

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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Curriculum For Success

Tutor Time school changes its name to The Village Early Learning Center. Grand re-opening set for Jan. 29.

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Holiday tradition

Joe and Pam Liguori have been playing Santa and Mrs. Claus for so long it almost wouldn't be Christmas in these parts without them. The couple recently returned to the place where it all began 23 years ago.

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SUSAN GREEN

Teacher Andrea Salazar uses a cutout star to discuss holiday customs in the Philippines with her class of 4-year-olds at The Village Early Learning Center.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I never worry about diets. The only carrots that interest me are the number you get in a diamond."

Mae West



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New year, new name for early childhood education center

BY SUSAN GREEN

It almost isn't day care anymore.

Sure, the kids are cared for while their parents work or shop or take care of other obligations.

But they also learn Spanish, listen to classical music and receive daily lessons in how to contribute to the community that surrounds them.

That's how it's been since the school formerly known as Tutor Time opened its doors 10 years ago in Bloomingdale West. Owner Susan Miller vows that her mission won't change even though she's giving up the Tutor Time franchise and changing the school's name to The Village Early Learning Center.

"Our mission is really to partner with parents," she said. "We think the parent is the first teacher."

She said she also wants to stress the relationship between children and their community, and she liked the philosophy of "It takes a village to raise a child" that was made popular by former First Lady Hillary Clinton. So she chose to incorporate that concept in the school's new name. A grand re-opening is planned for Jan. 29.

Miller said she decided to give up the Tutor Time name because keeping the franchise meant turning over 7 percent of revenues to the parent corporation. Dropping the franchise meant she could plow those earnings back into improvements to the campus. Already she has begun remodeling the indoor "village" which features a



SUSAN GREEN

Susan Miller, owner of The Village Early Learning Center, shows how parents can follow the curriculum, calendar of activities and menus posted on a bulletin board near the front of the school.

child-sized town square with a plaza and two-story buildings representing stores, a pet shop and a hospital. Each building will be decorated to represent different countries. The second floor will become the center's library, with shelves of books and places to sit and read.

Miller also used some of the savings from relinquishing the franchise to buy durable, easy-to-clean artificial turf for one of the outdoor playgrounds.

The center accepts children from infants through after-school age. Most children attend full time, but part-time slots are available. Miller said the facility has received some of the highest scores in the county for its voluntary preschool program, as measured by the Hillsbor-

**Madelyn Cuason and other 2 year olds enjoy newly installed artificial turf on their playground.**

ough public school district. The program also has met the standards set by several accreditation organizations, including the National Association of Young Children, the largest orga-

nization of early childhood educators.

Fees vary. Miller said she keeps her rates competitive and lower than some of the chain facilities nearby. Discounts are available to military families.

The Village keeps teacher-to-pupil ratios significantly lower than mandated by county regulators, Miller added. With a staff of 32, most classes have a teacher for every eight to 10 children.

Over the years, Miller has seen many changes in child care trends. The popularity of computers and the Internet has been one of the most dramatic, she said. Parents who once relied on friends and co-workers to recommend child care now increasing turn to the Web, Miller noted.

**GRAND
RE-OPENING
INFORMATION****What:** The Village Early Learning Center
Where: 3741 Canoga Park Drive
When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 29
Information: (813) 651-0779 or scmillerm@aol.com

It also has become important to have computers in all classrooms, so that children are exposed to them at an early age.

Another trend is healthy eating. The Village stress menus with fresh foods, low salt and no butter, Miller said.

She said the school also has a philosophy of giving. Staff, students and parents annually conduct food drives and fundraisers that benefit local or international charities, especially those aimed at children struggling with disabilities or disease.

"We want them [children] to know we're all in this together," Miller said.

In the 10 years since she started the center, Miller has built up her clientele to 177 families.

David Snively has had four children enrolled at the center, starting in 2002. Two of them, ages 7 and 10, are now in elementary school, and Snively credits the preschool program at Miller's center with easing their adjustment there. His youngest children are ages 3 and 4.

"I think mostly the people [staff] make the difference, and the curriculum is good," Snively said.

London Bound

With approximately 90 chaperones, the Bloomingtondale High School Band and Choral group, along with choral director, Beverly Sutherland, are on their way. The

of their London Concert Season. These concerts feature the very best of high school bands and choirs from North America.

London conductor and director of choral services at Westminster Cathedral, Thomas Wilson, visited Bloomingtondale High School this past October to rehearse with the Bloomingtondale Choral group. The rehearsal was done in preparation of the group's visit to the London International Choral Festival Gala Concert on Sunday, Jan. 2, in Cadogan Hall.

The group will return from London Jan. 3, 2011. Look for pictures and additional information on this exciting experience in future editions of the Gazette.

Only 25 groups internationally were honored with this invitation.

group left Dec. 27 to participate in the 25th Anniversary New Year's Day Parade and Chorale Festival in London, United Kingdom.

Only 25 groups internationally were honored with this invitation. The New Year's Day Parade Festival will present three concerts at Cadogan Hall as part



PET CORNER

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Is your pet a star? E-mail a picture to chaddertongroup@kw.com, along with their name and some information. If chosen, your pet will be featured in the Bloomingtondale Gazette and will win a \$20 gift card to PetSmart!

This month's winner is JD, a 15-year-old miniature dachshund who loves being with his owners, the Kulesas. With them, he has traveled from Texas to the East Coast. When he isn't travelling, he enjoys sitting in the sun and chasing lizards.



KIM WALLACE

Pause for Claus

Santa Claus made an appearance at the Bloomingtondale Beef O' Bradys on Bell Shoals, causing this one young diner to stop eating.

Happy HOLIDAYS

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Santa and Mrs. Claus visit Bloomingdale

By SUSAN GREEN

Joe and Pam Liguori have been playing Santa and Mrs. Claus for so long, it almost wouldn't be Christmas in these parts without them.

Last month, the couple returned to the place where it all began 23 years ago: the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association.

For the price of a can or two of food to help the needy, about 70 kids – and even a few adults – got the privilege of sitting with the Jolly Old Elf and his wife for a photo at Bloomingdale Golfer's Club. They also had a chance to ask for their heart's desire under the Christmas tree this holiday season.

Joe said he got his first

Santa gig when an association board member asked him to don the signature white beard and red suit, at that time rented. Pam played her part in slacks and an apron.

The experience launched a ministry for the couple, who are active members of St. Stephen Catholic Church. They bought their own costumes, and they now recreate their yuletide roles about two dozen times a year for charitable organizations, always for free.

Pam said they do it because they enjoy seeing young faces light up with excitement.

"I can't explain the feeling," she said. "But it's awesome."

Sometimes the chil-

dren's requests can be heart-wrenching.

"We've had them ask, 'Please help my daddy find a job,'" Joe recalled.

His wife remembered parents who told the couple their young daughter had diabetes.

"They said, 'Please tell her to be good and be careful and give herself a shot.'"

Then there are always the worries from children who are moving to a new home during the holiday season. The Liguoris assure them that Santa always knows the latest address where he can deliver presents.

Joe reckons about 20,000 children have visited with the couple in their alter egos since they

first began. The youngest visitor to ever bounce on his knee was about 2 months old. The oldest to pose with the couple was 103.

Stan Lee, association president, served as photographer. He said he was pleased with the turnout.

"We've had kids who have been here six, seven or eight years in a row," he said.

Food donations were destined to go to Metropolitan Ministries in Tampa. Donating their services as elves to hand out candy and assist the Liguoris were Tony Brochu, 14, of FishHawk Ranch, and Bobby Michael, 14, and Nick Shular, 11, both of Bloomingdale.



SUSAN GREEN

Orlon Rose, 4, and his brother, Cyrus, 2, visit with Santa (Joe Liguori) and his wife (Pam Liguori) at The Bloomingdale Golfer's Club in Bloomingdale. They are the children of Ann and Jim Rose of Bloomingdale.



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THE 2010
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Bloomingtondale Library poised to expand

By SUSAN GREEN

Bloomingtondale got its first public library only six years ago, but already the community has outgrown the 15,000-square-foot facility.

"That library is one of our busiest libraries, and it's way too small to meet the demands for space inside," said David Wullschleger, operations manager for the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System that oversees a network of collections across the county and in Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace.

In September, county commissioners approved a \$2.6 million expansion of the regional library at 1906 Bloomingtondale Ave. The project will add 10,000 square feet to the north side, or rear, of the library. Construction is expected to begin in about 18 months, after design and

"It's something that's desperately needed."

David Wullschleger
Operations Manager

bidding phases are completed, Wullschleger said. The expansion is scheduled to be finished by October 2013.

"It's something that's desperately needed," Wullschleger said.

He said the county will try to minimize growing pains by keeping the facility open during construction as much as possible. The addition mostly will accommodate more meeting space for community groups, and is not expected to affect the building façade.

How it might affect the interior is still to be determined, Wullschleger said.

For example, the library staff wants to expand the children's reading room so that it will hold all juvenile books and services.

Currently, some children's materials have spilled into the main shelving area of the library. Also planned is a meeting room for teen programs.

"That will all be determined during the design phase," Wullschleger said.

The Bloomingtondale library is a popular after-school gathering spot for students from Bloomingtondale High School, just west of the facility.

The library has had a genealogy room and a bank of computers since it opened. It currently houses more than 109,000 volumes, according to the county library website.

Wullschleger said that the book collection is not expected to grow significantly.

Alafia Elementary First Annual Rummage Sale and Craft Show seeks vendors

Staff report

Crafters are needed for the Alafia Elementary First Annual Rummage Sale. The upcoming Rummage Sale and Craft Show at Alafia Elementary School will be held Feb. 26, 2011 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

As space is going fast, Alafia Elementary wants our local crafters, businesses, and vendors to sign up for their space now. We want everyone with a special product, fantastic craft, and family fun to come and share

what they have to offer and show!

The cost is \$35 per space (table and tent not provided). This event is sure to have HUGE family turn out and our school has a one of a kind participation — it will be worth your time.

The registration form along with more information can be found by clicking on the "Fundraising Links" section.

For information, visit alafiafundraising.yolasite.com/spring-fundraisers-2011.php.



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Polar Express Winter Wonderland

By KIM WALLACE

Mrs. Marcy Rindgahl, media specialist at Alafia Elementary, enjoys her job of working with children, showing them how to find books on their level and getting them interested in learning how to read. When it comes to reading, she loves a good challenge.

read 16,312,581 words in this three-week time frame. Students averaged nearly 80 percent accuracy in the comprehension portion of the quiz.

The challenge was open to grade levels K-5. The required words each grade level was given to read were as follows: first grade

1,200 words, second grade 10,000, third grade 12,000, fourth grade 15,000 and fifth 18,000. These numbers were based on the average per grade level from the previous nine weeks.

These students, as you can tell, went way above their numbers.

The students at Alafia read 16,312,581 words in this three-week time frame.

This month she decorated her library in the Polar Express Winter Wonderland and challenged the whole school to read as much as they could in a three-week period. These students could not get any more excited about reading. The students at Alafia



KIM WALLACE

Mrs. Marcy Ringdahl, Media Specialist at Alafia Elementary, makes reading very interesting to students to get them excited about picking up a book to read.



Mrs. Lynne Little and Ms. Lindsay Gregg's first-grade classes enjoy the Polar Express Winter Wonderland in their library.

Students motivated to read more

By KIM WALLACE

Alafia Elementary teacher, Mrs. Mulvihill motivated her second-grade class to start reading more with a challenge. The class was challenged to goals of 15 hours, 900 minutes, 30 hours or 1800 minutes of reading during November. These Alafia Elementary students started Nov. 1 and had to Nov. 30 to complete their goal. Congratulations to all of these students!

Jordan Chastain, Ava Marx, Yarnaris Santiago, Jacqueline Divencenzo, Camryn Huet, Emma Breneisen, Kinsey Nicoletti and Kendale Robertson met their 30 hours of reading in one month.



KIM WALLACE

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Bloomingtondale high school hosts National English Honor Society induction

Bloomingtondale Senior High School recently hosted its inaugural induction ceremony for the National English Honor Society (NEHS) in the school auditorium.

More than 40 students were inducted. Members will have the benefits of not only national recognition, but also scholarship eligibility and networking with others who share enthusiasm in the language arts.

Officers include: Elise Herron, president, Cierra Roth, vice-president; Max Mattern, treasurer; Megan Wicks, secretary and Briana Eveler, historian. Sponsors are Shelley Hunziker and Teresa Lamar. Founded and sponsored



The Bloomingtondale High School National English Honor Society officers are: (left to right) - Elise Herron, president; Cierra Roth, vice-president; Max Mattern, treasurer; Megan Wicks, secretary and Briana Eveler, historian.

by Sigma Tau Delta, the NEHS is the only national organization exclusively for high school students and faculty who, in the field of English, are acknowledged for past and current accomplishments.

Bloomingtondale Community Station Notes Safety, security focus of New Year

With each New Year, we can reflect on memories of the old year and think about the hopes and challenges for 2011.

It promises to be a year of more changes and more challenges.

The Bloomingtondale community has many of its military residents deployed around the world.

Our state has a new governor who will make decisions regarding budgets and other programs directly affecting our community.

County government has several new commissioners who will be making critical decisions regarding our community, its growth, safety and security. The critical state of our economy will continue to have a very serious affect on our local business, residents looking for work and our schools.

As we begin this very challenging New Year, know that each of us in the Sheriff's Office wishes each resident of Bloomingtondale a very safe and secure New Year.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to make significant progress in providing Bloomingtondale and the surrounding area with a safer and more secure place to live, to work, to run your business and to raise your families.

Our continued work with concerned residents from your community will make this possible.

The expansion of the Sheriff's "Volunteer Citizens Patrol Program" and active participation by the Sheriff's community councils will also help us achieve success.

Significant improvements have been made and will continue to be made in 2011.

The Sheriff's special gang unit will continue to decrease gang activity in our area. We will finally see the beginning of the widening of Bell Shoals Road, the continued widening of Boyette Road and plans being coordinated to improve other main traffic areas like Lithia-Pinecrest Road.

One very important observation we, in law enforcement, have noticed is an increase in the number of accidents involving teen drivers.

To the family and friends of any teen involved in an auto accident, one is too many.

We must work together to stop these life changing accidents, especially those that involve teen drivers and passengers not wearing their seat belts. The solution is easy — every driver and passenger must wear their seat belts.

The key to relieving



Curtis Warren

congestion on our roads does not just come from widening roads.

When you slow down and obey traffic laws, accidents that tie up traffic are prevented. We all benefit. Deputies can spend more time working on law enforcement issues, providing the security you want and need.

The holidays are over now and residents are enjoying the nice gifts they received — everything from new bikes to new cars. Each of you must take the time to ensure these new gifts are safe from criminals.

Make sure your garage doors are locked, outside vehicles are kept locked at all times and valuables removed from view.

When you leave your home, ensure it is secured. If you are going to be away for any length of time, make arrangements to get your mail and paper or have them stopped.

I know a lot of you may be thinking, well we all hear these same safety and security steps over and over every year. The simple fact is that they don't work until you do them.

Let's make 2011 a safe and secure year. Take personal responsibility for your property, your home and your vehicles. Drive safe, obey the traffic laws and please buckle up!

Have a great 2011!

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KIM WALLACE

Bloomington Cheerleaders take 1st Place at Wharton Competition.

Bloomington takes 1st place at Wharton High competition

By KIM WALLACE

So far this year, Bloomington has twice won first place and placed second in the four competi-

tions leading up to the countywide district competition Jan. 18 at Freedom High School.

They will then move on to the state competition,

held Feb. 4, in Kissimmee at the Silver Spurs Arena. This team has a lot of talent and enjoys cheering for their school.

ON REAL ESTATE

Multiple choice

If you're looking for a bargain and considering purchasing a foreclosure, you'll first have to decide what kind of foreclosed property to pursue. The three categories are pre-foreclosure, sheriff's auction and repossession (or a bank-owned REO).

Pre-foreclosures are in the process, but have yet to be auctioned. Your offer will have to be negotiated with the lender as well as the owner, which makes the deal complicated and slow. Prices also tend to be highest in this category of foreclosures.

The lowest prices are found on properties that are being auctioned, but inspections are usually unavailable for these homes, and the transaction can

get very sticky. These foreclosures are often best left to contractors, investors and developers who are well versed in the challenges these properties present.

Finally, if the home does not sell at auction, it is repossessed by the bank and offered as an REO (Real Estate Owned by the bank). These may list a higher price than the auction price, but you may have the home inspected and avoid any repair surprises, not to mention the fact that you have clear title to the property.

However, homes in this stage are usually still offered in "as is" condition, so make sure to pay very close attention to the inspection report and, as al-



Ray Chadderton

ways, consult with your agent before making any offers.

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