

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

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## From bay to Bloomingdale

Ever wonder where birds go when they aren't in your back yard? They head for the ocean. See story, page 6.

SUSAN GREEN

A great blue heron soars over a pond at the Bloomingdale Golfers Club.

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

*T.S. Eliot*

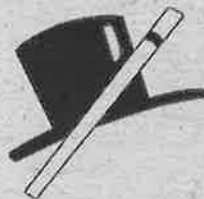




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## Cross-country enjoys winning season

"Success isn't something that just happens - success is learned, success is practiced and then it is shared." - Sparky Anderson

I was trying to think of a way to express my thoughts and feelings about this cross-country season and I came across this quote. It perfectly summarizes the Bloomingdale High School cross-country team. I think back to the end of June and all the mornings we met at 9 a.m. to run and train together. Thoughts of Warrior Running Camp and all day practice come to mind. Evening runs were at 5 p.m. in the summer heat and yet we still had a strong showing. Success is not something that just happens, it takes hard work, dedication and a de-

sire for self-improvement - especially in the sport of cross-country.

More than 50 student athletes joined Bloomingdale's team this year and what an amazing year we had. To cap off a season of top place finishes and the girls' team Federal Division championship in the Western Conference meet, 11 athletes qualified for the State Championships held at the Little Everglades Steeplechase in Dade City. Co-captain Julie Roggeman (junior) qualified for the girls' team. The boys' team led by Captain Cormac McCarthy (senior) and Co-captain Ian Ludden (junior) is composed of Eryk Harp (senior), Ryan Chadderton (junior), Kevin Heron (sophomore), Andrew LeBlanc (sophomore), Matthew LeBlanc (sophomore), and alter-



SUBMITTED

**Eryk Harp, Ryan Chadderton, Kaleb Koutz, Brandon Larsen, Julie Roggeman, Cormac McCarthy, Andrew LeBlanc, Ian Ludden, Matthew LeBlanc**

nates Corey Geer (sophomore), Brandon Larsen (sophomore), and Kaleb Koutz (freshman). I am proud of all the hard work and dedication that every athlete gave to the team this year. I know that we

will continue to improve and I look forward to next season. Go Bulls XC!

Jennifer Beach  
Head Coach Boys and Girls Cross-Country  
Head Coach Girls Track and Field  
Social Studies  
Bloomingdale High School



SUSAN GREEN

## Bloomingdale Golfer's Club event raises money for Barrington

By SUSAN GREEN

A golf tournament, auction and ticket drawing at Bloomingdale Golfer's Club last month raised nearly \$3,900 for general needs at Barrington Middle School.

The sum was a healthy increase over the \$2,200 raised for Barrington last year by a similar event, organizers said.

It was the second year

the event has been staged at the Bloomingdale golf course, said Barrington sixth-grade math teacher Brittany Jones. Last month, almost 90 players signed up to play 16 holes at the course.

Jones said she expects the school, located in the FishHawk area south of Bloomingdale, to hold the event again next year.

"It's really progressing well," she said.

Golfers in a tournament benefiting Barrington Middle School prepare to start their engines Dec. 3 at the Bloomingdale Golfer's Club.



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# Bloomingtonale High students connect with Alafia Elementary

By KIM WALLACE

Members of the Bloomingdale High School Crimson Guard and cheerleading squad staged a "Say No to Drugs!" pep rally at Alafia Elementary School last month.

The high school students performed and talked to younger students about why it is important not to use illegal drugs and the value of staying in school.



Cheerleaders from Bloomingdale High School perform a routine during a recent "Say No to Drugs!" pep rally at Alafia Elementary School.



KIM WALLACE

Alafia Elementary kindergarten teacher Susan Clarkson (background) prompts some of her pupils to run through an archway of human arms created by Bloomingdale High School cheerleaders at a "Say No to Drugs!" rally last month.



Members of Bloomingdale High School's Crimson Guard perform for Alafia Elementary pupils at a recent "Say No to Drugs!" pep rally.

# Bloomingtonale High seniors score big at county All-Star Game

By KIM WALLACE

Four football players and three cheerleaders from Bloomingdale Senior High School helped push their team to victory Dec. 10 in the annual Hillsborough County All-Star Game at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

The students, all seniors, were selected by their coaches to join the East Hillsborough team, made up of student athletes from, besides Bloomingdale, Durant, Newsome, Brandon, Riv-

erview, Spoto, East Bay, Plant City, Tampa Bay Tech, Strawberry Crest, Freedom, Wharton and Lennard high schools, along with Tampa Catholic and Seffner Christian schools.

Coached by Bloomingdale varsity head coach John Booth, the East Team won 26 to 13 over opponents from the western side of the county. Jessica Brower, varsity head coach for cheerleading at Durant, coached the cheerleaders for the east. Bloomingdale stu-



KIM WALLACE

Seniors selected were, back row: Brandon Gosdoski, Jackson Smigiel, Joe Campoamor, Dustin Bullara. Front row: Taryn Keyser, Cheyenne Dougherty, Bethany Wallace

chosen were Cheyenne Dougherty, Taryn Keyser and Bethany Wallace. Students playing for the Brandon Gosdoski, Jackson Smigiel and Dustin Bullara. Cheerleaders were Jacob Campoamor, Bullara. er and Bethany Wallace.



# Green resolutions to keep for 2012

By SUSAN GREEN

Are you looking for ideas for a New Year's resolution? The Southwest Florida Water Management District has some suggestions for 2012 resolutions that will protect healthy water resources:

- ◆ Help promote water conservation and skip at least one week of watering your lawn this month and in February. Research by the University of Florida indicates grass does not need as much water during the cooler months.
- ◆ Reduce daily showers by two minutes and save up to 240 gallons a month. Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth and save up to 225 gallons per month.
- ◆ Dine at water-conserving restaurants and choose lodging with water conservation in mind. For a list of participating businesses in Central Florida, visit [WaterPro.org](http://WaterPro.org) for restaurants and [WaterChamp.org](http://WaterChamp.org) for hotels.
- ◆ Help the environment by implementing Florida-friendly landscape

techniques, which include using the right plant in the right place, watering efficiently, fertilizing appropriately, using mulch, attracting wildlife, managing yard pests responsibly, recycling, reducing stormwater runoff and protecting the waterfront. Check out some ideas at [WaterMatters.org/yards](http://WaterMatters.org/yards).

- ◆ Explore more than 343,000 acres of water management district-managed public recreation lands. These lands were obtained to protect Florida's natural resources and are open for you to use for recreation. Get started by ordering your free Recreation Guide, which features more than 50 parks and preserves in the region owned by the district and its partners. Some of the outdoor activities available include hiking, bicycling, picnicking, nature study, horseback riding, fishing, paddling, camping and hunting. To order a guide or to learn more about the properties and how they help protect the 16-county region's water resources, visit [WaterMatters.org/recreation](http://WaterMatters.org/recreation).

## BLOOMINGDALE BUZZ

By SUSAN GREEN

This month's participants were interviewed at The Green Boutique in Plaza Bella on the very busy day before Christmas. Here's the question they were asked:

**WHY DID YOU BRAVE THE TRAFFIC AND CROWDS AND VENTURE OUT TODAY?**



**Ashley Gallops of Riverview**

"To get my nails done, actually."



**Jim and Sue Kendall of Bloomingdale:**

Sue: "It's a dad thing. I did my [Christmas] shopping a while back."

Jim: "I wanted to get something unique for them [daughters Kristina and Jackie]."

Sue: "Something other than what they had on their lists."

Jim: "Yes."



**Nick Czaja, stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and sister Emma of Valrico:**

Nick: "We are getting last-minute Christmas gifts. We are here [at The Green Boutique] for our mom [Nina Czaja]."

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# Islands in the bay benefit birds of Bloomingdale

Photos and story by SUSAN GREEN

Hey, Mom, where's the camera? There's a bird in the back yard!

Part of Bloomingdale's charm lies in its ponds and the bird-watching opportunities you can enjoy from a lawn chair, thanks to the many species of birds that fish, forage, bathe and sun themselves in the water or on the shoreline.

Ibis, herons, cranes, storks, anhinga and even an occasional roseate spoonbill check in for some rest and relaxation in the neighborhoods of Bloomingdale.

But where do they come from? Where do they go when they leave?

It's a good bet that many of the birds you see around Bloomingdale hatched and first took wing about 10 miles to the west, at an island nursery off the Tampa Bay shoreline near the mouth of the Alafia River.

One of the most diverse and productive bird breeding colonies in the U.S., the nursery comprises two islands created in the late 1920s from ship-

ping channel dredge material. Dubbed Bird Island and Sunken Island, the pair almost immediately became a favored nesting spot in part, experts say, because of their proximity to freshwater wetlands on the mainland.

"During the nesting season, the adult birds nesting at Alafia rely on inland freshwater foraging sites, like the ones in Bloomingdale, to find the food to feed their rapidly growing chicks," Mark Rachal, a biologist with Audubon of Florida's Coastal Islands Sanctuaries program, said in an e-mail.

"Now during the winter, non-breeding season, these same breeding birds will 'hang out' in [freshwater] areas ... building up their energy and staying safe until the next breeding season. There is absolutely a connection between the birds at Alafia, which is used mainly for raising chicks, and the freshwater wetlands found in Bloomingdale, which provide foraging habitat and safe roosting sites."

The nursery is in danger, however. Erosion from storms and shipping

wakes is taking its toll on the islands. A visit by boat offers plenty of evidence: fallen trees, steep embankments carved by relentless waves and signs that were planted on dry land now engulfed in several feet of water.

In May, using grant money, Audubon of Florida anchored a series of concrete reef balls off the shoreline of Bird Island. Within a few months, the concrete structures not only were protecting Bird Island's beach but attracting oysters and other critters to provide a convenient smorgasbord for the avian appetite.

However, the erosion at Sunken Island, which cradles most of the colony's nesting sites each spring and summer, was more severe and needed a bigger fix, Audubon biologists said.

In 2007, Audubon secured a \$240,000 grant to shore up the western side of the 75-acre island. Over the next few years, Audubon developed a project that led to the October installation of 775 feet of custom-crafted concrete structures, each resembling a hollow pyramid with cutouts to allow fish and other animals to take shelter inside.

Each 5-foot-tall structure weighs 8,100 pounds and had to be carefully positioned by a crane in rows rimming the island shore.

The grant did not fully cover the cost. Mosaic Fertilizer, which owns the islands, and the Pinellas County Environmental Fund kicked in some money, and Landon, Moree & Associates of Palm Harbor provided the engineering



A mother brown pelican feeds her nearly grown chick, hatched late in the nesting season, on the shore of Sunken Island behind a row of protective concrete structures intended to halt erosion.

drawings pro bono. Living Shoreline Solutions, which created the structures, discounted the work as a demonstration of projects that could shore up shorelines elsewhere in Tampa Bay and all over the world, said the company's chief executive officer, Tom Brown.

"We guaranteed that we could stop the erosion," Brown said. "We didn't know if we could accrete sand."

He said recently he was happy to report that only two weeks after installation, he saw sand piling up between the concrete structures and the island's edge, giving hope that some of the lost beach may reappear over time.

For information about birds in Tampa Bay, visit [www.audubonofflorida.org](http://www.audubonofflorida.org) and click on "Saying Special Places," then "Audubon Sanctuaries" and "Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries." For information on bird-watching field trips, visit [www.tampaudubon.org](http://www.tampaudubon.org).



Toppled trees on the Sunken Island beach illustrate why Audubon of Florida installed a series of custom-concrete structures to try to shore up the island, a prime Tampa Bay nesting site for up to 18 species of birds.



Tom Brown, chief executive officer of Living Shoreline Solutions, tells visitors how the concrete pyramid-shaped structures will protect the island from erosion and provide habitat for fish and aquatic creatures.



An aninga, ibis and great egret spend time at a pond on Culbreath Road in Bloomingdale.



### Community Station Notes

## New Year brings financial and security challenges

**W**ith another new year here, we can all reflect on the memories of the old year and think about the hopes and challenges ahead. The year 2012 promises more changes and challenges for us as a community, county, state and nation.

Even though the war in Iraq has ended, the Bloomington community still has many of its military residents deployed around the world. Our state government will be making many financial changes that will directly affect our residents. Our county government also has made numerous decisions that have directly affected many of us. With 2012 an election year, even more changes are coming from our federal government.

Fortunately, there have been no serious changes that will affect our ability in the Sheriff's Office to provide the best possible safety and security we can



Curtis Warren

for our residents. Sheriff David Gee and his staff stand ready to protect and serve to the best of our abilities.

As we begin this challenging year, every one of us in the Sheriff's Office wants to wish every resident of Bloomington a safe and secure new year. We all want to especially thank you who provided support and help to us during this past year.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to provide Bloomington and the surrounding areas of Hillsborough County with a safer and more secure place to live, work, run your businesses and raise your families. Our continued work with concerned residents from your community will make this possible. We will expand the Sheriff's Volunteer Citizens Patrol Program and

seek more active participation by the Sheriff's community councils to help all of us improve safety and security in the area.

### Safety and security education

Some of you who read our "Community Station Notes" in the Bloomington Gazette may notice that safety and security items are repeated at times. These include topics such as buckling your seat belts, not drinking and driving, locking up your homes and vehicles, and being cautious about identity theft. The reason we keep mentioning these topics is because there are folks who have to be told over and over again to do what must be done to protect themselves and their families. We hope most folks listen. We can only try to do our best to educate and motivate them.

The holidays are over and it's time for all residents to take the time to ensure their families, homes and vehicles are kept safe and secure. Make sure your garage doors are locked, outside vehicles are locked and all valuables have been removed from them:

The simple fact is that these safety tips don't work until you do them.

### Special crimes in our area

There were some specific criminal activities that occurred at the end of 2011 that I want to make residents aware of. Specifically, sales solicitation and identity theft.

Several residents were approached by representatives from, GE Platinum Protective Systems. In some cases the salesmen were very aggressive and even rude. These salesmen were stopped, asked to provide

the required legal documentation - which they could not provide - and then directed to leave. If they or any other solicitors approach you, do not open your doors. Call the Sheriff's Dispatch at (813) 247-8200. Please provide as much information as you can.

Sad to say, but some of our residents also were victims of identity theft. They were called by criminals pretending to be bank representatives or other officials and asked for personal information or money. Some fell for this scam. Please know that banks will not call you and ask for personal information. They already have it. Hang up when you are called and let your bank know about the call.

Let's make 2012 a safe and secure year. Take personal responsibility for your property, home, vehicles and finances. Also, be a good neighbor and watch out for your neighbors.



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# Cimino Elementary pupils honored as 'Cool Cats'

Story and photos by  
KIM WALLACE

A number of children attending Cimino Elementary School were honored recently with "Cougar Cool Cat" awards, based on the youngsters' display of character-building characteristics defined by the school as building blocks of success.

The awards program and criteria were developed by the school's guidance counselor, Debbie Minichbauer. She said she started the monthly awards program a few years ago to help motivate students to do their best.

The characteristics observed in children chosen for the award included respect, responsibility, gratitude, patriotism, caring, honesty, perseverance, patience, self-control, cooperation, collaboration, commitment, positive attitude, knowledge development, self-motivation and reflection.

Award-winners were nominated by teachers and school staff. They received their awards at a breakfast presentation to which their parents were invited.



Dominic Ottl, Kaleb Fishcher, Jazmyn Mejias, Stephen Shaw, Cimino Pre-k students recieved character award for Responsibility



Roxy Deneweth, Samara Majeed, McKenna Wilken, Emily Knowles, James Hawthorne, Chloe Erickson, Kylie Niles, Cimino Kindergarten students recieved character award for Responsibility



Andrew Desrocher, Zachary Fisher, Angelina Miller, Estella Colquett, Nathan Bankston, Zachary Weaver, Arianna Garcia, Cimino 1st grade students received charcter award for Responsibility



Kendal Rickard, Maddie Tillotson, Allie Earl, Joshua Bunker, Chloe Mill, Sara Kubik, Isabella Jones, Cimino 2nd grade student received character award for Responsibility.



MacKenzie Stoddard, Olivia Hernandez, Jordan Mitchell, Adam Ayer, Emma Wallace, Freya Johanson, Bryce Lowe and Shane Hyde, Cimino 3rd grade students received character award for Responsibility.



Trinity Howard, Isabella Manera, Isaac Jones, Tony Campodonico, Alexis Cole, Jin Langdon, Rosie Okoye, Cimino 4th grade students received character award for Responsibility.



Cailey Melancon, Callista Moss, Max Kriogbaum, Rachel Cupole, Maggie Pate, Jake Robinson, Ala'a Mansour. Cimino 5th grade students received character award for Responsibility.

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# Emails from Europe turn into a computer consultant's first book

By SUSAN GREEN

The wonders of computer technology not only made possible the subject of longtime Bloomingdale resident Barry Frangipane's first book but led one of his neighbors to prod him into writing it.

In 2005, Frangipane and his wife, Debbie, sold their cars, rented out their Bloomingdale home and lived for 13 months in Venice, Italy. Frangipane sent email reports to family and friends, including neighbor Carolyn Rosser, who found them so amusing she suggested he use them as the basis for a book.

In July, Frangipane published the result: "The Venice Experiment: A Year of Trial and Error Living Abroad," a humorous recollection of the couple's stint in a country far removed from suburban Central Florida. The 242-page book was co-written by Ben Robbins.

Frangipane, who likes to travel and has relatives in Italy, hit on the idea after realizing that his job as a computer programmer didn't involve much face time with customers. He provides services for clients all over the world but hardly

ever in the Tampa Bay area.

"Since I'm not where they are, it doesn't matter where I am," Frangipane explained, adding that all he had to take with him to Venice was a laptop computer and an Internet phone. "Customers could call and they would never know I left Florida."

His wife was then working a hectic job as an administrative assistant. Frangipane said it didn't take much to persuade her to resign and run off to Venice for a year.

"We were tired of the rat race," he said. "I was working around the clock, and I wanted a different view outside my window."

Though living in a city surrounded by water and inhabited by people who speak Italian might seem like a huge adjustment, Frangipane said it worked out beautifully.

People in Venice walk almost everywhere, and when they don't, they take a water taxi, so he and his wife did not need cars. The couple enrolled in Italian classes shortly after their arrival and soon became fluent enough to converse with

the townspeople.

"I shopped at the market. I went to the parks. I took the gondolas to go across the canals," Frangipane said.

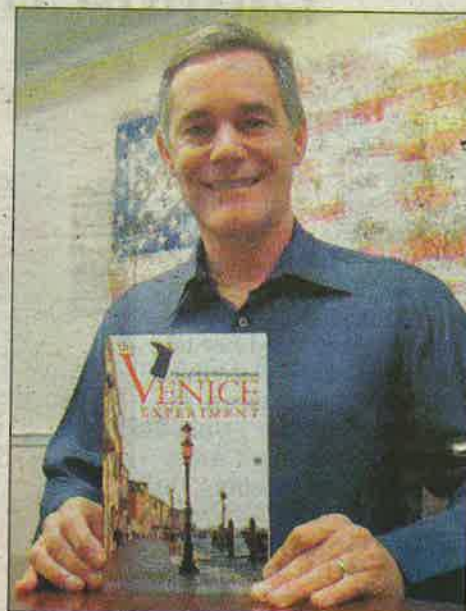
The biggest adjustment was to the slower, friendlier pace of Venice life.

"Everyone knows everyone," the author said. "A walk is a series of cups of espresso and glasses of wine to get where you want to go."

He added: "When we left Florida, we were concerned about how we would adjust to the lifestyle in Venice. After a year in Venice, we were very concerned as to how we would adjust to life when we got back."

Since then, his wife, who learned Mediterranean- and Italian-style cooking while in Venice, has become a local celebrity chef and currently works at Disney World's Grand Floridian Resort. Frangipane continues to work as a programmer and already is thinking of another extended stay abroad, possibly in Paris.

His advice for others thinking of trying it? "Pick a place and pick a date," he said. "Once you do that, the obstacles will



SUSAN GREEN

Barry Frangipane and his book.

disappear."

"The Venice Experiment" is available at local book stores and on Amazon.com for about \$15. For information, visit [venicexperiment.com](http://venicexperiment.com).

## Students rack up awards, gifts

A Bloomingdale Gazette Report

Three students from Cimino Elementary School won gift certificates for themselves and the school's media center last month in a writing contest sponsored by Inkwood Books, a store in Tampa.

The contest, timed to coincide with the recent release of author and illustrator Chris Van Allsburg's latest book, "The Chronicles of Harris Burdick," was open to fourth- and fifth-graders throughout Hillsborough County. Contestants were required to build a short story of 250 to 300 words around one of the illustrations in Van Allsburg's previous book, "The Mysteries of Harris Burdick."

Van Allsburg is known for previous works that led to feature films, including



SHERRILL FARRELL

**Fifth-grade essay contest winners from Cimino Elementary School were, left to right, Damian Mellars, Junior Cardenas and Sierra Michael.**

"The Polar Express" and "Jumanji."

Winning student authors received gift certificates for purchases at Inkwood, with matching awards going to the students' school media center.

Three fifth-grade students of Cimino teacher Sherrill Farrell were honored at an awards ceremony Dec. 11 at Inkwood

Books. Kristen Simmons, author of a soon-to-be published young adult novel titled "Article 5," presented the awards.

Winning students from Cimino were:

- Damian Mellars, first place, \$50 gift certificate.
- Brigido "Junior" Cardenas, second place, \$25 gift certificate.
- Sierra Michael, third place, \$15 gift certificate.

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## Campo YMCA judo student takes bronze medal in Argentina

By SUSAN GREEN

She stands barely 5-foot-2 and weighs 116 pounds, but Sarah Subko packs a powerhouse in her petite frame.

A student of the Florida School of Judo at the Campo Family YMCA since she was 5, Sarah used her talent and skills to place third in her division when she represented the United States at the South American Championships in Buenos Aires in October.

The 14-year-old is top-ranked for her age and size in the U.S., which earned her a spot on the American judo team to Argentina. She placed fourth in her division at the Pan American Infantile Championship tournament.

Both Buenos Aires events were sponsored by USA Judo, a leading organizer of judo competitions. The competitions drew teams from the U.S., Mexico, Puerto Rico and several countries in South America, said Sarah's mother, Natasha.

Though Sarah was happy with her performance, she said the weeklong trip offered other thrills, including a two-day tour of Buenos Aires before the competition started. The trip was her first to South America.

"The city is beautiful," Sarah said. "I loved it. We got to ride the subway and train. ... People were so



SUSAN GREEN

Sarah Subko flips a fellow student during a Florida School of Judo class at the Campo Family YMCA.

nice. Even though we couldn't speak Spanish, they would try to help us."

She said she noticed that Buenos Aires does not have large supermarkets like those in the U.S. but smaller meat or vegetable markets.

She said she also enjoyed spending time with others on the U.S. team and competitors from other countries. Each national team had a commemorative shirt, and team members would trade shirts so that they could collect the logos from other countries.

"It was a great trip," said Natasha Subko, who with Sarah's father, Robert, accompanied the teen. "It's not just about the judo. It's about meeting other people and going other places and having fun."

Sarah said she plans to continue working hard at her sport, realizing that she will be competing with 15- and 16-year-olds this year. She has her sights set on qualifying for national competitions in Fort Lauderdale and Dallas, Texas.

At Campo, she works with longtime judo instructor Edwin Maley, who credited her persistent practice and natural athletic ability for her success. She also practices at T-N-T Academy of Judo in Riverview. She attends Strawberry Crest High School.



KIM WALLACE

Head Coach Skip Holtz of USF with owners of Beef 'O' Brady's Bell Shoals Lora and Cormac McCarthy and JJ Massaro

## Top USF Bull not afraid to tackle Bloomingdale

By KIM WALLACE

Most bulls might keep their distance from an eatery known for beefy burgers, but not Skip Holtz, head football coach of the University of South Florida Bulls.

The Holtz Radio Show on 970 WFLA-AM aired live from the Beef 'O' Brady's restaurant on Bell Shoals Road in Bloomingdale a few days before the Bulls played the Mountaineers of West Virginia University Dec. 1 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

Show hosts Jim Louk and Mark Robinson joined Holtz in talking about football with fans from the Brandon and Valrico area.

The chain is a USF football sponsor, and the Bloomingdale franchise was among 12 locations selected for a live broadcast.

The night was filled with fans asking for autographs and pictures with the coach before and after the broadcast. Fans also could participate in a drawing for tickets to the West Virginia game. Kim Jaqua, a server at Beef's, and customer Jackson Smigel won tickets to game.



Kincaide Green was excited about getting Skip Holtz autograph



Head Coach Skip Holtz signs autograph poster for Beef 'O' Brady's

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# Bloomingtondale marks 25<sup>th</sup> year on the Santa tour

By SUSAN GREEN

After 25 years of coaxing shy, reluctant or frightened children onto the lap of a bearded man in a loud scarlet suit, you'd think Joe and Pam Liguori would have the Santa gig down to a science.

And, for the most part, they do.

Tommaso Conceicao, 15 months, was a holdout this year, but he finally agreed to sit in dad Tony's lap next to Mrs. Claus for a picture. Big sister Gaia, 4, however, happily scrambled into Santa's lap and confessed that her top gift wish for Christmas was a scooter.

In the roles they started playing for the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association a quarter-century ago, the Liguoris have perfected an act of patience, humor and understanding that turns most teary-eyed screamers into cooperative tots who at least touch the Jolly Old Elf long enough for their parents to snap a photo.

On Dec. 3 at the Bloomingtondale Golfers Club's Leg-

ends Grill, Joe Liguori summoned children to his side with reindeer bells and jokes about the famous sleigh team. Pam sat ready with a stuffed teddy bear to hand out, and volunteer elf Bobby Michael, 15, prepared to dart in with a candy cane for those overcome by the sight of the holiday season's most generous gift-giver.

For the price of a canned good or two, Bloomingtondale residents could bring their children to clamber into Santa's lap for a photo. Dozens of families took advantage of Santa's visit to get a picture and listen in as children confided their hearts' desires. Donated food went to the Emergency Care Help Organization (ECHO) in Brandon, a charity that provides food, clothing and services to people in need.

A request to play Santa and Mrs. Claus for the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association all those years ago started the Liguoris on a tradition of reserving the month of De-

cember for volunteer service in yuletide disguise. Pam said the couple now has Bloomingtondale residents who came to them as children bringing their own offspring in for the annual pre-Christmas chat.

Some parents routinely ask Santa to impart some words of wisdom. A father of two boys who brings them in every year typically has a different request as his sons grow older.

"This year it was for the oldest boy to sleep in his own bedroom," Pam recalled.

Joe and Pam, longtime members of St. Stephen Catholic Church, see their Santa service as a ministry and reprise their roles for various charitable organizations leading up to Christmas. Although the Bloomingtondale gig typically kicks off their season, this year the pair was fresh from a stint at a St. Joseph's Hospital treatment facility, where they had visited children with disabilities the day before.

Pam said a boy with Down syndrome had trouble talking but nevertheless managed to communicate.

"He got so excited when he saw us," she said. "His face could have lit up the whole place."

Her husband remembered another child who couldn't hear. He said he was disappointed that he didn't know sign language, but he decided to try to get a message across anyway.

"I went over to her, clutched my hands in my chest, and shimmied," Joe said, adding that he intended it as a message of love. "She got that."



SUSAN GREEN

A few minutes with Bloomingtondale's brand of Mr. and Mrs. Claus and Gaia Conceicao, 4, was ready to confide her desire for a scooter under the Christmas tree.

Other Santa sightings in Bloomingtondale last month included a visit to Cimino Elementary School's Book Fair and an appearance at a River Hills Country Club party at Beef O' Brady's on Bell Shoals Road. The Liguoris were not part of those appearances. Gazette correspondent Kim Wallace contributed to this report.



KIM WALLACE

Cimino Elementary played host to a Santa visit during the school's winter Book Fair. Beth Ann, granddaughter of school principal Deborah Talley, was among tots who climbed onto the bearded one's knee.

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