

BHA: Citizens Want, Need Intersection Improvements



MACK AUSTIN/Photo

The intersection of Bloomingdale Avenue and Bell Shoals Road consistently ranks high in the top 10 list of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office most frequent accident sites.

County Staff Claimed Residents Oppose Project

By D'ANN WHITE
 Correspondent

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association says quick action by County Commissioner Ronda Storms averted plans to nix improvements to the intersection of Bell Shoals Road and Bloomingdale Avenue.

Storms brought the matter to the board's attention during the Aug. 18 commission meeting after seeing an item on record that stated staff was taking the \$3

million intersection improvements off the county's transportation corridor plan at the request of residents.

Pointing to newspaper articles, Storms said she was under the impression that residents wanted the improvements. Businesses on the east side of Bell Shoals simply wanted some changes to the plan to give customers better access.

"What wound up happening is we took off the actual thing that the citi-

zens wanted to do," Storms said.

At the Aug. 18 meeting, planning commission staff director Scott Cottrell said it was his understanding that there was opposition to the project, so staff decided to amend the plan and make minor improvements to the intersection instead of adding turn lanes to Bell Shoals and Bloomingdale as originally proposed.

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**Annual
 Dues Drive
 In Gear**

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\$20 Annual Dues Drive The BHA

DUES NOTICES MAILED IN AUGUST

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

The BHA is banking on residents to invest 38 cents a week in their community.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. in August mailed dues notices to all Bloomingdale residences. The \$20 per home annual dues drive provides the organization's sole means of financial support.

The only homeowners association representing all of Bloomingdale's nearly 5,000 residences and 40 neighborhoods, the BHA is classified as an IRC 501(c)(4) organization, run by non-paid volunteers who live in Bloomingdale. All dues money collected is put

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.
2004 annual dues — \$20.00

Please complete and return this notice with your payment to:
BHA, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594

Name: _____

Address: _____

To register for neighborhood news updates, please provide your e-mail address.

back into the community.

The BHA keeps residents informed about neighborhood news and events with its monthly newspaper and official community web site. The

Bloomingdale Gazette, now in its 25th year of publication, is delivered free to all Bloomingdale residents (along with a complimentary copy of the Tampa Tribune) on the first

Saturday of each month.

The association also maintains the community's web site, www.BloomingdaleGazette.com. Homeowners can sign up on the site for e-mail updates issued by the BHA concerning neighborhoods, schools, county planning and zoning projects and law enforcement issues.

In conjunction with the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District, the organization maintains a community office. Open Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., the office serves as a meeting place and information center for all Bloomingdale residents.

A member of the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce, the BHA also supports Bloomingdale public schools, and provides an annual endowment to Bloomingdale Senior High School.

See DUES, Page 22

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Yard of the Month

The September Yard of the Month award goes to Rose and Alex Ampalathumkal. The couple's Ephrata Drive home in Bloomingdale West was nominated by a neighbor who said he was simply thankful for the sight of the "always neat" yard.

Alex said his wife is the one behind the couple's lawn maintenance efforts. "Rose tells me when to take care of it!" he said.

The Yard of the Month winners received a \$25 gift card from Ace Hardware, courtesy of The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. Send nominations to Editor, 3509 Bell Shoals Road, Valrico, FL 33594 or e-mail to LauraFrazier@tam-nabay.rr.com.



614 Ephrata Drive

LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

PRIDE Clean-Up Day Is Sept. 11

FREE DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD JUNK

Gazette Report

The dank mattress sagging against the garage wall... the fridge that gave up the ghost long ago... the old bi-fold doors you replaced in the late 90s but just couldn't bring yourself to throw away...

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. PRIDE committee invites all residents to take advantage of an upcoming community-wide clean-up day to dispose of items cluttering up our homes, yards and neighborhoods.

Community, county and city volunteers will be on hand to collect both pure junk and reusable castoffs 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 11, at the Hillsborough County

Parks Maintenance Unit, 1626 Natures Way, just west of Alafia Elementary School.

Elderly or disabled residents who need assistance to transport household junk or donated items can call the BHA office (681-2051) prior to 11 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 9 to schedule pick-up.

Items accepted will include old appliances, water heaters, televisions, steel and other metals, old furniture, construction debris and tires.

The Salvation Army will be on hand to collect tax-deductible donations of salvageable items.

Items that CANNOT be accepted include those normally picked up at the curb by Hillsborough County, solid waste from commercial activity, and hazardous waste such as paint, household chemicals, batteries and propane tanks.

Info: 681-2051.

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Your Inside Connections

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc.

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

E-mail: Bloomingdale.Homeowners@Verizon.net

Web Site: www.BloomingdaleGazette.com

BHA meetings are at the community office on the 1st Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President — Ted Grable
Vice President — Joe Hickle
Treasurer — Pam Liguori
Director — Tony Diolosa
Director — Steve Heckel
Director — Jane Lee
Director — Stanley Lee
Director — Lydia Harrod

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594
(813) 684-6667

BSTD meetings are held at the community office on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

President — Thom Snelling
Vice President — Russell Jones
Treasurer — Dale Kahn

Correspondence Secretary — David West
Trustee — Myron Magedanz
Trustee — Michael Buday
Trustee — Ken Pyse
Property Manager — Al Devney

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Treasurer — Paul

Kelmer, 681-9701

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BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

President — Bill Grace
Treasurer — Fred Englehart

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

The official publication of the BHA since 1980

3509 Bell Shoals Rd.

Valrico, FL 33594

(813) 681-2051

Fax: (813) 651-1129

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

Executive Director — Joe Liguori

Editor — Laura Frazier

Correspondent — Mack Austin

Correspondent — Leslie White

Restaurant Critic — Elton Dumont

Published by Sunbelt Newspapers — 505 W. Robertson,
Brandon, FL 33511. (813) 657-4500

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

Publisher — Carla Floyd

Advertising Manager — Tami Donaldson; phone: 627-1322; e-mail: tdonaldson@tampatrib.com

Barking Dogs Top Nuisance Complaints

CONFLICTS CAN BE HARD TO RESOLVE

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

"You never hear your own dog barking."

That old saying may hold true. But if recent reports of neighborhood nuisance complaints are any indication, the neighbors can definitely hear that dog.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, Inc. PRIDE committee encourages residents to take a neighborly approach in dealing with backyard annoyances — no matter which side of the fence one happens to be on.

In family-friendly Bloomingdale, it seems only reasonable to expect occasional annoyances such as barking dogs and raucous children playing outside a little too late in weekend evenings.

The neighborhood garage band's weekly jam session may run a bit long now and then, and the father and son basketball game that routinely starts next door after dinner may, on occasion, go into overtime.

Few among us can honestly say we've never left a barking dog outside too long, had a backyard shindig that ran into the wee hours, or occasionally cranked up the volume of our stereo or television.

The BHA board and PRIDE committee agree that property owners have a right to use their homes for their own enjoyment, within reasonable limits. Most neighbors graciously accept the fact that occasional transgressions of those limits will occur.

But when nuisances occur persistently and routinely, the equally valid rights of offended neighbors are violated.

The PRIDE committee suggests that when approached in a cordial, non-threatening manner, many neighbors will respond promptly to reduce the annoyance. Some, however, will not.

Even if the offense is in violation of local laws, deed restrictions and county codes, neighborhood nuisances aren't always easy to enforce.

Animal services, county code enforcement officers and homeowners associations can step in to help in some instances, but may require the complainant to

identify themselves on reports. Therein lies the problem; most homeowners don't want to go to war — or to court — with their neighbors.

Deputy Pete Maurer, Bloomingdale's community resource deputy, said the Bloomingdale substation routinely receives neighborhood nuisance complaints. Maurer said in some cases, deputies may be able to intervene without taking names.

"We can go out and talk to (the potential offenders) informally, and 99 percent of the time the problem is resolved," Maurer said.

For internet links to neighborhood deed restrictions, county codes ordinances and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, visit www.BloomingtonGazette.com.

Recent nuisance complaints received by the BHA, the Bloomingdale substation and the Hillsborough County

codes department include:

- ♦ Barking dogs
- ♦ Dogs let out to roam unattended
- ♦ Loud talking, doors slamming late at night
- ♦ Late night basketball games
- ♦ Television on neighbor's lanai played at high volume
- ♦ Loud car exhausts and stereos
- ♦ Motorized scooters and mopeds (not street legal on public property)
- ♦ Cigarette smoke drifting over from neighbor's patio
- ♦ Lawn mowers and blowers used early a.m., late p.m.
- ♦ Boisterous parrot residing on patio

Bloomington's PRIDE committee meets the third Monday each month at the Bloomingdale community office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road. Info: 681-2051 or Bloomington.Homeowners@verizon.net.

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Library Friends Receive Flag Funds, Book Donation

BOOK SALE SET FOR SEPT. 18

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

The Friends of the Library chapter for the new Hillsborough County Library under construction on Bloomingdale Avenue received last month a donation of \$2,000 earmarked for the purchase and installation of a flagpole at the facility.

The south Brandon couple that made the generous donation wished to remain anonymous.

Friends chapter President Pat Boody said the couple contacted her after reading a Brandon News report that some amenities, including the flag, were removed from the county's original building plans due to rising construction costs.

Boody said the benefactors are long time sponsors of Center Place and the Brandon Regional Library, as well as local missions and food banks.

"They are just lovely people," Boody said.

The Friends group has received donations of more than 4,000 used books for their upcoming book and media sale.

"I believe so strongly in libraries and their impact in the community, it's really heart warming to see others come forward to help," Boody



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Cimlino Elementary School students Tess DeSerisy and Danielle Gross, along with a group of their fellow Girl Scouts and friends, volunteered to help sort and collect books at the community office for the library's Sept. 18 book sale fundraiser

said.

The used book and media collection is still underway. The sale will be Sept. 18 at the

Stephanie Culbertson Recreation Center in Bloomingdale West Park on Canoga Park Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, e-mail Boody at pwboody@tecoenergy.com or call 785-3373.

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Buy books and media at bargain prices Saturday, Sept. 18 at the Bloomingdale West Park Recreation Center on Canoga Park Drive, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Proceeds will be used by the Friends of the Library to

provide service perks at the new library (special speakers, extra children's activities, volunteer awards, staff amenities and more).

Info: Pat Boody, 785-3373 or pwboody@tecoenergy.com.

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE
THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Bloomingtondale Substation Notes

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER

School Traffic, Safety

So far the new school year is going well from the safety and security standpoint. All drivers are reminded to stop on both sides of the street for school buses. Do not speed in school zones, where fines are doubled to an average of \$300.

Parents of Alafia Elementary School students are reminded to obey the "no parking" signs. The no parking zones are set up to provide protection for parents and school kids.

At the three-way stop near Alafia, come to a complete stop. If you roll through, you can get a ticket, have an accident or hit a child.

Also, please do not drop off or pick up Alafia students in the parks maintenance building parking lot on Natures Way. It is very dangerous with

the trucks going in and out.

All drivers are urged to use extra caution while driving near the Cimino Elementary School entrance. Kids are crossing Culbreath Road and traffic is very dense.

Special Projects

The Bloomingtondale Community has responded fantastically to the following special projects supported by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. Our special thanks to all of you who have participated. Please continue to support these very important projects.

Suitcases for Kids

This program, worked in conjunction with the Tampa Police Department, asks any one with suitcases, gym bags, or small luggage to spare to drop them off at the Bloomingtondale substation. Donated

bags will be used to provide children in difficult situations with a way of keeping their personal belongings with them when they have to move. The substation is in the plaza at the corner of Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven Drive, near Beef O' Brady's. Hours are weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

High School Reading Program

Bloomingtondale High's outstanding reading program has proven to be very effective at helping students improve their reading skills. The student's FCAT Reading scores are the proof. Residents are asked to bring magazines of interest to teens (sports, fashion, entertainment, history, travel, short stories, etc.) to the Bloomingtondale substation for delivery to the school. Volunteers are needed to deliver the magazines to the school and to help students improve their

reading skills. To help tutor a student, call the school, 744-8018. To help deliver magazines, call the substation at 635-8040.

Cops and Computers For The Community

This not-for-profit charitable program teams public safety professionals with members of the computer industry to place computers into the homes of students with special needs. In this day and time, all students must have a computer. The program's philosophy is, "Changing lives, one computer at a time." This program needs more public safety professionals, computer professionals and volunteers. Anyone in the Bloomingtondale community that would like to get involved can contact Deputy Maurer at 635-8040 or visit the program's website at www.ccftc.org.

Found Dog Needs Home



A Gazette Report

A black, mixed-breed male puppy was found in August at the intersection of Rosemead and Bell Shoals Road in Bloomingtondale.

After two weeks of posted notices, the dog, a Labrador mix estimated to be about a

year old, has not been claimed.

The family who found the dog is offering it for adoption, "to a good home with adoptive parents who agree to have him neutered."

To claim or adopt the dog, call Rebecca at (813) 318-1993.

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Charley Taught Cimino Staff A Lesson

SCHOOL OPENED AS SHELTER

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Just one week into the new school year, teachers and administrators had less than 24 hours to transform Cimino Elementary School into a Red Cross shelter.

At 3 p.m. on Thursday Aug. 12, Principal Sandra Frost was advised to ready the school to accommodate possible evacuees seeking shelter from the threat of Hurricane Charley.

In the building that houses kindergarten through second grade, teachers scrambled to secure their rooms in preparation.

"There is no one at this site who hasn't worked unbelievably hard," said Frost, who along with other school staff members reported to the shelter at 5 a.m. the morning of the Friday the 13th.

School nurse Trish Stover, lunchroom supervisor Jane Clark and custodian Melvin Doyen were required to report to the shelter. Assistant Principal Deborah Talley and Frost's secretary, Debbie Coleman, also arrived early Friday morning to support the principal and familiarize themselves with the emergency procedure.

Three representatives from the Red Cross set up the site, registering evacuees as they



LESLIE WHITE/Photos

Two evacuees and a Red Cross volunteer kept a close eye on the track of Hurricane Charley on a television in Cimino's cafeteria.

entered. The team recorded the whereabouts of those seeking shelter, should that information become necessary to access.

Brandon High School Principal Denny Oest was

assigned to Cimino's shelter to assist Frost. Several Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office employees were on site, as were public utilities workers, two EMT's and an ambulance from AmeriCare.

By 3 p.m. Friday, as the storm was making landfall, two evacuees had made Cimino their safe haven. One was transported by bus from an

See SHELTER, Page 21

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School's Collection To Aid Student Charley Victims

MORE SCHOOL SUPPLIES NEEDED

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

In the aftermath of Hurricane Charley, communities, churches and schools are uniting in an effort to bring

relief to those devastated by the storm.

After the storm, Cimino Elementary School guidance counselor, Debbie Minichbauer, rallied students by organizing CHAP, the Cimino Hurricane Assistance Program.

See AID, Page 21

Bloomington Group Bringing Food, Aid To Hardee County



LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Cambridge Cove resident Jeanne Sigmon, with (from left) Marlene Eskine, Michele Valdes and Vaughn Sigmon, collected, loaded and personally delivered more than 1,000 pre-made sandwiches, fresh fruit and other supplies to Hardee County.

MORE HELP NEEDED

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

When news images of Hurricane Charley's destructive wake hit the airwaves last week, Jeanne Sigmon knew she had to do something to help.

The Cambridge Cove resident considered donating food and supplies to collection sites set up in Tampa.

But driving to Tampa to deliver supplies intended to help victims to the south seemed inefficient to Sigmon.

Pointing to the northwest, Sigmon said, "It frustrated me because I thought, why should I drive up there, when the people who need help are down there (southeast)?"

United Way officials told Sigmon of an immediate need for relief in Hardee County, which sits south of the Branford area, just east of Manatee County.

Over the course of three days in August, with the help of her husband, Vaughn, and

a group of neighborhood friends, Sigmon collected, loaded up and personally delivered more than 1,000 pre-made sandwiches, fresh fruit and other supplies to Hardee County.

United Way officials told Sigmon power would be restored to most areas by last week, easing the need for pre-made food that doesn't require cooking.

The prospect of restored electricity, however, wasn't enough to convince the Bloomington group to call off their efforts. "Even when they do get power back, it will take some time for the grocery stores to restock their shelves, and they still need volunteers to look after the children of medical, law enforcement and emergency services personnel stationed in Hardee," Sigmon said.

Sigmon planned to stay in touch with United Way officials to stay informed about the community's changing needs as Hardee County recovers and rebuilds after the storm.

To help, call Sigmon at 643-2239.

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Commentary

Get Out And Vote, Bloomingdale!

DEADLINE TO REGISTER OCT. 4

By MACK AUSTIN

Most of us have seen too many political commercials and read too many articles about the upcoming elections.

Perhaps we've tried to sort out the truth, and to get educated on the important issues. Many of us have given our support to the candidates we feel will do the right things for us and hopefully make our lives better. But, do we really know just how important this election year really

is? Are we prepared to make some of the most important decisions of our lives?

In just a few short months, the general elections will be held. Hopefully, most of us will take the time to get registered and then take the time to vote. Sad to say, many won't do anything but continue to complain about how bad things are. As the saying goes, time will tell.

But right now, every one of us can take just a few moments from our busy lives and make the decision to get registered and vote. The deadline is October 4.

There's still time to get educated on the critical

issues being decided and to really know the candidates that are running. Just voting is important, but it's even more important to be an informed voter.

Yes, the office of President of the United States will be decided, but don't forget our state and our county. Florida has up for election one U.S. Senator, 15 U.S. Representatives, a State Attorney, a Public Defender, 7 Circuit Court Judges, 3 County Commissioners including one for our District 4, the County Clerk of the Circuit Court, the County Property Appraiser, the County Sheriff, the County Supervisor of Elections, the

County Tax Collector, 8 County Court Judges, 4 County School Board Members and other offices charged with making decisions about issues that will directly affect our families and our communities for the next four years.

So, simply said, do what is right. Get yourself registered and then make sure you vote. These are not minor decisions, and they can't be changed for four years. Get prepared to make them now. That is what Freedom is all about.

For additional information check out www.votehillborough.org.

Letters to the Editor

Get Cars, Boats Off Street During Hurricane

I am sending this letter, both as a concerned parent and Bloomingdale resident, with regards to observations I made in preparing for Hurricane Charlie in Bloomingdale.

In general, Bloomingdale residents did an exceptional job in preparing for the worst that Hurricane Charlie could have dealt, but a lot can be learned from the destruction

our neighbors felt in lieu of us.

Providing shelter for friends and family who were evacuated from their homes closer to the Gulf is a commendable offering. That said, I felt threatened for my family's safety by a lot of these displaced personnel who brought their trailers, boats, and other items to occupy our streets as the storm

approached.

Images from Punta Gorda show that if the brunt of the storm had hit where it was supposed to, all of these items would have become nothing but projectiles.

What I found most alarming is the fact that when confronted, some people seemed to feel that their belongings were more precious than the lives of the friends and neighbors who offered them shelter.

Visitors displaced were not the only culprits. Some of our own neighbors did the same thing with their "precious items."

Seeing 40- to 50-foot boats in Punta Gorda thrown into homes and hotels shows that these smaller vessels would have done the same thing to our neighborhood — except we would have not been evacuated to avoid the path of these "precious" projectiles.

Even our contractor failed to remove the 30 to 40

builder's signs from the side of the model home despite repeated requests.

We were lucky this time. Looking back is always 20/20, and no harm was done. I just ask people to think about the feelings they "could have felt" if their neglect ended up flying into someone's home and killing a neighbor. I hope we can learn from the disaster that we were lucky to avoid this time, so we can avoid needless loss of life and property when we are not so lucky the next time.

Drew Meyerowich
Bloomingdale East

Send letters to Editor, The Bloomingdale Gazette, 3509 Bell Shoals Rd., Valrico, FL 33594 or e-mail LauraFrazier@tampabay.rr.com. Letters are subject to editing and will be used on a space-available basis.

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Property Manager's Report

By AL DEVNEY

Irrigation

Thunder Irrigation added spray heads on Culbreath Road to Zones 3 and 4 of the Groveway system. This will give better coverage to the grass along the road.

Brandon Irrigation replaced 100 4-inch pop-ups with Rainbird 6-inch pop-ups on Zones 9 and 10 of the Natures Way system. This was a test to determine the cost of the best method to replace the 4-inch pop-ups.

Raymow also replaced 100 4-inch pop-ups with Rainbird 6-inch pop-ups on Zones 11 and 12 of the Natures Way

system. This was an additional part of the test.

During the monthly maintenance inspection, 19 heads were replaced and two risers were repaired. Additionally, there were 31 lights replaced.

Landscaping

Lee's Lawn Service installed 180 pavers and painted the entrance at Pine Grove for \$1,140.

Planscape replaced two dead palm trees for \$400 and installed 1416 coleus at seven different locations at a cost of \$1,770.

Other

ZK Construction repaired

the wall at Culbreath and Natures Way that was hit by a vehicle and Lee's Lawn Service painted the wall.

The owner of the vehicle has been notified that the cost to repair and paint the wall was \$1,090.

Russell Electric repaired the broken wires to the lights at the Culbreath gate.

Suarez Co. is to reimburse the Brandon Special Taxing District for the cost of the damage.

DPMI raised the American flags to full staff, inventoried the new flowers, the spray heads and conducted a joint inspection of all properties with Raymow representatives.

Hillsborough County Road and Street removed a very large oak tree and a large pine tree on Bell Shoals and Rosemead.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, 20 bags of litter, a well-worn tire, a United Rental barricade, two shirts, two towels, two pairs of gloves, a blouse, a black and white cat and 6 cents were picked up. The beverages of choice were Sprite for soft drinks, Old English 800 for beer and Seagram's Extra Smooth Vodka for distilled spirits.

Al Devney is owner of Devney Property Management Inc.

News Briefs

Business Network Forming

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

Music Programs For Home Schoolers

Music Showcase, 402 Oakfield Drive in Brandon, offers weekday classes geared for home school students who wish to participate in a group setting. Classes offered at levels from beginner to advanced include band, chorus and orchestra. Info: 685-5998

Chamber Golf Tournery at BGF

The Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce's annual golf tournament will be held Oct. 14 at Bloomingdale Golfers Club, 4113 Great Golfers Place in Bloomingdale East. The four-person scramble costs \$100 per player. Registration and lunch start at noon, with a 1 p.m. shotgun start. Gold, silver, beverage/cigar cart, contest, exclusive hole, and hole spon-

sorships are available. Info: 689-1221 or register online at www.brandonchamber.com.

Career Transition Group Meets at YMCA

The Career Transition Ministry was created to help residents of the Brandon area who have been negatively impacted by current economic times. It is a free service for anyone who is unemployed or underemployed, providing the opportunity to network with others in similar situations and to give leads into industries, companies and organizations that might be good contacts. The ministry meets Fridays, 1 to 3 p.m. at the Campo Family YMCA in Bloomingdale. Info: Cindy Kraft, 655-0658, or e-mail careermaster@exec-essentials.com.

Clinic extends hours

The Late Hours Urgent Care Clinic, 3444 Lithia-Pinecrest Road in Valrico, is extending hours on weekends 10 a.m. to midnight. Weekday hours will remain noon to midnight. The clinic does lab tests, EKGs and X-rays on site. Staff physicians are Dr. H.

See BRIEFS, Page 19

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LAURA FRAZIER/Photo

Bloomington's new band director, Jon Sever (center), enlisted a crew of Florida State University students to help whip the Rajun' Bulls into shape for marching season. From left, woodwind tech and FSU Marching Chiefs head drum major Jessey Howard; brass tech Sean Murray; Sever; drum tech Kenson Chang; Big 8 section leader and asst. drum tech B. J. Walker.

Despite Changes, Band Marches To Same Tune

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Kicking off his first year as Bloomington Senior High School's new band director, Jon Sever finds himself wear-

ing many hats these days in addition to the coach's cap he wears to supervise marching rehearsals.

"You're the music director, conductor, equipment manager, travel coordinator,

accountant, counselor and big brother, along with several other things that pop up along the way," he said.

Sever admits the scope of his responsibilities is a little intimidating, but he's up to the challenge, and he's not flying blind.

For two months last spring, the Sarasota native and FSU graduate shadowed the Rajun' Bulls — Hillsborough County's largest high school marching band — alongside the group's former director, Ted Hope. After leading the school's highly acclaimed music program for 17 years, Hope moved on this year to a district position as supervisor of music of middle and secondary schools.

Bloomington's music department, including the

chorus and orchestra programs, was entirely re-staffed this year. The changes left some students and parents wondering if the program would be able to maintain its popularity and long run of competition successes at district, regional and national levels.

Hope, along with school administrators, hand-picked Sever for the position. He has no doubt the band will continue their winning streak under Sever's direction, and may even improve upon it.

"Jon is going out of his way to keep things status quo for now. But he is (gradually) going to take the band to the next level. I hope he makes me look bad!" Hope said.

See BAND, Page 22

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Helping Children Cope With Disaster

By MACK AUSTIN

All of us in the Bloomingdale community have read about and seen on television the unbelievable destruction in our neighboring counties after Hurricane Charley. We should all be very grateful that this storm missed us.

We've seen many interviews describing how traumatic the experience was for adults.

We also need to realize how important it is to discuss what happened with our children. We must help them understand what happened and what is being done to help folks recover.

One of our main goals should be to help our children cope with the sudden changes and disruptions to our lives so they can cope and be able to adjust properly.

This is true in all of the

unplanned events that happen in our lives, whether it's a storm, a death in the family or even a divorce. We must not forget the children's feelings and needs.

Each of us must decide what's best for our own children. Children depend on daily routines, from waking up for school to playing with their friends.

When emergencies or disasters interrupt their routines, children become anxious. They look to us for reassurance that everything is going to be all right.

How you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to react. If you react with alarm, a child may become more scared.

There's nothing wrong with being scared. It's natural and healthy. There are real dangers that come in our lives. But remember, children have

very vivid imaginations. They need your positive support and help to understand what is happening and why it's happening and that everything will be better.

For many children their sense of time is different than ours.

These days many of us expect instant improvements. After a disaster like Hurricane Charley, the time to recover takes on a different perspective.

Until you've personally experienced a disaster of this magnitude and found yourself without electricity, water, phones and a dry place to sleep, it's very hard to understand.

Open, positive communication is the key. Talk to your

children about disasters. Ask them about their feelings, their concerns and answer their questions. Emergencies are a very real part of life. Include your children in your preparation and recovery activities.

Preparation on your part is very important in how things turn out. Don't wait until the last minute. Develop and practice a family disaster plan that includes hurricanes, fire drills and medical emergencies.

Teach them how to respond properly, to learn important phone numbers including 911. Practice your plans.

It's a big part of preparing them for life's emergencies that will come sooner or later.

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D'ANN WHITE/Photo

Eight-year-old Aubrey Stamper helps organize shelves at The Comics Club Inc. in Brandon. Her parents, Duane and Vicki Stamper, are the store's owners.

Bloomington Couple Make Comical Career Change

By D'ANN WHITE
Correspondent

Once considered a favorite pastime for youngsters, comic books today have matured with the generation that once purchased them for a dime at the local drug store.

In fact, patrons at The Comics Club Inc. in La Viva Plaza in Brandon are more likely to be 30-something men than preteens.

Storeowners Duane and Vicki Stamper say the attraction isn't simply nostalgia or the desire to recapture youth. With the release of films starring superheroes once found only in comic books, Duane Stamper said interest in comic books is bigger than ever.

"They're not just for kids,"

said Stamper. "The average age of our customers is 30."

And the Internet, DVDs and video games haven't dampened the enthusiasm to read about superheroes in comic books. If anything, said Stamper, technology has made comic books all the more popular. "I think there's still an allure about being able to hold something in your hand and read it," Stamper said.

Comic books, or funnies as they were once called, date back to the 19th century when books were introduced featuring characters that appeared in newspaper comic strips, like The Yellow Kid, a political cartoon published in the New York Journal in the 1800s. Others, intended to be comical, thus the name, included The Brownies,

Katzen Jammer Kids, Popeye, Mutt & Jeff, Buster Brown and Felix the Cat.

But the real heyday of comic books occurred in 1938 with the introduction of the first superhero, a person with powers beyond those of mortal man. His name was Superman and he was created by Action Comics.

From there, kids clamored for the newest installments of Spiderman, Hulk, the Green Hornet and Archie, always available near the checkout counter at their favorite five and dime store.

Among the kids who traded their paper route money for comic books was Duane Stamper.

"I read a lot of comics as a kid but I especially loved Superman," said Stamper

who grew up in Michigan and later moved with his family to Florida.

Stamper went on to major in journalism at the University of Florida. He was working as the editor of a business magazine near Fort Lauderdale when he happened to hear a radio commercial announcing that DC Comics was reprinting the first issue of Superman. He bought it and added it to the childhood comic collection that his brother, Dave, had saved for him after the family moved to Florida.

And then he kept adding to the collection. By 1989, he had several thousand comic books in his collection and decided to start his own mail order

See COMICS, Page 19

Bloomingtondale Resident A First-Time Author

By D'ANN WHITE

She never considered herself a writer, nor thought about writing a book.

That all changed last year when Bloomingtondale resident Linda Hill Rusmisl said she felt "compelled" to sit down and write.

The result is "Code Yellow," an inspirational novel about overcoming obstacles, said Rusmisl.

A 25-year resident of the area, Rusmisl attended Bufalo State Teacher's College and went on to work as a manager for Mobile Oil Corp.

Last year, she became intrigued with the idea of writing a fictional story with characters overcoming difficult circumstances through spiritual growth.

"I wanted to write a book that would inspire readers and maybe help them overcome their own obstacles in

life," said Rusmisl.

The main character is a woman named Maggie who is grappling with her mother's illness, her father's abandonment, abusive relationships and her daughter's mental illness. But near-death experiences lead her on the road to recovery and a spiritual awakening.

The title, explained Rusmisl, is based on the medical term "code blue."

"Code blue pertains to the death of the body," she said. "But there is also a code yellow, or near death, that leads to spiritual understanding."

Although it took only three months to write the book, Rusmisl said she discovered that publishing it takes much longer. "When I couldn't find a publisher, I began looking on the internet to learn about ways to publish the book myself," she said. "I learned all about book merchandising

companies."

Rusmisl also joined the Brandon Writers Group, which meets monthly at Barnes & Noble Booksellers in Brandon. She said the group composed of fellow writers not only encouraged her but offered advice on publishing and marketing her book.

Her book has been nominated for the Florida Writer's Association 2004 Royal Palm Literary Awards to be presented Nov. 6.

She's currently working on her second novel.

"It's really on the other end of the spectrum," she said. "It's a political mystery."

Rusmisl's book is currently available through Publish America at www.PublishAmerica.com or by visiting PublishedAuthors.net. It soon will be available in local bookstores as well.

Rusmisl can be reached at 651-3726.



Bloomingtondale resident Linda Hill Rusmisl has been nominated for the Florida Writer's Association 2004 Royal Palm Literacy Awards for her novel "Code Yellow."

Births

♦ Devon Edward-Albert Rhodes was born July 14, 2004, to Alison and Josh Rhodes of Kingstowne Circle.

♦ Braden Thomas Pope was born July 31, 2004, to Kassi and Barry Pope of Twilridge Place.

♦ Sydney Marie Ginaitt was born July 21, 2004, to Lisa C.

and Bernard A. Ginaitt of Versant Drive.

♦ Charles Purcell Bowman IV was born Aug. 10, 2004, to Barbara and Charles P. Bowman III of Vinedale Avenue.

Bloomingtondale area birth announcements provided by Brandon Regional Hospital.

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Creative Outdoor Décor Offers Fountains, More

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

Fashion's latest trend has nothing to do with hemlines or heels, at least not when you're talking about home fashions.

Since 9/11 more people have focused their attention on home and hearth, creating a safe, comfortable and beautiful space. Creative Outdoor Decor is a business geared to help beautify both the indoors and outdoors of any home.

Don Gerdich has owned the business since May, but Creative Outdoor Decor has made its home in Brandon for more than seven years. With an outdoor showroom that sits on an acre lot between Miller Road and St. Cloud on State Road 60, Gerdich carries a full line of statues, fountains, planters and garden decor to enhance a home's entrance, courtyard, patio, pool or backyard.

Three-tiered garden fountains decorate the lot, alongside smaller look-alike versions. Customers are invited to customize their fountain selection with finishes and finials suiting their style. All of the fountains use recycled water and don't need to be plumbed in.

"We deal with regional wholesalers, and also offer a California line of products that have a different, unique finish," said Gerdich.

Creative Outdoor Decor installs each purchase, delivering within a week, except for the California line which can take up to 30 days to come in.

Operations manager Greg Foster said all the fountains are self-contained.

"All people need to do is plug it in, and keep water in it," Foster said.

With each purchase, customers learn easy care tips. Algae being the main threat to keeping the fountain clean and clear, Creative Outdoor Decor carries a line of non-chlorine algacide for colored cement, and recommends cleaning with a light dose of chlorinated water for the



Creative Outdoor Décor staff, from left, marketing vice president Evan Love, operations manager Greg Foster and owner Don Gerdich.

white cement.

One unique garden accessory they carry is the Vantage PRO Wireless Weather Station, which incorporates all weather-related needs in one

device. It reads barometric pressure, temperature, humidity, moon phases, measures wind direction and speed.

Along with a multitude of

other talents, the wireless weather station has a sense of humor, actually giving a reading of "it's raining cats and

See DECOR, Page 22

LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Ridge, Taxing District To Beautify Corner

By D'ANN WHITE
Correspondent

The Bloomingdale Special Taxing District has agreed to join forces with the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association to beautify the corner of Natures Way and Culbreath Road in front of Alafia Elementary School.

The Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association wants to construct a water feature surrounded by plantings. Dale Kahn, a member of both boards, asked if the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District would be willing to donate funds for plantings.

Bloomingdale property manager Al Devney said that corner hasn't received new landscaping in years and said he'd plan to put it on next year's maintenance schedule for minor intersections.

The Bloomingdale taxing district is responsible for three major and 16 minor entries including this corner, Devney told the trustees.

"I had envisioned tearing out the old juniper in the parapets and putting in Indian hawthorn and crinum lilies," he said. Devney also would like to remove the liriope and expand the annual planting beds.

The estimated cost of the landscaping project, Devney told the board, is \$1,200 to \$1,500.

Trustee Michael Buday favored giving that money to the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association instead.

"It's a very visible corner," he said. "It really serves as a major entryway for the community and I believe the money would be wisely spent."

Taxing district President Thom Snelling was initially reluctant to turn over the money designated for the plantings to the Bloomingdale Ridge Homeowners Association, fearing it would set a precedent. But since the property manager was planning to landscape the corner anyway, he felt it would be in

"It's a very visible corner. It really serves as a major entryway for the community and I believe the money would be wisely spent."

MICHAEL BUDAY
BSTD trustee

the community's best interest to help with the project.

The board voted to approve applying \$2,000 toward the Bloomingdale Ridge project.

Kahn said the homeowners association is still working on details of the plan but has received cost estimates in the \$12,000 range. He said the Ridge homeowners association would fund the maintenance of the water feature.

As of this month, the taxing district has added a new minor entryway to its list of responsibilities.

At last month's meeting, the trustees agreed to take over maintaining the entry to Bloomingdale's newest subdivision, Eagle Point off Erindale Drive. The taxing district assumes responsibility for entryways to subdivisions once 92 to 95 percent of the homes are occupied.

Anne Garrett Ward, president of the Eagle Point Homeowners Association, told the trustees that 35 of the 38 homes in the development are now occupied. The homeowners association has also installed St. Augustine grass, another condition of the taxing district.

Devney estimated there are 500 yards of common area at the Eagle Point entrance, requiring about \$2,500 a year in maintenance.

That's a minor cost compared to what the taxing district has had to fork over in the past two months for vandalism damage.

Prior to school starting again, the community experienced several acts of vandalism including graffiti on the common walls and motorists "doing doughnuts" in the common areas, destroying the grass and bushes.

The district is offering a \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals.

BHA director Steve Heckel told the trustees that the association is in the process of revitalizing its mobile crime watch program, which will hopefully reduce acts of vandalism.

There currently are seven active Neighborhood Crime Watch programs in Bloomingdale, including a new program launched in Eagle Point. Heckel said the association also will look at expanding these programs.

The taxing district unanimously renewed the contract for Raymow, the district's lawn maintenance contractor, for a second year. However, Buday voted against renewing the contract for Neighborhood Pest Control because he said he isn't satisfied with the weed control program.

"I sure see a lot of weeds around," Buday said. "Greenhollow is all weeds and there isn't a lick of grass in the whole place."

Devney said the district is now spending \$26,000 a year

on weed and pest control, having added \$6,000 to this year's budget.

"But we've got 30 acres of grass and all types of sod," Devney said. "And once an area gets stressed, the bugs move in. That's what happened on Erindale."

He added that the weed killer cannot be applied once the temperature goes above 80 degrees.

Rather than re-bid the entire pest and weed control contract, Snelling suggested they amend the contract and bid for services on an as-needed basis.

Finally, at last month's meeting, the trustees heard a presentation by Joe Brandano of Brandano Displays Inc. of Pompano Beach on purchasing holiday banners for the major entrances. Faced with a tight budget, the trustees were looking into ways to decorate less expensively.

Bloomingdale Community Office manager Joni Hickle suggested the district look into purchasing seasonal banners to be displayed on existing utility poles and offsetting the cost with business sponsorships.

Brandano will return to this month's meeting with cost estimates. In the meantime, Hickle will look into the best ways to solicit donations.

The next BSTD meeting will be Monday, Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office on Bell Shoals Road. Meetings are open to the public.



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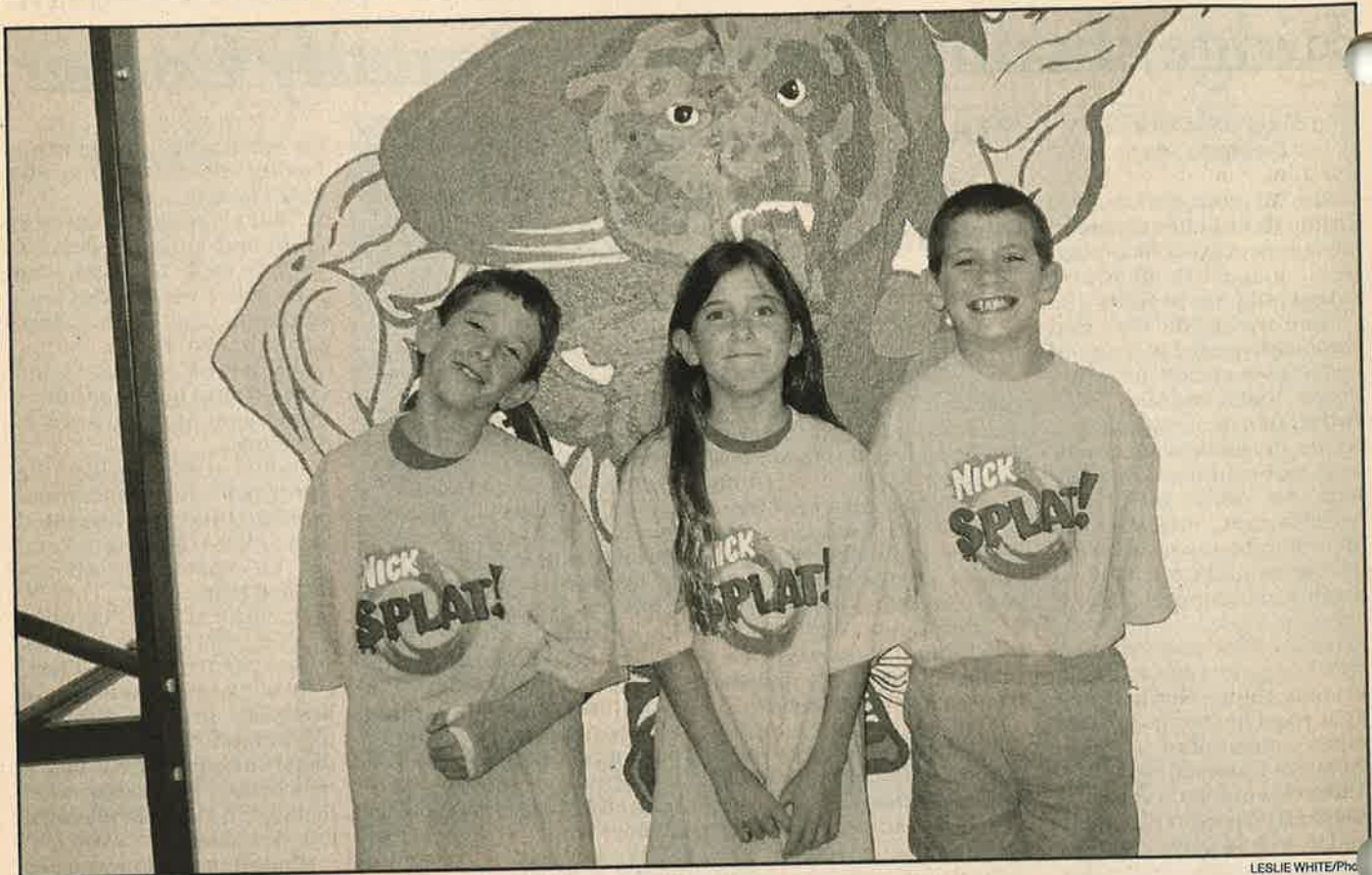
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LESLIE WHITE/PHO

Bloomington triplets Michael, Christine and Donald Gillis recently appeared on television in one of Nickelodeon's SPLAT! between-show spots.

Bloomington Triplets Appear On SPLAT!

TRIO AVOIDED SLIME

By LESLIE WHITE

Most kids like to end summer vacation with a bang, but three Bloomington siblings chose to end theirs with a SPLAT!

Triplets Donald, Michael and Christine Gillis were chosen for a special "Triplets" segment of Nickelodeon's SPLAT!, a series of spots that run on the kids' cable channel between cartoons from 5 to 7 p.m.

The show features games and competitions where teams rack up points.

In the show's third week of production, Ethnee Lea of the SPLAT! production team decided a show on triplets would be just the thing. Each team consists of 3 players.

Three sets of triplets appeared on the July 30 taping featuring the Gillis kids.

Nickelodeon operates out of Universal Studios in Orlando. The children's mother, Marlene Gillis, learned of the opportunity from an Orlando friend she met at a triplet convention.

The Gillis family was more than a little excited to be on the show.

SPLAT! is taped live, as Gillis says, "where the way it happens is the way it goes!"

"They came to us two minutes before the cameras went on with instructions," said a wide-eyed Gillis, who admits, "I was kind of nervous."

The Gillis team won the first round, a game of rally ball, similar to volleyball.

In the next game, the three teams had to watch an interview with a character called "The Terminator," then buzz

in to answer questions. Though the green and red teams were buzzing in fast and furious, the Gillis yellow listened carefully to each question, and were the only ones to buzz in with all three correct answers.

The Gillis' had watched SPLAT! before and were familiar with the show and its games, but the clan wasn't upset about not winning. The winners get the dubious honor of being "slimed," Nickelodeon slang for "doused and drenched from head to toe with various gooey substances."

That day's slime consisted of baked beans.

"Eww," said Christine as she recalled watching a kid in the audience get slimed with the goo. Parents Rob and Marlene weren't upset their kids didn't win, as slimees were given nothing more than a

towel to clean up with.

"My favorite part was the games," said Donald.

"Mine was when the callers had to pick 'win', 'play', 'steal', or 'prize'," said Christine.

Michael just liked being on the show.

"It didn't feel like two hours," he said.

Mom Marlene said, "I'm glad they had the opportunity to do the show. Watching all the kids have a great time and enjoy themselves was great. It's an experience they'll never forget. They felt like little stars themselves."

The 11-year-old Gillis triplets, Cimino Elementary students, each received a SPLAT! T-shirt autographed by the show's captains and crew. Perhaps the biggest perk — when school started a week later, all their friends thought they were cool.

COMICS

From page 14

comic book business.

The Stampers' segue into a full-time comic book store came a few years later. Although both had lucrative careers, Vicki was traveling a lot as a retail merchandise consultant for Ross stores.

"She was exhausted, and we always wanted to have our own business, be our own bosses," Stamper said. "Vicki had all this retail experience, so we decided to open our own store. I researched the idea for 18 months and learned everything I could about the business. And then in August 1994, we opened our own store in Fort Lauderdale."

Vicki kept working at Ross for a year while the store got up and going. She had just handed in her resignation at Ross when the couple received a pleasant surprise. After years of trying, Vicki discovered she was pregnant.

"I was told I couldn't get pregnant," said Vicki. "We were resigned to not having kids so it was a total shock."

Aubrey was born a year after the comic book store opened and took her first steps in the store.

Once again, Stamper put his research experience to good use to determine where the best public schools were in Florida. His search led him to Valrico, and specifically to Alafia Elementary School. It also happened that Brandon had no full-time comic book stores at that time.

The family purchased a

"I had customers who actually cried when I told them I was moving. We're a very family-oriented store and we really get to know our customers. They become friends."

DUANE STAMPER
Owner, The Comics Club Inc.

house in Bloomingdale East and reopened their comic book store at Oak Park Plaza on Lumsden Road.

"I had customers who actually cried when I told them I was moving. We're a very family-oriented store and we really get to know our customers. They become friends," said Stamper.

That customer loyalty helped finance their move to Brandon. Half of their regular customers continued doing mail order business with The Comics Club.

From the beginning, said Stamper, they had their eye on La Viva Plaza, just waiting for a spot to open so they could move across the street.

"The types of businesses in this shop — the antiques store, the used book store, the record store — really complement our business," he said.

So when a wallpaper store moved out, the Stampers promptly moved into the 2,000-square-foot space in La Viva last March.

"It's been great," said Stamper. "We've been very well received. Brandon just seems

to embrace us. We love living here."

The Comics Club specializes in a wide variety of newly released comic books as well as back issues. (The Comics Club has more than 70,000 back issues.)

Stamper is quick to point young children to the front of the store where the child-appropriate comic books are displayed. Comics with adult theme are located farther back and encased in plastic to deter young eyes.

"We feel we need to be a kind of gatekeeper," said Stamper. "Some parents don't realize there are comics for mature readers that have graphic language and violence." Some publishers, like Marvel Comics, now put ratings on their comic books.

Aubrey, now 8, has her own room at the back of the store where she can do homework, watch TV, play games, take a nap or read the newest comic books for youngsters. Her favorite, she said, is the old standby, Archie, and Sonic the Hedgehog.

"When kids come in the

store, I show them where the comic books for kids are," she said.

Reading since the age of 2, Aubrey encourages other children to read the books, "not just look at the pictures."

"They're great for kids who need to brush up on reading skills," said Stamper.

Despite their collectibility, comic books should be read, he added. "I advise people to buy and read comic books because they love them; not because they might go up in value," he said.

It's true some comic books have shot up in value. The first issue of Superman, published in 1938 and sold for 10 cents, would probably fetch \$1 million at auction today, said Stamper.

But age doesn't necessarily dictate value. Value is based on condition, rarity and demand. A comic book might be worth more because it features the first appearance of a certain character, a new writer or artist or even a change in the lead character's costume.

In addition to comic books and related collectibles, The Comics Club specializing in role play, battle and strategic board games and the collectible pewter figures that go with them.

For more information, contact Stamper at 653-4111. The Comics Club, 714 W. Lumsden Road, is open from noon to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday.

BRIEFS

From page 1

Moursi, board certified in emergency medicine; Dr. M. Ansari, certified in emergency medicine and internal medicine; and Dr. L. Aguila, board certified in emergency medicine.

Info: 643-9393.

Baby Boomer Birthday Bash

The first ever Brandon Baby Boomer Bash, to benefit

the Brandon Outreach Clinic and ECHO, will be Sept. 11, 6:30 p.m. to midnight, at the Winthrop Theater on Bloomingdale Avenue.

The \$30 per person admission includes dinner, dancing and entertainment by the Brandon Blues Brothers. There will be a cash bar. All Brandon residents 21 and older are welcome. Info: George May, 662-1102.

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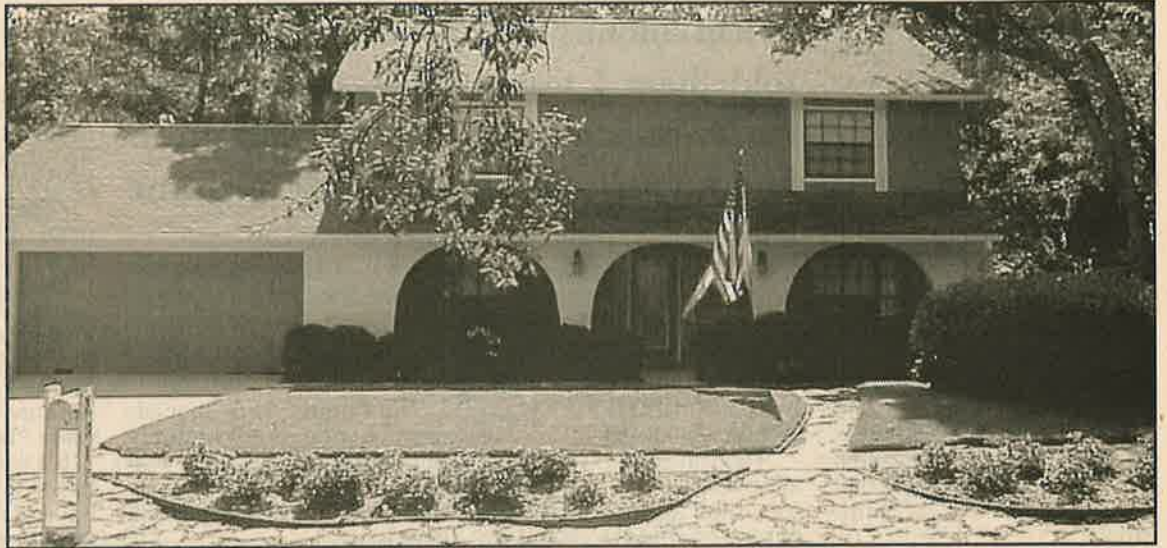


410474

Bloomington Real Estate Sales

**3912
Applegate
Circle,
Bloomington
Estates**

This two-story home with a screened pool listed and sold for \$244,900 in six days.



**Grovelay
Drive,
Somerset**

This corner lot home featuring numerous upgrades listed and sold for \$278,400 in one day.



**3503 Pine Knot
Drive,
Bloomington
East**

Listed for \$94,900, this two-story condo with a fireplace sold for \$93,000 in 20 days.

Info and photos provided by Luana Russell, Keller Williams Realty of Brandon. Realtors are invited to send recent sales info and photos to the editor at LauraFrazier@tam-pabay.rr.com. Featured properties will appear on a space-available basis.





LESLIE WHITE/Photo

Second-grader Bradley Johnson, his mother, Lynn, and first-grader Morgan Smedley made a donation to the Cimino Hurricane Awareness Program last week. Students bringing donations on Wednesday, Aug. 25 received a special "Cougar" hand stamp and a treat.

AID

From page 1

"We just wanted to help all the families devastated by Hurricane Charley," said Minichbauer.

Students, parents and the community are being encouraged to donate school supplies for students affected by the category four hurricane that swept through the state two weeks ago.

Two donation sites have been set up on the Cimino campus to collect the supplies, which will be delivered sometime early this month.

"Everybody here at Cimino is so giving all the time, and we wanted that Cougar spirit to enable us to do something to help the families," says

Minichbauer.

The Guidance Counselor called on some fifth grade students to help her organize the collection and man the drop off boxes. Students have been bringing in notebook paper, pencils, glue, folders, crayons and markers and dropping them in the bins before school.

One Cimino parent who is in the military will deliver the supplies personally, possibly to a hard-hit community in Arcadia that he's been working in.

Supplies may be dropped off at the school weekdays 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Call: 740-4450.

SHELTER

From page 1

already crowded Newsome High; the other was a local resident fleeing her mobile home for the safety of one of 48 Hillsborough County Red Cross shelters.

Though Cimino is designated as a shelter, it is not equipped with a generator, a problem that had Frost more than a little concerned, but school district supervisor Sherrie Sikes told Frost, "There are not enough generators to go around to the schools in our area."

To equip the shelter in the event of a power outage, Frost turned to parent volunteers to collect flashlights from the Bloomingdale community.

Red Cross volunteer Scott Barrish explained, "Cimino is a secondary shelter. The Red Cross uses formulas to determine capacity for the various shelters. Cimino can house 2,100 in a nonthreat situation, and 2,400 in a threat situation."

The multipurpose room of the school would house non-threat evacuees and the 300 extra from a threat situation would be accommodated in the adjacent building. Barrish expressed concern that though the hurricane veered to the southeast, allowing Tampa to avoid direct hit, tornadoes could pose a problem for our area.

"There is always a threat of tornadic activity and the severity of the rain bands," said Barrish. With the Alafia River running through this area, flooding could've been a major threat to nearby



LESLIE WHITE/Photo

The school opened Aug. 12 as a Red Cross Shelter in preparation for the storm.

homes.

"One of the Red Cross' primary functions is mass care, which involves the sheltering and feeding of all evacuees," Barrish said. Eventually, the Red Cross will mobilize Emergency Response Vehicles, or ERV's, which are equipped with a kitchen to feed those who need it.

The ERV's also deliver food to the shelters in the area. The Tampa Bay Chapter of the Red Cross covers Pinellas, Pasco and Hillsborough counties, and staffs each local shelter with a minimum of three volunteers.

Frost said the Red Cross thankfully came right in and took charge of Cimino's transformation to a shelter.

"This is the first time I've been through anything like this," Frost said. "I've learned so much."

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BAND

From page 12

Band Booster president Cathy Patrick said the transition has been seamless.

"Everything is on track, and the excitement is building for the first game of the season," Patrick said.

"Mr. Sever is very easy to work with. He's incredibly organized, so the band is already ahead of schedule on a lot of things. He has everything planned for the whole year on his calendar, right down to graduation," she said. "He just fit right into the

program."

Sever said Hope set the foundation for the group's success, along with parent and school support and the students' drive to strive for the highest goals. It's a solid foundation Sever said he plans to build on.

Despite the personnel shake-up, there won't be any major changes to the core program, at least not yet.

"We want to preserve the band's identity and unique style. Mr. Hope and I share a lot

of the same ideas and philosophies, so it's been relatively easy for me to continue with his program," Sever said.

Sever graduated from Sarasota High School, where he played trumpet in the school's marching band. A former member of Florida State University's Marching Chiefs, he received from FSU his undergraduate degree in 1977, and this spring his master's degree in music education. He also served as assistant band director at the university.

Sever previously directed Pasco County's largest high school marching band at River Ridge High School for five years.

Orchestra and associate band director Suling Chow stepped in this year for Scott Rudes, now assistant principal of student affairs at Bloomingdale. Chase White succeeds former chorus director Beverly Sutherland, now teaching chorus and orchestra at Newsome High School.

DUES

From page 2

Neighborhood safety is a priority of the BHA. The organization operates the Mobile Watch program, whose volunteers work with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Bloomingdale substation to keep residents safe and crime rates low.

Deed restriction and county codes compliance is a continuing focus of the BHA.

This year, the association hired an independent contractor, Neighborhood Standards, to identify and help resolve potential deed restriction and county codes viola-

tions on a regular basis.

The BHA board reports that Neighborhood Standards' proactive approach to resolving violations has been very encouraging. BHA director Steve Heckel said a vast majority of residents notified about violations have responded positively and promptly.

"At least seven fences in disrepair have already been repaired or replaced since Neighborhood Standards began issuing notices," Heckel said.

The BHA's efforts to keep Bloomingdale beautiful

extend beyond enforcing the letter of the law.

In 2002, the association launched the neighborhood PRIDE program, to encourage homeowners to maintain a sense of pride in ownership and community by cleaning up their homes, yards and streets. The PRIDE program has held four clean up days, with residents disposing of more than 400 cubic yards of debris and castoffs, free of charge. The next clean-up day is Sept. 11.

The BHA also supports local charity and community pride events. In 2003, the

organization raised more than \$1,500 in pledges while participating in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

In 2004, the BHA participated in the Brandon Fourth of July Parade.

The association meets on the first Monday of each month, 7 p.m. at the Bloomingdale Community Office, 3509 Bell Shoals Road.

Meetings are open to the public. For more information about the BHA or the dues drive, call 681-2051 or visit www.BloomingdaleGazette.com.

DECOR

From page 16

dogs" during what we in Florida know as our afternoon thundershowers. The system mounts on a pole outside, while the console stays indoors and can be mounted on the wall, like a thermostat.

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provided by separate businesses sharing space on site, make it easy for customers to find all the services they need in one centralized location.

Gerdich said, "We're three small businessmen, co-marketing our services, trying to help the customer."

With Tampa's Home Show coming up at the Tampa Convention Center Sept. 3-6, marketing vice president Evan Love is offering a 5 percent show discount to customers visiting their display.

"We'd love customers to stop by and see what we

have," Love said.

Creative Outdoor Decor is at 2800 State Road 60. Store hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday (closed Monday), 1 to 4 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Call: 662-2585.

LETTERS? COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

E-mail: Letters@BloomingdaleGazette.com

“It doesn’t make sense to stop a whole project that will improve safety and traffic flow for thousands of motorists each day because county staff can’t solve a simple problem with a few property owners.”

TED GRABLE
BHA president

PROJECT

From page 1

“We have a lot of citizen support along Bloomingdale, but there is citizen opposition along Bell Shoals so we have reduced the scope of the projects along both sections,” Cottrell told the commission.

Storms argued that’s not what the residents and business owners want.

“They’re not opposed to widening Bell Shoals,” she said. “They’re opposed to the plan we presented to them. There are businesses that are concerned because the median that we proposed to put in to accommodate the left-turn lane at the signal would restrict, somewhat, their access. How can that be interpreted to mean citizens are opposed to improving Bell Shoals?”

Word that the intersection improvements might be scrapped reached Ted Grable, president of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, who said he was shocked to learn the county staff had recommended canceling the project because of citizen opposition. “That’s absurd,” he said. “Thank goodness Commissioner Ronda Storms objected and led the county commission to direct its staff to go back and take another look at this.”

Grable said the BHA strongly endorses the project to improve one of the most accident-prone intersections in the county.

During 2003, there were 159 accidents at the intersection, according to the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office, 29 of them with injuries.

averaged out to 3 accidents per week, making it one of the most dangerous inter-

sections in the county.

“At our August board meeting, we discussed the project and our government services committee had been assured by the project manager that we would be kept advised of any changes in the project,” Grable said.

“The only thing we are aware of is a few property owners and businesses in the shopping center objected to a median that would block access to their stores.”

“It doesn’t make sense to stop a whole project that will improve safety and traffic flow for thousands of motorists each day because county staff can’t solve a simple problem with a few property owners.”

At the Aug. 18 meeting, the commission asked staff to reassess the project and put it back on the county’s transportation corridor plan.

BHA board member Steve Heckel has been working with the county and business owners on a solution to the access problem. He too, was surprised to learn the project had been cut.

On July 28, business owners met with county engineer Reg Alford to present an alternative plan to move the median cut on Bell Shoals to the driveway between SunTrust Bank and Long Tire and Auto Service.

The Bell Shoals business representatives, including Citgo, Long Tire and Auto Service, Papa John’s Pizza and SunTrust Bank, feared the proposed placement of a median and traffic signal on Bell Shoals would limit access to and hurt their businesses.

Citgo owner Larry Neville added that the original medi-

an and traffic signal plan would force customers to drive through his parking lot, in between the service station and the gas pumps, to access the other businesses.

Instead, the business owners suggested the county construct a new Bell Shoals entrance to Wal-Mart, with a traffic signal installed at the main entrance drive between Citgo and Sun Trust Bank.

The county, they noted, made a similar concession at Lowe’s Home Improvement Warehouse on Providence Road to provide access to Brandon Centre South shopping center across the street and at Brandon Crossroads shopping center on Falkenburg Road.

When a couple of the business owners said they’d rather have nothing done than the plan the county originally proposed, Heckel quickly spoke up that the project is needed and the community, as a whole, is in favor of it.

“I pointed out that the community definitely wanted something done to improve the traffic at this intersection and along the two roadways,”

Heckel said. “This intersection has been the most accident prone in the county for over two years.”

Heckel said he felt the business owners presented an alternative that wasn’t thoroughly explored by the county, and noted that the group even hired a private consultant at their own expense to look at the proposal.

In response, Alford met with the business owners Monday morning and agreed to have his staff survey the area and work up some numbers using the business owners’ suggestion.

Alford and the business group also agreed to look at another alternative — building an access road behind the shopping center, something the business and property owners were initially opposed to because it would mean reconfiguring the parking lot.

Heckel said he was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting.

“This shows the county is willing to explore options and that the business owners are willing to do so also,” said Heckel.

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