

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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SUSAN GREEN

Korey Maurello, 10 (left), and her brother, Nick, 4, show off the homemade corpse rising from the graveyard that was crafted by their dad, Rob.

First pumpkins, then Santa

If you think Bloomingdale goes all out for Halloween, stick around to see it during the Christmas season. See page 4.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.”

Author unknown



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Education is Wild at Cimino



KIM WALLACE



Cimino students who attended the recent PTA meeting enjoyed the Busch Gardens "Education is Wild" program!

Busch Gardens came out to Cimino Elementary first general PTA meeting and talked about "Education is Wild with Animals" and teaching kids how to take care of them!

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Family Fest blossoms for fourth year

BY SUSAN GREEN

It was definitely a family day at the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's fourth annual Family Fest, with kids, parents and grandparents turning out to sample restaurant specialties, enjoy games and music, and learn about local businesses.

Preschools set up displays next to college recruiters, and bank representatives mingled with professionals in real estate, insurance, and weight-loss programs at the event, staged Nov. 12 at the Bloomingdale Golfers Club.

Parents could let their children bounce off the walls in the bounce house, or take turns on the giant, inflated slide. Kids lined up to get their faces

painted by artist Heather Walton or choose a balloon animal fashioned by Robert Horning of Cards & Stuff Magic Inc.

Bloomingdale residents Charles Benton and his wife, Katrina, brought their son, Elijah, 2, and two nephews, Justin and Adrian Shoemake, ages 6 and 8, respectively. Charles Benton said the family has been attending the festival since it started.

"We just have fun, relax and enjoy the weather while we can," he said, noting the sunny day and cool temperatures.

Proceeds from sales of cookies, brownies and snow cones at the event help fund the association's Community Scholarship program, which provides an award annually to a

college-bound Bloomingdale senior based on academic performance and volunteer service hours.

The Beef O'Brady's restaurant on Bell Shoals Road gave away samples of its signature chicken wings. Door prizes included two large gift baskets filled with hair products and three gift certificates from Heather Michael and Jennifer Taylor of Salon Jennifer as well as a gift-filled tote bag assembled and donated by Audra Mosser from Thirty-one, a business that sells purses, bags and accessories at in-home parties.

Stan Lee, president of the homeowners association, said Family Fest started primarily as a way to foster community spirit.

"We bring the residents



SUSAN GREEN

Artist Heather Walton gives Colby Jacobs, 7, the face of an alligator at the annual Bloomingdale Family Fest.

in to meet the other residents," he said, adding that the displays demonstrate to Bloomingdale residents the services available close to their neighborhood.

"It's family and community," Lee said. "It's mostly for the kids."



Kids of all ages took turns sliding down a giant cushion of air at the annual Bloomingdale Family Fest.



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Will 'Boo Hoo' at Halloween mean 'Bah! Humbug!' this Christmas?

BY SUSAN GREEN

It was less than two weeks before Halloween, and the Great Pumpkin appeared to be at risk of rising from his patch without benefit of fake fog, cackling crones or dismembered body parts piercing through suburban sod.

A drive through the neighborhoods of Bloomingdale East near Bell Shoals Road scared up nary a ghoulish head in the dirt, or errant witch squashed against a wall or window pane. So I turned to Bloomingdale West, and particularly Bloomingfield Drive, that bastion of Boo Day beasts I remembered from years past.

The street appeared eerily normal, except for Constance Fry's home, with trees and the front door draped in cobwebs

and crime scene caution tape.

"I've got more stuff," Fry promised, adding that she had particular plans for a gargoyle and black lights.

A native of Ohio, Fry is accustomed to lavish holiday decorations. She shares her home with her husband, Michael, an Army major, and two children: son Jeffrey, 16, and daughter Kimberley, 14, who attend Bloomingdale High School.

She figures she inherited her energy for holiday decorating from her mother, Wanda Jefferys, who has promised to crochet a monster spider web to cover the front of the house next year.

The family moved to Bloomingdale from Pinellas County shortly before Christmas last year. The towering oaks with the "creepy moss" were among the selling points

for Fry, and she was reveling in the possibility of using the trees in her yard to enhance a spooky effect.

Though she said she doesn't want to see overspirited neighborhood rivalry over holiday decorations, she would have liked more competition on her block.

"I'm kind of disappointed," she said. She suggested that weather and the fear of vandals or thieves targeting outdoor decorations might have dimmed enthusiasm this year, along with the gloomy economy. She said she knew of at least five neighbors who have moved out on her street since her family moved in.

If the family's first Christmas in Bloomingdale last year is any indication, however, the lack of creepy crawlies in October shouldn't translate into a dearth of candy canes and fake icicles in December, she said. Several neighbors pulled out the stops for Christmas last year.

A few miles east, in a neighborhood off Culbreath Road, Rob Maurello also predicted more holiday spirit for Santa Claus



SUSAN GREEN

A phantom skeleton greets guests at this house in Bloomingdale West, one of a few in the neighborhood that had decorated for Halloween by Oct. 20.

than for the Great Pumpkin.

"At Christmas, everybody's got lights out," said Maurello, who moved from Denver to Bloomingdale 11 years ago. "Some years it's more than others."

In a neighborhood

sporting a few friendly-looking scarecrows, pumpkin cutouts, and twist-tie plastic ghosts, the Maurello yard was an eye-catcher with the lawn transformed into a graveyard and a spectral haunt hovering over the front door.

Maurello estimated the whole effect took two hours or less to create, including about a half-hour to craft a homemade corpse rising from the grave.

National reports as late as mid-October predicted an increase in consumer spending on Halloween this year, with revenues expected to near \$7 billion nationwide, according to www.upi.com/business_news. That includes costumes, parties and visits to haunted house attractions, along with dec-



An unusual tree gets the holiday treatment at the Fry



Cobwebs, crime scene tape and vampire bats at the front door were just the beginning of outdoor decora-

St. Andrews celebrates the seasons with handmade crafts for sale

BY SUSAN GREEN

Hundreds of shoppers transitioned from autumn celebrations to winter holidays at the 44th annual fall crafts fair at St. Andrews United Methodist Church at Bloomingdale Avenue and Bryan Road.

Turkey potholders and pumpkin themes snuggled alongside reindeer ornaments and Christmas wreaths at the Oct. 29 event, as fairgoers browsed among 80 vendor displays, noshed on baked goods or took home gently used treasures from Granny's Attic, a rummage sale of donated items.

Each year, the event raises about \$5,000 for the church's missionary efforts, said vendor coordinator Mary Jane Trimble.

She said she was pleased with this year's turnout, particularly because a persistent drizzle greeted vendors and shoppers early in the day.

Jeanette Henderson of Valrico hurried over to Anita Estacion's collection of handmade polymer clay ornaments and trinkets.

"We heard there were roosters," she said. "Where are the roosters?"

Henderson picked out a rooster ornament she planned to bestow on a friend for Christmas.

"Every year I try to get some kind of ornament for her tree," Henderson said.

For Kim and Andrew Baker, who moved to Valrico from Michigan a year ago, the bird ornament of choice was a pink flamin-

go, in honor of their new Florida home.

"My husband said we have to have a flamingo," Kim Baker said.

Estacion, also of Valrico, said she was glad to be back at the fair as a vendor. She showed her crafts at the fair for three years until a grandson came to live with her about eight years ago, and she found herself too busy to do artwork.

"I just re-started," she said. "Everything is handmade. You can see the fingerprints in them."

Nicole Wooldridge and Kristina Rocha of Valrico and Jessica Mendez of Temple Terrace went in together to display their scrapbooks, hair accessories and crocheted items at



SUSAN GREEN

Nicole Wooldridge of Valrico, a scrapbook vendor, is framed by a holiday wreath crafted by her friend, Kristina Arocha of Valrico, during St. Andrews United Methodist Church's annual fall crafts fair.

one of the booths. The women said they met through an artisan group page on Facebook.

Linda Uttley of Valrico said her decorated, lighted wine bottles were selling

well. Draped in beads and faux fruit, they provide a yuletide touch at buffet tables or other holiday affairs, Uttley said.

A repeat vendor, she said she typically gets a

good response from buyers and enjoys selling her wares at the St. Andrews event.

"It's good to see friends come back year after year," she said.

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BLOOMINGDALE BUZZ

BY SUSAN GREEN

This month's Bloomingdale Buzz interviews were conducted at Jiffy Lube, 3526 Bell Shoals Road, which held a grand opening Nov. 19. The business offers oil changes and other vehicle maintenance.

With the winter holidays and New Year's Day approaching, we asked people the following question:

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE COMING NEW YEAR?



Mariel Gallagher

Mariel Gallagher of Seminole:

"Personally, I want to become a better person, maybe to not pollute so much, to be greener, and to set more goals for myself... to make the world a better world for everybody."



Nelson Rodriguez

Salina Bailey of Valrico: "I hope that it's better than last year, with the economy and financial situation."



Salina Bailey

Nelson Rodriguez of Bloomingdale: "My thoughts are that world consciousness is starting to change, that people are starting to appreciate the more basic things in life ... by virtue of the economy forcing them to look at things differently."

"I think it's a very positive time and causing us to come together and realize that we have more in common than we have differences."

Public welcomed to ribbon cutting

Wednesday, Dec. 7 at 12:30 p.m., the "Back by Demand Thrift Store, Consignment Boutique and Snack Shoppe" is having a ribbon cutting and open house celebration. The event is presented by the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce.

Please come out and join us for a day full of shopping, refreshments, store specials and prize drawings. The store is located at the Bloomingdale Plaza, (next to Winn Dixie), 173 E. Bloomingdale Ave. For information, call (813) 438-8910.

No matter how carefully you stored the lights last year, they will be snarled again this Christmas.

Robert Kirby

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Chamber stages veterans event at Campo YMCA

BY SUSAN GREEN

About 40 businesses and nonprofit organizations turned out last month for a Veterans Festival at Campo Family YMCA, hosted by the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce in honor of Veterans Day.

Among them was Katrina Farrell, military liaison specialist for Seniors In Service of Tampa Bay. She said her organization pairs volunteers with homebound veterans and children affected by their parents' military service, such as deployment overseas.

Farrell said the Campo Y event attracted the organization because of the high number of military families living in Bloomingdale. Two Bloomingdale elementary schools – Alafia and Cimino – along with FishHawk Creek Elementary to the south and Symmes Elementary to the west, are among schools targeted for services because of the number of children in classes there from military families.

Veterans who volunteer in the program have been found to be

particularly helpful in spending time with children who have trouble accepting the long-term absence of a deployed parent, Farrell said.

"Definitely I feel like I'm in the right place to make the magic happen," Farrell said.

Also at the event were Randy Valdez and Terry Russell of Suncoast Community Health Centers, a federally funded nonprofit health program with clinics in Brandon, Dover, Plant City and Ruskin.

Valdez said the display's main aim was to highlight recently expanded dental services offered by the program, which charges fees on a sliding scale based on a patient's income.

Representing TECO Energy and its interest in electric cars was Kenneth Hernandez, manager for the company's alternative fuel vehicle program. He showed off a red Chevrolet Volt that can be battery-charged in a household garage to travel up to 40 miles, long enough for the average commute, he said.

The car also can run on gasoline, in case battery power is not available at the right time, he said.



SUSAN GREEN

Katrina Farrell, military liaison specialist for Seniors In Service of Tampa Bay, discussed what the volunteer program does at the Veterans Fest the Campo Family YMCA.

"We [TECO] see this as an opportunity," Hernandez said. "If we can promote a vehicle like this, we have an opportunity to lessen our dependence on foreign oil."

The festival included an opening ceremony by the Spoto High School ROTC and a fundraiser for the chamber's Military Affairs Council Education Endowment Fund.



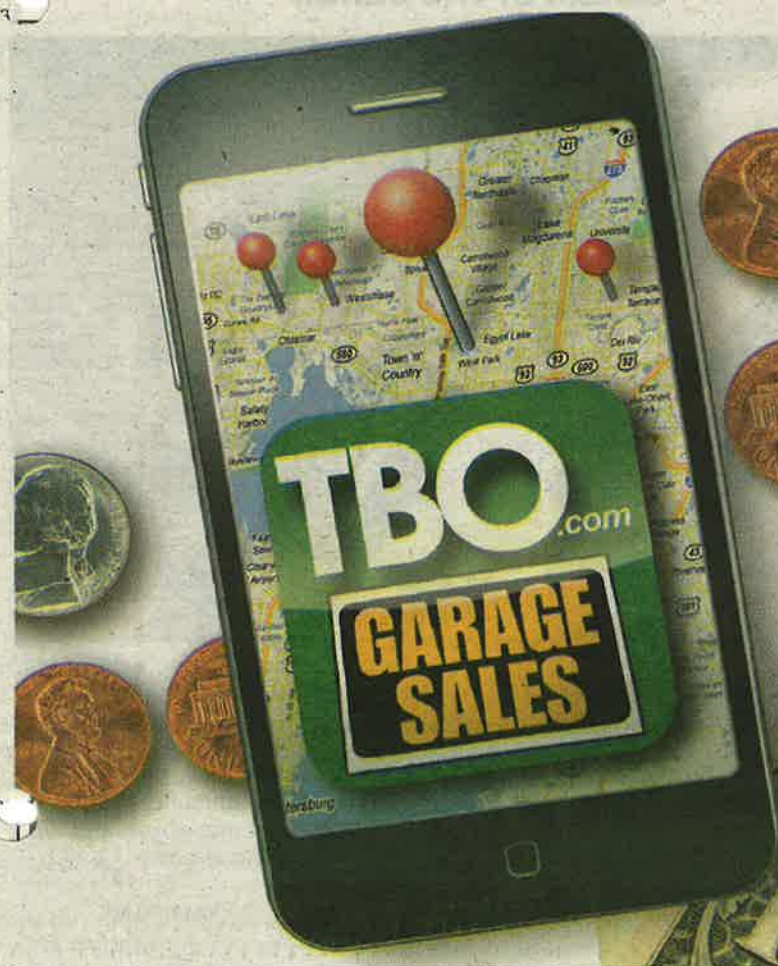
Power of Positive Women breakfast

Bloomingdale cheer-leading coach Candice Teague put together a Saturday morning breakfast for mothers and daughters of her team to come together for a time of fun and to get to know each other.

This month's theme, Power of Positive Women, was presented by Renee Riggs and her daughter,

Jessica Kidd. They spoke to girls and their mothers about day to day situations and how to be more positive in handling these situations. They also spoke about how mothers and daughters should be able to confide in each other even when things get tough.

KIM WALLACE



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Signs, signs, everywhere signs

Snipe signs are those signs seen everywhere stuck on poles or in the ground advertising everything from garage sales to rooms for rent to jobseekers. But are they legal? Simply stated, the printing of the sign is not prohibited. However, the placement of the signs in or on public property is.

Hillsborough County's Code Enforcement Department is the primary County entity charged with the enforcement and removal of illegally placed snipe signs. On average more than 30,000 signs are removed each year at great expense to County resources. The economic is-

ssues that both citizens and governments alike are struggling with have exacerbated the problem. The loss of revenue has caused reductions in County staff, while the need to advertise a struggling business has never been greater.

While government depends on revenues from a robust commercial sector, the law is clear - the placement of the signs on public property is illegal. The task of balancing the needs of the business community and the legality of the visual blight is daunting.

In an attempt to manage the illegal snipe sign

issue effectively in the face of diminishing resources, the Hillsborough County Code Enforcement Department initiated a volunteer program enlisting the aid of citizens in removing illegally placed signs. This group of civic-minded citizens has collectively removed more than 21,000 illegal signs from public property in little over one year - on their own time and at their own expense. Their efforts have allowed the Code Enforcement Department to use its resources that would otherwise be dedicated to the removal of illegal signs in a number of other productive ways. The success of the program has gained the attention of other municipalities looking for creative solutions to similar issues.

The Hillsborough County Code Enforcement thanks the many citizens who on a daily basis work to make this County a desirable place to live, grow, play and raise our families. For information on the Volunteer Sign Program and how you can get involved, contact Andy Pfeiffer, Hillsborough County Code Enforcement, (813) 274-6632.



KIM WALLACE

Bloomingdale Cheerleaders go pink

Bloomingdale cheerleaders support the Breast Cancer Awareness in the month of October. The team wore pink hair bows and purchased pink pom-poms to cheer with during games to support breast cancer. Also, this year both

the Junior Varsity and Varsity team participated in the Plaza Bella "Green Boutique" goes Pink 5K run and walk. Coach Teague thought this was a way for the girls to support breast cancer awareness and give back to the com-

munity by participating in this event. Coach Teague, along with assistant Coach Booth and 30 cheerleaders enjoyed the run to help out The Vera Bradley Foundation for Breast Cancer.

KIM WALLACE

Battle of the bands



KIM WALLACE

Burns Middle School band member Austin Ely was so excited being able to perform with Bloomingdale on the field.

On Nov. 10, the Burns Middle School Band was asked to perform with Bloomingdale High School for their last game of season. This gave the middle

school band students a chance to see what they have to look forward to next year. They sat with Bloomingdale and per-

formed on the field with Bloomingdale during the pre-game show and during game time.

KIM WALLACE

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Not as easy as it looks

Just as setting a listing price is ultimately your decision, so is whether to accept an offer. These days, it can be difficult to decide if an offer is a good one, because there are so many influential factors. Getting an offer is the first positive step. Now, take a deep breath and consider your options.

Are you under pressure to move? Whether it is finances, family or a job transfer, the urgency of your move may dictate accepting an offer lower than you had expected.

Likewise, how much debt do you still carry on your mortgage? Unless you are listing under "short sale" terms, you don't want to accept an offer that's less than what you owe, so pay close attention to how depreciation and closing costs affect your bottom line before making the decision to accept or counter



Ray
Chadderton

an offer. Another important factor to consider is whether or not the buyer is pre-approved for financing. If so, you can expect a quicker closing with no surprises, and confidently begin the pursuit of purchasing your next home. Even a lower offer from a pre-approved buyer may be better than a higher offer from one whose financing falls through at the last minute.

Remember, offers are about negotiation and compromise. Be flexible and reasonable when considering any and all offers that come your way.

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Letter to the editor

Dear Bloomingdale,

At this year's Fourth Annual Family Fest, a little girl passed out and was unresponsive. The following is a letter from her Grandmother, Mrs. Susan Flaws of Fox Run.

My husband and I bought our first home in Bloomingdale West 26 years ago and then 13 years ago sold it and moved to Fox Run where we currently reside. In both neighborhoods, we have had wonderful neighbors who always look out for one another. It has been a great place to raise a family. Even though our four kids are now all adults, Bloomingdale continues to be for us an awesome place to live and work.

On Saturday, Nov. 12, we took one of our daughters and our granddaughter to Family Fest sponsored by the BHA. After enjoying some of the festivities, our granddaughter passed out and was unresponsive for a time. So many people came to our aid - the man who called 911, the medical assistant who advised us how to position her for maximum blood flow to her heart, the woman who held a beach towel up to shade her until the paramedics arrived. . . Caught up in the moment in a hurry to accompany her to the emergency room, we were unable to express our gratitude for the outpouring of neighborliness.

THANK YOU to all of you who were so kind to us on Saturday. Bloomingdale really is a great place.

Our granddaughter was evaluated at the hospital and is now at home doing well.

Susan Flaws

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Bloomington resident helps Riverview High students come out swinging

BY SUSAN GREEN

Golf can be an expensive sport, so when Bloomington resident Heather Michael learned that her former teacher needed to raise some money to keep it going at Riverview High School, she pitched in to help organize the school's first fundraising golf tournament, held at Summerfield Crossings Golf Club.

The event Oct. 30 attracted 18 foursomes, including participants from Riverview, Valrico and even Pasco County. In all, about \$4,000 were raised for the Sharks, exceeding organizers' expectations.

"For our first time out, we're very excited," said Michael, who works as a



Heather Michael

stylist at Salon Jennifer in Bloomington. "I think we did very well." She said she helped golf team parents from Riverview High put together the event largely because of boys' coach, Ron Slater. Michael was in Slater's science class years ago at Brandon High School and remembers him as one of her favorite teachers. Slater's wife, Angela, coaches the Riverview Lady Sharks golf team.

Michael's son, Bobby, 15, played in the tournament alongside Slater's son, Cody, 17.

Angela Slater said money raised from the tournament will help pay for equipment and other needs for the team, which includes about 10 boys and six girls.

"The economy is a little tough, and these kids could use assistance," she said.

"Golf is a little different (from other sports) for working parents. We play at 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There's a huge transportation issue with trying to get kids to the courses."

She said the team practices at Summerfield Crossings. Because coaches cannot accompany every student as they round the course, students must learn in-

dependence and integrity to stay in the game.

"Golf is unique in that there is no umpire or referee," Angela said. "Golf is an honor sport. The kids have to learn the rules ... and the core values of responsibility and honesty and fair play."

She said the girls' team had an exceptional season this year, placing second in the Hillsborough County district and fifth in regional competition.

The boys placed fourth out of 12 teams in the district, she said.

Tournament sponsors included Mid State, Riverview Golf League, W.D. Wilson Fabrications, Turbine Aircraft Support Group Inc.,



SUSAN GREEN

Tom Figmik of Valrico, front passenger seat, was among supporters who signed up to play in Riverview High School's first fundraising tournament at Summerfield Crossings Golf Club.

Hess Orthodontics, Carr Grille and Hungry How-

Pediatric Dentistry, Michael said she also was grateful for the support of Summerfield Crossings general manager Jason Blanchard and Bloomington Golfers Club general manager Mike Wyatt.



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Community Station Notes

Have a safe holiday season

Thanksgiving is history and Christmas and the New Years are just around the corner?

We in the Sheriff's Office hope that you will continue to make your holiday seasons safe and secure. Whether you're traveling or just running errands locally, be aware of your surroundings and lock up your valuables. Follow the 30 Second Rule – in less than 30 seconds a thief can shatter your car window, reach inside and remove valuables left out in the open.

So, slow down, take the time to protect yourself, your vehicle and really enjoy the holidays.

Safety When Traveling

Many of you will be traveling this holiday season. Remember that during the holidays the volume of travel and the number of drivers increases, so allow extra time.

Follow the important rules we all know that can help keep you and your family alive. Buckle up and give 100 percent of your attention to driving. Don't be distracted by passengers or cell phones – talking or texting. As the driver, your responsibility is to get you and your passengers to their destination safe.

Of the millions of drivers traveling our roads over



Curtis
Warren

these holidays, there are some who need your special attention. Watch out for the following:

SLEEPY DRIVERS

According to the National Sleep Foundation, more than half of the nation's drivers admit to driving tired or drowsy, especially during the holidays.

One special group is drivers 18 to 29 years old. Nearly one-quarter of this group reported that they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel. These drivers are also impatient, drive faster and feel more stressed. Watch out for them.

DISTRACTED DRIVERS

With cell phones and texting as well as other new technological advances available, more drivers are distracted.

The types of distractions noted in accidents could fill a book and many are just plain crazy. They cover everything from cell phones and texting to eating, putting on makeup, changing clothes, talking to passengers, reading, shaving and now even watching videos or working on a laptop computer.

Concentrate on your driving like your life depends on it. It does!

DRUNK DRIVERS

These are some of the most dangerous drivers. Over 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related. These drivers are unpredictable and aggressive.

Watch for drivers weaving back and forth, driving very slowly or even driving in the emergency lane line. If you see one of these drivers, contact law enforcement.

AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS

The holidays can be stressful and some drivers take that stress behind the wheel. If you are driving near an aggressive driver, do not confront them or aggravate them. Back away, avoid eye contact and don't show any aggression yourself.

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

From all of us at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, have a great, and safe, holiday season.

Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall.

Larry Wilde,
The Merry Book of Christmas



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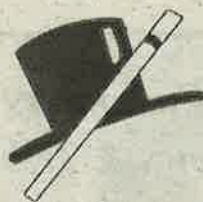




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