everyone who

volunteered to help.

More volunteer opportunities will be announced in upcoming issues of The Bloomingdale Gazette and on www.bloomingtondalegazette.com. Residents can sign up for "BHA News Alerts" to receive e-mails about community news, events and service oppor-

tunities. To receive news alerts, log on to the community Web site and type your e-mail address in the white box at the top of the page.

All e-mail address registered with the BHA are held in strict confidence and will not be displayed, shared with or sold to any other groups or individuals.

# County To Analyze Complex Road Improvement Needs

## RESIDENTS: TAKE BELL SHOALS OFF LIST

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

A new study requested this year by the Hillsborough County Commission requires county staff to take a closer look at roads currently considered difficult or impossible to widen and improve.

The Constrained Roads Study will focus on more than 100 roadways initially identified by county staff as impractical for improvements due to high cost, negative community impact, environmental impact or government policy.

As part of the study, workshops to gather public input will run in various parts of the county through February. Staff expects to conclude its research in March, and is scheduled to present its findings to the commission on April 1.

The first in a series of public workshops to discuss the constrained roads

study was held Nov. 14 at McLane Middle School in Brandon.

Ned Baier, the county's senior transportation planner, chaired the meeting with about 80 in attendance.

"The point of the study is that there are always multiple (transportation and development) things going on at once. This study is one way to make sure someone is looking at the big picture," Baier said.

"We'll be re-evaluating each of the roads on the list, going out for public opinion and doing an in-depth analysis."

Hillsborough's Metropolitan Planning Organization, Baier said, is eager to review the study results. The MPO is responsible for administering and prioritizing the spending of federal transportation funds throughout the county.

Overburdened roads associated with complex legal, financial or environmental conditions have long been referred to as constrained, Baier said. However, the study reflects the county's first effort to catalogue the roads and examine their

status — individually and as a whole — in detail.

Some of the roads have been classified as constrained for 15 or 20 years. As a result, Baier said, staff expects about a dozen to be taken off the preliminary list. Once they're off the list and the study is complete, the roads become eligible to move forward through the planning process for improvements.

Baier cautioned residents not to expect immediate improvements just because a road in their neighborhood might be taken off the list.

"The next step after removing a road from the list is to fit it into the long-range plan," a process that can take five to 10 years or more to commence, he said.

The hot topic at the Brandon workshop was Bell Shoals Road. The entire length of Bell Shoals, from Boyette to Lithia-Pinecrest roads, is on the list of constrained roads.

Those at the meeting unanimously supported removing one portion of

Bell Shoals from the list, from Boyette Road to Bloomingdale Avenue.

The audience did not object to leaving another section of Bell Shoals on the list, from Bloomingdale to Lithia-Pinecrest.

Prior to the meeting, the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association expressed concern about Bell Shoals being on the list. The road is identified as impractical for improvements for two reasons: environmental impact and government policy.

Baier could not provide specifics about the reasons given for Bell Shoals' constrained status. Some information on the preliminary list is vague and probably outdated, he said. That's one area county staff will strive to update throughout its study.

"We need to clarify in detail the status of the roads and the reasons they're on the list."

George May, Bloomingdale board member, said the list frustrated resi-

See ROAD, Page 15

# BHA Supports Neighbors' Requests For Lights At Parks East, West

## RESIDENTS CAN COMMENT VIA E-MAIL

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association board is asking residents, "What facility improvements or additions would you like to see accomplished at Bloomingdale's two

public parks?"

The board invites residents to submit their suggestions for possible upgrades and renovations to Bloomingdale East Park, on Natures Way, and Bloomingdale West Park, on Canoga Park Drive.

The association, at the request of residents, has asked the Hillsborough County Parks Department to consider installing lights at both parks for the

convenience of park patrons and to improve neighborhood safety.

The board also supports a request by one group of neighbors to construct a hard-surface volleyball court at Bloomingdale East Park. The volleyball court could replace an old tennis court that was converted to a seldom-used roller-hockey court a few years ago.

If you would like to comment on the

proposed park upgrades — or if you'd like to share additional ideas and suggestions with the board — please respond by e-mail to info@bloomingtondalegazette.com.

Comments received will be shared with the BHA board and parks department staff and may be published in upcoming issues of The Bloomingdale Gazette.



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BLOOMINGDALE  
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

At the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's Nov. 6 board meeting, BHA President Ted Grable reviews a community map with Hillsborough County Code Enforcement supervisor Bill Langford, center, and code investigator Armando Sanchez. The board invited Langford to attend the meeting to discuss code enforcement issues.

## Code Violation Citation Quiets Restaurant Racket

### PO' BOYS TO HALT OUTDOOR CONCERTS, KARAOKE

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

A commercial noise nuisance issue brewing in Valrico for more than a year finally quieted down last month, residents said.

Dozens of Bloomingdale and Buckhorn area residents said they've complained on numerous occasions since July 2005 to Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office deputies, Environmental Protection Commission staff and county code enforcement officers about what they described as rowdy, excessive noise disturbing the peace in neighborhoods near Po' Boys Creole Café on Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

Noise from late-night music and karaoke sessions held on an outdoor patio at Po' Boys, residents said, routinely carried into their neighborhoods and through their houses.

Sheriff's deputies and county staff, on several occasions, told residents they were doing all they could to address the complaints. However, the

problem continued unresolved until Nov. 14, when Bill Langford, a new Hillsborough County code enforcement supervisor, cited the establishment for violations to the county's land development code.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association invited Langford to attend its Nov. 6 board meeting to discuss unrelated code enforcement issues about the community's neighborhood improvement program. While they had his ear, the board asked Langford about the Po' Boys noise situation.

At the request of the homeowners association, Langford researched the property's zoning restrictions. A week later, he cited the restaurant, effectively pulling the plug on the noise.

Regardless of the noise level emanating from the restaurant, Langford said, zoning restrictions for the plaza prohibit outdoor concerts and other gatherings county codes define as "too heavy or intensive" for the area.

Mary Bosler, a Bloomingdale resident, said the racket ceased the day Langford issued a verbal

See CODE, Page 13

## LIBRARY

Continued From Page 6

Library staff will really pull out the stops Wednesday, Dec. 3, promising to magically transform the children's library into a river. "River Connections," for students in kindergarten through grade five accompanied by a parent or guardian, starts at 3:30 p.m. Children will learn about the inhabitants found in and around a river through interactive storytelling and costumed characters.

For more information about upcoming events at the Bloomingdale library, call (813) 273-3652, Ext. 2, or log on to www.hcplc.org.

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BLOOMINGDALE  
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

# Residents Can Make The Call To Help Resolve Problems

## BHA, GAZETTE STAFF PROVIDE CONTACTS

A Gazette Report

Bloomingtondale residents with questions about where to officially report anything from a lost dog to missing street signs and clogged storm drains can e-mail questions to [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com), or call the community office Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon, (813) 681-2051.

Frequent concerns and the appropriate contacts to address them are as follows:

### Street Signs Missing Or Damaged

Report to Hillsborough County Public Works Traffic Operations, (813) 744-5670.

### Street Lights Out, Malfunctioning

Report to Tampa Electric Company, (813) 223-0800, or fill out the online form at [www.tampaelectric.com](http://www.tampaelectric.com). To find the form, type "streetlights" in the search box on TECO's home page.

### Traffic Control Devices Down, Out of Order

Report malfunctioning traffic signals and

missing or damaged traffic signs to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, (813) 247-8200. Report non-hazardous maintenance needs to Public Works Traffic Services, (813) 744-5670.

### Animals Lost or Found

Report stray, sick or injured animals to Hillsborough County Department of Animal Services, (813) 744-5660.

### Park Grounds, Equipment Require Repair

Report park maintenance needs (county-owned parks only) to Hillsborough County Parks Maintenance Unit II, (813) 744-5815.

### Roads or Stormwater Drains Need Maintenance

Report roadway and stormwater infrastructure maintenance needs to Hillsborough County Public Works, (813) 272-5912.

### Trash, Recycling Collection Problems

Report problems with curbside trash and recycling services to Hillsborough County Solid Waste, (813) 272-5680.

BLOOMINGDALE  
LAW ENFORCEMENT

# Follow Safety Guidelines To Ensure Happy Holidays

## YEAR-ROUND RULES APPLY

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER  
Bloomingtondale Community  
Resource Deputy

Christmas and New Year's are two very special times of the year that can be filled with lots of fun and great memories. However, we have to remember to keep our priorities straight and focus on keeping our families, homes and possessions safe and secure. Life doesn't stop for the holidays, and neither does crime.

The same rules that apply year-round can help keep us all safe and secure during the holidays.

As always, but especially this time of year, please be constantly aware of your surroundings, lock up your valuables and follow good safety practices, especially when you're driving. Let's make our holiday memories good ones.

Many of us will be traveling this holiday season, both locally and long distance. The major thing that changes with the holidays is the volume of travel and the number of drunk drivers. In addition, teenagers will be out of school and on the roads. Truck drivers will also be in a hurry to make holiday deliveries. Just follow the steps

that will help keep you and your family alive:

- Don't drink and drive or allow anyone else to do so.
- Make sure everyone in your car is buckled up and that young children are properly secured in car seats or booster seats
- Give 100 percent attention to your driving, and don't be distracted. It's very dangerous out there.

Of the millions of drivers traveling our roads over the holidays, there are some that you really need to watch out for. Avoid all of these types of drivers and definitely don't be one of them!

### Sleepy Drivers

According to the National Sleep Foundation, more than half our nation's drivers, 51 percent, admit to driving while tired or drowsy, pushing themselves too far. We've all done it. In the same study, nearly one quarter of drivers ages 18 to 29 reported they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel. These drivers are also impatient, drive faster and feel more stressed. Watch out for them. They usually speed up, then slow down or weave back and forth, just like a drunken driver.

See SAFE, Page 11

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**SAFE**

Continued From Page 10

**Distracted Drivers**

Distracted drivers have become such a serious problem that laws were recently passed to increase fines for the offense. Law enforcement officers may now note "driver distracted" on accident reports, and insurance companies can increase the rates of customers charged with that offense.

The types of distractions noted could fill a book, and many are just plain crazy. They cover everything from cell phones, eating, putting on makeup, changing clothes, talking to passengers, reading, shaving and even watching videos or working on a laptop computer. A driver's mind can only concentrate fully on one thing at a time. Concentrate on your driving like your life depends on it, because it does.

**Drunken Drivers**

More than 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related. These are some of the most dangerous drivers. They

are unpredictable and can be very aggressive, and they usually aren't the only ones to be seriously injured in the crashes they cause. Watch for the common signs displayed by drunken drivers:

- Weaving back and forth.
- Driving very slowly or following the emergency lane line.

Avoid them, and contact local law enforcement if you see them. And please, don't be one of them.

**Aggressive Drivers**

The holidays are stressful, and many drivers take that stress with them behind the wheel. If you encounter 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. Many drugs will make drivers act aggressive. Just back off from them and avoid eye contact. Don't flash your lights or show any aggression yourself.

From all of us at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

HAVE A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON!

**Residents Urged To Report Acts Of Vandalism To Sheriff's Office**

**CALLERS MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS**

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

A wave of vandalism in Bloomingdale last month resulted in more than \$3,000 worth of damage to community property and an undetermined amount of personal property loss.

In early November, vandals broke dozens of flood lights and spot lights at the entrances to Cambridge Cove, River Crossing, Bloomingdale Cove and Somerset. In addition, the community directory sign at the corner of Natures Way and Culbreath Road was destroyed.

Bloomingdale's property manager, Al Devney, filed a police report documenting the crime with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District is responsible for maintenance of community signs and most entryway lights. Unless the vandals are caught and restitution is made, taxing district funds will be used to fix or replace the damaged property.

Also in Bloomingdale last month, several residents reported to Gazette staff at least a half-dozen mailboxes in the Oakcrest section were destroyed on the morning of Nov. 17.

In addition, several cases of graffiti on community walls, school buildings and a school mar-

quee sign were reported.

Clerks at the U.S. Postal Service Office in Valrico also confirmed several reports of mail tampering in Bloomingdale East. It is a federal crime to tamper with mail or mailboxes, punishable by fines up to \$250,000 or imprisonment for up to three years for each act of vandalism.

Pete Maurer, Bloomingdale's community resource deputy, said all acts of vandalism should be reported to the sheriff's office and Bloomingdale substation.

Even if residents have limited or no information about the suspects, Maurer said, the sheriff's office needs to know what's going on in the community to prevent the problem from recurring or escalating.

In addition, Maurer said, if residents in any area choose to turn their backs on vandalism and not report incidents to the proper authorities, sheriff's office records won't accurately reflect the area's need for increased police patrols.

"We need to know what's going on out there," Maurer said.

Anyone with information about the reported vandalism or other crimes is urged to contact the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, (813) 247-8200, and Deputy Pete Maurer at the Bloomingdale substation, (813) 635-8040. Callers may remain anonymous.

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## Property Manager Cleans Up After Parrot

FINDS 21 BAGS OF LITTER, NO BIRD

A Gazette Report

Al Devney, Bloomingdale Special Taxing District property manager, found 21 "Lost Parrot" signs, but no bird, in Bloomingdale last month.

In his travels around the community in November, Devney also picked up 21 bags of litter, a bicycle helmet, a barbecue grill lid, a hubcap and 26 cents.

The holiday beverages of choice were Coke for soft drinks, Bud Light for beer and Old Grand Dad for distilled spirits.

To report a property maintenance concern, including trash in common areas, sprinklers out-of-order and graffiti on community walls, call Devney, (813) 684-6667.

## Report Lost, Found Items To Sheriff's Office

### CAN ALSO REQUEST E-MAIL BROADCAST

A Gazette Report

Residents who find or lose a bicycle, car keys or any other personal property items are encouraged to call the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, (813) 247-8200.

Bloomingdale residents can also contact the Gazette to request a "Neighbor Network News" broadcast.

The free, confidential e-mail network serves to keep

Bloomingdale area neighbors connected on issues including items lost and found, neighborhood section events, homeowners' groups meetings, charity and church events and more.

To sign up to receive Neighbor Network News along with BHA News Alerts — messages concerning homeowners association issues — log on to [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com) and type your e-mail address in the white box at the top left of the home page.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

# BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS Hillsborough County Schools Calendar

REMAINDER OF  
2006/07 SCHOOL YEAR

A Gazette Report

End of Second Grading Period: Dec. 15

Winter Holidays: Dec. 18 to Jan. 1

Teacher Work Day: Jan. 2

Students Return After Winter Holidays, Start of Second Semester: Jan. 3

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Jan. 15

Students' Day At The Fair: Feb. 9  
Early Release, End of Third Grading Period: March 9  
Conference Night, Second Semester: TBA  
Spring Holidays: March 19-23  
Students Return After Spring Holidays: March 26  
Non-Student, Non-Teacher Days: April 6-9  
Last Day of School, Early Release Day: May 24

Source: Hillsborough County Schools Web Site, [www.sdhc.k12.fl.us](http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us).

## Gazette Correspondent Shares Passion For Writing

### GREAT AMERICAN TEACH-IN GUEST

A Gazette Report

Bloomingdale resident Dawn Zamanis, a writer whose work has appeared in magazines and newspapers, visited third-graders at Alafia Elementary School during the Great American Teach-In Nov. 15.

A single mother of five boys and a freelance writer for the Bloomingdale Gazette and The Brandon News, Zamanis spoke to the students about creative writing and the importance of reading.

Zamanis shared her passion for writing by involving the children in a writing assignment using her favorite "what if" technique to encourage them to expand their imaginations. She asked them to write a few paragraphs on an assigned topic and, to make it more interesting, asked them to focus on a lead or a "hook" of their choice.

The topic was, "A man opens his mailbox one day and finds something unbelievable inside." The children were asked to come up with their own hook by creating and answering a "what if" question, for instance, "What if the man finds a wallet with thousands of dollars in it?" Or, "What if the man finds a small pink dog?"

"The kids came up with some of the most original, entertaining stories," Zamanis said.

"They were creative beyond words, and many students showed tremendous promise as future writers like Carlos, 8, whose story impressed me



Photo courtesy of Dawn Zamanis

Bloomingdale resident Dawn Zamanis visited third-graders at Alafia Elementary School during the Great American Teach-In Nov. 15.

from the very first sentence. But all the children wrote with passion and zeal."

The students were invited to read their finished stories to the class.

"Many of the students leaped to the front of the classroom to read their stories aloud. Their words were exciting, imaginative and artistic."

Teachers Mrs. Firestine and Mrs. Spagnola, Zamanis said, deserve a lot of credit for the devotion they display to their students.

"Third grade is an important year for students due to the upcoming FCAT exam. Mrs. Firestine and Mrs. Spagnola have prepared their students well for the exam, and they are truly gifted teachers who care a great deal about the progress of each child," Zamanis said.

"I was honored to have been chosen as a speaker and humbled by the experience,"

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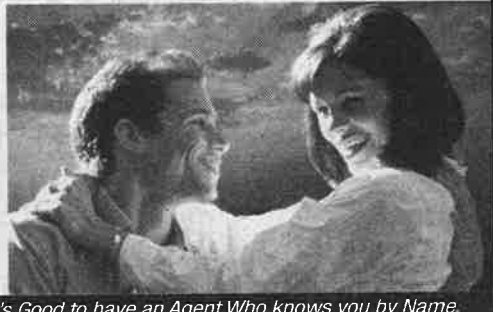
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**L** Lauren Chadderton, Junior Bulls cheerleader and Alafia Student with Katie Beasley, Varsity cheerleader; cheering for The Bloomingdale High School Bulls. Lauren attended the 5th Annual Bloomingdale Cheer Clinic where she along with the other Jr. Bulls learned cheers, chants and a dance routine. The following week the Jr. Bulls cheered along with the Bloomingdale Varsity Cheerleaders at the football game.

0081945398-01

## CODE

Continued From Page 9

citation to the restaurant manager, and hasn't resumed since then.

"The music has stopped for good," Bosler said.

Residents living as far as two miles away from the plaza in which the restaurant leases space, next to Albertsons supermarket, said the loud music and raucous activity routinely tested their patience and interrupted their sleep.

Kathleen Ruriani, a Bloomington resident, said earlier this year, "We work hard to afford a nice home in a nice quiet neighborhood. We don't want to hear (bands and karaoke). It's absolutely ridiculous. No homeowner could get away with anything like this. You'd think a business would be held to even higher standards."

One family in the Fox Run section of Bloomington who did not want to be identified said they resorted to installing special insulation around their windows and roof to drown out the reverberating sound.

Kevin Hayes, who lives in the Windsor Woods section of Bloomington, said he and his neighbors were told in 2005 by the sheriff's office and county staff to ask the EPC to investigate the issue.

"We were told the best way to address the problem was through EPC as a potential violation of the county's noise ordinance," Hayes said.

Marvin Blount, EPC field investigations chief, said his office conducted numerous field tests in front of complainants' homes this year to gauge the sound levels. EPC staff, in November, said results from each test fell within the "acceptable" range.

The tests results — and EPC's apparent inability to stop the noise — sur-

prised and frustrated some residents.

Hayes said he's grateful for the support of the sheriff's office and EPC. He also praised Langford for taking control of the situation. He just wishes it was all resolved a little sooner.

"The fact that it took so long for everyone to determine the correct department to address this problem is pretty frustrating to the neighbors," Hayes said.

"If we would have known (a year ago) that this was a code enforcement issue, it would have made our lives much easier."

Langford, who took the job as code enforcement supervisor seven months ago, said he was not previously contacted by residents or anyone else about Po'

## Community Council Meeting Wraps Up Noise Issue

### RESIDENTS, BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE

By MACK AUSTIN  
Correspondent

For more than a year, residents from neighborhoods near the Po' Boys restaurant on Lithia-Pinecrest Road worked with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Environmental Protection Commission and county code enforcement office to resolve a very tiring, emotional problem with excessive noise at the restaurant.

Some residents, unable to sleep because of the noise, were at their wits end trying to find a solution.

Pete Maurer, Bloomington's community resource deputy, worked closely with other deputies and code

enforcement officers to find a solution.

Bill Langford, a new code enforcement supervisor experienced in these types of complaints, was recently able to put an end to the loud music.

He provided regulation information to the owners of the business showing that they were not legally allowed to have music outdoors at their business.

Maurer arranged an open forum Nov. 16 for concerned residents and the restaurant's representatives at the Bloomington substation.

The restaurant's owner, Karen Walker, and manager, Don Hartley, attended the meeting. Deputies Carl Hassell and Jim St. Pierre also attended.

Maurer moderated the meeting, and all residents were given the opportuni-

ty to share their concerns. Maurer, Hassell and St. Pierre ensured everyone present had an opportunity to state their concerns and kept their emotions under control.

Based on the actions of Langford and the cooperation of the restaurant's owner and management, there will be no more outdoor music played at Po' Boys.

The Bloomington Area Community Council meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Bloomington substation on Bell Shoals Road. Bloomington area residents are welcome to attend. Concerned residents may also bring law enforcement, security and safety issues to the attention of the council by e-mailing [info@bloomingtongazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtongazette.com), or calling the substation, (813) 635-8040.

Boys. In addition, he could not immediately verify any records of complaints or phone calls about the issue were on record with his office.

Scott Allen, who lives near Bloomington High School, said, "There's no way it should have taken this long for someone at the sheriff's office or the county to step up and look into the usage restrictions at this business."

Many residents agreed the issue was frustrating, but consider it a learning experience.

Bosler said, "Now I have a better understanding of how to handle community problems with the county. It was also good to find out we can count on our neighbors when we have a community problem."

On Nov. 16, representatives of neighborhoods affected by the noise met with Po' Boys owner, Karen Walker, and manager, Don Hartley, at the Bloomington sheriff's office substation on Bell Shoals Road. Pete Maurer, the Bloomington community resource deputy, coordinated and moderated the meeting.

Maurer said the meeting resulted in a good session of give-and-take between residents, law enforcement officials and the business's representatives. At the meeting, Maurer said, Walker and Hartley said they would discontinue outdoor concerts and karaoke at the restaurant.

Hartley did not return phone calls to the restaurant asking for comments on the issue.



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BLOOMINGDALE SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

# Taxing District Public Hearing Set For Dec. 21

## BOARD EXPECTED TO ADOPT INCREASE

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District board will hold a public hearing this month to officially consider adopting an assessment increase voters approved in September.

Bloomingdale residents had the option to vote "yes" or "no" by special referendum on the 2006 Primary Election ballot to allow the board to consider a maximum \$30 annual increase per

home.

The annual assessment is currently \$100 per home. The board is expected to enact a \$130 per residence annual fee at its Thursday, Dec. 21 meeting, set for 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

Although voters approved the increase in September, the board is required to hold a public hearing to formally adopt the new rate because it exceeds the maximum increase allowed when the district was first formed about 20 years ago.

The taxing district is responsible for

maintaining all of the community's common areas, most minor entryways, community signage, entryway lighting and perimeter walls. Taxing district funds pay for common area maintenance, property management, landscaping, pest control, and general repairs and improvements.

The non-ad valorem assessment is added to the property tax bill of each homeowner in the district. There are currently about 4,800 homes in the district.

The meeting is open to the public. For more information, call (813) 684-6667 or e-mail [bloomington.district@verizon.net](mailto:bloomington.district@verizon.net).

## BOARD

Continued From Page 3

Former Tampa City Council members Rose Ferlita, District 1, and Kevin White, District 3, are also new to the board.

Sworn into new terms on Nov. 21 were Jim Norman, District 5, and Mark Sharpe, District 7.

The District 6 seat, held by Brain Blair since 2004, and District 2, held by Ken Hagan since 2002, were not open for election this year.

The new board unanimously chose Norman as its chairman. He was first elected to the board in 1992. The board elected Hagan as vice chairman, and Blair

as chaplain.

Districts 1-4 are single-member Districts. Districts 5-7 are at-large, county-wide seats.

The commission is responsible for approving the county's operating and capital budgets and capital improvement program. It may take action on any issues offering improvements to the county or the welfare of its residents.

According to the county's Web site, under a charter ordinance that went into effect May 1985, commissioners are directed to perform legislative functions of government by developing policy for the management of Hillsborough County. The county administrator, appointed by the board, and administrative staff are

responsible for the implementation of those policies.

Individual board members serve on various other boards, authorities, and commissions including the Environmental Protection Commission, Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, Tampa Bay Water, Aviation Authority, Expressway Authority, Sports Authority, Port Authority, Arts Council of Hillsborough County, Children's Board, Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Council of Governments.

For more county commission information, log on to [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/bocc](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/bocc).

## LETTERS

Continued From Page 7

now. At the end, when the dog was very ill, Rivera personally came to my house on Thanksgiving Day and the following day to check on my dog and give him in-home treatment. Hard to believe, isn't it?

I had to make that terrible ultimate decision for the dog. The doctor helped immensely in letting me know that this

was the right decision and the right time. That helped me perhaps more than the dog. Thank you, Dr. Rivera.

I personally recommend that you seek out Dr. Raul Rivera, DVM, if you need any type of veterinarian services. Dr. Rivera has different offices between Bloomingdale and FishHawk, but I would

travel anywhere for his "Super-Vet" services. His Bloomingdale office is at 3212 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, Suite 104, at the corner of Bloomingdale Avenue. His office phone number is (813) 643-7387.

Thanks again, Doc.

— Joe Hickle, Bloomingdale East

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## LUMINARIA

Continued From Page 1

office manager Derry Wilson and BHA volunteers will tabulate sales results the week of Dec. 11. The winning neighborhood will be announced on the community Web site the same week.

There are more than 40 neighborhood sections within Bloomingdale, ranging in size from a few dozen homes to more than 200. Event organizers said the neighborhood with the highest percentage of sales within its section — regardless of the total number of kits sold — will win the visit from Santa. Residents can find their section and household count on the community Web site under the "Deed Restrictions" tab at the top of the page.

There are a very limited number of kits available, Hickle said.

"We thought we'd start on a small scale this year, with just under 200 kits, to see how the community responds. Hopefully it will be a big success and we can increase the number of kits available next year."

The luminarias will be sold at the community office on Saturday, Dec. 9 during Santa's annual visit and photos with children, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The office is at 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., in the strip plaza behind SunTrust Bank and Citgo gas station.

Kits will also be available at the office one or two evenings the week of Dec. 4, Hickle said.

"We will announce the evening sales dates on our Web site and by BHA News Alert as soon as we confirm them," she said. Residents can sign up to receive free, confidential BHA News Alerts by E-mail on the community Web site.

For more information about the fundraiser or the scholarship, call (813) 681-2051, e-mail [bloomington.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:bloomington.homeowners@verizon.net) or log on to [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com).

# ROAD

Continued From Page 8

dents who, for nearly 10 years, have petitioned the county to improve the road. Twice in the past five years, county staff said Bell Shoals was slated for widening on the county's three-year and five-year plans. In 2006, staff said the road was slated for partial improvements at its Bloomingdale Avenue intersection and surrounding areas. In each instance, the plans were nixed due to funding or right of way acquisition problems.

The county released its annual Roadway Level Of Service report this month. Bell Shoals and Lithia-Pinecrest both received an "F," the lowest possible rating for roadway operating conditions.

Earlier this year, when Pulte Homes proposed its 3,110 unit Lake Hutto project — a development of regional impact in the FishHawk area, just south of Bloomingdale — the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association was pleased to learn the developer offered to fund the widening of both Bell Shoals and Lithia-Pinecrest roads. Pulte's offer, made in lieu of paying county transportation impact fees, was good news to the Bloomingdale association. The

group hoped the county had finally found a way to fund Bell Shoals in the near future.

The association asked the county commission — if it approves the development — to require Pulte to fund both roads. The Bell Shoals construction alone would cost the developer \$64 million. County staff said if taxpayers foot the bill, it's potentially a \$200 million project that is not funded in the county's long-range plan.

May said the Bloomingdale board maintains that Bell Shoals — a congested, two-lane, unimproved roadway with a failing level of service — must be improved as soon as possible.

"If Bell Shoals remains on the preliminary constrained list, and the commission is ready to decide on Pulte's proposal, could the developer's offer to widen the road be affected or even dropped completely," May asked.

"Essentially, the (preliminary) list really doesn't impact what the commission decides to do one way or the other (in regards to Pulte's proposal)," Baier said. "I believe the proposed development agreement defines what the developer's requirements would be in terms of schools, parks, roads and — particularly — the traffic mit-

igation plan."

At odds with the Bloomingdale association on the Bell Shoals issue, the Boyette Springs Homeowners Association board has asked the commission to six-lane the entire length of Boyette Road, instead of widening Bell Shoals. Boyette is currently undergoing Phase I of a two-part improvement and widening project paid for by the county.

The county commission is scheduled to review Pulte's Lake Hutto proposal Dec. 5. The hearing, previously set for Nov. 15, has been continued three times at the request of the commission.

Most of the 100 roads on the county's Constrained Roads List are in Tampa, Lutz and the Citrus Park area. The complete list is available on the county's Planning and Growth Management Web site at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/pgm](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/pgm). In addition to Bell Shoals Road, four other roadways in the greater Brandon area on the list are: State Road 60, from Falkenburg Road to Valrico Road; U.S. 301, from the Lee Roy Selmon Expressway to Gibsonton Road; Windhorst Road, from Lakewood Drive to Kingswood Road; and Kingsway Boulevard, from State Road 60 to State Road 574.

# FOOD

Continued From Page 5

ple," Riggins said. "It continuously overwhelms us when we see their generosity. We ask and they just give without asking. The ministry works because of the people of St. Stephen church. We are so thankful; there are no words. Without them, we wouldn't be here, and neither would the families in need. We are only able to help them because of the generosity of our parishioners."

Each Friday, families who have been accepted into the food pantry program (eligibility is determined in part by income, housing costs, etc.) are greeted with a warm smile, and leave the pantry with a week's worth of food and toiletries.

"But it's not just about the food," said Riggins. "We also help families obtain used furniture or appliances. We help in whatever way we can. And Deacon Tom Schott, our spiritual adviser, has been of great assistance with our program. We have all been inspired by one another."

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