

# THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXIV  
Number 11

NOVEMBER 2007 · THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

## Lighting the Way

The yearly luminaria  
sale starts Nov. 27

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## St. Nick is on his way

Santa arrives on  
Dec. 8

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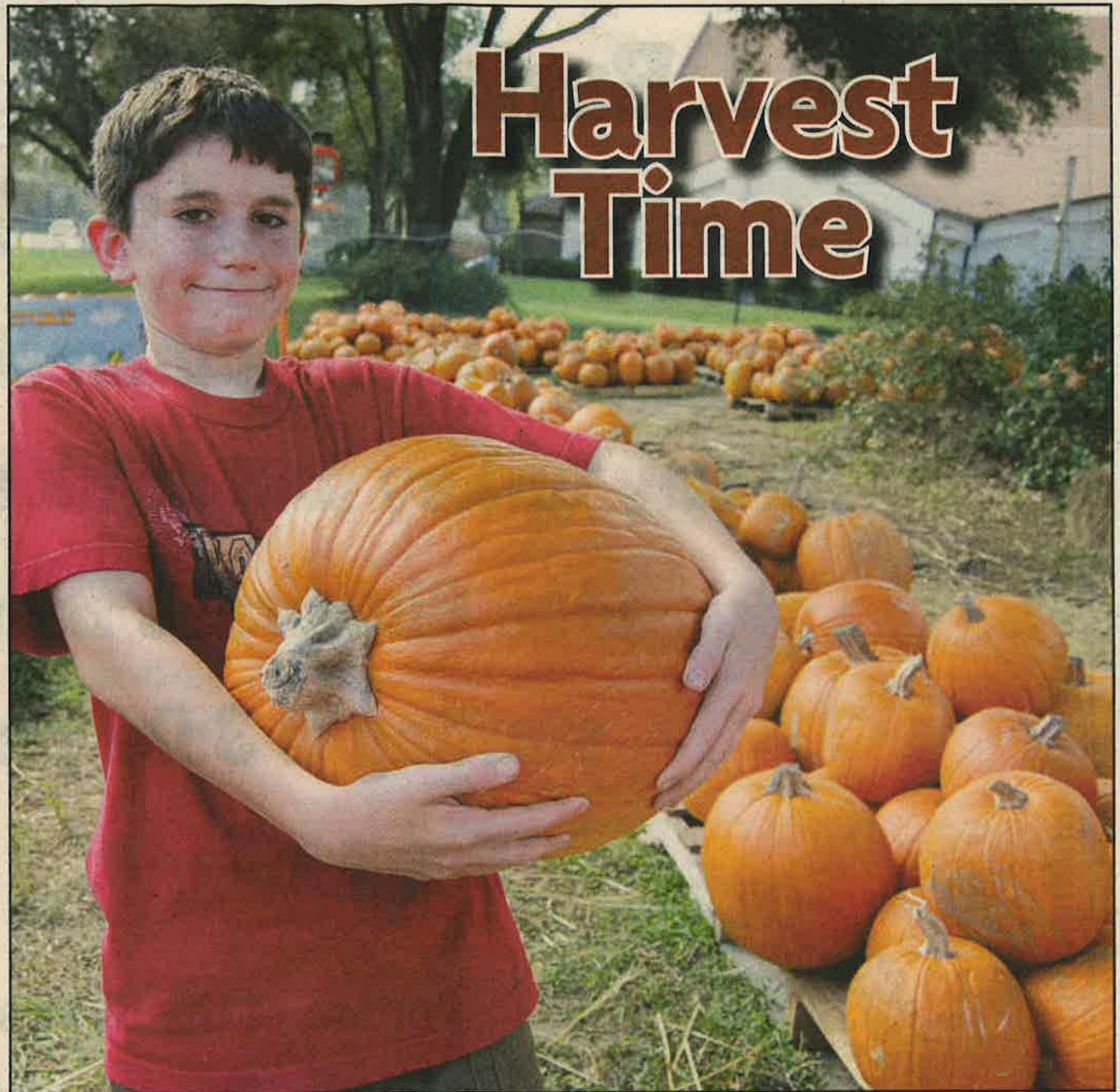
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LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photo

Patrick Vanhoek, 11, a member of Boy Scout Troop 11, helps man the pumpkin patch at St. Andrews United Methodist Church in Brandon. The annual sale was run this year by Troop 11 and the church's Breakthrough Student Ministry group. Vanhoek noted "lots of cheap pumpkins and a steady stream of customers." It won't be long before neighbors line up at the church, on Bloomingdale Avenue at Bryan Road, to peruse the fragrant rows of Christmas Trees for sale.

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Metropolitan Ministries of Tampa.**

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# Operation Cleanup A Community's Pride

By LINDA CHION KENNEY

Clayton Weaver needed no further introduction.

"He's the guy with the front-end loader," said Bloomingdale Homeowners Association (BHA) board members Shelia Harris and Lydia Harrod in tandem, as they watched Weaver drive by their check-in booth off Natures Way Boulevard in Bloomingdale.

There, volunteers and BHA board members Oct. 13 hosted the group's annual junk-your-trash day to help Bloomingdale residents spruce up their homes and neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Pride program received high marks from county officials.

"It gives everyone a place to go to get rid of their stuff instead of just dropping it off by the road, which happens quite a bit," said Weaver, who

See CLEANUP, Page 8



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photo

In front of Clayton Weaver's front-end loader are, from left, Jim and Julie Harris, Stanley and Jane Lee, Joe Hickle, Bonnie Grevert, Jay Kittle and Don Grevert. The group takes a break during the Oct. 13 community cleanup sponsored by the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association.

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# Luminaria Sale Lights Up Bloomingdale, Benefits Scholarship

By LINDA CHION KENNEY

Ten bucks for a kit of 20 luminarias, not a bad deal for a very good cause, according to the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association.

This year, for the second time, the association will sell kits to raise money for the scholarship program in honor of former Bloomingdale High School principal B.J. Stelter.

Each kit contains 20 bags, 20 candles, sand, matches and instructions for using the traditional Christmas lantern.

"We sold almost 200 kits last year, the first time out, without any publicity," May said. "This year we have 400 bags to sell. If we could sell all of them, we could award two \$2,000 scholarships, or four \$1,000 scholarships."

To aid in that effort, the BHA will start selling the kits earlier this year than last.

"We will start selling them the week after Thanksgiving," May said. "And we're going to do the contest again this year."

The contest works like this: The two subdivisions that buy the most luminaria kits, and the two subdivisions that buy the most kits as a percentage of homeowners, will win Santa Claus visits.

"Mr. Claus will be visiting four different areas on the evening of Dec. 22," May said. "Santa will drive through the neighborhoods, wave to the kids and pass out candy canes."

Santa also will be on hand to visit Bloomingdale kids Dec. 8 at the association's offices at 3509 Bell Shoals



LAURA FRAZIER/Photos

Above, Santa and Mrs. Claus will meet with children and families at the Bloomingdale Community office Dec. 8 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The visit and photos are free with a donation of non-perishable food items for Bloomingdale area charities.



At left, the neighborhood sections that sell the most luminaria kits and the highest percentage of kits per number of homes will receive a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. The Kringles visited Chadd's Ford in 2006.

Road. Luminaria kits also will be sold then. After Thanksgiving, the kits will be for sale at the offices Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and during regularly scheduled board and taxing district meetings Dec. 3 and

10, respectively. The meetings start at 7 p.m. and are open to the public.

Volunteers, especially kids, are needed to help put the kits together and to serve as elves for Santa Claus. High school students and Scouts who help

with the effort are eligible to receive community service hour credits.

As for the luminarias, May hopes to see them lit for Santa's visits, but especially on Christmas Eve, as is the tradition.

"You see subdivisions light up and it's just absolutely gorgeous," May said. "It really gets you into the spirit of things."

For information or to volunteer, call May at 662-1102 or the BHA office, from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., at 681-2051.

# BHA Asks Public To Weigh In On Deed Restriction Debate

By LINDA CHION KENNEY

No one wants to be the town cop, least of all the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association.

But someone has to beg the question that seeks the answer to how a mature community can build on its value by ensuring its neighborhoods' respective deed restrictions are enforced.

"You start seeing the deterioration of a community when homeowners start to ignore and disregard their deed restrictions," said BHA board member George T. May IV. "We don't want to be a Gestapo, but at the same time we want to maintain the integrity, quality and values of our neighborhoods."

Deed restrictions, also referred to as "covenants, conditions and restrictions," are the rules and regulations governing the use of a piece or prop-

erty or real estate. Deed restrictions are separate from zoning ordinances and typically have been viewed legally as a private contract between the buyer and seller of land. These restrictions typically are enforced by a homeowners association, pass on through ownership of the land and cover such things as what types of fencing, if any, you can use on your property; how you can, and should, landscape your lawn; and what, if any, structures you can have on your property, such as a shed, boat, basketball court or trailer.

The BHA at its October board meeting discussed the necessity of staying diligent about the community wide enforcement of deed restrictions.

"Once you start ignoring the deed restrictions, boom! There goes your neighborhood," May said. "That's

what we're hoping to avoid and why we're researching ways to maintain some structure and some organized way of ensuring that homeowners are aware of their deed restrictions and that they are adhered to."

Board members noted that as the community ages, new homeowners step in and might not be aware of the deed restrictions to which they must abide.

"We're under the consultancy of an attorney to get more educated about what we need to do and how to do it," May said. "Our aim is to invite the public and get the support of the community."

Board members said they hope to meet and reach consensus quickly.

"Age sometimes gives in to neglect but you have to maintain your home," May said. "We're an established community, and once

you start getting homes that are 15 to 20 years old you're going to have some maintenance issues. The good news is we're an established area and value has already taken root."

But with neglect, that value can tarnish quickly.

"It doesn't take a whole lot to knock down the value of a home with a declining, difficult real estate market," May noted. "Neglect will knock down the value real quick."

Residents with comments or questions about deed restrictions and enforcement are encouraged to attend the BHA's board meeting set for 7 p.m. on Nov. 5 at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Residents can also e-mail [bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net), call (813) 681-2051 or go to [www.bloomingtondalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingtondalegazette.com) for more information.

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# Last Day To Nominate A Neighbor

A Gazette Report

The Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations will accept applications for the winter quarter 2007 Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award until Saturday, Nov. 3.

All residents of Hillsborough County are eligible to nominate and be nominated. The nominee must demonstrate an on-going spirit of compassion and helpfulness

to his or her neighbors. The annual award comes with a \$2,000 grant to be awarded to the neighborhood association serving the area in which the recipient lives.

The Board of County Commissioners established the Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award on May 17, 2000, in honor of Lonnie Lea Napier. A Hillsborough County resident, Napier lost his life after falling from a tree while trying to rescue a neigh-

bor's cat. He demonstrated many instances of compassion and helpfulness. Neighbors told story after story of how he could be relied upon to help out in a number of ways, from putting up Christmas tree lights for a recently widowed woman to fighting a brush fire until firefighters arrived.

The award is meant to recognize those good neighbors who help simply because help is needed - individuals who demonstrate the spirit and

*The award is meant to recognize those good neighbors who help simply because help is needed*

compassion shown by Lonnie Lea Napier.

The quarterly winners will then be reviewed, and the Board of County Commissioners will present an

annual Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award at the Annual Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference next spring.

Nomination forms are available from the Hillsborough County web site at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr/awardnom](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr/awardnom). Click on the link for the online nomination form at the bottom of the page. For more information call David Ash, (813) 272-5860.

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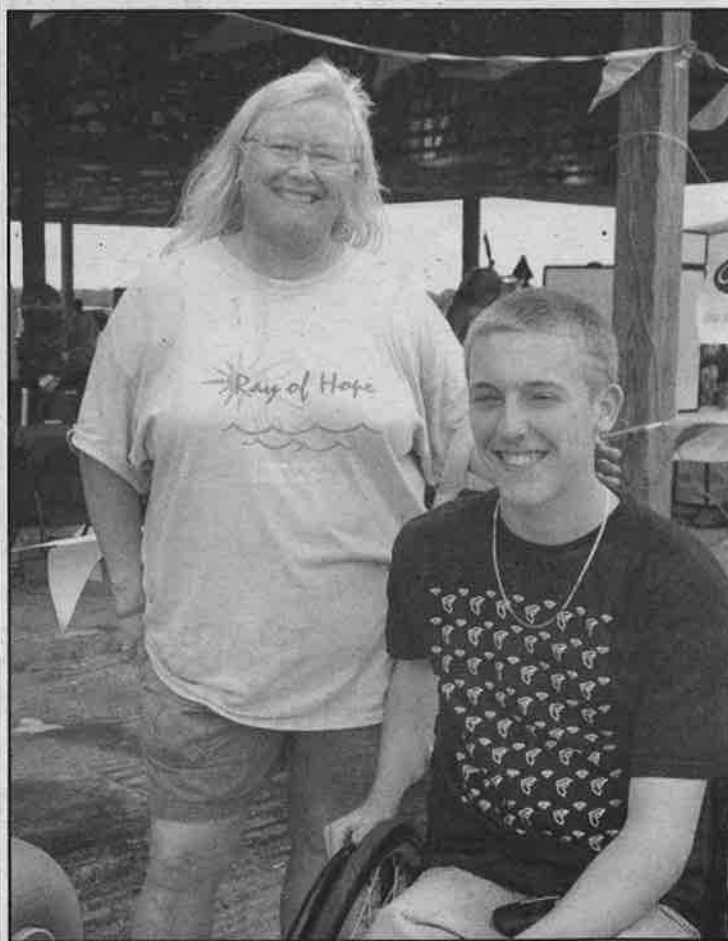
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## Benefit Raises Money, Renews Faith



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photo

Bloomingdale High School student Brett Reed, with his mother, Carol, at a fundraiser held in his honor Oct. 27 at the Winthrop Pole Barn. Brett has been diagnosed with Friedreich's Ataxia, a rare and degenerative disease that rapidly takes away motor and sensory coordination. The festival was held to raise money for his aquatic therapy. At the event, longtime family friend Laura Solin said, "It renews my faith in mankind that the community is so compassionate. They are very supportive in whatever way they can."

# Your Inside Connections

## BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594

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Fax: (813) 684-2358

E-mail: [bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net)

Office hours: Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Meetings: first Monday each month, 7 p.m.

Web site: [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com)

President: Joe Hickle

Vice president: Stanley Lee; Treasurer: Pam Liguori

Directors: Ted Grable, Don Grevart, Shelia Harris,

Lydia Harrod; Dale Kahn, George May and

Myron Magedanz.

## BLOOMINGDALE SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

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Fax: (813) 684-2358

E-mail: [bloomingdale.district@verizon.net](mailto:bloomingdale.district@verizon.net)

Office hours: Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Meetings: second Monday each month, 7 p.m.

President: Thom Snelling

Vice president: Russell Jones

Treasurer: David West

Corresponding Secretary: David Steck

Property manager: Al Devney

Trustees: Joe Harless; Joe Liguori and James Laughlin



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The official publication of the BHA since 1980

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Web site: [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com)

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## GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters about neighborhood issues to [bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net](mailto:bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net) or Editor, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL, 33594. Letters are subject to editing and will be published on a space-available basis.

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## CLEANUP

From page 3

works for the Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation maintenance unit at 1626 Natures Way Blvd., just south of Alafia Elementary School.

"And it keeps the neighborhood clean," Weaver added. "If more communities would do what Bloomingdale does it would be a big help."

Association directors bet big on the annual cleanup day, so much so that the entire board, with a good number of volunteers, runs the event all day long, or until the dumpsters are filled.

This year there were 12 dumpsters.

"Thirty-yard dumpsters, and a couple 40-yards," Weaver said.

And just about all of them were filled to capacity.

Stanley Lee joined his fellow BHA board members in thanking Bloomingdale residents for their conscientiousness. But a special thank you was reserved for a woman who declined to give her name.

"She told me she walks her daughter down to the pond, in the Oak Crest subdivision, to feed the ducks," Lee said.



A Bloomingdale resident signs in with Bloomingdale Homeowners Association members Lydia Harrod and Shelia Harris.

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"Her daughter commented one day on the trash she saw, so this good lady went back to the pond and loaded a pickup truck full of trash."

As Lee saw it, that one action spoke above all the others.

"We were astounded," Lee said. "And we love it. It makes you feel good that it's not just people cleaning out their garages, but that they're also going out and cleaning up the neighborhood. That's an excellent neighbor. And that's community spirit."

Weaver said the day's dumping was a good thing for Hillsborough County taxpayers. It costs money, and keeps county workers from other jobs, to rid the streets of unwanted possessions illegally dumped along the county's roadways.

"The majority of it is mattresses and box springs," Weaver said. "But there's also refrigerators, washers and dryers, the same stuff we get here (at the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Pride Cleanup)."

It's not too late for residents who missed the Oct. 13 cleanup.

Solid waste that cannot be left for curbside pickup,

including household junk, old appliances, residential yard waste, paint and batteries, can be brought to one of five community collection centers open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Closest to Bloomingdale are the Alderman Ford Collection Center in Lithia, at 9402 State Road 39, and the South County Collection Center, at 13000 U.S. Highway 41 in Riverview.

The Alderman Ford center accepts collectible and non-collectible waste, scrap metal tires and lead acid batteries. Call: 757-3820. The Riverview center accepts collectible and non-collectible waste, yard waste, scrap metal tires, used motor oil and lead-acid batteries. On the second Saturday of the month, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Riverview center also collects hazardous chemicals and electronics. Call: 671-7611.

To gain access to a community collection center, residents must present a copy of their property tax bill and photo ID. For additional information, call 272-5680 or visit [www.hillsborough-county.org/solidwaste](http://www.hillsborough-county.org/solidwaste). Click the "Community Collection Centers" link to the right.





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**Happy Thanksgiving!** Traditionally, in November we pause to offer thanks for the good fortune we've experienced during the year. I would like to take this opportunity to express a sincere **THANK YOU** to all my friends and neighbors for their friendship and support. My wish to all of you is for a... Bountiful harvest — rich in rewards.

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The Brandon and Riverview area Club Z! is managed by Seffner resident, Nancy Martin, who has three school-age children of her own.



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**Dancers To Perform At Orange Bowl Half-Time Show**



Photo courtesy Julestarz Academy

Julestarz Academy for the Performing Arts Company Dance Team has been invited to perform at the Fed Ex Orange Bowl at Dolphin Stadium in Miami on Jan. 3, 2008. The dancers will perform in front of more than 80,000 fans and a national television audience of nearly 20 million homes during the half-time show. Julestarz Academy for the Performing Arts is located at 16132 Churchview Drive, Lithia. The company currently consists of 27 dancers ranging from ages 6-16 who perform at a variety of community events throughout the year. For information call (813) 661-9037.

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## Event Scares Up Charitable Donations

Bloomington resident and University of Florida alumnus Holly Clarkson of Southern Title, at the "Scare The Crow" event held in October at Plaza Bella, entered a USF-themed scarecrow in the contest to help raise money for breast cancer research. Plaza Bella owners Roz and Mark Creager organized the event to allow local businesses and organizations to raise money for the charity of their choice. Four awards were given: Best Theme went to The Peacock's Plume childcare center; Most Trendy to the Brandon Ballet; Brainiest, to the Osprey Observer; and Best All-Around Crow Award, to the Campo Family YMCA.



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photo

# M.J. Barleyhoppers

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# Vandalism Cost Taxpayers \$9,774.18 This Year

By AL DEVNEY  
Property Manager

Residents can contact Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Property Manager, Al Devney, with community property maintenance and repair needs at (813) 684-6667 or [bloomington.district@verizon.net](mailto:bloomington.district@verizon.net). For more information about the taxing district, go to [www.bloomingtongazette.com](http://www.bloomingtongazette.com). Devney's latest property management report, submitted to the taxing district board of trustees in October, is as follows:

There were two pre-bid

meetings held in September, and two contractors attended the mandatory meeting for the three zones of irrigation to be installed in front of the Savannah Landing entrance.

Nineteen contractors attended the mandatory meeting for the FY08 painting contract of 9,400 linear feet of walls on Springvale, Culbreath and Natures Way. For the painting contract, letters were mailed to 102 residents requesting permission to paint the inside of the wall that abutted to their property. Of that number, 73 responded yes, 12 responded

no and 17 did not respond.

Davidson Landscaping replaced 500 old 4-inch pop-up sprinklers with new 6-inch pop ups.

Natural Design completed section A of the sod contract, installing 46,240 square feet of St. Augustine sod in common areas on Rosemead, Canoga Park and Garnet. They will work on Section B and C in early October.

There were two renderings of graffiti removed in the area, one on a sidewalk on Erindale and the other on the wall on Garnet. Both areas

were cleaned and painted over within 24 hours.

Cardinal Landscaping replaced a multitude of dead bushes at several locations on Natures Way and Erindale.

Planscape Inc repaired a leaking main line under an oak tree on Garnet.

Landscaping in the east and west was examined and evaluated to determine what will need to be replaced in FY08. There were 41 locations identified that will need attention next year.

Signs by Mineo designed, painted and installed a sign for

the Eagle Pointe Entrance.

Vandalism this month was limited to damage to lights at the Groveway entrance. The cost to repair one light and replace one light was \$405. Vandalism cost to the BSTD for FY07 was \$9,774.18.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, there were 16 bags of trash and 11 cents picked up. Additionally, 22 flood lights were replaced and 15 illegal signs were removed. The beverages of choice were Diet Coke for soft drinks, Fosters for beer and Jim Beam for distilled spirits.

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## Adopt A Pet At County Fairgrounds Today

A Gazette Report

More than two dozen groups will offer hundreds of homeless dogs, cats, puppies and kittens of various breeds available for adoption on Saturday, Nov. 3 at a Pet Adoption Expo, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Florida State Fairgrounds Special Events Center, 4800 Highway 301 N., Tampa. Admission and parking are free at the Orient Road entrance to the Fairgrounds.

The public is asked not to bring their pets. Cash and local checks are suggested (credit cards may not be accepted by all groups). Adopters should also bring valid photo I.D. and proof of current address.

In addition to adoptable pets, the expo offers a variety of educational opportunities to encourage responsible ownership including training tips, dog-bite prevention, low cost spay/neuter programs and volunteer opportunities.

Participating agency Hillsborough County Animal Services is part of ASPCA Mission: Orange, a national outreach program focused on increasing pet adoptions and save rates. Other Tampa/Hillsborough partners are The Humane Society of Tampa Bay, Animal Coalition of Tampa, and No More Homeless Pets - Hillsborough. Hillsborough County Animal Services is also a member of No More Homeless Pets - Hillsborough.

For more information, call Hillsborough County Animal Services at (813) 744-5660 or go to [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/animalservices](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/animalservices).

## THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594  
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# High School Hosts Spaghetti Dinner

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Senior High School Athletic Booster Club will host its third annual spaghetti dinner at the school from 5 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 14. Cost is \$5 per dinner and includes dine-in or take-out salad, bread, a drink and dessert. Proceeds go to support more than 300 student athletes in 22 school sport activities including wrestling, weight lifting, vol-

leyball, trophy accounts, track, tennis, softball, swim and dive, soccer, golf, football, cross country, cheerleading, basketball and baseball. For more information contact Beth Campoamor at (813) 653-1959 or bethcamp@tampabay.rr.com. For booster membership information contact Trish Gold at (813) 684-4632 or tgold2@verizon.net, or come to the next meeting at 7 p.m. at the school on Tuesday, Nov. 13.

## Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Board of Trustees' Fiscal Year 2008 Monthly Meetings Open To The Public

The all-volunteer Bloomingdale Special Taxing District Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings, open to the public, at 7 p.m. on the second Monday each month (or as otherwise noted when holidays fall) at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico. All residents are encouraged to observe the meetings or bring their neighborhood comments and concerns before the board. For more information call (813) 684-6667, e-mail bloomingdale.district@verizon.net or go to [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com).

October 8, 2007  
 November 12, 2007  
 December 10, 2007  
 January 14, 2008  
 February 11, 2008  
 March 10, 2008  
 April 14, 2008  
 May 12, 2008 – Budget Workshop & Meeting  
 June 9, 2008 – Public Hearing & Regular Meeting  
 July 14, 2008  
 August 11, 2008  
 September 8, 2008

For more neighborhood news and events, visit [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com)

# Beth Shalom Hosts Auction Tonight

A Gazette Report

Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon will host its annual fundraiser, "All Jazzed Up – An Evening of Auctions," on Saturday, Nov. 3 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Sabal Park, Tampa.

Items available for bid include gift certificates for restaurants, spas, retail stores and services, plus sports event tickets and new household items, games and DVDs. For information call the temple at (813) 681-6547 or e-mail all-jazzedupauction@yahoo.com.

## Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Board of Directors' Fiscal Year 2008 Monthly Meetings Open To The Public

The all-volunteer Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. Board of Directors holds regular monthly meetings, open to the public, at 7 p.m. on the first Monday each month (or as otherwise noted when holidays fall) at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico. All residents are encouraged to observe the meetings or bring their neighborhood comments and concerns before the board. For more information call (813) 681-2051, e-mail bloomingdale.homeowners@verizon.net or go to [www.bloomingdalegazette.com](http://www.bloomingdalegazette.com).

October 1, 2007  
 November 5, 2007  
 December 3, 2007  
 January 7, 2008  
 February 4, 2008  
 March 3, 2008  
 April 7, 2008  
 May 5, 2008  
 June 2, 2008  
 July 7, 2008  
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 September 1, 2008

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# Bloomingtondale Children Get In The Act

By LINDA CHION KENNEY

Two reasons brought Alafia Elementary School third-grader Julianna Byington to the James McCabe Theater in Valrico for this semester's Children's Acting Class.

"I just like to act," she said. "And I want to try something new."

Instructor Terry Abbott was ready for Byington and her classmates at a recent Children's Acting Class, which culminates in a Jan. 26 performance.

The pay- as you-go weekly program, at a cost of \$8 per week, runs Tuesday nights through January at the historic theater, at 506 Fifth St. in Brandon. Students from Alafia, Brooker and Cimino elementary schools, Foundation Christian Academy and Burns Middle School were among the first-week attendees.

"Imagination, that's the key to acting," Abbott told his students as they lined up for an improvisation exercise that required them to "walk through" certain settings.

"If you're acting like you're walking in the snow, you have to act like you're cold," Abbott said. "Use your imagination and think about what it smells like, what it feels like on your toes."

One student walked through "a foot-deep of ice cream." Another, against "a big current." Still others through, "hot sand," a "mound of spaghetti" and "a whole lot of dirty, gooey, nasty mud."

Taylor Tew, a second-grader at



LINDA CHION KENNEY/Photo

Attending the kickoff of this semester's Children's Acting Class at the James McCabe Theater in Valrico are, from left, Holly Hodgens, Anna Eaves, Julianna Byington, Julie Conti, Taylor Tew, Kaylee Conti, Hailey Fonte and her brother Derek, and Isabella Fraraccio.

Alafia, gave the exercise, and the class, high marks.

"It's good for kids to be acting, because on stage you move around a lot and it's good for your body," she said.

Julie Conti, a third-grader at Cimino, said she was in attendance because her mother thought it was a good idea.

"She said I was coming here but I didn't know why," Conti said. "Now

that I'm here it's so cool, because of the stage and what it looks like. I think I'm going to have a great time."

See ACTING, Page 19

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# Sheriff's Office Stresses Holiday Safety

By PETE MAURER  
 Bloomingdale Community  
 Resource Deputy  
 and  
 SANDY CAPITANO  
 Bloomingdale Community  
 Service Officer

It's a great time of year for teenagers. Schools will soon be out for Thanksgiving, there are lots of sales going on at the mall, lots of parties and plenty of time to go places. Sadly, this time last year our communities and others like it were reeling from the tragic deaths of young teens that died needlessly in auto accidents.

One of the most critical decisions we all make every day is whether or not to wear our seat belt and to insure that anyone riding with us wears their seat belt. It's a serious decision, especially for our teens just learning to drive. Those of us in law enforcement hope it becomes a natural habit to buckle up.

There is no magic answer on how to get every driver and passenger to buckle up. Each one of us has to decide. Parents, take the time to set the example by buckling up yourselves and emphasizing the importance to your teens.

Make these holidays ones to remember, not ones to regret. We at the Sheriff's Office want all of our residents to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season. Following are some tips to help each of you stay safe and secure this season. Please take the time to follow them.

As a shopper, be extra cautious and stay aware of your surroundings and your actions. Don't get in a big rush and be careless. Stay alert

at all times. Definitely do not leave your car unlocked with the engine running. Do not leave packages or other valuables in your car. Lock them in the trunk. These are all invitations for thieves to take advantage of and they will. Lock up your vehicles at home too -- there has been an increase in auto burglaries in our area.

As a homeowner, prepare and secure your home before you head out for holiday traveling or even just for shopping. Burglars drive through neighborhoods looking for easy targets -- don't let your home be one! Special "Security Watch" requests can be completed at the Sheriff's Bloomingdale Community Station on Bell Shoals Road at Glenhaven Drive.

Most burglaries can be prevented by taking a few simple steps like having all door and window locks checked for proper operation, adding simple security items and paying special attention to doors. Two of the most vulnerable areas are your garage doors and garage side doors. They both give open access to your home. Insure they are properly locked! Thieves look for these open targets.

As a driver, no one wants to be involved in an accident, especially one involving a drunk driver, so don't be one, and don't ride with someone who has been drinking. Talk to your teens about the dangers of drinking and driving, and set the right example. A few minutes discussing the dangers and setting strict rules can save a life -- possibly your teen's life.



Deputy Pete Maurer



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<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">20% OFF</p> <p style="font-weight: bold;">ENTIRE ORDER Shirts &amp; Dry Cleaning</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Valid on Incoming Orders Only. No Exceptions. No Combining Coupons.</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">COUPON EXPIRES 12/1/07 TT</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">20% OFF</p> <p style="font-weight: bold;">Wedding Gowns, Comforters, Blankets, Alterations, Drapes</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Valid on Incoming Orders Only. No Exceptions. Minimum Order of \$5.00. No Combining Coupons.</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">COUPON EXPIRES 12/1/07 TT</p>

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# Sheriff's Office Rolls Out COPS Program In Bloomingdale

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A Gazette Report

Bloomingdale residents who want to take an active part in keeping neighborhood streets, homes and roads safe are invited to learn about a new Sheriff's Office initiative at a community meeting set for 7 p.m. on

Thursday, Nov. 8 at Bloomingdale West Park, 3940 Canoga Park Drive.

Sheriff David Gee announced in October the county's first voluntary Citizens On Patrol program will be launched in Bloomingdale. The "COPS" program will allow volunteer residents to serve as a Neighborhood

Watch on wheels, providing extra eyes and ears for deputies on patrol and helping as needed with school crossings, traffic direction and assisting disabled motorists.

COPS volunteers will receive comprehensive training, uniforms and on-the-street guidance, and will patrol Bloomingdale neigh-

borhoods in specially marked sheriff's office vehicles.

The initial phase of Citizens On Patrol began this year in Apollo Beach and Westchase, where significant reductions in crime have been documented as a result of the program.

Interested residents are encouraged to attend the

Nov. 8 meeting, which will be attended by current COPS volunteers, community resource deputies and Sheriff's Office District IV Commander, Major John Marsicano. For information call the sheriff's office, (813) 247-0944, or the Bloomingdale substation, (813) 635-8040.

# Classes Teach Teens Defensive Driving, Vehicle Control

A Gazette Report

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office is offering a new safety program for teen drivers to promote roadway safety and help new drivers get off to a good start behind the wheel. According to the sheriff's office, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for those ages 15 to 20 across the nation.

The Teen Driver Challenge is one way teens and parents can build the foundation for years of safe driving.

The program, sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association, is part classroom, part driving experience, focusing on defensive driving and vehicle control. The two-day program is designed to provide young

drivers with the knowledge and understanding of vehicle dynamics and human kinetics', the forces created by an automobile and the effects of the forces on the human body.

The objective of the program, created by law enforcement officials is to enhance the young driver's awareness of the complex task of operating a motor vehicle and to create and practice skills that will prepare them to anticipate and handle hazards that occur daily in normal driving conditions. The curriculums were created around the fact that most crashes involving teenage drivers are classified as "avoidable" and due to lack of experience or train-

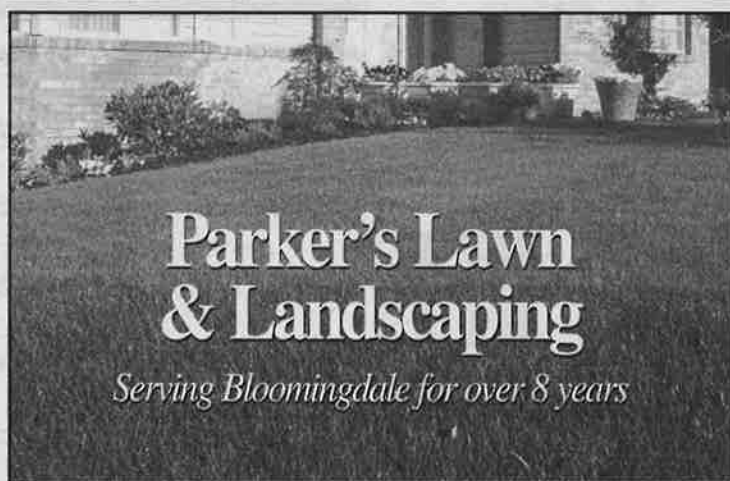
ing, teens are not prepared to make the vehicle respond appropriately.

The education segment (defensive driving) is designed to give the student a better understanding of the responsibilities and liabilities of the driver, vehicle dynamics, friction and the effects of intoxicating substances on their ability to operate the vehicle.

Eight basic skills, actions and/or techniques of driving are identified as areas that teens need experience or training to safely operate a motor vehicle. Steering, acceleration, deceleration, backing and off road recovery are some of the tasks addressed in this program.

The Teen Driver Challenge will be offered on the following dates: Nov. 8, 10, 29 and Dec. 1. Participants must hold a valid driver's license (no restricted licenses); classes are limited to 10 students. Classes are held at 2200 Falkenburg Rd., Brandon. Driving experience is conducted at the Walter C. Heinrich Practical Training Site, 14603 State Road 39, Lithia.

To enroll, you must download forms (some of which must be notarized) from the Sheriff's Office web site, <http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us/>. Click on the "Teen Driver Safety" icon for forms and more information, or call (813) 247-8115.



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# Hillsborough School Board Is Tech-Savvy

A Gazette Report

The Center for Digital Education and the National School Boards Association have announced that the Hillsborough County School Board placed seventh nationwide among large districts in the 2007 Digital School Boards Survey, up from 10th last year.

The Digital School Boards Survey examines how school boards and their districts are applying information technology to increase

accessibility and enhance communication with the community, while improving the quality of instruction. Survey questions and criteria centered on school boards' online presence; technology applications that allow the public to interact with school board members; access to information such as school board calendars, policies and agendas; and technology advancements in the school board meeting rooms. The survey was sponsored by Verizon Business.



# First Steps: Personal finance for 20- and 30-somethings

By SEAN MUSSENDEN

When the cashless revolution finally succeeds, the homeless guy who hangs outside my office probably will have to find a job. This occurred to me as I passed by his outstretched hand last week.

Normally, I'd drop a few coins into his beat-up paper cup. But I'd given up using real currency for a week as an experiment, to find out just how close we have come to the post-cash era.

I didn't bother asking Homeless Guy if he took plastic, since A) the answer seemed pretty obvious and B) I didn't want to interrupt the conversation he was having with himself.

Every year, for nearly three decades, economists and futurists have told us that we sit on the cusp of a cashless society, where money will exist only as a stream of electrons, not on paper. And every year, we keep lining up for ATMs and pulling a fiver out of grandma's birthday card.

The volume of these predictions has increased in recent years with the emergence of new technologies like the combo cell phone/wallet - which, like your buddy's band, is big in Japan, if not America.

A recent study by ACI Worldwide

predicted that electronic payments will double by the end of the decade as consumers grow more accustomed to paperless transactions.

But we're not there yet. It was only in 2004 that electronic payments for the first time outnumbered cash payments, 55 percent to 45 percent, according to the Federal Reserve. The Fed just announced plans to examine the current mix.

The percentage of electronic payments is likely to be higher now, but as my week-long cash hiatus confirmed for me, it's almost impossible to live totally cash-free in 2007. (For a detailed accounting of my cash-free week, including a video, check out [firststeps.mgblogs.com](http://firststeps.mgblogs.com))

That's a shame. I hate cash. Not Johnny Cash. He's great. I wish paper and metal currency had died, and he were still around, instead of vice versa. I live as close to a cash-free existence as possible.

You should too. The problem with cash is that it costs too much.

That sounds odd, I know, like saying the problem with spicy food is that it is too spicy, but stick with me.

It has a high convenience cost. Unless you have free ATM usage,

*Using credit cards for every transaction provides more airline miles, points, or "cash" back. A \$20 bill only gives you the germs of the last person who touched it.*

in most cases you must spend your money in order to obtain your money. Banks raise these fees every year. If you (stupidly) hit up a check cashing place on payday instead of relying on an ATM, you'll pay even more.

There's also a huge information cost. With a monthly credit card or debit card statement, I know exactly how much I spend. I know where my problems are. For me, it's restaurants - and I'm not alone. A recent survey by Visa found that people in their 20s spend more on eating out than anything else but rent.

Let's not forget the missed opportunity cost. Using credit cards for every transaction provides more airline miles, points, or "cash" back. A \$20 bill only gives you the germs of the last person who touched it.

There are problems with a totally electronic existence. Unless you know how to use a credit card responsibly - as a tool of convenience and not as a loan - and pay it off every month, then you invite trouble.

Credit always leaves a trail. If you buy certain things that you'd rather the government, your spouse and the guy who steals your mail not know about, cash is a better choice.

I suppose we'll know the cashless revolution has finally arrived when drug dealers, gun runners and that homeless guy on the corner start accepting PayPal.

Check out my blog, [firststeps.mgblogs.com](http://firststeps.mgblogs.com) for more on living a cash-free life. Contact Sean Mussenden at [smussenden@mediageneral.com](mailto:smussenden@mediageneral.com) or 202-662-7668.

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We offer the chance to make your rank or earn a promotion with your knowledge of military trivia. Every question is multiple choice. Each correct answer earns you a higher rank. Answer every question correctly and you get a star -- a general's star.

Answers are at the bottom. No peeking!

1. How many times has President Bush visited troops in

Iraq since April 2003?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

2. How many times has Sen. Hillary Clinton visited troops in Iraq since April 2003?

- A. 0
- B. 1
- C. 2
- D. 3

3. The original G.I. Bill, signed into law June 22, 1944, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, gave veterans how much money per year for college or trade school tuition?

- A. \$500
- B. \$1,000
- C. \$2,000

D. \$5,000

4. In 2004, IVAS cost the Pentagon \$1.1 million. What is IVAS?

- A. Interim Vehicle Assault System
- B. Integrated Voting Alternative System
- C. International Vessel Assistance and Support
- D. Individual Veterans Assistance System

5. Gen. David Petraeus is the top U.S. commander in Iraq. Who is the top American general in Afghanistan?

- A. Gen. James Conway
- B. Gen. Dan McNeill
- C. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez
- D. Gen. Duncan J. McNabb

6. What is the military's health insurance program for service members and families called?

- A. CHAMPUS
- B. USAA
- C. TRICARE
- D. VA

7. In August, an Air Force B-52 bomber was accidentally loaded with six nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. What kind of alert did the Pentagon issue?

- A. Dull Sword
- B. Lost Arrow
- C. Broken Arrow
- D. Bent Spear

8. What is the title of the \$10 book that is a must-buy for soldiers bound for Iraq?

- A. "Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq During World War II"
- B. "U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual"
- C. "Care of the M-16 Assault Rifle"
- D. "Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife"

9. Which of the following cities was not spotlighted in Ken Burns' TV documentary "The War?"

- A. Mobile, Ala.
- B. Roanoke, Va.
- C. Sacramento, Calif.
- D. Luverne, Minn.

#### ANSWERS:

1. C. President Bush visited troops in Iraq on Thanksgiving 2003, June 2006 and August 2007
2. D. The senator was on three "CODELs," a.k.a. Congressional Delegations, to Iraq in November 2003, February 2005 and January 2007.
3. A. Doesn't seem like much until you realize that \$500 then is equivalent to \$5,775 now, and Harvard charged

less than \$500 per year for tuition.

4. B. Meant to speed voting ballots to overseas service members, eight ballots were cast using the system, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

5. B. He is commander of the International Security Assistance Force, based in Kabul.

6. C. TRICARE replaced CHAMPUS and comes in several versions for active-duty, reservists, retirees and their families.

7. D. It's the second-highest alert level. The most-serious "Broken Arrow" alert would have occurred if the nukes had been lost, destroyed or exploded.

8. A. Written for G.I. Joes, the University of Chicago Press resurrected the 44-page guide this year.

9. B. The fourth was Waterbury, Conn.

Advance one grade in rank for every correct answer. Here is how you rank:

1 -- Private. Go back to boot camp.

2 -- Corporal. Study harder and you may be promoted.

3 -- Sergeant. Hope you are better on the rifle range.

4 -- Master Sergeant. Climbing through the ranks.

5 -- Lieutenant. Half way to the top.

6 -- Captain. Over the hump.

7 -- Major. No longer a minor military buff.

8 -- Colonel. Put an eagle on your lapel to show your smarts.

9 -- General. Lead the troops ... in a trivia contest!

Compiled by James W. Crawley, national correspondent of Media General News Service. E-mail him at [jcrawley@mediageneral.com](mailto:jcrawley@mediageneral.com).

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# Picture-Perfect Ribbon Cutting



The Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony Oct. 8 for Huth & Booth - The Portrait Gallery, to celebrate the opening of their new location in Lake Brandon Professional Park. Owners Betty Huth and Ed Booth said they worked together for 18 years to create family portraits with the expectation that they will be handed down from generation to generation. "We pride ourselves in providing our clients with exceptional portraiture of families and children," they said. Contact Huth & Booth Portrait Gallery at (813) 571-2100 or go to [www.hbphoto.com](http://www.hbphoto.com).

## Business Women Meet Monthly

A Gazette Report

The Greater Brandon Business and Professional Women meet on the second Thursday of each month at Giordano's Restaurant, 11310 Causeway Blvd., Brandon, at 6:30 p.m.

New attendees are welcome. Dinner cost is \$15. For more information or to RSVP, contact Donna Fore at (813) 528-0902 or Dee Loar at (813) 295-0457.

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## ACTING

From page 14

Students pay only for the weeks they attend classes and can pay as they go or pay for a set number of weeks in advance.

Also, five scholarships are available to students from foster families.

"My wife, Kim, and I are foster parents and we wanted to give back to that community," Abbott said. "A lot of times foster kids don't have the opportunity to get involved with things other kids do, because they're shy or there isn't a lot of money. I just wanted to provide an outlet for these families."

Foster families also will receive free tickets to the upcoming "Saving Christmas" show in rehearsal with the Village Players of Valrico. Abbott is a board member of the community theater troupe and wrote and directed the troupe's latest offering, "Moonshine," which completed a four-week run in September.

"Saving Christmas," written and directed by Vinnie Natale, a 1992 Bloomingdale High School graduate, follows the antics of a "clumsy, but very good-hearted elf, who is sent on a journey around the world in an attempt to save Christmas," Natale said.

The family show, featuring magic and illusions, was written by Natale, whose company, the Entertainment Factory, specializes in the art of magic.

Show dates for the general public are Nov. 30, Dec. 1-2, 7-9 and 14-16. Show times are 8:15 p.m., except for Sunday shows, which begin at 3 p.m. Tickets cost \$12.

"One night of the show's run will be totally free for foster parents and their families," Abbott said. That benefit show, closed to the public, is Nov. 29. Donations of gifts for foster children are being accepted at the James McCabe Theater by appointment. Call Natale at 651-3600. For information about the acting classes, call Abbott at 482-6009.

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