

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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Resolution: Be Safer

Deputy Pete Maurer
urges residents to
stay safe in 2008

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Words To A Tea

Jane Austen visits
Tussie Mussie's
Tea Room in Plaza Bella

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JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette photo

Santa and Mrs. Claus and their trusty elf chauffer on Dec. 22 visited Windsor Woods, Cambridge Cove and Augusta Village, where residents lined the streets with paper bag lanterns to celebrate Christmas and their respective wins in the BHA's second annual luminaria contest. See story, page 4.

Time To Get Involved

*BHA President urges residents to get
involved in their community, see page 8*

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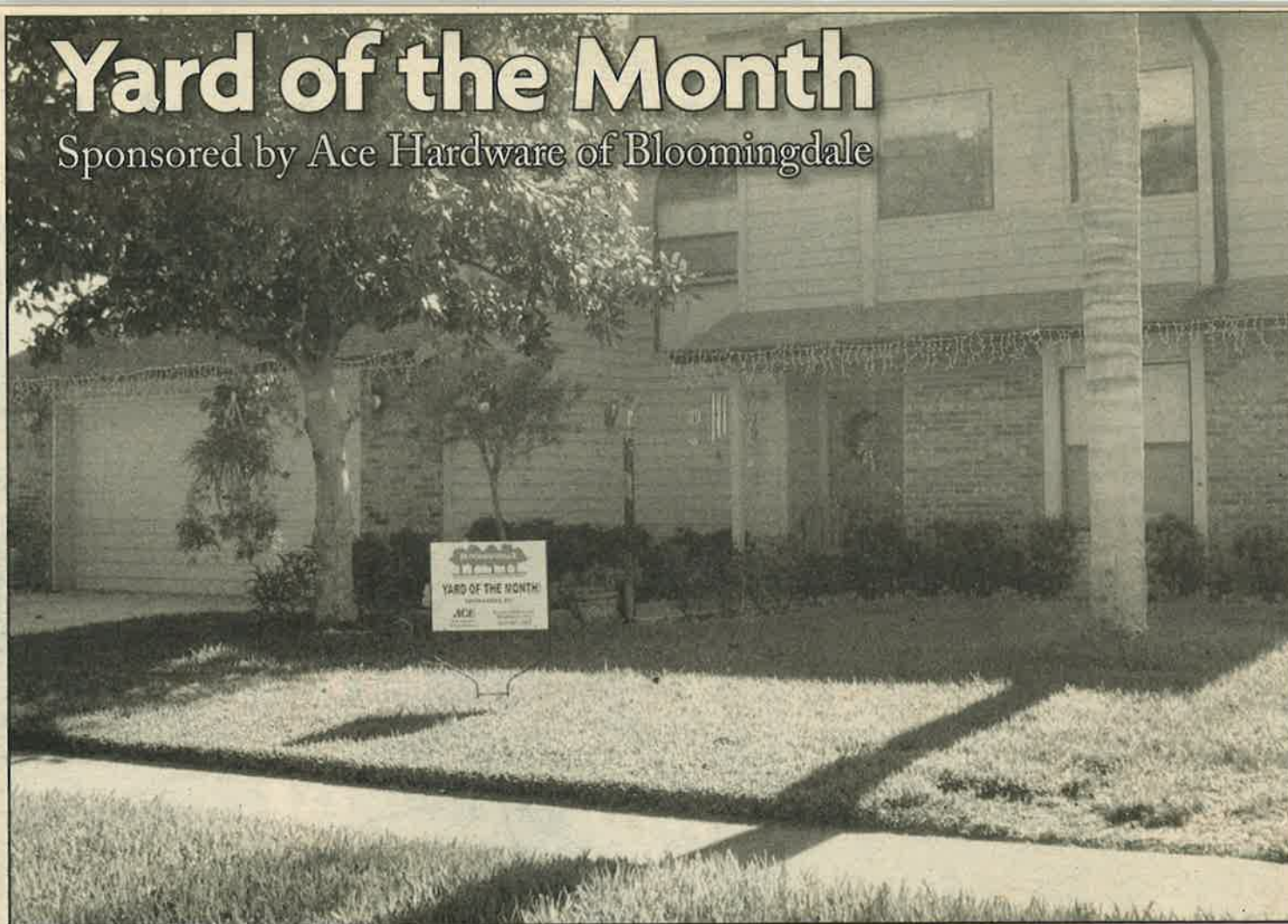
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Yard of the Month

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JANE LEE/Gazette photo

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Holiday Spirit Shines In Bloomingdale

By JOY BOISSELLE

Young, old and in-between, one person can put a smile on anyone's face — Santa Claus. At least that's how it appeared when Santa and Mrs. Claus made their annual visit Dec. 22 to neighborhood winners of the homeowners association's luminaria sale contest.

Dozens of first place Windsor Woods residents lined their streets with the paper bag candle lanterns in anticipation of the visit they won by selling 43 kits in the fundraiser. Other winning neighborhoods included Cambridge Cove and Augusta Village.

Santa and his better half paraded through the neighborhoods in style aboard their "sleigh," a convertible Mercedes coupe on loan from Susan Luther, president of All American Title, and driven by trusty "elf" George May, a Bloomingdale board member and Honorary Mayor of Brandon.

May, a Windsor Woods resident, said, "Our street (Treeline Drive) made this a jingle mingle, a chance to get out and socialize with neighbors. We served refreshments and goodies in each other's driveways and we had the majority of the street lit up."

Nikki Mendez, 16, summed up the event's significance to the community. She said, "The luminaries are a fun way to get in the Christmas spirit and bring everyone together."

Luminarias are a beautiful Christmas tradition, but in this case, also a purposeful one. Proceeds from the sale benefit the B. J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship fund, a program designed to reward deserving Bloomingdale High School seniors. Last year, one student received a \$1,000 scholarship primarily funded by the contest.

For information about the scholarship program and more Bloomingdale news and events, call (813) 681-2051, e-mail bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net or go to www.bloomingdalegazette.com.



JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette Photos
Paul Anthony Bryant, 3, and his mom, Daisy, got a special treat from Santa and Mrs. Claus Dec. 22, at the Bloomingdale Community Office where the jolly couple prepared to make their annual neighborhood visit to luminaria contest winners.

Nikki Mendez, 16, under the supervision of her mother, Daisy, lights luminarias in front of the family's Windsor Woods home Dec. 22 in anticipation of Santa's arrival.



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Office hours: Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Meetings: first Monday each month, 7 p.m.
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Vice president: Stanley Lee; **Treasurer:** Pam Liguori
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County Offers Free Household Junk Disposal

A Gazette Report
 Hillsborough County residents can dispose of household junk, old appliances, residential yard waste, paint, batteries and more for free at one of five Community Collection Centers open 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday.

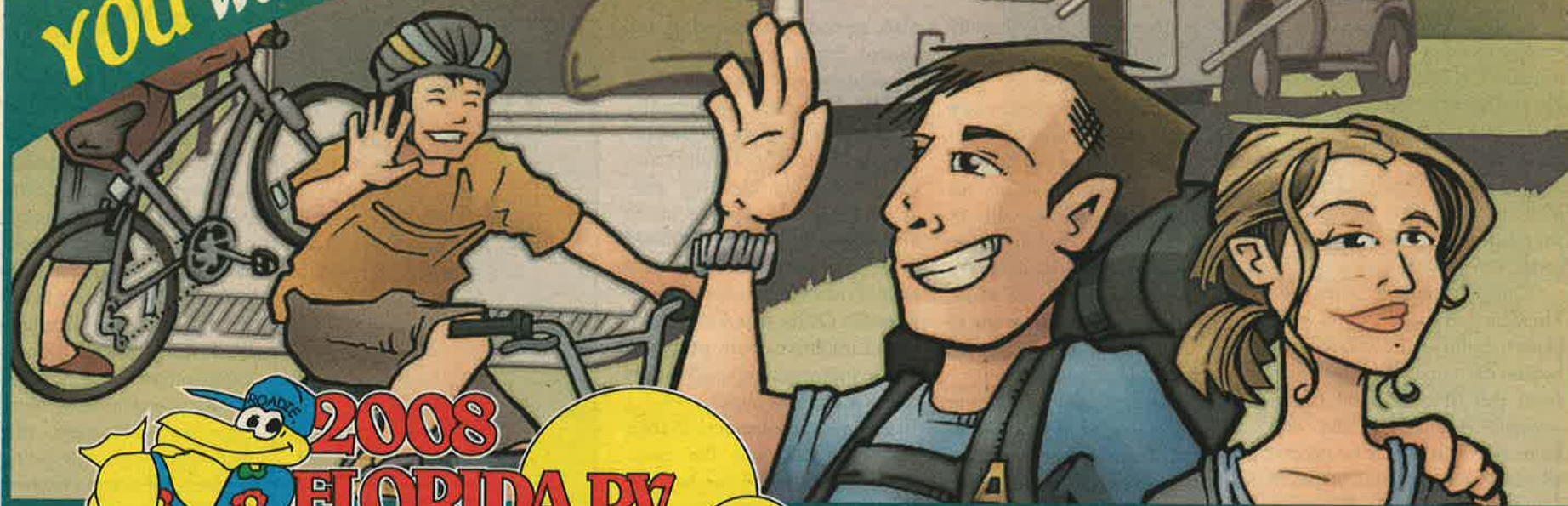
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BHA President Encourages Involvement

By JOYBOISSELLE

Ten years ago, Bloomingdale resident Joe Hickle was content. He and his wife, Joni, had moved to the area from Dallas a decade earlier and were settled in. The couple enjoyed their home on Monte Lake Drive, set on what they believed to be a protected conservation area.

Things changed when Joe Hickle heard about a developer's plans to build on the wooded area behind his home. He sought help from the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association and said he received the advice he needed to solve the problem, maintain his quality of life and sustain his property's value. Wanting to be involved in his community, help others like him, and keep Bloomingdale the superior community that it was, Hickle joined the association's volunteer board of directors. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, Hickle is president of the BHA. He said the organization's purpose is a simple one: to help protect most residents' biggest investment — their home,

and perhaps even more importantly, to maintain a high quality of life.

"I see myself as the leader of a voluntary body of concerned citizens who are trying to help out," Hickle said. "We want to see good property values, quality of life, and we want to help maintain the beauty of the area. We are here because we care about the community and we want to keep it a nice place to live. It's why the BHA exists."

Hickle sees 2008 as a year for continuing to focus on deed restrictions and enforcement. An area the board is exploring is the creation of Master Homeowner Associations in many of the community's 40 sections.

"The problem of deed restriction enforcement could be more easily managed on a smaller scale through master associations," he said. "We (the BHA) would help residents with the legal process and they would have greater deed restriction enforceability in their own neighborhoods."

Hickle also wants successful community programs already in

place to continue, including the annual Santa and Mrs. Claus community visit, the B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship program for Bloomingdale High School seniors, and the community clean-up program. He would also like to see a resurgence of "neighborhood pride" programs and solid support of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office new Citizens on Patrol initiative. Both programs aim to improve safety and reduce crime in the community.

Resident involvement in their neighborhoods and the community is essential for keeping Bloomingdale an attractive place to live, Hickle said.

"Residents should join the association, volunteer to serve on some of our committees and come to an occasional board meeting. Get involved in a positive way as part of the solution, and not just the problem," he said.

Getting involved led Hickle on his journey from concerned resident, to board member, to vice president, and finally, to his



Joe Hickle

current position as president. With high motivation and 10 years BHA experience behind him, 2008 promises to be an exciting, busy year for Hickle and the entire community.

For information about the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, call (813) 681-2051, e-mail bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net or go to www.bloomingdalegazette.com.

Center Offers Free Weight Loss Clinic

A Gazette Report

Bloomingdale Acupuncture and Nutrition Center will hold a weight management and health and wellness workshop from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 7 at Bloomingdale Regional Public Library, 1906 Bloomingdale Ave.

"Ring in the New Year" attendees will learn why diets don't work, why eating fat doesn't make you fat, how metabolic typing, sugar and carbohydrates affect weight loss efforts, how to regain energy and vitality, and the secrets to losing weight and keeping it off effectively.

"All ages can benefit from the weight management seminar," said Dr. Guillermo Caceres. "We will help you keep that New Year's resolution to lose weight and teach you to stop yo-yo dieting and take control of your weight once and for all."

The free seminar is open to the public; seating is limited to the first 15 callers. For information or to reserve a seat call (813) 341-2200.

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For BHA membership information, call (813) 681-2051, e-mail bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net, log on to www.bloomingdalegazette.com or visit the Bloomingdale Community Office, open 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday to Thursday at 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, behind Sun-Trust Bank.

MOMS Run For Their Lives

A Gazette Report

The MOMS Club of Valrico/Bloomingtondale will host a 5K Run/Walk, "Run For Your Life... Or Someone Else's," this spring, to benefit the American Cancer Society's annual Relay For Life fundraiser.

The 5K will begin at 8 a.m. on March 1 on Culbreath Road between the Campo Family YMCA and the South Brandon Little League Complex on Bloomingtondale Avenue. The event will include a family-friendly after party with entertainment, food and drink vendors and raffle prizes. Awards will go to the first cancer survivor who finishes the race overall and master male and female finishers and the top three finishers in each of several age group categories.

Early registration (prior to March 1) is \$20 per

person; race day registration is \$25. Participants can register online through Feb. 28 at www.active.com. The first 200 registered participants will receive a custom race packet and tee shirt. Race packets will be available for early pickup from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Feb. 29 at Hit The Trails, 16144 Churchview Drive, Suite 105, in FishHawk Ranch Park Square.

The club also seeks sponsorships in the form of cash donations to cover event expenses and to maximum its fundraising efforts. Interested sponsors can contact Amy Peerless at (813) 657-0404 or apeerless@hotmail.com.

For event information or to register, contact Sarah Woodyer at (813) 685-1690 or woodyer1@gmail.com.

In The Swim



JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette photos

Water aerobics instructor, Sandy Dolan, rallies the troops during a cardio and toning class in December at the Campo Family YMCA on Culbreath Road at Bloomingtondale Avenue. For membership information or winter class schedules, (813) 684-1472.

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JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette photo

Breath of Life

Registered nurse Kimberly Smith, at right, supervises as Tammy Valentine practices CPR techniques she learned in December at the Campo Family YMCA. Residents can learn CPR, first aid skills and more in a variety of classes offered monthly at the YMCA, on Culbreath Road at Bloomingdale Avenue. For information call (813) 684-1472.

Friends Bring Local Art To Library

A Gazette Report

The public art committee of the Friends of the Bloomingdale Regional Public Library will continue its efforts this year to showcase the work of local artists.

In 2007, the friends group purchased display rods and molding with which to display artwork on a rotating basis in the McLean Community Room, children's room and computer learning lab.

Works displayed in 2007 were Roxanne Tobaison's watercolor paintings of Florida scenes, birds and landmarks; Anne Drewry's water media abstracts in collage, acrylics and mixed media; and William Greet's scenic creations in varied media and oil.

This month, the library will feature the works of Carol

Karow, whose pastel works feature portraits, landscapes and animals.

Karow was encouraged by her mother at age 7 to begin her painting career.

She will paint any subject, but said her passion is portraits. Unlike many portrait artists who work strictly from a photograph, she prefers a face-to-face meeting with her subject, "in order to capture the life essence," she said.

Karow has studied at the Ringling School of Art and Design and completed workshops with Susanna Spann, Bob Fagan, Suzanna Sargaent, and others.

Local artists interested in displaying their work at the library are invited to contact the friends group at bdlfol@gmail.com.

Salvation Army Needs Clothes, More

A Gazette Report

Cleaning out your closets or garage after the holidays? The Salvation Army offers free pick-up of usable clothing (especially coats), blankets, furniture, books, toys, shoes appliances and other household items. Just call for pick up, then label and place your donations in your driveway. A driver will pick up your items on the scheduled day, and upon request will leave a tax-deductible receipt on your door. Information: 1-800-330-ARMY.

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Bloomington Homeowners Association Meeting Schedule

The all-volunteer Bloomington Homeowners Association Inc. Board of Directors holds monthly meetings, open to the public, at 7 p.m. on the first Monday each month (or as otherwise noted when holidays fall) at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico. All residents are encouraged to observe the meetings or bring their neighborhood comments and concerns before the board. For more information call

(813) 681-2051, e-mail bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net or go to www.bloomingtondalegazette.com.

January 7, 2008
February 4, 2008
March 3, 2008
April 7, 2008
May 5, 2008
June 2, 2008
July 7, 2008
August 4, 2008
September 1, 2008

Bloomington Special Taxing District Meeting Schedule

The all-volunteer Bloomington Special Taxing District Board of Trustees holds monthly meetings, open to the public, at 7 p.m. on the second Monday each month (or as otherwise noted when holidays fall) at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico. All residents are encouraged to observe the meetings or bring their neighborhood comments and concerns before the board. For more information call (813) 684-6667, e-mail bloomingtondale.district@verizon.net or go to www.bloomingtondalegazette.com.

January 14, 2008
February 11, 2008
March 10, 2008
April 14, 2008
May 12, 2008 - Budget Workshop & Meeting
June 9, 2008 - Public Hearing & Regular Meeting
July 14, 2008
August 11, 2008
September 8, 2008

Clinics Tee Off This Month



JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette photo

Megan Younkman, Bloomington Golfers Club director of golf instruction, helps newbie Sherry Hart with the basics in this December photograph. Younkman, an LPGA Class A instructor, offers private lessons at the club year-round. Adult clinics begin this month. For information call (813) 655-GOLF, ext. 13, e-mail director@myprogolfschools.com or go to www.myprogolfschools.com.

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Together Forever



JOY BOISSELLE/Gazette Photo

Bloomington residents know that Busch Gardens isn't the only local place to observe wild-life. Florida Sandhill Cranes are frequent visitors around neighborhood's ponds and on Bloomington Golfers Course. The tall gray birds live up to 20 years and mate for life.

District Installed Holiday Bows, Canes

A Gazette Report

Bloomington Special Taxing District property manager, Al Devney, oversees maintenance and improvements to the community's common areas. Contact Devney at (813) 684-6667 or bloomington.district@verizon.net.

Devney reported the following activities in November 2007.

Signs by Mineo removed a vandalized entrance sign at the Allwood entrance. The sign will be repaired and repainted for \$320. Specialty Pressure Washing removed the graffiti on the brick column in the same area for \$60.

Metro Painting pressure washed, primed and repainted walls at the Gotham entrance to cover the graffiti on those walls for \$400. Devney Property Management, Inc. repainted the back of the directory sign located at the south corner of Natures Way and Culbreath.

Metro Painting completed its wall painting contract for 10,520 linear feet at a cost of \$30,441.30. The walls on Springvale, Culbreath and Natures Way from Bloomington Village to the lift station were painted.

Metro Painting installed 484 candy canes and 484 red Christmas bows on 242 light poles in the east and west. They will be removed after the holidays.

CPMI installed the wreaths and lights at seven entrances and the red bows on the flag poles, Bloomington signs and directories.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, there were 15 bags of trash, a shirt, a bath towel, a pair of pants, two pair of shoes and 8 cents.

The beverages of choice were Diet Coke for soft drinks, Corona for beer and Captain Morgan Spiced Rum for distilled spirits.

Adopt-A-Pond Relocates

A Gazette Report

Hillsborough County Adopt-A-Pond program manager John McGee announced in December the organization's relocation to the Hillsborough County Environmental Services office at 2420 N. Falkenburg Road in Tampa.

"We think this new organization will

allow us to accomplish our tasks more efficiently and may open doors in the future for expanded services," McGee said.

The Adopt-A-Pond program enables residents to form pond groups eligible for guidance in designing a neighborhood pond maintenance plan, free plants, cleanup assistance and more.

McGee encouraged residents interested in cleaning up and revitalizing backyard ponds to submit program applications as soon as possible.

"Adopt-A-Pond takes time in the beginning, so now is the best time to get a jump on it," McGee said. "Plus there is currently no waiting list for cleanup assistance."

Applications are available online at www.hillsboroughcounty.wateratlas.org/app.

In addition, the agency is offering free copies of its 2008 Adopt-A-Pond calendar and free surplus storm drain markers, while supplies last.

For information call (813) 744-5671 or e-mail mcgee@hillsboroughcounty.org.

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Keep Tabs On Sex Offenders

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association encourages residents to check the Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement web site for public records listing the current residences of registered sexual offenders and predators. The database is searchable by street, city or ZIP code. Information is also available by calling (850) 410-7000.

Parents should be aware that although sexual offenders currently serving probation may be restricted from living in or near places where children congregate, there are no restrictions on former convicts who have served their jail time and completed probation. In addition, sexual predators and offenders convicted prior to the 1996 Jimmy Ryce act may not have any residential restrictions attached to their probation sentence.

According to local probation officers, registered sexual offenders (after serving jail time and probation) are required to notify FDLE with

their new address whenever they relocate. When a registered offender establishes a new residence, FDLE issues a bulletin to local law enforcement and schools as a precautionary measure.

Although some employment restrictions may be indefinitely placed on offenders, it is legal for them to be employed or own many types of businesses that cater to families and children. Offenders are not always required by law to disclose their predator/offender status to the general public at their place of employment.

Representatives of the Hillsborough County School District and Bloomingdale area Sheriff's deputies say they keep close tabs on registered offenders. They encourage parents to speak with their children about safety issues in general, and to contact the sheriff's office and school officials with any specific concerns they might have.

The FDLE site also offers information about missing children, stolen property, fugitives, domestic security issues and more.

S C H O O L S

Meeting To Address Gifted Student Issues

A Gazette Report

Superintendent of Hillsborough County Schools Mary-Ellen Elia will be the guest speaker at the Jan. 12 meeting of the Gifted Advocacy Council of Hillsborough, to be held at MacFarlane Park Magnet School, 1721 N. MacDill Ave., Tampa. Council membership

is required for entrance. New member registration and refreshments will be available at 9:30 a.m., and the superintendent's talk will begin at 10 a.m. In her presentation, "Building a Bright Future for Gifted Learners in Hillsborough County Schools," Elia will address topics of interest to parents and educators of

gifted students, including identification procedures, magnet schools, training and certification of teachers, alternative service models, program funding and curriculum. There is no charge to attend, but pre-registration is required. For information and registration forms, go to <http://GACHFlorida.org>.

Meal Pre-Pay Students Must Re-Register

A Gazette Report

Families using the Hillsborough County School District's meal pre-pay program, MealpayPlus, must re-register on or after Tuesday, Jan. 1 to use the recently upgraded system.

The new system will provides parents with more information about their child's account, more flexibility in designating the use of money in the account, and the ability to view pending and confirmed payments. Another new feature is a toll-free parent support center that parents can call

with questions: (877) 237-0946.

In addition, a new fee structure for payments will begin on Jan. 1. Fees will be determined by a percentage of the transaction, as opposed to the current sliding scale flat fee per transaction.

As always, parents can make payments to meal accounts at their convenience, set up e-mail reminders when the account balance is low, create settings for automatic replenishment, and review their child's daily meal selections. To re-register visit <https://www.mealpayplus.com/>

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Resolve To Improve Safety, Security In 2008

By PETE MAURER
Bloomingtondale
Community Resource Deputy

With each New Year comes new beginnings, and 2008 promises to be a year of changes and challenges.

Community Service Officer Sandy Capitano and I wish each and every resident of Bloomingtondale and the surrounding communities a very safe and secure New Year. We especially want to thank those of you who provided support to us during this past year.

Great progress has been made by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office in making

Bloomingtondale and the surrounding areas safer and more secure places to live, to work and to raise our families. Our continued work with concerned residents from our community has helped make this possible. The expansion of the sheriff's Volunteer Citizens Patrol Program will help make Bloomingtondale even more safe and secure.

We all know how continued growth in our area affects us in terms of increased traffic and crime. Significant improvements have been made and will continue in the New Year. The sheriff's gang unit continues to decrease gang activity in our area,



Deputy Pete Maurer

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and we will finally see the widening of Bell Shoals Road, the continued widening of Boyette Road and other main traffic areas.

One very interesting observation we in law enforcement have noticed is that the major key to improving traffic flow comes not from not just widening more roads but from you, the drivers. When you slow down and obey the traffic laws, you prevent accidents that tie up traffic, and you also save a lot of money on expensive citations and increases in auto insurance. We challenge all of you to make a personal resolution in 2008 to drive safer and obey the law. We will all benefit,

and our deputies can then spend more time solving other law enforcement issues.

The holidays are over and residents are enjoying the nice gifts they received, everything from new bikes to new cars. Each of you should take the time to insure these new gifts are kept safe and secure from thieves. Make sure your garage doors and vehicles are locked. And please secure bikes and other valuables inside – otherwise, they will walk away.

If you will be away from your home for any length of time, make arrangements with a friend or neighbor to get your mail and

paper, or have them stopped until you return. You can also arrange for a sheriff's deputy to check on your property by filling out a request for a security check at Bloomingtondale substation.

We all hear these same safety and security steps over and over every year, but the simple fact is that they don't work until you take action and do them.

Let's make 2008 a safe and secure year. Take personal responsibility for your property, your home and your vehicles. No one will miss them more than you. Also, be a good neighbor and watch out for your neighbors.

Vandalism Costs Taxpayers Dearly

The Bloomingtondale area in December saw a significant increase in tagging – gang-related graffiti. Bloomingtondale Taxing District property manager Al Devney reports each incident results in an average repair cost of \$400, and one recent incident cost \$1,000 to remedy. Residents are asked to report graffiti and vandalism to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, (813) 247-8200 and to contact the property manager for cleanup, (813) 684-6667.



Photo from Patty Wood

This Tea Was Literally Delicious

Patti Heaney Ripani portrayed Jane Austen at a 232nd birthday tea held Dec. 8 at Tussie Mussie's Tea Room in Valrico in honor of the 16th-century English novelist. Tea room owner Patty Wood said Ripani performed a "culturally enriching, historically accurate and humorous" portrayal of Austen while 51 guests at the party enjoyed gourmet tea and a three-course lunch of finger sandwiches and Stilton quiche, followed by Coquille St. Jacques and a dessert course of Godiva chocolate cake and scone pudding with bourbon sauce. Ripani, who lives in Sun City Center, will return to the tea room for a Sense and SensibiliTea party in January. Tussie Mussie's is at 1050 Bloomingdale Ave., in Plaza Bella. For information call (813) 689-2000 or e-mail info@tussiemussietea.com.

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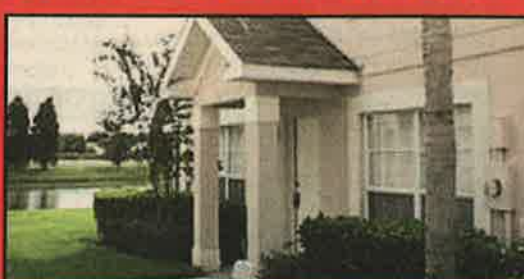
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