

THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

Volume XXVIII
Number 9

SEPTEMBER 2006 • THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

FEATURE STORY



The Brandon Blues Brothers are polishing up their act and bringing it live to the third annual Brandon Baby Boomer Birthday Bash.

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BUSINESS

A unique cooking school geared to aspiring young chefs 3 to 14 is set to open Sept. 18.

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Community Cleanup Day Set For Sept. 9

FREE DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD JUNK

A Gazette Report

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. will host its Community Cleanup Day Sept. 9. The event will begin at 9 a.m. and will last until 1 p.m. or until all Dumpsters at the site

are full, whichever comes first.

Bloomingdale residents are invited to take advantage of this free opportunity to drop off household discards not normally accepted at the curb by Hillsborough County trash collectors.

Residents who arrive at the site after 1 p.m. — or earlier, if all available containers are full — can dispose of their items at a nearby county collection cen-

ter that will be open Sept. 9 until 5:30 p.m. For more information, refer to the story about county collection centers in this issue of the Gazette.

Acceptable items include old appliances, water heaters, televisions, computers, steel and other metals, old furniture and mattresses, non-commercial

See CLEAN, Page 15

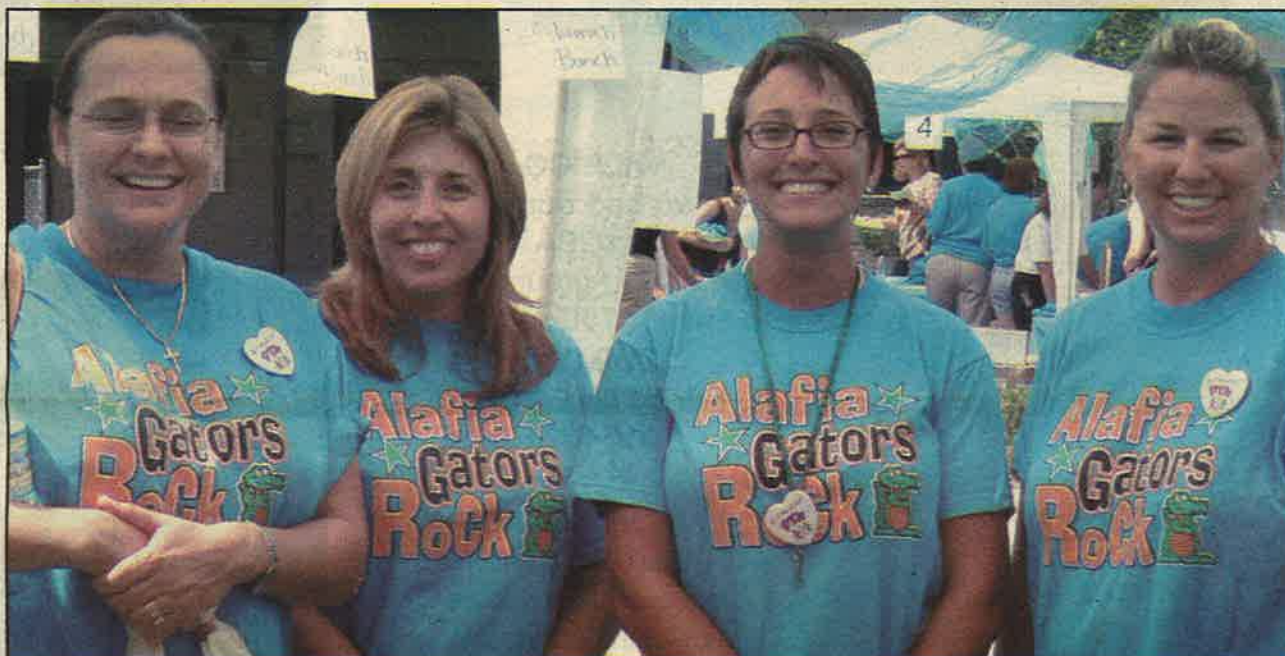


Photo Courtesy of Alafia PTA

Alafia PTA members Tami Rodems, Sharon Linsky, Dani Akers and Heather Harnage paused for a smile at one of four stations set up at the school's annual Sneak Peek in August.

Alafia Volunteers Host Annual 'Sneak Peek'

SHOWCASED PTA, NEW LUNCH BUNCH PROGRAM

By BEVERLY HARBORD
Alafia PTA Board Member

Alafia Elementary School's Parent Teacher Association held its annual "Sneak Peek" event Aug. 2 to wel-

come students and parents back to school.

The PTA welcomes children and their parents to the event each year to visit the school, meet their new teacher, and practice his or her school routine.

This year, Dani Aker, PTA presi-

dent, membership chairwoman Cynthia Atkins and the entire PTA board worked especially hard to make it an extraordinary event.

We had four crisp, white tents decorated with turquoise blue streamers and tooling. PTA board members

See ALAFIA, Page 14

SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT ♦ PAGE 8

Bloomingdale Residents Can Vote On A Proposed \$30 Per Home Annual Tax Increase On The Sept. 5 Primary Election Ballot.

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More Commuters See Value In Boarding The Bus To Base

FREE RIDE FOR MILITARY, GOVT. CIVILIAN WORKERS

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

Marine Corps Lt. Col. Chris Ara* deployed a new strategic initiative this summer, a mission designed to combat rush-hour stress and high fuel costs associated with his daily commute to and from work at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

Like an increasing number of military personnel and civilians who live in the Bloomingdale area and report to work at the base, Ara decided it was time to give public transportation a shot.

Before he hopped on the bus for the first time in July, Ara admits he was a little skeptical about using public transportation.

"I conjured up images of sitting on an old, dilapidated bus next to junkies and muggers, but I found the experience to be quite the opposite," he said.

The first Monday morning he caught a bus on the Hillsborough Area Transit Authority's 24X express route to MacDill, Ara listened in as some of his fellow riders shared animated stories of the past weekend's events. Others indulged in the opportunity to doze off and recharge in air-conditioned comfort on their way to work.

"Everyone who rides the MacDill express bus works at the base. Most riders are people in uniform just like me," he said.

Dozens of bus riders recently polled by Gazette staff said they appreciate — and have come to rely upon — the opportunity to save time, money and gas. Military personnel and government civilian workers are eligible to ride the bus to work at the base for free.

More commuters are lining up to board the bus, Ara said.

"Society gains fewer commuters on the road, therefore reducing traffic congestion and air pollution."

Economic and ecological benefits aside, Ara said the best perk he's discovered since boarding the bus is the time to enjoy a favorite passion of his — reading.

"I have an hour on both ends of the commute to get

Bloomingtondale Commuters: More Buses Needed

RIDERS STAND, SIT IN AISLES

A Gazette Report

In response to recent reports of overcrowded, standing-room-only public buses traveling between the greater Bloomingdale area and MacDill Air Force Base, Gazette staff polled Bloomingdale area residents who commute to their military or civilian jobs at the base using the 24X and 25X express bus routes. Some responses are as follows:

"I have been riding the bus since May 2005. Overall, I have been very satisfied with the service. The 24X has really caught on. We routinely have about six personnel standing."
— Brian Miller

"I usually ride the 25X bus five days a week. I leave Valrico at the stop at the corner of Bell Shoals Road and Glenhaven Drive. From my standpoint, I would say there are about 10 to 15 new riders in the past few months."
— Richard Gorka

"I have commuted to my job at MacDill on the bus since 2002. The number of riders on the 24X route has easily doubled over the past two months. This morning (Aug. 9, 2006) the 24X had people sitting in the aisles. It has become commonplace for riders to have to stand for the entire commute. I strongly suggest HARTline start making plans for a third bus as soon as possible."
— William McKenna

immersed in my latest novel, a luxury I have not been able to find the time for in years."

There is one drawback to the increase in riders, according to Ara and other express route

See BUS, Page 12

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Residents Measure Hollow Wood Drive Traffic Calming Drive Options

SURVEY: 260 CARS USE ROAD ON SCHOOL DAYS

By DAWN ZAMANIS
Correspondent

About 20 Bloomingdale residents turned out for an Aug. 23 public meeting at Bloomingdale West Park to discuss possible traffic calming methods for Hollow Wood Drive in the Windsor Woods section of Bloomingdale East.

County staff from the public works traffic division, deputies with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and county emergency medical technicians also attended the meeting.

The meeting was at the request of Windsor Woods residents concerned about high traffic volume and speeding during school arrival and dismissal times on Hollow Wood Drive between Treeline and Cold Creek drives.

Recent surveys by the county's traffic division staff counted 260 cars a day now use the road on school days, more than double the usual count of 100 cars a day. The average speed clocked on cars traveling through the neighborhood was 29.7 mph.

County staff presented several options for residents to consider and vote on at the meeting.

Concerned residents who were not able to attend the meeting are encouraged to send their choice of options presented and associated comments to county staff as soon as possible.

Send comments to the public

works traffic division by e-mail links on www.hillsboroughcounty.org/publicworks/traffic, or call 272-5912.

The results of the study will be published in 90 days on the traffic division Web site, and on Bloomingdale's community Web site, www.bloomingtondalegazette.com.

Option 1 — Do nothing

If residents opt to leave the situation as-is and make no improvements, the issue cannot be brought up for discussion again for another three years.

Option 2 — Post and enforce additional speed limit signs

If homeowners choose this option, additional speed limit signs could be posted in problem areas. In addition, residents could work with local law enforcement officials to selectively post deputies in trouble spots to enforce the speed limit. Yellow traffic divider lines could also be painted on the roads where the traffic volume is highest.

Option 3 — Install traffic calming measures

The third option offered was the installation of traffic calming measures. Different scenarios discussed included converting some of the busiest streets, including Hollow Wood, to one-way roads; installing "no left turn" signs prohibiting turns during designated hours of the day; narrowing the roads to slow the traffic flow or widening the roads to accommodate increased traffic flow;

and the least popular option presented at the meeting — the installation of speed humps.

Residents at the meeting had the opportunity to vote on one of the three options. Most felt speed humps would be unsightly and present more of a nuisance than a solution. Sheriff's Office and EMT representatives at the meeting also cautioned residents that speed humps would affect response times for emergency calls in the neighborhood. It was noted that for every speed hump installed, law enforcement and emergency personnel would need an additional ten seconds to respond to calls for help.

Many residents were interested in an additional option discussed, the installation of traffic roundabouts or treed circles in the road to slow traffic (similar to those in Fox Run), but since the county only picks up half of the very expensive costs to install the roundabouts, that option was tabled for the time being.

Option 2, to post additional signs and ramp up speed limit enforcement, seemed to reign in the most votes, along with parts of Option 3, the installation of no left turn signs at problem areas.

On a related safety issue, several residents also encouraged their neighbors to request the completion of sidewalks on Treeline and Kiowa to meet up with existing sidewalks on Culbreath Road, by calling Gary Tait with the county's school safety department, 272-5912.

Windsor Woods residents in attendance at the meeting contributed to this report.

Sidewalk Repairs Under Way On Nature's Way, Culbreatha

USE CAUTION AROUND WORK SITES

By LESLIE WHITE
Correspondent

The sidewalks around Nature's Way and Culbreath Road are the path of choice for many Bloomingdale bike riders, walkers and joggers.

Soon they'll also be dotted with construction repair sites manned by the Hillsborough County Public Works Department.

County spokesman Steve Valdez said recently that tree roots have pushed up portions of concrete along the roads, resulting in uneven sidewalks. Workers with Hillsborough's South County Maintenance Unit recently surveyed the area and marked sections slated for repairs with fluorescent pink paint and orange flags, Valdez said.

Rather than replacing entire sections of uneven sidewalk, workers will shave off the protruding concrete to make the transition between sections smoother.

"It (the shaving method) provides a cost savings and works really well. It's very cost efficient," Valdez said.

Most of the work will be done during the day. If crews have to pour any sections of cement, sidewalk flow could be interrupted for up to a week.

"With school back in session, parents should address possible detours with their bike-riding or walking students. It could be as simple as veering off into the grass, but if the work area is a large one, kids may need to temporarily ride or walk just outside the curb to avoid the project site."

For more information about this and other Hillsborough County Public Works projects, call the county's information line at 272-5900.

Your Inside Connections

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc.

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

President: Ted Grable Vice President: Joe Hickle
Treasurer: Pam Liguori Director: Lydia Harrod
Director: Steve Heckel Director: Dale Kahn
Director: George May Director: Tim Shuman
Director: Myron Magedanz Director: Sheila Harris
Director: Stanley Lee

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

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

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

Trustee: Joe Harless
Property Manager: Al Devney

Bloomingdale Community Security Program

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

Coordinator/Equipment Manager:

Tony Diolosa, 681-1146
Treasurer: Paul Kelmer
Patrol Member: Steven Heckel
Patrol Member: Brad Scharp
Patrol Member: Paul Warr



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BOSTD meetings are held at 3419 Cade Lane on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.
President: Bill Grace
Treasurer: Fred Englehart

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The official publication of the BHA since 1980
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Executive Director — Joe Liguori
Editor — Laura Frazier
Correspondent — Mack Austin
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Published by Sunbelt Newspapers
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The Gazette is delivered free to Bloomingdale residents along with The Tampa Tribune on the first Saturday of each month.

Publisher — Carla Floyd
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BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Baby Boomer Bash Benefits Brandon Clinic, Camp

OPEN TO ALL ADULTS 21 AND UP

A Gazette Report

The third annual Brandon Baby Boomer Birthday Bash will be at the Winthrop Barn Theater Sept. 9 from 6:30 p.m. to midnight. The event is open to all adults 21 and older.

Tickets, \$40 per person, include dinner and dancing. There will be

a cash bar.

The Brandon Blues Brothers will perform live at the event. Baby Boomers turning 50 and 60 this year will receive special recognition.

All proceeds will benefit the Brandon Outreach Clinic and Rotary's Camp Florida.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call George, 662-1102, or Marilyn, 892-7151.



Linda Chion Kenney/photo
The Brandon Blues Brothers fine-tune their act for this year's Baby Boomer Bash.

Cast Your Ballots, Bloomingdale!

PRIMARY ELECTION IS TUESDAY, SEPT. 5

A Gazette Report

Will Bloomingdale area residents select Katherine Harris, Peter Monroe, LeRoy Collins, or William McBride as their Republican candidate of choice for the U. S. Senate?

Will Democrats stand behind gubernatorial hopefuls Glenn Burkett, Carol Castagnero, John Crotty, Jim Davis or Rod Smith?

Will our community support Charlie Crist, Tom Gallagher, Vernon Palmer or Michael St. Jean to become the next governor?

How about the Republican candidates for state Senate District 10? Will it be Sandra Murman, Ronda Storms or Ray Young?

How will District 4 school board member incumbent Jennifer Faliero fare in the non-partisan race against her opponent, Hunter Gambrell?

And who, exactly, are all these people?

For up-to-date information about races and candidates on the Sept. 5 Primary Election ballot, including links to many candidates' Web sites, log on to the Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Web site, www.votehillsborough.com.

Bloomington Senior High School Crimson Dolls Hold Car Wash

MENTION GAZETTE, GET FREE CALENDAR

A Gazette Report

The Bloomington Senior High School Crimson Dolls will hold a car wash fundraiser at the Citgo service station on Bell Shoals Road, just south of Bloomington Avenue, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 9.

Proceeds from the car wash will help support the Crimson Dolls, the auxiliary drill/dance team that performs with Bloomington's Rajun' Bulls Band.

To receive a free magnetic calendar/dry erase board with the purchase of one car wash, say "I saw it in The Bloomington Gazette!"

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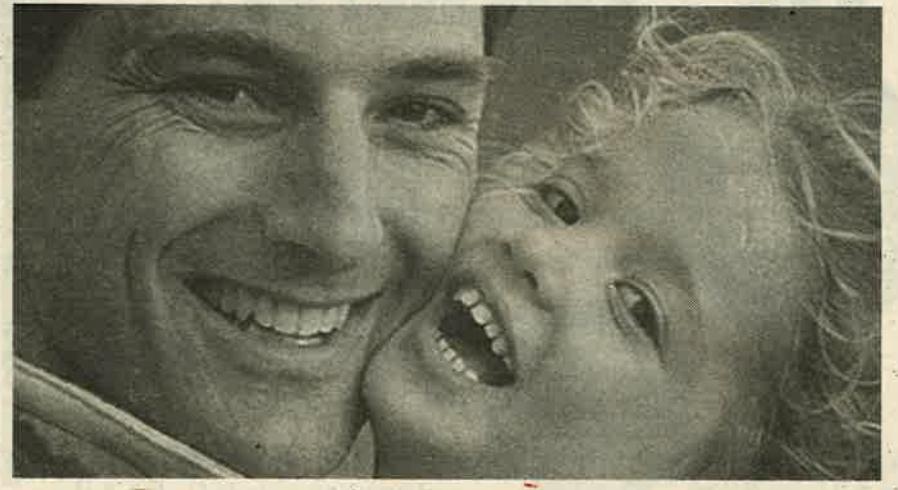
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DAWN ZAMANIS/Photo

Brandon Group Teed Off Fundraiser With Mini-Links Golf Challenge

Preliminary festivities for Brandon's Light The Night fundraiser to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society were held in FishHawk Ranch Aug. 19. The town square was transformed into an 18-hole miniature golf course, courtesy of Bloomingdale resident Bob Gaudreau, owner of LeaderBoard of Tampa, a franchise that organizes golf and mini-golf tournaments. For more information about the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, log on to www.lightthenight.org. For information about LeaderBoard of Tampa or the MiniLinks course, call (813) 685-1509 or log onto www.minigolftournaments.com.

Komen Florida Suncoast Race Set For Oct. 7

OPEN TO ALL AGES, FITNESS LEVELS

A Gazette Report

The Florida Suncoast Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation will host its eighth annual Race for the Cure Oct. 7 at Vinoy Park in St. Petersburg.

Scott Komen, Susan G. Komen's son, is the 2006 honorary chairman.

The goal for this year's race is 15,000 participants raising at least \$1 million, with 75 percent of the proceeds directly benefiting the Suncoast chapter and local community.

Funds raised will support a variety of Suncoast programs including breast health education, clinical breast exams, screening mammography, diagnostic evaluations and treatment. Komen national will use the remaining funds to support breast cancer research.

Events and late registration begin at 6:00 a.m. A competitive 5k race and a 5k walk along the waterfront and through historic Northeast St. Petersburg — as well as a one-mile Fun Run/Walk — will all kick off at 8 a.m.

Special events and activities will be provided for children 10 and younger and participants of all ages and fitness levels. For more information, and to register for any event, log on to www.komensuncoast.com.

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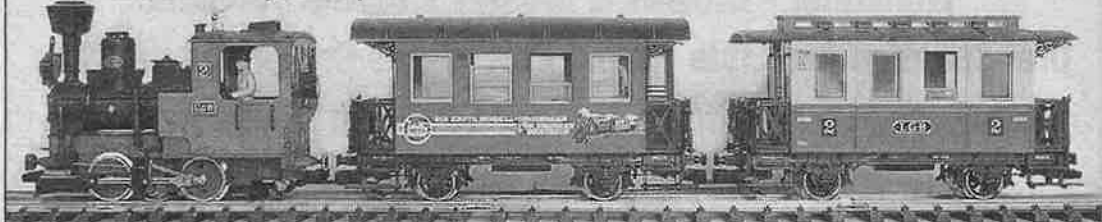
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BLOOMINGDALE SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICT

Taxing District Proposes Annual Assessment Increase

HOMEOWNERS CAN VOTE ON SEPT. 5 BALLOT

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

All homeowners residing in the official Bloomingdale Special Taxing District can vote in the Sept. 5 Primary Election for or against a \$30 increase to the community's annual per-home tax assessment.

At its monthly meeting in March, the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District board of trustees agreed the community's current annual assessment, \$100 per home regardless of the value or location of each residence, is not enough to properly maintain and improve Bloomingdale's common areas and entryways.

The funds, tacked on to each homeowner's annual property tax bill, are managed by the board of trustees — all volunteer, non-paid Bloomingdale residents. There are currently about 4,800 homes in the district.

Special taxing district board trustee David Steck said the board unanimously agrees that Bloomingdale is significantly under-assessed in comparison to similar planned developments.

“If taxpayers compare what we get in the form of a clean, livable, vibrant and aesthetically pleasing community, versus what we have historically paid, we have a real bargain in Bloomingdale,” Steck said.

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

The board applied earlier this year to present a special referendum on the Sept. 5 Primary Election ballot to increase each homeowner's assessment to \$130 a year. A simple majority vote is required for the referendum to pass. If passed, the new rate would become effective in 2007.

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

Bloomingdale Special Taxing District

Community Property Inventory*

- Community Property Area:**
- Six square miles
 - Major entryways: 8**
 - Minor entryways: 56**
 - Mowing area: 43 acres**
 - Oak trees: 631**
 - Crepe myrtle trees: 355**
 - Palm trees: 450**
 - Creeping fig: 450**
 - Landscaped beds: 122,848 square feet**
 - Ligustrum trees: 57**
 - Holly trees: 10**

* Numbers are approximate and subject to change

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

“We're spending more than \$200,000 a year just on those two contracts,” he said. “Added to all our other basic upkeep and operating expenses, that doesn't leave enough reserve for capital improvement projects.”

“Everything is more expensive,” he said.

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

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

“As more homes were built in newer sections like Somerset and Bloomingdale Cove, the additional revenue kept feeding our basic cost increases and allowed us to do (supplementary) projects like installing new irrigation zones and sod, operating a more aggressive wall painting program, and planting more trees in several areas,” he said. “All those extraneous were offset by the number of new houses being built in the district.”

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

The district recently completed renovations at the cor-

New Sod To Be Installed In Bloomingdale East, West

PLANS ALSO UNDER WAY TO IMPROVE CULBREATH ENTRANCE

A Gazette Report

Bloomington Special Taxing District property manager Al Devney reported the following community property maintenance projects recently completed or scheduled for this month.

To report community property maintenance needs, call (813) 684-6667 or e-mail bloomington.homeowners@verizon.net. The taxing district offers a standing \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible for the theft, vandalism or destruction of community property.

August Activities

Pre-bid meetings for yearly herbicide, pesticide, fertilization and lawn maintenance contracts, along with a pre-bid meeting for a large St. Augustine grass sod contract, were conducted.

Three electrical companies were contacted to give proposals to install lighting at the new Culbreath Road entrance.

Five jasmine plants and nine Aztec plants were stolen from the River Close entrance, along with two watering buckets for new oak trees on Natures Way.

Two Dogs Tree Service removed a dead oak tree on Natures Way.

Planscape Inc. installed two live oak trees on Natures Way.

Lisa Strange, with the Hillsborough County extension service, was contacted for advice to control the vines that are infesting our shrubs. Strange said there are no chemicals on the market to kill the vines, and the only way to get rid of them is to remove them from the roots.

Shuman's Handy Work replaced the light sensors at the Greenhollow and Golf Manor entrances and covered 297 linear feet of wall that had been defaced with graffiti.

The Hillsborough County road and street division was contacted to determine who had the responsibility for cleaning the drainage ditch on Bell Shoals Road. Staff mem-

See IMPROVE, Page 12

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

Drivers Must Slow Down, Stop For Buses

FINES DOUBLED IN SCHOOL ZONES

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER
Bloomington Community Resource Deputy

Yet another reminder is order for all Bloomington area motorists.

Cars traveling on BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD must stop for school buses on roads without median dividers. It's the law.

Some of you may get tired of hearing this reminder, but many of us are tired of seeing drivers in a hurry break the law and put our children in danger.

There are thousands of kids in our community riding school buses and waiting at bus stops. Drivers simply must pay close attention when driving near buses and schools.

You would not believe some of the excuses law enforcement officers hear when we stop drivers who are speeding in school zones, where FINES ARE DOUBLED.

One driver recently pulled over for speeding explained, "I was on my cell phone and didn't see the flashing (school zone) lights." This person should not be driving at all.

Most drivers don't really plan on speeding. The cost of citations is catching up to the cost of gas. Not paying attention is the primary cause of speeding. If you do speed and are pulled over by a deputy, please note: there will be no more warnings.

You speed, you pay — and you pay big.

Also keep in mind the need to post deputies in school zones to stop speeders takes them away from other important duties. Special patrols will continue, with many using new, unmarked vehicles. Rest assured, they will be watching out for you.

Residents Invited To Bring Law Enforcement Concerns To Light

GROUP MEETS THIRD THURSDAY EACH MONTH

A Gazette Report

All Bloomington residents are invited to bring their concerns or questions about law enforcement issues to the Bloomington Area Community Council for attention.

Bloomington's community resource deputy, Pete Maurer, heads the council. The group is composed of neighbors from various sections of the community whose goal is to share information about — and seek resolution of — local safety, security and general law enforcement issues.

The group works with government officials, county staff and other agencies to address issues that hit close to home including traffic control, road improvements, gang activity, home and business security, neighborhood nuisance issues and more.

The council meets at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday each month at the sheriff's office Bloomington substation, near Beef O'Brady's on Bell Shoals Road at Glenhaven Drive.

For information, call Deputy Maurer, (813) 635-8040. The substation is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Community Council, Substation Plan Senior Citizen Initiative

WHAT KIND OF HELP, INFO DO SENIORS NEED?

By DEPUTY PETE MAURER
Bloomington Community Resource Deputy

The Bloomington Area Community Council, in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, is organizing an educational and informational program for Bloomington's senior residents. The program will also provide informa-

tion and assistance to senior citizens' families, caregivers, private duty health care workers, friends and neighbors.

The group plans to assemble representatives from a wide variety of agencies to introduce their areas of expertise and resources available to assist senior citizens.

We are surveying our residents to help put this program together by asking, "What questions and concerns regarding

senior citizen issues would you like to see addressed?"

-A list of potential topics appears below. Please take a moment to review the list and let us know which items you believe our senior citizen residents need more information on. Please also feel free to suggest additional topics of interest.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in helping educate and inform our senior residents.

BHA News Alert About Natures Way Assault Elicits Concern

RESIDENTS: WHY WEREN'T WE NOTIFIED SOONER?

By LAURA FRAZIER
Editor

A BHA News Alert issued by e-mail Aug. 7 about a personal assault on Natures Way that occurred two days earlier has some residents asking, "Why weren't we notified sooner?"

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office records indicate on Aug. 5 about 11:40 a.m., an adult female jogger was assaulted

by a suspect described as a young, black male, possibly in his late teens, heavy set and with long hair. The assailant allegedly grabbed at the woman's legs as she jogged solo on Natures Way in the vicinity of Fairway Manors.

The suspect, reportedly wearing a white shirt and black shorts, escaped on foot in the area of Polumbo and Clarion drives. Sheriff's office officials confirmed the victim did not suffer serious injuries.

Several Bloomington residents who live in the area of the attack first notified Gazette staff about the incident Aug. 7.

After confirming details of the report with Bloomington Community Resource Deputy Pete Maurer, the Gazette immediately sent out a BHA News Alert with all available details to about 800 residents on the Bloomington Homeowners Association's private e-mail list. The news alert met with mixed reviews from recipients.

Many residents responded to the e-mail message expressing frustration about why a "suspect at large" situation was not immediately broadcast to the community

See ALERT, Page 14

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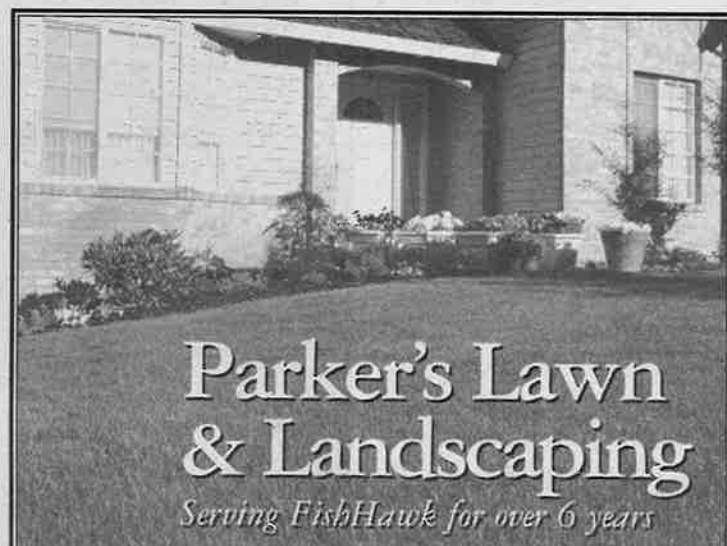


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Young Chefs Academy Cooks Up Fun For Kids

CLASSES FOR KIDS 3 TO 14

By DAWN ZAMANIS
Correspondent

Got a kid who likes to cook?

The Young Chefs Academy Cooking School just might be the best investment you can make in your child's culinary future.

This school, set to open Sept. 18 at 1576 Bloomingdale Ave., is accepting young chefs ages 3 to 14 with an interest in learning culinary arts, kid style.

They will offer after-school and weekend courses in cooking, as well as birthday parties, field trips, minicamps and other cooking-related activities for children.

Owners Jack and Amy Metz of Brandon, a father and daughter cooking duo, are enthusiastic about their new endeavor.

"We are excited to become part of the Brandon community and are looking forward to helping budding young chefs build life-enriching skills as they experience the joy of creating and tasting new foods," they said.

This is reportedly the first cooking school of its kind to come to Brandon, and many parents are delighted it has arrived.

Brandon resident Mary Callen's 11-year-old daughter, Ashley, hopes to sign up for the classes.

Callen said, "My daughter loves to cook. She's always in the kitchen watching me and helping me. I try to teach her, but sometimes I am in a rush and she doesn't learn how to prepare the meal from start to finish. I think this is a fantastic idea."

Young Chefs Academy's mission is to teach children life-enriching culinary skills in a safe environment that encourages discovery, creativity, and

See CHEFS, Page 13

BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOLS

Bloomingtondale Principal A Believer In Greatness

By DEREK MAUL
Columnist

Bloomingtondale High School Principal Mark West is relaxed as he walks around campus, pointing out features of interest. It's as if he's always been there.

In a way he has. West came on board as principal January 2006 but his photograph been hanging on the wall since 1987. West helped open the school, teaching physics for five years on the charter staff.

Born in North Carolina and educated at Wake Forest University, West moved south in 1985. "I wanted to try something new," he said. "Sunshine, all that kind of thing."

He considered offers up and down the East Coast. "Science teachers were in short supply," he said. "But I really liked the people I interviewed with here."

West started at Plant City High School. He moved to Bloomingtondale in 1987 then Middleton Middle School in 1992, first as a teacher and later as assistant principal.

In 1998 West was offered his first opportunity to serve as principal. He moved to Turkey Creek Middle School in Plant City and oversaw a massive building project and extensive renovations while the campus moved across the street into a jungle of portable classrooms.

Seven years of Grade A work at

Turkey Creek made West an obvious choice when Bloomingtondale opened.

"This is a great school because we have great people," he said. "I've got a caring staff, really committed to the kids. Plus we've got some fine traditions. We're committed to excellence and we want the kids to succeed."

West believes strong schools help to anchor the community.

"Bloomingtondale (High School) has grown up with the community," he said. "It's a great community and it deserves a great school. It's easy to get caught in the shadow of Tampa, but I always tell people 'I'm from Brandon/Valrico' because of the great things we have going on here."

How can communities help? "Make education important and continue to do that," West said. "We're a part of everyday life. Bottom line is it's important for us (educators) to get involved in students' lives but parents have to get involved in school life as well. The cool thing about this school is parents stay involved."

West enjoys getting to know his students.

"That's the fun part of this job," he said, "the interaction with the kids. I love dealing with people in general, but most importantly with

kids. Seeing the energy, how vital they are, you see the potential in every single one of them."

West's biggest challenge is also his greatest opportunity. "Trying to get to every one of those kids who slip through the cracks," he said. "Weeding out what's important and don't sweat the small stuff. It's so sad to see what kids have to go through before they get here, the circumstances. So you want to reach out and give them the best possible shot that you can."

Mark West concluded on a positive note.

"We're getting better at what we do," he said. "Probably the best thing about being in this job is you're not jaded by the world around you. The cool thing about working with kids is you see what they can be. I think we're in good shape as a society. Our teachers see it, too. That's my job, to make them see that. It's too easy to get bogged down and worry. But if you keep that overriding vision ..."

For fun, West said he likes to spend time with family.

"We like to do things together and I've gotten into biking," he said.

Additionally, West spends free time reading. Recent favorites are "Blue Like Jazz" by Donald Miller, "The Essential 55" by Ron Clark and John Maxwell's "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership." "I like to read a lot," he said.



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Bus Riders To Get Shelter From The Storm

HART TO BUILD GLENHAVEN SHELTER

By D'ANN WHITE
Correspondent

Bloomington East bus riders won't have to worry about getting soaked while waiting for the bus during next year's storm season.

With work on a shelter on Culbreath Road nearly complete and another shelter planned on Glenhaven Drive, residents who commute downtown and to MacDill Air Force Base by bus no longer will be left standing out in the rain.

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit spokeswoman Jill Cappadoro said commuters to MacDill Air Force Base on Route 25X hopefully will have a new shelter by next summer. HART has appropriated funding for a shelter on Glenhaven and will begin acquiring a site. Each shelter costs an estimated \$20,000 to \$30,000. Currently, HART has 4,500 bus stops but only 25 shelters. However, the transit authority has 30 shelters approved in the coming fiscal year, including the Glenhaven shelter where as many as 20 commuters catch the bus every weekday.

"HART has really focused on customer service," said Cappadoro.

Bloomington East resident Norbert Gobin, an employee of U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill who began riding the bus in 1985, has been lobbying for the Glenhaven shelter for several years noting that, unlike some bus stops, riders

can't wait in their cars for the bus at Glenhaven. Riders must park their cars behind Beef O' Brady's in the Village Center on Bell Shoals Road and then walk a short distance to Glenhaven to wait near a child-care center.

"We've long been in need of a shelter there," said Gobin, who recently served on a county commission-appointed study group to review and recommend bus service improvements. Gobin has published an e-mail newsletter for Route 25X called BusChat since 2002. BusChat began with 40 e-mail addresses and now has nearly 300. "Right now the only shelter along 25X is at Hanley Park (on Kings Avenue). So, when it rains, riders go ahead and drive to work rather than get wet waiting on the bus."

Gobin said providing basic comforts like shelters is in HART's best interests since the MacDill route is so popular.

"We have three buses on the 25X route and two have standing room-only," said Gobin. "A few weeks ago, we had 17 people standing, 52 people on a bus meant for 35. There's a large population of MacDill personnel in the Bloomington and FishHawk area and the base has its own parking issues that make riding the bus preferable. We now have five buses going to MacDill every morning - three from Bloomington and two from FishHawk." Gobin said Route 24X, FishHawk/Riverview to MacDill, which began in January, also has standing room-only.

The Route 25X bus also picks up

MacDill commuters at Bloomington and Bryan Road, Kings Avenue and Lumsden Road and at the AmSouth Bank on Causeway Boulevard. The Causeway stop serves both 25X and 27X, six buses a day. In addition, there are 14 vanpools heading into MacDill each day.

"With the price of gas going up, we love taking the bus," Gobin said. "And every bus load means 35 less cars on the road."

In the meantime, HART has completed its park-and-ride shelter on Culbreath Road and Bloomington Avenue serving Route 27X, the FishHawk/South Brandon Express Route to downtown Tampa. The transit authority is now in the process of constructing a switchback, a zigzagging pathway from the parking lot to the shelter for wheelchair access. Because there is a slight grade, the zigzag makes it easier for wheelchairs to negotiate the pathway, Cappadoro said. Once finished, HART will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

HART also is considering another of Gobin's suggestions: discounts on express fares for disabled and elderly riders. This month the board approved scheduling public hearings in September to seek community comment on a half-fare discount on commuter express routes for riders 65 and older, people with disabilities and Medicare cardholders.

HART already offers discounts for the elderly and disabled on local routes.

In addition, the board is considering adding trips to heavily used local routes that would run beyond midnight, said Cappadoro.

BUS

Continued From Page 3

riders Gazette staff spoke with last week. It's increasingly difficult to find a seat.

"I often hear complaints of the buses being more crowded than ever, and sometimes riders have to stand. I don't think it's anything that can't be overcome by simply adding more buses," he said.

On Aug. 9, riders of the 24X MacDill express (with stops on Boyette Road in Riverview and the FishHawk area) and the 25X (with stops in the Bloomington area) reported standing room only on all buses on both routes.

Lt. Col. Andy David* has boarded the 25X bus to commute to and from his job at Central Command since 1987.

"Riding the bus is great, but if I take the first bus coming to work or the first one going home, I often have to stand up for the (one hour) commute," David said.

He estimated about 30 new riders have started using the 25X over the past few months.

David agreed with the majority of commuters who responded to the Gazette's informal poll that overcrowded buses do present potentially serious safety concerns.

But he's not complaining too loudly.

"The least I can do is stand up during a free ride to and from work, considering my son is serving in Baghdad and there is a war going on."

* Names of military personnel stationed at MacDill Air Force Base have been changed, by request, due to security reasons.

IMPROVE

Continued From Page 9

ber Marcus Fletch said it is the county's responsibility and it would be cleaned by the second week of August. Additionally, the road and street division was called to report that a resident had taken a nasty fall on the sidewalk on Natures Way and River Close. The sidewalk is raised about 3 inches because of tree roots. The sidewalk was sprayed with fluorescent orange paint to alert residents of the dangerous situation (see related story about sidewalk repairs in this issue of the Gazette).

Don Davis, supervisor of the Americans with Disabilities Act sidewalk ramp

construction division, was contacted concerning a pile of debris that had been left at the Allwood entrance. He stated that the area would be cleaned prior to school starting.

In the land of eat, drink and pitch out the window, 22 bags of litter were picked up, 18 entryway light bulbs were replaced and 11 cents was recovered. Items of special interest found included an ice tray, a traffic cone, a beach towel and a piece of black, exotic ladies' lingerie. The beverages of choice were Diet Lime Coke for soft drinks, Miller Genuine Draft for beer and

Old Grand Dad for distilled spirits.

September Projects

The installation of St. Augustine grass sod in Bloomington East and West will be supervised by the property manager.

The landscaping plan for the Culbreath Road entrance will be reviewed, permits will be obtained from the county, and bids will be solicited from contractors to install new landscaping, lighting and signage.

The trees on Natures Way damaged by passing trucks will be noted and proposals to have them trimmed will be requested.

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CHEFS

Continued From Page 11

most of all fun. The academy houses two fully functioning kitchens that are colorful and cheery and designed especially for children.

The academy will welcome field trip groups to their cooking school from area schools, child care establishments, scout troops, and religious groups. They also have special curriculums that mesh with what kids are currently studying at various schools and organizations, focusing on subjects like nutrition, kitchen safety, the science of cooking and more.

Safety is a priority at the academy. Children, therefore, are not permitted to use the stove by themselves. The kids do, however, participate in all of the preparation that goes into making a meal; mixing, kneading, cutting, assembly, presentation, etc.

"Our goal is to teach cooking methods with recipes and activities that emphasize creativity. Our curriculum is written by a professional chef, and many of the things kids learn in our kitchen can be duplicated at home with the help of a parent," Jack Metz said.

They also have a retail store on the premises offering unique cooking items, gifts and tools for children.

Classes available at the academy include Big Chef, Little Chef for ages 3 and 4 (parent must



Photo courtesy of Young Chefs Academy
Father and daughter team Jack and Amy Metz cook up fun for kids at the Young Chefs Academy cooking school, opening Sept. 18 on Bloomingdale Avenue.

be present); Junior Chef's Club for ages 5 to 7; Chef's Club for ages 7 to 14; and Advanced Chefs for ages 11 to 14.

For more information, call (813) 643-7025 or e-mail brandonfl@youngchefsacademy.com or visit www.youngchefsacademy.com.

TAX

Continued From Page 8

ner of Bell Shoals Road at Greenhollow and at Garnet, just two of the eight entryways it hoped to have completed by now.

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

"We're not talking about putting in some elaborate, Taj Mahal entryways, but we do need to stay competitive with the new communities emerging around us," Snelling said. "We'd like to make some simple, neat and tasteful improvements."

"Our goal is simply to keep everything clean and neat, repair accident sites, and to maintain

our irrigation system and all manner of flowers, grass, bushes and trees.

"And we absolutely must upgrade our entryways."

Steck said, "If the community doesn't need the additional monies, then we won't take the additional monies. But at least we'll have at our disposal the contingent revenues necessary to keep Bloomingdale a first class community in which to live and raise our children."

For more information about the Bloomingdale Special Taxing District or the proposed assessment increase, log on to www.bloomingtondalegazette.com, call 684-6667 or e-mail bloomingtondale.homeowners@verizon.net.

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ALERT

Continued From Page 10

by the Gazette and/or the sheriff's office.

One respondent wrote, "Why did it take two days to let the residents of this community know (about the crime)?"

Another wrote, "Why did residents have to contact (Gazette staff)? Why didn't the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office contact the community? This is one reason I signed up for BHA News Alerts; so that I know what is going on. I have found it to be an informative and useful tool. But there could have been other victims. If the community is alerted immediately, then we can take precautions."

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Debbie Carter said her office cannot issue media alerts or reverse-911 calls for every incident reported, due to the sheer volume of calls deputies respond to each day.

"We are already at 479,000 reports written this year," she said. "If we reported every single incident that occurred, the newspapers and TV stations wouldn't even have enough time to handle them."

Media alerts and reverse-911 calls to residents are reserved for the most severe crimes and disasters, Carter said.

"Had this been a rape, a brutal assault, a missing child or Alzheimer's patient — or a natural disaster requiring evacuation like a fire or broken gas line — we absolutely would pull out all the stops to notify the community."

Carter said any resident can check crime reports on the sheriff's office Web site, www.hcso.com under "Press Releases," or by calling the public information line, 247-8658.

When it comes to BHA News Alerts, Gazette staff relies on Bloomingdale neighbors and pub-

lic officials to pass along information about law enforcement issues, safety concerns and any other urgent situations they feel should be broadcast by e-mail to the community.

However, even when urgent situations are reported immediately, it is the policy of Gazette staff, under the direction of the Bloomingdale Homeowners Association, to first confirm details received with the appropriate authorities before releasing the information to the community. This policy is in place to avoid disseminating erroneous information and to protect the privacy rights of any individuals who may be affected.

Depending on the severity of a crime or the urgency of a safety issue reported, it could take anywhere from five minutes to two days for Gazette staff to confirm the details with the appropriate authorities and issue a BHA News Alert. The sheriff's office staff must also follow its own procedures for confirming, reporting and releasing crime reports. Details about most crimes are therefore generally not available immediately.

The sooner residents and public officials report urgent concerns to Gazette staff, the sooner we can confirm the information and issue an e-mail broadcast.

To sign up for the BHA's private e-mail list, log on to www.bloomingtondalegazette.com and type your e-mail address in the white box at the top left of the page. No further personal information is required. E-mail addresses are not disclosed to other recipients, and addresses will not be shared with or sold to any other organizations.

To report urgent items to be considered for BHA News Alerts, please e-mail info@bloomingtondalegazette.com or call 643-2990 and leave a message.

ALAFIA

Continued From Page 1

wore their school spirit shirts and a great big smile. Our goal was to make everyone feel at home at Alafia, like one big, happy family. We wanted parents to feel comfortable asking questions, and to see the PTA as a fun and integral part of this great elementary school.

Parents were invited to visit four stations to learn about the PTA and how they could become involved. The children played games and won prizes at each station. The "games" theme worked very well because the children got the parents excited about school and getting involved.

The first station was hosted by Akers. Children searched for "ducks" in a baby pool, while Akers discussed the school's new Lunch Bunch program with parents.

The program is designed to give students a 10-minute break at the end of their lunch period to talk and play, and to clear their minds of stress and their bodies of pent-up energy. Studies show that children are less fidgety and better able to focus in class when they have an opportunity for free play in their day.

The annual cost of running the program is \$9,000. The PTA has already started raising money from community businesses and is hosting a school donation drive. The money will pay for two employees to run Lunch Bunch, and for activity supplies such as sidewalk chalk, balls, chess, jacks and other games. For more information or to make a donation, e-mail alafiapta@msn.com or call the school, 744-8190.

At the second station, children searched for rocks in a sand bucket, while representatives from the Market Day organization handed out fliers describing one of the PTA's annual fundraisers. Market Day delivers frozen, restau-

rant-quality food to the school for pickup, and returns a percentage of the proceeds to the PTA.

The PTA also had fliers detailing the dinner nights schedule throughout the school year with Beef O'Brady's, Bloomingdale Pizza, Chick-fil-A, Moe's, Steak 'n Shake and Chuck E. Cheese. Special events representatives detailed fun events planned for the year such as the Fall Festival, school dances, movie nights, Holiday Shop, and craft nights.

At the third station, children played math games while PTA members described how parents could get involved to benefit their children and the entire school. Some examples include home room parents, media center helpers, tutoring, sunshine and sympathy (providing cards and small gifts for staff, faculty and PTA board), hospitality (organizing functions in support of the staff, faculty, and PTA board), and the Reflections art program.

The fourth and final station was the checkout line for memberships, student planners, T-shirts, magnets and yearbooks. Those remarkable women were able to keep a smile on their faces throughout sweltering heat, long lines, endless questions and the stream of money coming in.

What a grand success. The PTA recorded almost 300 new memberships that day, more than half the total membership goal for the school.

Alafia Principal Ellyn Smith said she received many compliments about the school and the Sneak Peek event.

"My hat goes off to the entire PTA board, but especially to Cynthia Atkins, membership, and Dani Akers, PTA president. I am looking forward to a fantastic year at Alafia," Smith said.

Cleanup Volunteers Needed

STUDENTS EARN SERVICE CREDITS

A Gazette Report

More volunteers are needed for the BHA's Community Cleanup Day, Sept. 9, to staff the collection site and help residents unload their cars.

High school students and Scouts may earn community service hour credits for assisting with the project.

To help, e-mail info@bloomingdalegazette.com or call 643-2990 — please leave a message with your name, phone number and the hours you are available to work.

The cleanup will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or until all the Dumpsters at the site are full, whichever comes first.

The Bloomingdale Homeowners Association Inc. is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization.

Free Junk Disposal At County Collection Centers

OPEN WEEKDAYS, SATURDAY
UNTIL 5:30 P.M.

A Gazette Report

Hillsborough County residents can dispose of household junk, old appliances, yard waste, paint, batteries and more for free at one of five collection centers open Monday through Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

To gain free access to collection centers, residents must present a copy of their property tax bill and photo ID.

Two collection sites convenient to the Bloomingdale area, and the items they accept (varies by site), are listed below. For more information about collection centers or the Hillsborough County Solid Waste Management Department, call 272-5680 or visit www.hillsborough

county.org/solidwaste.

Alderman Ford Collection Center

9402 State Road 39, Lithia.
Information/directions: 757-3820.

Accepts collectible waste, non-collectible waste, scrap metal, tires and lead acid batteries.

South County Collection Center

13000 U.S. 41, Riverview. Information/directions: 671-7611.

Accepts collectible waste, non-collectible waste, yard waste, scrap metal, tires, used motor oil and lead acid batteries.

On the second Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. hazardous chemicals and electronics are also accepted at the South County Collection Center.

CLEAN

Continued From Page 1

construction debris and tires.

A number of items cannot be accepted at the Natures Way site, including regular household garbage usually picked up at the curb, solid waste from commercial activities, hazardous materials such as paint, household chemicals, batteries and propane tanks. In addition, yard waste cannot be accepted at the site. To dispose of those items, please refer to the story about county collection centers in this issue of the Gazette.

Elderly or disabled residents who need assistance to transport household junk can call the

BHA office, 681-2051, before noon Sept. 7 to schedule a free pick-up.

The twice-annual event is sponsored by the homeowners association and funded in part by a minigrant from the Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations.

Bloomingdale's community cleanup days are staffed by neighborhood volunteers and held in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation Department.

For more information, call 681-2051 or e-mail info@bloomingdalegazette.com.

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GOLF COURSE FRONTAGE! Scr. pool & spa. On the 8th fairway of Bloomingdale Golf Course!



4BD/3BA \$374,900
Professionally decorated scr. & htd. pool/spa beauty with 3-car garage.



3BD/2BA PLUS DEN \$369,900 Scr. Pool/spa home on nearly 1/3 acre in Bloomingdale Ridge with 3-car garage.



4BD/2BA \$309,000
Immaculate scr. pool home with large kitchen, garden bath and super convenient location!



3BD/2BA \$299,900
Screened pool home with wood floors and large lush lawn.



4BD/3BA \$284,900
MOVE-IN CONDITION! Granite counters, wood cabinets, almost everything updated.



4BD/2.5BA POOL HOME! \$279,900 Family room w/fireplace and fenced backyard. Bloomingdale schools.



3BD/2BA \$269,900
Charming scr. pool beauty on 1/3 acre non-deed restricted lot. Updated kitchen & super location!



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