

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXVIV
Number 2

FEBRUARY 2009 • THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

A Visit From The Commissioner

Newly elected Kevin Beckner visits, holds a "Coffee with Kevin" at the library.

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Getting To The Bottom Line

A primer on the reality of deed restrictions.

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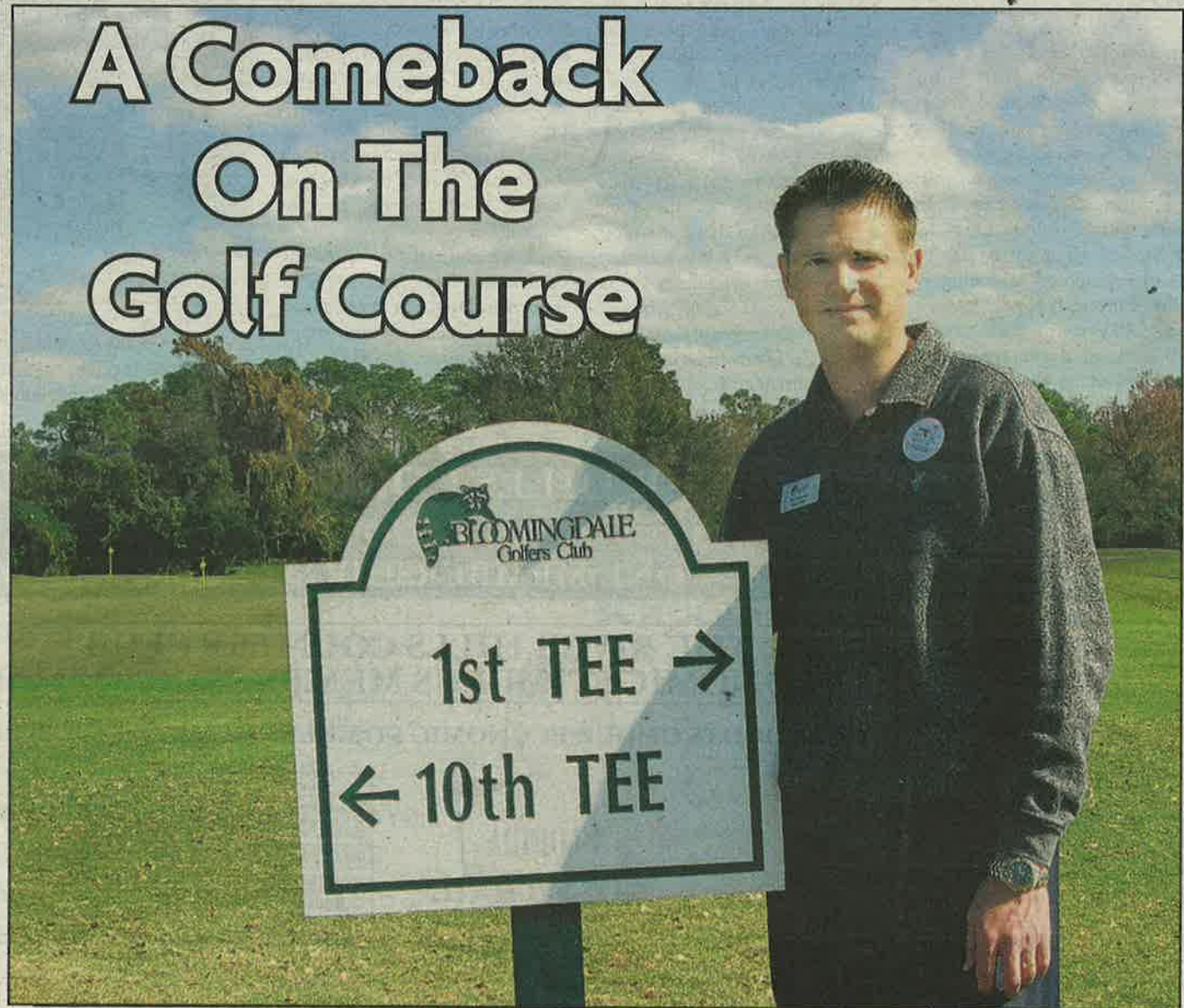
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A Comeback On The Golf Course



Brand Compton, the General Manager of the Bloomingdale Golf Club, discussed the steps taken to bring top-notch golf to the Bloomingdale area.

See story, page 10.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."

Albert Einstein

Commissioner Visits Bloomingdale Library

By Leslie White

District 6 County Commissioner Kevin Beckner invited local constituents to Bloomingdale Regional Public Library Saturday, Jan. 17 for coffee and conversation. More than 40 area residents turned out to discuss community issues and share their concerns with the newly elected county official.

"This is great," said Beckner, "I'm glad to see so many people turn out to talk about what's important to them."

Various "Coffee with Kevin" events were scheduled every January Saturday morning at libraries countywide, giving residents an informal opportunity to let the commissioner know what's on their minds. Of widespread concern at this gathering was the proposed widening of Lithia-Pinecrest Road, juvenile crime and youth advocacy as well as local traffic congestion. Each attendant was encouraged to fill out a detailed description

of their concern and turn it in to Commissioner Beckner's aides to allow further investigation. They also requested contact information so that Beckner and his aides can follow up personally.

"I believe in activism and I believe in making sure your voice is heard," assured Beckner. If we can address the issues and improve your quality of life, then that's what I'm here to do."

Though these informal meetings will only take place this January, Beckner's office hours are solely for one-on-one meetings with the people of Hillsborough County, allowing them an opportunity to voice their concerns outside of the three minutes given to those attending the regular bi-weekly meetings held in downtown Tampa. Office hours will rotate through the various districts ensuring that once a quarter Beckner will be in each of the four district offices.

"It's the people who got me

I believe in activism
and I believe in
making sure your
voice is heard.

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KEVIN BECKNER**

here, and it's the people I'm committed to serving," said Beckner, urging all in attendance to get involved in some way. "When people come together they can make a real difference in their community. Part of my goal is to increase communication to our citizens."

A schedule of the upcoming open office hours and locations is forthcoming. For more information contact Commissioner Beckner's office at (813) 272-5730 or visit hillsboroughcounty.org/boccc.



Photo by LESLIE WHITE

District 6 County Commissioner Kevin Beckner gave ear to the concerns of one local resident at a recent "Coffee with Kevin" meeting at Bloomingdale Regional Public Library.

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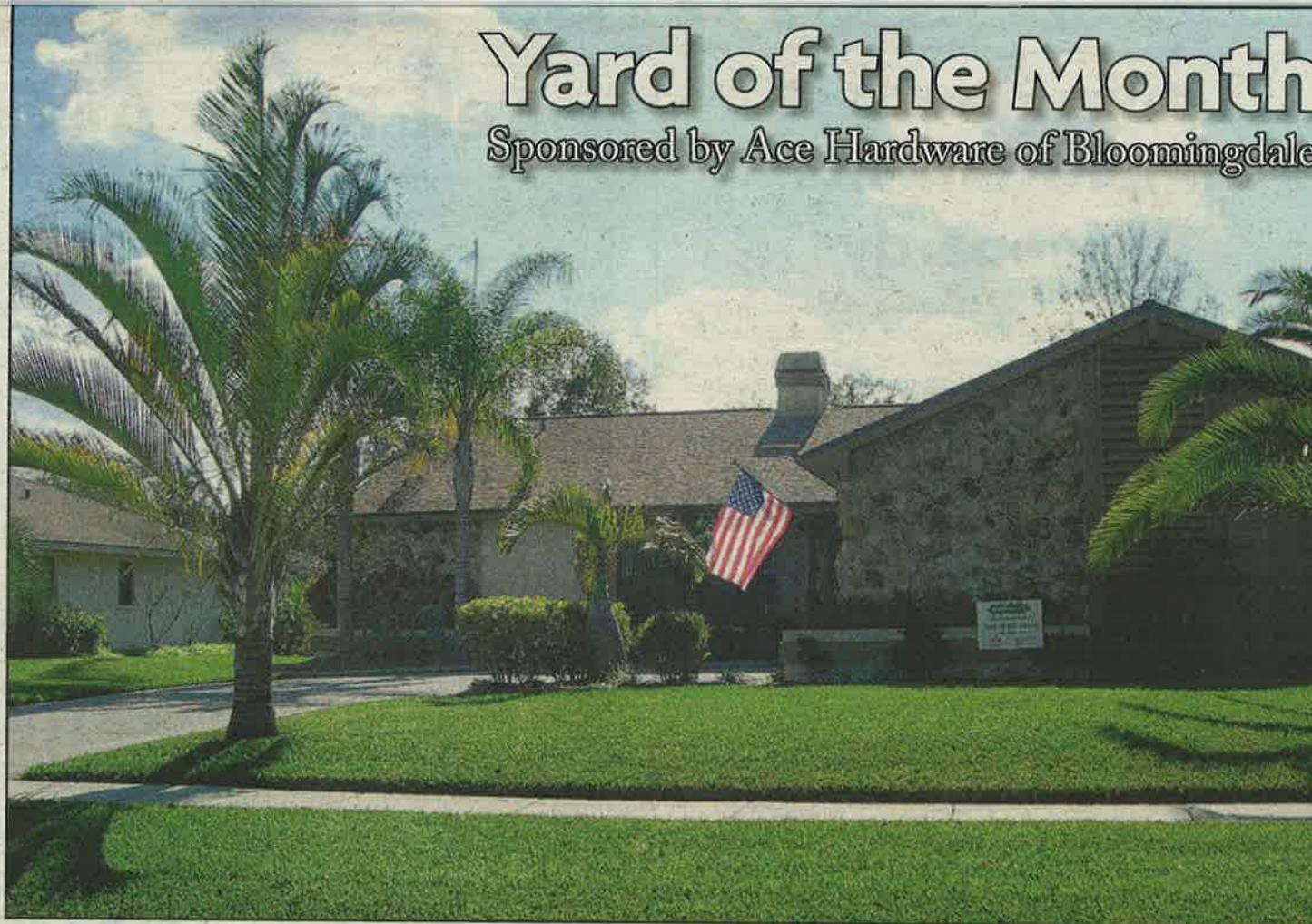
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Category	Current Dues/Month	Year 1	Year 2	Total Savings
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Full Golf	\$313.00	\$188.00	\$290.00	\$1776.00
Junior Golf	\$216.00	\$135.00	\$210.00	\$1044.00
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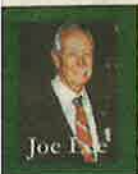
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Lithia-Pinecrest Improvements In Jeopardy

In 2005, The Brandon Chamber of Commerce was asked to work to improve Lithia-Pinecrest Road by members of the chamber and more than 400 community representatives. Up to this time, the chamber claims to have had many successes and support from our elected officials and county staff.

The PD&E study of the roadway is currently underway to better determine the improvement opportunities and costs. Unfortunately, the comments being received by County Commissioners is that the residents along the road do not support the improvements and expansion of Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

The study is nearing completion and your input is critical. As the consultants have begun sharing preliminary recommendations (which depict up to six lane road expansion), a group of residents in the more rural section of the study area have become alarmed.

These are merely recommendations and are not being added to any work plan. After the study is completed, then the community and the county will be able to create their plans for improvements based on all of the data and scenarios presented. However, a group of citizens concerned about the aesthetics closer to CR-39 are working to derail this study.

The Chamber of Commerce would like your voice to be heard. You can contact your County Commissioners by calling (813) 272-5660.

Alafia Welcomes New Principal

By Michelle Ernest
Alafia PTA President

The Alafia PTA is excited to welcome new principal Mrs. Lisa Tierney-Jackson. The PTA feels that she is the perfect match for our school and that the transition will be smooth. Mrs. Jackson previously taught at Alafia and has worked with many of the current faculty and staff. The goals of the PTA have always been to support the teachers and students. Alafia is a wonderful school with a strong sense of family among its parents, teachers and students. We welcome Mrs. Jackson to our family and look forward to a new beginning.



Bloomingtondale Property Manager Position Available

As some of you are aware, our longtime Bloomingtondale Property Manager, Al Devney, president of DPMI, has retired. As a result, the Bloomingtondale Special Taxing District (BSTD) is seeking an individual to act as Property Manager and oversee the maintenance of our Bloomingtondale property.

This PART TIME position would require approximately 20-25 hours per week spread over five or six days per week.

The successful candidate should be a Bloomingtondale resident, have their own pick-up truck, have access to mechanical, electrical and plumbing hand tools, and lawn and landscape tools. The position requires the ability to obtain \$1,000,000 of insurance, to have or be able to acquire a CAM license, and be incorporated, LLC or be in the possession of another appropriate legal entity. The job also requires a working knowledge

of electricity, irrigation and irrigation systems, landscaping and basic computer skills.

The duties include (but are not limited to) overseeing vendors and contractors that routinely assist in the maintenance of our Bloomingtondale community, checking and replacing light bulbs on a scheduled or as needed basis, minor electrical service as needed, repairing minor irrigation problems as needed, planting shrubbery

as needed, minor painting and other tasks as dictated by the President and Trustees of the Bloomingtondale Special Taxing District. There is also an "in office" component of the job which includes accident and vandalism investigation, preparing various reports and budget preparation and input. One would also attend the monthly and special meeting held by the Taxing District. A complete job description will

be presented at the interview. Salary for this part time position will be based on experience and qualifications. The District desires to fill this position immediately. If you are interested, please submit a resume' in confidence to:

**Bloomingtondale Taxing
District**
3509 Bell Shoals Road
Valrico, FL 33596
Attn: Thom Snelling

Cell Tower At Cimino?

While the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association or its publication the Bloomingtondale Gazette has no opinion, we have been asked to inform the community of the possibility of a cell phone tower being placed at Cimino Elementary School. If you are interested, would like to hear the pros and cons, agree or disagree, please feel free to contact school principal Deborah Talley by e-mailing deborah.talley@sdhc.k12.fl.us or by calling the school at 740-4450.



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- BRANDON** • 913 W. Brandon Blvd **684-4499**
- BRANDON** • 11393 Causeway Blvd **643-6944**
- LITHIA** • 16707 FishHawk Blvd **654-7991**
- PLANT CITY** • 2621 Thonotosassa Rd **752-6631**
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- RIVERVIEW** • 13414 Boyette Rd.New **657-8497**
- RIVERVIEW** • 13196 Hwy 301 S..... **671-4156**
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- VALRICO** • 1985 E. Brandon Blvd **654-2324**
- VALRICO** • 2511 S.R. 60 E..... **643-4825**

Your Inside Connections

BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

PO Box 7221, Brandon, FL 33508
Phone: (813) 681-2051
E-mail: bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net
Meetings: first Tuesday each month, 7 p.m.
Web site: bloomingdalegazette.com
President: Stanley Lee
Vice president: Jim Harris
Secretary: Jane Lee
Treasurer: Dennis Osborn
Directors: Shelia Harris, Myron Magedanz

BLOOMINGDALE SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594
Phone: (813) 684-6667
E-mail: bloomingdale.district@verizon.net
Office hours: Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Meetings: second Monday each month, 7 p.m.
President: Thom Snelling
Vice president: Russell Jones
Treasurer: David West
Property manager: Al Devney
Trustees: Joe Harless; Joe Liguori and James Laughlin



THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE
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The official publication of the BHA since 1980

Post Office Box 7221
 Brandon, FL 33508
Ph: (813) 681-2051

E-Mail: bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net
Web site: bloomingdalegazette.com

THE GAZETTE IS PUBLISHED BY SUNBELT NEWSPAPERS

Publisher: Denise Palmer
 505 W. Robertson St.,
 Brandon, FL 33511
Ph: (813) 657-4511
Advertising: 647-4557

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Gardeners Prepare For Cold Spells

By LAURA CONE
 lcone@mediageneral.com

Commercial growers as well as the backyard gardeners with green thumbs prepare for the sudden cold snaps that could damage prized plants during Florida winters.

Tobias Smith, the manager of Holmberg Farms, 13430 Hobson Simmons Rd., Lithia, said as a commercial grower he supplies more than 250 retailers and landscapers with plant material.

See COLD, Page 16

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Deed Restrictions: What's The Bottom Line?

By JOY BOISSELLE

Confusion over deed restrictions has been an ongoing issue in the Bloomingdale community. For example, questions like, "I don't pay dues; aren't I exempt from deed restrictions? Can I paint my house any color? Are sheds allowed in my neighborhood?" For years, numerous articles, both in the Bloomingdale Gazette and on the community's Web site, have been written to explain the issues and ensure resident deed restriction compliance. Still, a lack of understanding persists.

So, what's the bottom line? "All of Bloomingdale's 44 neighborhoods are bound by deed restrictions, no matter whether you have paid dues to an association or even have a copy of those restrictions," said Stan Lee, new Bloomingdale Homeowner Association president.

Just what does that mean? The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Board of Direc-

tors asked attorney Dan Pilka of the Pilka & Wells law firm to provide general legal clarification on some issues surrounding deed restrictions and our community. Pilka has been practicing law since 1984 and has specialized in community association litigation for the past nine years.

"Deed restrictions are the rules and regulations filed by the property developer with the Clerk of the Court for Hillsborough County, and everyone, owner or tenant, must comply with the restrictions," he stated.

Typically, deed restrictions cover land and property usage, such as the size of the home, building specifications and property changes, and they ensure that the property is used as the developer intended. Restrictions, for example, can include: no livestock, no parking of commercial vehicles, and no property changes without approval.

"Deed restrictions are important because they maintain the

quality and character of the neighborhood. They benefit everyone by maintaining neighborhood cohesiveness and they protect property value," Pilka explained. For home buyers, deed restrictions provide a sense of security that the area in which they live will be maintained to a certain long-term standard.

"Deed restrictions are a binding contract between neighbors, and are absolutely enforceable," he added.

What happens when a problem occurs? First, try to work out any disputes neighbor to neighbor, Pilka recommended. If your neighborhood has a mandatory HOA, the next step is to take the issue to the board. The board will work to resolve the issue within their association guidelines. If the problem continues, mediation and litigation are possible courses of action.

Pilka believes residents should get involved with their HOAs to help maintain their



Dan Pilka of Pilka & Wells law firm provided valuable information concerning deed restrictions and the Bloomingdale community during a recent interview.

communities. "Attend meetings, serve on committees...involvement fosters pride in ownership and has an immediate impact in the community," he said.

Every home owner in Bloomingdale should have been provided a copy of deed restrictions at their home's closing. If you don't have a copy of your restrictions, there are several ways to obtain them. All restrictions are recorded with the Clerk of the Court for Hillsborough County. In addition, many of

Bloomingdale's deed restrictions are available on our community Web site. To search our database for your neighborhood, click on "About Bloomingdale" on the home page main menu, then select "Deed Restrictions" from the sub-menu. Finally, if you live in a mandatory Homeowners Association, you can request a copy of the restrictions from your board.

For information, call (813) 681-2051 or go online to bloomingdalegazette.com.

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Pet Shop Offers Jungle Experience

By SUZANNE M. SCHMIDT
sschmidt@mediageneral.com

When Karin Allen had the choice to stay in the corporate world or leave it, she decided to leave it and fulfill her dreams by opening a pet shop.

Allen opened Bungle in the Jungle, 16731 FishHawk Blvd., last October. The store offers pet supplies for birds, fish, reptiles, dogs, cats and small animals as well as various exotic pets including birds, tropical fish, snakes, lizards, tortoises, hamsters, gerbils, rabbits and chinchillas. Allen also supplies mice, rats and crickets for feeding.

"I always really liked animals and I have always had a wide variety of pets," Allen said. "Before working in the corporate world, I used to work at a pet store and a tropical fish farm. When the insurance company I worked for shut down, I decided I didn't want to go back to insurance. I decided if I was going to accept less money, then I was going to do something I really

enjoy. Most of the animals I sell here, I have had as pets at one point. I like my job better now because I like selling the animals and seeing they are going to a good home."

In addition to finding the animals a good home, Allen said she also is happy to give demonstrations where she will bring animals for people to interact with like her pet bearded dragon named Rex.

"I like to have animals here that can be used for educational purposes," Allen said. "The whole idea behind my shop is that there is an adventure theme. People can handle and touch just about every animal in the store. I have also done presentations at a Teach-In and at the Fear Factor event at FishHawk Creek Elementary School."

Allen not only helps out teachers by giving demonstrations, she also is a friend to the teacher's pet. She said she will

See JUNGLE, Page 16



Photo by SUZANNE M. SCHMIDT
Karin Allen holds her favorite macaw, Baby Girl, at her newly opened pet and supply store.

And Win!

By LESLIE WHITE

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association through the official publication, The Bloomingdale Gazette, and Ray Chadderton of Keller Williams Realty/The Chadderton Group, are offering two \$50 gift certificates to Stonewood Grill & Tavern in a month-long community contest. To play, visit either Peterbrooke Chocolatier at 3476 Lithia Pinecrest Road or Car Wash on the Greens at 3618 Lithia Pinecrest Road and simply estimate the number of jelly beans in the jar at one of the two locations. The person closest without going over at each location will win. The contest runs Feb. 7 to March 11. Winners do not have to be present to win. You may enter more than once, and you may enter at one or both locations.

If you are a Bloomingdale resident or business owner and would like to sponsor a contest of your own please e-mail inbloomingdalenews@tam-pabay.rr.com.

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Barlowgirl To Perform Benefit Concert March 6

Breakthrough Student Ministries, the youth group of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church will be hosting a concert featuring BarlowGirl on Friday, March 6 at 7 p.m. in the St. Andrew's sanctuary. BarlowGirl is a Christian rock band comprised of three sisters which has accumulated multiple Gospel Music Awards. The girls describe themselves as "radical girls for God" and their music delivers that message in a powerful, poignant way. Among their many hits are their award winning songs "Never Alone" and "I Need You to Love Me".

Profits from the concert will be donated to Steppin' Stone Farm in Lithia. The farm is a Christian based residential group home for teenage girls. It emphasizes that through accountability and personal responsibility each girl has a chance to change her destiny. Gift cards from Home Depot and Lowe's will be collected the night of the event for those people who want to contribute directly to Steppin' Stone Farm.

Tickets for the event can be purchased at iticket.com. Prices are \$15 for advance purchase tickets and \$20 the day of the event. St. Andrew's UMC is located at 3315 Bryan Road in Brandon. For more information please visit StAndrewsBrandon.org, or call (813) 689-6849 x 217. Local businesses or private citizens that would like to join the effort to partner with Breakthrough Student Ministries can call Brenda Bazemore at (813) 689-6849, ext. 217.



Above, Kaitlyn Loy takes the tickets of Jennifer Vonga and Rick Alba



At right, Tony Armellino and Barry Humphrey are part of security to keep the concert safe



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The Renaissance of Bloomingdale Golfers Club

My name is Brad Compton, General Manager of the Bloomingdale Golfers Club since Oct. 1, 2008. As General Manager of the Bloomingdale Golfers Club, I have been tasked with overseeing the club's renaissance. For those that have played the golf course in the past few months, I am sure you would agree that the condition of the golf course has greatly improved since the summer. We intend to continue that process for the long term.

However, not only are people unaware of our great course condition, I learned from many individuals during the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Annual Family Fest Day held at the golf club this past November that many Bloomingdale area residents are unaware of the golf course itself. Our renaissance will only happen from the support of our surrounding neighbors. My job is simply to ensure that the word gets out about the club, its facilities and its programs. This article represents another step in the club's renaissance process.

For those of you who might not be aware of us, let me share some highlights about the Club:

- It is Tampa's premier golf facility and has been consistently ranked number-one by The Tampa Tribune readership 10

years in a row

- Golfers Digest has rated Bloomingdale Golfers Club four stars. Golf Digest described the club as having the best collection of par 5's on any one golf course as they have seen anywhere in the USA

- The course layout, designed by renowned architect Ron Garl, is an exceptional and classic championship layout in an unspoiled setting of 100-year old oaks, towering pines and natural marshland. You'll enjoy a round filled with numerous sightings of wildlife, fields of flowers, and with the challenge of spectacular holes threading their way around thirteen lakes
- The club is home to perhaps the finest PGA Tour quality practice facility anywhere. The practice facility includes the following:

1. A large range with numerous target flags to hone your iron game yet is plenty deep to contain 400 yard tee shots.

2. The largest putting green in the area at over half an acre. Be on the lookout for a variety of putting contests and events in the near future.

3. A sand bunker and chipping green complex to work on every phase of your short game

4. For those who practice

often, practice facility memberships are now available to the public

5. Our practice facility is home to Mypro Golf Schools and Megan Younkman. As an LPGA member, Megan teaches beginners and professionals, juniors and seniors, and men and women.

Given the variety of amenities and course conditions available at the club, it should come as no surprise that some of the world's best players from the PGA, LPGA, European Tour, Buy.com tour, and other regional tours have called Bloomingdale Golfers Club their home. Currently, PGA tour star Michael Bradley plays out of the club.

The club in the past has been host to numerous local, state, and national tournaments, as well as host for the PGA Tour Qualifying School. A big part of our renaissance is to once again be host of these great events. Our other goals for the club include hosting special life events such as weddings, retirement parties and other social events as well as golf tournaments including fund raising not for profit events.

As part of the newly created Florida Golf Trail, which consists of nine Florida clubs, three Washington D.C. clubs and one



Brad Compton stands on the Bloomingdale Golfers Club Course.

in Cincinnati Ohio, the club can offer many benefits to non-profit events that often a stand-alone club cannot offer. The trail also allows us to offer a low cost membership that includes reciprocal privileges at all 12 other trail clubs including the private Joe Lee designed River Hills Country Club in Valrico and the private Tom Fazio designed Bayou Club in Largo.

In addition to patronizing the club to bring about its renaissance, we need the community's support in protecting the improving golf course. As you know, a well-maintained and financially strong golf course can have a significant impact on the values of the homes surrounding the golf course. Recently we have had numerous instances of vandalism and arson on the golf course. Additionally, tee markers, flag-

sticks, garbage cans, and other items have been stolen from the grounds at the club. We ask that anyone having knowledge of these events would report them to the police or to me personally. To achieve this end, we are offering a \$5,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of the vandals. If anyone has information relating to our on-going investigation we would appreciate it if you call us at (813) 685-4105 Ext. 14.

We thank you for those who have patronized us and those of you who have treated the golf course as their own by watching out and keeping non-golfers off of the golf course at all times. Together we can make the renaissance of the Bloomingdale Golfers Club a reality. I appreciate the opportunity to serve you and look forward to meeting you in near future.

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Moving On

By LESLIE WHITE

Bloomington Bulls Head football Coach Jason Stokes announced to his team and staff on Jan. 13 that he would be leaving Bloomington to pursue coaching positions elsewhere, saying he "wanted to pursue a coaching job at an inner-city school." During the meeting, Stokes told players, "I feel this is in the best interest of my family."

At a Bulls Booster Club meeting the same night, Athletic Director Danielle Shotwell broke the news to attendees, most of which were very surprised. Shotwell told Booster Club members that she expected plenty of applicants since more than 80 applied for the same position the previous year after the departure of Stokes' predecessor, Corey Brinson. Stokes officially resigned the next morning.

Within five days he was announced as head coach at Middleton High School. During his tenure the Bulls had a winning season and made it to the playoffs for the first time. Stokes had recently been named "Coach of the Year" by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers which awarded \$2,000 to Bloomington's football program. Stokes did not respond to a request for an interview.

It was announced Jan. 19 that former Bloomington Coach Jason Stokes would take over the head football coaching position at Middleton High School after Harry Hubbard was let go in December. Stokes resigned Jan. 14 after serving only one season as the Bulls' head coach.



Photo by LESLIE WHITE



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Helping Those In Need

By LESLIE WHITE

As our nation's economy continues to decline, more people are in need of help and the Brandon area is no exception. It was this realization that led the Bloomingdale High School PTSA Board to consider how they could help their community in a way that would make a real difference.

"Brenda Esprit, our Programs and Awards Chair, researched the local area to see what soup kitchens are serving our community," said PTSA president Catrina Miller.

She found The Portamento of Hope Café, and after speaking with Director Lila Lilyquist, the board found there was a great need for assistance and the decision was made to provide it. Bloomingdale volunteers signed up to serve at the café, students and parents working together to organize the clothes closet,

serve foot as well as cook for the cause.

"A check for \$250 has been donated, which was raised from our 5K Family Fun Run back on Nov. 1," said Miller. More than \$1,600 of those same proceeds were donated to the Bloomingdale library victim. The Bloomingdale PTSA is not only focused on the needs of the school and the students, but the community surrounding it. According to Miller, the board collectively decided to use some of the funds raised throughout the year to support local charities and causes.

"I have personally been moved and I am delighted to be part of this wonderful team of volunteers that want to make a huge difference in our community," said Miller. She also stated that there will be an ongoing partnership between the PTSA



Photo by LESLIE WHITE

Bloomingdale PTSA Program & Awards Chair Brenda Esprit (left) was one of several Bloomingdale High parents who, along with a group of volunteer students, served food to the community of people in need in the Brandon area at Lila Lilyquist's Portamento of Hope Café.

and the café.

The Portamento of Hope Café is located at 107 East

Mason Street (off Parsons) in Brandon. Future plans for the café include offering a computer room, a clothes closet and nutritional education center for families in the community in need of those services. The café served its first meal June 16, 2008, and Lilyquist welcomes all volunteers as well as any community members with electrical, plumbing, painting and computer skills which will

help develop the café's services. Also welcomed are donations of food, clothing, toys and books. The café accepts donations from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Lilyquist can be reached at 681-2444. Students wishing to volunteer at the café will receive community service hours as well as the satisfaction of doing a good deed.

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Science Fair Celebration

By HEATHER SCALLAN

Cimino Elementary School teachers Heather Scallan and Stephanie Hannett encouraged students to complete their Science Fair projects by hosting a pancake breakfast for students and their families. Their husbands prepared the feast for visitors while families admired the Science Fair boards created by students to learn the scientific method.

"The projects this year have far exceeded my expectations," said Hannett.

Four students will go on to represent their classrooms at the school level: Beth Farrell, Noah Manera, Matthew Young, and Mariam Higgenbotham.

While the men cooked, families enjoyed the feast.



LESLIE WHITE
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More Than A Decade Of Service

By CRD PETE MAURER

As of this month it has now been 11 years since the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Community Station opened on Bell Shoals Road. That was 1998. To really relate to how long this has been, try to remember how much gasoline cost in 1998 or how much homes sold for. And yes, homes were being built and selling back then.

Very special thanks goes to the residents of Bloomingdale and surrounding communities for the outstanding cooperation and support they have given those of us in the Sheriff's Office and here at the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Community Station.

Together we have continued to make our community a safer and more secure place to live and raise our families.

Hillsborough County's Sheriff, David Gee, his staff and

the many teams that make up the Sheriff's Office continue to provide dedicated service even as we all face tough financial times. Having the community's increased support through programs such as the Volunteer Citizen Patrol Program have helped those of us in law enforcement improve our ability to provide you with the secure home and work environment you want and deserve. This program has already improved communication and coordination in solving crimes.

As always, we need your cooperation and support in improving the quality of life in our community. Please help us help you.

KNOW THE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU

As our nation, our state, our county and our residents face tight budgets and uncertain



Deputy Pete Maurer

times, there will be very important decisions made next month as our political leaders meet for their March session.

State representative Rich Glorioso met last month with members of the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Area Commu-

nity Council (BACC) to discuss special issues that will be addressed during this session.

These issues rang from the state's budget shortages to seat belt laws, car seat laws, red light cameras, transportation issues, sexual predator and offender issues and more.

Call Representative Glorioso's office in Plant City at (813) 757-9110 for detailed information. Give him and his staff your support on the key issues important to you.

GANG MEMBERS INVOLVED IN LOCAL ATTACK

We hear about gangs in the news and read about them in the paper. Many folks don't want to believe or admit that there are gangs in our area, but yes, there are.

In fact last month just south of Bloomingdale in FishHawk there was a gang related attack on some teen residents. The gang members involved are in custody.

The Sheriff's Office is dedicated to protecting and serving your community. One way the sheriff has directly attacked the gang situation is through a very active special gang unit dedicated to locating, observing, and arresting gang members.

One very valuable tool that is used to help the sheriff and his gang unit improve their

work against gangs is through educating parents and others to help identify gang members and potential gang members. Parents are one of the best sources. Through training and education they can watch for the signs and changes that indicate their kids are involved with gangs and hopefully stop them before they get too involved.

Residents can contact the Sheriff's Hot Line at (877) 426-4688 to report gang activity in our area. All calls are anonymous. Also they can check the Sheriff's website, hcsos.tampa.fl.us, for information on the Sheriff's "Gangs Out" Program. Additional information will soon be available at the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Community Station. Call 635-8040 to check on the availability of this info. Additionally, anyone observing possible drug activity can call 986-7468.

Another effective way to find out about activity in your neighborhoods is to visit the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Area Community Council (BACC). The BACC meets in the community station the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.

The old phrase, "there is safety in numbers," is even truer when it comes to protecting our families, our homes, our property, our schools and churches and our businesses.

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Bloomingtondale Florist Readies Roses For Valentine's Day

By JOY BOISSELLE

As Valentine's Day quickly approaches, let the mom and daughter duo of Marilyn and Karen Schotanes, co-owners of Bloomingtondale Florist, help you say, "I love you" with flowers. In business for 10 years, the Schotanes have been named the Tampa Tribune's Best of Brandon Florist for the past nine years. She's not one to brag about the achievement, but if you ask Karen, she has a pretty good idea on why they have earned it.

"We are known for good quality flowers and we carry a large variety of flowers," she said. "We also deliver good customer service, and when a customer is dissatisfied, we try to rectify the problem. We want all our customers happy."

Though the shop carries more than 25 varieties of roses, the red rose is the star of Valentine's Day according to Karen.

"For Valentine's Day, 80 percent of our arrangements are

roses. Red is the most popular color, then pink and yellow," she explained. She added that most flower purchases on Valentine's Day are by men. Statistics put the percentage at a whopping 73 percent.

Valentine's Day is the busiest day for florists, followed closely by Mother's Day. In a three-day period, florists will deliver approximately 110 million roses to loved ones across the nation. Thus, Karen has advice.

"Order early, at least a week ahead," she said. "Valentine's Day is on Saturday this year, and we want everyone to have their flowers before 6 p.m." Arrangements range from a single rose at \$15 for walk-in customers to \$35 and up for arrangements to be delivered.

Bloomingtondale Florist is located at Bloomingtondale Square Shopping Center. For information or to place your order, call (813) 654-7304 or (800) 940-7304.



Marilyn Schotanes, co-owner of Bloomingtondale Florist, displays some of the more than 25 rose varieties she keeps in stock at her store. Bloomingtondale Florist, voted first place florist in the Tampa Tribune Best of Brandon Readers Poll competition, is located in the Bloomingtondale Square Shopping Center.

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Photograph by Stephanie Dubsky

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Hi, my name is Brittany and I live in Bloomingdale East. I just turned 17 years old on Christmas Day. My people talk about how old this is for a dog but since I am their "angel", I guess my age really doesn't count. Anyway, I don't hear them talk about my age anymore; they just move their lips.



Sometimes my parents go on vacation and leave me at home. I have two sets of sitters, Mrs. Jolie and Mr. Jim and Mrs. Vi and Mr. Dennis. While I like my sitters and they give me special treats, I would prefer that my parents stay home.

A long time ago I had a cat named Tiggers. Every Saturday we would ride to the store with my dad to buy mom a lottery ticket and he would get us a jerky treat. I really don't know what happened to Tiggers but I think she got in a stranger's car thinking they were going to the store and never came back.

I do have a friend that lives across the street named Jazz. He is a black Cocker Spaniel. He is OK but he always wants to lick my ears. I don't know why 'cuz his are just as long as mine so he could lick his own.

Well, that's enough about me. Tell your people to send in your picture and tell us a little about you. They can e-mail it to inbloom-daleneews@tampabay.rr.com.

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Scouting For Food In Bloomingdale

By EILEEN HACKBARDT

"Scouting for Food" is scouting's community stewardship project aimed at addressing the problem of hunger in the community in which we live and work.

Cub Scout Pack 61 will be participating in collecting non-perishable food the week of Feb. 15 - 21, 2009. Bags will be left at houses in the Bloomingdale area. A return date will be listed on the bag. All donations will be given to ECHO, a local organization that supplies food to the hungry. There has been a huge spike in the number of people seeking assistance at ECHO this year, so your help in filling these bags is needed more than ever.



Members of Cub Scout Pack 61 drop off food at ECHO during the 2008 Scouting for Food drive.

COLD

From page 6

They sell wholesale a variety of landscape shrubs, ornamentals, citrus, roses and palms grown on 200 acres in Lithia. They are not open to the public.

"We have green houses for a lot of our tropicals," he said. "We close up all the houses. Also with some of our less cold-hardy material in our fields, we run the water during the coldest part of the night to raise the temperature around the plant so no frost settles on the foliage."

With an irrigation system, they are able to keep the water on at a low level. But not all plants like water during cold weather.

"We don't water the ornamental grasses because it could cause damage during a frost," he said.

In addition to landscape grasses, azaleas and holly bushes and trees are popular during the winter.

For backyard gardeners, a

garage can make a good replacement for a commercial grower's greenhouse.

Horticulturalists such as Anne Pigeon with Colorfield Farms, Inc. in Wimauma, advises gardeners to put a blanket over plants during a cold spell or bring the plants into a protected area such as a garage.

"Unfortunately, our problem in the Tampa Bay area is we get one or two cold nights a year," she said. "The plants we all plant in our yard are subtropical and tropical. Typically they don't like to go below 32 degrees. If we get a cold snap you get some damage on them."

She said gardeners should thoroughly water their plants before, not during, a weather event such as cold snap.

"It does not help to sprinkle water on them during the cold," she said. "You cause more damage."

Some plants that recover, but may suffer during a cold spell include pentas, red saliva and

papaya, which can be cut back and will come back from base.

In addition to butterfly plants, garden supplies, orchids, bromeliads and culinary herbs, Colorfield Farms, Inc. is known for their honeybell oranges or "Minneolas Tangelo" which are picked in January and February.

"They are very sweet and juicy," she said. "They are a cross between grapefruit and tangerines. It tastes like heaven. There is nothing else like it."

Robert Conkey of Wimauma, who owns Colorfield Farms, said people typically buy the honeybells by the dozen or by the bushel.

For people with small yards, he suggested container gardening. Containers are ideal for the winter months when some plants need shelter on cold nights.

"We have planters with flowers and herbs and even big ones that have trees in them," Conkey said. "You can have a theme basket. Container gardening is the way to go."

first met Allen at the Fear Factor event at the school and has since been buying crickets for his most beloved pets, his toads.

"When I first noticed where she was located, I was very excited I would be able to buy crickets from her," Spengler said. "We brought toads with us when we

moved from Ohio five months ago and they are our favorite pets. She also has such a great selection of animals that I love going in there. She goes above and beyond for her customers."

For information, call (813) 643-9686 or e-mail Allen at bun-geinthejungle@verizon.net.

JUNGLE

From page 8

give a 15 percent discount to teachers buying supplies for the class pet as well as board the small animal while the teachers are on break.

Mark Spengler of FishHawk

Dinner @ 6

6 ingredients, 6 servings or 6 hours in the crock pot
These recipes will help your family have dinner @ 6!

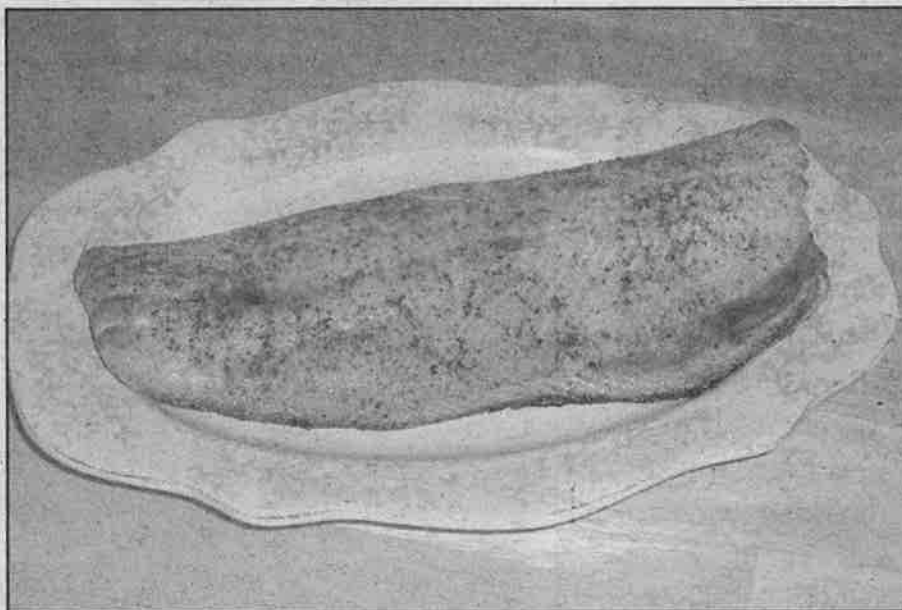
If the only thing you normally make for Valentine's Day is reservations, then this is the year to try something new. Times being what they are, flowers and dinner out might strain the budget, but a memorable dinner at home doesn't have to. Columnist Harriet van Horne once said, "Cooking is like love - it should be entered into with abandon or not at all." It's true. This year make a restaurant quality meal that's as visually appealing as it is healthy. Cooking for your family on special occasions is not only an act of love, but it's the stuff memories are made of as well. So, this year - make a memory. Make dinner.

The entrée is salmon with maple-soy glaze, which can be prepared in less than 20 minutes, start to finish. I like to serve this with wilted garlic spinach, which is also a really quick and healthy side dish.

Visit Dinner @ 6 online for a beautiful, delicious, low-fat dessert everyone will love, as well as an alternative entrée featuring red meat, a great salad and easy oven roasted potatoes.

Simple. Satisfying. Savory ~ and served with love. That's this month's dinner @ 6! Until next month...

Leslie White can be reached by e-mailing: lwhite_bloomingtondalegazette@yahoo.com. For more recipes visit Dinner @ 6 online at www.dinnerat6-lesliewhite.blogspot.com. Readers are invited to share their quick and easy meal solutions, comments and ideas.



Salmon with Maple-Soy Glaze

- 1 full salmon fillet
- 4 T. pure maple syrup
- 2 t. soy sauce
- ½ t. lime juice
- ¼ t. liquid smoke

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place fillet in 9-by-13 baking dish, coated with non-stick cooking spray. Mix maple syrup, soy sauce, lime juice and liquid smoke. Brush onto the top of salmon fillet evenly. Sprinkle fillet with a little sea salt and cracked pepper. Bake 12 minutes or until fish flakes easily with fork.

Wilted Garlic Spinach

- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 bag spinach, pre-washed
- Olive oil

In a medium non-stick skillet heat oil over medium high heat. While it's heating, slice garlic cloves. Drizzle olive oil into skillet, about 1 tablespoon. Cook garlic, stirring occasionally, until nearly crisp. Remove garlic from pan at this point and put the entire bag of spinach into seasoned oil and lower heat to medium. Continue stirring spinach until all leaves are wilted, which shouldn't take long - less than 5 minutes.

Serve alongside salmon fillet.

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\$2,000 Scholarship Available For Bloomingdale Seniors

By JOY BOISSELLE

Are you a Bloomingdale High School senior living in the Bloomingdale community AND are you looking for money to help cover college costs? Then look no further than your own back yard. Apply for the Bloomingdale Homeowner Association's annual B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship. A BHA initiative begun in 2006, the \$2,000 scholarship, honoring former Bloomingdale High Principal B.J. Stelter, will be awarded in May, just in time to defray some of educational costs.

"The objective of the scholarship is to encourage Bloomingdale High School students, who are residents of the Bloomingdale community, to pursue a college career and to reward their exemplary academic and community service efforts," said Shelia Harris, BHA board member and scholarship committee chair.

Applications are available

The deadline to apply is April 2. The winner will be notified by mail May 1 with formal presentations made May 5 at the May BHA board meeting as well as at Bloomingdale High School's end-of-year awards assembly.

at the Bloomingdale High School Guidance Resource Office as well as online at the BHA Web site, bloomingdalehomeowners.com. Eligibility criteria are: a graduating senior with a weighted grade point average of 3.0 or better; plan to attend either a two- or four-year accredited college or



JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette Photo

Last year's scholarship winner, Whitney Cull received the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship from past association president, Joe Hickle. Pictured left is B.J. Stelter, former Bloomingdale High principal.

university; parent or guardian is a resident of Bloomingdale, as defined by the BHA (proof of residency required); and BHA dues are current. Family members, including grandchildren, of the BHA Board of Directors are not eligible to apply.

The deadline to apply is April 2. The winner will be notified by mail May 1 with formal presentations made May 5 at the May BHA board meeting as well as at Bloomingdale High School's end-of-year awards assembly.

For information, e-mail the

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. Bloomingdale.Homeowners@verizon.net or call (813) 681-2051. Mail completed applications to Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc., Post Office Box 7221, Brandon, FL 33508.



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"Talk around Town" is a section of your hometown newspaper that seeks to reach out to the community. Every month, residents and those who work in our community will be asked a question, sometimes light-hearted, sometimes serious, and asked to respond. Do you have a question you would like to have asked? Email your suggestions to InBloomingtondaleNews@tampabay.rr.com.

This month's question:

"What is your idea of the perfect Valentine's Day?"



Johrdanne Collins
Brentwood Hills
(above)

My perfect day would be a day and night at the beach with a significant other complete with a bottle of wine, candles, lots of roses and rose petals."

Mike Salke
Starbucks Asst. Manager
(right)

"The perfect Valentine's Day for singles would be a romantic dinner for two. If you have family and kids, spend a nice quiet evening together with them."



Adam Mazur
Panera Bread Manager
(above)

"My idea of the perfect Valentine's Day would be to spend time with my wife at home and have a special dinner."



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