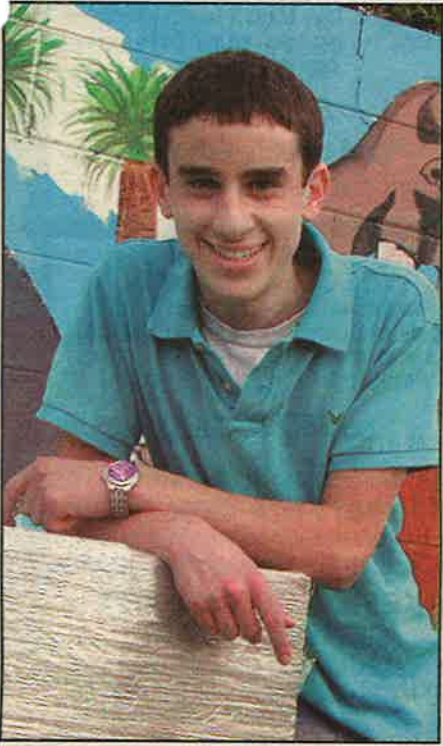


FEATURE STORY



Bloomington High School senior Jerry Kent worked for two years to establish a fossil dig site at the school.

PAGE 9

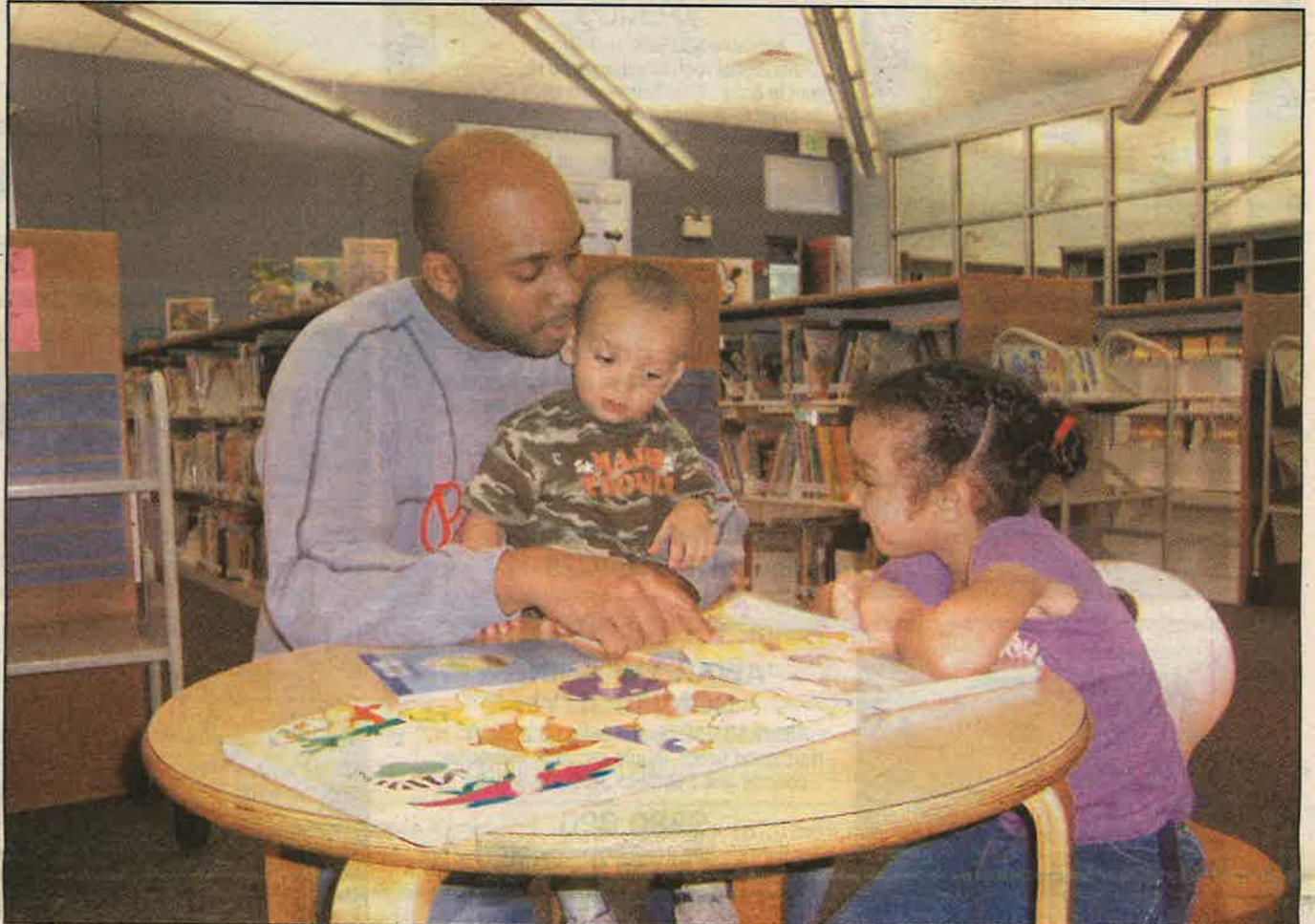
BASEBALL

Bullets raise \$13,500 for Brandon area charities.

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Laura Frazier/Staff Photo

Frank Jennings, a Lithia resident, reads to his children, 1-year-old Seth and 3-year-old Phoebe, in the children's room at Bloomington Public Library. Of the 19,000 library cardholders in the South County district, 2,500 reside in Lithia. Brandon and Valrico residents account for more than 12,000 cardholders, and 2,000 live in Riverview. Another 2,000 reside in other parts of the greater Brandon area.

Friends, Neighbors Request Library Expansion

BUILDING, PROGRAMS 'BURSTING AT THE SEAMS'

By LAURA FRAZIER
Eltz

Meeting space at Bloomington Regional Public Library is at a premium these days, even for a group of its closest friends.

The Friends of the Library are planning a celebration to mark the branch's second birthday in February.

The gathering will be short and sweet, limited perhaps to a fruit-punch toast at the end of the regular business meeting. It's not celebratory spirit the Friends lack, just available meeting space at the library.

Librarian Julie Beamguard, Bloom-

ington's branch supervisor, said her staff spends a lot of time each day talking to nonprofit groups interested in meeting at the library.

"There aren't many places in Valrico or Brandon where you can go for free meeting space. Our schedule is constantly full, and we are always turning people away," she said.

A number of clubs meet at the library once or twice a week. The Greater Brandon Genealogical Society and Hillsborough County Master Gardeners are regulars, along with clubs for people interested in computers, knitting, reading, writing ... even coupon clipping.

The staff schedules nonprofit group meetings around an already jam-

packed roster of special programs provided by the Friends of the Library.

The branch hosted 500 special program events in 2006 for adults and children. Most were in the building's largest meeting area, the 125-person capacity McLean Family Room. Another small room holds up to 10 people. Two additional study rooms can accommodate only five.

"We are clearly serving as a community center in addition to providing traditional library services, and that's great," Beamguard said.

"But we really do hate to turn people away, and we could do so much more if we just had the space. We are bursting at the seams."

See LIBRARY, Page 17

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 3

The BHA Is Now Accepting Applications For The 2007 B.J. Stelter Bloomington Community Scholarship

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BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

BHA Now Accepting College Scholarship Applications

1 STUDENT TO RECEIVE \$2K AWARD

A Gazette Report

The B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship is sponsored by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

The BHA will award a \$2,000 scholarship in 2007 to one graduating high school student.

Summarized eligibility requirements, selection criteria and application due dates are listed below.

Application forms and more information are available at the Bloomingdale High School guidance office, the Bloomingdale community office, and online at www.bloomingtondalehomeowners.com.

Objective

The objective of the scholarship is to reward and encourage high school seniors who live in the Bloomingdale community and attend Bloomingdale Senior High School to pursue a college career, and to honor the exemplary efforts and outstanding dedication of B.J. Stelter, principal of Bloomingdale Senior High School from 1991 to 2005.

Awards

The number and value of each annual scholarship award(s) will be determined by the (BHA) board of directors, no later than its January board meeting, based on available internal funding and fundraising efforts during the year. All awards are for the current school year and are non-renewable.

Eligibility

Candidate's parent/guardian must reside in the official BHA membership area, as defined on the BHA Web site. Proof of residency will be required at the time of scholarship disbursement.

Candidate's parent/guardian must be a current dues-paying BHA member at the time of application. Memberships

(\$25/year) are available any time of year.

Candidate must be a graduating senior at Bloomingdale Senior High School.

Candidate must have at least a weighted 3.0 grade point average, on the latest available report card, at the time of scholarship disbursement. Proof of grade point average will be required at the time of disbursement.

Candidate must be accepted at a two-year or four-year accredited college or university. Students may apply for scholarship prior to acceptance, but proof of acceptance will be required at the time of disbursement.

The award(s) will be made without regard to financial need.

Children or grandchildren of current BHA board members are not eligible.

An official transcript and discipline record will be required.

Selection Criteria

Recipients will be chosen on the basis of the following selection criteria and weighted as follows: Community Service — 45 percent; Essay — 35 percent; Academics — 20 percent.

See SCHOLARSHIP, Page 15



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association president Ted Grable, in 2006, presents former Bloomingdale High School Principal B.J. Stelter with a plaque commemorating the community's annual college scholarship award established in her honor.

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Bloomingtondale Relay For Life Set For March 9

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY BENEFIT

A Gazette Report

The American Cancer Society will host its annual fundraiser, Relay For Life, on March 9 at Bloomingtondale High School.

The event begins at 6 p.m. on the high school athletic field and continues overnight until 9 a.m. March 10.

The event is a celebration of cancer survivorship as well as

the culmination of fundraising efforts by the Bloomingtondale community.

"Each year hundreds of folks from all walks of life participate in the event," said Anthony Pursino, a Bloomingtondale resident and board member of the American Cancer Society.

"This year is particularly exciting because cancer deaths in the U.S. have declined for the second year in a row. Events like Relay For Life are respon-

sible for this. If you have been touched by cancer in any way, this is the event to attend."

Kristy Deaton, this year's event chair, said, "The Relay For Life gives us all hope that cancer can be beat."

She ought to know. Deaton has survived two battles with cancer and is going strong.

Virginia Carter will host the American Cancer Society's reception for all cancer survivors on the field.

"We are looking to have as

many cancer survivors come out and join us," she said.

"The survivors are our guests of honor and will be treated as such. Whether you are a 10-year survivor, or if you were diagnosed 10 days ago, you are a survivor and you are invited."

Carter, herself a cancer survivor, was introduced to the Relay For Life in 2004 and has helped plan the annual event since then.

Interested participants are

urged to come to a planning and informational meeting at the Campo YMCA on Feb. 8 at 6:30 p.m., or contact the American Cancer Society by e-mail to Lauren.Heise@cancer.org or by phone, (813) 685-0670, Ext. 112.

Ask for community representative Lauren Heise, who said, "If you, your family, or neighbor has been touched by cancer, please join us and help us give hope to our community that cancer can be beat."

Author Discusses Marital Problems In Military

'DIVORCE BY DEPLOYMENT'

By SCOTT E. RUPP
Correspondent

There is one casualty of war that continues to go unreported, according to a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Army, Valrico resident Percell Artis Jr.

While reports flow in from Iraq and Afghanistan listing body counts and injuries, Artis said the death of marriages as a result of war is rarely discussed. Artis calls it "divorce by deployment."

Artis became an expert on

the subject not by choice but by circumstance and has now written a book titled, "Divorce by Deployment: My Story, My Tragedy, My Victory," released last month through self-publisher iUniverse, out of Lincoln, Neb.

The book started as an instrument of therapy for first-time author Artis. He penned it during the breakup of his own marriage in 1999 while deployed to Kosovo.

While there, he received a "Dear John call" from his then-wife, telling him she was leaving and taking both their son and their possessions with her.

Powerless to do anything that might change her mind, he resigned himself to the fact that she wasn't going to be waiting for him at home. Helpless to do anything else, he grabbed his computer and began to write his thoughts about life, marriage, divorce, his past and his career.

"It jolted something inside me," Artis said. "It was just me and my computer. Typing became my therapy."

He described feeling hopeless, his mind scattered, unable to perform to the best of his abilities. With his personal life in shambles, he found that he was constantly distracted, putting him in even more danger.

Combining his own experiences with similar stories from others in the military, he com-

pleted the book. His hope is that others who find themselves in the same situation might turn to his book and feel less alone.

Artis described his first marriage as a normal one. He was happy and in love, despite having the problems of any married couple.

And while he agrees that being deployed for months at a time was certainly a factor in the divorce, he feels it wasn't the only contributing factor.

Far too often, he said, military spouses do not realize what kind of marriage they are getting into beforehand.

"This is a common thing. You don't hear much about divorce. It's always death and casualties and IEDs," he explained. "(That news), it creates a lot of stress for the

spouse left behind. They have to worry about cutting and watering the grass, the trash. Deployment creates a strain. This book is a comfort because it happens a lot in the military."

Artis describes his book as a "hard-hitting memoir."

He recounts the first few happy years of his marriage and how their communication broke down during his deployment.

Artis has since remarried, has custody of his son and plans to retire from the military in July.

He's stationed at MacDill Air Force Base.

"Divorce by Deployment" is available through www.iUniverse.com, www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com, or by calling Artis at 689-3639.

Your Inside Connections

The Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association Inc.

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

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

Bloomingtondale Village Center, Bell Shoals Road.
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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

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SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

School Set To Expand Technology, Upgrade Facility

OPENED IN 1980

By LAURA FRAZIER
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

Immanuel Lutheran School on John Moore Road in Brandon opened its doors in 1980 to 72 children in grades first through seventh.

Today, more than 150 students in grades first through eighth are enrolled.

The school's first mission was to establish a strong academic program in a loving, Christian environment, said Principal Dave Geidel, who joined the staff last year.

However, during its 27 years, the school also has established a history of academic and athletic excellence, he said.

"Many of our students are on the honor roll when they go on to high school," he said. "In addition, our athletic teams are quite competitive in the Brandon Christian Athletic League, and that equips them well for sports at the high school level."

With core academics and extracurricular activities in order, Geidel said it's time to start expanding the campus and upgrading its facilities.

"We're hoping to break ground in a month or so on a new youth room that will free up space for a larger computer lab," he said.

Geidel believes it's crucial to keep up with the latest technology available to students.

"The more we can deliver instruction through the technology-driven world our students live in, the stronger our academics will be," he said. "We're working diligently to keep up with all the advancements."

The school recently purchased projectors and computer software that teachers can use to show 10-minute video clips related to their lessons.

"I was a visual learner and I still am," he said. "The more modalities we can deliver our lessons in, the more effective they will be."

In addition to the computer lab, a Christian preschool is on the principal's wish list.

"Early childhood care is a big need for families today," he said. "A new facility for that would certainly be a blessing. We may even bring some modular classrooms in to establish our preschool sooner."

The school also would like to refurbish its playground. Proceeds from its Valentine Family Tea Party Feb. 10 will go

School Hosts High Tea, Raffle To Help Build Playground

The playground committee of Immanuel Lutheran School presents A Valentine's High Tea & Raffle Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. in the Family Life Center at the school, 2913 John Moore Road.

Table sponsorships, \$150, include advertisement opportunities, table signage and program mentions.

Individual tickets, \$15, include high tea and etiquette lessons; raffle also available.

Only 200 tickets will be sold.

Proceeds will aid the Immanuel Lutheran School Playground Project.

For more information, call (813) 689-1787.

toward the purchase of new equipment.

"We'd like to add some slides and climbing apparatus and another swing set, things that would enhance the physical activity of our students."

Geidel and his wife, Mona, get their own outdoor exercise riding bikes around their neighborhood and taking walks on the Brandon Parkway.

The couple came to Brandon in July from Loveland, Colo., where Geidel was principal for 23 years at a Lutheran school with students that ranged from preschool through eighth grade.

"We were fortunate enough to have four children and raise them all in Loveland without disrupting our lives," he said. But it was time for a change, and God led us here to Brandon. My wife and I are looking forward to getting to know the people here."

The Geidels have been busy settling in and haven't had much time to explore their new surroundings, but they'd like to. The couple enjoyed attending the Brandon Ballet's performance of "The Nutcracker" at Blake Performing Arts School in December. They plan to check out the Strawberry Festi-



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Immanuel Lutheran School Principal Dave Geidel supervises a group of third-graders on the school playground. Proceeds from the school's Valentine Family Tea Party Feb. 10 will go toward the purchase of new play equipment.

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See SCHOOL, Page 12



Larissa Randall and Sydney Luzier work together to get their robot ready to run a mission at the Florida State FLL Tournament.

Photo courtesy of the Luzier Family

RoboChicks Rock Robot Challenge

GIRL SCOUT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

By SYDNEY LUZIER
Girl Scout Troop 766

Eight girls in a Girl Scout interest group, Troop 766, have been working together at least five hours a week since August. Our interest is in robotics so we named our team RoboChicks.

We are all part of this group because we like either math or science, or both. We have been working to solve the annual First Lego League Challenge.

The challenge involves four equally ranked judging areas: Robot Performance, Teamwork, Robot Design and Research Presentation.

We have had to build and program a Lego robot. The robot has to complete the assigned missions, such as dropping a small ball into a Lego bone and moving Lego small molecules to a face on our mission's mat. Each mission that we complete successfully earns points in

a tournament.

Some members of our team also did research for a presentation on this year's theme, nanotechnology.

Nano is a word for things that are much smaller than microscopic; one million nanometers would fit into one millimeter. Technology is what goes into computers, video games, robots, etc.

The experience has been challenging because we've had to face and work through several problems, such as working together, fixing the robot, and fixing the programs that run the robot.

We overcame these problems and competed in a local qualifying tournament against ten other teams and won the Teamwork Award.

We were surprised to see that we were the only all girl team in that tournament.

We competed in the Florida State First Lego League Tournament with 48 other teams and won first place for our presentation. It has been an amazing and unforgettable experience for all of us.

Brandon Regional Service Center Under Construction OFFERS COUNTY SERVICES

A Gazette Report

Hillsborough County commissioners and elected officials broke ground for the Brandon Regional Service Center, at 311 Pauls Drive, on Jan. 30.

The center is scheduled for completion in late 2007.

The \$4.2 million, 18,000-square-foot facility will be a local government center in the heart of Brandon.

County departments such as Planning & Growth Management, Water Resource Services and the Citizen Action Center will provide information and services. Satellite offices of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, property appraiser and the sher-

iff also will be on hand.

Residents can stop by the center to receive zoning counseling from Hillsborough County, record documents with the Clerk of the Circuit Court, file for homestead exemption with the Property Appraiser's Office, or talk to a community resource deputy about a neighborhood watch program. The building also features meeting rooms for county and community use.

The Brandon Regional Service Center is next to the Brandon Chamber of Commerce in the Brandon Overlay District, which is designed for residents to park and walk up to any of the businesses or offices in the district. The center is the second of several multi-service facilities to open throughout the county.

Funding has been approved for similar facilities in Plant City and Town N' Country.

Source: Hillsborough County Press Release Issued 1/27/07.

Church Expands To Accommodate Growth

ANGLICAN FAITH HAS ROMAN CATHOLIC ROOTS

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

The Rev. Bill Perkins, rector of St. Matthew's Anglican Church in Riverview, is on a mission to double the square footage and the congregation

of his church.

St. Matthew's, at 10701 Bloomingdale Ave., was built in 1998. While the church was under construction, a core group of 12 founding members met on Sundays at Stowers Funeral Home in Brandon.

By the time the new church was ready its congregation had

See CHURCH, Page 11

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B L O O M I N G D A L E L A W E N F O R C E M E N T

Bloomington Substation Celebrates Ninth Anniversary

EMPHASIZES COMMUNITY POLICING, PROGRAMS

By PETE MAURER
Bloomington Community Resource Deputy

It has been nine years since the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office's Bloomington substation opened.

Thanks to the outstanding cooperation and support of residents in the Bloomington community and aggressive programs put in place by the sheriff's office, progress has continued in making our community a safer and more secure place in which to live and raise a family.

Hillsborough County Sheriff David Gee has continued to implement new programs that put an emphasis on community policing. Your community deputies now work directly under a sheriff's detective. This change has

already improved communication and coordination in solving crimes. We will continue to need your cooperation and support in improving the quality of life in our community.

As we head into our 10th year in Bloomington, your substation will continue to offer a variety of public safety programs.

Recent publicity regarding incorrect information from a Consumer Reports survey about car seats has brought attention to the critical need for all children to be properly secured in vehicles.

The responsibility to become informed about child seats rests with the parents or other drivers with child passengers.

Car seat checks are offered for free at the Bloomington substation. For an appointment, call us at (813) 635-8040.

There is no substitute for all drivers

using their seat belts. A parent who is seriously injured because they were not buckled in would be unable to provide help to their children or other passengers. So, the rule is short and simple: Buckle up, everyone.

Seat belt and child seat safety is just one way the sheriff's office is dedicated to protecting and serving the community. We offer a number of programs that provide information, education and training on every possible subject related to safety and security. In the critical area of crime prevention and protecting yourself from crime, the following programs are offered:

- Neighborhood Watch
- Business Watch
- Apartment Watch
- Auto Theft Prevention
- Cons and Frauds
- Drugs In The Workplace

- Identity Theft
- Loss Prevention: Shoplifting, Credit Card/Check Fraud
- Personal Safety Awareness
- Bank Robbery Prevention Training
- Drug Awareness
- Home Security

Lastly, we urge all residents to get involved in community programs like the Bloomington Area Community Council.

The old phrase, "there is safety in numbers" rings true when it comes to protecting our families, homes, schools and businesses. The council meets at the substation on the third Thursday each month. For information on the listed topics, log on to www.hcso.tampa.fl.us.

For information about the Bloomington Area Community Council, call the substation weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (813) 635-8040.

Deputy To Participate In Police Unity Tour

HONORS THOSE WHO DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

Too many recent news headlines have included the tragic deaths of young law

enforcement officers cut down in the line of duty by uncaring, vicious criminals.

Honoring the memory and sacrifices of those officers, as well as their families, is very important.

That is the primary goal of the

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The non-profit organization has established a special memorial in Washington, D.C., that includes the names of all law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty.

Hillsborough County District IV Deputy Frank Cheshire, a traffic enforcement motorcycle officer, will

represent our area in the 2007 Police Unity Tour, a 250-mile bicycle ride from Chesapeake, Va., to Washington, D.C. The annual event is held to gain recognition for the fallen officers.

The three-day bicycle ride starts May 10. Cheshire needs help raising funds to cover the expense of the trip. To help,

See POLICE, Page 15

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Bullets Aim To Develop Player Skills, Community Service Ethics

OUTREACH PROGRAMS INTEGRAL TO LEAGUE

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Nine years ago, Mike Lancaster and Sal Giardina set out to form a youth sports organization for their young sons and other Bloomingdale children interested in playing Little League.

Their goal was to assemble and train two under-13 teams for the all-star travel circuit, and to prep the boys for the big leagues — high school baseball.

The size and demographics of the league have gradually changed over the years, in step with southeastern Hillsborough County's residential development.

The club's primary focus, however, has remained the same since day one: to use the game of baseball to teach young men important life lessons and strong community service ethics.

In 1998, Lancaster and Giardina took two teams drawn solely from Bloomingdale Little League's ranks to their first tournament in Apopka.

According to Lancaster, the fledgling team performed "pretty poorly."

"My joke was the reason we originally named them Bloomingdale Distance was we had a long way to go," he said.

Now, almost 10 years later, the Bullets Baseball Organization boasts nine teams with more than 100 players between the ages of 8 to 18. The club recruits players from Bloomingdale, Pinecrest and South Brandon Little Leagues.

A number of Bullets teams have won multiple state and national tournaments over the years. In addition, 70 percent of the players on the debut roster advanced to high school ball.

Several inaugural-year players, including Giardina's son, Carmine, graduated high school in 2006 and went on to play college ball. Carmine Giardina plays for the University of Central Florida.

According to the organization's



Photo Courtesy Bullets Baseball

Bullets Baseball founder Sal Giardina, third from left, presents proceeds from the league's Jan. 6 marathon game to Greater Brandon Community Foundation board members, from left, Carlos Tosca, Ann Nymark and, at right, Arlene Waldron. The foundation coordinates funding and volunteers for a select number of local charities.

founders, however, the Bullets biggest accomplishments can't be measured on a scoreboard or a stats sheet.

Last month, the league held its third annual baseball marathon to benefit Brandon-area families in need.

Every player in the league collected "per inning" dollar amount pledges from family, friends and neighbors. In exchange, all nine teams pledged to play at least 100 consecutive innings of baseball in one day.

The Jan. 6 marathon game began at 8 a.m. at Bloomingdale Park, 2215 Bloomingdale Ave. By 3:30 p.m., the group had played 400 innings and raised \$13,500, earmarked this year to benefit the Greater Brandon Community Foundation.

Giardina credits the success of the annual marathon to the all-inclusive involvement of Bullets players and families.

"We've got a lot of people in our organization on board with giving back to the community," he said. "These kids

are very blessed with what they have. Every player in our organization takes part in our vision to give a little back."

Last January, the group raised \$12,000 to benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. In 2005, the marathon netted \$7,500, which the team donated to the Disaster Relief Fund of the American Red Cross Tampa Bay Chapter, to benefit the victims of Hurricane Charley in Punta Gorda.

In addition to the marathon, the club holds two more annual benefit programs.

Each November, every family in the organization pays a \$40 community outreach fee to provide Thanksgiving dinner for one area family in need. Last year, they provided turkeys and all the trimmings for 100 families, most identified by Dover Baptist Church as disadvantaged migrant farm workers.

In December, each family is asked to buy \$40 worth of Christmas gifts for a needy child. The group hosts a holiday dinner party to distribute the gifts at the

Dover church. Last December, they cooked and served dinner to 100 underprivileged kids and their families. After the dishes were done, the players looked on as their guests open presents.

"It is an incredible event, and an incredible opportunity for the boys to see first hand how they've personally helped one child, one family," Giardina said.

"Our whole goal with our three outreach events is to teach these kids how to give back to the community," he continued. "If they're in our organization for 10 years — from the time they're 8 until they're 18 — community service and giving back is going to become a big part of their lives."

The group has partnered with Hillsborough County's Parks and Recreation Department to refurbish the baseball fields at Dover Park on Gallagher Road. Although the club leases the fields, it's working on a major overhaul of the facility.

"We don't own the property, but we're spending close to \$10,000 to upgrade the baseball fields. Not only will it be a great place for our league to practice and play, it will provide a great field for the community to use," said Lancaster.

Giardina's biggest hopes for the club's future don't have anything to do with tournaments or trophies.

He hopes to continue to expand the league's fundraising and community outreach efforts. He'd also like to run a few free camps for underprivileged kids.

Most of all, he'd like to see other youth baseball organizations step up to the plate with similar outreach programs.

"I feel we have something very special here with the Bullets, and I hope that other organizations will follow this path. How great would it be to have all these leagues using the greatest game in the world to help people in need, and to teach our youth how to do that?" he said.

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BLOOMINGDALE SPORTS

New 13-and-Under Baseball Team Forming

CALL TO REQUEST TRYOUT

A Gazette Report

The Tampa Bobcats 13 and under AAU baseball team is looking for players interested in taking their baseball skills to the next level.

Players should not turn 14 until after May 1.

Interested players should have solid fundamentals and be prepared to

work hard.

Head coach Fred Campbell (pro-level playing and high school coaching experience), and assistant coach Jim Harris (college-level playing experience) will focus on the finer points of playing winning baseball at the high school level and beyond.

To request a tryout, contact Bloomingdale resident and assistant manager Randy Zak at (813) 789-7925.

Youth Football, Cheerleading Sign-Ups Set

NEW, RETURNING PLAYERS MUST REGISTER

A Gazette Report

The Brandon Bears youth football and cheerleading organization will have registration for returning players only on Feb. 17 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Feb. 18 from 1 to 3 p.m.

A parent or legal guardian must be present and must bring the child's birth certificate and registration fees.

Open registration will be March 3 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and March 4 from 1 to 3 p.m.

For information visit www.brandonbears.com or call Charlotte Danish at (813) 829-9511.

BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS

'Tenacious' Student Digs History

FOSSIL SITE HIS BLOOMINGDALE LEGACY

*By LINDA CHION KENNEY
Correspondent*

What do fossils, Ivy League college applications and history lessons have in common?

A ticket to the future, if all goes as planned for Jerry Kent, a senior at Bloomingdale High School.

For Kent, it started 12 years ago when he first expressed his interest in prehistoric reptiles in Barbara Chandler's Lithia Springs Elementary School classroom.

"I would always play with dinosaurs in kindergarten," Kent said. "As I got older my interest eventually evolved into archaeology and then into history, in high school. Now that has evolved into government, so it's come from the past to the present to the future."

In Kent's future are his plans to major in history in college and then pursue a graduate degree in political science or government.

"I want to go into national government so I can



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Staff photo

See FOSSIL, Page 12 Bloomingdale High School senior Jerry Kent visits the fossil dig site he's been working to establish at the school for two years.

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Old Green Boutique Gives Way To Progress

BLOOMINGDALE LANDMARK RAZED

By LINDA CHION KENNEY
Correspondent

Roz Creager is not about to bash progress, but that doesn't mean she wanted to give witness to the tearing down of yet another sign of Brandon's humble past.

And so when the wrecking ball came to render obsolete the pink building with green shutters near the intersection of Bloomingdale Avenue and Bell Shoals Road, Creager deferred and stayed home.

"It doesn't take long for them to knock it down," said her husband, Mark, who was on site Jan. 8 as the tractor hoe rendered into a heap of trash the last remains of the Green Boutique, once located at 1014 Bloomingdale Ave.

"Some people didn't realize it was going to be torn down," Roz Creager said. "Probably when they see it gone it will surprise a lot of people. It probably has become a little bit of a landmark for the area."

Her son, Matt, was born shortly after Creager and her husband, Mark, moved into what was then a chopped-up concrete structure in need of desperate repair. It was 1977. That structure became their home and eventually their business.

The Green Boutique, specializing in gifts, home décor, some apparel and even fashion jewelry, moved into the 36,000-square-foot Plaza Bella shopping center Thanksgiving Day. The store, which also carries Brighton collectibles and the Vera Bradley line, officially reopened for business Dec. 1.

As the developers of Plaza Bella, the Creagers knew that the Green Boutique — both the home they once lived in and an adjacent building — had to come down to make room for a 7,000-square-foot retail com-



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Staff photos

Mark and Roz Creager, owners of the Green Boutique and developers of Plaza Bella, as new owners of their new home and future business in 1977. Below left, Andy Sicotte of Cross Construction Services runs the tractor hoe as it takes a bite into the old Green Boutique. Below right, Mark Creager looks on as his old home and business gets reduced to rubble.



plex. But that didn't make it any easier to see the buildings demolished.

"How does it feel? It's emotional, because that building holds a lot of memories," Roz Creager said. "But we're thrilled with progress, too. So it's all real positive, but I hate to see it totally, everything, come down."

Also slated to be removed were a bunch of stately trees.

"When we moved there, it was just a big, barren pasture," Roz Creager said. "We planted all the trees that were there. I remember planting the trees when we redid the house, thinking of shade, and strategically placing them around the house. And of course, with the nursery, we planted even more trees. We planted a lot of the oak trees that were around there."

Green Boutique closed its nursery operation about 15 years ago.

The old property consisted of two buildings, with a combined space of 2,600 square feet. Now, there is one storefront, comprising 5,000 square feet, in the Plaza Bella shopping center. Retailers include Salon Essence; the Vino 100 wine store; and Orange, a home décor and gift shop specializing in gifts more contemporary than Green Boutique and with a unique flair, Roz Creager said.

Creager is the daughter of Dick Cimino, for whom the elementary school off Culbreath Road in Valrico has been named posthumously. She remembers Brandon in a simpler time, when she would ride her horse on a curvy John Moore Road and also off into the orange groves near the Brandon Swim and Tennis Club, which has been renamed the Brandon Sports and Aquatic Center, at 405 Beverly Blvd.

"There were just a few houses, really, on Bloomingdale Avenue, but far to the east of me, and a couple of neighbors on Bell Shoals Road," Creager said. "When that sun set it was dark. There were no street lights. It was just pitch dark. It was the country. We were in the sticks."

Those sticks gave way to suburbia, complete with big-box retailers and traffic gridlock, as well as a 2,270-student school, regional library and the well-known Bloomingdale sub-

division, which wraps around its 18-hole golf course with rolling acres of mid- to upper-priced homes.

Creager remembers after moving into her home in 1977 a water worker telling her about the upcoming Bloomingdale development.

"I remember him telling me, 'Boy, you bought a good place, this whole subdivision, Bloomingdale, is going in and it has a golf course,'" Creager said.

Today, the nearby Bloomingdale Square shopping center is anchored by Publix and Wal-Mart. But when the Creagers moved in, there was no shopping center, just a huge pine tree forest.

"It's all progress, what can you say?" Creager said. "You move on."

Her son, who graduated from Bloomingdale High School in 1996 and the University of South Florida four years later, also has mixed emotions.

"I'm glad to be staying here on the property and seeing this (Plaza Bella) business community and shopping center come about," he said. "It would be sad if someone else had demolished it, and to see something pop up that we didn't build, design or plan."

Still, the Creagers did look into moving their old home, but became an expensive proposition.

"Originally we were thinking of trying to incorporate it into the (Plaza Bella) development," Creager said. "To move it or attach it to a building. But reality sets in when you start looking at the dollars and cents of things. It was impractical and cost-prohibitive. When you learn more about how things work you realize it's a pipe dream."

As for Mark Creager, he took pictures as the old home came down.

"Different things hit you at different times," he said, as he watched pieces of wood "some tired old boards," as he put it — crack in half.

"I rebuilt this place when we bought it," he said. "My mother carried sheet rock, piece by piece, to the street and the garbage men took it away."

Nostalgia aside, Mark Creager said the day of demolition felt "kind of good."

As he put it: "Right now it's good to see it come down because it has to be done and it's holding up other things."



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CHURCH

From page 6

grown to 60 members.

Today, St. Matthew's has 170 active members. Sunday services typically draw about 100 parishioners to the modestly-sized chapel. On Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas, dozens of worshippers crowd into the front vestibule, straining to hear the sermon.

Cramped quarters in the church's small fellowship hall barely accommodate half of those who gather for dinners and other activities. Paved parking spots are also at a premium on the 6-acre property.

"To put it simply, we're just stuffed," Perkins said.

The church expansion plans break down into three phases. Last week, workers at the site finished phase I: running new sewer and water lines to the church.

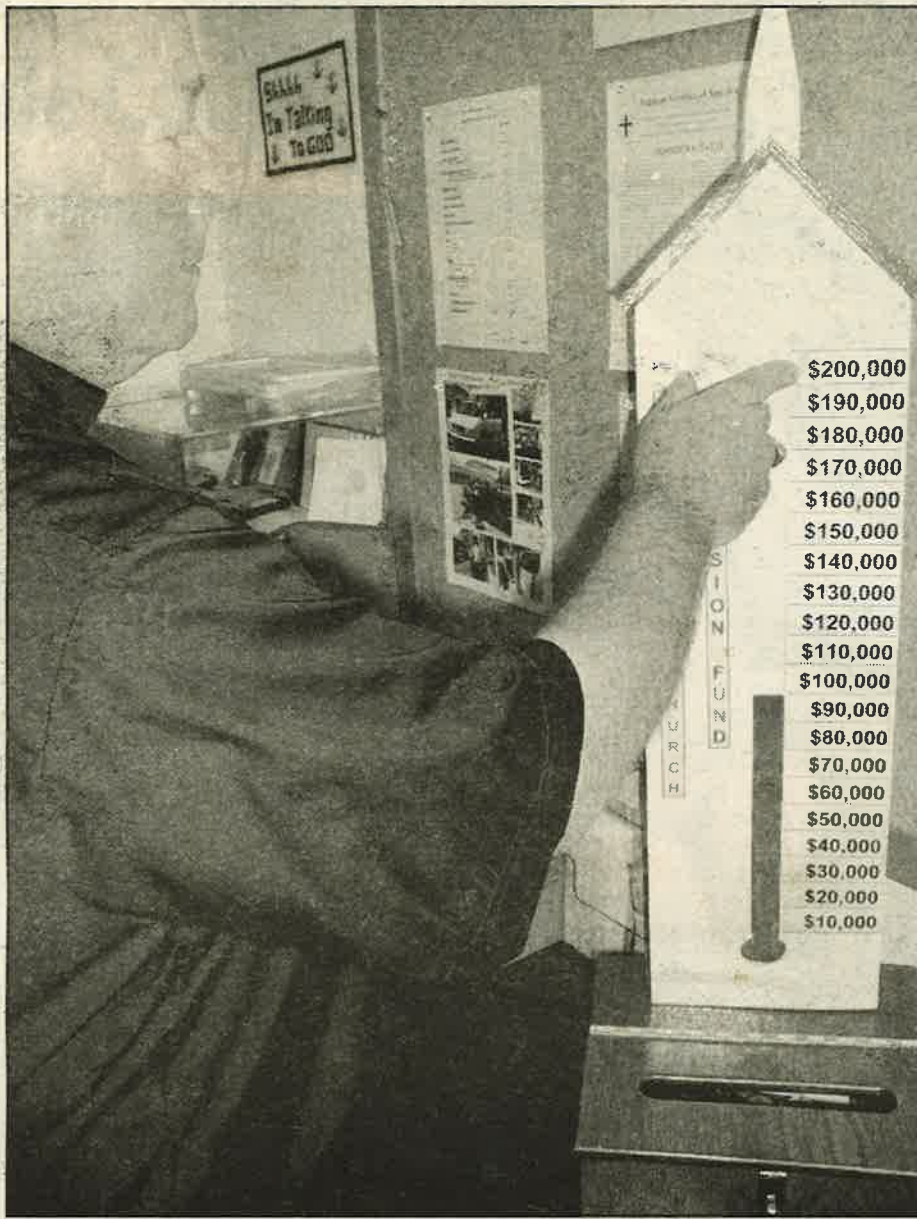
"We had to connect to lines on the other (north) side of Bloomingdale Avenue. They had to run the lines under Bloomingdale, so it's been quite a project," he said.

Phase II will bring the building addition up to the dry-in stage, with all essential construction complete and sealed from the elements.

The congregation raised more than \$200,000 to complete the first two stages. They'll need to double that effort to move through stage III; interior finishing and completion.

Perkins is enjoying his role as a hands-on pastor and part-time contractor.

He had a hand in painting the existing church and planting landscaping before it opened almost 10 years ago. It's not unusual to find him sprucing up the fountain in the church's outdoor



A collection box meter keeps St. Matthew's parishioners updated on funds needed to complete the church expansion. The church raised more than \$200,000 to fund the first two phases of construction. They must raise at least another \$200,000 to complete the project.

Laura Frazier/Photo

memory garden or doing odd jobs around the church. Without financial backing from an umbrella organization, St. Matthews must raise all funds within its own congregation.

"I get all the emotional and professional support I could ever need from

our diocese, but financially, we're on our own."

Most Anglican churches in the United States operate with full autonomy, without the benefit of a unifying authority or church government. Many modern-day Anglicans broke off from

the Episcopal Church during a conservative backlash in the 1970s. Perkins said many were concerned about the church's liberal attitude toward age-old traditions and services.

The Anglican faith is based on the traditions and beliefs of the Church of England, which in turn has its roots in Roman Catholicism.

Perkins said Roman Catholics and Episcopalians who want to preserve ancient traditions and scripture interpretation often turn to the Anglican Church. He estimates 60 percent of St. Matthew's congregation are former Roman Catholics.

Traditional Anglicans retain customs and traditions that other Christian sects have abandoned, Perkins said. Worshipers at St. Matthew's kneel to pray, and make silent confession before receiving communion.

In many cases, the differences that bring people to the Anglican Church are considered small details. There are, however, some very contentious issues among Anglicans and their Episcopal and Catholic counterparts.

"We do not support a lot of modern agendas. We interpret Scripture to dictate that ordainment is not the role of women, and that homosexuality is immoral," he said.

"I don't want to offend anyone, but we're more concerned with being faithful to Scripture than being politically correct. We love all people, but this is how we interpret Scripture, and we must stay faithful to it.

"It's an ethical and moral choice that continues to bring more and more people to our church and back to the traditional Anglican ways."

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FOSSIL

From page 9

use the lessons of the past, and use the mistakes of the past, to benefit the future," Kent said.

The future holds another enticement for Kent, who used his interest in archaeology to lobby for a fossil dig site at Bloomingdale High. His goal is to have that site, and its associated school fossil club, firmly established at Bloomingdale so it can serve as an outreach program to students in schools throughout the Tampa Bay area.

Kent started his project as a sophomore, stumping for a fossil dig and club on the grounds that "it's not something boring and it's something kids can explore hands-on." Moreover, he said, "anybody who goes to the dig site gets to take home the fossils they find."

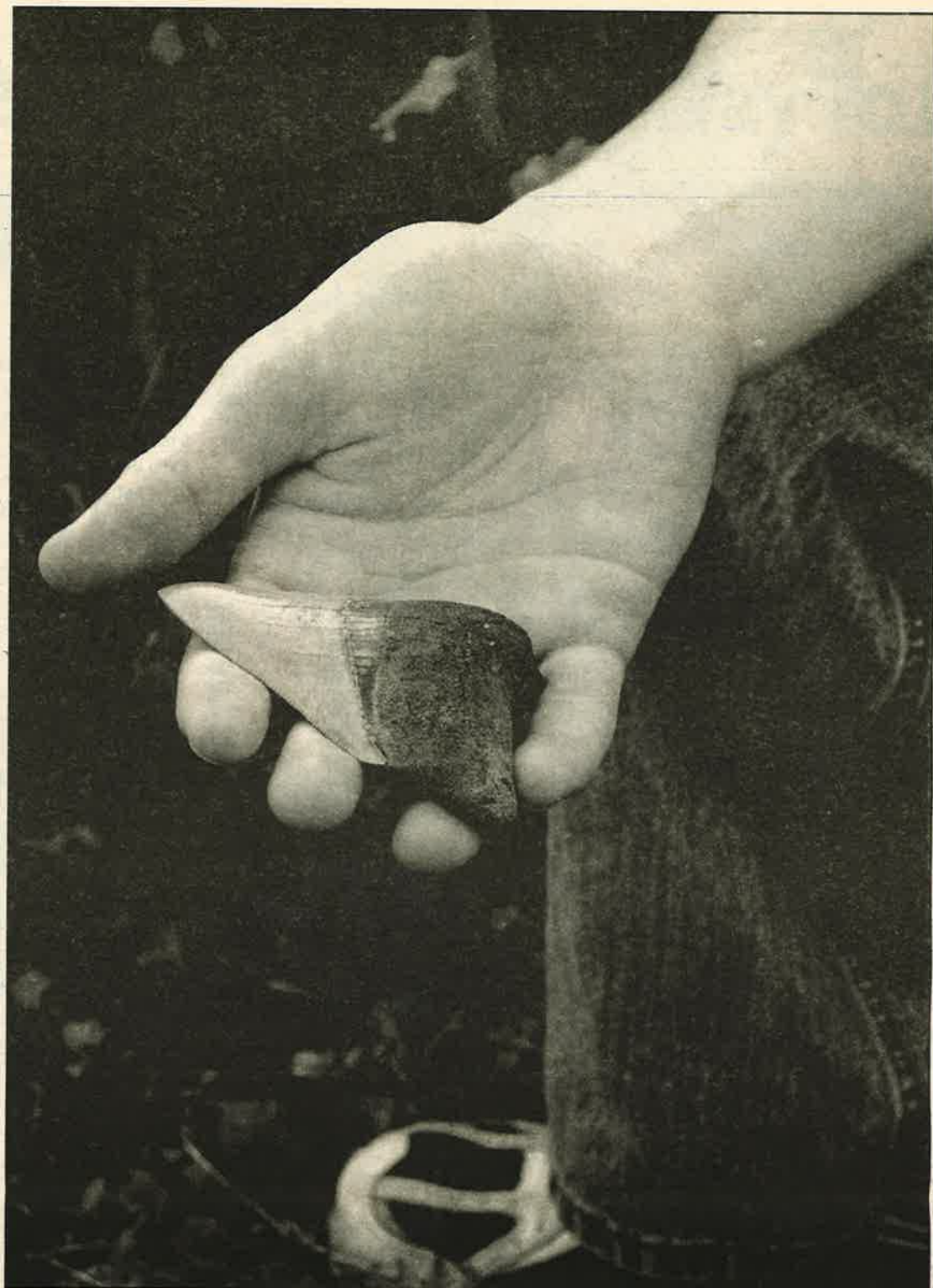
Lori Anderson teaches earth science at Bloomingdale and is the fossil club's sponsor. Her goal, like Kent's, is to have the site, which sits behind the school's biodome, used for community outreach.

"I'd like for our kids to be doing outreach specifically with younger kids, who have a natural interest in science," Anderson said. "All little kids love dinosaurs, but as they get older their interest in science kind of wanes off. But if you can reignite their interest in dinosaurs and prehistoric organisms, then you might get students who weren't necessarily interested in science in high school and beyond."

The site is expected to be completed within two months, Anderson said.

For Kent, it's been a two-year journey. He started with one teacher, Charles Tommello, who retired. The next teacher quit to work for a phosphate company. A third teacher quit and then Anderson joined the Bloomingdale staff this school year for her charter year teaching.

"Jerry has been tenacious, I will say that for him," said chemistry and astronomy



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Staff photo

Jerry Kent holds the tooth of a Megalodon, a prehistoric monster shark that ruled the oceans millions of years ago. "You know Jaws?" he said. "The Megalodon could eat Jaws for breakfast."

teacher Shelly Glennon. "A lot of kids will come up with an idea, get it started, and then their interest wanes. Or it's not easy going and they drop it. But Jerry had to go through different teachers to get it done and now it looks like he'll be able to get to see it up and running, at least in its initial stages, before he graduates."

The site, when finished, will mix fossils with a gravel mix for a land-based dig, and with a shell mixture for a marine-based dig, Anderson said. She wants to create a curriculum for

the site, so that visitors "can get a good background on the fossils they'll find." She wants to include a set of follow-up lessons and include a display case of fossils against which student can compare their finds.

Meanwhile, Kent's influence will be remembered most for getting the project off the ground in the first place.

"The school gave us a dig site, but it really was a refuse site and we got a lot of volunteers together and cleaned it out after school over a couple months," Kent said. "When it was cleaned, we sterilized it and painted the walls with colorful murals depicting the flora and fauna of prehistoric Florida."

The site remains a project underway, but Kent has high hopes for his project, despite some initial setbacks.

"My original plan was to get phosphate companies to donate gravel," Kent said, noting that shark's teeth and other fossils are collected as a by-product of phosphate mining. "I thought what they could do is give me the material they used to make the phosphate."

That didn't happen.

Then, Kent said, he contacted the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, from which he eventually secured, he said, "a generous donation of fossils that's going to be included in the dig site."

He said he also contacted the Florida Institute of Phosphate Research, which "explored the dig site and provided guest speakers." Also received, Kent added, was a \$500 field trip fund "that will allow the club

next year to explore the Florida phosphate industry and fossil sites throughout the state."

From Home Depot, Kent said, "we just received a donation of concrete blocks and metal spikes to allow us to complete the dig site. Then we're going to use our club money to purchase aggregates of gravel and shells to mix with the fossils from the University of Florida."

Those fossils, Kent said, "include everything from sharks' teeth to tortoise shells."

"Or maybe the club will get lucky and find something like a mammoth tooth or a piece of a mammoth tusk," he added. "These are the animals that lived here millions of years ago."

Kent's vision for the future of the club manifests itself in some of the group's early successes.

"I really was impressed that students, a lot of the younger kids, were so interested," Kent said. "One kid really thanked me for the fossil site. He told me that being able to explore this field of science has helped him develop an interest in science and now he wants to become a paleontologist. That kind of thing is really rewarding, to know that you've made that kind of an impact in someone's life."

Kent has high hopes for his own life as well, using the fossil dig club experience to bolster his college applications. With SAT scores of 780 and 670 in reading and writing, respectively, and 670 in math, Kent has applied to some of the nation's most prestigious schools.

"This kind of project allows one person, me, to influence a group of kids who in turn will continue influencing kids over the next 20 years with new classes joining the club," Kent said. "This project hopefully will allow me to produce exponential, positive change."

That factors in as well to Kent's ultimate goal for a career in national government.

"I developed an interest at a very young age for exploring the past," he said. "This project was the first step, and kind of a practice run for what I want to do in life, to use the lessons of the past to improve the future."

For information about the dig, or to donate materials, contact Anderson at Bloomingdale High at 744-8018, Ext. 265.

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SCHOOL

From page 5

val in February and see the manatees at TECO's Big Bend viewing center.

"We're looking forward to exploring Florida," he said.

About Brandon, Geidel said, "Everything is very handy, yet the town has some of the old-

time flavor and all these little communities around it, each with its own history and traditions."

Immanuel Lutheran School is at 2913 John Moore Road. Information: 685-1978.

BLOOMINGDALE BUSINESS

Bloomingtondale Couple Serve Barbecue, Community

CELEBRATE FIRST ANNIVERSARY

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Bloomingtondale residents Jaymer and Cyndi Holcombe recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of the opening of their barbecue restaurant, Jaymer-Que, at 3331 Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

The Holcombes invited more than 100 special guests to an old-fashioned pig pickin' party.

Friends, family and fans gathered on the outdoor patio to feast on pulled pork, barbecued chicken, ribs and all the fixings during the all-day celebration.

Also on hand was Cards & Stuff owner Robert Horning, who twisted balloons into a variety of animals for the many kids on hand.

"This was the perfect way for us to celebrate, and it was perfectly our style to have our friends over," said Jaymer Holcombe.

And having "friends" over is what they do five days a week. Before Jaymer-Que even opened, the Holcombes knew they wanted to have a restaurant that was an extension of their own kitchen.



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Cyndi and Jaymer Holcombe opened Jaymer-Que a year ago with a passion for cooking and a penchant for entertaining.

For Cyndi Holcomb, the most rewarding part of the year has seen what the restaurant has become to its patrons.

"We've seen people come to Christ, come to church and just come in and share their hurts," she said.

Frequent diner Janie Guffey said, "It's a great family-run business, and I love the fact that the owners want to glorify

God with their business. They care about the people who come in here, and even though it's a small place, they have big hearts."

Heart is what drove the Holcombes to become involved in serving their community through their business.

When one Bloomingtondale family was hit with large, unexpected medical bills,

the couple stepped in to offer the family barbecue meals to help out.

They also have a regularly scheduled Tuesday themed day called "Ends of the Earth," in which 10 percent of the day's proceeds go to missions both locally and overseas.

"We feel that God has used this place to minister to other people," Cyndi Holcombe said.

Other themed days include "Wing-it Wednesday," featuring slow cooked wings; "Turkey Lurkey Thursday," featuring fresh smoked turkey; and "Friday Ribfest," with fresh-off-the-pit beef ribs. Customers can hang out in the covered patio or inside while enjoying their meal.

With a passion for cooking, Jaymer is best known for his brisket, but frequently offers special creations from his pit, including salmon, Cornish game hens, prime rib, steaks, lamb and even duck, also all available by special order.

Jaymer-Que is at 3331 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, behind the Hess station. Hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, closed Sunday and Monday. Information: (813) 657-4227.

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- VALRICO • 2511 S.R. 60 E. 643-4825

Entire Community Celebrates Library's Second Anniversary

SUPPORT EXPANSION BY JOINING FRIENDS

By PAT BOODY
Bloomington Friends of the Library

Hello, neighbors.

It's hard to believe that the Bloomington Regional Public Library will be celebrating its second anniversary this month.

In that very short time, our materials circulation has risen to the third highest in the entire county library system, surpassing much larger and more well-established libraries.

Congratulations to you as citizens and parents, for using this wonderful resource.

Bloomington Regional has offered more programs to the public than any

other library in the system, with programs provided by library staff, outside speakers and community groups for all ages and interests.



It has served as a resource to folks needing assistance in tax preparation, as well as an accessible location for early voting.

We're all proud of the generous donation of land by the McLean family that spurred the vision of the library board and County Commission to build this beautiful 15,000-square-foot facility.

All that being said, most of you regular library patrons have noticed that the meeting space, study space, literacy tutoring space and computer room are booked to the maximum most days, and books never seem to stay on the shelves

for long.

We are in the process of working with the library board to include the expansion of the Bloomington Regional Library in the budget for the next two-year cycle, which will be presented in this spring.

If we do not make this deadline, it will be 2009 before we can present the case for expansion. That would delay the build out of the library to at least 2012; something that I suspect many of us would agree is an unacceptable delay for a community that is showing such strong support of the library.

The Friends of the Bloomington Library is a not-for-profit organization that raises funds to support our library's programs and to promote its resources. The Friends are conducting a membership campaign to continue to support

programming needs for all ages; from toddlers to retirees and everyone in between.

It costs only \$15 to become a Friend. We encourage you to join, as every new membership is a vote for the library expansion. Your membership in the Friends is tangible proof that our wonderful community truly cares about the library that has become so much more than bricks and mortar, but a living part of our community.

Please join us today. Make your voice count for the library expansion!

Pat Boody is a Bloomington resident and president of Bloomington's Friends of the Library. Information: pwboody@tecoenergy.com or call (813) 275-3642.

LIBRARY

From page 1

The Friends invited Joe Stines, the county's library director, to a recent meeting. The group discussed the library's growing pains and prospects for expansion.

At the meeting, the Friends outlined the overwhelming popularity of the library's services, facilities and materials. They also submitted their official request to expand the branch.

Pat Boody, Bloomington Friends of the Library president, asked Stines to convey to the library board the community's desire to expand the 15,000-square-foot library an additional 15,000 square feet, doubling its size. Library services staff confirmed the building was designed to accommodate such an expansion.

The group also listed other needs they said support their request to expand the building.

The branch's computer lab can hold only nine computer stations. More computers — and surrounding space for observers — are needed.

"When school lets out, the kids walk over from Bloomington High School in droves. Every computer is taken and there is a waiting list from 3 p.m. until at least 6 p.m. every day," Beamguard said.

Boody said, "As computer use continues to grow, there will undoubtedly be an increased need for computer

Library's Book Store Proves Popular With Patrons

OFFERS GENTLY USED BARGAINS

A Gazette Report

The Book Ends Bookstore at Bloomington Regional Public Library is well supported by volunteers and community members alike.

Since the library opened in 2005, dozens of volunteers have dedicated hundreds of hours to keeping the bookstore well organized and running smoothly.

"It is a very successful fundraiser for the Friends of the Library, and a wonderful way for members of the community to clean house and donate books, DVDs, CDs and other media," said Friends president Pat Boody.

The Friends donate duplicate and extra books to servicemen and women stationed overseas, and to inmates of the Hillsborough County jail.

The group recently received a letter of thanks from Sheriff David Gee.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the large donation

of books from the Friends of the Bloomington Library," Gee wrote. "The wonderful community service on the part of your volunteers is greatly appreciated. With donations such as yours, we are able to provide recreational and educational reading material to the inmates in our facilities. I hope that you will continue to remember us if more books become available."

Boody said Book Ends manager and Friends vice president, Carol Jones, learned that one of the women inmates was in tears the day that the books arrived.

"She had never had a new book before. Who knows when one of your donations will touch the heart of a reader and change a life?"

Children's books are in great demand at the bookstore.

"Many children regularly bring in a quarter to select a book and are disappointed to find the children's shelves empty," Boody said.

Book Ends is in the Friends of the Library room, just inside the building's main entrance.

access and training facilities."

She also mentioned another critical need at the branch: a separate meeting area dedicated to children's programs and special events.

"We just don't have enough floor space in the children's library for storytelling and other activities," she said.

Beamguard added, "We hold most children's programs in the McLean Room, which creates another scheduling challenge. It's not unusual for us to set up

and break down the room twice a day to accommodate different groups and activities."

"Every program we do is popular and packed, and I guess in a way that's a good problem to have. I do wonder, though, how we're going to accommodate the use of this library for any length of time. It disappoints us to have to turn away so many people."

Ted Grable, president of the Bloomington Homeowners Association, attended the recent Friends meeting to voice the community's support of the proposed expansion.

"It's unbelievable how this community has embraced the library. I stopped by there last Sunday to pick up some books I'd placed on hold. It was absolutely packed. People were just everywhere. I think it's pretty clear that we desperately

need the expansion," Grable said.

Even if the library board agrees posthaste to set the 15,000-square-foot expansion in motion, it could take five or six years to become a reality.

Susie George, a library system manager, said the board is set to review the proposed expansion at its Feb. 20 planning meeting.

"The Bloomington expansion is currently on our list of unmet needs. There are 10 or 12 items on the list at any given time. The board is now evaluating the list to submit to the county commission for their consideration during the upcoming (Capital Improvement Plan) budget process," George said.

It remains to be seen whether or not creative or alternative funding could be

secured to complete the expansion sooner than 2012. For now, library staff and Friends members say they will continue to provide the services and programs the public has been clamoring for since it opened two years ago.

"We opened with a bang and we've been so busy since day one. There was a pent up demand for a branch in Bloomington," Beamguard said.

"Ever since our first full month in operation, we've consistently ranked third or fourth highest countywide for materials circulation. We don't have the square footage or the large collections that the other top circulators (all regional libraries) do."

By the numbers, the Bloomington library is operating at the same level as regional libraries in the county, but with a smaller facility and fewer materials and amenities. The rising trend worries Beamguard more than a little bit.

Bloomington currently has 80,000 volumes of material on its shelves. Another 20,000 volumes expected to arrive at the branch this year will fill the shelves. Beamguard would like to build Bloomington's anthology to about the size of Brandon Regional Library's 140-volume collection, but said there is no floor space left to install another range of shelving.

"By this time next year, if something doesn't give, we will run out of room on our shelves. Every library has to do some weeding from time to time — you wouldn't want to keep the same selections on the shelves forever. But we don't want to have to get rid of books or stop adding new ones for space considerations."

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SCHOLARSHIP

From page 3

Selection Committee

A three-member selection committee shall be responsible for selecting the scholarship recipient(s). The committee will be composed of three BHA board of directors members, or the board's designees. The decisions of the selection committee are final and are not subject to appeal.

Important Dates

Feb. 1: Application available for download at www.bloomingtondalehomeowners.com. Look for the "B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Scholarship Application" button at the top left of the home page.

April 5: Deadline for receipt of application at the Bloomingdale community office.

May 7: The scholarship recipient will be announced at the May 7 meeting of the BHA board of directors. The recipient will be invited to attend the meeting.

Last week of June: Scholarship disbursements will be made. The disbursement may be made at a later date if the student has not made his/her final school choice, but the winner needs to keep the BHA updated on this situation.

Essay

Candidates are required to compose

an essay, typewritten only, between 300 and 500 words. The student may select any one of the three following topics for their essay:

"What Receiving This Scholarship Would Mean To Me"

"What My Community Service Time Has Meant To Me"

"How Living In and Growing Up In Bloomingdale Has Shaped Me As A Person"

Submission

Each candidate will be required to submit the following items on or before the above defined deadline: A completed application; essay, one letter of reference from a Bloomingdale Senior High School faculty member or, a representative of a community service organization listed on the application; an official transcript from Bloomingdale Senior High School; an official discipline record from Bloomingdale Senior High School.

Submit applications to: Bloomingdale Community Office, Attn: Scholarship Committee, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. E-Mail: bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net. Fax: (813) 684-2358. Phone: (813) 681-2051. Web site: www.bloomingtondale-homeowners.com.

POLICE

From page 7

send contributions by April 15 to Police Unity Tour of Florida, Chapter VIII, P.O. Box 6550, Brandon, FL 33508. Please include your name and address, and note Deputy Frank Cheshire as the sponsored rider of your choice.

As the Unity Tour riders live up to their motto, "We ride for those who

died," we can help keep the memories of their fellow officers alive and give proper recognition to their sacrifices. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

For more information about the Police Unity Tour and the national memorial, log on to www.nleomf.com.

Community Lights Up Holidays, Raises Scholarship Funds

GROUP TO AWARD \$2K IN 2007

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Dozens of Bloomingdale neighbors who helped light the way for Santa Claus' arrival in December will also help lighten the financial load for one Bloomingdale High School senior heading for college this fall.

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association board members and neighborhood volunteers assembled more than 200 paper-bag luminaria kits in December, each with enough sand, tea lights, white bags and matches to make 20 lanterns. They sold about a hundred kits in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Families throughout the community snapped up the \$10 kits to light up their driveways on Christmas Eve, and to contribute to the community's annual college scholarship fund.

The association also offered an extra incentive for neighbors to participate in the fundraiser; a personal visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus for the neighborhood section purchasing the most kits per household. The prize was granted at sunset on Dec. 16 to Chadd's Ford in Bloomingdale East, where dozens of children lined the streets in anticipation of Santa Claus's arrival. Bloomingdale residents Pam and Joe Liguori arranged the visit.

Chadd's Ford resident Jolie Harris helped sell the kits door to door. When the contest was announced in November, Harris jumped on the opportunity to recreate a holiday tradition she remembers seeing as a child.

"There was a neighborhood near our house where they started out with a few luminarias and it just kind of grew over the course of a few years. First they started with the luminarias, and then each year there would be more and more candles, and everyone's decorations got more elaborate."

It's a tradition Harris and the homeowners association hope to continue and grow each year.

"It was just so beautiful on Christmas Eve when we all lit the candles. Everyone was out walking around and kind of chatting. We will definitely do it again next year."

Net proceeds from the sale, combined with additional cash contributions from residents, will allow the group to award a \$2,000 scholarship this year.

The association established the B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship in 2005 to honor Stelter upon her retirement as principal of Bloomingdale High School. Its mission is to encourage students to pursue a college career.

Alexia Shemroske, guidance counselor at Bloomingdale, said 80 percent of seniors graduating from Bloomingdale in 2006 planned to attend college. Class of 2006 graduate Michael Cocchiolo received the community's \$1,000 inaugural scholarship last year.

The scholarship is open to students who live in Bloomingdale and attend Bloomingdale High. Eligibility requirements, application forms and more information are available at the school and on the association's web site, www.bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net, or call (813) 681-2051.

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