

## Association Presents 2004 Good Neighbor Awards

### 8 RESIDENTS HONORED FOR SERVICE, SUPPORT

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. board of directors presented Good Neighbor awards to three community leaders in December.

B.J. Stelter was honored for her outstanding leadership as principal of Bloomingdale High School.

Ronda Storms was recognized for her support of neighborhood and community issues as Hillsborough County's District IV commissioner.

Carla Floyd and The Brandon News, the association's partner in the publication of The Bloomingdale Gazette, were honored for providing news coverage and support of neighborhood issues.

The BHA's President's Recognition Award went to association board member Steve Heckel, for his efforts in initiating and organization the new Neighborhood Improvement Program.

Special Recognition Awards were presented to D'Ann White, for serving as past editor of The Bloomingdale Gazette; Pat Boody, for her work in forming and leading the Friends of the Library's new Bloomingdale Regional Public Library chapter; Rodney Bidle, for his continuing service to the community by providing support for The Bloomingdale Gazette Online edition, and Al Devney, for his outstanding service as Bloomingdale's Special Taxing District property manager.



Photo Courtesy of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association

Bloomingdale Homeowners Association President Ted Grable presented Bloomingdale High School Principal B.J. Stelter with the community's Good Neighbor award at the school Dec. 15.

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 DVD Player**

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# Alafia Pupils Shop For Mom, Dad At School

## STICKY FROGS, LIGHT UP PENS POPULAR BUYS

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

While frenetic parents rushed from store to store tracking down the perfect gifts last month, students at Alafia Elementary took some time out of their school day to do a little shopping themselves.

Alafia's PTA-sponsored Holiday Shop provided students an affordable shopping experience that didn't require parental supervision or a ride to the mall.

PTA President Rhonda McCall said, "This is a service that we provide for the kids to have a safe shopping environment."

PTA volunteers served as helpful elves, stocking tables and helping kids find the perfect gift to fit their budget. Fif-

teen tables filled up the multi-purpose room, each stacked high with items ranging in price from 25 cents to \$12.50.

Each class visited the shop for 20 minutes at a time, allowing students to peruse the possibilities for parents, siblings, friends and even pets.

Available were key chains, pencils, jewelry, games, toys, figurines, footballs, wind chimes, tools and garden decor, as well as pillows, photo albums and radios.

As each student checked out, they received a gift bag to wrap up their purchase before their parents caught sight of it.

Fifth-graders Alex Bryant, Amber Hoffmeister and Shaquitta Brown considered their options carefully before making purchases for the



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Alafia students peruse the tables at the school's annual Holiday Shop — a safe, affordable shopping experience provided by the PTA.

loved ones on their list.

"I'm excited about what I got!" said Hoffmeister.

McCall noted that sticky

frogs and light up pens were the most popular gifts this Christmas. Won't mom and dad be surprised?

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LESLIE WHITE/Photo

# Student Turns Tables On Art Teacher

## BLOOMINGDALE TEACHER INSPIRED ARTIST

By D'ANN WHITE  
Correspondent

She'd always enjoyed drawing and painting. And deep down inside, she knew she was pretty good at it.

But Pam J. Patton said she'd never have considered a career in art were it not for the encouragement of her art teacher at Bloomingdale High School.

Karen Marcos, now the chairwoman of the art department at Bloomingdale, remembers recognizing Patton's talent when she asked her students to create self-portraits.

"I saw this fragmented portrait of a girl holding a canvas and I knew this girl had it," said Marcos.

Patton said she'll never forget Marcos' words the first

day of art class at Bloomingdale.

"She said anybody can be an artist. You just need to practice," said Patton, recalling the words Marcos still tells her students today. "I knew at that moment that I could do anything in art that I wanted to. I just had to practice."

And that's just what she did. With Marcos' nomination, Patton received an arts scholarship to the University of Tampa and now the mother of two with a third on the way is making a name for herself throughout Tampa Bay for her watercolors of landmark buildings. Her original paintings are presented to visiting dignitaries by Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio and her prints are sold at the Colum-

See PATTON, Page 23



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Bloomingdale Senior High School art teacher Karen Marcos, left, and former student Pam Patton hosted their first two-woman art show, "Strokes of Encouragement," at Center Place in December.

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3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. (813) 681-2051. Fax: (813) 684-2358.

E-mail: [Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net](mailto:Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net)

Web Site: [www.BloomingtondaleGazette.com](http://www.BloomingtondaleGazette.com)

BHA meetings are at the community office on the 1st Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

|                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| President — Ted Grable  | Vice President — Joe Hickle |
| Treasurer — Pam Liguori | Director — Lydia Harrod     |
| Director — Tony Diolosa | Director — Dale Kahn        |
| Director — Steve Heckel | Director — Myron Magedanz   |
| Director — Jane Lee     | Director — Ken Pyse         |
| Director — Stanley Lee  |                             |

## Bloomingtondale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594  
(813) 684-6667

BSTD meetings are held at the community office on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President — Thom Snelling  
Vice President — Russell Jones  
Treasurer — David West

Correspondence Secretary — Paul Sims  
Recording Secretary — Michael Buday  
Trustee — David Steck  
Trustee — Joe Harless  
Property Manager — Al Devney

## Bloomingtondale Mobile Watch

Coordinator/Equipment Manager —

Tony Diolosa, 681-1146

Treasurer — Paul

Kelmer, 681-9701

Patrol Member —

Steven Heckel,

654-4266

Patrol Member — Brad Scharp, 643-5000

Patrol Member — Paul Warr, 685-7883



Wireless provider for Bloomingtondale Mobile Watch

## Bloomingtondale Oaks Special Taxing District

P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132. (813) 685-2817

BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

President — Bill Grace  
Treasurer — Fred Englehart

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Correspondent — Mack Austin

Correspondent — Leslie White

Restaurant Critic — Elton Dumont

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Publisher — Carla Floyd

Advertising Manager — Tami Donaldson; phone: 627-1322; e-mail: [tdonaldson@tampatrib.com](mailto:tdonaldson@tampatrib.com)

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## Deed Restrictions Available Online

### SEARCH DATABASE BY STREET, SECTION NAME

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

Homebuyers are supposed to receive a copy of neighborhood deed restrictions with their real estate closing papers, but the documents can be hard to track down — unless the neighborhood happens to be Bloomingtondale.

The Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association Inc. provides electronic copies of deed restrictions for all but a few of community's 40 neighborhood sections on its Web site, [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com).

Each neighborhood section of Bloomingtondale has its own unique set of restrictions. Deed restriction information stands out as the most frequent request received by the BHA.

*"We would like everyone to see their deed restrictions as a feature of the community, just like green space and street lighting, rather than an obstacle to overcome."*

TED GRABLE  
BHA president

Ted Grable, president of the homeowners association, said compliance with neighborhood restrictions and county codes is an important issue in Bloomingtondale.

"We find that a few homeowners and landlords do not respect the common rules that we all agreed to when we purchased our homes. The BHA, through our Web site and through the Gazette, is working to inform the community on these issues. We would like everyone to

see their deed restrictions as a feature of the community, just like green space and street lighting, rather than an obstacle to overcome."

The deed restriction database is searchable by street name or section name. The site also offers information about county codes and ordinances and Bloomingtondale's Neighborhood Improvement Program. For more information, visit [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com) or call 681-2051.

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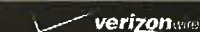
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## Bloomington Area Community Council Report

By MACK AUSTIN  
Correspondent

The following items were discussed at the December meeting of the Bloomington Area Community Council:

### Parents Drop Off Students In Bad Spots

Measures were taken to improve the drop-off/pickup areas around Alafia Elementary School. However, some parents continue to drop off their kids in the parking lot at the Parks Maintenance Unit. This is a very dangerous area.

### Flashing Lights Installed By YMCA

Flashing signals were installed and activated by the Hillsborough County Traffic Engineering section. Coordination is being completed to have the remaining sidewalks installed.

### Traffic Calming Needed To Curb Speeding

Residents from several sections reported drivers speeding through their neighborhoods. Some are working with the county's traffic calming program to coordinate improvements.

### Bloomington Library Set To Open

After many years of waiting and planning, the new Bloomington Library will open this year. Congratulations to every one involved in



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Bloomington Area Community Council member Terry Ward, right, met with incoming Hillsborough County Sheriff David Gee, center, and District IV Lt. Willie Parker at the Stephanie Culbertson Recreation Center in Bloomington in November.

this long project.

### White Lights Help Catch Red Light Runners

Special white lights were installed on several local traffic lights including those at the intersection of Bell Shoals Road and Bloomington Avenue. The lights allow deputies stationed at any area around the signal to determine when the light turns red and which drivers are running through the red lights. Video monitoring is also being considered.

### Development Proposed For Land Next To Library

A village-type professional

project is being proposed for the vacant property just east of the new library on Bloomington Avenue.

### Medical Center Has Moved

Bloomington Medical Center moved to the intersection of Bell Shoals and Boyette roads. A new Walgreen's replaced the center.

### Sewer Line Completed

A new sewer line on Lithia-Pinecrest Road from Erindale Avenue to Culbreath and from Culbreath Road to Fish-Hawk Boulevard has been completed.

### Bloomington Area Growth Continues

A great deal of new homes and businesses are under construction along Bloomington Avenue from the intersection of Lithia-Pinecrest Road to U.S. 301.

### New Street Lights Installed

New street lights have been installed at Rivercrossing.

### Mobile Watch Program Beefs Up

A new Bloomington

## Council Needs Your Ideas, Input

The Bloomington Area Community Council needs the support and input of more residents to continue to improve our community.

The council, known as the BACC, is a volunteer group of residents who monitor local safety, security and quality of life concerns. The council works with local law enforcement and government officials to promote the best interests of the Bloomington community.

The group meets at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at the Bloomington substation, in the Beef O' Brady's plaza at the corner of Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven Drive.

To find out how you can help, contact Deputy Pete Maurer, 635-8040.

Mobile Watch program is being planned to incorporate Homeland Security procedures.

### New Sheriff Takes Helm

David Gee, a longtime Brandon area resident and Hillsborough County deputy is the new Hillsborough County Sheriff.

### School Sidewalks Still Needed

Sidewalks near Cimino Elementary School on Culbreath Road are still in the planning and land acquisition phase.

### Boyette, Bell Shoals Road Improvements

The initial phase of the Boyette Road widening project has begun. Plans for improvements to Bell Shoals Road at Bloomington Avenue are still under review.

See REPORT, Page 23




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## Bloomington Substation Notes

# New Year, New Sheriff

COMMUNITY WELCOMES SHERIFF DAVID GEE

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER

Another year has passed and what a year it was. Absolutely no one predicted the summer of storms. Again the residents of Bloomington and in fact all the residents of Hillsborough County should be very grateful that we were spared again. Several Hillsborough County deputies deployed to the hard hit areas to help provide security and other law enforcement support.

We begin 2005 with a newly elected Sheriff David Gee. Sheriff Gee, a longtime Brandon area resident and Hillsborough County Deputy, is extremely familiar with the law enforcement needs of our community. We can expect even more of the outstanding service we have received to date. We would ask that the residents of Bloomington renew their dedication to support the sheriff's office as a team working together to provide safety and security to our community and all the surrounding communities.

Residents of Hillsborough County will see some positive changes coming under Sheriff Gee. Deputies are already in the process of acquiring vehicles with a new design on them as well as some changes in their uniforms and even the sheriff's uniform patch. Upgraded equipment and other resources will be provided to insure that the residents of Hillsborough County receive the best law enforcement service that can be provided.

An important part of the support that all residents in the Bloomington and surrounding areas can give the sheriff's office is to continue to be very vigilant in their every day activities, watching for suspicious activity in their neighborhoods and reporting it.

Another very important way to support law enforcement is very simple — slow down and be a responsible driver. Obey all traffic laws

and follow all safe-driving rules. This will reduce accidents, deaths and injuries and enable deputies to concentrate on other important issues.

As 2005 begins, Community Service Officer Capitano and I would like to wish every resident of the greater Bloomington area a very safe and secure New Year. We'd like to thank each and every one who provided support to us during this past year.

We would very much appreciate the continued support of those already involved in our many community projects, and to welcome those of you who would like to get involved.

Working together we can and will make the Bloomington area safer and more secure. We are all part of our community team. With each one doing their part Bloomington will continue to be a great place to live.

For information about any of the following projects and programs, call 635-8040.

### Cops and Computers

Used computers can be dropped off at the Community Station for distribution to needy children.

### High School Reading Program

Magazines can be dropped off at the Bloomington substation for delivery to Bloomington High School.

### Neighborhood, Business Watch

Plans are in the works to enhance established programs and start new ones.

### Free Car Seat Checks

Scheduled programs offer free car seat checks by trained deputies.

### Sheriff's Citizens Academy

Residents attend the Sher-



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Please read the sign — several incidents of illegal dumping near the substation have been noted. The garbage bins are contracted for use only by businesses near the substation. To report illegal dumping, call the substation at 635-8040.

iff's Citizen Academy to become acquainted with the many programs and responsibilities of the sheriff's office.

improving the quality of life in our community. For more information, see the monthly Community Council report in this issue of the Gazette.

### Community Council

The Bloomington Area Community Council provides an outstanding opportunity for concerned residents to become actively involved in

### Everyday Crime Watch

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# Established Salon Gets New Owner, Mini-Makeover

## NOW CALLED SALON ESSENCE

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

In a business designed to improve what's on the outside, the new owner of one Valrico beauty salon says it's what's on the inside that counts.

Therisa Coughlin admits Salon Essence, in the plaza behind SunTrust Bank on Bell Shoals Road in Bloomingdale, may not be the biggest, newest or fanciest salon in town.

But since the shop first opened in 1995 as MalSun's, hundreds of customers flock through its doors each week for what Coughlin says many women really appreciate — expert beauty services and top quality products, all at moderate prices in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

The shop has had three different owners since MalSun Jones opened for business in 1995. In 1999, Jones sold the shop to Vicki Davis, a former stylist at Details salon in Brandon. Davis named the shop with a play on the name of epic *Gone With The Wind's* heroine — Scarlett O'Haira's.

Like Jones, Davis sold the shop to free up some time to spend with her family and friends, but wasn't ready to turn in her scissors. Both former owners were happy to stay on at the salon after selling the business to their colleagues.

Stylists Debbie Lowe, Ouida Hart, Heather Michael and Gean Danker round out the salon's tight team of original employees.

On a typical day, more than 100 customers come to the salon for full service hair-styling, waxing, manicures, pedicures and acrylic nails.

The six stylists have hundreds of regular clients they've known for years, including former school-teachers, old friends and military families. The team's long list of regulars includes many multi-generational family circles of mothers, sisters, grandmothers and daughters.



LAURA FRAZIER/Photos



Veterans Jones, Hart and Davis each have more than 15 years hairdressing experience and a loyal faction of regular clients who trust them with their tried and true styles.

Michael and Danker, who have worked alongside each other since graduating from Brandon area high schools in the 90's, are popular hires for the latest cuts, up-dos and funky new coloring trends.

The stylists are all close friends, sharing hairdressing tips and customers as comfortably as they volley a steady stream of beauty shop chitchat between their workstations.

Coughlin said she dubbed the store Salon Essence sim-

ply because it's a lyrical name she's always dreamed of for her own shop.

In mini-makeover fashion, she gave the salon a fresh coat of paint and tweaked the décor and the ambience a bit, adding plants and café tables outside the shop. She hopes to eventually expand the salon and its services.

One thing that won't change is the business's objective, which Coughlin said has been the same since day one.

"We love Brandon, and there is definitely a demand for cutting edge beauty services in our town, but this is not New York or Chicago," she said.

Above, stylist Debbie Lowe, one of six hairdressers at Salon Essence, said it's been easy to stay on through ownership changes at the shop because her co-workers and longtime clients are like family. At left, Therisa Coughlin, center, is the new owner of Salon Essence in Bloomingdale, first opened in 1995 as MalSun's by MalSun Jones, left, and later renamed Scarlett O'Haira's by its last owner, Vicki Davis, right. The trio continues to work together at the salon.

Despite the allure of opulent, high-priced day spas, a number of which opened recently in the Brandon area, Coughlin said, "Going to the salon doesn't have to be so to-do and outrageously priced. We just want our clients to feel at home, and we also understand that not everyone can come in and spend \$450 on a day of beauty."

On a recent busy weekday at the salon, customers said they like the top-notch services and easy-going atmosphere.

Coughlin has a simple explanation for the loyal following the shop has maintained throughout 10 years and three ownership changes — it's all in the family.

"We are like a professional family," she said. "This is our second home. We come to work to get rid of our stress,

See SALON, Page 23



## Established Salon Gets New Owner, Mini-Makeover

**NOW CALLED  
SALON ESSENCE**

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

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LAURA FRAZIER/Photos



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## Karate Academy Opens Second School In Bloomingdale

**AFTER-SCHOOL  
PICK-UP AVAILABLE**

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Earl Harris Karate Academy recently opened its second Brandon area location at the corner of Lithia-Pinecrest and Bloomingdale Avenue. Home to over 280 students, the academy expanded to better accommodate its existing students and to introduce newcomers to the martial arts.

Tae kwon do and advanced discipline classes are available for adults and children ages 4 and up.

"I've got students who have been with me going on 19 years, and I'm now teaching the second generation," said Harris, who runs the schools with his wife, Deborah.

A grand master and seventh-degree black belt, Harris has been in martial arts for more than 40 years.

"I've been doing this since I was 12," he said.

Harris's children share his interest.

His son, Keon Pinkney, a third-degree black belt, runs the academy's Kingsway Road location. His daughter, Breanna, a second-degree black belt, six-time state champion and seven-time national champ, is still training and helps out around the school.

The academy offers programs for the entire family, with Harris himself teaching the adults.

"The adult classes focus on self-discipline, stress release and energy. It helps get them in shape and is a great cardiovascular workout," he said, adding, "We teach practical self-defense."

Classes are coed and are held in the evening. There are no weekend classes because students need weekends free to compete in various tournaments.

"Our school is different from other schools in that we're competitive and do a lot of tournament traveling," Harris explained, adding, "No student here sits on the bench. Competition keeps



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Daniel Medina, Robyn Roldan and Grand Master Earl Harris, in black, instruct a group during the after-school program training at Earl Harris Academy.

our students and class motivated and competitive."

The team travels to Orlando, Miami and Gainesville, as well as local tournaments in Tampa. Each student competes as an individual, but collectively the academy's students have brought home the banner from the KICK-USA (Kids in Competition Karate) competition since 1999.

In 2004 alone, Earl Harris Karate Academy won eight straight national KICK-USA Karate Championships and seven consecutive state championships.

"We're the only school to win that many back to back championships in the state of Florida," Harris said.

The longtime teacher believes the benefits of studying the martial arts are, "self-discipline, respect for others, responsibility, self control, self esteem as well as life lessons in doing the right thing, enabling the students to steer clear of drugs, gangs and be able to withstand peer pressure."

See KARATE, Page 23



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# Extreme Dental Makeovers Available In Bloomington

## NON-SURGICAL CHANGES CAN TAKE OFF YEARS

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

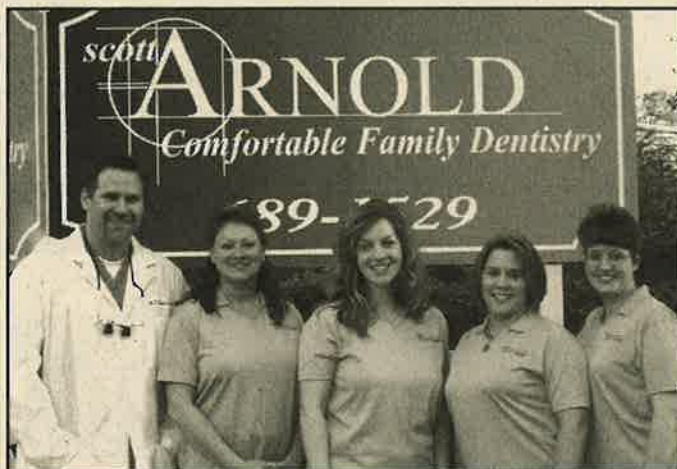
"Extreme Makeover" is more than a reality show. It's also what one area dentist says he can provide comfortably in as little as two visits.

Dr. Scott Arnold of Arnold Dentistry in Bloomington is a recognized leader in the field of cosmetic and restorative dentistry, having been named one of America's top dentists for 2003-04.

"Most people don't realize this, but you can literally roll back the aging process with a smile makeover," explained Arnold, who shows his remarkable before and after photos as proof.

Passionate about his work and what dental technological advances can do for his patients, Arnold is constantly continuing his education at the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies, recognized as the premier post-graduate facilities for cosmetic and aesthetic dentistry.

At the institute, Arnold distinguished himself as being at the forefront of advanced dental techniques. And he



The staff of Arnold Dentistry, from the left, Dr. Scott Arnold, Elizabeth Albritton, Stephanie McKinley, Terry Padgett and Angela Polk.

brings back more than just knowledge from his training. He said he has an innate desire to see his patients have the smile they've only dreamed about.

"I have patients that go through life hiding their smile because they're self-conscious about it," he said. "What we offer is a non-surgical makeover that virtually changes the shape of your face."

Stephanie McKinley, a dental technician at Arnold Dentistry, has experienced a smile makeover first-hand and says of the experience, "I've gone through it myself, so I know

what it does to your self-esteem."

Assisting Arnold in these transformations, McKinley has seen grown men moved to tears at the sight of their new smile.

"One man was so amazed at what he saw in the mirror that he just cried and hugged me," said McKinley.

Results that used to take years and were extremely intrusive can now be achieved in as little as two visits, thanks to advances in dental technology.

Arnold invites patients to set up an appointment to discuss their dentistry needs and

concerns and to get more familiar with what he has to offer. He provides before and after pictures of patients from his practice that feature his own work, not somebody else's.

From cosmetic gum lifts and laser bleaching to porcelain veneers and replacing outdated mercury fillings with tooth-colored fillings, non-intrusive procedures can alter both appearance and how you feel about yourself.

For the patient's comfort during the process, nitrous oxide, also known as laughing gas, is available, though not necessary, and no-needles Syrojet technology prevents pain without the shot.

Overhead TV monitors entertain patients for the duration of the visit.

"We want our patients to be relaxed," Arnold said. "I treat each person like I would want my own family to be treated."

Arnold Dentistry, 4320 Bell Shoals Road, is now accepting new patients, and offers six and 12 month interest-free financing options, as well as low interest financing for up to five years. Arnold also performs regular dental maintenance and treats TMJ.

To schedule a consultation, call 689-1529. For further information visit [www.exceptionalcosmeticdentistry.com](http://www.exceptionalcosmeticdentistry.com).

## A New Year, New You?

### ANTI-AGING TREATMENTS NON-INVASIVE

By MACK AUSTIN  
Correspondent

Hundreds of Bloomington residents are among the millions of people worldwide facing their New Years' resolutions today. Some of those resolutions probably included promises to improve personal appearances and boost self-esteem.

Having someone to help you get started and work with you to reach any goal makes it much easier.

Bloomington residents are very fortunate to have some professionals right here in our area to help them reach some

of their personal improvement goals.

Dr. Myron Kwan and certified physician assistant Ann Tran operate the new Advanced Laser Center on Boyette Road. They work with people who would like to improve their personal appearance and self-esteem through a variety of cosmetic application laser treatments.

Kwan and Tran use the new Profile by Sciton laser, a multi-wave length system capable of delivering the widest range of non-invasive treatment for cosmetic applications. It is used to remove hair, veins, wrinkles, age spots



Certified physician assistant Ann Tran prepares to complete a laser treatment on Hope Marlowe at Advanced Laser Center on Boyette Road.

and scars.

The procedures for each of these treatments vary in terms of time. Designed to be the most durable and adjustable system in use, Kwan said the

Profile is fast, safe accurate and effective for all patients and all skin types.

The center is currently

See LASER, Page 10

## Extreme Dental Makeovers Available In Bloomingdale

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CHANGES CAN  
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By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

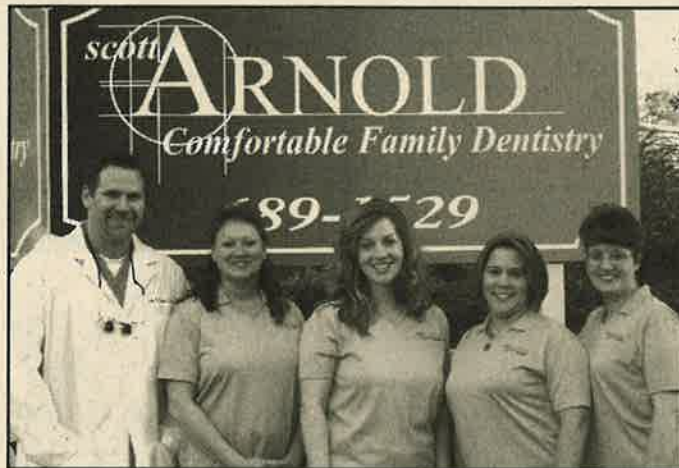
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See LASER, Page 10

## Customized Closets Help Families Control Clutter

**CAN INSTALL ONE  
CLOSET,  
HOUSEFULL**

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

Carol and Tim Weathersbee's new family business has helped at least one local husband get out of the doghouse and into the closet.

The Plant City couple started their own custom closet design and installation business in April this year. One of the first calls they received was from a traveling nurse disparaged by the spouse-created mess she was faced with every time she returned from a long business trip.

In the woman's absence, her husband's cufflinks and watches wound up strewn about the house. Ties, belts and jackets were draped over armchairs or puddled on the floor, the clean items indiscernible from the laundry.

Clearly some intervention was needed.

Instead of consulting Dr. Phil, the nurse called Encore Closets Inc. to help streamline the cleaning and storage process for her husband.

The Weathersbees installed a custom closet system for the couple, including racks for belts, ties, jackets and robes. They added a pull-out hamper basket for laundry and a few built-in drawers, one velvet-lined especially to receive the gentleman's wayward jewelry.

As is her custom, Carol Weathersbee called her client a few weeks after the installation to see how things were working out.

"She was just delighted to



Photos courtesy of Brittany Weathersbee

Carol and Tim Weathersbee of Plant City started their new family business, Encore Closets Inc., in April this year. Custom closet systems are available in traditional white melamine and a variety of upgrades like this maple finish.



report that her husband found it very easy to keep things neat and organized. She was tickled pink and thanked us over and over again," she said. "They're just waiting now for us to find a good garage system supplier so we can help organize that for them."

Delighted relief is a common reaction to the sense of organization custom closet systems can provide, Weathersbee said.

"Even though people are building very large homes these days, storage is still an issue. They want those big, beautiful homes to look showroom quality, without the clutter."

"If someone calls to say they're coming over in 30 minutes, having a special place designated for things like toys, keys, purses, clothes, laundry, shoes, school books and bags... it just makes it so much easier to whip the whole house into shape."

Encore Closets uses products similar to those used by large nationwide chains, Weathersbee said, offering

custom design and installation at a fraction of the cost.

"Our concept is that if we wouldn't pay for it ourselves, we're not going to try and sell it and expect someone else to pay for it. Our goal is to create a sleek design that is functional and attractive, but is not going to bust someone's budget."

The company offers free in-home estimates weeknights.

The couple visits the client's home to discuss their needs and to take measurements. In two to three days, they deliver a custom design plan and are ready to schedule a weekend installation.

They use furniture grade particleboard with a thermal grade melamine coating to create the closet systems. Systems are available in the customary white melamine or maple and cherry finishes.

"You can build furniture with the material we use. It just creates a beautiful closet system that is functional and very durable."

The couple can design custom systems for one closet or a whole house.

Their references include new home and existing home installations. They've even designed a free-standing, permanently affixed unit for a room without space for a decent size closet.

For information, call 956-1051.

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LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Laura Caruso brought six of her grandchildren to visit with Santa. Mrs. Claus was especially happy to cuddle Caruso's newborn grandchildren, twins Zachary and Amber.

## Santa, Mrs. Claus Make 16th Annual Visit

### DUO COLLECTED SLEIGHFUL OF FOOD DONATIONS

A Gazette Report

Santa and Mrs. Claus made their 16th annual appearance in Bloomington last month to hear children's wish lists and to collect food donations for local charities.

More than 100 children and their families visited with the Claus's Dec. 11 at the Bloomington Community Office.

In exchange for a donation of one or more canned food items, the couple provided free photos and refreshments, courtesy of the Bloomington Homeowners Association Inc.

The duo, snowbirds from the North Pole who winter on Dumont Drive in Bloomington, delighted droves of wide-eyed children with their patient, loving reception of visitors from newborns to adults.

A team of Santa's helpers welcomed visitors to the



Donna and Glenn Rininger of Bloomington brought their grandchildren, from left, 4-year-old Channah, 9-year-old twins Cannon and Callie, and 3-month-old twins Cariss and Carlyn, to visit Santa, along with the children's 93-year-old great grandfather Glenn Rininger Sr. Channah and both sets of twins are the children of the Rininger's daughter and son-in-law, Christie and Todd Bobo.

office, offering refreshments and signing in guests.

The elves were dressed in holiday attire, right down to their jingle-bell slippers.

Likewise, Santa and Mrs. Claus were resplendent, seated in the regal holiday chairs donated for their use by the Hillsborough County Parks

and Recreation Department. Food donations collected at the event were delivered to Bloomington area charities in time for Christmas.



LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Laura Caruso brought six of her grandchildren to visit with Santa. Mrs. Claus was especially happy to cuddle Caruso's newborn grandchildren, twins Zachary and Amber.



Jenny Pizzaro couldn't hide her enthusiasm while relaying her wish list to Santa.



Victor Brown was in awe of Santa Claus.

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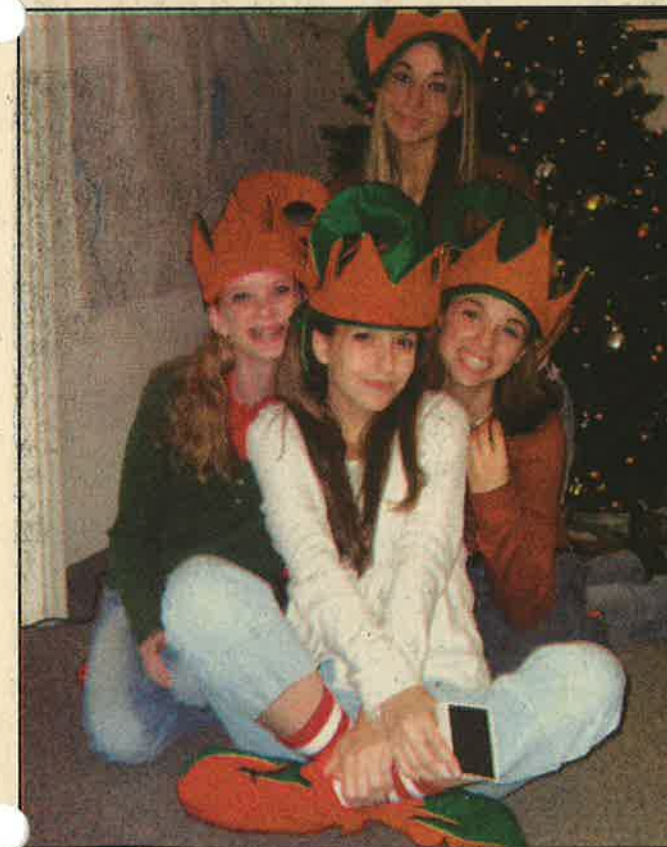
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Santa's teenage elf squad teamed up to sign in visitors and serve refreshments to visitors.

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LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Rick and Kristi Bequette, here with their daughter Bria, won a \$50 Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift card for their "Most Elegant" display. Bria's brothers, Blake and Brice, were suffering through a bout of the flu and couldn't join us for a photo. Get well, boys!

## Contest Winners Bring Holiday Sparkle To Bloomingdale

### DISPLAYS WERE EXCESSIVE, ELEGANT

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

Three Bloomingdale families were awarded prizes last week in the homeowners association's annual Holiday Decorations Contest.

The contest was announced Dec. 1 on the community's Web site, [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com).

All three winners received multiple nominations from friends and neighbors who called or e-mailed the Gazette to tell us about the creative holiday displays.

Each family received an Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift card, courtesy of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

#### Most Delightfully Excessive

Dee Thomas and Gary Liptok  
4107 Canoga Park Drive, Bloomingdale West



Michael Baugh, here with his nephew Daniel, teamed up with his sister, Donna Germann, to create their "Most Charming" display. The siblings shared a \$50 Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift card award

See LIGHTS, Page 15

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LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Rick and Kristi Bequette, here with their daughter Bria, won a \$50 Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift card for their "Most Elegant" display. Bria's brothers, Blake and Brice, were suffering through a bout of the flu and couldn't join us for a photo. Get well, boys!

## Contest Winners Bring Holiday Sparkle To Bloomingdale

### DISPLAYS WERE EXCESSIVE, ELEGANT

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

Three Bloomingdale families were awarded prizes last week in the homeowners association's annual Holiday Decorations Contest.

The contest was announced Dec. 1 on the community's Web site, [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com).

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See LIGHTS, Page 15

## LIGHTS

From page 14

Never let it be said that less is more when it comes to holiday decorations. Some of the most impressive displays occur when high-spirited homeowners cram every inch of their yard with lights, décor and action.

The judges all agreed the home of Dee Thomas and Gary Liptok was an extra-sensory, extra-festive, over-the-top treat. Throughout the yard, dotted with candy canes, grazing reindeer and even a polar bear on his own iceberg, the couple fearlessly mixed all types of lights—colored, white, icicle, classic bulbs, twinklers, blinkers and flashers. Santa and his reindeer were set for takeoff, expertly strung beneath a lovely old oak tree dripping with lights. Not even the garage was spared, with its colored bulb outline and "Merry Christmas" greeting.



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

The fearless and substantial efforts of Dee Thomas and Gary Liptok garnered the "Most Delightfully Excessive" award. The couple won a \$100 Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift card for their over-the-top display.

#### Most Elegant

Rick and Kristi Bequette  
4301 Glendon Place, Cambridge  
Cove

"Christmas Vacation" movie.

#### Most Charming

Michael Baugh and Donna Germann  
3914 Sweatleaf Drive, Bloomingdale West

Our judges marveled at the simple, yet elegant—and quite meticulous—display at the home of Rick and Kristi Bequette. Twin royal palms bordering the home's walkway were circled with red lights nearly to the top, then crowned with green twinklers just below the fronds. The home's stately white entryway columns were twined with red ribbon for a giant candy cane effect. Rick's very precise roofline lights were accented by white icicles dripping off the roof's edge. The Bequettes' display has evolved, improved and grown over the past four years to the delight of their Cambridge Cove neighbors, who jokingly refer to them as the Griswolds—the decorations-obsessed family in the Chevy Chase

Handmade and heartfelt were the first words that came to mind when the judges visited the home of Michael Baugh and his sister Donna Germann. A kid-size, homemade gingerbread man welcomed passers-by to stop and admire the sweet display of candy canes, soldiers, wreaths and decorations proclaiming "Peace On Earth" and "Seasons Greetings." Baugh said most of their decorations are either made by hand or yard sale finds given a little TLC and a few new bulbs—a nice surprise that truly charmed the judges.

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# Customer Service Is Focus Of Eye Care Practice

**CO-OWNERS ARE BRANDON NATIVES**

By **LESLIE WHITE**  
Correspondent

"Homegrown" is what Dr. Stephen Gres and licensed optician Karen Fisher call themselves, both Brandon natives now in business together as owners and operators of Get In Focus Eye Care on Bloomingdale Avenue.

"Karen is the central figure for the optical division. She's been here a long time and so many people know her," said Gres.

With decades of experience and expertise between them, the pair joined forces two years ago and recently expanded their store.

"Two years ago, this room was half the size of what it is now," Gres said. "We put a lot of blood, sweat, tears and love into it," he said, adding that they did most of the work themselves.

"Most optical centers are corporate owned. They're getting massive. We focus on our customers, giving excellent service in a comfortable setting, and we stand by our product."

The newly renovated store



Becky Gres, Jennifer Miles, Karen Fisher and Dr. Stephen Gres, the staff of Get In Focus Eye Care.

allows Gres and Fisher to showcase their wide selection of frames from designer labels like Giorgio Armani, Christian Dior, Liz Claiborne, Jones of NY, Laura Ashley, Nichole and Bebe.

Get In Focus uses computerized eye exams as the basis for Gres' examination, and can also screen for glaucoma with a non-contact test.

The office is equipped with a lensometer, a machine capable of taking a pair of glasses and telling exactly what the prescription is, allowing the optical center to

create a duplicate pair of glasses without another exam, which comes in handy when a patient needs prescription sunglasses.

Get In Focus treats patients with eye diseases like conjunctivitis and ulcers resulting from contact lens use. Gres can also remove invasive particles that damage the eyes, such as iron, which he sees most often in mechanics.

The store stocks contact lenses, including hard to fit lenses for stigmatism, as well as colored contacts. They sell Acuvue Advance, a two-week

lens made of a silicone hybrid, which Gres says is the most comfortable lens on the market.

"New materials in contact lenses make them easier to wear," said Gres, who cautions, "Disposable contact lenses only work if you actually dispose of them," emphasizing their affordability.

There are one to two-week disposables and monthly disposables. Gres said in the past, most patients quit wearing them because of the dis-

See FOCUS, Page 22

## Homeowners Association To Raffle DVD Player

**PLAYER IS MP3, JPEG COMPATIBLE**

By **LAURA FRAZIER**  
Editor

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. is offering residents a chance to win a new DVD player simply by registering their e-mail address on the community's Web site by Feb. 28.

The contest is free. There are no forms to fill out, and personal information is not requested. The drawing is open to all homeowners and renters over the age of

18 who reside in Bloomingdale. Up to two e-mail addresses per household may be entered.

The homeowners association and Gazette staff send occasional e-mail messages to Bloomingdale residents about late breaking news, community meetings and events, law enforcement advisories and local government issues.

E-mail addresses registered with the BHA are not sold or shared with any other parties, and the list of recipients is not displayed with sent messages.

The DVD player is MP3 and JPEG compatible, allowing users to play digital audio files and view digital photos on

their television. It features progressive scan, picture zoom, a screen saver and TV Guardian, which when enabled filters foul language from DVD videos.

To enter the drawing, log on to www.bloomingtongazette.com. Type your e-mail address in the box at the top left corner of the page, click on "Register My E-mail," and you're in. All residents who previously registered their addresses on the site will automatically be entered in the drawing.

A complete list of drawing rules available to view on the Web site. Winners will be announced in the March issue of The Bloomingdale Gazette.



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See FOCUS, Page 22

## Pro Pooper Scoopers Are No. 1 With No. 2

BUSINESS IS PILING UP

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Chereese Rehart and Kristy Hart call their professional dog and cat pooper-scooper business Yard Guards on Doody. Their slogan touts their specialty: "We take crap, seriously."

In June 2003, Rehart and Hart recognized the need for somebody to do the dirty work.

"I had seen the TV show 'I've Got a Secret' on the Oxygen channel, where contestants guess a person's profession. This episode had a professional pooper scooper. So, I started researching," said Rehart.

From personal experience, Rehart knew how difficult it was to get the kids to do it, and out of that came an idea for a business built around the unglamorous chore. Hart handles the front end of the business - the books and billing - while Rehart handles the back end, literally.

"It doesn't gross me out," said Rehart. "A wiggly tooth, now I can't handle that but I'm fine with this."

Yard Guards are a member of aPaws, the Association of Professional Animal Waste Specialists, an organization that trains and sets the standard for this industry.

Rehart and Hart are licensed and insured, and serve both commercial and residential customers.

"Most of our customers just don't have the time to do it themselves," explained Rehart, who visits customers on a prearranged schedule tailored to their needs, with the average customer needing once-a-week service.

Aside from being a convenience, Yard Guard's service ensures a healthier lawn.

"Contrary to popular belief, dog waste is not fertilizer," Rehart said.

Because it's protein-based, it doesn't decompose the same as manure. Leaving

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CHERESEE REHART  
Co-owner of Yard Guards on Doody

waste in the yard can also enable diseases like hookworms, whipworms and parvo to spread to other pets and even children.

Rehart cleans her tools after each visit and double bags the waste, wearing protective gloves, then disposes of the waste each day at Boyette Animal Hospital, which allows her to use their garbage bin.

Rehart will also alert pet owners to any parasite problems in their pets' waste. Yard Guards currently accepts customers in Hillsborough and southern Pasco counties.

"We offer an excellent customer referral program. One free week of service for each customer referred," said Rehart.

Yard Guards also provides an introductory offer in the form of a "poo-pon," which provides \$10 off the first month's service. There are no contracts or obligations. Continuous-service customers are billed monthly, while one-time customers pay per visit.

Rehart meets each pet on her first visit, allowing them to become familiar with her scent so her visit is a pleasant one each time. As for business, Rehart is happy to report, "It's piling up!"

For information, call 657-9797 or visit yardguardsondoody.com.



Chereese Rehart and Kristy Hart are Yard Guards on Doody, two self-proclaimed "entremaneures."



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# Author Brings Storytelling Talent To Alafia, Cimino

## NEW TWIST ON OLD STORY DELIGHTS KIDS

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Cimino and Alafia Elementary students were in for a treat when children's author Jim Aylesworth paid a visit to the schools in December.

With 30 books to his credit, Aylesworth delighted both students and teachers with his updated version of "The Gingerbread Man."

In unison, Cimino students, teachers and Aylesworth recanted in song-song style the new rhyme he penned to the old favorite.

An engaging speaker, Aylesworth admitted to his audience that he never intended to be an author, saying, "I only wanted to be a first-grade teacher." And teach he did for 25 years, each year rising to the challenge presented by wiggly, giggly first-graders.

"They'd laugh, talk, touch each other, pull their arms from their sleeves and tuck them in their shirts," he said.

At Aylesworth's Cimino appearance, the teachers all laughed at the familiarity of the frustrations, and then smiled at his recounting of how he creatively addressed those problems.

"I found that if I read them a book they got quiet," Aylesworth recalled.

Eventually, one of his students suggested he become an author because he was such a good reader.

Upon that recommendation, the storyteller began toying with the idea of becoming a writer. Putting some of his ideas down in what he called a pretend book — nothing more than a few pieces of paper folded into book form — Aylesworth carried it around and wrote his book as it came to him.

That book, published in 1980, was called "Hush Up!" Many of his ideas came from his students.

*"They'd laugh, talk, touch each other, pull their arms from their sleeves and tuck them in their shirts."*

JIM AYLESWORTH  
Author



Children's author Jim Aylesworth delighted Cimino Elementary students with the tale of how he became an author.

"Hickory Dickory Dock" is his long version of the nursery rhyme, taking children through the hours of the day with his own characters and their antics.

One of his most popular books is "Old Black Fly," which came about as he noticed his students were more interested in an ugly

black fly that kept buzzing around the classroom than they were in his teaching.

During Aylesworth's visit, Alafia students got the chance to make their own old black fly splatter art, each child building their creation around a different letter of the alphabet.

Alafia media specialist



Alafia second-graders made bookmarks at the Teddy Bear Tears station, inspired by one of Aylesworth's books.

*"The kids are going to have an awesome time today for reaching their reading goal."*

NANCY WATERS  
Media specialist at  
Alafia Elementary

Nancy Waters combined the author's visit with a reading celebration for the students.

"The kids are going to have an awesome time today for reaching their reading goal," said Waters, who planned several activity stations centering around Aylesworth's books.

Scooter races, bookmarks, a bean bag toss and cookie decorating kept eager readers busy at Alafia until they began their chance to hearing Aylesworth's tale of how he became an author.

For more information, visit Aylesworth and his books. The visit [www.ayles.com](http://www.ayles.com).

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## Style Meets Savings At Thrift Avenue II

STORE STOCKS SIZES 2-26

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Style meets savings where Thrift Avenue II intersects with Bloomingtondale.

Lora Tucker, owner of a ladies' consignment shop on Oakfield Drive has expanded her business, opening a new location on Bloomingtondale Avenue.

"Now I'm a chain," laughs Tucker, who divides her time between both locations. Having been in the consignment business for 15 years, Tucker knows what works and what doesn't. She keeps her stores stocked with updated seasonal styles, accepting only women's clothes with nothing over two years old.

She also offers formals and gowns year-round, in sizes ranging from two to 26. Much of this she learned while she was in business with her mother, who had a shop in Hyde Park for 10 years.

In addition to clothing, Tucker keeps a room of knick-knacks, odds and ends and the small pieces of furniture, lamps and tables she receives.

"You never know what you're going to get. It amazes me, some of the stuff I get in!"

Consignments work on a 90-day basis, with Tucker and the consignor splitting the income 50/50. She offers two payouts a month, and will hold the money for six months to give her consignors plenty of time to collect. Appointments are not necessary to drop off clothing, and there is no item limit.

After 60 days, clothes go half price. After 90 days, Tucker donates things that don't sell to a homeless shelter in Brandon.

In addition to clothes, Tucker also offers shoes, purses, belts and costume jewelry.

She will accept some vintage and antique clothing, and asks that everything brought in be clean, pressed and on hangers.

"One of the things that's nice about coming to a consignment store is you find things nobody else has. You're not going to go out to eat and see somebody wearing your outfit."

Lora's Thrift Avenue II is at 2224 E. Bloomingtondale Ave. Hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., closed Sunday. For information, call 657-4030.



From casual to dressy, Thrift Avenue II has clothing for every size and style.

## Ahoy, All Bloomingtondale Boaters

**FREE VESSEL  
SAFETY CHECK  
JAN. 15**

A Gazette Report

Bloomingtondale area boaters, begin your new year by having a free vessel safety check to ensure that your boat is safe and ready for the cooler months.

The U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will hold a free safety

check on Jan. 15 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at West Marine, 3905 W. Cypress St. in Tampa.

Vessel safety checks verify that your boat meets all state and federal requirements. Citations are not issued at safety checks. Boaters will either receive a safety check decal indicating their boat passed the check, or a copy of the inspection report with suggestions to meet Coast Guard requirements.

For more information, call 348-0521.

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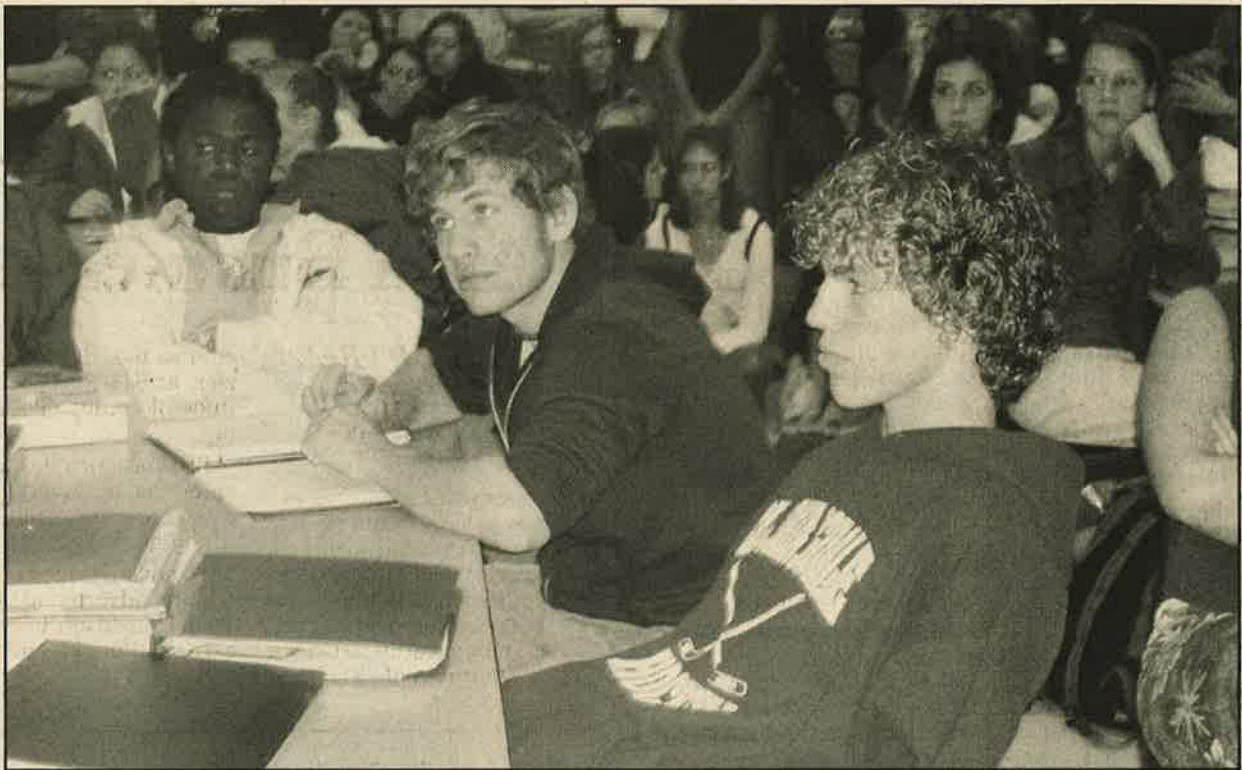
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D'ANN WHITE/Photo

The True Love Waits club at Bloomingdale High School attracts a standing-room-only crowd of students who have vowed abstinence.

## Bloomington High Club Members Say No To Sex

### TRUE LOVE WAITS ATTRACTS 200 STUDENTS

By D'ANN WHITE  
Correspondent

Whether it's the chess club, the school newspaper or the National Honor Society, high school clubs are lauded for their accomplishments.

But a new Bloomingdale High School club is distinguished by what its members don't do: have sex.

True Love Waits is not only Bloomingdale High School's newest club, it's also one of its largest, with more than 200 members crowding into a classroom once a month to listen to speakers on the merits of abstinence and to discuss pressures and concerns surrounding the students' decision to abstain from sex.

Juniors Sarah Shirina and Tracey Allen came up with the idea of forming the club after learning about similar clubs at Hillsborough and Jefferson high schools.

*"I was a little skeptical. In high school, this is not what you perceive as cool."*

PATRICIA LYONS  
Club sponsor

They approached Spanish teacher Patricia Lyons about sponsoring a club at Bloomingdale.

"I was a little skeptical," admitted Lyons. "In high school, this is not what you perceive as cool."

The administration also needed assurances that the club wouldn't have a religious focus.

With those assurances in place, True Love Waits announced its first meeting.

"In the first two days, we had over 100 kids signed up," said Lyons. "Now we have close to 200 kids."

The popularity of the club forced it to move to a larger meeting room in November. But even that room couldn't contain the numbers of stu-

dents who stood against the walls after all the chairs were filled. The club is now looking for an even larger place to meet.

For Lyons, who sponsors the club with family consumer sciences teacher Katrina Millan and science teacher Ben Turner, the club's popularity is testament to the changing morals of today's youth. The high incidence of teen pregnancy combined with the very real possibility of contracting the HIV virus or other sexually-transmitted diseases - today one in four teens carries a sexually-transmitted disease - has turned the tide.

Especially surprising to Lyons is the number of boys in the club, but junior Caleb

Payne said guys are tired of being pressured into having sex when they're not ready.

"We're trying to make abstinence acceptable. We're trying to make it so everybody's not going out and having sex," he said.

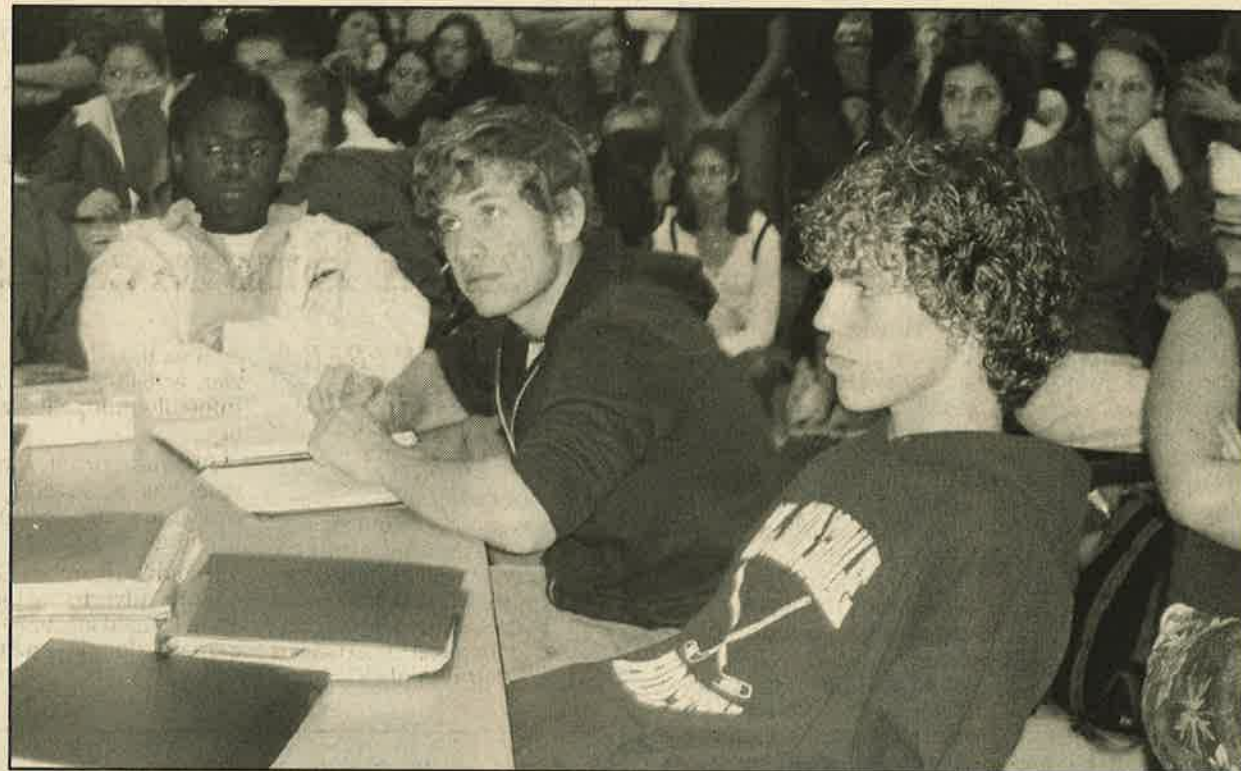
"Guys are realizing there are consequences to sex," said junior Mikey Morales. "There's the possibility of becoming a parent before you're ready or dealing with an abortion. And then there are STDs and AIDS. We're not adults. We're not old enough to handle these consequences."

Payne said the fact nearly half the students attending True Love Waits meetings are males is refreshing.

"I'm surprised and encouraged there are so many guys here with moral values," he said.

In fact, said Allen, when they decided to create club T-shirts, it was the guys who embraced the idea of wearing pink shirts with the words "I'm

See CLUB, Page 22



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The administration also needed assurances that the club wouldn't have a religious focus.

With those assurances in place, True Love Waits announced its first meeting.

"In the first two days, we had over 100 kids signed up," said Lyons. "Now we have close to 200 kids."

The popularity of the club forced it to move to a larger meeting room in November. But even that room couldn't contain the numbers of stu-

dents who stood against the walls after all the chairs were filled. The club is now looking for an even larger place to meet.

For Lyons, who sponsors the club with family consumer sciences teacher Katrina Millan and science teacher Ben Turner, the club's popularity is testament to the changing morals of today's youth. The high incidence of teen pregnancy combined with the very real possibility of contracting the HIV virus or other sexually-transmitted diseases - today one in four teens carries a sexually-transmitted disease - has turned the tide.

Especially surprising to Lyons is the number of boys in the club, but junior Caleb

Payne said guys are tired of being pressured into having sex when they're not ready.

"We're trying to make abstinence acceptable. We're trying to make it so everybody's not going out and having sex," he said.

"Guys are realizing there are consequences to sex," said junior Mikey Morales. "There's the possibility of becoming a parent before you're ready or dealing with an abortion. And then there are STDs and AIDS. We're not adults. We're not old enough to handle these consequences."

Payne said the fact nearly half the students attending True Love Waits meetings are males is refreshing.

"I'm surprised and encouraged there are so many guys here with moral values," he said.

In fact, said Allen, when they decided to create club T-shirts, it was the guys who embraced the idea of wearing pink shirts with the words "I'm

See CLUB, Page 22

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contact the editor, Laura Frazier, at 643-2990, or e-mail [Info@BloomingdaleGazette.com](mailto:Info@BloomingdaleGazette.com).

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## Bloomingtondale Real Estate Sales

This four-bedroom, two-bath home at 3950 Applegate Circle in Brandon listed and sold for \$239,900 in 44 days.

The home features upgraded flooring, renovated kitchen and baths and lush landscaping.

Information provided by

Amy McGill of Partnership Properties, Crumpler & Associates Inc.

Realtors are invited to send recent Bloomingdale real estate sales information and photos to the editor at [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com).

## Local Red Cross Chapter Urges Home Heating Safety

**DOZENS OF HOME FIRES REPORTED IN DECEMBER**

A Gazette Report

The Tampa Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross provided an unprecedented level of response to victims of the hurricanes, which affected Tampa Bay and other parts of Florida from August through mid-October.

Now, the chapter is responding to home fires that have occurred at an alarmingly high rate since Oct. 15, providing assistance to victims of more than 100 fires.

In fact, during the first 13 days of December, the Red Cross responded to more than 35 fires.

In many cases, the causes of these fires have been attributed to the misuse of heating appliances, use of inappropriate heat sources or to a heating system malfunction.

For home fires, the Red Cross provides emergency housing and financial assistance for the purchase of food and clothing to those displaced by the fires.

Nationwide every year, from Thanksgiving to New Years Day, fires alone typically injure 2,000 people and cause \$500,000 million in property damage.

The Red Cross urges home-

See SAFETY, Page 22

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## CLUB

From page 20

Waiting For Her” on the front and the True Love Waits logo designed by student Kristen Shader on the back. The girls opted for a baby blue version.

Bloomingtondale’s teaching staff and administration have been pleasantly surprised at the response to the club.

November’s speaker, Assistant Principal Scott Rudes, talked openly about his own decision to wait for true love. A 1991 graduate, Rudes said he faced many of the same issues surrounding sex that teens face today. But he said he’s grateful he waited because it made his marriage all the more strong. He’s now been married for nine years and is the father of three children.

Sponsor Katrina Millan, a second-year teacher at Bloomingtondale, is also open about her decision to be abstinent outside of marriage. She made that decision while in high school in Jacksonville. She graduated in 2000 and remained firm in her decision throughout her years at Florida State University.

“I think abstinence makes a big difference in the way you view yourself,” she said. “It builds self-confidence and self-respect. You’re not only protecting your body, you’re protecting your heart. All my



D’ANN WHITE/Photo

Bloomingtondale High School junior Joel Deserio good-naturedly participates in a demonstration with family consumer sciences teacher Katrina Millan in which duct tape, with arm hair attached, is torn from the arm to show how sex can leave a mark on every partner. The club was started in September and already has a membership of 200 students.

students know I’m abstinent. It’s really exciting to provide support to these students against the pressures. They’re taking a stand, and they’re showing that one person can make a difference.”

Millan currently is in the

process of becoming a certified abstinence speaker through the Brandon Care Pregnancy Center’s Be the One program.

Among the projects the club is undertaking is the production of a videotape featuring

man-on-the-street interviews about views on abstinence and a diaper collection for the Care Pregnancy Center.

Eventually, said Shirina, they’d like to go into the middle schools to talk to students there about abstinence.

## SAFETY

From page 21

owners and renters to use extreme caution when using heating systems or heating appliances such as space heaters and offers the following tips to help residents protect their property and belongings:

### Home Heating Systems

Have the entire heating system, including chimneys and vents, inspected and serviced by a licensed professional. Chimneys and flues should also be checked for blockages, such as bird nests and for corrosion and loose connections. Replace the furnace filter if necessary and never use appliances

such as ranges, ovens or clothes dryers for heating.

### Fireplaces

Have chimneys and flues inspected and serviced by a licensed professional. Creosote, a substance formed when wood burns, collects in chimneys and can cause a fire if not removed. Burn only wood, never paper or pine boughs, which can emit from chimneys and possibly ignite a neighboring home. Use a sturdy hearth screen when a fireplace is lit, never use flammable liquids and ensure that flues are open when fireplaces are in use.

## FOCUS

From page 16

comfort caused by lack of oxygen.

“Today’s lenses fit better and have better edges, making them healthier than conventional lenses.”

Gres takes time to educate contact wearers, helping them make a wise, healthy decision in their eye-care. That personal concern translates from his patients into his community, with Get In Focus getting involved in such programs as “See More Clearly,” which helps underprivileged kids from the University Mall area receive eye exams.

“We want to stay involved and help our community,” said Gres.

The office accepts

Humana, CIGNA, VSP, VCI, United Healthcare of Florida, Spectera, Medicaid and Medicare, Amerigroup, Staywell, Healthcase, Davis Vision and also honors TriCare, BCBS, and Aetna.

Get In Focus is at 805 Bloomingtondale Ave. in King’s Row Shopping Center, at the corner of Kings Road.

Walk-ins are accepted, but appointments are encouraged. Hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., closed Sunday.

For more information, call 657-3600.

**CLUB**

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**PATTON**

From page 3

dia Restaurant in Ybor City.

“I’d never taken an art class before Karen’s,” said Patton. “She had such an impact on me. If she hadn’t encouraged me, believed in, I don’t know where I’d be today.”

While Patton was busy raising her family and pursuing her art, Marcos continued doing what she’s done for the past 27 years — teaching. She was oblivious to the influence she’d had on Marcos until she saw a newspaper feature on the young artist earlier this year in which she credited Marcos with encouraging her.

“I couldn’t believe that she’d mentioned me,” said Marcos. “I was overwhelmed. I found her number and called her right away. It’s what every teacher dreams of — to inspire someone.”

But when teacher and student reunited, the tables turned. Now Patton had a chance to encourage Marcos to something she’d dreamed of — to exhibit her own artwork.

“Over the years, I’d put my own artwork on the backburner,” said Marcos,

who majored in art at the University of South Florida and began her teaching career at Plant City High School at the age of 22.

She then taught at East Bay High before joining the staff at Bloomingtondale when the school opened in 1987.

“I’d try painting at night, but after working with kids all day, I didn’t always feel creative,” said Marcos.

Nevertheless, Marcos managed to complete three or four pieces a year, and with Patton persistent prodding, she agreed to join Patton in December for their first two-woman show titled “Strokes of Encouragement,” a name borrowed from the headline of the story of their reunion that appeared in The Brandon News in February.

“I think it’s important for her students to know that she practices what she teaches,” said Patton.

Before the show last month, Patton said, “I’m really nervous about this show. I had a piece in a gallery show in Ybor City and did the Gasparilla Art Show a couple of times, but this is Brandon, where I live and work.”

In contrast, Patton said she was excit-

ed because she sees the show as a tribute to art educators in the schools, people who often find their funding the first to be cut because the arts aren’t viewed as a necessity in education.

The two artists said their styles couldn’t be more different, although both have an affinity for vibrant color.

Patton’s realistic watercolor paintings of Tampa Bay landmarks appeal to both residents and tourists.

Marcos, on the other hand, describes her work as spiritual and emotional.

“I’ve never sold a piece from a gallery show,” she said. “People don’t buy my work because I paint things that personally affect me or interest me. My art is filled with political views, spiritual messages and symbols. I grew up in the Greek Orthodox Church, which is filled with icons and tradition.”

Using a decidedly nontraditional technique of oils on paper, Marcos’ paintings are filled with fanciful creatures — faeries, stylized dogs and sheep.

The exhibit, held in December, contained 17 to 20 of Patton’s 16- by 20-inch works and 12 of Marcos’ 30- by 40-inch paintings.

**REPORT**

From page 6

**Scooters, Mini-Bikes Are Illegal**

Gas and electric powered scooters and mini-bikes are illegal on all public roads and sidewalks. Parents can be ticketed for allowing their children to use these dangerous “toys” on public property.

**Officials Support Bloomingtondale Issues**

County Commissioner Ronda Storms was re-elected in November to represent District IV, which includes Bloomingtondale. Storms and

her staff will continue their active support of our community.

Congratulations are in order for Sen. Tom Lee, now serving as the Florida State Senate president.

District 62 state Rep. Rich Glorioso is an active member of the Florida Families, Military and Veterans Affairs and Transportation Committees, all areas of very special interest to the residents of Bloomingtondale.

The community council looks forward to working with all our government representatives.

**SALON**

From page 5

and that attitude translates to our clients.”

Acrylic nail technician Maria Lobello joined the staff this year.

In true hands-on management style, Coughlin will continue to serve as the salon’s manicurist.

Salon Essence offers professional styling products by Bed Head, Matrix, Redken, Sebastian, Paul

Mitchell, Nexxus, BioSilk and Malibu 2000.

A new line of soy-based candles, tarts and accessories created by local business T & K Treasures is also offered.

Salon Essence is at 3507 Bell Shoals Road. For appointments, available Tuesday through Saturday (closed Sunday and Monday), call 681-2060.

**KARATE**

From page 9

The academy offers after school pick up at the local elementary schools.

“Our program is very structured here,” Harris said.

“They come here to learn about life kills. We teach them stranger danger and practical self-defense.”

Training is held weekdays from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. In addition to martial arts classes, students are encouraged to get their homework done, and be picked up by 6:00 p.m.

During the summer, Harris offers summer camps at both locations, where students

train every day, then participate in a field trip.

“We go to the movies, go swimming, bowling, skating, to the park,” he said.

The academy also opens for birthday parties, with demonstrations and basic stance and kicks lessons. For parties, Harris suggests calling at least two weeks in advance to ensure availability.

Earl Harris Karate Academy is at 3220 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, call 657-8800 and at 1273 Kingsway Road, call 661-8505. For more information visit, www.earlharris.com.

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