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Alafia overcrowding addressed

"It looks good" for new Bloomingtondale East school

By Laura Frazier, Editor

Representatives of the Hillsborough County School Board met with Alafia Elementary PTA members, faculty and parents on October 11 at Bloomingtondale High School. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a preliminary consensus on how to resolve overcrowding at the burgeoning school. The "A" rated, award winning school is critically overcrowded. Over 1300 children currently attend the school, built to accommodate only 868 students.

Early in 1999, administrators announced the opportunity to purchase land for a new school at the south intersection of Natures Way and Culbreath Road. But the parcel was determined to be landlocked, and the additional property required to build access roads to the site was not immediately available for purchase. In addition, school board officials say they met with widespread resistance from Alafia parents not willing to send their children to a new school.

The owner of the land required for an access road is reportedly ready to sell the property. Construction funds are available. And, with Alafia Elementary bursting at the seams, many parents have reconsidered the advantages of a new school. PTA President Debbie Duncan says, "Although there are many different opinions as far as a solution, the majority of parents have expressed a sense of urgency to relieve the overcrowding as soon as possible. Overall, parents are telling us they feel that a new school is the best way to do that." A show of hands at the October 11 meeting was nearly unanimous in favor of building a new school.

A new school would mean new school boundaries. A large number of students attending Alafia and a smaller number attending Lithia Springs Elementary would be reassigned to the new school. Duncan says, "No one wants their children to have to change schools. But, we will have a large group of the same students moving into a brand new school with state of the art technology. My own children would likely be included in the new boundary area, and I personally feel that this is the best solution."

Bill Person, Hillsborough County Director of Pupil Assignment, says, "There

are still differing opinions about how we should proceed, but we believe the majority of parents are ready for a new school in Bloomingtondale." Superintendent Earl Lennard is in the process of reviewing input from school officials and the community and is expected to make a decision in favor of a new school in early November.

Duplicating the plans used for the new Colleen Bevis Elementary School, opened in FishHawk Ranch this year, would save time and money on the Bloomingtondale school project. "Utilizing the existing (Bevis Elementary) plans would save us at least a year in the architectural phase," said Person. "We are eager to move this along quickly to relieve the overcrowding situation." Person anticipates that, using the Bevis Elementary plans, a new school could be ready for the 2002 school year.

"Our district has a lot of respect for the staff, faculty, parents and students of Alafia Elementary," said Person. "This is a high performing school that has continued to excel in the face of escalating attendance numbers and the many challenges those numbers bring."

For more information, or to express your concerns and preferences to resolve them, please contact Hillsborough County Schools Superintendent Earl Lennard at 272-4000.



Bloomingtondale Little Leaguer Tyler Dowdy mirrors Coach Russ' crouching as he prepares to head for second base. Photo by Mack Austin

New traffic pattern elicits relief, concern – See pg. 14

Your Inside Connections

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

3509 Bell Shoals Rd. • Valrico, FL 33594
(813) 681-2051 • E-mail: BHA@CyberRails.com

Web site: www.bha-online.org

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Vice President Len Jasczik
Treasurer Pam Liguori
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Treasurer, Paul Kelmer 681-9701
 Steven Heckel 654-4266
 Brad Scharp 643-5000
 Paul Warr 685-7883



Bloomingdale Oaks Special Taxing District

- P.O. Box 3132, Brandon, FL 33509-3132
President Bill Grace, 685-2817
Treasurer Fred Englehart
Meetings .. Second Wednesday each month at 7:30 pm,
 3419 Cade Lane, Bloomingdale Oaks



Share your news with the community!

Write to Editor, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594
 Phone: (813) 681-2051 • Fax: (813) 651-1129
 E-mail: frazier1@tampabay.rr.com

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

- 684-6667
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Vice President, Tom Mackiewicz 653-4145
Treasurer, Don Cassels 681-8855
Corresponding Secretary, R. Dickey 689-2177
Recording Secretary, Alice Burleson 685-1076
Trustee, Tim Golden 653-1337
Trustee, Paul Almeida 661-2018
Property Manager, DPPI 684-6617



Meetings

All meetings take place at the Community Office at 3509 Bell Shoals Rd. These are monthly public meetings and all Bloomingdale residents are invited.

BHA Board of Directors Meetings
 Second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

Special Taxing District Meetings
 Second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.



the Bloomingdale gazette

The official publication of the BHA

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GRAND OPENING PREVIEW

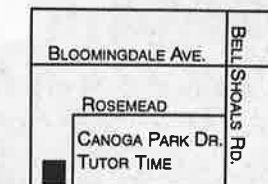
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We're looking for a few good yards!

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association invites all Bloomingdale homeowners to nominate their friends and neighbors (or themselves!) for the Bloomingdale Yard of the Month award. If you have a beautiful or unique yard, or know someone who does, please complete the entry form and mail to: Yard of the Month, BHA, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594, e-mail to frazier1@tampabay.rr.com or fax to 813-651-1129. Winners will be presented with a \$25 Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale gift certificate.

Bloomingdale Yard of the Month nomination

Homeowner's name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Landscape features that stand out _____

BHA supports on-site deputy for Rec Center

By Mack Austin

Members of our community have sought County assistance to obtain the services of an on-site resident Deputy at Bloomingdale West Park on Canoga Drive for the better part of this year. Progress on this special project is being made. The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA) Board unanimously approved support of the project at their September meeting. Adjacent property owners have been notified of the project by the Parks Department, and no one disapproved.

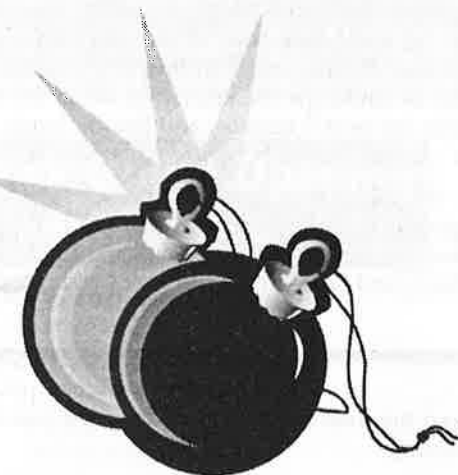
The Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation Department is currently selecting the Deputy, preparing the on-site residence and coordinating funding for long-term maintenance. The completion of this project will result in significantly improved security for area homeowners, parents of children who attend Rec Center activities and the Center's County employees. This is another example of what can happen when Community residents and County Departments work together towards a goal that will benefit everyone.

Coordination has also been initiated to obtain a resident Deputy for the Bloomingdale Little League Park area. For more information, please contact the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association at (813) 681-2051.

Coming in December...

Best Bloomingdale Holiday Decorations Contest!

Bloomingdale residents, it's almost time to get up in the attic and pull those boxes down! The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association will sponsor our second annual "Best Bloomingdale Holiday Decorations Contest" in December. Winners will be chosen in three categories; Most Elegant, Most Charming and the esteemed Most Delightfully Excessive. A team of judges will patrol our neighborhoods in mid-December in search of the most impressive lighting and decorative displays. Residents will be invited to nominate their own home or one that has caught their eye by phone, fax or e-mail. Get your extension cords ready, and watch for details in the December issue of the Gazette.



Upgrading your family computer?

Computers needed for seniors program

County Commissioner Jim Norman is coordinating a program to put your used computer and accessories to good use. Commissioner Norman's vision of "Computers for Seniors" was inspired by Hillsborough County's "Computers for Kids" program. Under the program, donated computers would be installed at senior care centers across the county. The objective is to provide senior adults with the ability to explore learning opportunities and to communicate worldwide with friends and family through the Internet.

Commissioner Norman reports that his mother Lessie, who is in her 70s, received a computer for Christmas. "Although she required some coaching at first," Norman said, "she's just loving it now." In addition to computers, donations of software, printers and other computer related items are needed. For more information about the program or to make a donation, call Assistant County Administrator Jimmie Keel at 276-8780.

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Zack Carter, 5, and his sister McKenzie, 7, hug their dog Cooper after he was saved during emergency surgery to remove a swallowed fish hook.

McKenzie and Zack Carter, children of Trish and Jeff Carter, were recently fishing in the Alafia River at the River Crossings dock in Bloomingdale when their 3-year-old Dauschound Cooper went after a hot dog being used for bait. As Cooper lunged for the hot dog, he swallowed the fish hook.

The Carters rushed Cooper to Animal Medical Center, where Dr. Jim Antunano performed emergency surgery and removed the fishhook from Cooper's esophagus. "Animal Medical Center cared enough to take charge late on a Saturday and did what was needed to save Cooper's life," says Trish Carter. "Cooper is almost like our third child and it would have been horrible to lose him."

Don't forget... Every pet needs a vet!



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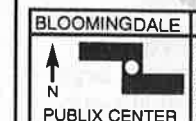
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Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

September meeting minutes, abridged

Financial report

Michael Hayes from the firm of Ferraro, Higginbotham and Hayes presented the financial report. The total fund balance as of August 31 was \$194,119. Mr. Hayes reported that some line items were over budget for the 11 months of fiscal year 2000, including the maintenance of shrubs, irrigation and lawns.

Correspondence

BSTD President Thom Snelling reported receipt of a letter indicating that the County wanted to deed a parcel of land on Springvale to the BSTD. He stated that the BSTD only maintains certain property in Bloomingdale and does not own or seek to own any property.

Mr. Snelling reported that a letter was sent to a resident that was using the District's electricity to power his outside lights.

New business

Trustee Burleson stated the need to monitor the oak trees creating problems with cracking sidewalks.

President Snelling indicated that the Board would need to appoint 5 new trustees since no one filed for a seat. The 5 Trustees whose term expired indicated they would serve again. Separate motions were made and approved to appoint Trustees Mackiewicz, Almeida, Burleson, Dickey and Golden. The officers for fiscal year 2001 were also approved as follows: President: Mr. Snelling, Vice President: Mr. Mackiewicz, Treasurer: Mr. Cassels, Corresponding Secretary: Mr. Dickey, and Recording Secretary: Mrs. Burleson.

Mr. Lyle Beeth of Bristol Green addressed the Board regarding the Bristol Green entrances. A motion was passed to split the installation costs of entryway lighting with Bristol Green. Al Devney of DPPI Property Management said that plans to landscape the entryways are in the rotation cycle within the next 6 months, and that the cycle is still on schedule.

Mr. Rick Pitrowski of Oak Crest addressed the Board regarding the landscaping at Oak Crest. Trustee Mackiewicz asked Mr. Devney to bring quotes to the next meeting for lighting and landscaping the Oak Crest entryway.

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Property Manager's Report

September 2000

Submitted by Devney Property Management, Inc.

President Al Devney, phone: (813) 684-6617

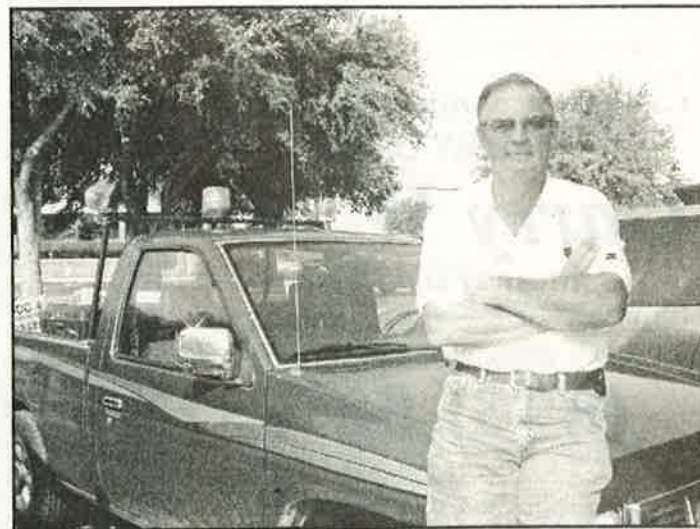
Irrigation: Brandon Irrigation repaired problems in the Bell Grande, Glenhaven, Natures Way and Cambridge Cove systems. DPPI repaired a broken main line in the John Moore system and added 12 spray heads to the Rosemead system. DPPI replaced 35 spray heads and 2 rotors, repaired 3 zone lines and 5 risers, added 12 spray heads and replaced 15 lights and 2 receptacles.

Landscaping: Planscape Inc. installed the minor landscape packages at Isleton and Caliente, and replaced 5 dead palm trees and 15 burford holly bushes.

Other: Russell Electric repaired the lights at Pine Grove. Signs by Mineo repainted the signs at Kiowa, Heritage Park, Golf Manor, Kendal, River close, Allwood and Groveway. DPPI sealed and painted the walls on Canoga Park and Garnet and cleaned the walls on natures Way and Greenhollow. DPPI surveyed the sidewalks in Bloomingdale East and West to determine which ones were hazardous and needed to be replaced or repaired. Eleven had large holes, 286 had large cracks and 217 needed to be sanded down. DPPI also sur-

veyed the trees in the right of way and found 87 in need of trimming.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window: Al Devney picked up 24 bags of litter, 4 shirts, a roll of 35mm film, a wooden wine box, springs for a sofa, a ridge vent, 50 trash bags, an accounting book, t-bird hubcap, a can of tuna fish, a timing belt, 7 Bud Lights, 2 full bottles of Sutter Home Chardonnay and 52 cents. The beverages of choice were Coke for soft drinks, Ice House for beer and Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum for distilled spirits.



DPPI President Al Devney

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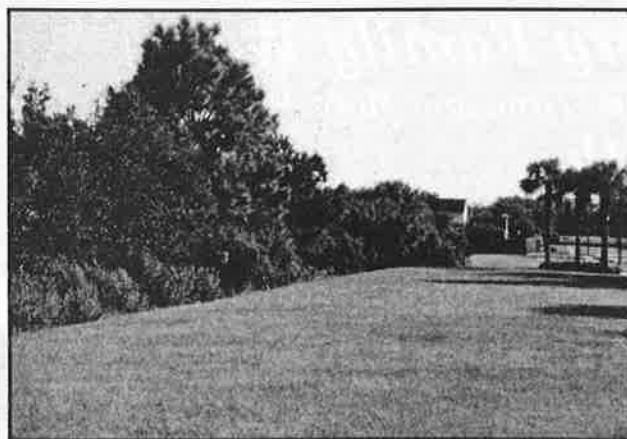
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Springvale rezoning request – pros or con?

By Laura Frazier and Mack Austin

The owners of 11+ acres of land zoned for conservation and recreational use in Bloomingdale East have put the property up for sale and scheduled an appearance at the February 27, 2001 Hillsborough County Commissioners Land Use Meeting. County records indicate the owners intend to apply for the RES-4 zoning designation, which allows for the construction of 4 homes per acre. Residents are concerned that the heavily wooded conservation area and pond will be destroyed. But Ross Schwaller II of Christian Home Realty of Brandon, representing the owner in *Springvale conservation area*. Photo by Mack Austin the sale of the property, says, "To the best of our knowledge, only one and a half acres of the property are legally buildable due to EPC and EPA wetlands protection. We're talking about building one big home on a small portion of the land."



The property was originally slated by developers to be deeded over to the residents of the community, but was instead abandoned in the mid 1990's. In the absence of a claim to ownership, property taxes were not paid for several years. After tax default proceedings, the land was sold in March of 2000 to a local, private party for \$2,500. The private owner then sold the property with a parcel of land including six additional Hillsborough County properties to S.W. Southeast

Holdings, Inc., a Nevada Corporation. The property is currently listed for sale through Christian Home Realty at \$275,000.

Prior to the February 27 meeting, the owners are required to notify residents living within 250 feet of the property (via certified mail) of their intent to petition the county to vacate drainage easements on the property. The existing drainage easements (i.e. stormwater retention ponds and surrounding areas of public land) form a roadblock between existing streets and any possibly buildable portion of the land. EPC officials indicate that a preliminary

look at the county plats shows a major portion of the property to be environmentally protected wetlands that cannot be altered or destroyed. The drainage easements would therefore need to be surrendered to the owner to allow for additional

continued on next page

buildable space and the construction of private access roads.

Residents will have the opportunity to either support or oppose the modification through the petition process. If the request to vacate the easements is approved at the February 27 meeting, Hillsborough County Commissioners and a Zoning Hearing Master will make a final decision on the rezoning request at subsequent hearings.

Homeowners living adjacent to the property have discussed several courses of action to prevent the development of the land. But even if the pending request is denied in February, the owner or subsequent owners may seek rezoning approval again in the future, for this or any other (potentially even less desirable) development. Some residents have discussed approaching the Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation Department about purchasing the land for use as a park and conservation area. Homeowner Dan Buettner says, "This is a very special piece of property, home to many types of wildlife including eagles. There are not many natural areas like this left for us to enjoy."

Homeowner John Yake says the bottom line from the residents' viewpoint can be found in the community's standing deed restrictions and covenants. "The deed restrictions apply to all section J & K property owners," said Yake, "including the owner of the property in question." Yake refers specifically to the following excerpts of deed restriction documents recorded with Hillsborough County in the early 1980's: "The areas shown as (conservation areas) on the recorded plat of the property...shall be left to remain and survive intact, in its present, natural condition and state...These covenants are to run with the land and shall be binding on all parties and all per-

sons claiming under them for a period of thirty years... after which time said covenants shall be automatically extended for successive periods of ten years, unless an instrument signed by a majority of the then owners of the lots has been recorded, agreeing to change said covenants in whole or in part."

The County Commissioners, Real Estate Department, Land Use and Rezoning Department and Environmental Protection Committee will coordinate facts and documents pertaining to this issue in the coming months. Although official findings were not available at press time, representatives of each department we spoke with commented, without exception, that they expect the restrictions of the original Bloomingdale plats and deed covenants to be upheld.

For more information, please visit our community web site at bha-online.org, contact John Yake via e-mail at jyval@aol.com or call the BHA at (813) 681-2051.



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Bloomingdale Community Substation Notes

By Deputy Pete Maurer

Phone: (813) 635-8040

Holiday season security

The holiday season begins this month. Now is the time, both as a shopper and as a homeowner, to take the extra precautions to ensure your holidays are not marred by a robbery or a home burglary. Some folks make it very simple for a criminal to ruin their holidays by leaving car doors unlocked or packages piled in the back seat. Not taking the time to carefully secure your home before you head out for Christmas vacation or just shopping can result in serious problems. Have a neighbor or friend take care of your yard, paper and mail. Taking these precautions are worth the time. If you are leaving the area for the holidays, a special "Request For Security Check" can be completed at the Community Station. Drop by for details. And remember - CLOSE AND LOCK YOUR GARAGE DOORS!

Holiday season safety

It's time to think about safety during the holidays, beginning with putting up the lights and tree and being very careful if it gets cool enough to light a fire. Be sure you and all of your passengers are buckled up. Don't drink and drive or ride with those that do. Have a great, safe holiday season.

Holiday giving

For some children, the holidays aren't a very happy time. Many of these are kids from homes with problems. The Bloomingdale Community Station is working with the Tampa Police Department to collect suitcases and sports bags for kids being removed from difficult situations without anything to put their few belongings in. Suitcases and sports bags can be dropped off at the Community Station for delivery to TPD. See CSO Sandy Capitano for information on this program. All contributions will be appreciated.

Speeding fines doubled

Many studies have been done as to why drivers choose to speed and endanger others, especially children, by breaking the law and speeding in school zones and construction zones. None of the results are logical, just careless and selfish. Fines for speeding in these areas are automatically doubled as a minimum! Law enforcement will write all the tickets it takes. We do appreciate those drivers that obey the traffic laws.

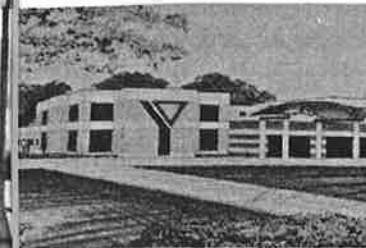


Paul Hooper, a Bloomingdale Area Community Council member, and Deputy John Kirk work together to make the "Cease Fire 2000" firearm trade-in program a success. Over 150 firearms were collected and properly disposed of. Thanks to everyone who helped with this project. Photo by Mack Austin

Campo Family YMCA nears completion

A Gazette report

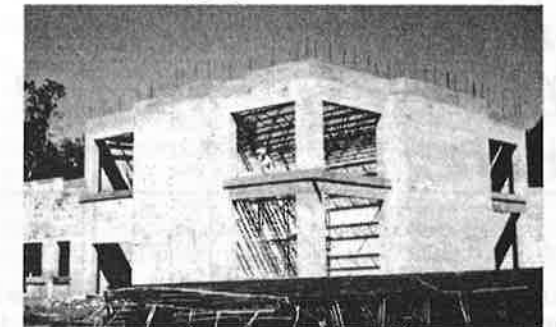
The Campo Family YMCA, under construction at the corner of Bloomingdale Avenue and Culbertson Road in Bloomingdale, is scheduled to open in January 2001. The facility will feature a state of the art health and fitness center



The Campo Family YMCA, artist's rendering provided by the YMCA.

complete with a supervised nursery and youth area, a 75 foot outdoor heated pool, multi-purpose basketball gym, rock climbing wall, and a teen center designed by and for youths 13 - 17. Programs planned include youth and adult sports, teen programs, swim lessons, karate, dance, basketball, t-ball, soccer and Bible study.

The YMCA is now offering Cornerstone Memberships for a joining fee of \$175. Monthly membership dues vary depending on the number of family members; \$62 per month for a family of four. Cornerstone Members will enjoy exclusive benefits, including a special grand opening preview dinner. For more information, please call 684-1371.



Work progresses on the Campo Family YMCA. According to Dave Hollowell, YMCA construction monitor, the project is on schedule and should be completed by the first of the year. Photo by Mack Austin.



Plans to coordinate funding for and begin construction of the crossover between the YMCA and Bloomingdale Little League Park will commence upon completion of the YMCA building and the widening of Bloomingdale Avenue. Photo by Mack Austin.



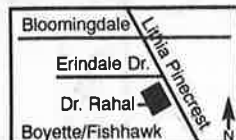
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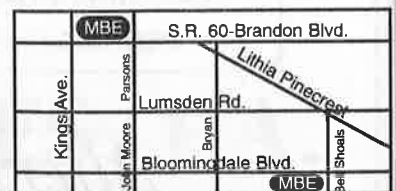
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Expires 12/1/00

New feature-packed BHA web site up and running

By Rodney Biddle, BHA-Online Webmaster

We are proud to announce that the new BHA-Online web site is up and running. The web site, introduced in 1999, has been redesigned with a new, easy to use layout incorporating updated content and expanded features and links.

The web site will continue to provide community information including neighborhoods, deed restrictions and BHA broadcast e-mail updates. New features include community news, events, projects and links to Bloomingdale areas of interest like the Campo YMCA, Bloomingdale Golfers Club and Culbertson Recreation Center.

Area relocation information, "Preferred Properties," and BHA members areas are also available. We hope you'll visit the site to see what we're up to at <http://bha-online.org>. Please feel free to e-mail us at rbiddle@cyberrails.com with any comments, suggestions or ideas.



Pamper the chefs on your list



Caption: Bloomingdale East resident Dana Selementi, an Independent Kitchen Consultant for Pampered Chef, offers a full line of high quality kitchen products for the chefs (or wannabe chefs!) on your list. For a free catalogue, or to arrange a Pampered Chef party in your home, call Dana at (813) 681-4180.

November 7 - the day your vote counts



Voting is a right and a privilege not to be taken lightly. Please take the few minutes required to vote on November 7!

Restaurant Review

Simply Thai Restaurant

Bloomington Square Plaza
Next to Ace Hardware

(813) 681-4470

Open for dinner nightly except Mondays, 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Open for lunch Tuesday - Friday, 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

First of all, a great big thank you to Bernie Bryslan, who clued me in to how good this local restaurant is. He was absolutely correct. Bernie, this review is for you! That being said, let me give you some first impressions on a recent Wednesday evening when we stopped in to Simply Thai for dinner. Clean. Neat. Friendly. And busy!

The music was pleasant. The paneled walls, lighting and wall décor gave the appearance that it was both a family restaurant and intimate at the same time: We were impressed by the number of customers who seemed to be on a first-name basis with the manager and vice-versa, a great show of loyalty.

We chose Spring Rolls for our appetizer, shredded cabbage, onions, carrots, bean threads and spices rolled into a baked won ton. It is served with a special, spicy sweet and sour sauce. We passed on the salads, but the Nam Sod did sound interesting; ground pork with fresh ginger, onions, peanuts, lime juice and spices. The equally interesting soups offered included Chicken Coconut or Shrimp in a spicy lemon-grass broth. House specialties include Thai Chicken sautéed in peanut sauce, Frog Legs with Basil Sauce, Mussels with

Mushrooms and Twice Cooked Duck.

My wife selected the Garlic Pork entrée, thin sliced lean pork with garlic white wine sauce and black pepper on a bed of steamed cabbage. I chose the Garlic Shrimp. In the restaurant business, presentation is a major consideration, and the folks at Simply Thai pay attention to detail. From the flowering carrots and the crisp steamed cabbage to the garlic sauce and the plates, it seemed like haute cuisine. Both entrees were served with a large plate of white rice. Very tasty indeed!

Other selections ask you to choose pork, beef or chicken. Then you can order your selection Panang style (simmered in coconut milk, lemon leaves, green peas and bell peppers), Red Curry (coconut milk, red curry, bamboo shoots, string beans, fresh basil and bell peppers) or Ginger (mushrooms, scallions, onions, sliced bamboo shoots and ginger). Seafood entrees include Fried Ginger Fish, Calamari Basil and Baby Clas with Oriental Broccoli to name a few. And of course, don't forget the noodle plats, vegetable plats and 5 different fried rice plates.

There is no children's menu, but with the ample amount of food served with entrée orders, children can share at no extra charge. The bill for us with gratuity was \$33.00

One final note. Thai dishes are traditionally served very hot and spicy, but Simply Thai lets you choose the degree of fire to suit your palate. Four levels of heat offered are MILD - flavorful, but no kick, MEDIUM - hotter than table pepper, HOT - hotter than Tabasco, and THAI HOT - not responsible!

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Limited Openings for 2000-01 School Year

New Alafia traffic pattern elicits relief, concern

By Laura Frazier, Editor

By all accounts, the new traffic flow pattern instituted at Alafia Elementary in October has allowed traffic to flow more efficiently in and around the school during arrival and dismissal times. After the first school day using the new traffic pattern, Bloomingdale Community Deputy Pete Maurer said, "Many parents commented that this was the fastest drop-off/pick-up line they have experienced at Alafia."

The new rules, which went into effect on October 2, require parents to drop off or pick up students by approaching the school from the north on Natures Way, with a left turn only into the parking lot. Drivers leaving the parking lot are then required to make a right turn only, heading south on Natures Way. The new procedures have greatly reduced the daily gridlock of hundreds of cars and pedestrians at the intersection of Natures Way and Culbreath Road.

School officials and Sheriff's Deputies are pleased with the results of the traffic rerouting, citing pedestrian and automobile safety as their number one concerns. But residents of the Bloomingdale Ridge section of the community say an existing problem with cut-through traffic in their neighborhood has been exacerbated by the new rules.

Bloomingdale Ridge encompasses several neighborhoods in close proximity to the school. Hickory Ridge Drive in the Fox

Run section has long served as a short cut between Natures Way and Culbreath Road. Northridge Drive, which runs through Fox Run and The Greens, is another well traveled extension of the same short cut. Homeowners along both roads say they are pleased to see some traffic congestion relief on Natures Way and Culbreath Road, but are concerned with increased cut-through traffic on their interior streets.

Carl Stickeler, President of the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association, said, "This (through traffic) isn't a new problem, but it certainly has escalated since the traffic re-routing." Stickeler says the homeowners acknowledge that any street with dual entrances is bound to have a degree of through traffic. But the increased volume of traffic has also amplified the number of vehicles zipping through the residential neighborhood in excess of the 25 mph speed limit.

"Our association had a traffic study done prior to the implementation of the new traffic pattern, as a base line to compare to the new results. The County recorded 750 vehicles driving through Fox Run in a 24-hour period. Over 40 of those vehicles were driving in excess of 35 mph. Eleven were traveling over 45 mph, and one exceeded 50 mph."

Many Bloomingdale Ridge homeowners say they moved to their neighborhood because it is within walking distance of the school. But many of those same parents now join the congested car-rider line to drive a few short blocks away. They don't feel that it is safe to let their children walk to school. "With the volume and speed of through-traffic, you can't let a 6 or 7 or 8 year old out to fend for themselves. It's just too dangerous," said Stickeler.

continued on next page

The homeowners association is participating in Hillsborough County's Residential Traffic Control (RTC) program. Under the program, RTC engineers work with residential neighborhoods and law enforcement officials to identify, document and resolve speeding and excessive traffic volume.

"We have informally discussed a variety of options, none of them perfect," said Stickeler, "including restricting turns with traffic signs and installing speed humps." Gating the entrance to the community or permanently enclosing the Natures Way entrance to Fox Run are less practical, and less popular, options. "Installing gates or walling up the entrance are extreme measures that would cause additional problems and inconveniences for Bloomingdale Ridge residents," said Stickeler. "We will work with the county and our homeowners to determine the best solution."

In the meantime, Deputy Maurer says, "The new procedures have significantly improved the flow of traffic, but there are some adjustments and considerations that will make it work even better. The adjustments include simply following the new directions. The considerations involve being patient with other drivers, and respecting the safety and privacy of those residents who live near the school. Cutting through the nearby neighborhoods to save a few minutes is inconsiderate and does not help the primary purpose of this program. Providing a safe environment for both students and parents requires everyone working together calmly and patiently."

Bloomingdale Ridge residents are invited to contact BRHOA President Carl Stickeler at (813) 689-5556 or by e-mail at carlstick@aol.com to express their concerns and preferences for resolving them. For more information, please visit the Bloomingdale Ridge web site as linked to bha-online.org.

St. Stephen Catholic Church groundbreaking

By Laura Frazier

Members of St. Stephen Catholic Church in Brandon held a groundbreaking ceremony on Saturday, September 23 at the future site of their Parish Life Center and school, at the corner of Boyette Road and Pleasant Valley Dairy Road in Riverview. Reverend Patrick Irwin, "Father Pat" officiated. The parish will be built in



An assembly of priests representing local parish diocese lend a helping hand to Reverend Patrick Irwin (3rd from right) at the St. Stephen Parish Life Center and school groundbreaking ceremony.

four stages over a 10 year period, beginning with the construction of a Catholic school serving a projected 800 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. "We are committed to opening our school for the 2001-2002 school year," said Father Pat. Additional phases include the construction of a 20,000 square foot Parish Life Center, a 1,500 seat church building, a gymnasium, ball fields and a retirement center. A 20 million dollar capital fund campaign to subsidize construction expenses is currently underway.

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Drivers must use caution around high school

A Gazette Report

School arrival times combined with the morning rush hour and the ongoing widening of Bloomingdale Avenue make for some very congested, potentially dangerous driving conditions. Drivers are urged to use extreme caution while maneuvering through the school zone in front of Bloomingdale Senior High. To further illustrate the point, we received the following letter from an obviously distraught Bloomingdale East resident in October.

"Dear adult driver of the blue pick-up truck... This morning, after I dropped my daughter off at Bloomingdale Senior High, I was heading west in front of the school to return home. There is a turning lane designated with a big yellow arrow for people heading east to turn into the school. You decided to go the wrong way down this clearly marked lane and almost caused a wreck. One car had to swerve completely off the road to miss you. I have a few questions I would like to ask you. Would you have stopped if the car you ran off the road had wrecked? Would you have stopped if you had accidentally hit one of the many kids crossing road? Would you have been willing to come tell me, as a parent, that you had just killed my child? I get in a hurry like everyone else, but if you are running that late to wherever you are going, leave earlier. Is it worth it to you to take the chance of causing a serious accident? Please ask yourself these questions before you dart out onto the turning lane going in the wrong direction again."

Can you top this?



Bloomingdale Oaks resident Joanne D'Ambra offers unique gifts and unusual treasures at "Top This Unique Gifts" in Brandon. Joanne and husband John craft many of the items offered, including Joanne's wire and bead work creations, and John's vintage tableware wind chimes. Popular works include Joanne's "Dreamdrops," glass bead and crystal sun catchers, wire "Mermaids" wall décor and "Bookworms" wire bookmarks. Most items sell for under \$20. The D'Ambras moved to Bloomingdale in March of this year and opened their boutique on September 1 at 606 Oakfield Drive in Brandon, adjacent to Della's Delectables Café. Store hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. For more information, call Joanne at (813) 643-7852.

Culbertson Recreation Center Activities

The Culbertson Rec Center is located at Bloomingdale West Park on Canoga Park Drive. To register for activities or for more information, call 744-5907 weekdays from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Adult indoor basketball

Registration on November 1 at 7 p.m. There will be 12 teams of adults ages 18 and up. The cost is \$40 per player. Games begin December 2 and end the first week of March 2001. Late sign-ups please call or visit the Rec Center, or call Steve Clouse at 685-7975 evenings from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. Sponsored by the Hillsborough County Parks and

Recreation Department.

Children's basketball/cheerleading

Children ages 3 to 13 may sign up anytime in the month of December at the Rec Center, weekday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The season starts in January 2001. Cost is \$20 per player, includes shirt, shorts and trophy. Checks or money orders only please.



Santa and Mrs. Claus return to Bloomingdale!

Santa and Mrs. Claus are planning their 12th annual visit to Bloomingdale on Saturday, December 16 at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, in the Sun Trust Bank Plaza. The



Mr. and Mrs. Claus are coming to town

Kringles and their elves will greet children and pose for pictures from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The visit and photos are sponsored by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association and are provided at no charge, with the donation of any non-perishable food item for local charities. If you require directions or further information, please call the BHA at 681-2051. A representative of the North Pole will return your call promptly!



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MOMS offer free child identification program

By Mack Austin

There may be no way to identify children involved in accidents where the drivers are critically injured or killed. Many children require special medication or have treatment restrictions. It is essential for medical personnel to have immediate access to this information.

The MOMS Club of Valrico (Moms Offering Moms Support) is coordinating a community service project named CHAD (Children Have An Identity). The project involves the use of specially designed stickers used to identify young children in the event of an auto accident. The stickers are placed on the child's car safety seat or in a glove compartment.

The CHAD child identification program was developed as the result of a serious traffic accident in which a 13-month-old boy named Chad was injured while riding with his babysitter. The babysitter was killed. No one at the scene of the accident knew the child's identity. Only a miracle helped Chad when an emergency room nurse recognized him, notified his parents and administered the proper treatment.

CHAD stickers may be picked up at the Bloomingdale Community Station or from members of the MOMS Club of Valrico. For additional information on this program, contact Karen Rodriguez, President of the MOMS Club of Valrico, at

651-3261, Lynea D'Angelo at 661-8397, or Michele Roberts at 655-3072.



CHAD child identification stickers are available through the MOMS Club of Valrico. Photo by Mack Austin

Storm drain blockage causes flooding

A Gazette report

Some Bloomingdale residents have experienced flooding during recent storms. Personnel from the Hillsborough County South Maintenance Unit found several storm drains clogged with trash, pine straw, and trash can lids. Residents are asked to be sure their trashcan lids don't fall into the drains, and to property dispose of pine straw and other lawn waste.

Christopher Woods Educational Center



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Give Your Child A Better Head Start.

SAFE Program aims to eliminate "that dreaded call"

By Mack Austin

Many of us with teenagers have in the back of our minds the fear of getting "that dreaded call" in the middle of the night from someone telling us, "there's been an accident." We say and do all we can to engrain in our young adults the serious consequences of drinking and driving and not wearing their seatbelts. Some listen and some don't.

But many teens will listen to someone with firsthand experience. A team of volunteer paramedics working with a program called SAFE (Students Alive From Education) have been there. The volunteers have a sincere concern for the safety of our teens. The SAFE program allows paramedics to convey very graphic presentations of what happens when they arrive at the crash site, describing step by step what happens when vehicles and human bodies challenge the laws of physics and lose. Paramedic Greg McCarty says, "The worst thing we can do at a scene is nothing, because that means there are no survivors."

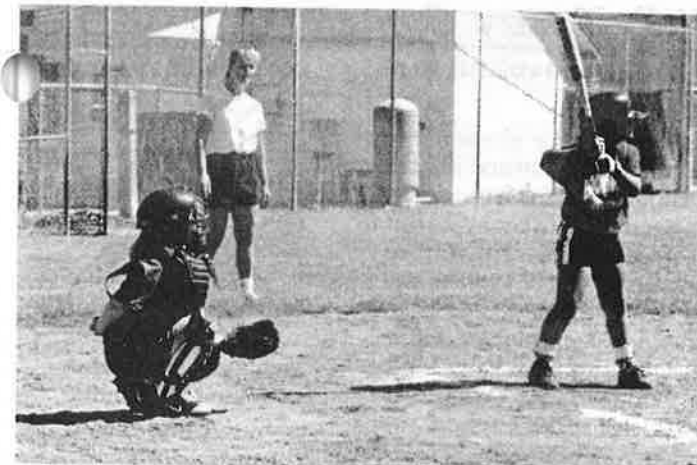
Crash scenes are not referred to as accidents. Lt. Ronnie Garcia says, "If there is drinking involved, it is no accident." Greg and Ronnie usually present their program at high schools to groups of students with no adults present. They get to know the group and are able to talk to them, not at them. "Teens are young adults, not kids. They don't need another lecture. They

need to hear the facts about what happens when you use poor judgment and make bad decisions," notes Ronnie.

Greg and Ronnie recently presented the SAFE program to a group of parents and teens at the Culbertson Recreation Center. The joint group presentation proved very effective. The teen chosen to help with the crash scene and medivac demo was turning sixteen the next day and had his mom sitting in the front row. The demo gave them a very clear picture of an experience neither would want to go through in real life.

SAFE is continuing to grow as the program's methods are being spread and shared. It is a non-profit organization and needs the support of parents, communities, schools and businesses. It is extremely effective and essential for all teens to see and follow its serious message. Both Ronnie and Greg have had teens tell them it has saved their lives or the lives of friends. For more information on the SAFE Program, call 554-8690.

Paramedics Ronnie Garcia and Greg McCarty attend to victim "Brandon" during the SAFE Program presentation. Brandon turned sixteen and got his driver's license the next day. Photo by Mack Austin



Where did the Gold Medal U.S. Olympic Girls Softball team get their start? They all began their Olympic quest just like catcher Sterling Phillips and batter Valerie Torres, under the watchful eye of coach Jodi Duncan.

Community Investment Tax projects

Remember the Community Investment Tax? CIT funds built Raymond James Stadium and provided funding for other projects. Here are some current projects that affect Bloomingdale.

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Kid's Essay Contest

"What I'm thankful for"

Bloomington elementary school age children are invited to enter our "What I'm thankful for" essay contest. Send us your thoughts (up to 200 words) about what you are thankful for. Three winners will be selected based on originality, content and expression. Winners will receive gift certificates from Party Land of Bloomington, where they can shop for Sanrio (Hello Kitty) and Pokemon merchandise, glow sticks, stickers, school supplies and lots of cool stuff. Send in your entries by November 18 to The Bloomingdale Gazette, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594, or by e-mail to frazier1@tampabay.rr.com. **Good luck!**



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

PECAN SALE, 30th Annual. First United Methodist Of Brandon, Fresh crop of shelled pecan halves. 5 lbs for \$26. 689-2835 or 689-6168. P/U at church Saturday Nov. 11th or Monday Nov. 13th.

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