

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXIV  
Number 3

MARCH 2007 • THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

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PAGE 12

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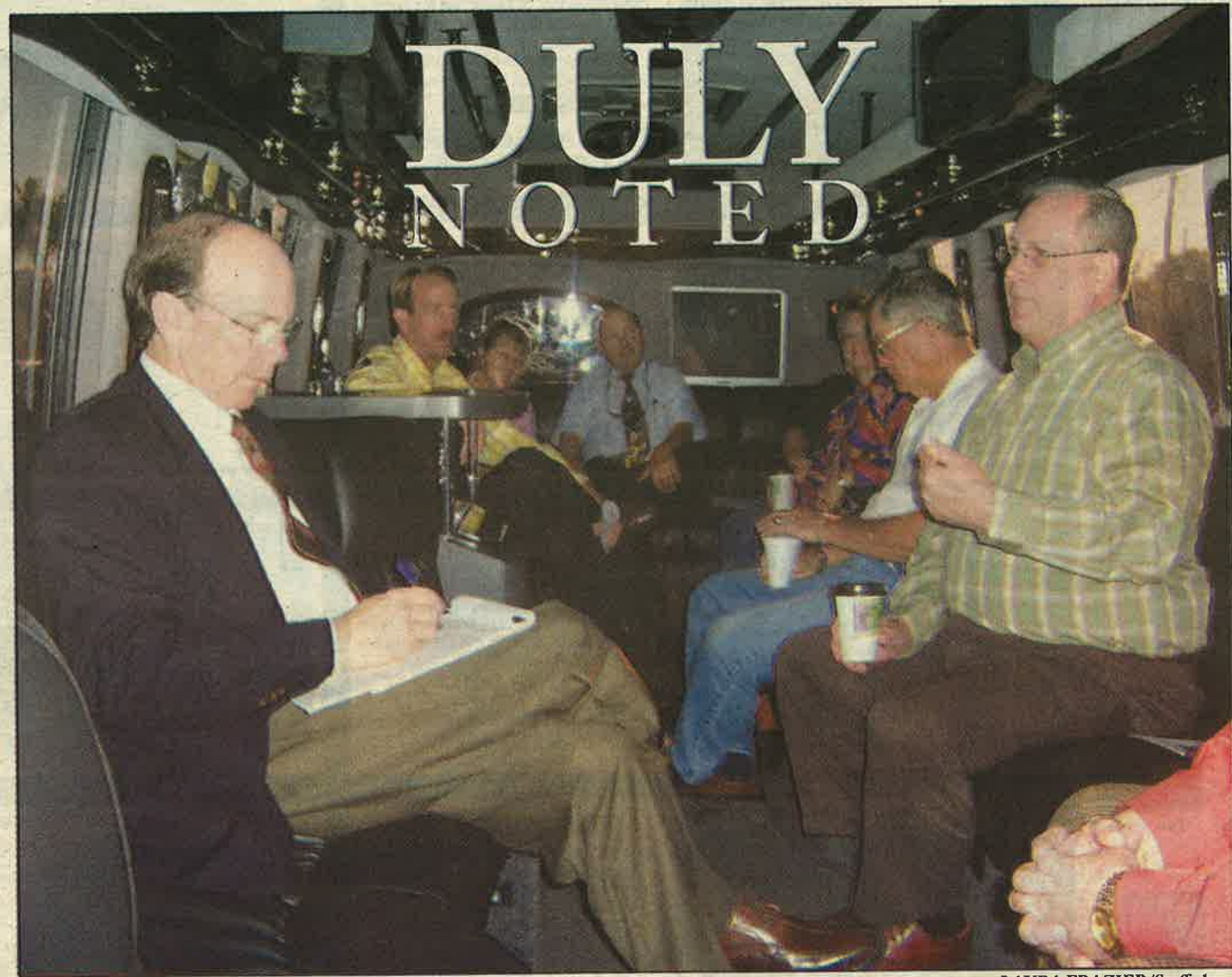
The BHA will accept applications for the B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship through April 5.

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## BOARD SEAT

One seat is open on the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District board of trustees.

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LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photo

County Commissioner Al Higginbotham, on a Feb. 23 bus tour, takes note of civic concerns relayed by Bloomingdale Homeowners Association president Ted Grable, at right, and, in the back, Bloomingdale board member Stan Lee; community office manager Derry Wilson; special taxing district trustee Joe Liguori; board member Lydia Harrod; and property manager Al Devney. See Story, page 6.

## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 8

*Bloomingdale's Relay For Life Kicks Off At 6 p.m., March 9 At Bloomingdale High School*

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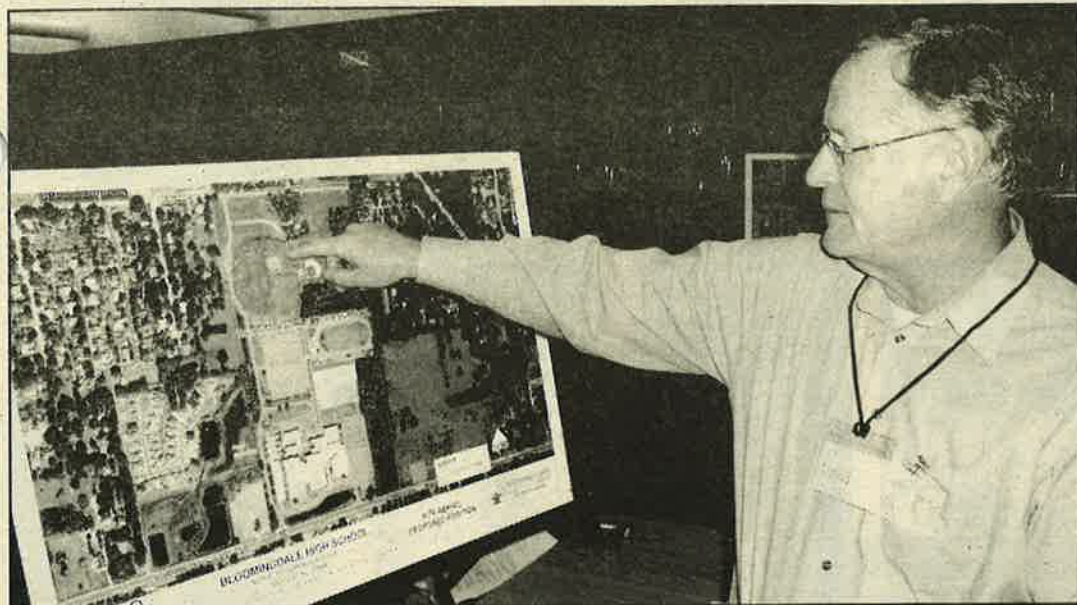
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LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

## Classroom Expansion

David Borisenko, Hillsborough County School District manager of planning and facilities siting, discusses during a public meeting Feb. 15 at Bloomingdale High School plans to add a 12-classroom wing to the school. To meet state-mandated class-size requirements, the district plans to build wing additions at 39 public schools over the next year and a half. The expansions will provide 780 additional classrooms. A new wing with eight classrooms also is planned for Alafia Elementary School. School officials are fast-tracking the project to meet the state's Dec. 1, 2008, class-size amendment compliance deadline. All 39 construction projects must be completed before the start of the 2008-09 school year. "We're scrambling to be sure we can meet the requirements," Borisenko said. For more on this story, log on to [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com).

## Sweet Turnout For Alafia Valentine's Day Dance

Students and parents alike are struck by Cupid.

By DAWN ZAMANIS  
Correspondent

About 250 students at Alafia Elementary School's Cupid's Dance Feb. 16 participated in games, dancing and a little flirty fun.

Principal Ellyn Smith was on hand to supervise the dance.

"This event is for our kids and their families to get together and have some fun," she said. "We planned it for the children, as a fun event that they could enjoy with their friends."

The popular DJ for the evening, Josh, entertained the children, from grades kindergarten through fifth, with games and activities. Prizes were given to all the kids who participated, including the official Alafia T-shirt.

There were plenty of snacks and treats available for grumbling tummies, including pepperoni pizza, popcorn and punch. A photographer took photos of the kids for an additional fee and a raffle was also held.

The music was loud and upbeat, and parents and teacher alike got a big kick out of watch-



DAWN ZAMANIS/Photo

Children and their parents danced the night away Feb. 16 at Alafia Elementary School's Cupid's Dance.

ing their kids -- some dressed to the nines -- dance the night away. They even had a dance contest where the students participated in the "twist," and they weren't shy about it at all.

The parents had as much fun as the kids. Many snapped photos and took to the dance floor to get a glimpse of their child's sweetheart -- the one they talk about all day after school.

All in all, Cupid's Dance was a huge success because it was something parents and their children enjoyed together.

And, Smith said, that was the whole idea.

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# And The Teacher Of The Year Is ...

By LINDA CHION KENNEY  
lchion@mediageneral.com

The word "hate" came up often as eighth-grader Melissa Ouellett discussed her least-favorite subject: math.

But her tone changed when she talked about this year's math class with Mr. Gibbs at Burns Middle School.

"I hate math, and I was always bad with math, until I had him, and now I get A's," Ouellett said.

So, too, does James Gibbs, the newly named Hillsborough County Teacher of the Year.

As Ouellett put it, "He just makes algebra I easier to understand."

Ouellett waited with her schoolmates on Feb. 20 to welcome the late-arriving Gibbs. The five-year public school veteran and retired military officer had a great excuse for being tardy -- he was being driven to school in a stretch limousine, a perk he received for being named top teacher in the nation's eighth-largest school district. The district employs more than 15,000 teachers.

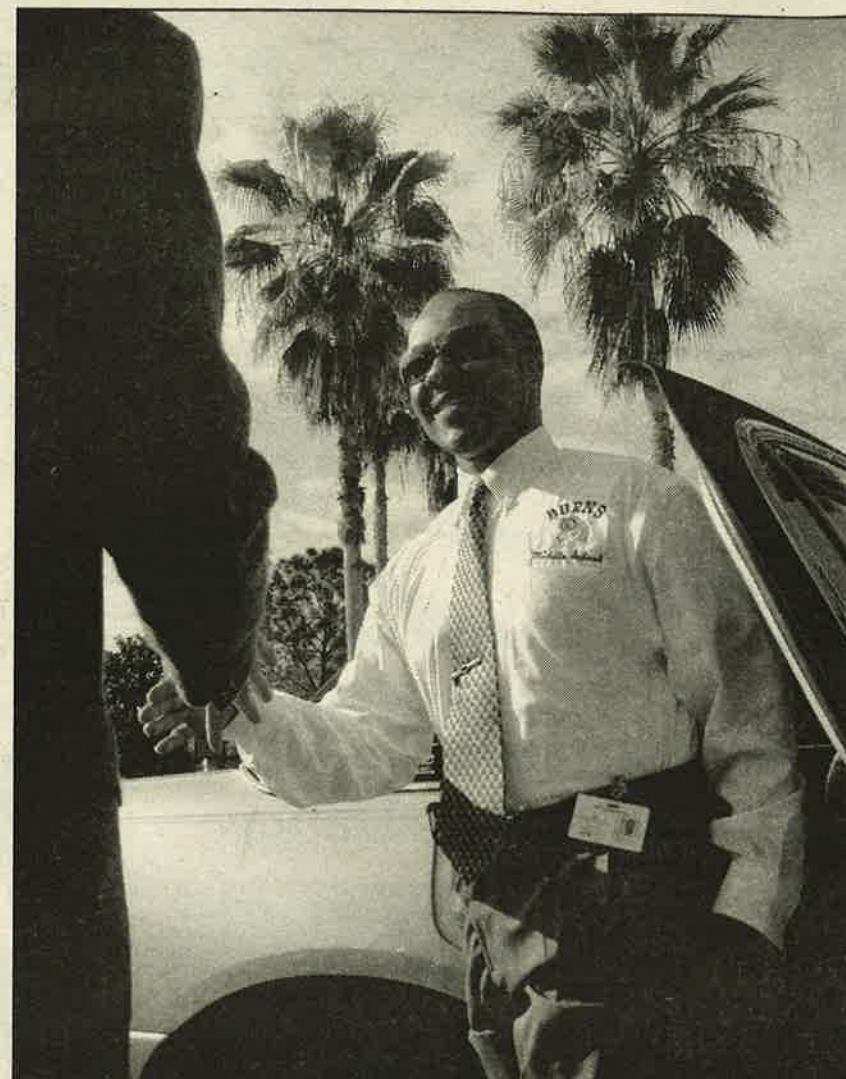
Stepping out of the limousine, Gibbs was greeted by the Burns Chamber Orchestra,



which played Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. His boss, principal Brenda Nolte, observed that "probably about 1,480" students were lining the hallways of the two-story building to clap-in Mr. Gibbs.

"He's like the best teacher ever," said seventh-grader Jessica Desroches. "He doesn't yell, he give us time to do our work and it's just fun (being in his class)."

"You Go Gibbs!" heralded one of many banners hand-crafted by Burns students. Georgia Reese, one of Gibbs' students, gave high marks to the teacher.



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photos

Hillsborough's Teacher of the Year takes a limousine ride to school, where he is greeted by more than 1,500 of his fans -- students and colleagues alike.

See TEACHER, Page 5

## Your Inside Connections

### BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

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**Meetings:** first Monday each month, 7 p.m.  
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## THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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### THE GAZETTE IS PUBLISHED BY SUNBELT NEWSPAPERS

**Publisher:** Carla Floyd  
 505 W. Robertson, Brandon, FL 33511  
**Ph:** (813) 657-4500

**Advertising:** 627-1322

The Gazette is delivered free to Bloomingdale residents along with The Tampa Tribune on the first Saturday of each month.



# Families Trade Room, Board For Fond Memories, Cultural Exchange

□ High school students from 40 countries around the world need Brandon area host families.

By LAURA FRAZIER  
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

Dozens of high school students from 40 countries around the world are waiting in the wings for an invitation to become part of a Brandon area family, if only for 10 months.

Families are needed in the south county area to provide room, board and a place in their hearts for about 75 boys and girls ages 15 to 18 set to arrive in Florida this August. Once they're placed with host families, the students will enroll in public high schools for the 2007-08 school year.

Dale and Margaret Kahn, Bloomingdale residents, are local reps for the Center for Cultural Exchange, a non-profit sponsor since 1985 of international exchange student programs.

In years past, the Kahns welcomed students from Japan, Spain and Iceland into their home. This year, the couple volunteered to recruit new host families in eastern Hillsborough and western Polk counties.

Dale Kahn said he and his wife want to help introduce others to an experience his family found rewarding beyond their expectations.

"You get an inside view of how someone else lives, in a country and culture that may be very different from your own," he said.

The cultural exchange works both ways.

"The kids are very interested in American culture and people. Americans today aren't always thought of in the highest regard, so in a small way, host families become ambassadors of America's values and ways of life."

The exchange, however, is more than a social experiment.

"The kids really become part of your family. After a while, since they don't have their own parents around, you naturally fill the gap. The students we've hosted consider us to be their American family."

Exchange students traveling to the U.S. are encouraged to pack items that illustrate their culture and lifestyle. Host families are encouraged to observe and celebrate the holidays and traditions celebrated in their students' country of origin.

"Our guest from Japan brought her full ceremonial dress and a lot of things that were very interesting," Kahn said.

The instant addition of a teenager to a family naturally brings with it added responsibilities for parents. But the load is balanced, Kahn said, by the many fond memories families accumulate during their guest's stay.

The Kahns were already run-

See EXCHANGE, Page 18



Photo courtesy of the Kahn family

Margaret Kahn, in 2000, delights in the ceremonial dress worn by Kana, a Japanese foreign exchange student.

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## TEACHER

From page 4

"I've been good in math before, I've been like A's and B's, but now, ever since Mr. Gibbs, I have 100 percent," Reese said. "He makes (math) so easy to understand all the time. I don't know how he does it. He just has a special talent, it's just magic."

Gibbs links his success to the success of others.

"I pillage, I plunder, I borrow," he said. "I'm an agglomeration of a bunch of other teachers."

He said he also treats his stu-

dents like young adults, keeping in mind the very real pressures they face coming to terms with who they are during the middle school years.

"I talk to them about how to brush things off, how to not let all the middle school drama affect them," he said. "Unfortunately, they'll grow up to be adults with drama and they have to learn how to deal with it. But life is not tragic. Have a laugh and move on."

## BHA Will Accept Scholarship Applications Through April 5

□ One graduating high school student will receive a \$2,000 award.

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. will accept applications for the B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship through April 5.

The association will disburse a \$2,000 award this

year to one high school senior graduating from Bloomingdale High School.

For eligibility information, selection criteria and an application form, visit the high school guidance office or log on to [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com). Click on the "B.J. Stelter Scholarship" button at the top left of the page.

Applications are also available at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Office hours are Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to noon. Information: (813) 681-2051.

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# New Commissioner Takes Note Of Bloomingdale

□ Al Higginbotham meets with BHA reps to discuss their civic concerns.

By LAURA FRAZIER  
[lfrazier@mediageneral.com](mailto:lfrazier@mediageneral.com)

Hillsborough County Commissioner Al Higginbotham, elected to office in 2006, is noted for his quiet reserve at board meetings and public hearings.

The District 4 commissioner's laidback demeanor pales by comparison to his predecessor,

Ronda Storms. Higginbotham thinks that's a good thing.

"I'm not that interested in grabbing headlines because, oftentimes, they'll grab you back," he said.

Once they get to know him, he hopes his constituents will consider his soft-spoken, thoughtful manner to be a strong suit.

"You'll find that I am going to be alarmingly quiet, and that's because I am a big believer in institutional knowledge."

Higginbotham wants to get a better handle on the history and fundamentals of contentious, long-term issues like development and transportation before he takes a hard stance on anything.

The commissioner is open to meeting with individuals and civic groups in his district willing to share their take on county-related issues. Last week, he accepted an invitation to take a bus tour of Bloomingdale.

Ted Grable, president of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association's board, said the group appreciated the opportunity to familiarize Higginbotham with the community. The homeowners focused on civic matters they feel are important to Bloomingdale and many other neighborhoods.

"There is a misconception that Bloomingdale is sort of parochial," Grable said.

"But we always want to look beyond our borders to what's important in our surrounding neighborhoods and other established communities throughout the county."

Alluding to new south county development, Grable said at the Feb. 23 meeting, "We're here because we don't want to see the needs of this community and others like it passed by just because developers have created the next Nirvana eight miles out."

"Established neighborhoods

are not portrayed as the sexy, exciting things newer developments are. But we have a great neighborhood and people who care about their community. We need the county to support our backyard and next-door-neighbor issues."

The homeowners encouraged Higginbotham to take an interest in county code enforcement, parks and libraries, trash collection services and the hot-button south county issues -- growth, transportation and road improvements.

During the early-morning bus tour, a short stop at the Bloomingdale Regional Library on Bloomingdale Avenue proved to be a good opportunity for Grable to describe the overwhelming popularity of the 2-year-old facility and the community's desire to expand it. About a dozen people were lined up outside the library before its 9 a.m. opening time.

At a stop near Bloomingdale East Park on Natures Way, the neighbors shed light on a serious shortfall they said occurred despite the combined efforts of the homeowners association, special taxing district and parks department staff.

Board member Lydia Harrod said, "About a year ago, everyone worked together and spent a lot of time, thought and county money on landscaping this park."

"But after the plantings, due to poor or non-existent irrigation by the county, much of the stuff that was planted just died."

Grable added, "Neighborhood parks are woefully under-maintained in this county."

Throughout the ride, Higginbotham listened intently and quietly took notes.

The commissioner piped up, however, as the tour passed a sign for a HARTline bus stop. He is a big advocate of mass transit.

See COMMISSIONER, Page 19

# MOMS Nurture Children, Serve Community

Local chapters of International MOMS Club support each other and their neighbors.

By LAURA FRAZIER  
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

They're crazy-busy raising a passel of kids, but these multi-tasking moms also find time to raise money -- and spirits -- in the greater Brandon area.

The MOMS Club of Brandon and its sister alliance, MOMS Club of Valrico/Bloomingtondale, are chapters of the International MOMS (Moms Offering Moms Support) Club. The non-profit group offers camaraderie and networking opportunities for mothers who forego full-time employment to stay home and be their kids.

Club members are proud to call themselves stay-at-home moms, but you'd be hard pressed to catch them at home. Between group field trips to local attractions, ladies' nights out and kids' play dates, these moms are on the go, with kids in tow. Don't assume, however, that they're all about glitter and glue and trips to the zoo.

In addition to supporting each other through the trials of parenthood, MOMS clubs make it a point to participate in service projects that benefit their communities.

"Many of us had pretty satis-

fyng and fulfilling careers outside the home before we decided to dedicate ourselves to our families," said Cheryl Kehrmeier, Bloomingtondale MOMS member.

"It (community service) kind of fills us up."

The Bloomingtondale group champions a number of local causes, including Everyday Blessings in Thonotosassa. The non-profit facility offers kids from troubled families an alternative to immediate foster-care placement.

"We organized a Santa Shop in December for about 25 kids at Everyday Blessings," Kehrmeier said.

"We bought a bunch of toys and games, and Learning Express on Lithia-Pinecrest Road donated some items. A week before the event, the kids could earn reindeer dollars for good behavior. We set up a shop where they could 'purchase' presents for their brothers, sisters and parents. We helped them wrap the gifts, and everyone just had a ball. It was an awesome experience"

Bloomingtondale MOMS also held recent fundraisers to benefit Ronald McDonald House and Dress For Success, a program that provides career attire to low-income women seeking employment.

Michelle Borland, Brandon MOMS member, said the clubs allow mothers to forge relationships with their peers while contributing to community causes.

"The support from other moms, whether it's just having play dates or being able to have

conversations about kids and family life that no one else would understand ... it's just wonderful."

The Brandon club operates a "Cuisine Team," to provide meals to members who are sick or going through a tough time.

"Everyone in the club supports each other," Borland said.

Both chapters participate in the American Cancer Society's annual Relay For Life fundraiser. The event is held at schools and parks around the world to celebrate cancer survivorship and help raise money for research and patient support programs.

To pump up its relay team contribution, the Bloomingtondale chapter will host its second annual Night of Hope fundraiser March 30 at the Palmetto Club in FishHawk Ranch. The casino-style gaming night features roulette, craps, slots and

a Texas Hold 'em tournament. The \$50 admission includes hors d'oeuvres and desserts, entertainment, door prizes and a silent auction. The club's 2006 casino night netted \$16,645 for the American Cancer Society.

Money isn't the only thing MOMS groups help raise. Sometimes it's spirits.

Brandon MOMS and their pre-school age children meet once a month at Alafia Village on South Kings Avenue, where they invite residents of the assisted living facility to participate in sing-a-longs, finger plays and arts and crafts.

"Some of the residents just sit and listen, and others love to sing along and clap. They also really enjoy watching our kids do little craft projects," Borland said.

The group contributes regularly to the Emergency Care Help Organization in Brandon.

"When an e-mail reminder goes out about our general meetings each month, it always includes a list of specific needs at ECHO. We provide food, diapers, whatever they need, whenever we can."

The Brandon chapter held a Scoop For A Cure fundraiser Feb. 10 at the Carvel ice cream store on Bloomingtondale Avenue. The store pledged 15 percent of ice cream sales that day, and proceeds from ice cream cake sales throughout February, to the MOMS relay team.

Brandon MOMS meet at 10:30 a.m. on the third Monday each month at St. Stephen Catholic Church, 5049 Bell Shoals Road. Information: (813) 655-5485.

Valrico/Bloomingtondale MOMS meets at 10 a.m. the first Wednesday of each month. Information: (813) 746-2168.

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# Residents Rally For Annual Relay

□ First local event kicks off 6 p.m. March 9 at Bloomingdale High.

A Gazette Report

The American Cancer Society's signature fundraiser, Relay For Life, will be held in March and April at seven locations throughout the greater Brandon area.

The internationally recognized event, held annually at community schools and parks around the world, is designed to celebrate cancer survivorship and raise money for research and patient support programs.

Seven Hillsborough County public high schools will host the Relay this spring.

Prior to the event, high school students, families, friends and neighborhood groups form their own teams. The challenge to participants is to keep at least one member of their team walking laps around a designated track for the duration of the overnight event. Prior to the Relay, the teams collect "per lap" pledge donations. Many participants bring tents and sleeping bags to take turns stretching out while their teammates walk the track.

The first local event kicks off March 9 at Bloomingdale High School.

"Each year, hundreds of folks from all walks of life participate,"

said Anthony Pursino, a Bloomingdale resident and American Cancer Society board member.

"This year is particularly exciting because cancer deaths in the U.S. have declined for the

second year in a row. Events like Relay For Life are responsible for this. If you have been touched by cancer in any way, this is the event to attend," Pursino said.

Kristy Deaton, Bloomingdale

relay chairwoman, has survived two battles with cancer.

"The Relay For Life gives us all hope that cancer can be beat," she said.

Virginia Carter, a relay volunteer and cancer survivor, will host a reception for survivors on the field at Bloomingdale March 9.

"We want to have as many survivors as possible come out and join us," she said.

"The survivors are our guests of honor. Whether you are a 10 year survivor or were just diagnosed 10 days ago, you are a survivor and you are invited."

For information about any local Relay For Life event, call the American Cancer Society at (813) 685-0670 or log on to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

## 2007 American Cancer Society Southeastern Hillsborough County District Relay For Life Group Dates, Locations

- Bloomingdale, March 9, Bloomingdale High
- South Shore West, March 30, East Bay High
- East Tampa, April 13, Spoto High
- Seffner/Mango, April 13, Armwood High
- Brandon, April 20, Brandon High
- FishHawk, April 20, Newsome High
- South Shore East, April 27, Riverview High



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## Girl Scouts Send Cookies To Troops

Local Scouts send 51,358 boxes to service members last year.

By KELLY LYNN

Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council Inc.

Let our military troops know you care. Send them "Girl Scout Cookies from Home!"

The Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council is working to send Girl Scout cookies to men and women currently serving in the U.S. military and to those in local veterans' hospitals.

In addition to buying delicious Girl Scout cookies for yourself, you may purchase boxes for military personnel.

Thanks to a generous response from the community, local Girl Scouts sent 51,358 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies to our service men and women in 2006.

You may purchase cookies by the box or by the case to be delivered to our troops. Girl Scout Cookies are \$3.50 per box or \$42 for a case of 12 boxes.

When you purchase Girl Scout cookies, you help support Girl Scouting in Suncoast Council's four-county area. By purchasing "Cookies from Home," you bring a little taste of home to our military troops.

Look for local Girl Scouts selling cookies to make your contribution to our armed forces. Girl Scout cookie booth sales will take place through March 11.

If you don't see Girl Scout cookie booths in your area, contact the Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council at (813) 281-4475 or 1-800-881-4475 to find out how you can find cookies or send "Cookies from Home." You can also check our Web site, [www.girlscoutsofsuncoastcouncil.org](http://www.girlscoutsofsuncoastcouncil.org), for more information.



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photo

## Yard of the Month

Vickey and Tom Kemper, 621 Ephrata Drive, Sandy Creek Manor

Send Yard of the Month nominations to [info@bloomingdalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingdalegazette.com) or call (813) 681-2051. Winners receive a \$25 Wal-Mart gift card, courtesy of The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

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LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photos

Pictured at the dinner are, George May, homeowners association board member and immediate past chairman of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce board; B.J. Stelter, former Bloomingdale High School principal; Mary Grable, Bloomingdale High School guidance counselor and former Teacher of the Year; and Ted Grable, volunteer president of the homeowners association. Pictured at right, Bloomingdale community office manager Derry Wilson, with her husband, Herb, attended the dinner.

## Neighbors Celebrate Civic Pride

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association held its annual community appreciation dinner Feb. 8 at Buca Di Beppo restaurant on Causeway Boulevard in Brandon.



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Pat Boody, at left, president of Bloomingdale Regional Library's Friends of the Library, and Julie Beamguard, branch supervisor, both received the homeowners association's Good Neighbor award. Ted Grable, association president, said, "Our community is extremely fortunate to have these two dedicated, enthusiastic individuals working toward the betterment of our public library." Bloomingdale Community Resource Deputy Pete Maurer was also presented with the award for his longstanding, dedicated service to the community.

[www.bloominglegazette.com](http://www.bloominglegazette.com)



## Neighbors Celebrate Civic Pride

Pictured above, Al Devney, at left, Bloomingdale Special Taxing District property manager, schmoozes with taxing district trustee David Steck. Pictured at right, seated at left, neighborhood volunteer Joni Hickle, who organized the dinner, seated with her husband, Joe, vice president of the BHA board, and Pat Heckel, seated across from her husband, Steve, board member. Mike and Teresa Buday, front right, attended the dinner to say goodbye to their neighbors before their impending move. Mike Buday recently resigned from his seat on the taxing district's board of trustees.



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photos

## LETTERS

Send letters to [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com) or Editor, The Bloomingdale Gazette, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594.

All submissions are subject to editing and will be published on a space-available basis.

### What Happened To Left-Turn Signal Needed Near High School?

Are there any plans to install a left turn (south bound) signal at the intersection of Bloomingdale Avenue and Springvale Avenue?

About a year ago, an article in the Gazette stated that a left-turn signal would be added to the existing light.

As a parent whose son is about to get his driver's license and join the throngs of teenage drivers leaving Bloomingdale High School at 3 p.m. each day, I believe a left turn signal allowing folks to safely turn from Bloomingdale Avenue onto Springvale

is long overdue.

I pick up anywhere from two to five boys at school each day. By far, the most harrowing part of our trip is the left turn from Bloomingdale onto Springvale.

Cars back up far past the provided left-turn lane, frequently causing drivers to slam on their brakes and change lanes quickly while the first car in line is waiting to turn left.

And, with kids eager to get home, chances are being taken crossing over Bloomingdale.

If a left-turn signal were installed, with a longer allotment of time for the school dismissal time frame, life at that intersection would be much smoother.

With fewer school buses available, the traffic to and from the high school will only get worse.

I believe every precaution should be taken and the installation of this turn signal is a needed step in the right direction.

John Hayes

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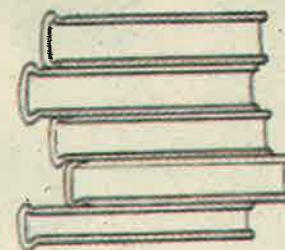
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# Volunteers, Churches Drive Meals On Wheels Program

□ The non-profit group needs help to expand its reach.

By LAURA FRAZIER  
lfrazier@mediageneral.com

A small army of volunteers hits the streets of Brandon each weekday. Their mission: to deliver hot, home-style meals -- with a side-dish of fellowship -- to people unable to shop or cook for themselves.

In order to meet the growing needs of the burgeoning Brandon community, the group is calling for reinforcements.

The Brandon chapter of Meals On Wheels, a non-profit group founded in 1976, is run solely by volunteers. More than 250 recruits gather each week at 16 participating churches to prepare, package and distribute the meals.

About 140 people confined to their homes with various infirmities receive the free or low-cost meals. Many more have applied for the program, but they'll have to wait until more churches and volunteer drivers step up to help out.

Volunteer Cathy Patrick said the group is sending out an urgent call for help.

"We'd like to get to the point where we don't have anyone on a waiting list. We desperately need help to expand our reach," she said.

"We are praying that some new churches would like to help. Some of our churches have full kitchens, others have nothing more than a slow-cooker, and some simply provide a meeting and meal-assembly place

for a few hours each day. Every church does it a little differently, and we're very flexible."

Start-up funds and food prep volunteers are available to ease new churches into the program.

There's also a pressing need for drivers willing to deliver five meals once a week. Deliveries generally take about an hour. Drivers pick up the meals and destination directions between 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. at the church of their choice.

Patrick has served in many capacities with the organization since 2000, when she volunteered to deliver meals.

"About seven years ago, there was an article in The Brandon News that said Meals On Wheels needed delivery drivers at St. Mark's Church in Valrico. We had just moved to the area, and I thought it would be a good way to learn my way around Brandon."

MapQuest printouts in hand, Patrick mastered the local streets. She also made new friends in the process. Her once-a-week visits promised more than a meal to people on her route.

"So many of the people really looked forward to my visits, and I did too."

Senior with limited mobility account for most people receiving meals. However, people of all ages in the program are recuperating from acute illnesses, broken bones or surgery. Some are housebound with debilitating conditions like rheumatoid arthritis. Many suffer from cancer and heart disease.

One woman on her delivery route was confined to a wheelchair with ALS, known as Lou

See MEALS, Page 16



Photo courtesy of Meals On Wheels

Meals On Wheels volunteers assemble hot lunches to deliver to homebound residents in the greater Brandon area. The group wants to connect with more churches willing to participate in the program.



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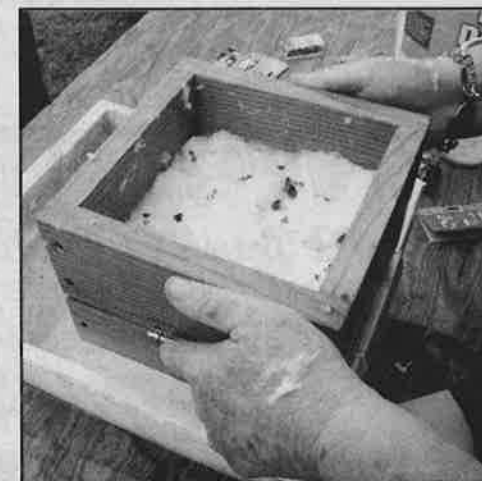
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LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

## Pulp Creation

Local artist Minnette Webster, at the Bloomingdale Regional Library in February, demonstrates the art of papermaking. Past president of the Brandon League of Fine Arts, Webster works in a variety of art media and has won numerous awards in juried shows and exhibitions. She teaches adults and children privately and publicly. At her Feb. 10 papermaking class, she dissolved sheets of cotton linter, made from the cull of the cotton plant, in a bucket of water. The soppy material was then scooped out, drained, pressed on a deckle -- a metal paper-making frame -- and left to dry. The handmade papers are then embellished with paint and other trimmings to create cards, framed art and more. Information: (813) 689-8041.



# HART Set On Flexible, Convenient Service

□ Riders can call three hours in advance for local bus service in limited areas.

By LAURA FRAZIER

lfrazier@mediageneral.com

Jill Cappadoro, a suburban mother of three children ages 8, 12 and 16, appreciates convenient local transportation options and daily travel schedules with a little flexibility.

Likewise, Cappadoro hopes Brandon area residents will appreciate a convenient, flexible new public bus service set to roll out this spring.

As a spokeswoman for the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit authority, also known as HART, Cappadoro is busy this month promoting the agency's new HARTflex program.

The service aims to provide all public vehicles that circulate in specific geographical zones. The goal is to pick up customers at their homes by appointment -- up to two weeks and at least three hours in advance -- and transport them to nearby neighborhood destinations or other bus stops for travel outside the flex zone.

Riders can request a pickup at their doorstep to take the bus to work, stores, restaurants, appointments and anywhere else within their designated area, for activities like shopping, visits with friends, church functions and volunteer duties.

The rates are the same as HART local service: \$1.50 per trip for adults, and 75 cents for seniors older than 65, youths 17 and younger and people with dis-



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photo

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority spokeswoman Jill Cappadoro, at the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce transportation forum Jan. 30, displays details about HART's proposed flex route plan. The door-to-door bus service is proposed for three pilot areas in Brandon.

abilities or on Medicare. HART one-day and 31-day unlimited ride fare cards will be accepted on the plan. Preliminary operating hours for the service are 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday, but like other proposed details, could change depending on the public's needs and input.

The authority in January established three pilot flex routes. They chose an 11.3-square-mile section of Brandon to launch the service, taking into consideration key trip generators such as popular destinations and demographics.

They limited the scope of the three routes to an average of about four square miles, each with at least two local or express route stops and two or more popular destinations.

"Brandon is so large, it's the one area we thought warranted at least three flex routes to begin with," Cappadoro said. One proposed route, No. 505,

was designed to serve an area roughly between Lumsden Road north to Brandon Boulevard, and Falkenburg Road east to Kingsway Road.

Under the plan, anyone living in that area can be picked up at their home and taken to popu-

lar destinations like Westfield Brandon mall, Sam's Club, Brandon Regional Hospital, Oak Park Plaza at the intersection of Lumsden Road and Kings Avenue, and anywhere in between.

To get back home the same day, riders arrange pick-up times and locations with the bus driver. HART plans to use 15-passenger cutaway buses for its flex routes.

The vehicles, which resemble airport shuttles, enable wheelchair and scooter users to board the bus from the sidewalk. The side-loading feature eliminates the need for disabled riders to negotiate curbs and right of ways in order to board at the rear of the bus. The buses also feature bike racks on the front bumpers.

The authority is asking for public input to help tweak the flex areas and services offered. They want to know what destinations people would use the service to get to. They also want to know if the hours of 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. would meet the pub-

lic's needs, and if there are any other changes to their proposal that might benefit current and potential riders.

Cappadoro said the service has great potential to benefit a variety of riders, including elderly or disabled people who don't drive or don't own a car, people who need to get to work but whose cars are in the shop for maintenance and repairs, and those who choose not to drive but still need an occasional lift to doctor's appointments or social activities.

She also has an idea how the service might benefit suburban families like her own.

"It would lend independence to two of my kids that I feel are old enough to use public transit. They could use HARTflex to access school, after-school activities, the movie cinema and the skating rink."

Public comments about the proposed HARTflex service, requested by Feb. 9, can be submitted on HART's Web site, [www.hartline.org](http://www.hartline.org), or call (813) 254-4278.

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# Pet Owners' Failure To Scoop Poop Dogs Homeowners

□ The county's animal ordinance requires people to pick up after pets.

A Gazette Report

The message couldn't be any clearer: If your pet poops on any property other than your own -- whether it's public or privately owned -- you can't just leave it there. You've got to pick it up.

Many residents from various sections of Bloomingdale contacted the Gazette in recent months to talk about their frustration -- and disgust -- with pet owners who refuse to abide by the "Pooper Scooper Provision" of Hillsborough County's Animal Ordinance.

Several homeowners reported repeat offenses by neighbors who regularly walk their dogs around the neighborhood sans baggies or pooper scoopers.

One neighbor said, "It's pretty obvious who's letting their dogs (defecate) all over the neighborhood. You can tell because they never carry any-

thing with them to pick it up."

One resident involved in a neighborhood cleanup of a retention pond near Sandy Creek Drive reported volunteers dredging the pond for trash discovered a disgusting surprise.

"There were an alarming number of little grocery store bags filled with pet waste in the pond," she said.

"It appears that people walking their dogs are picking up the poop with the bags, then tossing the mess into our storm drains. I'm not even sure if they know that whatever goes into the storm drains winds up in the pond."

The animal ordinance, enacted in January 2001, states, "Any feces deposited by a dog, cat, or pet pig on public property, public walks, recreation areas or the private property of others must be immediately removed by the person who has custody or control of the animal unless otherwise authorized by the property owner."

Residents can report violators of the ordinance to Animal Services, (813) 272-5900. There is a \$50 first-offense fine for failure to remove pet waste.

## Sale To Benefit Wendi Mangold Set For March 3

A Gazette Report

A yard sale and bake sale to benefit the Mangold family of Valrico will be March 3 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Brandon Boys and Girls Club, 213 N. Knights Ave. in Brandon.

One hundred percent of the proceeds will benefit the family of Wendi Mangold, a young mother

of three children ages 5, 3 and 1, who is battling an aggressive form of breast cancer.

Friends organizing the sale said the proceeds will help offset expenses the family has incurred during Wendi's treatment.

For information or to donate items for the sale, call Cindy at (813) 643-3928.

## MEALS

From page 13

Gehrig's disease. She and Patrick, both in their 40s, became fast friends.

"I would arrange my delivery schedule so that I'd wind up at her house last. Then I'd have time to sit and talk for awhile, make a pot of coffee, and do anything she needed me to. I'm not delivering meals this year, but I still try to see her when I can. She is a dear friend."

Many recipients or their families offer the \$2.00 donation Meals On Wheels suggests, but it's not required.

"We want medicine and necessities like that to come first."

Meals On Wheels is not government subsidized. Participating churches make contributions when they can, and a few restaurants and grocery stores make in-kind donations from time to time. For the most part, however, volunteers chip in to pick up the tab for food, packaging and gas.

While they wait and pray for additional church locations and drivers, the group will do its best to deliver food and fellowship to Brandon's home-bound residents. They don't want to turn anyone away.

Information: Melody Green, (813) 689-8769.

**THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE**

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(813) 681-2051 • Fax: (813) 684-2358



## BLOOMINGDALE SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

### 1 Seat Open On Taxing District Board

Trustees appropriate taxes for community property maintenance.

By JOE LIGUORI

Bloomington Special Taxing District Trustee

There is an opening on the seven-member board of trustees of the Bloomington Special Taxing District.

Michael Buday, a trustee and recording secretary for the district, has moved and is no longer able to serve on the board.

Over the years, the taxing district trustees have been good stewards of our money. The district spends about \$500,000 of our taxes to maintain, repair and improve Bloomington's common areas and community property.

Based on input from you, our residents, there seems to be general agreement that the board has, in fact, spent wisely.

What you may not know is that, for years, only one Bloomington West resident has served on the board of trustees. That trustee, Thom Snelling, has also served as president of the taxing district for more than four years.

With the exception of Snelling, all trustees serving the board for many years have resided only in sections of Bloomington on the east side of Bell Shoals Road.

The board intends to nominate and appoint a

#### View Taxing District Annual Budget Online

Bloomington residents, to view the Bloomington Special Taxing District's annual budget for fiscal year 2007, log on to [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com), or pick up a copy at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon. The budget will be published in its entirety in the April issue of The Bloomington Gazette.

Information: (813) 684-6667.

community-minded resident at its March meeting, set for 7 p.m. March 13 at the community office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. We hope at least 10 individuals -- representing both Bloomington East and West -- will attend the meeting and express an interest in joining the board.

In selecting a new trustee, there will be no preference given to homeowners residing in either Bloomington East or West. The board would, however, like to see all areas of the community represented during its effort to fill the seat.

For more information about the Bloomington Special Taxing District, log on to [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com); e-mail [bloomington.district@verizon.net](mailto:bloomington.district@verizon.net); or call (813) 684-6667.

## BLOOMINGDALE LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Sheriff's Office Programs Open To Residents

Special training and information help reduce crime, keep homes and businesses secure.

By PETE MAURER  
Bloomington Community Resource Deputy

In last month's Bloomington Gazette, I mentioned some of the special programs offered by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to help deter crime and improve safety and security in our communities. The participation of residents is key to making these programs work.

The special programs offer residents opportunities to get involved with and learn more about the many missions of the sheriff's office. They also offer an opportunity to obtain critical information on how to improve personal, home and business safety and security.

The following sheriff's office programs have been effectively utilized in the Bloomington area. For more information on these and other programs visit

the HCSO Web site at [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us) or call (813) 247-8000.

#### Citizen's Academy

This pro-active program offers qualified residents the chance to attend classes conducted by HCSO deputies and detectives.

Students learn first-hand about the many missions of the sheriff's office. It includes visits to the county jail and HCSO training site.

Several members of the Bloomington Area Community Council have completed the training. Their experiences and information gained have allowed them to assist in making Bloomington safer and more secure.

#### Reserve II Deputies

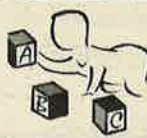
This is an intense program in which students complete both in-class and hands-on training in the many tasks that all HCSO deputies must be proficient in.

Upon graduation, Reserve II deputies are qualified to work with full-time deputies, providing an invaluable service to the

See LAW, Page 18

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# FLORIDA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL®

MARCH 1-11, 2007 — PLANT CITY, FL

## 2007 CONCERT SCHEDULE

Date	4:00 p.m.	7:30 p.m.	
Thurs, Mar 1	George Jones	Clint Black	Senior Citizens' Day
Fri, Mar 2	*Nashville Legends	Gretchen Wilson	Pepsi Day
Sat, Mar 3	Mark Lowry	Casting Crowns	Moonlight Magic Night
Sun, Mar 4	Joe Nichols	Martina McBride	Kids Day - Youth Parade
Mon, Mar 5	Lee Greenwood	LeAnn Rimes	Family Day
Tue, Mar 6	Ray Price	Randy Travis	Grand Parade Day
Wed, Mar 7	Little Richard	Kenny Rogers	Ride-a-Thon Day
Thurs, Mar 8	Oak Ridge Boys	Oak Ridge Boys	Ride-a-Thon Day
Fri, Mar 9	John Anderson	Big & Rich/Cowboy Troy	Senior Citizens' Day
Sat, Mar 10	Bellamy Brothers	Hootie & The Blowfish	Ride-a-Thon Day
Sun, Mar 11	Josh Turner	Montgomery Gentry	The Tampa Tribune Day
			Moonlight Magic Night
			Youth in Agriculture Day
			Family Day

\*Nashville Legends are Barbara Fairchild & Bill Anderson

## FESTIVAL SPECIAL ACTS

Fri, Mar 2	Grupo Los Nenes - 7:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. ONE DAY ONLY!
Fri, Mar 9	The Florida Opry@ 7:30 p.m.- 10 p.m. ONE DAY ONLY!
Sat, Mar 10	Rev. Arthur Jones and The Bible-Based Fellowship Church Cathedral Choir; 7:30 p.m. - 10 p.m. ONE DAY ONLY!

## FESTIVAL FAVORITES

Dennis Lee  
Stars of the Peking Acrobats®  
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Vocal Trash

## SENIOR CITIZENS' DAYS

Thurs, Mar 1  
Jimmy Sturr & Orchestra  
10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.  
Thurs, Mar 8  
"Boots" Randolph Group  
10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

**KIDS  
THRU HIGH  
SCHOOL  
GET IN  
FREE  
SATURDAY,  
MARCH 3!**

## MIDWAY HIGHLIGHTS

Thurs, Mar 1	Ride-A-Thon - \$17 - 3-11 p.m.
Fri, Mar 2	Moonlight Magic - \$20 - 11 p.m.-3 a.m.
Sat, Mar 3	Rides reduced till 4 p.m.
Sun, Mar 4	Midway open at 10 a.m.
Mon, Mar 5	Ride-A-Thon - \$17 - 10 a.m.-11 p.m.
Tue-Thur, Mar 6-8	Ride-A-Thon \$17 - 3-11 p.m.
Fri, Mar 9	The Tampa Tribune Day - \$2 off Fun-Pack Ride Coupon Book 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Moonlight Magic - \$20 - 11 p.m.-3 a.m.
Sat-Sun, Mar 10-11	Midway open at 10 a.m.

RIDE-A-THON

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MOONLIGHT MAGIC

**\$20**

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FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION:

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Photo courtesy of the Kahn family

Diana, an exchange student from Iceland who stayed with the Kahns in 1998, bonds with her "American little sisters" Jamie and Jen Kahn.

## EXCHANGE

From page 5

ning in three different directions with their own children when they hosted their first exchange student in 1998.

"It's a huge commitment, but after awhile everyone adjusts and it works out great."

According to the Center for Cultural Exchange, students in the program are academically strong, proficient in English and eager to experience American life. The students' parents provide full insurance coverage and

spending money for the kids.

The students can be matched to host families with similar interests. Many are talented in music, art, dance, sports, computers and more. In addition to the 10-month exchange program, families are also needed to host students for a five-month session, from January to May.

For information, call Kahn at (813) 571-0784 or e-mail beahost@bigfoot.com.

## LAW

From page 17

sheriff's office and the community.

Several Bloomingdale residents have completed this program and serve in our area.

## Business Watch

Through this program, business owners learn first-hand from HCSO deputies what it takes to keep their businesses safe and secure. The personal contact with the deputies that patrol their community is a very important part of the program.

Many Bloomingdale residents are also business owners and the information gained in this program has proven to be important in keeping their businesses secure.

## Church Watch

This program offers training on how to protect the buildings and property associated with churches and houses of worship, which, just like businesses, are subject to crime and vandalism.

## Neighborhood Watch

One of the well-known programs, Neighborhood Watch works with residents to train and assist them in building an effective security program for their communities.

The program has proven to be effective in reducing neighborhood crime, in turn improving safety and security, as well the overall well-being of residents.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN  
THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

# COMMISSIONER

From page 6

"I ride HARTline once a week, on the park-and-ride express route. It's a very nice experience. The great thing about the bus system is ... we've got the rubber and we've got the road. We just need to get more people on the busses. Before the public will get on the rail, they've got to get on the bus."

Bloomington board member George May inquired about the proposed widenings of Lithia-Pinecrest Road, Bell Shoals Road and Parsons Avenue. He criticized Boyette Springs residents' recent request to take developer funds earmarked to four-lane Bell Shoals Road and instead use them to six-lane Boyette Road. Boyette is currently undergoing a four-lane widening project paid for by the county.

"Rather than trying to rob Peter to pay Paul, let's all work together. All of us (in district four) have needs," May said.

The commissioner said he planned to gather history and details about the issues brought to his attention. He intends to meet again at a later date with the Bloomington group.

"I'd like to come back to you with some ideas about how I can help you. I want to make sure we didn't just have a visit and nice ride today."



LAURA FRAZIER/Staff photo

County Commissioner Al Higginbotham, right of center, pictured with BHA representatives Pam Liguori, left, Stan Lee, Ted Grable, Lydia Harrod and George May.

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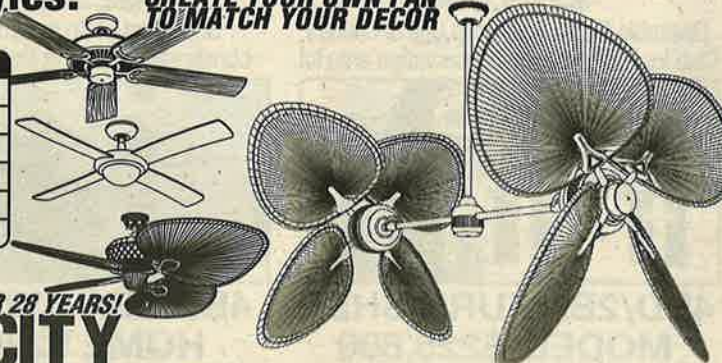
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