

FEATURE STORY



Family and friends of a Valrico teen promote seat belt use.

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BUSINESS

They shop, plan and prep; you make it and take it.

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# Taxing District Proposes Annual Assessment Increase

## HOMEOWNERS CAN VOTE NOV. 7

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

At its March monthly meeting, the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District board of trustees agreed the community's current non ad-valorem assessment is not enough to properly maintain and improve its common areas and entryways.

Bloomingdale property owners currently pay \$100 per home annually for community maintenance and improvements. The funds, tacked on to each homeowner's annual property tax bill, are managed by the board of trustees — all volunteer, non-paid Bloomingdale residents. There are currently about 4,800 homes in the district.

Board president, Thom Snelling, said an annual increase of about \$30 per home would allow the district to meet rising basic maintenance costs, and to build a reserve of funds for key improvements like upgraded landscaping and renovated entryways.

The board agreed to file for a referendum on the Nov. 7, 2006 General Election ballot to increase each homeowner's assessment to about \$130 a year. A simple majority vote is required for the referendum to pass. If passed, the new rate would become effective in fiscal year 2007.

For the past several years, Snelling said, basic maintenance costs — including irrigation, landscaping, fertilizing and painting — have consumed more than half of the district's available funds.

"Our pest control and fertilization contract is up to \$35,000 a year, and we're faced with about \$175,000 per year for basic landscaping maintenance."

**Taxing District Budget Meeting, Public Hearing Set - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Meetings are at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, in the plaza behind SunTrust Bank and the Citgo service station. Information: 684-6667 or bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net.

- Monday, May 8  
Budget meeting workshop, 7 p.m.
- Monday, June 12  
Public hearing to present budget, 7 p.m.

"We're spending more than \$200,000 a year just on those two contracts," he said.

"Added to all our other basic upkeep and operating expenses, that doesn't leave enough reserve for capital improvement projects."

"Everything is more expensive." Since its inception 20 years ago, and up until about three years ago, the district has managed to keep up with rising expenses by gains attributed to an average of 300 new homes constructed and added to the tax rolls each year.

With infill development nearly complete, however, Snelling said only about 50 new homes have been added to the district annually in recent years.

"As more homes were built in newer sections like Somerset and Bloomingdale Cove, the additional revenue kept feeding our basic cost increases and allowed us to do (supplementary) projects like installing new irrigation zones

and sod, operating a more aggressive wall painting program, and planting more trees in several areas."

"All those extra niceties were offset by the number of new houses being built in the district."

The shortfall has hindered the board's plans to upgrade all of Bloomingdale's main entrances.

The district recently completed renovations at the corner of Bell Shoals Rd. at Greenhollow and at Garnet, just two of the eight entryways it hoped to have completed by now.

High on the district's priority list are the renovations of entryways on Bell Shoals Road at Glenhaven, at Erindale and at Rosemead; John Moore Road at Bloomingfield; and Culbreath Rd. at Bloomingdale Ave.

"We're not talking about putting in some elaborate, Taj Mahal entryways, but we do need to stay competitive with the new communities emerging around us."

"We'd like to make some simple, neat and tasteful improvements."

Even if voters approve an annual increase, Bloomingdale will still boast one of the lowest maintenance assessments in Hillsborough County, Snelling said.

"It is my understanding that it's not uncommon for some of the new developments in our area to assess \$1000 annually per home for common property maintenance."

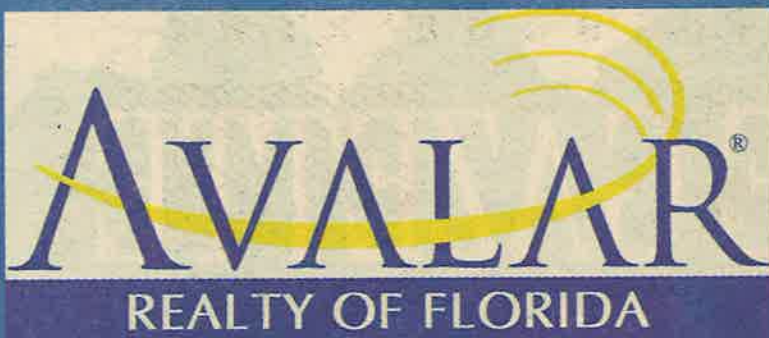
For now, the board is confident a modest increase will allow the district to accomplish routine maintenance, with reserves left over for special projects.

"Our goal is simply to keep everything clean and neat, repair accident sites, and to maintain our irrigation system and all manner of flowers, grass,

See TAXES, Page 19

## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS ♦ PAGE 3 FUN-RAISER ON HOLD





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# Fun-Raiser On Hold

EVENT TO BE  
REVAMPED, RESCHEDULED

A Gazette Report

The planning committee for the Bloomingdale Community Family Fun-Raiser, originally set for May 20, announced last month it would be postpone the event until further notice.

In order to ensure a successful first-year event, the group is working on a number of improvements to its plans.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association regrets any inconvenience to neighborhood, student and school PTSA volunteers who signed up to help with the Fun-Raiser, and to businesses that donated funds and prizes or rented booth spaces for the event.

A new date and further details will be announced as soon as they become available. For more information, e-mail general questions to: [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com) or contact the miniature golf tournament organizer, Bob Gaudreau, at [bgaudreau@ltsleaderboard.com](mailto:bgaudreau@ltsleaderboard.com).



Vin and Laura Marchetti, at the state capital last month, met with Gov. Jeb Bush and State Rep. Irv Slosberg to discuss their support of stricter seat belt laws.

Photo courtesy Marchetti family.

## Crash Victim's Family, Friends Took Trek To Tallahassee

### GROUP PROMOTES SEAT BELT USE

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Correspondent

Friends and family members of a Valrico teenager who died March 3 in a car accident are asking for support — and a promise — from Florida legislators and drivers of all ages.

Katie Marchetti, a 16-year-old Durant High School junior, and her boyfriend, 19-year-old A. J. Lamantia, were traveling home March 3 on

A cross your heart promise



Interstate 75 about 10:30 p.m., after attending a Lamantia family gathering in Sarasota.

Lamantia said Katie was reclined in the passenger seat, her seat belt

unbuckled. He said he nodded off for a split second, long enough to lose control of the vehicle and send it careening first into a guard rail, then into a concrete wall.

The impact threw Marchetti from the car into the path of oncoming traffic. Lamantia, who was wearing a seat belt, said he quickly regained consciousness, only to watch in horror as Marchetti was run over by another car. She died the next day at Tampa General Hospital.

See SAFETY, Page 19

## Adult Sports Leagues!



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# TECO Aims To Reduce Frequency, Duration Of Outages

## \$100 MILLION BUDGETED FOR IMPROVEMENTS

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

During the 2004 summer of storms, hundreds of Bloomingdale residents endured power outages that went on ... and on, and on ... for up to five consecutive days in some areas of the community.

A recent power outage that lasted about two hours in parts of Bloomingdale West — and reports of increased power surges and brief outages throughout the community — is cause for concern, residents say.

The Bloomingdale Area Community Council, at its monthly meeting in April, discussed the issue.

Bloomingdale area residents at the council meeting expressed their concerns about, “a deteriorating, continually troublesome power system,” affecting Bloomingdale West and several smaller neighborhoods to the south, off John Moore Road.

Aside from the obvious inconven-

ience to residents, the council agreed several health and safety issues are affected every time the power goes out.

People with small children, the elderly, and those who use electrically powered medical equipment face serious health concerns during each outage, council members said. In addition, when the lights go out at night, the opportunities for burglaries and theft are ripe. And when street lights and traffic signals are out, auto accidents naturally ensue.

The council asked if recent outages, power surges and blown transformers reported by residents are an indication that parts of the power system in Bloomingdale are in need of repair or replacement.

Tampa Electric Co. spokesman, Laura Duda, said last week there is no pattern of specific service problems in the Bloomingdale area that would indicate a deteriorating electrical system.

The two-hour outage in late April was likely caused by a tree-trimmer that made contact with a power line, she said.

As for recent reports of increased power surges and brief outages, Duda said, “Most of the recent outages throughout our service area have been animal related.”

“Small animals — anything from frogs to squirrels — do a lot of damage in the spring when they get into the equipment.”

There are no plans in place to make major equipment or technical changes to the Bloomingdale area system, Duda said, and outages cannot be completely eliminated.

The company is, however, making some changes to its overall outage preparation and recovery plans and customer service department.

TECO's current budget for improvements to system reliability and customer service is \$100 million more than last year.

“We are targeting areas that have had the most tree-related outages, throughout our entire service territory,” Duda said, including the Bloomingdale area.

Gazette staff confirmed with TECO representatives in 2004 the extended

outages in Bloomingdale West resulted from power lines damaged by fallen trees and limbs.

TECO's enhanced tree-trimming program, in addition to its revamped customer service plan and new high-volume automated phone system, should minimize the frequency and duration of further outages in Bloomingdale and throughout the company's entire service area, Duda said.

“A hurricane is not going to come through without some outages, so our goals are to operate a more aggressive trimming program to minimize outages caused by tree damage, to accomplish restorations as quickly as we can, and to expand the capacity of our phone system to handle more calls.”

Residents can report outages and receive restoration updates by calling 223-0800. TECO tracks its customers by phone numbers on file with the company. Residents are advised to provide TECO with updated phone numbers by calling customer service or submitting a request online at [www.tampaelectric.com](http://www.tampaelectric.com).

## Bloomingdale Boaters Club Seeks Members

### PLANS FAMILY-FRIENDLY ADVENTURES

A Gazette Report

A group of Bloomingdale area families who enjoy boating along the Gulf coast is forming a new club for local boating enthusiasts.

To join the Bloomingdale Boaters Club, Bloomingdale resident Rick Pitrowski said it doesn't matter if you trailer

your boat or have a slip; whether you have a 30-foot cruiser or a 19-foot bay boat; it's only important that you love the water.

“The idea is to meet off the water on occasion to socialize and discuss future boating trips, and to meet on the water regularly to enjoy it.”

Recent trips the group enjoyed included scalloping in Homosassa, exploring Egmont Key and other barrier islands

along the coast, scouting out dolphins at play, and relaxing on the sand bars off Been Point on Anna Maria Island.

“We are looking for family boaters to join us this summer on our many trips to the warm Gulf waters,” Pitrowski said.

The group would like to hold an organizational meeting for new members as soon as possible. For information, e-mail [bdboatersclub@aol.com](mailto:bdboatersclub@aol.com).

## Ladies And Gentlemen, Start Your Golf Carts

### JOIN BHA IN JULY FOURTH PARADE

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. board of directors invites all residents to join its golf cart convoy in Brandon's annual

Fourth of July parade. The parade starts 10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 4. Participants will decorate their own carts, or those donated by local businesses, with a patriotic theme and the Bloomingdale logo. To join the fleet, e-mail [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com) or call 681-2051.

## Your Inside Connections

### The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594  
Phone: 681-2051 Fax: 684-2358  
E-mail: [Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net](mailto:Bloomingtondale.Homeowners@Verizon.net)  
Web Site: [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com)  
BHA meetings are at the community office on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President: Ted Grable Vice President: Joe Hickle  
Treasurer: Pam Liguori Director: Ken Pyse  
Director: Lydia Harrod Director: Steve Heckel  
Director: Dale Kahn Director: George May  
Director: Tim Shuman Director: Myron Magedanz

### Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594  
Phone: 684-6667  
BSTD meetings are held at the community office on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President: Thom Snelling  
Vice President: Russell Jones  
Treasurer: David West  
Recording Secretary: Michael Buday  
Trustee: David Steck

Trustee: Joe Harless  
Trustee: Rami Hijazi  
Property Manager: Al Devney

### Bloomingdale Community Security Program

The Bloomingdale Community Security Program committee meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m..

### Coordinator/Equipment Manager:

Tony Diolosa, 681-1146  
Treasurer: Paul Kelmer  
Patrol Member: Steven

Heckel  
Patrol Member: Brad Scharp  
Patrol Member: Paul Warr

### Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132  
Phone: 685-2817  
BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.  
President: Bill Grace  
Treasurer: Fred Englehart



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COMMENTARY

# Storms: Just Say No To County Mayor Proposal

POSITION WILL  
COST TAXPAYERS  
MONEY, VOICE

By RONDA STORMS  
Hillsborough County District  
IV Commissioner

Go get your wallet, right now... seriously. Lock it away in a safe place. A lawyer lobbyist just back from Tallahassee is sashaying up to you at about fifty miles an hour with a really great deal for you — an elected county mayor.

Keep your eyes peeled and pay attention to the man behind the curtain.

The people behind this scheme say they are doing it because they are oh-so concerned about important issues, like transportation. Ask the lawyer lobbyist this: Where were you when we fought for funding for Boyette, Lithia-Pinecrest, or even the traffic signal at Erindale? Busy fighting for funding for the yellow streetcars in downtown Tampa, that's where. That's right; the two mile "transportation" initiative that cost taxpayers over \$56 million and is still rising. That's their idea of visionary transportation — no kidding.

Don't be fooled. The county mayor position will cost you money and power. You will lose your ability to make your voices heard if you have one politician from Tampa in charge of everything. There is a reason why your fellow citizens on the charter review board who were called up to serve this past year rejected this proposal as bad for regular citizens.

There is a reason why this effort is self-funded (\$75,000) by this lawyer lobbyist but not by regular people like you. There is a reason why the leadership of this effort is comprised primarily of failed politicians who either could not get elected the first time or were fired by the voters when they sought re-election.

And know this: the county mayor system will not abolish the current commissioners. You'll still get to pay for your



"The good news to all this is that you get to vote on it."  
— County Commissioner Ronda Storms

current layer of government, and you will also get to pay the costs of the new mayor, plus any support staff the mayor would add.

This new mayor will be another politician who will probably know zero about building roads, running water lines, maintaining parks, and will be forced to hire someone to do just that. This means that the mayor will be able to fire paid professionals and hire good old-fashioned political cronies in their place.

And open government will take a big hit, since the mayor will not have to abide by the Sunshine Laws ... they won't apply.

Your commissioners recently asked for a comparison of other jurisdictions with a strong mayor form of government. We discovered they had a whole host of bad numbers associated with them; higher debt loads, fewer revenues, fewer assets and a host of other bad fiscal implications.

"Pay no attention to that," we were told. "We don't know why that's true; it could be caused by anything."

The bottom line is that this county mayor proposal is an equal opportunity offender. No matter your party affiliation, the county mayor proposal is a bad deal for you.

If you're a Democrat, you might like the big government part, but chances are a Republican will get elected since most of the county wide offices are

See STORMS, Page 12

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criminal activity): (813) 247-8200

Environmental Protection Commission  
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Federal Dept. of Business and Professional  
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## EVENTS

Send event announcements  
to [info@bloomingtondalegazette.com](mailto:info@bloomingtondalegazette.com).

### MOMS Club Meets Monthly

The MOMS Club of Brandon meets at 10 a.m. on the second Monday each month at Bloomingdale West Park on Canoga Park Drive. The group, open to all Bloomingdale and Brandon area moms, organizes weekly play groups, community service projects, field trips and Mom's Night Out activities. Local civic, government and business groups with topics of interest to young families are invited to contact the club about opportunities to address the group. Call: Diana Klowkowski, (813) 654-8777.

### Fine Arts Show, Reception

The 47th annual Brandon League of Fine Arts members show began May 1 and will run through June 30 in the Mook Gallery at Center Place. Local artists will be exhibiting their

finest drawings, photographs, paintings, and ceramics. Gallery hours are weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. The public is invited to attend a reception and meet the artists on Thursday, May 11 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

### Brandon Business Expo, Taste of Brandon

More than 200 business vendors, including Brandon area restaurants, will display their products and services at the Florida State Fairgrounds May 11 from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$5 for parking. For more information call 689-1221 or log on to [www.brandonchamber.com](http://www.brandonchamber.com).

### Center Place Children's Art Workshops

Summer workshops for ages 2-17 will be held at Center Place. Classes include Fun Painting, Mime and Magic, 3-D Creature Masks, Space Art, Eti-

quette and Modeling, Kid's Clay, Mad Science, Discover America, Art Mural and much more. Call: 813-685-8888 or visit [www.centerplacebrandon.com](http://www.centerplacebrandon.com).

### Church Hosts Mission Benefit

Baylife Church will host a Mission Market and Models event at the church on May 6. The event is to raise money for adults and students planning mission trips to Tanzania, Costa Rica, Russia, Jamaica and Gulf coast areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Call: 813-661-3696.

### County Celebrates Older Americans Month

During Older Americans Month in May, Hillsborough County's Aging Services Department plans a variety of activities to celebrate the life and achievements of senior citizens. A Seniors Prom will be held May 12 at the Brandon Recreation Center on Sadio Street in Brandon from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Call: 813-272-6630.

Celebration activities include:

### Home Remodeling Class

The Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service will offer a "Secrets of Successful Remodeling" class May 20 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Hillsborough County Extension office in Seffner, 5339 County Road 579. The class is designed to educate homeowners about the home remodeling process. The cost is \$7.00 per household; register by May 15. Call: 813-744-5519 or visit <http://hillsboroughfcs.ifas.ufl.edu>.



Photo Courtesy of MOMS Club of Bloomingdale/Valrico

### MOMS Club Casino Night Hits The Jackpot

Valrico resident Steve Mygatt hits the jackpot April 1 at a charity casino gaming night held by the MOMS Club of Bloomingdale/Valrico. The group raised more than \$12,500 for the American Cancer Society. Contributing sponsors were Bill and Wendy Johnson, Cheryl Kehrmeier, Viacord Mothers Circle, Chuck Hermida of Pinch-a-Penny, Standard Pacific Homes, FasTrackKids and Brightest Star Preschool, Mary P. Hansen of Coldwell Banker, HiTech Automotive, Mortgage Financial Network, Teksystems, Abdoney Pediatric Dentistry, Bay Area Photography, Bigelow Tea, Brandon Elks Lodge, Brandon Montessori School, Clean Haul, The Health Center, Dr. Joseph Ciccarello, Jack Holsonback, P.A., Liz Diaz, Pillar to Post, and Mike and Kim Smolen.

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# Bloomingtondale Woman Celebrates 100th Birthday

## 15 GRANDCHILDREN, 18 GREAT-GRANDS

By D'ANN WHITE  
dwhite2@mediageneral.com

Florence Sweeney Geurink has never shied away from fun.

As a young woman, that meant dancing with the fellows who vied for her attention before she became engaged to Clem Geurink.

"Dancing, going to the movies and then to the ice cream parlor after," she said. "That's what we liked to do."

Once wed, she and her husband enjoyed traveling around the country with their four daughters, Mary Claire, Margot, Anne and Liz, and playing bridge with friends.

Now, as she celebrated her 100th birthday March 4, Geurink said she still enjoys a good time.

"I was always ready to go, and I haven't changed," she said. "I still love a good time. You can find happiness anywhere if you just look."

Having long ago put away her dancing shoes, these days Geurink's idea of fun is reading, knitting and getting together with friends at Nativity Catholic Church for bingo. She lives in Bloomingtondale East with her daughter, Liz McLaughlin.

"I would play love to play bridge, but no one around here plays it," lamented Geurink, who was born and raised in Davenport, Iowa. "People don't like it because you have to use your ...," and she points to her brain.

Geurink believes her ability to balance work and fun played a role in her longevity, although genes certainly didn't hurt. Her sister lived to be 100 and her mother 96 years old.

While dating Clem, she worked as a bookkeeper for Oscar Meyer and then, when the girls were born, she became a bookkeeper at the Rock Island Arsenal during World War II.

"I always worked but I managed to find time to do the things I wanted to do," she said.



Photos courtesy Florence Geurink

She and her husband of 73 years traveled to Paris, Hawaii and the Bahamas as well as all continental United States, except one. "I think I'm missing South Carolina but I'm not sure," she said, adding that she might just travel there yet.

After her husband died in 2000 at the age of 96, she continued to live on her own, even driving a car until she moved to Bloomingtondale last year.

"My driver's license was good until this birthday," she said.

With the price of gas today, she said it's just as well that her license has expired.

Her husband owned a service station in Davenport and charged \$1 for five gallons of gas.

Geurink marvels at the advances she's witnessed during her lifetime, from the Royal typewriter to the Dell computer and from the Wright brothers to the space shuttle.

"I saw my first television when I began dating Clem," she recalled. Now she's mastered to remote for the big-screen television where she watches movies on the Hallmark channel.

"I think I lived in the best time in history," she said.

Following a Mass in her honor at St. Stephen Catholic Church last month, Geurink celebrated her birthday with family and friends including many of her 15 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.



### Sample Entrees

- ~ Maryland Style Crab Cakes
- ~ Garlic Shrimp Linguine
- ~ Oven Roasted Rosemary Chicken
- ~ Asian Pork and Snap Pea Stir-Fry

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Say you  
saw it in The  
Bloomingtondale  
Gazette



# Girl Scouts Of Suncoast Council Offer Summer Camps

## OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A Gazette Report

The Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council will present resident camp at three locations this summer, as well as day camps and a traveling camp. You do not have to be a Girl Scout to register for camp. Girls who are not currently scouts pay \$10 for membership in addition to the camp fee.

### Camp Dorothy Thomas in Riverview

Resident camp for girls entering

grades 1 through 12 in the fall. Offerings include the popular horsemanship program, the Challenge Course, and a new "Snow Ski" camp. Programs of varying lengths run June 11 through July 20. Cost: \$225 to \$525.

### Camp Scoutcrest in Odessa

Resident camp offers sailing, water ski/wakeboarding, drama, and photography for girls entering grades 4 through 12 in the fall. Programs of various lengths run June 11 through July 21. Cost: \$255 to \$475.

### Camp Indian Echo in Hudson

Resident Horseback Riding camp for experienced riders. Girls must be entering grades 4 through 12 in the fall. Session runs July 16-19. Cost: \$225.

### Day Camps

For girls ages 5 through 17; offered at various locations throughout Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties. Programs last from 3 to 5 days, with dates ranging from May 30 through July 29. Cost: \$45 to \$175.

### Traveling Camp

For girls entering grades 7 through 12 in the fall. Campers will travel to New York City June 4-8. Visit popular landmarks including the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building. Cost: \$685.

Sign-up for all camps is on a first-come, first-served basis. To register for more information, call the Girl Scouts of Suncoast Council at 813-284-4475 or visit [www.girlscoutsofsuncoastcouncil.org](http://www.girlscoutsofsuncoastcouncil.org).

Coming this week on [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com)

Congratulations to Bloomingdale High School Class of 2006 Valedictorian, Roger Nehaul, and Salutatorian, Melissa Miller • Community welcomes Bloomingdale Fire Department's New Station 27 chief, Raul Velasquez • BHA announces recipient of first annual B.J. Stelter Bloomingdale Community Scholarship

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## B L O O M I N G D A L E S P E C I A L T A X I N G D I S T R I C T

# Spring Cleaning, Landscaping Planned This Month

## PROPERTY MANAGER'S REPORT

By AL DEVNEY  
DPMI Property Management Inc.

### April Activities

TruGreen ChemLawn began the fiscal year landscape program in 37 areas throughout the community.

Specialty Pressure Wash cleaned the walls on Bell Shoals, Erindale and Lithia-Pinecrest.

Shuman's Handy Work installed paver pads under four newspaper stands, cleaned two entryway signs and the

Bloomington Little League sign, and removed old annual plants.

Planscape Inc. installed 1,500 red and lime coleus in eight areas, repaired the damaged irrigation system on Lithia-Pinecrest, and refurbished the existing landscaping on Lithia-Pinecrest.

HARTline was set to repair damage to a main line, zone line and valve on Culbreath which occurred when a new Park & Ride facility on Culbreath was constructed.

DPMI conducted a survey of walls to be covered with creeping fig.

A request for additional landscaping at the Lithia-Pinecrest entrance and the southwest corner of Natures Way and Culbreath was forwarded for pricing.

Raymow continued the annual mulching program and completed trimming the creeping fig.

DPMI picked up 20 bags of litter and replaced 37 flood lights.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, DPMI picked up a bowling ball broken into pieces, a large, half-full container of motor oil and five cents. The beverages of choice were Coke for

soft drinks, Budweiser for beer and vodka for distilled spirits.

### May Activities

The initial landscaping contract should be completed, including modified irrigation to support the new plants.

Additional landscaping bids will be awarded and work will begin.

Entrance sign painting and wall cleaning contracts should be completed.

The design and bill of materials for the renovation of the Lithia-Pinecrest entryway will be completed.

## Part-Time Office Help Wanted

### FLEXIBLE DAYS, HOURS

The Bloomington Special Taxing District and Bloomington Homeowners Association Inc. have an opening for a part-time office manager (20 hrs. per week, flexible days and hours) at the Bloomington Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

The position requires general clerical and computer skills and some bookkeeping experience. Knowledge of software including Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Outlook and QuickBooks Pro is preferred. For information or to apply, call 684-6667 or e-mail bloomington.homeowners@verizon.net.



Flowering jatropa tree

## New Trees Dug Up, Stolen

### WILL COST \$600 TO REPLACE

A Gazette Report

Six new trees were recently dug up and stolen from the corner of Natures Way and Elba, just days after they were planted on April 21.

Bloomington Special Taxing District property manager, Al Devney, said the four-foot-tall, red flowering "jatropa" trees, planted near the entrance to Stratford Place, cost \$600 to install.

The taxing district offers a \$500 standing reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons involved in vandalism or theft of community property. Callers may remain anonymous. Contact Devney at 813-684-6667.



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### GOLF COURSE COMMUNITY

3BR/2BA home is located on the golf course in Diamond Hills. Kitchen features upgraded raised-panel cabinets w/Corian counters & plantshelves. Sliders open to 1300sf. screen-enclosed lanai. Spacious master suite w/garden bath and double vanity. Upgraded tile thru-out w/upgraded carpet in bedrooms. Brick-paver lanai w/6-person hot tub. Lush landscaping. Gated community w/every amenity. Come see it today!

MLS# T2147726 • 1,534 sq. ft. • \$275,000



### COPPER RIDGE

4BR/2BA pool home located in Copper Ridge. Kitchen features white cabinets w/plant shelves. Kitchen nook overlooks pool area. Open, airy family rm w/vaulted ceilings & glass sliders open to screen-enclosed lanai. Formal dining room. Master suite has plant shelves, windows overlooking lanai and a bath with garden tub and double vanities. Spacious secondary bedrooms. Neutral decor. Berber carpet and tile throughout. Solar heated pool. Large corner lot. Minutes from shopping and dining.

MLS# T2153266 • 1,760 sq. ft. • \$275,000



### SOUGHT-AFTER FISHHAWK RANCH

4BR/3BA home offers huge office/den & bonus rm. 42" raised panel cabinets in kitchen w/lots of counter space, plant shelves & built-in desk. Art niches thru-out. Formal dining rm w/built-in niche for china cabinet. Huge upstairs bonus room. Master bath features garden tub and double vanities. Separate wing w/large bedroom, full bath & french door to lanai. Screen-enclosed lanai with pool is perfect for entertaining. Lots of privacy. Backs up to conservation. Don't miss this one. Priced to sell!

MLS# T2152964 • 3,116 sq. ft. • \$480,000



### DIAMOND HILLS BEAUTY

5BR/3BA pool home w/bonus & office/den. Kitchen features 42" maple cabs. w/crown molding & built-in wine rack, Corian counters, pendant lights over snack bar, tiled backsplash & work island w/storage. 18X18 cer. tile & carpet thru out. Formal living & dining rms. Open, airy family rm, triple glass sliders lead to pool area. Master suite has sitting area w/sliders & tray ceiling. MBA features garden tub w/decor. tile, plant shelves, marble counters & dbl. vanities. French drs. to office/den. Huge bonus rm upstairs. Upgraded lighting. Oversize solar heated pool, extended lanai w/brick pavers. Pond view on both sides. Don't miss this one!

MLS# T2153728 • 3,668 sq. ft. • \$590,000



### WOODBERRY

This 3-bedroom/2-bath home shows pride of ownership. The kitchen is a chef's delight with plenty of cabinets and countertops. Spacious master suite with huge walk-in closet and beautiful garden bath. Large secondary bedrooms. Combination living room/dining room with additional bonus space perfect for in-home office or playroom. Fenced backyard. Located in the gated community of Woodberry. Minutes to shopping, dining and all major roads. This one is a must see!

MLS# T2161232 • 2,186 sq. ft. • \$305,000



### TWIN LAKES

This 4-bedroom/2-bath home is in immaculate condition. Light & bright kitchen features oak cabinets w/plant shelves, work island, and stainless range & microwave. Huge pantry. Open and airy family room with picture windows & built-in entertainment center w/crown molding. Formal living and dining rooms. Huge master suite. Master bath has a garden tub and double vanities. Spacious secondary bedrooms. Berber carpet and ceramic tile throughout. Art niches. Screen-enclosed lanai w/solar-heated pool is prepared for surround sound and cable. Huge, fenced back yard.

MLS# T2157219 • 2,230 sq. ft. • \$365,000



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## BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS Spring Festival Netted \$15,700 For School

### CIMINO PTA ORGANIZED EVENT

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Cimino Elementary School held its first annual Spring Festival last month, an effort that raised \$15,700 for the school.

Teachers and volunteers organized the event, open to the entire community.

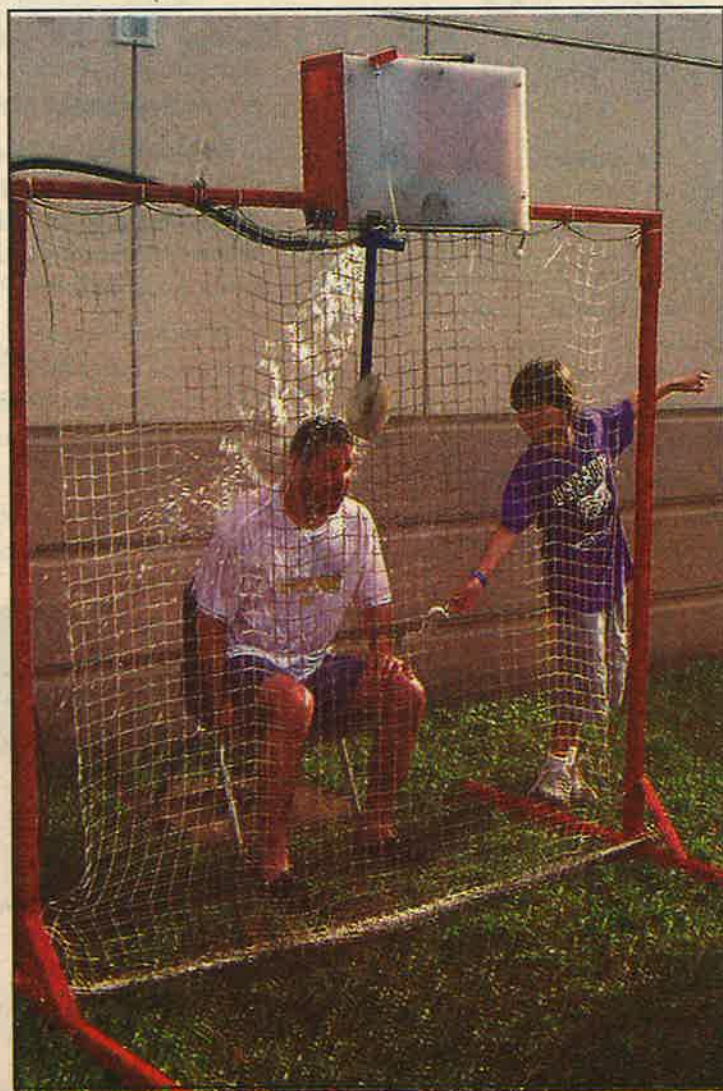
Assistant principal, Debbie Talley, said, "We could not have done it without the support of the PTA."

The festival featured crafts, concessions, games and giant inflatables. A family dinner catered by Chick-fil-A and Dominoes Pizza was held in the school cafeteria.

Booths were set up for face painting, hair wrapping, old-time photos and karaoke.

Inside the media center, a book fair was held on one side of the room, while a silent auction took place on the other side. Up for bid were memberships to Brandon Sports & Aquatic Center, Dinosaur World, Lowry Park Zoo and the Tampa Museum of Art. The silent auction alone brought in \$5,000.

"A portion of the (proceeds) went towards technology, but the majority went directly back into the classrooms," said Talley.



Cimino Principal Lou Cerreta is a good sport, even as he gets "flushed" by a student at the school's first annual Spring Festival.

Principal Lou Cerreta said, "It was a great community event. I saw kids there Alafia Elementary, Lithia Springs Elementary and Burns Middle School. It was a fun night for the whole family."

The event was a hit with students and is slated to become one they can look forward to every year. Talley said, "I'd like to see it again because the kids really enjoyed it, and everyone had a good time."

## Cimino Principal Transferred To Citrus Park School

### STUDENTS, FACULTY SAD TO SEE 'MR. C' LEAVE

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

This Hillsborough County School board, in April, announced the transfer of Cimino Elementary School principal, Lou Cerreta, to a new elementary school under construction in the Citrus Park area.

Cerreta, who came from Buckhorn Elementary to Cimino in February 2005, made the announcement during the school's daily closed-circuit television program April 19.

Cimino's PTA convened a day after the

announcement to give parents a chance to say goodbye to Cerreta, who took his new post a week later on April 24.

Many students and parents had the same reaction to the news of the transfer.

"It's a surprise," said Kim Wallace, whose two children have attended Cimino since it opened in 2002.

"Not only did he achieve his (own) goals, but he also did a great job maintaining the mentality of (former principal) Sandra Frost after she died."

Wallace's son Paul, a second grade student at Cimino, asked his mom, "Why does Mr. C have

See SCHOOL, Page 15

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## B L O O M I N G D A L E S C H O O L S

## Cimino Offers Summer Camps For K Through 8th Grade

SIGN UP BY MAY 31

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Summer camp conjures up thoughts of bunk beds, bug bites and postcards home to mom and dad, but one local elementary school is revamping that image into one of innovation and entertainment.

Cimino Elementary is offering a summer camp program for students from kindergarten through eighth grade.

The school's principal, Lou Cerreta, modeled the program after summer classes formerly offered to Hillsborough County's gifted students. The camps, in session from June 6 to June 30, run two to four hours a day, five days a week, from 8 a.m. to noon. A variety of camps with different themes offer hands-on, out-of-your-chair experiences.

"Parents wonder what to do with their children during the summer, and there are summer camps everywhere," Cerreta said.

"We are offering a variety of alternatives

**Cimino Elementary School Summer Camps**  
Register By May 31  
813-740-4450

**GRADES 3-6**

(8 to 10 a.m.)

Intro To Volleyball

MiniPicasso

Video Extravaganza

Mad Science

MiniMozart

Creative Art

(10 a.m. to noon.)

Wide World Of Sports

Creative Art Adventure

Video Extravaganza

Mad Science

Claymasters

Moving and Grooving

**GRADES K-2**

(8 a.m. to noon.)

Primary Fun Camp

Hearts and Arts

Creative Art

Wide World of Sports

**GRADES 7-8**

(10 a.m. to noon.)

Music Rocks (must have band experience)

that include academics, but with so much fun tied to it."

Cerreta credits his staff for the creativity of the camps.

"The teachers came up with the ideas. Children are looking for hands-on adventures — something exciting."

The summer camps are open to the public; children do not have to attend Cimino to participate. Registration (deadline May 31) is \$300 for the four-week program, \$250 for additional family members.

Information: 740-4450.

## Hillsborough School District Offers Online Summer Courses

REGISTER BY MAY 20

A Gazette Report

Registration for Hillsborough County Public Schools' virtual summer courses is underway. Registration is open until May

20, 2006. Classes begin June 1, and end July 21. The program has a capacity of about 900.

The virtual school is open to students who need to make up classes they failed during the 2005-06 school year, as well as

those who wish to take extra classes to earn high school credits.

To register, find information on courses offerings, or review policies and procedures for taking an online course, log on to [www.http://online.mysdhc.org](http://www.http://online.mysdhc.org)

## St. Stephen Catholic School Students Advance To World Finals

## ODYSSEY OF THE MIND COMPETITION

A Gazette Report

St. Stephen Catholic School's Odyssey of the Mind team advanced last month to the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, an international competition that promotes team effort and creative problem solving for students from kindergarten through college.

The team clinched their spot, its second in just three years, after a successful performance at the state finals held at the University of Central Florida in April.

The Odyssey of the Mind program was founded in 1978. Thousands of teams from the U.S. and other countries participate in the program. Teams participating in the finals advanced from local, state, regional and country competitions.

Championship teams invited to the World Finals will com-

pete with teams from countries around the world, including Canada, China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Poland, Singapore, and Uzbekistan.

This international event will be held this year at Iowa State University from May 24-27.

Team member Ryan Chappell, an eighth-grade student at St. Stephen, said, "Having the opportunity to compete against kids from all over the world is an amazing experience. I truly believe our faith in God had a big part during this year's competition. God guided us

through each practice and competition."

Other team members are eighth-grader Therese Feaster, seventh-graders Nick Rose and Andrea Davis, sixth-graders Katie Adams and Kate Smith, and fifth-grader Amelia Tam.

## BHA To Present First Annual Scholarship

\$1,500 AWARD

A Gazette Report

The selection committee for the B. J. Stelter Bloomingtondale Community Scholarship will announce the first recipient of the annual award at the Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association's May 1 board meeting.

One graduating Bloomingtondale High School class of 2006 senior will receive a \$1,500 award.

The selection committee, composed of the scholarship namesake and former Bloomingtondale principal, B. J. Stelter; PTSA president Robin Rogovin; and BHA board member Dale Kahn, planned to notify the winner last week and invite the student and his/her family to the May 1 meeting.

The meeting, set for 7 p.m. at the Bloomingtondale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, is open to the public. The scholarship recipient will be announced after the meeting on [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com).


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- Hickie family photo

### Alafia Names Volunteer of the Year

Alafia Elementary School recently presented its 2005-06 Outstanding School Volunteer award to Theresa Hickie, pictured. The award is presented annually to school volunteers who have shown outstanding dedication and a commitment to quality education.

## Academy Changes Name, Adds Classes

### PART-TIME PRESCHOOL, SUMMER CAMPS

A Gazette Report

The Brightest Kids Academy, formerly FasTracKids of Tampa Bay, recently celebrated its two-year anniversary with the opening of a new part-time preschool for children 3 to 5 years of age.

"Last year, many of our clients asked us why we were not doing a preschool program similar to the FasTracKids (academic enrichment) program," says Laurie Cohen, Brightest Stars Preschool director.

The part-time preschool program focuses on brain, social and communications development.

"In speaking with our clients and others in the community, we learned that many single-income families are looking for a genuine learning center, not just a day care," said Laurie Cohen.

You won't find a backyard playground or any television sets at the academy. There is no food service or scheduled nap time.

"There's no need to pay excessive tuition so your child can have playtime with other children," Cohen said.

"After the part-time class, our parents have the rest of the day to schedule a playtime, have fun with other extracurricular activities, go to the zoo or MOSI, or do whatever they want to do with their kids."

The preschool's curriculum was created by the Leap Frog Company.

"The Leap Frog Schoolhouse division did an excellent job at developing a full curriculum, which is both literature and theme-based. It uses



Young Bloomingdale residents Matthew and Sarah Young enjoy activities at The Brightest Kids Academy, formerly FasTracKids of Tampa Bay.

the latest in Leap Frog technology and is phonics-based, the standard of the Hillsborough County school system today," said Cohen.

The program also incorporates basic math, science, social studies and Spanish skills.

"We are getting children prepared for kindergarten in a way that is fun and interactive," said Jessica Brainard, lead teacher of the preschool.

The academy is also offering a preschool-based summer camp for children 3 to 5 years old. The six week program features a new theme each week. Free trial classes are available.

The Brightest Kids Academy is at 3341 Lithia-Pinecrest Road, in the Albertson's shopping plaza. For information call 813-662-2700, visit [www.thebrightestkids.com](http://www.thebrightestkids.com), or e-mail [info@thebrightestkids.com](mailto:info@thebrightestkids.com).

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## STORMS

Continued From Page 5

held by Republicans, and you'll get to pay for it, including the policies.

If you're a Republican, you might like the Republican-getting-elected part, but you'll hate the bigger government, having to pay for the added layers, and the extra museums thrown in to appease the downtown crowd.

If you're an Independent, you're sunk because you know the office will go to one of the two parties — even as they're telling you it's nonpartisan — and you'll be paying for the nonpartisan party politics result, plus all the political paybacks to boot.

The good news to all this is that you get to vote on it. See you at the polls!

0001663337-01



BLOOMINGDALE LAW ENFORCEMENT

# Community Council Encourages Hurricane, Disaster Prep

## NOW IS THE TIME TO PLAN AHEAD

By MACK AUSTIN  
Correspondent

The all-volunteer Bloomingdale Area Community Council meets monthly at the Bloomingdale substation on Bell Shoals Rd. to discuss local safety and security issues. Information: Deputy Pete Maurer, 635-8040.

### 'Tis The Season For Storm Prep

Homeowners must prepare their homes, families and yards for the upcoming hurricane season. Items requiring attention include trimming trees and securing loose items in yards such as landscaping timbers, or anything that could potentially become a flying object. Residents are also advised to review their homeowner's insurance policy for coverage details.

### Yard Waste Clogs Storm Drains

Homeowners must take care when disposing of yard trash to insure it doesn't end up in our drainage system. When the heavy rains begin, clogged storm drains can result in water and debris backing up in to our yards and homes. Yard waste — especially pine straw —

## Neighbors, HOA Reps Invited To Meetings

All Bloomingdale area residents and homeowners association representatives are encouraged to attend monthly meetings of the Bloomingdale Area Community Council. Meetings are held on the third Thursday each month, 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Substation, near Beef O'Brady's on Bell Shoals Road. For more information, call Deputy Pete Maurer, 635-8040.

clogs up drains very quickly and can cause flooding. Trash can lids that wind up in the drains are also a problem because they do not decompose. Residents are reminded to stack their yard waste neatly and securely at the curb on pickup day or the night before.

### Trash, Yard Waste Service Complaints

Many complaints and concerns about yard waste not being picked up in some sections of Bloomingdale were recently reported (story in this issue). The BHA is monitoring this situation very closely. One council member suggested that refrigerator magnets or recycling bin stickers with trash collection customer service numbers on them would be helpful. To report concerns about trash and yard waste pickup, call Liberty Waste LLC, (813) 248-3802.

### Emergency Response Team Training Available

When it comes to recovering from local disasters, having residents in our area properly trained to handle recovery operations and emergencies is a valuable asset. Hillsborough County's Community Emergency Response Team program trains residents in the skills necessary to help their local communities recover after a disaster. County Fire/Rescue instructors cover a variety of important topics in this training.

For information about this program, call (813) 224-8920 or log on to the fire/rescue section of [www.hillsboroughcounty.org](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org).

### Dangerous Drivers Near Cimino Elementary

Drivers who are in a hurry endanger

our school kids and crossing guards on a daily basis. A special lane was recently added at the exit to Cimino Elementary School to allow drivers to turn right and go north on Culbreath Road. But now, many drivers are getting in a hurry and not coming to a complete stop. This extremely dangerous habit endangers the kids and the crossing guards. Several close calls recently occurred. The council asks all drivers to please slow down around our schools and always come to a complete stop at stop signs.

### Road Improvement Needs Continue

The council discussed the recent repaving project on Natures Way and Culbreath Road. Some members asked when internal neighborhood roads were scheduled for paving.

The continued major item of concern is the enhancement project scheduled for Bell Shoals Road, and the much-needed traffic signal at Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven Drive (see related story in this issue). The council expressed serious concern about the increased traffic flow that will come when the next phase of the Boyette Road widening project begins in the near future.

## Bloomington Gazette

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BLOOMINGDALE LAW ENFORCEMENT

# Parents Urged To Keep Children Safe

## REMEMBER CARLIE, JESSICA

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER,  
OFFICER SANDY CAPITANO  
Bloomingtondale Community Resource Deputy,  
Service Officer

With so much going on today in our fast-moving world, it's too easy to forget a series of tragic events that, not too long ago, affected many of our lives.

We should all be able to remember the video tape of the abduction of a young girl named Carlie. It has been almost two years since she was abducted and murdered in neighboring Sarasota County.

The trial of Carlie's murderer is over. He was found guilty and now faces the death penalty. Quite frankly, we hope the appeals process will fail and that justice will be served.

Not long after Carlie's abduction, another young life was taken by the senseless actions of another sick man. Young Jessica lived just a short distance north of us in Citrus County.

The anniversary of the loss of these two young girls is an appropriate time to remind ourselves that we can not become complacent. We must always be on our guard for those who would harm

our children.

It's just a couple of short months until school is out. Now is the time to be sure our children, and ourselves, are ready for the long days ahead. Summer seems to be the prime time for these vultures to come out of their nests.

Unfortunately, those of us who work in law enforcement come face to face with tragic events like these all the time. Even with our many years of experience, we still can't answer the question of why these criminals do what they do to others, especially those so young.

What we do know is that we must do all we can to protect those we love. And we need the help of every member of our community to do it.

Have you, as a parent, taken the time to sit down and carefully explain to your children — boys and girls — how important it is to be aware of their surroundings, to be cautious of strangers, and what to do if someone tries to harm or abduct them?

Parents, please continue to know where your children are and whom they are with. Build a relationship of trust and concern with them so they will let you know what they are doing, where

## Web Site Lists Offenders, Predators

Parents, please log on to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Web site, [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us). There is a special section on the site that lists all of the currently registered sexual offenders and predators living in our communities. You may be unpleasantly surprised.

— Deputy Pete Maurer

they will be, and will be able to help take care of themselves.

Please understand we don't have to become paranoid and terrorized by these criminals. Most of the people around us are good, but we must all face the fact that some are not. It is critical that both parents and children learn more about what to do to protect themselves. Most of those who are abducted don't get second chances. It only took a few minutes for both Carlie and Jessica to be abducted and only with the hard

work of hundreds of law enforcement workers were their final fates known.

There are many groups in our community involved in helping prepare parents and children for the unseen dangers in our world. The YMCA offers special classes in self-defense. Many Websites contain excellent information as well.

One additional step parents can take is to have their children fingerprinted. This service is offered through the Sheriff's Office and other groups. For information, call the Sheriff's Office Bloomingtondale Community Station, (813) 635-8040.

And please, remember Carlie and Jessica. Their precious lives were taken away so early. Make their lives count for something positive. Take the extra time to learn how to take better care of your children by preparing them for life's dangers.

Check out these websites for additional information on "stranger danger" and other important child safety topics: [www.childsafetyexperts.com](http://www.childsafetyexperts.com), [www.safekids.com](http://www.safekids.com) and [www.theparentreport.com](http://www.theparentreport.com).

# County To Expedite Plans For Two Traffic Signals

## GLENHAVEN, GARNET HIGH PRIORITIES

By LAURA FRAZIER  
Editor

The intersections of Bell Shoals Road at Glenhaven Drive and at Garnet Drive have long been notorious hot spots for traffic tie-ups and auto accidents. Thousands of motorists each day travel through the two main entrances to Bloomingtondale, routinely sitting in backed-up traffic for up to 15 minutes during rush hour.

With no traffic control devices at the busy intersections, drivers often have no choice but to dart into the unyielding,

fast-moving traffic on Bell Shoals.

So when Hillsborough County's traffic engineering department recently announced plans to install traffic signals at both corners, many motorists breathed a sigh of relief.

Adulation gave way to disbelief, however, when the time frame for installation of the signals was announced.

According to county staff, the signal at Garnet would not be installed until December 2007, and the Glenhaven light not until March 2008.

The Bloomingtondale Homeowners Association received dozens of calls and e-mails from residents incensed over the delay. Improvements to both

intersections, the residents said, are sorely needed and long overdue.

Debra Phillips, a resident of The Links subdivision of Bloomingtondale, in an e-mail to the homeowners association, wrote, "As a parent of a teen driver, I fear that it is only a matter of time before we see a tragic fatality (at Glenhaven or Garnet).

"Even I, an experienced driver, absolutely dread going to either one of those intersections, rush hour or not. These lights should have been in place a long time ago.

"Any and every thing that we can do as a community to get these lights installed sooner is a push in the right

direction."

The Bloomingtondale Area Community Council, a volunteer group committed to improving neighborhood safety issues, agreed with Phillips. At the council's request, Bloomingtondale's community resource deputy, Pete Maurer, contacted public works staff to see if anything could be done to expedite the installation of the signals.

A week later, Maurer reported to the homeowners association that new plans were in the works to install a temporary traffic signal at Glenhaven Drive as soon as possible.

In addition, county staff told Maurer

See SIGNALS, Page 18

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B L O O M I N G D A L E L A W E N F O R C E M E N T

# View Bloomingdale Crime Details, Map Online

## MONTHLY REPORTS

A Gazette Report

Monthly local reports of crimes reported in the Bloomingdale community and surrounding areas are now available to view online at [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com).

The reports, which detail the date, time

and types of crimes reported to authorities, are provided as a community service by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the Bloomingdale substation.

For information about any of the reported crimes, contact the Sheriff's Office public information officer at 247-8058.

## Mailbox Bashing Is A Crime

\$250 FINE, REVOKED DRIVERS LICENSE

Spring is here, and it seems to be the season for mailbox bashing, which the Bloomingdale substation recently received numerous reports of. Destruction of mailboxes is not a game, it's a crime. Criminal mischief, as defined by Florida Statute 806.13, with damages less than \$200, is a second degree misdemeanor which carries a \$250 fine for the first offense, and may result in revocation of a driver's license or withhold issuance of a license for one year.

— Deputy Pete Maurer

B L O O M I N G D A L E B U S I N E S S

# Moms, Friends Leave Corporate World For The Kitchen At 'Let's Eat!'

## CUSTOMERS ASSEMBLE PRE-PREPARED MEALS

By LESLIE WHITE  
Correspondent

Three years ago, Melissa Slack stepped out of corporate America to have her first child. Her friend, Marni Poe, a lawyer, was also on maternity leave.

"I love to cook and entertain," Slack said, "but I found myself in a rut. Cooking seemed like a big chore, and I was challenged to get dinner on the table."

The two friends, facing similar experiences trying to feed their families, came up with the idea of pre-planned, make-it-and-take-it meal preparation.

"We each had a passion for it, and really believed in it," Slack said.

"Let's Eat!" became more than a daily goal. It also became the name of a viable solution to the American

quandary of trying to feed a family in a healthy way amidst a bustle of activities and varied schedules.

The franchise business is a growing enterprise, with ten locations in Florida and one in Maryland.

The premise of Let's Eat! is simple — all the menu planning, shopping, prep work and cleaning are done by employees of the business. That leaves customers to assemble, wrap and label their choices.

In less than two hours at a Let's Eat session, between eight and 12 meals — in portion sizes the customer chooses — are ready to take home and freeze.

The menu changes monthly, offering customers plenty of choices, all using fresh ingredients.

Each entrée has a station with ingredients, utensils and measuring cups at hand.

Alongside the entrée selections are a side dish or two, and a dessert option.

Blackened mahi mahi, beef enchiladas with sour cream sauce, and chicken piccata are a few menu options. Family favorites, low carb options and seasonal items are on every monthly menu, and vegetarian dishes are always available, as are breads, side dishes and desserts.

The first step is visiting [www.letseat-dinner.com](http://www.letseat-dinner.com) to make menu selections, which change monthly. Customers can register for day or evening sessions on either a weekday or weekend. Sessions are paid for online.

Coffee, tea, wine and light snacks are served to customers during their session. Soft background music provides a relaxed atmosphere, Slack said.

Customers assemble dishes by following posted directions and take their creations to the wrapping station where the entrées are wrapped and labeled.



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Bloomingtondale Estates resident Amy McGill, a new mother, works on assembling blackened mahi mahi with black bean salsa at Let's Eat! FishHawk. "It's easier to just assemble, freeze and thaw than to make a whole dinner all at once," McGill said.

See EAT, Page 16

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# BLOOMINGDALE BUSINESS

## Choosing A Groomer Need Not Be Grueling

### ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

By EMILY PRYOR  
Special to The Bloomingdale Gazette

Whether you are a longtime Bloomingdale resident or new to the community, if there is a new member of your family who has grooming needs, finding a professional to entrust your "fur baby" to can be challenging. Asking the right questions can make finding a groomer that is right for you and your dog an educational and interesting experience.

"How much?" and "When can I get my dog groomed?" are usually the first — but not necessarily the most important — questions asked.

Important questions to ask a new groomer include how long they have been in business, how many people work at their shop or salon, who will be grooming, bathing and handling your dog, and do they provide a service schedule that will work with your own routine.

If you call a shop that is new to you and the person on the line sounds very busy, ask for a time that would be better to discuss your grooming needs. Any professionally run grooming shop attempts to keep the rhythm of the day as calm as possible for the safety of the groomers and the dogs. Any shop can become hectic at any given moment. At those times, the priority of the professional groomer is to be more attentive to the dogs at the shop and less attentive to the potential customer on the phone.

Ask for a tour of the grooming area. Is the area clean, well-lit, peaceful, and clutter free? Your future groomer should be proud to show off the grooming area — as long as your dog is not being groomed at the time. Most dogs, while fairly content on the table or in the tub in the hands of a groomer, can become very anxious if they see, hear, or smell their humans when they are at the facility.

Your pet thinks he or she should be at your side or in your lap. If their human shows up early to pick them up, they become very excited because they think it is time to go home. This creates a dangerous situation, since the face is usually the last part of the groom.

Scheduling is an often overlooked issue that can create unnecessary stress for the groomer, your dog, and you and your family. Ask the groomer how they run their drop off and pick up process.

Some shops require you to pick up your pup as soon as it is finished being groomed. They may not have the space to hold any dogs for additional time.

Some shops want all dogs checked in at an early morning hour, to be released in the afternoon or at the end of the day. If this is too long a time for your dog to be at the facility, they may offer an express service for an additional charge.

Experience and training is an important topic to cover. There is no official certification for pet groomers, but there are many opportunities for groomers to improve their styling skills, handling abilities, and their knowledge of the best equipment and products for the dogs that they groom. Many groomers have apprenticed or learned to groom through showing specific breeds of dogs. Others began their careers by attending grooming schools.

Some continue their education by attending grooming conferences. The collective wealth of knowledge available at these seminars is beneficial for the groomer, the dogs that they handle, and the owners who are looking for a long lasting relationship of trust and confidence. Ask groomers if they have attended any conferences lately.

Communication is the foundation of a good relationship between you and your dog's groomer. Face to face is the best-case scenario. Ask to arrange to speak to the groomer before your dog's first grooming experience.

Lastly, please consider the fact that — as far as your dog is concerned — changing groomers is not like changing hairstylists. You will not do your dog any favor by shop-hopping to save a dollar or two. In addition, if you decide to return to your old groomer, you may find they no longer have a place available on the schedule for your dog.

It takes a lot of hard work to become a good professional groomer. When you find a groomer that pleases you, don't take that groomer for granted. The pleasure of a clean, freshly groomed dog is only enhanced by the comfort of having confidence that your dog has experienced the least amount of stress in the process.

Emily Pryor, a Bloomingdale resident, owns and operates "That's Groomer To You" mobile dog grooming service. Information: 728-9407.

## EAT

Continued From Page 15

The labels include instructions for thawing and cooking, as well as suggested sides and wines.

Customers carry each entrée to a section of the refrigerator set aside for their visit. By the time the session is over, the meals are ready to be loaded into a cooler and taken home to freeze. It's that simple.

And, that's just what Poe and Slack were aiming for — simplicity.

"We've created family-friendly meals that people can relate to and that they look forward to serving," Slack said.

Let's Eat! also sells ala carte meals and offers pre-assembled meals for pickup or delivery for a nominal fee. Let's Eat! is in FishHawk Ranch's park square, 16132 Churchview Drive, Suite 105, Lithia.

For more information, call 685-7111.

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ROBERT CONE/Staff photo

## Future looks Golden

Bloomingtondale High School's Jaclyn Johnson signs a letter of intent to attend and run cross country and track for the University of Central Florida Golden Knights. Johnson was joined at the April 21 signing party by, from left, former Bloomingtondale cross country coach George Garner, assistant coach Dale Bateman, Johnson's mother, Pam, head cross country and track coach Jen Durham, Johnson's father, Joe, and assistant coach Steve Littleton. Johnson said she plans to study sports health and art at UCF.

# Card Shop Gets New Name, New Location

## SAME DISCOUNTS, GIFT ITEMS

By IRENE BUGGY  
Correspondent

This time of year, many of us are shopping for graduation and wedding gifts, including

yours truly.

The other day, when I was in the Card Smart Shop in the Alberston's shopping plaza on Lithia-Pinecrest Road, my ears perked up when I overheard a customer speaking with one of the salesladies about the store

moving.

CardSmart owners Ken and Sandee White are taking their shop just down the road to the Lithia Crossings Shopping Plaza, near SteinMart. They will set up shop in the storefront between Bleu Salon and the

Land 'n Sea Market on June 1.

The store will have a new name — Lithia Card and Gift — but the Whites said their customers will still enjoy a nice discount on all greeting cards and a wide assortment of gift items to choose from.

The store carries Dept. 56 collectibles, the Willow Tree Angel collection, a line of Yankee Candle products and a variety of small gift items like mugs, porcelain figures and novelty items.

Information: 651-2273.

## THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

The official publication of the BHA since 1980  
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## Track Standouts

Several members of the girls track team at Bloomingdale High School fared well at the district track and field meet at Gaither High April 20. By finishing in the top four of their respective events, the Bulls qualified for the region meet April 27, which was also held at Gaither. None of the girls were able to qualify for states by finishing in the top four in their events at regionals. Pictured are, in front, from left, Katie Weir (4x800-meter, 4x400-meter), Natalie Morgan (4x400) and Lauren Waterman (4x800, 4x400). In back, from left, are Nancy Melnyk (2-mile), Alyssa Feliciano (high jump), Jan Karlen (4x800), Jaclyn Johnson (800, 4x800, 4x400), Jasmine Oliver (100 hurdles, 300 hurdles) and coach Jennifer Durham. Not pictured is Tina Hooks, who came in fourth at districts in the shot put.

## SIGNALS

Continued From Page 14

a left turn lane (northbound) would be added to Bell Shoals at Garnet, sometime in 2007.

Cheryl Lynn Reece, administrative specialist for Hillsborough County Public Works director Frederick Nutt, said a temporary traffic signal — as opposed to a permanent structure — would be installed at Glenhaven to prevent possible conflicts with future reconstruction plans for Bell Shoals Rd. between Boyette Rd. and Bloomingdale Ave.

Pulte Homes Corp. has offered to

widen Bell Shoals as a condition of approval for its Lake Hutto development near FishHawk Ranch. If approved, the widening could begin in four years. The development proposal is scheduled to go before the county commission this month. Pending Pulte's offer, Bell Shoals is not scheduled for widening in the next 10 years.

The Glenhaven signal has been sent to the county's traffic services divisions for in-house design to expedite its installation, according to Reece. The

goal, she said, is to install a temporary signal sometime this year.

In addition, a consultant will permit and design a left turn lane (northbound) on Bell Shoals at Garnet. The turn lane is currently set for completion in August 2007, but Reece said the schedule could be moved forward by several months if there are no major permitting issues.

Both intersections were recently re-evaluated by the county to determine necessary improvements. Both ranked high in priority.

"Public works staff agreed with Bloomingdale's residents, homeowners association board and community council that, even though (Glenhaven and Garnet improvements) are likely to be addressed in future Bell Shoals construction plans, accelerating the scheduling of even some temporary measures would greatly enhance and benefit public safety," Maurer said.

Project updates will be announced on the homeowners association Web site, www.bloomingtongazette.com.

## The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594 Phone: 681-2051 Fax: 684-2358

E-mail: [Bloomington.Homeowners@Verizon.net](mailto:Bloomington.Homeowners@Verizon.net)

Web Site: [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com)

BHA meetings are at the community office on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m.



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## TAXES

Continued From Page 1

bushes and trees.”

“And we absolutely must upgrade our entryways.”

Residents with questions or comments about the proposed assessment increase can attend any

one of the board’s open monthly meetings, held the second Monday each month, 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office.

For more information about the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District, log on to [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com), call 684-6667 or e-mail [questions/comments@bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:questions/comments@bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net).

## SAFETY

Continued From Page 3

Katie’s parents, Laura and Vin Marchetti, said law enforcement officials told them their daughter would likely have survived the crash with minor injuries if she had been wearing her seat belt.

“The simple truth is that my daughter died because she wasn’t wearing her seat belt,” Laura Marchetti said.

About 100 of Katie’s friends and their parents from Durant, Bloomingdale, Newsome, Riverview and Plant City traveled to Tallahassee last week to bring attention to a proposed seat belt safety law they support.

They gathered at Bloomingdale Square just before dawn on March 26, the day recently designated by Hillsborough’s Board of County Commissioners as “Click It For Katie Day.”

The Marchetti’s chartered two busses to transport the group to the state’s capitol, where they met with State Rep. Irving Slosberg, who introduced the bill about five years ago.

The Dori Slosberg Safety Belt Law would allow police to pull over motorists of any age primarily for not wearing a seat belt. Although Florida law requires all drivers and front-seat passengers to buckle up, officers are not permitted to detain a vehicle solely because its occupants are unrestrained — unless the driver appears to be under the age of 18.

The bill is named for Slosberg’s late daughter, who also was not wearing a seat belt when she died in a 1996 car accident at age 15 in Boca Raton.

Marchetti said Katie’s family and friends want to express the critical need for every driver, not just teenagers, to buckle up every time they get in a car.

Since her daughter’s fatal accident, Marchetti has discussed the bill with many drivers of all ages. The idea, she said, has met with a surpris-

ing degree of resistance.

Some opponents of the bill cited personal freedoms and the right to choose whether or not to wear a seat belt.

Seat belt use, however, is already a state law, Marchetti said.

“This (Dori Slosberg Bill) just gives our law enforcement officers the authority to enforce seat belt use for drivers of all ages, not just those they suspect are under 18.”

“It is so important that this law applies to all ages across the board because, first of all, parents and other adults are the ones modeling behavior for our teenagers.”

Some people she debated the matter with expressed concerns about serious or fatal injuries that could occur if drivers become trapped in their cars by a seat belt.

The small percentage of fatalities sustained while wearing a seat belt can’t compare to the number of lives that could be saved every day by using them, she said.

“If you had a fatal disease and your doctor told you, ‘Here is the cure. You have a 98 percent survival rate with this treatment,’ wouldn’t you go with those odds?”

If passed, the Dori Slosberg Seat belt Safety Law would go into effect in October 2006.

Whether or not the bill is passed, Marchetti asked Brandon area residents to make a personal promise in her daughter’s memory.

“Every time you fasten your seat belt, it crosses over your heart.”

“Please make a commitment to cross your heart with your seat belt every time you get into a car.”

For more information about the memorial foundation, call 681-4291 or send an e-mail through the Web site at [www.thekatiemarchettimemorialfoundation.com](http://www.thekatiemarchettimemorialfoundation.com).

## SCHOOL

Continued From Page 10

to leave? He’s really fun!”

“Mr. Cerreta has made some changes for the best at Cimino. I really believe that his whole heart is about the kids,” Wallace said.

“Losing somebody as good as him is hard.”

Assistant principal, Debbie Talley, said she is sorry to see Cerreta go.

“From the school district’s point of view, they made an excellent choice. He’ll do great,” she said.

The as-yet unnamed elementary school “T” is being built to relieve overcrowding at Bryant Elementary. The school will house students in portables at Citrus Park Elementary during the first year, until the new school is completed.

School district officials said the process to name a new principal for Cimino will start soon. After the position is advertised for two weeks in the district’s administrative bulletin, district 5 supervisor, Sherrie Sykes, will interview candidates and make a recommendation to the super-

intendent’s staff.

The superintendent’s office will conduct another series of interviews before making a final recommendation to the school board. The board ultimately is charged with appointing a new principal.

Talley said the process is a thorough one, and she expects to hear something by mid-May.

“The (school district) really puts a lot of thought into it,” she said.

Cerreta will still be visible on Cimino’s campus to take care of some unfinished business, including mentoring two students who recently earned the opportunity to be principal for a day through the school’s accelerated reader program.

Cerreta admitted it was hard for him to leave Cimino, but said he’s ready for the challenge.

“I’m always setting the bar high for my staff. Now the bar has been set high for me.”

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