

# The Bloomingdale Gazette

Volume XVII, Number 1

Published by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

January 1997

## BHA Briefs

**Editor's Note:** This letter sent to residents of Windsor Woods could apply to every neighborhood within Bloomingdale.

Dear Neighbors:

A number of you have recently approached the BHA regarding increasing disrespect of deed restrictions. Home ownership represents the single-largest investment many of us will make in a lifetime. Every property owner has a basic right to enjoy and protect his home, and that sometimes presents a quandary.

One person's "enjoyment" can diminish another homeowner's enjoyment, as well as the value and security of surrounding homes. In Florida, and in most new developments across the country, we try to balance an individual's rights with those of his neighbors through county code enforcement and deed restrictions.

Windsor Woods was established with a set of these restrictions (Declaration of Covenants & Restrictions, Bloomingdale Section PQ, dated 1986). They are not perfect. If you were to sit down and draft them again today, you would likely draft them differently. However, they are one of the few protections we have to help us protect our future property values. In any case, they are *extremely* hard to amend.

Each development has its own unique set of covenants guarding the rights of all who live there. Some are more lengthy than those applicable to Windsor Woods, but none were written to be onerous. They only represent the developers best guess at what would be needed. As stated in the preamble to the Windsor Woods Covenants: "in order to protect the health and welfare of the public, to protect property values and maintain the attractiveness of the community, desires to impose certain..." You need only look as far as North Brandon, or as near as Fox Run to immediately see their importance.

The basis of enforcing these restrictions is voluntary compliance. Each one of us, when we bought our homes, agreed to live by these rules. When you choose to now deviate from them you are in effect snubbing your neighbors and robbing them of the full enjoyment of their property and its value. Even when the family next door, attempting to get along, says "it's O.K.," that won't make it right. Nor do they have the power to approve a deviation. For deed restrictions to work fairly, they must be applied consistently all of the time.

Several real estate agents have stated that potential buyers are "scared off" by the disregard of those covenants. No one would lose much sleep over that fact alone, until you realize the financial implication to our wallets. House prices are usually determined by a market analysis, or survey of current resales; driving buyers away drives down those prices. On the other hand, consistent price appreciation with resales will result in a greater sales price for your home when you decide to move. Again, compare the prices per square foot in Fox Run to those in Windsor Woods. You'll quickly see the correlation between strongly enforced deed restrictions and property values.

A few people have complained that they did not receive copies of the restrictions, regardless, these are still enforceable and you must abide by them. Your title insurance company may be willing to provide you with a copy of your deed restrictions. The BHA also has copies of the deed restriction in the Bloomingdale Community Office. Several of the restrictions are also required by county codes, or require permits that can be revoked if they contradict the Declaration of Covenants & Restrictions.

One definition of community is a collection of individuals banded together for their common good. The BHA, a volunteer organization made up of your neighbors, is committed to keeping Bloomingdale an attractive, safe community to raise your family as well as protect your property. As your development continues to grow, we stand ready to help you with this matter.

Sincerely,  
The Bloomingdale Homeowners' Association.

## Speed Humps Turned Down, Sidewalks Recommended

By Chris-Anne Phillips

Traffic and ways to reduce speeding along Canoga Park Drive were the topic of a community meeting with county officials Dec. 19 with one message received loud and clear - residents want no more speed humps in Bloomingdale West.

County-appointed hearing master Jerry Devkowsky said Canoga Park Drive has received a Class 2 rating, meaning it is considered an emergency situation.

The meeting turned emotional when residents along Bloomingfield voiced loud opposition to speed humps being installed along Canoga Park Drive in an effort to slow down motorists in the area of the recreation center.

But emotions ran just as high on the other end where one resident recalled the tragic death of six-year-old Jonathan Faber, struck by a car while crossing Canoga Park on his bicycle last June. While the resident wasn't in favor of speed humps, it raised the need for traffic control

measures to the extent that those so opposed to speed humps were willing to concede to the installation of one.

Devkowsky will include among his recommendations the installation of one speed hump at Canoga Park Drive and Garnet. He also will recommend sidewalks and special enforcement by the sheriff's department. In addition, he will recommend the county investigate the affect speed humps on Bloomingfield have on traffic and perhaps recommend a "new kind" of traffic circle at Bloomingfield and Canoga Park Drive.

His findings will be presented to the county and petitions may be required to put any recommendations into effect.

Nearly 60 residents attended the meeting that was scheduled in response to a letter requesting speed humps along Canoga Park.

The traffic survey that followed indicated 2,723 cars

See HUMPS, page 8

## Bloomingdale 1996 Retrospective



Even with double sessions in effect, Bloomingdale hallways are still crowded.

With the good came some bad in 1996. New construction meant either less congested rush hour traffic or greater housing density; busing into the inner city was stopped, but it resulted in double sessions and a middle school at two different campuses; a new recreation center opened, but increased activity created traffic and pedestrian hazards; water bills went up but not to the extent that residents were willing to tie themselves into a 20-year debt. There were a lot of people in Bloomingdale who made us proud to call them neighbors and some who have wasted too much energy defacing our community.

Here are some of the highlights and low-lights of 1996.

### No. 1 School Schedule Has Parents Seeing Double

Families with children at Bloomingdale High School had to adjust to a new routine this year. For the first time since 1985 two Hillsborough County schools were placed on double sessions as a solution to overcrowding. The most populated areas of the county - Northwest and East - found the largest enrollment at their schools Gaither and

See 1996, page 3

## Help Needed Capturing Vandals; Damage Costing Residents Money

by Chris-Anne Phillips

The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District is looking for residents' help in catching vandals who are defacing the community and robbing costly items.

Property manager Alan Devney began his morning routine of driving around the community Jan. 2 and was dismayed to find yet more acts of vandalism to the common grounds.

A motorist with a four-wheel drive vehicle dug ruts into the tree bed on Erin Dale and dug up sod in three or four places, Devney said.

Rounding the corner onto Culbreath, he was met with more unpleasant sights, the St. Augustine grass in front of The Greens had been dug up and turned to mud by vehicle tires.

Devney said this is becoming more and more the norm. He never knows what he will find on his morning rounds. And he is no longer surprised.

In the past year, he has painted and repainted walls marked by graffiti, re-planted dug up shrubbery, replaced smashed or stolen light bulbs, purchased letters to replace



Brass letters on entry signs are a common target for vandals. They cost approximately \$50 to \$75 each to replace.

those stolen or kicked off entrance signs, and replaced broken sprinkler heads.

"It's reached an intolerable level," Devney said. "These are malicious acts by young people."

Devney said he believes passersby have seen these acts of vandalism in early-morning hours, and asks that witnesses to such acts write down the license plate number and turn it

in to the STD. The sheriff's department will do the rest.

"These people have to be stopped," Devney said. "It's costing residents tax dollars every time something has to be replaced."

Devney estimates more than \$10,000 is spent annually

See VANDALS, page 11

# BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY PAGE



Dear Readers,

As you may have noticed the greater Bloomingdale area has been in a flux of change for the past 2 years, and will continue to change over the next five years. Some changes are good and some not so good. No matter how you feel about the changes, be prepared for what they bring.

These changes will not eliminate our basic community concerns, nor will it ensure community peace and prosperity. But with the combined efforts of more people to understand and use these changes positively, we as a community can reinforce the instinct and desire for cooperation that are basic to the human condition. By getting involved with the BHA you can help monitor these community changes. With your help and assistance the BHA board can better plan the future of our community.

These changes should not bewilder you, they should challenge you. In understanding and being part of the change, it can reduce the fear it holds and increase the hope it brings; and while life for each of us is an ever-increasing amount of rain, by understanding these changes we can continue to build new bridges.

Sincerely,

Rick Oros

## Our Times

# The Wall Is Gone, But Identity Left A Long Time Ago

By Rozel Sculli

Well it finally happened. The community has lost the one tangible part of its identity.

The Bloomingdale sign was devoured by the bulldozer's jaws to make way for a drug store.

Although from time to time it would lose any assortment of letters, the message was clear that residents had come home and guests had entered a distinct community.

What sign? Some of you may be asking.

It wasn't really a sign at all. It was a wall with a cascading landscape at its feet on the corner of Bell Shoals and Bloomingdale that announced the presence of a unique place.

More than 17 years ago the project of a vast planned community was undertaken. There was nothing like it anywhere in Eastern Hillsborough County.

Builders had developed subdivisions of homes in north and south Brandon, but nothing to the extent of what Criterion had planned and named Bloomingdale.

The name rang with prestige like the similarly named upscale department store in New York City.

The Wall in its prime, attracted motorists' attention away from the cold, gray steel of the electrical substation on the opposite corner. It set this southeast corner apart from the fast food restaurants and strip shopping centers to the west.

At times, it was attractively landscaped and oak limbs embraced to form a canopy over its majestic façade.

Two years ago when we learned of its impending doom, I wrote a column asking that the new developers recognize the importance of a community's identity and erect a sign or wall announcing the entrance to Bloomingdale.

But is it the entrance any more?

What has Bloomingdale become but an umbrella name for the myriad subdivisions that are housed within.

Do residents of The Estates care that

Bloomingdale be heralded at the corner of Bell Shoals? They have their own entrance off John Moore. And what about all those who use the Lithia Pinecrest entrance on Erin Dale? Their landmark is a pink convenience store. The Glenhaven entrance off Bell Shoals is more known for leading visitors to Bloomingdale Golfers Club. And Rosemead is known primarily has a street where it's hell to turn left onto Bell Shoals. And no one is quite sure how to pronounce Garnet, the second entrance to West. It is like the ruddy gem or should it have ended in "ette"?

So where does Bloomingdale's identity lie?

The efforts of the Special Taxing District are well-intended. It is their plan to rebuild the Bloomingdale entrances - all seven of them. To make grand lighted entrances that are beautifully landscaped. The kind that remind residents they live in a special place and are a classy welcome to guests. The expense will prohibit any more than two to be completed in a fiscal year, but that's a start and no matter who serves on the board, there needs to be a commitment to the completion of the project.

It's unfortunate that we need tangible evidence of our identity. But a visible source of pride can instill pride of ownership where it may have been lost. It may inspire a homeowner to paint his house or clean up his yard. People might remember there are restrictions to certain changes. And others might recall that they live in Bloomingdale first instead of hidden behind the brick or stucco wall of their private neighborhood.

This isn't River Crossing, or West or East, or Cambridge Cove or "the apartments". It's Bloomingdale.

It's a shame we need a sign to remind of us of that.

Good-bye Wall. There was a time when you helped us remember who we are.

## OFFICERS

**BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
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Valrico, Florida 33594  
681-2051

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### Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

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Tom Snelling Trustee 681-9186  
Chris Hering Trustee 654-0235  
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John Britton Treasurer 681-1553  
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Rick Boring 684-2022

### Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

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## The Bloomingdale Gazette

3244 Lithia Pinecrest Road • Suite 103  
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HOURS: M & F: 9:30-12:30,  
T & TH: 9:00-11:00, W: 9:30-2:30

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### Statement of Operation

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## MEETINGS

All meetings take place at the Bloomingdale Community Office. These are monthly public meetings and all Bloomingdale residents are invited.

### Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

Second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

### BHA Board of Directors

Second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

### Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

First Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

### Mobile Watch & Neighborhood Watch

Watch this listing for dates & times. The meetings are held on a per need basis.

## Important Notice To Home Associations

The Bloomingdale Community office receives many calls that pertain to specific Homeowners Associations within the whole of Bloomingdale.

While all residents of Bloomingdale East, West, South and Estate are entitled to be members of the Bloomingdale Homeowners' Association (BHA), many subdivisions such as The Greens or Erin Arbor have their own associations.

With many new communities growing up in Bloomingdale South and new associations forming, it is important for the Community Office to have a contact name and phone number for each asso-

ciation.

At this time we ask your help in providing this valuable information to our staff. We ask that a representative from each association, new and old, provide a name and phone number to the Community Office by the first of the year.

Mail or drop off the information to The Bloomingdale Community Office, 3244 Lithia Pinecrest Road, Suite 103, Valrico, FL 33594. For information, call 681-2051. Office hours are 9:30 to 12:30 Monday and Friday; 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and 9:30 to 1:30 Wednesday.

## NIP Report

Happy New Year from all of us with the NIP Program. We thought this would be a good time to refresh you on some of the county restrictions that are most often violated.

Recreational vehicles, boats, travel trailers, motor homes, etc., that are over 20 feet in length must keep a 20-foot setback from the side property line on the street side. If it is under 20 feet in length, there is not a front yard setback required. Such vehicles must be parked on property, not on the right-of-way.

Boat trailers are not included in the recreational vehicle code, but they must be parked so that they do not hang over the sidewalk or right-of-way.

Recreational vehicles and domestic vehicles must be in good repair and have current tags and only one recreational vehicle is allowed per property. Again, these are county violations and if you are in violation, the county will be notified after you have been sent a card or given time to correct the violation.

Fences must be kept in good repair. If you have broken slats, please remove and replace them. Nothing makes a neighbor-

hood look more run down than broken, run down fences. Our area has a lot of growth in the last few years. With all the beautiful new homes, please let's not let our other areas get run down.

Please remember there are deed restrictions in your area that may be stricter than the county code, so check out the restrictions for your area. If you are unsure or don't have a copy of deed restrictions, please visit the community office to make a copy.

It's in all our best interests to keep our neighborhoods looking good. You cooperations is appreciated should you receive a deed or county violation card for a car parked on the grass, broken fence garbage can in sight - it's very simple to comply. Move your car off the grass, fix your fence and please keep your garbage cans out of sight.

It's all just so many small things not taken care of that make our neighborhoods look run down.

The restrictions apply to every home in Bloomingdale. Let's all do our best to comply and keep Bloomingdale a place we're proud to call home.

# Bloomingtondale 1996 retrospective

## 1996 from page 1

Bloomingtondale.

Bloomingtondale parents were angry when they felt the county had gone back on its word to keep the high school off double sessions. A series of public meetings left few questions answered and the county placed the blame back on the residents who failed to pass the half-cent sales tax the first time it came up for a vote.

The 3,000-plus students at BHS began the first of what is projected to be two schools years on double sessions with seniors and juniors attending classes in the morning and sophomores and freshmen going to class in the afternoon.

It made for mind-boggling scheduling for administrators who vowed to accommodate students with advanced level classes and extra-curricular activities. For some, it meant getting out of school at 5:30, rush home for dinner, and return to school for band practice sometimes until 9 or 10 p.m., a late night for 5 a.m. wake up calls for the upperclassmen.

Bloomingtondale wasn't the only school seeing double-when Burns became a middle school in the fall, it had to settle in at two separate campuses. The original campus wasn't large enough to house sixth graders, so the youngest Bruins had to attend the new Valrico Elementary School, or Burns Middle School, Valrico Campus, on Miller Road.

When the half-cent sales tax came up for a second vote, it passed, with the biggest votes in favor of the tax coming in the Gaither and Bloomingtondale schools district, as expected.

It will allow for the construction of 15 new schools, including a new high school and two new middle schools in this area.

## No. 2 New Construction Booming

Residents of Bloomingtondale East who didn't venture past their neighborhoods to the nearest exit during the year are in for a surprise. Bloomingtondale has hit maximum density with at least eight new subdivisions under construction in what is now being called Bloomingtondale South.

The build-out of the Bloomingtondale Community is taking place down Culbreath Road and along the south loop of Nature's Way.

With names like Bristol Green, Somerset and Heritage Park, Cambridge Cove and Bloomingtondale Cove, The Links, Villas of Bloomingtondale and Bloomingtondale Golfers' Club homes have sprung up in every price range from the 90s to half-million dollar mark.

When completed, developers will have added 1,000 new homes to the community.

## No. 3 Finally, A Place to Recreate

In June, the long-awaited Bloomingtondale Park West Recreation Center opened to cheers of parents who discovered inexpensive child care for the summer months. More than 200 children enrolled in the center's summer

program.

The playground has attracted the young and not-so-young like men's Sunday flag football league. And specialty classes draw residents to the center in the evenings.

But the Community Center has been more than a place for children and adults to play. It has already been the site of two major community meetings involving county officials.

## No. 4 Kinder, Gentler Bloomingtondale Ave.

After nearly 18 months of construction, Bloomingtondale Avenue widening from Bell Shoals to John Moore Road was completed with its best feature - a light a Bryan Road. The only drawback is now women can't apply make-up



The completion of Bloomingtondale widening made morning and afternoon drive time less stressful.

and men can't shave while stopped in traffic.

While the widening has helped with east-west traffic flow, it hasn't alleviated the insufferable back-ups north and south at Bell Shoals.

The next phase to be completed is between Kings and Highway 301 and drawings are in the works for the next road mess between Bell Shoals and Lithia Pinecrest.

## No. 5 Gangs, Vandalism Plague Community

While one community along Sandy Creek Drive is was beautifying its environment by giving new life to what was once an overgrown pond, others are giving Bloomingtondale a black eye.

Gang graffiti became more prevalent as did vandalism of entryway signage and theft of landscaping plants. Residents had hammered home the message that the vandalism, whether being committed by them or their children, is costing them tax dollars.

Bloomingtondale received the express attention of the Sheriff's Department's Gang Suppression Unit, whose officials have met with schools officials and parents to educate them in looking for signs in their children that might indicate gang involvement.



The Bloomingtondale West Recreation Center which opened in June is enjoyed by youngsters and adults like Mark Shor who walks the exercise path.

## No. 6 Putting The Horse Before The Cart

When the county built the new rec center it didn't take into consideration the increased traffic in the area, especially pedestrian traffic on foot or bicycle.

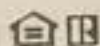
The need for caution signs, bike lanes and sidewalks  
See 1996, page 4

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# Bloomingtondale 1996 Retrospective

was realized after a six-year-old boy was struck and killed while crossing Canoga Park on his bike.

The tragedy induced an outcry from area residents who attended a standing room only meeting with county road officials and Commissioner Dottie Berger.

The meeting resulted in a reduced speed limit, caution signs and a bicycle lane, but sidewalks are still being considered as the search for funding continues.

## No. 7 Reclaimed Water Goes Unclaimed

Rising water bills had homeowners looking for alternatives. One that was given serious consideration was reclaimed water.

It was announced in February, the county program would be available to the Bloomingtondale area, but closer inspection of the program which offers unlimited use of water for lawn maintenance, revealed the high start-up costs and long-term financial commitment homeowners would be facing.

The treated wastewater would run through conduits that would have to be installed in the community and would be paid at a rate of \$422.67 a year for 20 years. More than 55 percent of the homeowners in an area receiving the water would have to approve the installation, meaning those who were opposed would still be liable for their share of the cost if the majority prevailed.

Fox Run residents sought out the program most aggressively and in the end, decided the 20-year financial commitment was a disadvantage that far outweighed the advantages.

## No. 8 Small Shops Give Way to Mall

The Bloomingtondale Gazette reported in its March issue that several businesses had suffered financial loss and moved out of Bloomingtondale Square as a result of the opening of Brandon TownCenter.

Businesses like Carvel, Elephant's Trunk, Little Professor Book Store, Video Show, Stuarts and Giorggi's had either closed or set up shop in the more lucrative mall corridor.

"There wasn't enough traffic after the mall opened," said Phillip Giorggi, owner of a men's apparel store that relocated to the mall area. "No question about it, the mall affected Bloomingtondale Square to a big extent."

But Square management said change is expected as consumer preferences shift. The Square has become more service oriented with real estate offices and health services opening in the past year.

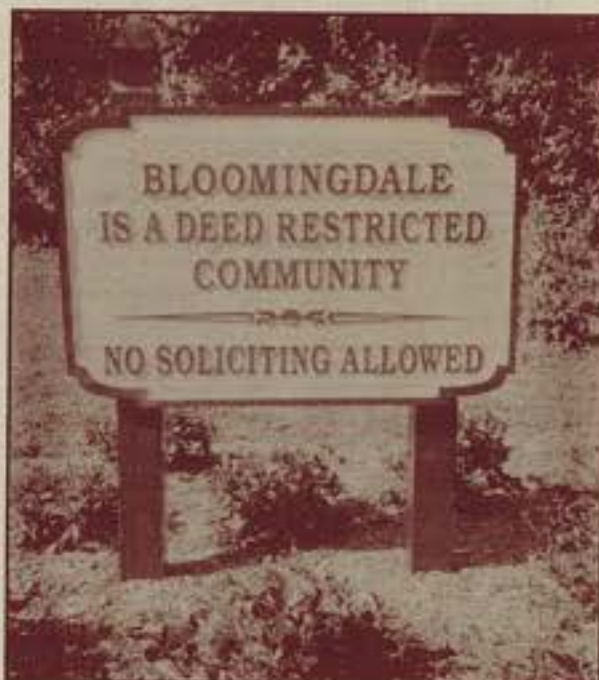
And while some businesses moved, those who stayed

say they enjoyed banner a year.

"Actually it's getting better," said Randy Cunningham, owner of Bloomingtondale Square Liquors.

And Bealls reported its Bloomingtondale store is in the top 5 percent of the 62-store Florida chain.

But while shop owners were moving out of the Square, new commercial centers were begun at Lithia Pinecrest where an Albertson's is being built and has changed the configuration of Miller Road, and at Bell Shoals and Bloomingtondale where a Walgreens and adjacent shopping strip are under construction.



No soliciting signs have been enstalled at entry ways to Bloomingtondale.

## No. 9 Go Away, We Don't Want Any

The Bloomingtondale Special Taxing District want peddlers to get the message - No Soliciting Allowed in Bloomingtondale.

The STD erected seven signs, one at each entrance to the communities, and while residents say the signs don't keep away every door-to-door salesperson, the signs make it easier for residents to shoo them away by pointing out the restriction.

The Gazette has received word that it has not deterred children's fund raising, but that was never the STDs intent. "We just want to keep outsiders out," STD president

Rick Pitrowski said at the time.

## No. 10 It's Fun to be at the YMCA

The Village People weren't singing about the YMCA, but Bloomingtondale's residents were buzzing about it once they learned a new center was being planned for south Brandon. Pledge/membership cards were circulated to residents who did not respond has it was hoped they would, but that didn't stop the Y folks from picking Bloomingtondale as its next location.

The new center would complement the Y's Camp Cristina, an outdoor YMCA experience south of here off Boyette Road.

The Y figures, "If we build it, they will come." No real estimate on when folks will be able to take advantage of the Young Men's Christian Association, but guess is, it's still two years away. One site that continues to come up is the vacant lot across from the Bloomingtondale Little League on Culbreath. The new facility is projected to cost \$3.5 million.

## Passing:

- Karen Willis, beloved computer teacher at Alafia Elementary, lost her battle with cancer. A memorial park is planned at the school to honor her memory.
- Family and friends mourned the sudden passing of East resident Cleve Wilson III, an active member of his church and community.
- Tragedy struck close to home when a fatal accident took the lives of residents Vincenza Ruiz and her nine-year-old son Andrew.
- For the family and classmates of six-year-old Nicholas Faber, Canoga Park Drive at Garnet will remain a sad remembrance.



Karen Willis

## 1996 Notables:

- West Resident Tim Golden for his efforts is making the park area a safer place.
- Center director Donna Clouse who finally got to open the

See 1996, page 5

# Earn Extra Income!!!



The Bloomingtondale Gazette is looking for an advertising representative.

Must enjoy meeting people.

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681-2051.



The Bloomingtondale Gazette is looking for "Delivery Kids". Routes available are:

- Sandy Creek Drive
- Wynnwood Drive
- Isleton Drive
- Tyndale Drive
- Bloomingtondale Estates, No.

For more information call Ms. Halaufia at 661-6707.

# Bloomingtondale 1996 Retrospective

county's newest rec center in her very own community.

- **Dick Hamilton**, Fox Run resident who worked tirelessly to find out everything there was to know about reclaimed water.
- **Jenna O'Keefe**, who organized the clean-up of Friendship Pond behind her Sandy Creek home.
- **Rick Pitrowski**, et al. were successful in having school bus stops moved away from community entrances so kids wouldn't block intersections or be tempted to play in the landscaping or to destroy signage.

Austin's seat belt awareness poster won best in the state.

- Resident **John Hughes** graduated first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.
- Talented resident **Skye Perry** won the Ruth Eckerd Hall Youth Scholarship award.
- Resident **Kimberly Blanchard** was chosen Outstanding Graduating Female Leader at the University of Florida.
- **Sue Allen**, resident artist, won the highest honor at the Brandon League of



Randy Wolfe

elect ed president of the Brandon Presidents' Roundtable.

- PTAs win state, county awards. Alafia received the Local Unit Achievement Award

from the Florida State PTA for the third consecutive year, and Lithia Springs was named the best PTA in the county.

• Bloomingtondale East resident **Matthew**



Matthew Austin's award winning poster



Sue Allen

Fine Arts fall show.

- **Judy Kiser** of West who organized her neighborhood's first block party - recognized because more neighborhood functions are needed for a happy, healthy, involved community.

*Happy New Year from the staff of The Bloomingtondale Gazette*

# Bits and Pieces

Around Bloomingtondale



## Resident Photographer Work Exhibited

By Gazette Staff  
On Display

The photographic collection of **Betsy Snow** will be on display during January at Center Place. Ms. Snow is a Bloomingtondale resident having relocated from the Jacksonville area. She specializes in artistic portraiture of families, individuals and children created in the natural environment.

Ms. Snow began by studying for two years under a prominent master photographer before beginning her own business. She has won local and statewide awards for her excellence in photographic portraiture.

who attended to sign. The card and a donation from the Davis' were contributed to the Children's Miracle Network on behalf of the people of attended the gathering.

"I think that in today's impersonal world, this idea of 'neighbors' isn't as strong as it should be," Davis said. "I would like to strengthen the concept of neighborhood."

## Get Culture

Dinner theater and barber shop singing highlight the cultural events at Center Place next month.

The 1997 Dinner Theater season begins in February at Center Place with "Love Letters" just in time for Valentine's Day.

Stage Door Community Theatre, will present "Love Letters" in a 5:30 matinee on Feb. 9 and evening shows Feb. 8, 14 and 15 at 8:00. A dinner buffet will be offered one hour prior to each show.

Reserved seating is \$20 a person for dinner and the show. The reservation deadline is Feb. 4 for the shows on the 8th and 9th, and Feb. 11 for the shows on the 14th and 15th.

For information, call 685-8888.

The Center Sounds series will feature a Barber Shop Quartet on Sunday, Feb. 16 at 3 p.m. There is no charge for the event, but due to limited seating tickets are required. They are available in the Center Place office. Refreshments will be provided.

The musical selections will showcase the talents of quartet members who have been in national and international competition, and have earned several top 10 rankings.

## Holiday Thank-you



Michael and Judy Davis

Michael and Judy Davis hosted a Christmas gathering for their neighbors and clients at their home in The Greens on Dec. 7.

As part of the festivities, Davis purchased a large Christmas card for those

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# Happy New Year



## Church and Synagogue News

### Move Forward In The New Year

By Ellen Slovacek

It's a new year. Indeed, nearly a new millennium. A new year offers each of us a new beginning. And by the looks of my somewhat crowded aerobics class this morning, I can see that there are many of us who feel it is time to move onward and upward...or at least not "outward" anymore.

A few years ago, I heard a universal truth that stuck in my mind. And when I get discouraged, I think of this truth:

"It doesn't matter where you are on the continuum of life, but the direction in which you are moving."

I like that. When I look back at all the mistakes I made last year, and all the goals that were not achieved, I take solace in the thought that at least I tried. And though I didn't attain perfection in any particular area, I can at least say I am closer to some of my goals than I was last year. yes, maybe I'm inching my way toward a goal, but I am getting closer to it. It's a heck of a lot better than backsliding.

Maybe for some of you, as you begin 1997, you are in the middle of a divorce. Your marriage is hopelessly lost. That's okay. At least you are doing something about it. Onward and upward on the continuum! Over the next year you can inch your way into better relationships. Take stock of where you are right now and move forward.

There are probably many of us (I have to include myself in this group) who are, let's say, not quite the picture of health. That's okay. I have a good friend who at this time last year was 100 pounds overweight. On the "picture of good health" continuum, he was lagging way behind. But he started walking every day and monitoring his eating habits. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, he started shedding weight. Today, a year later, he is 100 pounds lighter. At the beginning of last year, I wanted to lose 10 pounds. Guess what? At the beginning of this year, I still want to lose 10 pounds. I may have been farther ahead on that continuum of good

health than my friend, but he was headed in the right direction. He kept moving and passed me, even though I had a 90-pound head start.

"It doesn't matter where you are on the continuum of life, but the direction in which you are moving."

I have one last thought for you to ponder as you take stock of where you are and where you want to be this time next year. I heard a friend in our church once say, "The beauty of the gospel is that you don't have to be what you are." That's what repentance is all about. Changing yourself for the better. The Lord will help you with that, because He wants you to be the best you can be. Anything is possible with His help, even eventual perfection.

Happy New Year and may God bless you in your efforts.

#### Now here's what's happening...

The Women in Focus Ministry of the Bell Shoals Baptist Church, 2102 Bell Shoals Road, invite all area women to their Tuesday morning Fruitful Hands Craft class. A different craft is made each week. Sample crafts and supply lists are available at the display board located in the concourse near the Special Events Center. Child care is available at no charge with reservations required one week in advance. Call Cynthia Alford at 661-5561 for more information.

The Singles Ministry of First Baptist Church, 216 N. Parsons, is beginning a "Dealing with Divorce" workshop. The video series, "Rebuilding the Castle That Has Come Down" and Jim Smokes' book, "Growing Through Divorce" will be used. The small group sessions will be conducted by trained leaders. The series will be each Wednesday through Feb. 12. Classes are 6:15 to 8 p.m. and child care will be provided at no extra cost. All sessions will be held in the Stone House at 108 Sadie Street. For information, call 689-1204.

## Calling All Winter and Spring Brides

Your wedding can be prominently and elegantly displayed in

*The Bloomingdale Gazette.*

If you, your parents or in-laws are a Bloomingdale resident and you have a spring or summer wedding planned, please call us and we will mail our wedding form to you. You may complete the form and return it to our office with a photograph during the wedding month.

Share this joyous occasion with your neighbors and have a keepsake to add to your wedding memories.

*The Gazette* will focus on the details of your nuptials - the theme colors and flowers, an elaborate description of the bride's gown, and complete listing of the wedding party. Give us reception details and other special information like family traditions that may have been incorporated in the ceremony. Best of all, we will include a photograph of the bride or bride and groom.

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Mail the following information to *The Bloomingdale Gazette*, 3244 Lithia Pinecrest Rd., Suite 103, Valrico, FL 33594, or call the Community Office at 681-2051 and leave your name and address. We will mail a form to you immediately.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Bride and groom, first and last names)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
(if address is out of town, please ALSO give address of Bloomingdale resident)

Local telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Kids Kalendar Rated G

### Children's Theater

Stages Productions returns to Center Place with a musical presentation of "Jack and the Beanstalk". There will be a daytime show on Jan. 23 at 9:30 a.m. and evening performances on Jan. 24 and 31 at 7 p.m.

Children will meet a tap dancing goose, a singing wind-up harp, and a loveable gentle giant with an Arnold Schwarzenegger voice. The colorful cast outwits the evil Baron and the play ends with a fresh twist.

Tickets for the play, which is recommended for children 3 and up, are \$2.50 a person and must be purchased in advance.

Coming in February will be a performance of "Three Little Pigs" on the 28th.

### Reading Adventures

Nationally acclaimed actor, singer and guitarist, John Fogarty, will lead children on a musical adventure when librarian Will Reade and his puppet pal, BW, host Adventures by the Book on Jan. 12 at 2:30 at Center Place.

Reade and his bookworm buddy will

introduce the audience to Huck Finn, the Little Mermaid, Peter Pan, Red Riding Hood and many other famous characters, inspiring children to discover the joy of reading on their own.

The program is free, but tickets must be obtained at Center Place because seating is limited.

### Badge Workshops

Boy and Girl Scouts can investigate the wonders of science in workshops at the Museum of Science and Industry that fulfill badge requirements. Workshops are held Saturdays 10 a.m. to noon or 1 to 3 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 3 p.m. Cost is \$10 a scout. A minimum of 15 scouts is required.

Jan. 18 - (Boy Scouts) General Science; Jan. 19 - (Brownie Girl Scouts) Science Wonders; Jan. 20 - (Junior Girl Scouts) World of Today & Tomorrow Dabbler; Jan. 25 - (Bear Cub Scouts) Aircraft; Jan. 26 - (Wolf Cub Scouts) Machine Power.

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# Gator Tales



## PTA Plans New Playground

By Gazette Staff

Alafia's PTA board has selected as its major project of the year building a playground for all grade level students.

But the expense is more than they can handle so the PTA is looking for business partnerships to help fund the badly needed playground equipment. Currently, only a basketball court exists for older children.

"There is not a real playground," PTA president Michelle Colesanti said. "Everybody needed everything, but we decided to do something for the children for a change."

An existing playground is for kindergarten children only. It consists of crawl-through tubes, a balance beam, and monkey bars.

"We need larger equipment for the older children,"

Colesanti said.

She stated the PTA can afford between \$5,000 and \$10,000 of the cost of equipment, but that larger equipment will cost more. Already, Bauch and Lombe has made a \$1,000 contribution.

The idea for a playground came from Principal Tanley Cabrera, who was an assistant principal at Seffner Elementary School before she was promoted.

At Seffner, the school was awarded a \$35,000 grant to purchase equipment for a playground for special needs children. The school also has a full-sized playground for its other students.

"We hope to have it in by the end of the year," Colesanti said. "It took a couple of years at Seffner."

Colesanti said board members will be meeting with Cabrera on Jan. 15 to discuss needs and costs.

January is when everyone takes time to recover from Christmas. But one PTA item on tap is a Pizza Dinner and Bake Sale Jan. 23. It will be held in the school cafeteria from 5 to 7 p.m. Parents should look for details to come home with their student.

# Alafia Award Winners

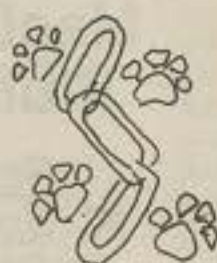
Alafia Elementary School announced its inaugural Alligator Excellence in Education Award winners for the first grading period last month. Students in grades one through five, who, during the first grading period have achieved all A's and have maintained appropriate behavioral standards earned the award and are as follows:

Grade 1 - William Aisenberg, Lauren Bailey, Suke Benson, Thomas Berlacher, Stacey Bordalo, Andrew Bottoms, Ryan Boyette, Jewel Brown, Nick Bucholz, Taylor Caplinger, Olivia Chaires, Maggie Coker, Jordyn Corder-Wolfe, Whitney Cull, Kendrick Cummins, Paul Davis, K. K. Engram, Wesley Faulk, Brittany Francis, Emily Frazier, Adam Biovino, Alexandra Glover, Cameron Gordon, Matthew Hamm, Zeina Hasbini, Jared Holme, Melanie Hoos, Megan Hudson, Brian Inch, Alex Kacer, Anthony Lobascio, Angelina Lalima, Dustin Mattingly, Rachel Maxwell, Daniel McClellan, Caitlin Montaldo, Hannah Morgan, Kelsey Nelson, Melissa Nichols, Nicole Ortega, Thanyevia Pollard, Zakery Reese, Lindsay Riches, Kelli Serio, Bailey Shertzinger, Jenna Simonson, Sam Singletary, Abigail Smith, Ashley Squires, Tina Trice, Kandace Valentine, Jordain Whatley, Amy Williams, Jamie Wood, and Kristen Woodberry.

Grade 2 - Lauren Ashley, Nicolas Astore, Meagan Baytarian, Paul Boyette, Exequiel Bravo, Ben Brekhus, Rachel Brunson, Cameron Bullock, Melissa Chudow, James Clark, Angelina Dale, Victoria Dale, Thomas Desmond, Danielle Echols, Robert Ferdinand, Tara Fowke, Timothy Goss, Kristin Gocomin, Brittany Hill, Derek Hirsch, Janelle Karlen, Rachel Kelly, Kyrsten Lee, Alexander Lewis, John Lockett, Michael McConville, Sherrick McFarlane, Matthew Miller, Shannon Moore, Bradley Myers, Tyler Myers, Jasmine Oliver, Sarah Paquin, Stephanie Piotrowski, David Placke, Kelsey Primiano, Richard Riopel, Lauren Romero, Elizabeth Rossi, Jourdan Santome, Bradley Schneider, Erica Scholl, Cynthia Scott, Kristen Shader, Tiffany Shannon, Mitchell Shipman, Anna Shirina, Kyle Simpson, Darin Smith, Myles Strong, Sarah Sullivan, Elyse Szczepanski, Shannan Stewart, Kaitlyn Tomlinson, Kelsey Vadelune, and Lauren West.

See AWARD, page 8

# Lithia Lynx



## Mrs. Terrell Top Teacher

By Ron Pogorzelski

While shopping for gifts at Brandon TownCenter last month, a teacher mentioned to a young sales girl that she taught at Lithia Springs Elementary School.

"Then you must know Mrs. Terrell who is my all-time favorite teacher," said the young sales clerk. "I made up my mind many years ago I was going to be just like her. I

graduate in elementary education this coming semester and she is still my idol."

No greater compliment can be paid a teacher than to be emulated.

Linda Terrell, a second grade teacher, is Lithia Springs Elementary Teacher of the Year. A dedicated veteran of 25 years, her enthusiasm for teaching and love of children have never waned.

Admired by her colleagues, she is described as "quiet, organized and very effective."

"Observe her at work or talk to her students," one teacher commented. "and you'll know that she is teacher of the year. She inspires her students."

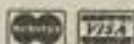
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# Bulletin Board

### Dates To Note:

- Jan. 16 - 2nd grading period ends
- Jan. 17 - Student holiday
- Jan. 20 - School holiday
- Jan. 29 - Half-day
- Jan. 31 - Elementary report cards
- Feb. 6 - Secondary report cards

### Band Instruments Needed

Mary Help of Christians School, a private, non profit middle school for boys is seeking band instruments for use by students in a revived school band.

The school is particularly in need of flutes and an electronic keyboard. Some instruments exist from an original boys' band started at the school in the 1930s, but many are in poor shape and repair costs are prohibitive, said

Brother Sal Sammarco, who will lead the band.

"I'm hoping that there are some people in our community who might once have played an instrument, still have it and might be willing to donate it to the school for use by our students," he said.

Those wishing to donate instruments or who seek additional information should contact the school at 626-6191.

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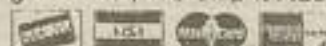
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PREMIUM

# Bulls' Teams Tops At Diadora



Bloomingtondale's boys' soccer team captured the Diadora Classic among a field of the state's elite teams.

By Gazette Staff

It was a virtual Bull-rush at the prestigious Diadora Classic Soccer Tournament in December. Bloomingtondale teams were bullish on opponents capturing both the boys and girls championships in one of the most elite soccer showcases in the state.

The Bloomingtondale boys won the third annual event in a 4-1 victory against cross town rival Gaither, while the girls remained undefeated with a 5-1 victory against Lakeland Jenkins in the inaugural tournament for girls.

Matt Lepley put the Bulls on top 1-0 on an unassisted goal, then scored again before the game ended. Chris Gatlyn, the tournament's MVP, scored his eighth goal in five matches, while Justin Wilson also contributed to the score. Because the tournament is elite, it attracts many college scouts and the competition is such that each year

different classifications.

Former champions in the boys tournament included Bloomingtondale, Berkeley Prep, Jesuit and Clearwater Central Catholic.

The girls' event presented similar competition including state semi-finalists Tampa Prep and Berkeley Prep and several region finalists and semifinalists.

Annie Ruiz paced the girls victory with 2 goals. Also scoring were Pam Mattheus, Lauren Danielek and Jana Escribano.

"The reason for the (girls) tournament is to play the toughest competition we can," said co-organizer Dick Sheffield. "So when we go up against teams like Jacksonville Bolles we are prepared."

## HUMPS, from page 1

travel along Canoga Park daily with 85 percent driving at a rate below 37 mph. But vehicles have been clocked as high as 49 mph in the 25-mph zone.

He also indicated funds are available through the residential traffic control program for sidewalks.

"Residential traffic control is renowned for speed humps," said Tim Golden, who has spearheaded the safety efforts. "but they can also affect all sorts of other measures.

"They are an agency that has funding for sidewalks, but I don't know how much attention sidewalks will get when they're used to putting in humps."

Golden earlier stated some \$32,000 is needed for cement alone, and Commissioner Dottie Berger earlier said county parks and recreation would install the sidewalks if the funds could be found for materials.

## AWARD, from page 7

Grade 3 - Angelica Albrecht, Lacey Angerosa, Mathew Anthony, Heather Asplund, Matthew Beaudreault, Lee Anne Bowers, Steven Cowing, Audrey Coyne, Christina Crawford, Christabelle Darby, Alex Deakman, Zach Delagrang, Nicole Dulaney, Caitlin Duncan, Jennifer Earle, Rachelle Gardow, Carmine Giardina, Joshua Gillen, Kylee Gilman, Johnny Goodrich, Cydney Greene, Daniel Horn, Melissa Isabel, Stephanie Kacer, Caitlin Kelly, Cherry Kim, Jaff Lau, Jessica Lumsden, Morgan McClain, Mark McShera, Ramon Melendez, Greta Morgan, Lauren Morrow, Roger Nehaul, Kim Ronichtera, Linda Rackauskas, Michael Rumfelt, Daniel Segarra, Joey Serock, Sarah Shirina, Josh Simpson, Nick Stickeler, Andrew

Stoutenburg, Catherine Tiso, Heather Todd, Jessica Traurig, Kevin Tressel, Robert Vidal, Mark Waeltermann, and TaHara Williams.

Grade 4 - Jason Boslaugh, Megan Fast, Christopher Monson, Allison Perkins, Trisha Phillips, Jillian Primiano, Kevin Savage, Paria Shirzadi, Meghan Tomlinson, David Vassalotti, Chelsea Woodcock, and Cameron Worden.

Grade 5 - Brittany Anderson, Austin Cooley, Roxanne Gilmore, Nicole Paquin, Lisa Puckett, Shannon Rodgers, Jennifer Romanski, Annemarie Rossi, Ryan Smtih, Ryan Stauffer, Jill Traurig, Jennifer Waller and Nicholas Zurasky.

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# Sport Spots

## Sports Salute

### Individual Efforts The Pride of '96

1996 may have been short on state champions from Bloomingdale, but big on pride with some outstanding individual accomplishments.

Golfer **Beth Bauer** was the only state champion. She led the Bulls to a one-stroke state victory against county rival Chamberlain. Bauer, who is the No. 2 ranked amateur in the nation also was named the state's Golfer of the Year.

Bauer had the only par of the two-day tournament, shooting two rounds of 72. Contributing to the state title were Jennifer Carter, Jamie McGuinness and Katie Mayerl.

In softball, the girls won district with a 22-4 record and **Natalie Deckert's** 8-0 shutout against Sarasota Riverview in the championship game.

Both the boys and girls were district champions in track and field. The boys were led by two-event winners **Brian Surcy** and **Sean Gilman**. Surcy captured the 110-meter high hurdles and 300 intermediate hurdles and Gilman won the 1600 and 3200 meter runs to lead a field of nine first-place finishers.

Two-year MVP **Emily Janss** led Bloomingdale to a district championship in soccer. Before being eliminated in the regionals, the Bulls had compiled a 17-1 record and Janss was named a Parade All-American.

In wrestling, **Josh Latham**, a district

and regional champ, finished third in the state in the 125-pound weight class.

This fall, the boys cross country team earned its first trip to state. **Sean Gilman** won districts and regional titles before finishing a disappointing 19th while running with the flu.

The girls were the only 6A team in the county to qualify for state, but no runners medaled.

The volleyball Bulls ended their fall season with a 19-10 record and were region runner-up. In swimming junior **Summer Washburn** won districts and was second in the state in two events - the 200 individual medley and 100-yard backstroke. She also swam a leg of the second place 200-yard medley relay team with **Stephanie Reich**, **Jennifer Handley** and **Carrienne Vaughan**. The same girls finished seventh in the 400-yard freestyle. **Michael Ames'** last chance at a state diving title were eliminated when he broke his leg for a second time before the start of the season.

And finally, the Bulls boys and girls made it a double victory in soccer at the annual Diadora Classic.

**In youth sports...**

The Bloomingdale girls softball teams - minor, major and seniors - made a clean sweep of District 13 championships.

## Bulls' Athletic Calendar

**Boys' Basketball**  
Jan. 16 at Plant City  
Jan. 18 at Chamberlain  
Jan. 23 Hillsborough  
Jan. 25 at Leto  
Jan. 27 at Brandon  
Jan. 30 Gaither  
Feb. 1 at King  
Feb. 3 Plant City  
Feb. 6 Chamberlain



**Girls' Basketball**  
Jan. 17 at Hillsborough  
Jan. 21 at Brandon  
Jan. 24 at Gaither  
Jan. 28 at Leto  
Jan. 31 Plant City  
Feb. 4 at Chamberlain  
Feb. 7 Hillsborough

**Boys' & Girls' Soccer**  
Jan. 16 Hillsborough  
Jan. 17 at Chamberlain  
Jan. 21 at Plant City  
Jan. 24 Brandon  
Girls' games 5:30; Boys 7:30  
Fridays - 6:30 & 8:30  
Saturdays - 1 & 3 p.m.

**Wrestling**  
Jan. 17 Plant City  
Jan. 21 Leto  
Jan. 28 at King  
Jan. 31 Hillsborough  
Feb. 1 at East Bay  
Feb. 3-8 Districts



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## Real Estate Moves Pride Of Ownership... Price Insurance

By Michael Davis

Ever been to a flea market? Items of every type, size and variety can be purchased there at bargain prices. Did you ever stop to think about the reason prices are so low? Every item for sale at a flea market is offered "as is". The rule of the day is "caveat emptor" - let the buyer beware.

This what-you-see-is-what-you-get atmosphere is reflected in the prices. After all, if every item were clean, showed pride of ownership, and was in perfect working condition, a higher price would be asked. But, there is another factor which affects the prices found at flea markets - suspicion. Buyers, not being sure about the true condition of items being considered, offer even less than the bargain prices - just in case the item doesn't work properly.

In contrast, consider what would happen if a dealer offered like-new items, at a fair price, in their original cartons, from a booth that was both eye-catching and clean. What if buyers had a choice between two items of the same manufacture and model? One sparkles, shines and works like new, while the other is in undetermined condition, obviously someone's discard.

If comparably priced, which item would you purchase? The message may be the same when buying and selling a home. Home buyers are attracted to a home that glows with pride of ownership. They see themselves enjoying life in a home that is fresh, clean and in perfect condition. They will pay full price for that home if it is priced fairly - neither above nor below "fair market value."

On the other hand, buyers attracted to a home in questionable condition may react quite differently. It is not uncommon for buyers to offer \$2,000 less than the asking price for every \$100 in needed repairs. Selling a home "as is" can trigger the flea market, bargain hunter mentality in most buyers. A significantly lower sale price may result.

Selling your home soon? Arm yourself with a thorough understanding of your home's condition, and the effect it may have on prospective buyers. Ask your real estate agent to perform an unbiased "walk-through" of your home followed up by a written list of suggestions to improve your home's "buyer appeal" or better yet, ask them to provide a video tape on preparing your home for sale.

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## Tax Topics

# What's New For 1997

By Robert J. Morris, CPA

Yes, there are new laws affecting your tax liability beginning in 1997.

Beginning Jan. 1, there now is a \$2000 deduction allowed for an IRA contribution on behalf of a non-working spouse. Up to and including 1996, only \$250 was permitted but now that has been changed such that you may now deduct up to \$4000 in 1997 for IRA contributions for all married couples.

There now is relief in the area of adoption tax credits which has been long-awaited. Beginning Jan. 1, there is a tax credit allowed per child on certain approved expenses incurred with the adoption of a domestic or foreign child. Then up to \$6000 in tax credits for certain special needs children. These credits also carry forward provision and should help many cases of adoption to come to fruition in the future. Also, there is an exclusion amount of up to \$5000 paid by the employer under a nondiscriminatory adoption assistance plan for employers.

The so-called luxury tax will begin to phase out in 1996 and gradually over time be eliminated in the year 2003. I hope the cost of these items will likewise be reduced each year in tandem with the tax decrease.

The self-employed individual can deduct an ever-increasing amount over 10 years of health insurance costs up to 80 percent in the year 2006. Also businesses can increase their elective cost write-off of new equipment purchased. The limit currently is \$17,500

in 1996 but gradually increases to \$25,000 in the year 2003. Also, a restricted class of self-employed will be able to structure a medical savings account. Primarily covered will be those with high deductibles or catastrophic plans with under 50 employees. The new insurance policies will also be limited to only 750,000 plans in any one year. After the year 2000, Congress will evaluate the pilot project and decide its future.

Beginning this year, you may withdraw funds from your IRA to pay medical expenses in excess of the 7 1/2 percent limitation and avoid the 10 percent penalty (but not the income tax). If any of these topics appear to benefit you, then contact your tax advisor on its full benefit to you.

And finally, Congress has passed a bill labeled as the Taxpayer Bill of Rights which has over 40 changes to the manner in which you deal with the IRS. Most changes are Pro taxpayer which is beneficial to us all.

One word of advice, however, is to contact your tax professional whenever you receive ANY communication from Uncle Sam. You have new improved rights but all too often these rights are lost if you do not follow the letter of the new law. Your tax professional should be aware of your rights to act on your behalf for your best results.

Make sure your representative is qualified before, during and after IRS complications arrive.

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**BHA Meeting**

The monthly meeting of the Bloomingdale Homeowner's Association will be Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Office, 3244 Lithia Pinecrest Road, Suite 103, in the Royal Oaks of Bloomingdale. All dues paying members and new residents are encouraged to attend. Guests may ask questions or raise issues at the top of the meeting.

**STD Meeting**

The monthly meeting of the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District will be Monday, Jan. 13, at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Office located at 3244 Lithia Pinecrest Road, Suite 103, in the Royal Oaks of Bloomingdale. A portion of homeowner property taxes supports the STD which maintains the common areas of Bloomingdale. All homeowners are welcomed to attend.

**Walk Coming to Nature's Way**

On Saturday, Feb. 8, Bloomingdale East's Nature's Way will be the site of the American Cancer Society's Annual Making Strides Against Cancer. Striders will be walking to and from Bloomingdale East Park along Nature's Way beginning at 9 a.m.

Making Strides is a 5-mile move-along-athon that celebrates life through cancer survivorship.

For information, contact the American Cancer Society office at 685-0670.

**Emergency Services Merged**

In one of the most significant county department mergers in some time, Emergency Medical Services and the Fire Department consolidated operations Jan. 1

County Commissioners approved the merger in late October naming the new department Fire Rescue.

The merger was recommended in a performance audit of the county's public safety functions last summer. About 70 percent of the calls the Fire Department received were medical emergencies, including auto accidents. About half of the county's firefighters also are certified as emergency medical technicians. The audit also found 80 percent of the fire departments in the country also include EMS personnel; in Hillsborough, 11 fire stations house ambulances.

The merger is expected to save nearly \$350,000 over three years by eliminating duplication and consolidating costs for administration, facilities and fleet maintenance. It brings together 439 fire department employees and 179 EMS employees, plus some 200 fire department volunteers.

**Low-Impact Aerobics**

Tracey Shriver teaches low-impact aerobics at the Bloomingdale Park West Community Center. Classes meet Wednesdays and Fridays from 6 to 7 p.m. and the cost is \$3 per class. Child care is provided for children 5 and older. Shriver explains there is no jumping or

jogging involved. With low-impact aerobics one foot is always on the ground. Light weights and floor work are also used.

For information, call 744-5907.

**Spanish Lessons**

Conversational Spanish classes will resume at the Bloomingdale Park West Community Center in January. Classes will meet every Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m.

For information call 744-5907 after 1 p.m.

**Parents Help Group**

Parents Anonymous is a self-help group for parents who have lost, or feel they are losing control of their children. Groups meet in Valrico on Thursdays evenings from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at area churches. The meetings are free. For information call 251-8080.

**Recycle Computers**

The county has begun a program, "Computers for Kids," that involves collecting computers to place in recreation centers and later in libraries for kids to use during after school and summer programs.

Since the program began in April, donations have dropped off. There is no certain type of computer that the county is looking for. Software and programs also are acceptable donations.

Computers can be dropped off at the Parks and Recreation Department's maintenance unit on 78th St. and the Crosstown Expressway or at any of several libraries including the Main Library downtown at 900 N. Ashley Drive. For information call 744-5815 or 273-3652.

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**Vandals, from page 1**

to replace or repair damaged property. These funds come from the \$80 per household that makes up the \$300,000 STD budget.

Already this year, another \$4,000 to \$5,000 is being spent to replace four signs at Fairway Manors. The letters have been stolen enough times to warrant a change in the make-up of the signs.

"I'm tired of replacing letters," said Devney, who stated composite wood signs like the ones at Oak Crest will be installed in place of the brass-lettered signs.

Devney said he has replaced approximately 30 letters at a cost of \$50 to \$75 each, this year alone.

In addition to the signs, entry way light bulbs at \$5 apiece are often having

to be replaced because vandals remove them to smash them on the street.

Vandals also have stolen 10 shrubs recently from landscaped beds. The shrubs run \$8 to \$10 apiece. Plus some two dozen flowered landscaping has been stolen.

"Petunias," said Devney incredulously, "pulled out to the roots. Now who would want to do that?"

Devney said no less than six sheriff deputies have been put on alert, but he added residents need to be on the look-out too for any suspicious activity.

"Absolutely no one from the STD goes into those landscape after day light hours," Devney said. "If there's someone who appears to be doing work there at night, they don't belong there. Report it."

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homes came in many shapes, sizes and conditions. He's seen firsthand how by suggesting to his home sellers to perform minor clean-up and repair work, they were able to sell their home quicker and for thousands more.

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