

Patriotic pooch and pal



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

James Jarzynski, 4-year-old son of Jim and Rita Jarzynski of Bloomingdale, and Cookie, a 3-year-old Yorkshire terrier, prepare to have a blast this Fourth of July.



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Featured Story:

**County gives
Friends group
tour of
new library**

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Parade and Brandon Blast set for holiday celebrations *see page 9*

Businesses Fear Impact Of Bell Shoals Improvements

OWNERS ARE LOOKING INTO ALTERNATIVES

By D'ANN WHITE
Editor

The goal was to increase traffic flow and cut down on accidents at the busy intersection of Bloomingdale Avenue and Bell Shoals Road.

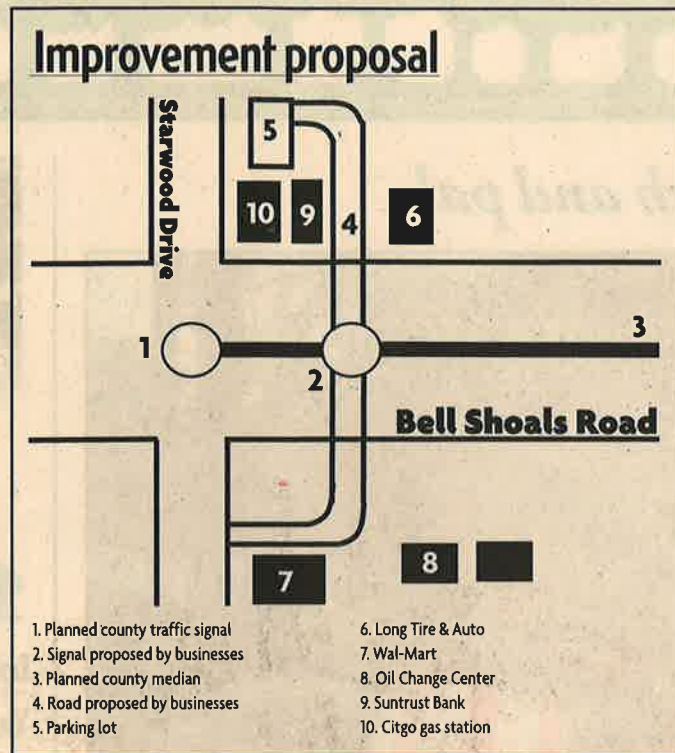
But businesses in the area say county plans to improve the intersection could kill their businesses.

Businesses on the east side of Bell Shoals Road between Starwood Drive and Rosemead have hired a traffic consultant to investigate ways the county can improve the intersection without cutting off access to their businesses.

Last November at a public meeting at Bloomingdale High School, county staff and consultants unveiled plans to make \$3 million in improvements to the intersection, ranked among the top 10 in Hillsborough County for accidents.

According to county project manager Reg Alford, the improvements are a temporary fix until the county has the \$13 million it needs to widen Bell Shoals all the way to Boyette Road.

County consultants are recommending installing traffic lights on Bell Shoals at the entrance to Wal-Mart and on Bloomingdale at the entrance to Publix in Bloomingdale Square. The proposal also



Map by Amanda Tomaini

calls for the installation of traffic medians to prevent motorists from making left turns onto Bloomingdale from the Bloomingdale entrance closest to McDonald's restaurant, and medians along Bell Shoals Road from Bloomingdale Avenue to Rosemead Lane to eliminate the continuous left turn lane in front of Wal-Mart.

However, the Bell Shoals business owners say the median on Bell Shoals Road will hinder access to their 12

businesses or force drivers to turn onto Starwood Drive, the street off Bell Shoals leading to the Kash n' Karry, and then cut through the Citgo station property to reach them.

To determine the impact, Bloomingdale Homeowners Association director Steve Heckle conducted a traffic survey, counting 1,100 cars going into the east Bell Shoals businesses each day.

"This is a busy little shopping center," said Buddy Long of Long Tire and Auto Service. "They want to create this median for safety reasons, but there hasn't been one major accident in front of our stores."

When the business owners complained to the county, county staff proposed adding a road behind the Citgo station off Starwood Drive to provide access to the businesses.

But John Knightly of Bell Shoals & Associates, the owner of the shopping center, said there isn't enough right-of-way behind the shopping center to build a road.

"It would have to be a one-way road, and it would eliminate a number of parking spaces," he said. In addition, the road would not be large enough to provide access to the semi-tractor-trailer trucks that need access to Long Tire & Auto Service and Papa John's Pizza. Long Tire has 10 to 15 delivery trucks a day and Papa John's attracts two semi trucks a week.

Citgo station owner Larry Neville is also concerned that forcing traffic to drive through his station between the convenience store and gas pumps would create a danger for customers.

"And since there's no left turn lane on Starwood, traffic will back up onto my property," he added. "People use our businesses because of convenience. If the county makes it inconvenient, no one will use us. This is our livelihood, so it's very much our concern."

He noted, for instance, that many customers stop at the SunTrust drive-through on their way home to Bloomingdale. But the median will prevent customers from taking a left turn onto Bell Shoals to head home after they use the drive-through. By the same token, Most of Papa John's delivery customers live south of the restaurant. Delivery drivers will no longer be able to turn left on Bell Shoals to deliver pizza. The median would also have an impact on the 80 customers who drop off their cars at Long's Tire for repairs each day.

As an alternative, the business owners are proposing the county install a service road similar to the one that serves Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse on Providence Road.

The county faced a similar dilemma when Lowe's was constructed and businesses in Brandon Centre South across the street feared access to their shopping center would be cut off. To resolve the conflict, an access road was

See SHOALS, Page 23

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The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594. (813) 681-2051. Fax: (813) 651-1129

E-mail: Bloomingdale.Homeowners@Verizon.net

Web Site: www.BloomingdaleGazette.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 — Tony Diolosa
Director — Steve Heckel
Director — Jane Lee
Director — Stanley Lee
Director — Lydia Harrod

Bloomingdale 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
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Treasurer — Dale Kahn

Correspondence Secretary — David West
Trustee — Myron Magedanz
Trustee — Michael Buday
Trustee — Ken Pyse
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Tony Diolosa, 681-1146

Treasurer — Paul

Kelmer, 681-9701

Patrol Member —

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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

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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Valrico, FL 33594

(813) 681-2051

Fax: (813) 651-1129

E-Mail: News@BloomingdaleGazette.com or dwhite2@mediageneral.com

Executive Director — Joe Liguori

Editor — D'Ann White

Correspondent — Mack Austin

Correspondent — Leslie White

Restaurant Critic — Elton Dumont

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Yard of the Month

An immaculately landscaped yard doesn't come naturally. Wayne and Diana Walker have spent the 16 years since moving to their home at 1435 Buckner Road in Augusta Village in Bloomingdale East working hard to keep it in tip-top shape. "It's a full-time job," joked Wayne Walker. The weed-free lawn is broken up with stone-bordered gardens of manicured shrubs and sago palms with splashes of color from crotons, impatiens and various annuals. As for the wreaths, potted plants and other decorations on the front porch, "that's strictly my wife's domain," said Walker.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Yard of the Month sign will be displayed in the Walkers' yard and they will receive a \$25 gift certificate from Wal-Mart.

Nominations may be e-mailed to the BHA at Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net or mailed to 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, 33594.



1435 Buckner Road

D'ANN WHITE/Photo



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Bloomingtondale Area Community Council Report

Bloomingtondale Groups Hold Joint Meeting

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

The Bloomingtondale Home-owners Association and the Bloomingtondale Area Community Council welcomed several guests to their annual joint meeting last month.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy David Gee was on hand to find out first hand what residents are concerned about.

Gee was accompanied by several members of his staff including Bloomingtondale Community Resource Deputy Pete Maurer, Community Service Officer Sandy Capitano and nine Sheriff's detectives, crime analysts and patrol deputies who serve the Bloomingtondale community.

Gee gave a detailed presentation on the sheriff's office's history in the area, a summary of activities that the sheriff's office is involved in today and a look at the future challenges facing the sheriff's office.

He noted several examples of the "colorful history" of the sheriff's office starting in 1845; being responsible for planning the first roads in 1893 to Sheriff Culbreath being appointed the first formal sheriff in 1941, Sheriff Malcolm Beard developing a nationally recognized law enforcement organization in 1965 and the current sheriff, Cal Henderson, developing



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy David Gee, center, and District IV Lt. Wille Parker chat with BACC member Terry Ward following the joint BHA/BACC meeting held at the Culbertson Community Center.

successful community policing and outreach programs.

Gee noted that it took the dedication of all of these sheriffs to bring the office to where

it is today – a modern, high-tech, well-trained law enforcement agency whose mission has become even more critical following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Other challenges facing the sheriff's office, he said, include continuing growth and development.

He added that law enforcement is a community effort and the sheriff's office needs the community to become involved through crime watch, neighborhood watch associations and programs such as Bloomingtondale's PRIDE program and mobile watch.

"Each resident must do his part to get involved," he said.

Directors of the BHA and members of the BACC then addressed issues that included boats parked on driveways and in yards and other deed restriction violations.

The BHA recently launched a new neighborhood standards program and hired a contractor to inspect properties for deed and county code compliance.

Residents are encouraged to report problems or concerns to Neighborhood Standards.

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Bloomington Substation Notes

By DEPUTY
PETE MAURER

Living in Florida in the good ole summer time is great. With the high gas prices, it's fantastic to be able to vacation right here in the state you live in. To insure you and your family enjoy your leisure time together, please be safe, drive safely, use your seat belts and don't drink and drive. Have fun all summer and don't spend any of it in an emergency room or at the Falkenburg jail.

Vacation tips

It's your home sweet home. Do what it takes to keep it that way. Most of you will be going on vacations this summer. So you can really enjoy this time away, take the time to prepare your homes to insure they are secure while you're gone. Make special arrangements to have your yards cared for, nail held up or picked up, and neighbors keeping watch while you're gone. Help take care of each other. You can also complete a Security Watch form at the Bloomingtondale Community Station.

Reserve deputies needed

One way we help protect our homes and our families is by having more deputies patrolling our community. One way this is done is through the Sheriff's Reserve Deputy Program. This program offers the opportunity for residents in our community who really want to get involved in protecting and serving to get the training they need. Check out the story on Bloomingtondale resi-

dent Reserve Deputy Mike Sessa in this issue of the Gazette. If you're interested, go to the Gazette Web site www.bloomingtondalegazette.com and check on the sheriff's office link. Here you will find detailed information on this outstanding program. Or you can call the sheriff's office directly at 247-8614.

Make it legal

With the hot weather comes lots of summer parties. That's cool! But not when they end up in confrontations and people getting arrested. There are precautions and rules that can be followed to be sure everyone has a good time and gets home safe. Parents, it is your responsibility to insure no one under age is drinking. Start by not furnishing teens with alcohol or drugs. Also, there are specific guidelines that must be followed concerning noise. Have fun but respect your neighbors, too. The worst end to a great party is having someone getting cited for driving under the influence, being involved in an accident or being killed. Alcohol and driving do not mix. Don't mix them!

A national campaign continues through July to crack down on DUI deaths. Florida law enforcement agencies including those in Hillsborough County will use checkpoints and saturation points to catch those drivers who voluntarily put others at risk.

The campaign's title says it all - "You drink and drive, you lose."

Also, remember that Florida statutes make the possession and use of all fireworks illegal.



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Can you count the number of nails and staples in this utility pole? It is illegal to place signs on poles and endangers the workmen who climb the poles.

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Property Manager's Report

By AL DEVNEY

Irrigation

Thunder Irrigation added eight spray heads to the Erindale zone 8 to give better coverage.

During the monthly inspection, 22 spray heads and four rotors were replaced and 17 risers were repaired. Additionally, there were 30 lights replaced.

Landscaping

A crape myrtle tree on Canoga Park Drive was destroyed as a result of a hit-and-run accident.

Three oak trees on Greenhollow are being watered daily in an effort to save them.

Other

Lee's Lawn Service removed the destroyed crape myrtle on Canoga Park and trimmed several oak trees on Natures Way and Culbreath Road that were covering traffic signs.

Handy Hands pressure washed 1,405 linear feet of walls on Springvale for

\$463.25.

All the signage in the area was inventoried.

There are 46 individual signs of which 19 need to be repainted.

JBD Construction has finished the demolition stage of the Greenhollow entrance and has begun construction of the brick pillars.

The 10-day delay in the construction was caused by the rationing of concrete.

There are 29 broken slats in the wooden fence on Natures Way. This is an increase of four slats over April.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, there were 13 bags of litter, two hubcaps, two sofa pillows, a sheet, a wall phone, a green ball, a mouse with a tail, six lug nuts, a 7.5 mm socket, a shirt, three pairs of underwear, a pink soccer ball and 19 cents picked up.

The beverages of choice were Diet Cherry Coke for soft drinks, Budweiser for beer and Old Grand Dad for distilled spirits.



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

Bloomingdale resident Mike Sessa is one of Hillsborough County's newest reserve deputies.

Resident Completes Reserve Deputy Program

By MACK AUSTIN
Correspondent

Mike Sessa, a Bloomingdale resident and member of the Bloomingdale Area Community Council has fulfilled his personal goal of being able to serve his community by becoming a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Reserve II deputy.

Sessa recently completed the Hillsborough County

Sheriff's Office Reserve II Program, a demanding program that offers those that complete it opportunities to work along side full-time Hillsborough County sheriff's deputies.

Sessa's wife, Carleene, also completed the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Citizen's Academy, a program offered to residents wanting to be

See DEPUTY, Page 20

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Community Celebrates July Fourth

By LINDA CHION KENNEY
Correspondent

A 44-year Brandon tradition continues today, July 3, with the community's Fourth of July Parade kicking off at 10 a.m. at the intersection of Lumsden Road and Parsons Avenue.

This year's parade will include 123 entries, including an entry from the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association. It's expected to be 4,627 feet long, just short of a mile.

Last year, some estimates put the crowd as high as 100,000 people, but even at a more modest 75,000 count, that still makes the parade one of the largest in the state.

The parade will proceed up Parsons Avenue to Robertson Street where it turns west and ends at Buckingham Place, just outside the entrance to the Publix shopping center.

This year's parade, "Celebrate America 2004 — Military Salute," is expected to end around 1 p.m. It's being held on July 3 because the parade is never held on a Sunday, where it might interfere with services and block church traffic, organizers said.

The parade is the handiwork of the Roundtable Charities of Greater Brandon Inc., more commonly referred to

as the Presidents' Roundtable.

This year, the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce is extending the celebration by hosting its first-ever Brandon Blast, a show of support for the military combined with a day of community activities culminating with a 15-minute display of fireworks.

The event, at Westfield Shoppingtown Brandon, is intended to complement the Presidents' Roundtable's parade.

The chamber also was seeking a chance to combine two of its community events into one, Military Appreciation Day and the Hippy Hoppity Hoedown.

The Hippy Hoppity Hoedown in the spring, previously the Ho-Ho-Hoedown in December, was intended to replace the Brandon Balloon Classic, which was grounded following the 9/11 terrorist attacks due to the need to keep MacDill Air Force Base's airspace free.

Military Appreciation Day, an event spearheaded by former chamber chairman and military veteran Earl Haugabook, was intended to thank Brandon's large population of military residents for their service to the country.

When Bloomingdale resi-

dent Jennifer Murphy took over as chamber chairwoman this year, she and Haugabook sat down and discussed the possibility of combining the two events and, in the process, give Brandon an all-day Independence Day celebration.

The chamber also wanted to bring a fireworks display back to Brandon. For years, the Presidents' Roundtable has struggled with financing the fireworks, especially with the high cost of insurance.

The Brandon Blast kicks off at 11:30 a.m., immediately following the Fourth of July parade, at Westfield Shoppingtown Brandon's overflow parking area next to Interstate 75. The day's festivities will include rides, MacDill Air Force base displays, entertainment, a homemade ice cream contest and an amateur barbecue contest. Admis-

sion and parking is free and there is no charge for military families to eat a meal and ride the rides.

The event wraps up at 9 p.m. with a 15-minute fireworks display.

The 15-minute fireworks display will cost the chamber about \$8,400, a marked increase from the \$950 the Presidents' Roundtable paid for fireworks in 1980, according to The Brandon News.

The Brandon News and The Tampa Tribune is the title sponsor for the first Brandon Blast Military Appreciation and Community Celebration. Other sponsors are TECO Energy, Brandon Regional Hospital, Southwest Florida College, USAA and JR's Floribbean Barbeque is providing free barbecue meals to all military families.

Call: Laura Simpson or Kelly Stepler, 689-1221.

Letters Welcomed

The Bloomingdale Gazette welcomes the opinions of its readers on a wide range of topics. Letters to the editor should be made as legible as possible.

Letters must be signed and a telephone number included for verification purposes.

Letters will be edited to meet legal, grammatical and stylistic requirements.

Mail letters to:
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Group Provides Support For Parents Of Autistic Children

Monthly Meetings Available

By MARLENE BOGGS
Correspondent

Dr. Housam Moursi first thought that his son, Jacob, might have a problem when the boy was 2 years old.

Jacob was less receptive to interaction than the other kids his age, didn't communicate, was a picky eater, often seemed to be in a world of his own.

"But even though I thought something may be wrong, I put it in the back of my mind. I told myself he was just a late bloomer."

Then Moursi and his wife, Dawn, had another child, and they had yet another basis for comparison.

When the couple's daughter, Laila, was 1 and Jacob was 3, Moursi compared their development and became increasingly worried. After a round of tests and examinations, the diagnosis was one no parent wants to hear. Jacob, he was told, is autistic, suffering from one of a spectrum of disorders, which fall under the general term "pervasive development disorder."

Autism is not a disease, but a developmental disorder of brain function. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorder and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health, symptoms usually appear during a child's first



MARLENE BOGGS/Photo

Dr. Housam Moursi, left, Peggy Stuart and Emily Gertinisan were among those attending a May 23 meeting of a support group for families of autistic children.

three years, and early intervention is important to improve social development and reduce undesirable behaviors.

Moursi, an emergency room physician and co-owner of Late Hours Urgent Care Center in Valrico, soon discovered that finding the right therapy for his son was both difficult and expensive.

"If it's hard for me, I

thought, how much harder is it for parents who are not in the medical field?" He decided to organize a support group that would meet to exchange experiences and information on current therapies and new therapies being studied.

In April he met with other local parents of autistic children. The group met again in May and plans to hold monthly meetings.

Among those attending were Mike and Cindy Gertinisan of Brandon, accompanied by their daughter, Emily. Brandon therapist Peggy Stuart, who has been working with Emily, was also on hand.

Among the therapies Stuart suggested was to Cindy Gertinisan said that Emily has improved dramatically since she has been taking therapy with Stuart. Stuart suggested parents of autistic children might "swap kids," with parents working with the children of others in the group. "Children often respond bet-

ter to strangers than they do to family members," she explained.

Among other subjects, the group discussed available therapies and problems in both public and private schools. Moursi's son is now in a private school in Sarasota County. "He has made some progress there," Moursi said.

The group will meet again from June 27 from 3 to 5 p.m. at Nature's Health Foods, 3443 Lithia Pinecrest Road, Valrico.

Moursi said parents who are concerned about the possibility of a child being autistic are also welcome at the meeting. "If a mom says something is wrong with her child, 90 percent of the time, she's right," Moursi said.

Moursi also found that his insurance company would not pay for therapy for Jacob. It has been estimated that the cost of caring for an autistic person over a lifetime is

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Taxing District Approves 2005 Budget

By D'ANN WHITE
Editor

With approval of the new budget at a public hearing in June, the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District hopes to focus more funds on improving the community's landscaping.

Residents had a chance to voice their thoughts on the taxing district's fiscal year 2005 budget, which begins in October at the June 14 hearing.

The taxing district anticipates collecting \$478,000 in special assessments in 2005, up from \$475,000 in 2004 due to construction of 28 new homes in the past year. Each home is assessed \$100 for the taxing district. It was

increased \$20 last year after remaining at \$80 per home for nearly 20 years.

The biggest increase next year is for irrigation. Currently, property manager Al Devney maintains the irrigation in the common grounds but the trustees want to hand over the job to an irrigation maintenance company. That will increase the budget item for irrigation from \$17,000 in 2004 to \$25,000 in 2005.

Other big-ticket items in the budget include \$35,000 for landscape maintenance, up from \$24,000 last year, and fertilization at a cost of \$27,000, up from \$21,000.

However, the district has been able to cut the cost of other line items including lawn maintenance, down to

\$130,000 from \$137,000 and wall painting down by \$4,000 due to lower bids.

In next year's budget are plans to redo the entry at Culbreath Road and, if there is any money left over, to begin putting in an entryway at Springvale Drive. The estimated cost is \$50,000.

Also under capital improvements, the taxing district plans to spend \$55,505 to add, replace and upgrade irrigation systems throughout the community.

The next special taxing district meeting is scheduled for July 12 at 7 p.m.

Bloomington residents will have an opportunity to make history during the Aug. 31 primary by electing five of the seven trustees of the tax-

ing district.

Seven residents have filed to run for taxing district trustee seats, believed to be the first time there's been more candidates than seats.

Trustee David West, who was appointed, said, in the past, the district has had to recruit trustees.

"It's nice to see more people wanting to get involved in their community," said West.

The positions now held by Rusty Jones, Dale Kahn, Myron Magedanz, David West and newly appointed trustee Ken Pyse will be up for election. Thom Snelling and Michael Buday are the only trustees whose posts are not up for election.

Trustees serve four-year terms.

Business Briefs

New agent

Realty Executives Partners at 155 E. Bloomingdale Ave. welcomed Guadalupe Casto as one of its new agents.



Casto

Casto, who lives in Bloomingdale Estates, is a native of Mexico and is fluent in Spanish and English. She is married to Doug, who retired from the Air Force.

They have two daughters, Elisabet and Raquel, a sophomore and freshman at Bloomingdale High School, respectively.

The girls were home-schooled and traveled extensively with their parents while on military orders. They lived in Italy before moving to the Brandon area.

Casto will specialize in military relocations. She can be reached at DeCasto@netscape.net or 767-1986.

Studio Eyes Open

Studio Eyes, a new store offering a variety of designer optical wear and contact lenses, opened in June at Lithia Crossing shopping center.

Studio Eyes' owner Dr. Chris Russell has been practicing in the Tampa Bay area for more than nine years and has been a resident of Valrico for 15 years. Through his experience, Russell has learned that patients not only want to see properly, but want to wear glasses and contact lenses that are unique and attractive. Therefore, Studio Eyes has teamed with prestigious companies and will offer the latest in optical wear at 3466 Lithia-Pinecrest Road. Studio Eyes is located in 1,920 square feet with a unique design. Russell and another licensed optician, Tom Kyte, are on hand to serve customers.

Realty celebrates birthday

Michael Davis Realty at 130 E. Bloomingdale Ave. just celebrated its fifth year in busi-

See BRIEFS, Page 20

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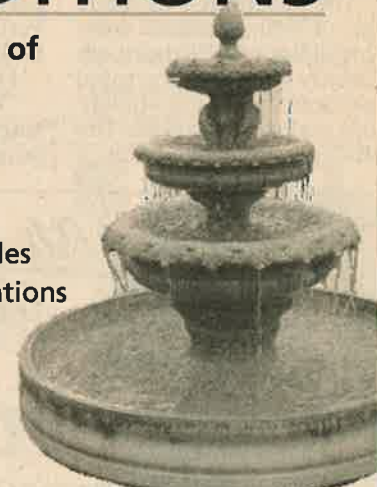
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From left are Tyler Howard, Meleah Baker, Rachel Mattoon and Joseph Kucera.

Alafia 4th-Graders Play At The Center

News Report

Four Alafia Elementary School students performed with the 2004 All-County Elementary Chorus May 11 at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

Alafia Elementary fourth graders Meleah Baker, Tyler Howard, Rachel Mattoon and Joseph Kucera tried out for parts to sing either alto or soprano for this ensemble.

The ensemble was made up of 600 students from throughout Hillsborough County who demonstrated excellent vocal development and performance skills. The students rehearsed for a

month. The festival's orchestra was also made up of students who played violin, viola, cello and bass, along with students performing hand bell choir chimes, primary strings and other instruments.

The audience at the sold-out concert gave the performers a standing ovation.

For Kucera, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"It was cool to be able to perform at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center," he said. "It was a lot of fun."

Mattoon agreed.

"We performed on the stage where famous people sang," she said.



Rachel Mattoon displays her winning Reflections artwork.

Alafia Elementary Reflections News

News Report

She'd like to become a world-renowned artist one day.

But in the meantime, Alafia Elementary School student Rachel Mattoon is satisfied just to be recognized at the state level for her art.

The fourth-grader received a first place in the visual arts category of this year's PTA Reflections art program and went on to compete at the state level, earning a blue ribbon and having her artwork displayed in the state Capital. Mattoon, who takes art classes at Center Place, submitted a self-portrait in the style of Picasso.

Mattoon was one of a group of Alafia students whose entries qualified for

county-level competition. The artwork, in keeping with this year's theme, "I am really happy when" was displayed at the Hillsborough County PTA/PTS reception held at Gaither High School in January.

Other Alafia students qualifying for the county competition were Cameron Robertson, Casey Capobianco, Kayla Cox, Bradley Engle, Tyler Pletcher, Taylor Purtell, Isabella Ramirez, Connor Jurens, Danielle Murray, Abrey Stamper, Matthew Waltz, Nicholas Pletcher, Alex Bryant, Erin Bullard, Brittany Corbell, Bryan Engle, Rachel Mattoon, Nicole Pocchiaro, Anna Pternitis, Jack Schwartz, Megan Bergevin and Devyn Driskell.



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Friends Chapter Tours Library Construction Site

By D'ANN WHITE
Editor

If they had their preference, most people wouldn't choose to spend their Saturday mornings at a hot, dusty construction site, tripping over piles of dirt and wiping away perspiration.

But members of the newly formed south Brandon library chapter of the Friends of the Library said they had been looking forward to giving up part of their weekend and donning sweaty hardhats if it meant a chance to get a sneak peak at the long-awaited Bloomingdale library branch.

"It's been very exciting to see this building going up," said chapter President Pat Boody. "And it was so nice of the county to offer us this up-close look."

County architect Israel Grajales gave up his Saturday morning to meet members of the friends chapter at the construction site on Bloomingdale Avenue east of Bloomingdale High School.

"The county has really made us part of the process the entire way. It's been wonderful the way they've asked for our input," said Boody. "We really appreciate it."

Construction on the new \$4.5 million, 15,000-square-foot library, which will relieve the Brandon Regional Library, the county's busiest library, began in December.



D'ANN WHITE/Photos

County architect Israel Grajales discusses the roof structure of the new library with Friends President Pat Boody.

And, despite a national shortage of concrete, Grajales said it looks as if the new facility will be completed by Dec. 8, earlier than anticipated.

For their part, members of the friends chapter liked what they saw.

"I like all the windows. There are even windows in the tutoring rooms," said Guy Castagliola, who anticipates using those rooms as a volun-

See LIBRARY, Page 18



Friends member Steve Heckel, right, listens as county architect Israel Grajales explains how the new library's façade will consist of hand-layered brick and stucco.

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LESLIE WHITE/Photo

The Red Barn Petting Zoo offers a slice of simpler times in Bloomingdale.

Petting Zoo Offers Look At Past

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

In the midst of one of the fastest-growing areas of Brandon lies a little slice of Americana.

Red Barn Petting Farm is a trip back in time to when life was a little simpler, a lot slower and not quite so crowded.

Located at 4205 E. Bloomingdale Ave., the petting farm

was the brainchild of Charlie Davidson, who wanted to have a place where the kids could come and see what life used to be like.

"The big red barn was built just for this," said his daughter, Darlene Davidson. "In this large developing area, we wanted to keep a little bit of the American heritage. We wanted to show people what life was like in the late 1800s

and early 1900s."

Rabbits, ducks, turkeys, sheep, chickens, goats and a few miniature donkeys and cows call this well-kept farm home. Tours are designed for groups only, and have the kids bouncing along on a hayride through the cow pasture, making a stop to feed the cows a treat of tortilla chips.

"The kids love the cows' long tongue reaching out to snatch the chip," said Davidson.

The wagon settles beneath the shade trees as hay riders jump off to visit with the animals. Davidson will catch a chicken and let the kids pet one. The goats, sheep and donkeys like a little attention too. But the rabbits, ducks, turkeys and peacocks prefer to be seen but not touched.

After interacting with the barnyard animals, the kids have a little snack before heading over to tour the barn filled with antiques and mementoes from days when

life wasn't electric-generated or computerized. Children get to see an old-time kitchen and antiques that once were an everyday part of life.

"The 3- and 4-year-olds love it," said Davidson. "It's really amazing to them because it's a whole new world."

Just outside the barn is a playground with plenty of equipment to keep little hands and feet entertained. Davidson plays some country music and lets the kids play and explore.

Born and raised in this area, Davidson has been working with kids for more than 20 years.

"I enjoy the kids, so I always look out for their safety and want them to have fun."

Red Barn Petting Farm is available for tours, birthday parties, family reunions or get-togethers. Call 684-6920 to book a tour or to request a brochure of what this little slice of the past has to offer.

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Bloomingtondale Scouts Wild About Wildlife

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

You can find pet lovers in all walks of life.

Cimino crossing guard Ardie Paetz even found a few at her crosswalk.

Paetz works for the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office as a crossing guard and is also the leader of Girl Scout Troop 110. On a daily basis, she gets to know the kids and the parents she helps get across Culbreath Road on their way to school. She also sees several pets making the trip.

With her troop members embarking on a community-minded service project to earn their Bronze Award, Paetz decided to seek the help of Cimino parents for donations of used bedding, towels, sheets, small cages, carriers, heating pads and hanging plants for Bloomingdale Avenue's Care Animal Hospi-

Cimino parent Elana Gauslow biked to the school with a bag load of blankets and towels to aid the cause. The hospital, which rescues and rehabilitates wildlife, uses these donations to make the animals more comfortable and

provide clean bedding.

"The girls earned their pet and wildlife badges. Now they're working on their service project, which has to be related to the badges they earn," explained Paetz. "One of the girls' moms knew about this, so we took a tour of Care Animal Hospital to see the facilities. The girls decided this would be their project."

Items collected will be put to good use for the wildlife at the animal clinic, which are either released once their injuries heal or remain at the hospital if they can't be returned to the wild.

Currently, inhabitants are a variety of birds, rabbits, goats and a goose with an attitude.

To aid the cause, made and distributed fliers, which they posted at area Wal-Marts, pet stores, feed stores and throughout the community. They then spent one Saturday in May at a drop-off location, collecting donations.

In return, donors were invited to bring in their pets and receive a digital photo of the pet. The girls also printed the pets' paws with nontoxic ink, cleaned them up and gave the owners a personalized pet card, said Paetz.

The first pet to be paw



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Cimino Elementary School parent Elana Gauslow donates used bedding to Girl Scout Troop 110, whose leader is Cimino crossing guard Ardie Paetz.

also printed the paws of a few hamsters.

The two girls also paw printed a few hamsters.

Donations included some small cages, for which clinic supervisor for Care Animal Hospital Melinda Farmer was especially grateful.

"With the rain coming up, the smaller cages come in, handy," said Farmer.

Care Animal Hospital accepts these types of donations year round. The hospital also needs clean carpet scraps to line cages.

The Bronze Award service project not only rewards the Scouts for their environmental outlook, but for their leadership skills and commitment to both their community and themselves.

Paetz is working on the paperwork to send in to Girl Scout Council to see that the Scouts in Troop 110 are rewarded for their endeavor on behalf of animals.

printed was a wolf.

"It wasn't scary," said Scout Melanie Poston, 11. Poston and fellow Scout Teresa Paetz



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Births

The following births were reported at Brandon Regional Hospital:

May 7

Aiden Michael Ernest, son of Michelle and Brandon Ernest of Kristin Place.

May 21

Daniela Maria Navarra Balestena, daughter of Jimmy Navarro and Lourdes B. Navarro-Balestena of Laurel Oak Drive.

May 28

Sydney Amanda Sullen-

berger, daughter of Allison and Brett Sullenberger of Portobello Circle.

Levi Alan Donaldson, son of Ashley and Bryan Donaldson of Preston Woods Drive.

June 10

Payton Gail Aldridge, daughter of Sarah and Jimmy Aldridge Jr. of Cabbage Palm Drive.

June 14

Madison Leigh Bristol, daughter of Jennifer and Carl Bristol of Shady Leaf Drive.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE
THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Bloomingtondale Volleyball Coach Sets Team Up To Succeed

HESS ENTERS 30TH SEASON

By RON LEWIS
Correspondent

The reasons why Bonnie Hess will return to the sidelines as Bloomingtondale High School's head volleyball coach for the 11th straight year include a passion for teaching, a love for sports and the community, and a desire to see teenagers set and reach their goals.

Hess, 52, has coached volleyball in Hillsborough County for 29 years, beginning at Bayshore Christian then moving to Berkeley Prep and Mann Junior High School before coming to Bloomingtondale.

Her love for athletics developed at an early age, and her sports resume growing up includes pretty much everything except horse racing and the luge.

In high school, Hess starred in tennis, volleyball, basketball and track. In college, she picked up field hockey because it looked fun.

Hess' father played minor league baseball, and she said she watched her dad practice two to three times a day. That was when Hess learned what practice really was and the fundamentals of the game.

As a child she did well in school and idolized her physical education teachers, who helped teach her to communicate. Those who've tried



ROBERT CONE/Staff photo

Bloomingtondale High School volleyball coach Bonnie Hess shows Bethany Cooper, 12, and Hannah Goeckner, 10, the proper way to set a ball at Hess' recent weeklong summer volleyball camp. More than 200 girls and boys ages 8 to 18 participated in this year's camps.

walking instead of running or not picking up balls during a practice know Hess' firm but loving tone.

"I have always tried to instill a desire for excellence in each person as an individual and as a team," Hess said. "I am tired of 'That's good enough' attitudes and folks doing just enough to get by. It appalls me when kids in the classroom want to do the bare minimum and either beg for a grade they don't deserve or are content just to pass with a D."

Hess also credits her communication skills to time spent with college basketball coaching legend Dean Smith, whom she had the opportunity of meeting at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes coaching camp.

"I want the players to see it

is their responsibility to improve as individuals and my job to put dedicated athletes together to make the most of our strengths and weaknesses so we can play to the best of our potential as a team," said Hess. "I want to teach them about unselfishness and team concepts."

Much of Hess' coaching style came from Tom Jarman, now the athletic director and wrestling coach at Manchester College in Indiana. Jarman allowed her to keep statistics for the wrestling team while she was pursuing her degree in education at Taylor University.

See COACH, Page 19



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Hard-To-Find Gifts No Longer Hard To Find

By **LESLIE WHITE**
Correspondent

One-stop gift shopping is not just a quick solution to a last-minute problem, but the goal of a new business in Bloomingdale.

The Gift Box opened in June as an answer to the need for that hard-to-find or last-minute gift. Owner Nancy Hicks stocks the shop with unique gifts for all tastes, a full line of cards and will even gift-wrap purchases for free.

"All of our gifts range in price from 99 cents to \$200. There's something for everyone," she said.

The Gift Box carries a line of bamboo accessories and furniture to suit a Florida-style home. There's also Adirondack chairs made of pressure-treated pine, old-fashioned beach chairs and a sling chair you won't want to get out of.

Hicks is proud to feature fine art tapestries showcasing Emily Adams' prints as well as Dr. Livingstone Girls, which are hand-crafted figurines depicting colorful female characters.

Wicker baskets, pottery, Greek- and Tuscan-styled clocks and accessories line the shelves. A candle corner offers long-burning, sweet-smelling candles by Nouvelle. Other figurine lines Hicks carries are Dreamsicles and Sunshine Promises.

Hicks sells all her cards for 79 cents and plans to add a line of stationery.

Lining the walls are collectable art and autographed albums, for a one-of-a-kind gift for any collector.

For the more relaxed gift, The Gift Box has Magnolia Casuals hammocks, rope swings and sling chairs, which customers can personalize by choosing the material best matching their motif.

Kids are welcome to play in "Brandon Beach," a corner dedicated for a little sand play while parents shop.

The Gift Box is located at 2224 Bloomingdale Ave., near the corner of Lithia-Pinecrest Road, and is open Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturdays. The store is closed Monday and Sunday.

Call: 662-5001.



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Nancy Hicks is owner of The Gift Box, a new gift store in Bloomingdale catering to all budgets.

Recycle Ink Cartridges At Community Office

A Gazette Report

Bloomingdale residents who wish to recycle their spent computer ink cartridges to benefit our neighborhood schools are invited to use the collection box in the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

The office is at the rear of the SunTrust Bank/Citgo gas station just south of Bloomingdale Avenue, and is open Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Tina Pietrzyk, a Bloomingdale resident and representative of A Smart Choice of Florida recycling company,

will collect the cartridges and issue checks to Bloomingdale area public schools including Alafia Elementary, Cimino Elementary, Burns Middle and Bloomingdale High, or the private school of your choice.

The most commonly used cartridges will yield from \$1 to \$7 each.

Residents can indicate the school they wish to contribute to by placing the cartridge in a baggie and marking it with the school name.

If you have questions about the recycling program, contact Pietrzyk at 625-9450.

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LIBRARY

From page 13

teer tutor for the Hillsborough County Literacy Council.

"I love the big community room," said member Carol Jones. "It will have a divider panel so we can have two meetings at once if we want."

However, it was the space behind the library that interested member Steve Heckel. Not only will it provide plenty of space for overflow parking, something the Brandon library lacks, but there's room to build a Bloomingdale community center.

"We need a place for the Bloomingdale community to meet," he said, noting that currently public meetings are either held at the Stephanie Ann Culbertson Recreation Center in Bloomingdale West Park or at local schools.

The library, designed with a brick and stucco façade, will have 15,000 square feet of space with room to expand another 10,000 square feet, making it a regional library.

It will feature covered book drop areas, a 1,500-square-foot children's library enclosed in glass, a computer lab, a community room to accommodate 80 to 120 people, two group meeting rooms for eight to 10 people and two tutoring rooms for four to six people.

But library fans aren't waiting until the facility is open to get involved. A group of residents have formed a chapter of the nonprofit national Friends of the Library association to promote the library and raise funds for items not



D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Led by county architect Israel Grajales, members of the newly formed Friends of the Library chapter tour the construction site including acreage available for overflow parking. Taking the tour were chapter members Pat Boody, Steve Heckel, Molly Holt, Guy Castagliola, Carol Jones, Anne Lawrence and Charles and Lois Polstra.

covered in the county budget.

Boody, a longtime librarian who now works at TECO, is leading the new friends chapter with help from Charles Polstra, vice president; Emma Nystrom, secretary; and Helen Beaulieu, treasurer.

Now that officers have been elected and the bylaws approved by the umbrella Hillsborough County Friends of the Library, Boody said the group is getting down to the business of planning activities for the grand opening and raising funds.

The chapter, now meeting monthly at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, also is in the process of forming a junior friends chapter, hoping to get local teens more involved in

the library, which will include a room geared for middle and high school students.

The chapter also plans to work with the Hillsborough County Arts Council on the choice of public art for the new library. To support the arts, the Hillsborough County Commission passed an ordinance setting aside a certain percentage of the construction of county facilities for public art. Bloomingdale's public art budget is about \$17,000.

Polstra also would like to see the library serve as a venue for local artists, craftsmen and hobbyists, perhaps with a rotating display.

Among the fundraisers the chapter is planning is a book sale and membership drive in September. Membership fees for the friends are \$10 for individuals and \$25 for a family.

Over the next several months, the chapter will collect donated books, videos, DVDs and CDs to sell at the event. The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association has agreed to allow residents to drop off donations at its office.

Members hope to use the funds to purchase a microwave and refrigerator for the staff's break room as well as some trendy furniture to give the teen room personality.

The chapter also will work on plans for "shelving party" to help fill the library with the 35,000 books it will open with and a January grand opening celebration.

As for a name for the new library, the chapter has submitted its request that the library be named after the community in which it is located, Bloomingdale. The chapter also has requested that the community room be named for the McLean family, which donated part of the land on which the new library sits.

One of Bloomingdale's early settlers, John Noel McLean homesteaded the property the library is being constructed on in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The county may hold a meeting to get community input on the name. But the ultimate decision rests with the county commission.

However, the new librarian has been named. Riverview librarian Julie Beamguard will lead the library's staff of 10 full-time and four part-time employees.

For information on joining the friends chapter, call 275-3642 or e-mail Boody at: pwboody@tecoenergy.com. The next friends meeting will take place July 22 at 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office.

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Alafia Students Participate In Battle Of The Books

By THERESA HICKIE
Correspondent

It was a challenge fourth-graders at Alafia Elementary School were eager to tackle.

In December, all fourth-graders at Alafia Elementary School were given a list of 20 books to read to get a spot on the coveted Battle of the Books teams.

Waters, the media specialist at Alafia, challenged the students to read each book; take an Accelerated Reader test, receive at least an 80 percent passing grade and write a summary of each book.

All of the students were given a Battle of the Books folder to record their progress. As an added incentive, the class that read the most books in a month won a pizza party.

Seven students at Alafia Elementary read all of the battle books: Kimmy Sleeman, Shannon Hickie, Meleah Baker, Zachary Carter, Bryan Engle, Alex Bryant and Michelle Vandemare.

All of the fourth-grade students were then required to take a 40-question comprehension test.

Each student needed to know the title and author of all

20 books along with events and characters.

The children who completed the test in the fastest amount of time, and got the most questions correct, were selected to be on the class battle team.

Then the teams from each fourth-grade class competed against each other to see which team would move on to the district level to battle against other Hillsborough County schools.

It was an intense morning at Alafia. The cafeteria was filled with teachers, parents, grandparents, third- and

fourth-grade classes watching the contestants calmly answer question in Jeopardy-like fashion.

The winning team included Renee Rudolf, Jasmine Volel, Alex, Bryant and Anna Prince. Other teams were Kimmy Sleeman, Bryan Engle, Shannon Hickie and Zachary Carter; Michelle Fee, Samantha Wiley, Emilee Grem, Alexis Demeria; Tarek Mokhtar, Amber Hoffemeister and Allie Repetti; and Alexandria Willhite, Caleb Cook, Savanna Aversa, Isadora Dombrowski and Nicole Pocchiarri.

COACH

From page 16

"Being involved with your players goes beyond the court," Hess said. "You need to make sure they are good citizens, too."

Another strong influence Hess was former Florida State University volleyball coach Cecile Reynaud, coached college volleyball for more than 25 years and racked up more than 600 victories. She also co-authored "The Volleyball Coaching Bible." Hess said many of the drills she uses in practices she learned from Reynaud.

Though Hess has had success everywhere she's coached, she suffered through her first two losing seasons the past two years at Bloomingdale. It hasn't been easy, but Hess said she enjoys reconnecting with former players who have gone on to play college ball.

"Our first team went to state and the next ones finished as district winners or runners-up. We have certainly upgraded and changed to play more advanced systems since I came (11 years ago)," said Hess, who has won more than 75 percent of her games in 30 years of coaching. "Sometimes it takes a few years to have the players

come back and let you know how much the lessons they learned have meant to them. I recently attended the wedding of one of the players from my first year at Bloomingdale. She has written several times to let me know how much I meant to her."

Having a good support staff is crucial to success, said Hess, and she wasn't talking about assistants on the bench. Hess said her big reason for personal success in coaching is her husband, Chuck, and their son, D.J., who is something of a sports prodigy himself. "I'm the technician and he's (Chuck) the strategist," said Bonnie. "I teach the physical stuff and drive for perfection and he tells me how to put it together."

Chuck is not only a father, scorekeeper and strategist, he's the much-needed dumping ground for his wife's rants and raves. Hess said he understands what she's feeling and contributes his thoughts and makes it better.

Like Hess, D.J., who will enter sixth grade at Bell Shoals Baptist School in the fall, plays almost every sport. He's also learning about how a coach ticks, she said.

"Being a good athlete does-

n't mean you forget the fundamentals, and who better to coach a child than a mom?" Hess said.

"D.J.'s been coming to practice with me for years

now and he plays for his school's fourth- through sixth-grade team and was MVP last year. I really would like to be able to go to more of his games this year."

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DEPUTY

From page 8

better informed about the many activities the sheriff's office is involved in.

Sessa discussed the experience during a recent interview:

Q: Why did you both decide to complete the Sheriff's Reserve II Program?

A: I served for 24 years in the U. S. Air Force working in the law enforcement field. It was an opportunity to get back into something I enjoy doing.

Q: How did you learn about the Sheriff's Reserve II Program?

A: I heard about the Reserve II Program from Deputy Pete Maurer, our Bloomingdale community resource deputy.

Q: Did you have any special experiences or background that helped you complete the programs?

A: My Air Force security police experiences during my career in the Air Force were certainly beneficial in helping me complete the program.

Q: Would you share some specifics about the programs,

like how long they are and where do students take their training?

A: The program takes about eight months to complete. The course is given by Hillsborough Community College under the strict guidelines of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Q: Who are the instructors for the courses and what are their qualifications?

A: The Reserve II Program instructors were active sheriff's deputies, police officers, fire rescue instructors and an attorney, all of whom are highly knowledgeable in all aspects of their particular fields. They are true professionals.

Q: What course subjects does the training cover? Which ones did you like best? And least?

A: The course covers virtually all phases of law enforcement including basic law, first aid, CPR, defensive tactics, day and night weapons firing, day and night driving, but it doesn't end there. After graduation you are required to complete 100 hours of field training and an additional 12

hours at the communications center. I liked the driving and firing best. The defensive tactics course was physically demanding and the thought was always on my mind of the possibility of suffering an injury, which might result in my being unable to complete the course. Therefore, this was my least enjoyable part of the academy. Thankfully, everyone in my class made it through without a problem.

Q: How difficult was it to complete the training and still have a normal home/work life? Was it worth the effort?

A: The training consisted of classroom work and also physical training. One needs to be dedicated to this field of work to complete the program. It also helps to have the support of your family, as you will be in class four nights per week for four hours each night and also some Saturdays, all day, for eight months. Was it worth the effort? Most definitely.

Q: What types of special duties will you be performing along with the sheriff's deputies as a Reserve II deputy?

A: We will be assigned to work 100 hours of training with a field-training officer during which we will perform regular patrol duties. After our 100 hours, we can select duties with aviation, marine patrol and/or regular patrol duties.

Q: What expenses do you expect to incur now that you are a Reserve II deputy?

A: The sheriff's office provides all of your uniforms and equipment with the exception of your duty weapon and boots. This is the same expense that regular deputies have to incur. I believe this policy is fair and reasonable.

Q: Would you recommend the Reserve II Program and Citizen's Academy to others? Why?

A: I would highly recommend this program to anyone who is able and willing to contribute their time and effort to make this a safer community. The more volunteers, the more deputies we have on the streets fighting crime. With the world situation and the threats we are being constantly reminded of, we need all of the help we can get.

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BRIEFS

From page 11

ness. The company services all of Hillsborough County and East Pasco County. Broker owner, Michael Davis, and his wife, Judy, reside in the Bloomingdale area and their children, Selah and Micah, graduated from Bloomingdale High School.

Davis began his real estate career in Brandon 23 years ago. He has since helped more than 2,000 families move in and out of the greater Tampa Bay area.

Call: 662-2600.

New gaming center

The newly opened OP Center at 2222 Bloomingdale Ave. offers high-end gaming computers and high-speed Internet connection, and features 15 high end gaming stations, 19-inch graphic monitors, individual headphones, and an assortment of the latest PC games. Several game stations have MMOGs - Massive Multi-player Online Games installed. A 55-inch monitor is used for playing Xbox games.

Charles Woodcock, a retired Navy officer and strategic consultant, working for a group of investors opened the 1,800 square foot freestanding gaming center in mid-April and has seen a

See BRIEFS, Page 21

Pink Birds Multiply Along Alafia

By LOIS KINDLE
Correspondent

Sighting a rare roseate spoonbill may be easy this time of year.

A growing number of the more than 300 pairs of the pink birds coming to Tampa Bay to nest each year select the mouth of the Little Manatee River as their destination.

Audubon of Florida began banding spoonbills two years ago to study the nesting and migratory habits of the species. So far they have banded 408 of the wading birds.

"They are very rare in Florida," said Ann Paul, Tampa Bay regional coordinator for Audubon's Florida Coastal. "They are a species of special concern."

The designation is given by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to species that were once in trouble and are now recovering. Although not endangered or threatened at this time, Paul said there are only 800 to 900 pairs of nesting spoonbills in the state, and they need to



Photo courtesy of the St. Augustine Alligator Farm

A banded 7-month-old roseate spoonbill born on the shores of Tampa Bay was spotted at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm while spending the winter in north Florida.

be monitored.

"There used to be 1,200," she said. "While numbers are on the rise in the Tampa Bay area; they are diminishing in South Florida."

Paul said annual flooding of

the Everglades by the water management district disperses fish from nesting spoonbills that feed their babies. As a result, most of the chicks die.

In the Tampa Bay area, including South Shore, spoonbill populations are flourishing. The bird colony here is listed by the wildlife commission as the most important in Florida because 18,000 pairs of 16 different species nest here.

"It's an excellent indication of the overall biological production of an area," Paul said. "The wetlands in Tampa Bay are healthy enough to enable birds to find the specific resources they need to support successful nesting."

Spoonbill nests produce an average of two chicks each year that survive to fledge and strike out on their own. Paul reported recently that 100 fledglings were spotted walking along the shores of the

Alafia River waiting for food from their parents. The Alafia colony is the largest in Florida, she said.

Audubon of Florida wants to enlist the help of the public in spotting and reporting the whereabouts of roseate spoonbills once they leave their nesting grounds. Once fledged, the birds scatter all across Florida.

Anyone sighting a spoonbill, especially one that is banded, should call 623-6826 or e-mail apaul@audubon.org.

The information, especially the band number if it can be read, will provide information about the bird's movement and habits.

Tampa Bay birds carry red bands, while birds from Florida Bay in the southern part of the state have black ones. All bands are placed high on the birds' legs, above the ankle joint.

BRIEFS

From page 20

stream of gamers appreciating the Bloomingdale location and low cost. Hourly rates start at \$5 per hour and decrease with block purchases and memberships. Daily rates are \$15 for all-day during the week and \$25 on the weekends.
Call: 655-4746

Networking group

A new business group is forming for Bloomingdale residents or businesses. The group meets weekly to network and refer leads to businesses in the Bloomingdale area grow.
Call: Larry Niday, 244-6475.

Career transition

The Career Transition Ministry was created to help resi-

dents of the Brandon are who have been negatively impacted by current economic times. It is a free service for anyone who is currently unemployed or underemployed, providing the opportunity to network with others in similar situations; to share frustrations; what works and what doesn't; provide a forum to end the isolation and the resulting feelings of diminished self-confidence and self-esteem; and to give leads into industries, companies and organizations that might be good contacts.

The ministry meets every Friday from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Campo Family YMCA in Bloomingdale

Information: Cindy Kraft, 655-0658, or e-mail career-master@exec-essentials.com.

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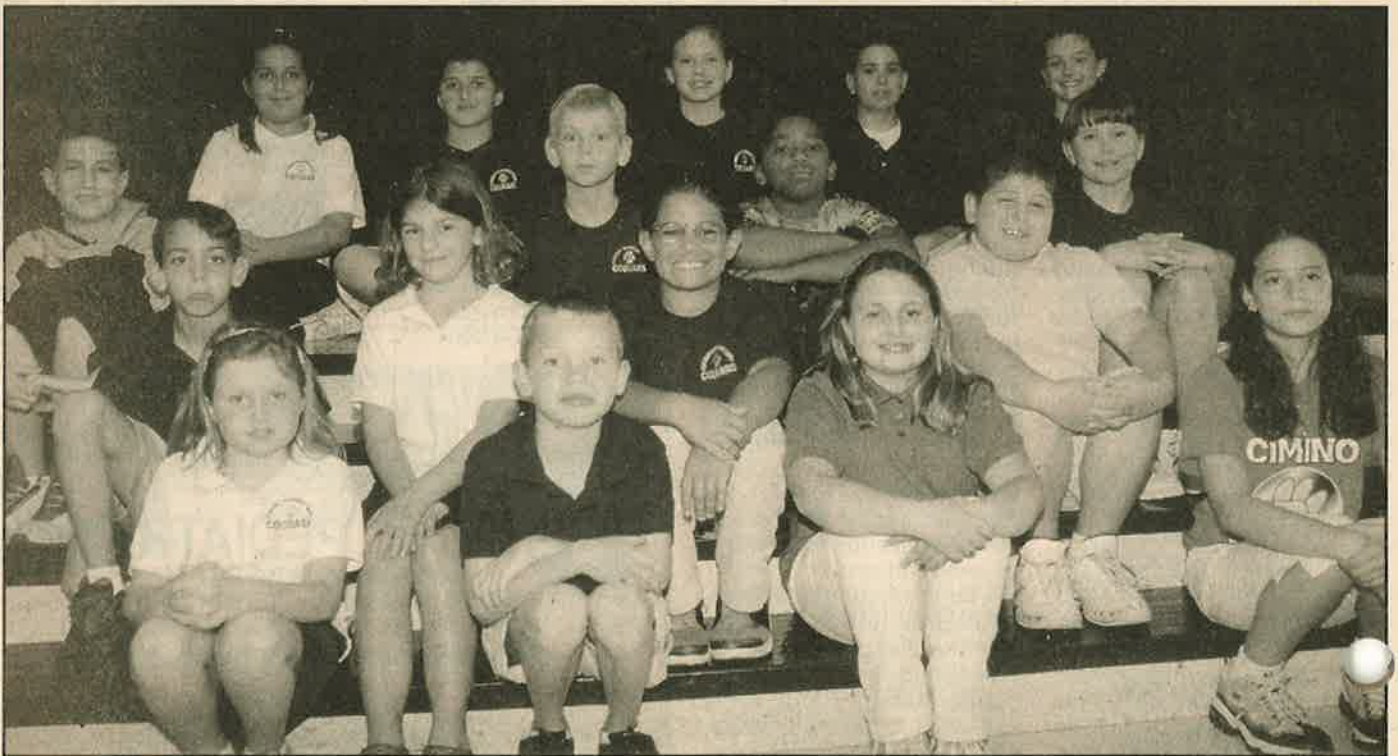


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Cool cats



The following students, above, in grades kindergarten to second grade were named Cool Cats for Character at Cimino Elementary School for April: bottom row from left, Mallory Hillary, Adrianna Bistolfi, Derek Thompson, second row, Luke Elton, Robert Ross, Nicole Pilotte, Morgan Mulcahy, Haley Jones, third row, Aiyana Smith, Courtney Ellison, Hannah Cole, Alexis Melton, Jordan Mills, Travis Meachum, third row, Elaine Hernandez, Haley Bateman, Frankie Allers, Austin Eaton, Corey Hamm, Madee Prether, absent Joseph Wheless, Morgan Harrity and Chris Miranda. Below, the following students in grades three to five were named Cool Cats for Character at Cimino Elementary School for April: bottom row, from left, Taylor Knox, Aidan Lardner, Taylor Lewis, Jessica Garcia, second row, Nicholas Beesting, Hannah Salamy, Bryan Menetre, Sam Gunnoe, third row, Bear Seeman, Joseph McKinley, Christian Slater, Jana Miller, top row, Averi Edwards, Quin McHale, Emily Amburn, Caleb Saunders, Ashley Kinney, absent Billy Caulley.



GROUP

on page 10

between \$5 million and \$10 million. Moursi has experienced some of the impact of these costs on his family already.

"We've spent about \$5,000 a month," he said. Part of this was for therapists. The fee for a licensed therapist is about \$70 an hour; for an unlicensed therapist, the fee is about \$40 an hour. And experts suggest 30 to 40 hours a week of therapy. There is also a long wait to schedule therapy sessions.

"It takes about five months, and this can be a critical five months for the child," Moursi said. "Early intervention is very important. It can do wonders," he said. "It's best if therapy begins by age 2 or 3."

Moursi was able to begin therapy for Jacob in a shorter time due to "professional courtesy," he said. But he worries that other parents might a long wait and the optimum time to begin therapy will have passed for them.

Jacob is among a growing number of children known to be autistic and some experts say the number is approaching epidemic proportions. Whether this is due to better diagnostic techniques or other factors is not known. It was considered a rare disorder only 15 years ago when 1 in 10,000 children were affected, but Karen Berkman, director of the Center for Autism and Related Disorders at the University of South Florida said the latest statistics she has indicates that it now affects 1 in 250 children.

"Some estimates are 1 in 166," Moursi said. "We're seeing a lot more in the emergency room." Boys are four times more likely than girls to have the disorder and NINDS suggests children suspected of being autistic should always be checked to rule out a problem with hearing, although some with impaired hearing are also autistic.

Autistic children may exhibit symptoms ranging from the mild to severe. According to information on the NINDS Web site, the hallmark feature of autism is impaired social interaction.

Autistic children may fail to respond to their names and often avoid looking at other people. They often have difficulty interpreting tone of voice or facial expressions and do not respond to the emotions of others or watch the faces of others for cues about appropriate behavior. They appear unaware of the feelings of others toward them and of the negative impact of their behavior. They may engage in repetitive movements such as rocking and hair twirling, or injure themselves by biting themselves or head banging.

Autistic children tend to start speaking later than other children and may refer to themselves by name instead of "I" or "me." Some speak in a sing-song voice about a narrow range of favorite topics.

Autistic children may also be overly sensitive to certain lights, odors, sounds and tex-

tures. They may not have a sense of danger and may have a hard time staying focused. They may constantly flap their hands or exhibit other repetitive movements. They may experience problems with their digestive system.

Some begin losing the vocabulary they previously used and may regress into complete silence. "Verbal apraxia," poor voluntary control of speech muscles, is common among autistic children. Some autistic children develop normally during the first months of their life, then begin to show the signs of autism.

Although autism has long been regarded as a genetic disorder, passed down within families, there is little scientific explanation for its cause. A study involving two variants of a single gene that may raise the risk by twofold or more is now underway.

But researchers doing the study believe it takes between five and 10 genes working together to produce autism. And other researchers are looking at other possible causes, including the use of the mercury-based preservative thimerosal, used in vaccines given to very young children.

But both the causes and the treatments are subjects of controversy within the medical community. NINDS states that there is one thing previously believed to cause autism that has been disproved: parenting.

Symptoms in many chil-

dren improve with intervention or as the child matures. Some eventually lead normal or near-normal lives, according to NINDS. At present, there is no cure, but therapies — interventions — have been designed to remedy specific symptoms and often bring substantial improvement.

Treatment options include gluten-free diets, nutrition supplements, and applied behavior analysis. ABA uses behavior modification that involved giving a child one simple command at a time, repeated to them hour after hour, day after day, until the child does what is asked. NINDS states that therapy should begin as early as possible. Doctors may also prescribe medications to reduce self-injurious behaviors or other symptoms.

In mid-April, the Autism Research Institute held a "Defeat Autism Now" rally in Washington, D.C., hoping to garner support for more money for research into the causes of autism and a possible cure. And Beckman said the USF center is "looking to designate facilitators to work with local groups" and identifying groups interested in working with them.

Meanwhile, in the Brandon area, Moursi said he will continue to hold monthly meetings of the new group.

For information on future meetings of the local group, call Late Hours Urgent Care Center, (813) 643-9393, between noon and midnight.

SHOALS

From page 2

added alongside Lowe's that lined up with a similar access road at Brandon Centre South. A traffic signal allows motorists on Providence access to both shopping centers.

The Bell Shoals business hope the county will consider a similar proposal. They want an access road added alongside Wal-Mart that will line up with the access between Long Tire & Auto Service and Sun-

Trust Bank with a traffic signal installed at that point rather than at Starwood Drive as suggested by the county.

The business owners hope to arrange a hearing before county commissioners in July to plead their case.

In the meantime, engineering for the Bell Shoals/Bloomington improvements is nearly complete and construction is expected to get under way in November.

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