



THE BLOOMINGDALE GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SINCE 1980

VOL. XLIV



ISSUE 8



AUG. 2024



WWW.BLOOMINGDALE.LIFE

THIS MONTH



**MAN'S BEST FRIEND
ON A LEASH**

Page 4

**THANK YOU TO OUR
COMMUNITY FOR MAKING
MUSIC BINGO A SUCCESS!**

Page 10

**EARNING RECOGNITION
THROUGH THE
CONGRESSIONAL AWARD**

Page 12

BATTLE OF THE BANDS!

Page 14

**KEEPING KIDS INTERNET
SAFE AS THEY HEAD BACK TO
SCHOOL**

Page 15

PLEASE  RECYCLE

WINNER

**2013, 2014, 2016,
2018 & 2019**

**Hillsborough County
Neighborhood
Recognition Award**

**Best Communications
Newsletter Category**



August is the slow, gentle month that stretches out the longest across the span of a year. It yawns and lingers on with the light in its palms." *Victoria Erickson*



YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LIKE US ON  **FACEBOOK!** www.facebook.com/BLGazette



Elise Cruz Aragon
Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette
P.O. Box 6313, Brandon, FL 33508 - (813) 681-2051

Design/Layout: Chris Hicks, NTZ Studios (ntzstudios.com)
Staff Writers: Michelle Colesanti, Nick Nahas & Amanda Ragan

The official publication of the BNA since 1980, delivered free to Bloomingdale residents on the first Wednesday of each month.



Andrea Daly
Senior Marketing Manager
adaly@tampabay.com

**Tampa Bay
Times**

BLOOMINGDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 6313, Brandon, FL 33508 (813) 681-2051

Email: Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com Website: www.Bloomingdale.Life

Follow on Facebook: www.facebook.com/Bl.Neighbor1

BNA board meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Bloomingdale Regional Library.

President:
Suzy Watts

Vice President:
Sean Donahue

Treasurer:
Grace Lewis

Directors at Large:
Laney Balis

Kalyn Dukes

Bobbi Ferraro

Kiersten Sutton

**Bloomingdale
Office Update:**
Residents may call
Suzy Watts, acting
as the interim office
manager until a
replacement Office
Manager has been
secured.

BNA BRIEFS

BNA CALENDAR

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events!

August 6 / Music Bingo at Bullfrog Creek Brewery to Support Seeds of Hope

August 7 / Open House at Bloomingdale Senior High School

August 8 / Open House at Alafia Elementary School, Burns Middle School

August 27 / BNA Monthly Meeting / 7 p.m./ Bloomingdale Regional Library

September 7 / Community Garage Sale

December 8 / Santa Visit

JOIN THE BNA!

\$42 annually helps keep our community programs going. Please send your membership in today and be part of making Bloomingdale a great place to live! **Membership can be paid through PayPal!**

Scan this QR Code or visit <https://bloomingdale.life>
At the bottom of the homepage, click Membership.



A Note from the Editor

With these lazy days ending, I hope you found time to take a moment for yourself and those you keep close. I had the joy of spending time with my family up north before the descent into madness – better known as back to school – begins. My summer highlight was meeting my nephew for the first time; his gummy smile and willingness to eat mashed up prunes still brings a smile to my face, even a month later.

As summer turns to fall, let this be your gentle reminder that great things are still in store for us before the year closes out. With school back in session and the cooler weather just on the horizon, take this opportunity to jumpstart a new project for yourself. Whether it be a fresh coat of paint in your living room or a new Pilates class with friends, take the upcoming change and use it to spur a new beginning for yourself.




There's still a lot in store for us at BNA for this year. With the Garage Sale just around the corner and Santa's impending visit, there's so much more for us before the year closes out. Keep using this momentum to try new things and get out into the community we all love.

Elise Cruz Aragon

Editor - The Bloomingdale Gazette



Back-to-School specials Call us and find out.

-  **VENDORS:** We refer **quality** vendors to prepare your house to be SOLD in today's Market.
-  **VALUATION:** What's your house really worth? Zillow is not the answer. Call us for a **free** Market Analysis.
-  **EXPERIENCE:** Learn why **The Henzler Team** has sold **1,000+** homes and is ranked nationally.
-  **TEAM SUPPORT:** From the 1st consultation to closing, we'll be with you every step of the way & provide **feedback**.



THE HENZLER TEAM

Make this school year the best one yet!



Contact us before
the school bells ring!



Dan & Barb Henzler Gi Gi Pat Kim



KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY

Each Office Is Independently Owned and Operated

813-293-3603 | henzler@kw.com | www.DanHenzler.com

0000351755-01

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

As part of BNA's new initiative, welcome baskets will be distributed to new neighbors every quarter. Baskets come with coupons to local businesses and a rack card from BNA. If you would like to donate anything for our new and future neighbors, contact Kiersten Sutton with BNA. We're so excited to have you here!

SERVICE HOURS FOR STUDENTS

If you're looking for a little help within your organization and want to offer service hours, make sure to reach out to Mindy Edgeman at Bloomingdale High School. She can help navigate you through the process so our students get the hours they need for Florida Bright Futures, and you get the most assistance from our Bloomingdale students.



Leashing Dogs at Bloomingdale Parks

By Elise Cruz Aragon

One of the best ways to enjoy your Saturday morning is to take man's best friend to the park – it's a great way for pets and their owners to enjoy the outdoors. A stroll with Fido can take the mind off any stress and give you something to smile about for the rest of your day. However, leashing your dog while at these parks is crucial for the safety and enjoyment of all Bloomingdale neighbors.

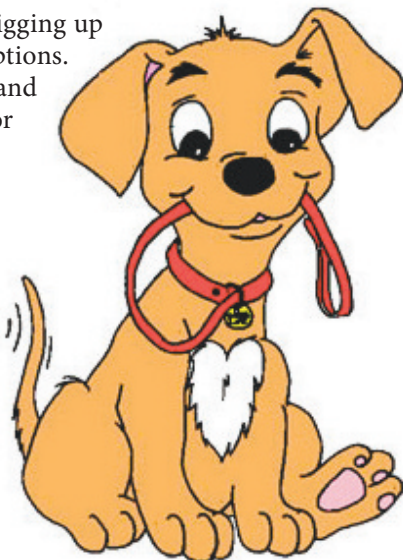
A leash helps keep your dog under control and prevents them from running off, which can lead to dangerous situations like traffic accidents or encounters with aggressive animals. Even well-trained dogs can act unpredictably, and a leash ensures they stay close and safe.

Not everyone at the parks may be comfortable around dogs. Some people may have allergies or fears. Leashing your dog shows respect for others' comfort and space, allowing everyone to enjoy the parks without concern.

Leashing your dog also prevents them from digging up gardens, chasing wildlife, or causing disruptions. It minimizes the risk of aggressive behavior and helps maintain the parks as enjoyable spaces for all visitors.

Using a leash reflects responsible pet ownership and sets a positive example for other dog owners. It ensures the safety and well-being of your dog, other park-goers, and the park environment.

In summary, leashing dogs at Bloomingdale East and Bloomingdale West parks is essential for safety, respect, and responsible pet ownership. Let's work together to keep our parks enjoyable for everyone.



AUGUST COMMUNITY CALENDAR

This month marks Get Ready for Kindergarten Month and National Crayon Collection Month, just in time for back to school!



August 1st: Lughnasa (Gaelic festival)

August 3rd: National Watermelon Day

August 6th: International Sailor Moon Day, Music Bingo

August 8th: National Pickleball Day

August 11th: Play in the Sand Day

August 12th: Tisha B'Av

August 14th: National Navajo Code Talkers Day



August 16th: Hawaiian Shirt Day

August 18th: Tu B'Av



August 20th: National Bacon Lovers Day

August 24th: Kobe Bryant Day, Pluto Demoted Day



August 27th: Crab Soup Day

August 29th: Marine Corps Reserve Birthday



Want to share a community event in The Gazette or on the Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association Facebook page? Email inbloomingdalenews@gmail.com

YARD OF THE MONTH

CYNTHIA AND CLIFTON GRIFFIN
1205 MONTE LAKE DRIVE, VALRICO



ACE the **YMCA**
The helpful place.

The Yard of the Month is sponsored by
Ace Hardware of Bloomingdale and Campo YMCA.

Send Yard of the Month nominations to:
bl.neighbor1@gmail.com or call 813-681-2051.
Winners receive a **\$25 Gift Card** to Ace Hardware of
Bloomingdale and a **1 month family membership**,
plus join fee to the Campo YMCA.

HELP!



IS ON THE WAY



Enjoy our end of summer savings on a new system!

Buy 1 A/C System
Get 1 Heat Pump

FREE*

**BOGO
SALE**

- + FREE HVAC
INSTALL ESTIMATES
- + NEXT-DAY INSTALLS
- + EASY FINANCING OPTIONS

Our expert technicians will get the job done right the first time,
and you'll appreciate our guaranteed on-time, same-day services.

- HVAC Replacement
- HVAC Repair & Maintenance
- Smart Thermostat Installation
- Slow or Clogged Drains
- Sewer Line Inspect & Repair
- Pipe Insulation & Re-Piping

EMERGENCY **HOTLINE** (813) 498-3848

IERNAair.com

*See IERNAair.com/coupons for details. © By Ierna's Heating & Cooling. All Rights Reserved. LICENSE #CAC1813676, #CFC1429475

0000348720-01

Getting the Kids to School Safely

By Elise Cruz Aragon

As the new school year begins, ensuring the safety of students walking to and from school becomes a vital community concern. With more children on foot navigating their way through neighborhoods and crossing streets, it's crucial for both drivers and students to be vigilant and proactive in maintaining a secure environment.

Drivers play a significant role in safeguarding young pedestrians. It is essential for motorists to remain attentive and adhere to speed limits, particularly in school zones where children are most likely to be crossing streets. During the hours when school starts and ends, traffic patterns change and the presence of students increases, making it imperative for drivers to exercise extra caution. Obeying traffic signals, yielding to crossing guards, and refraining from using mobile phones while driving are all critical practices that contribute to a safer environment for students. Last year in Florida, there were over 700 pedestrian fatalities, underscoring the importance of vigilance in protecting young pedestrians.

Community members can further enhance safety by participating in local initiatives designed to protect children. Programs that promote “walking school buses” or involve adults volunteering as crossing guards help create a safer environment for students. Additionally, neighborhoods can host safety awareness campaigns to educate drivers about the importance of vigilance near schools. These collective efforts ensure that everyone understands their role in keeping children safe.

For students, understanding how to cross roads safely is equally important. Before stepping off the curb, students should always look both ways to check for oncoming traffic, and they should only cross at designated crosswalks where possible. Making eye contact with drivers can help ensure that they are seen and acknowledged. It's also vital for students to avoid distractions, such as using electronic devices, while crossing streets.

Education on pedestrian safety should start early, and parents can reinforce these practices by modeling safe behavior and discussing road safety with their children. Instilling habits such as waiting for the pedestrian signal and looking both ways before crossing can help students become more aware of their surroundings and reduce the risk of accidents.

By working together, both community members and students can contribute to a safer environment for everyone. Awareness, education, and vigilance are the cornerstones of public safety, especially when it comes to protecting our youngest and most vulnerable road users. Through collaborative efforts and responsible behavior, the journey to and from school can be made safer for all.





The Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association is happy to promote the

Bloomingdale East & West Community Garage Sale

**Saturday
September 7, 2024
8 a.m.**

Over **100** sales throughout
Bloomingdale East & West

Visit our Facebook page for updates.

www.Bloomingdale.Life
Email: Bl.Neighbor1@gmail.com

 Bloomingdale Neighborhood Association



Compiled non-partisanly, the League of Women Voters offers information for all voters about those in the running in upcoming elections. No candidate will be endorsed or opposed, and LWV stays neutral in its effort to encourage election participation.

If you know of someone who lives outside of our neighborhood, encourage them to use the LWV as a resource to find the candidates running in their area. More information is available on their website, <https://lwvfl.org/>.



Do You Own a Rental Home or Investment Property?
Are You Tired of Self-Managing and Ready to Enjoy Your LIFE?

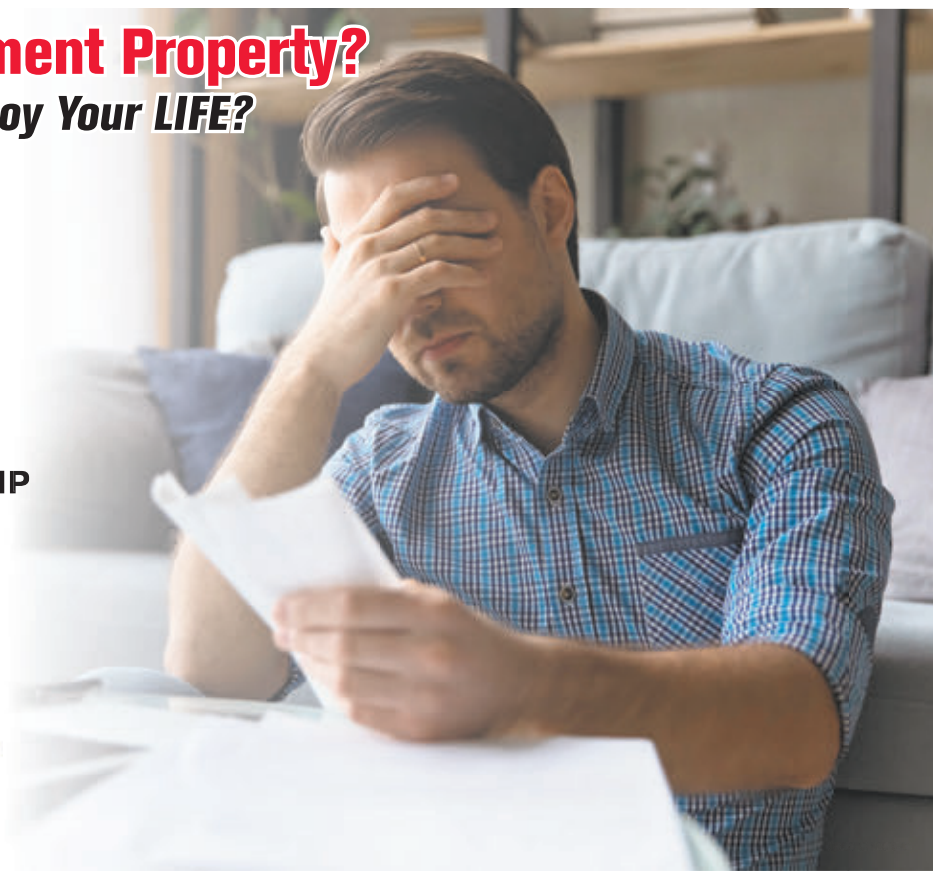
PMI Arrico is an Air Force retiree-owned-and-operated Real Estate and Property Management Company. We maximize the performance and value of our clients' investment properties while you have fun!

- We aggressively market your home
- We thoroughly screen tenant applicants
- We execute and enforce attorney-provided lease
- We collect rents and hold security deposits
- We coordinate quality maintenance
- We accurately account for all funds
- We know the landlord/tenant laws!
- We follow strict codes of ethics
- We hold the highest standards of professionalism
- **You enjoy peace of mind!**



Free Rental Analysis

Paul Arrington MPM, RMP
Owner/Broker
813-906-1710
arricorealty.com



Our Local Candidates for Office

By Michelle Colesanti

While everyone is focused on the upcoming major races in November, there are plenty of local races that are just as important to the people in Hillsborough County and specifically Bloomingdale. On Tuesday, August 20, you can exercise your right to vote for those you think will be the best candidates for the position they wish to secure. So that voting is convenient for everyone, no matter your polling place, Early Voting takes place at Bloomingdale Regional Library from August 5-18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You can request a ballot by mail, but the deadline is August 8. Visit www.votehillsborough.gov/VOTERS/Vote-By-Mail for more information.

The primary ballot is different depending on whether you are registered for a specific party or are independent. Everyone can vote for the School Board District 7 candidates, Public Defender's office and County Court Judge Groups 11 and 21. Democrat and Republican ballots will include candidates for County Commissioner District 4. The winners of that race will then run against each other in the November election along with Independent Matthew Taylor. Your vote is important so if you are registered, get out there and make your voice count.

Primary Candidates for County Commission District 4 Democratic Primary Candidates:



Jonathan Chavez A recent USF graduate who's passionate about protecting the environment. "Hillsborough county has beautiful natural resources, and I refuse to let corporations strip our county to the bone." A Tampa Bay native, he has received two B.A. degrees: Political Science and Economics. Visit www.chavez4florida.com.



Nicole Payne is running for County Commissioner because she believes in the power of community and the importance of having strong, politically balanced, dedicated leadership that listens to and advocates for its residents. The most critical issues facing District 4 include infrastructure development, public safety, and access to quality healthcare and education. "We need to ensure our roads and public services keep pace with growth, support our law enforcement and first responders, and provide resources that promote the well-being and success of our residents." Pane has lived in Hillsborough County for seven years, working in both districts, and has seen firsthand the challenges and opportunities we face. She is committed to bringing positive change and ensuring our county thrives. A military veteran spouse and mom, she is also the Managing Partner of Kennico Investments, LLC, Co-Owner of Winederlust.wine, Adjunct Professor at Schiller International University, President of the Hillsborough County Black Chamber of Commerce and a doctoral candidate with South University- Savannah. She is a passionate advocate for mental health and community development. Visit www.vote4nicolepayne.com/home.



Christine Miller is President & CEO of the Plant City Chamber of Commerce. She was recently appointed by Governor DeSantis as interim County Commissioner for District 4 due to Michael Owens recent departure to run for Florida House Senate District 70. She is committed to meeting the needs of the community, with a dual concern for business and quality of life. Miller forges strong connections and lasting relationships with strategic leaders to create a more remarkable place to live and do business. Miller resides in Plant City with her husband of 25 years and her three children. Visit <https://votechristinemiller.com/about/>.



Cody Powell began his public service career by serving on the Hillsborough County Land Use Appeals Board, where he was appointed by Ken Hagan and fellow Board of County Commissioners to the Hillsborough Planning Commission. He stands for conservative values and promises to support small business owners. Other priorities include fiscal discipline and customer service in government. Powell enjoys serving at his local church, playing golf, working out, and time with his family. Visit <http://www.votecodypowell.com/>.

School Board District 7 Candidates:



Karen Bendorf says, "As the wife of a community pastor, mother of six amazing sons and a public-school teacher in Hillsborough County for the past 13 years, I am passionate about providing our precious children a high-quality education and days spent in a safe and wholesome school environment." As an invested teacher and community member, she will work to offer students the educational experience they deserve. Visit www.electkarenbendorf.com/.



Johnny Bush is a student-centered educator who believes every child matters. He said, "Every employee of our district is vitally important to the success of all students. I am running to put students first by supporting those we charge with educating them." According to Bush some of the critical issues include teacher shortage and lack of teacher pay, student behavior/lack of mentoring, mental health support/lack of staff. Bush is a 37-year educator from Lake Worth (Palm Beach County). He used his BA in Social Work and a Masters in Deaf Education to teach deaf and hard of hearing students, most recently in Brandon. His credentials include being an AP at Riverview HS, Athletic Director at Brandon HS, APC and Principal at Robinson and Plant High Schools, from which he finally retired. But he can't stay away from the kids. He currently works as Campus Safety Monitor Jefferson High so that he can interact and continue to mentor students. Bush is a Christian who has been happily married for 25 years and has two daughters. Hobbies include reading the Bible and MLK's A Testament of HOPE. He also enjoys traveling and hiking and is fluent in American Sign Language. He also loves to surf and owns eight surfboards. Visit www.votejohnnybush.com/.



Jen Flebotte cares deeply about the future of our children and community. "As a mother with kids in Hillsborough County public schools, I've firsthand witnessed the strengths and the challenges our education system faces. This personal experience, enhanced by my journey of homeschooling my children and now navigating the public school system with them, has ignited my passion for this role." Additionally, the heart-wrenching loss of her daughter profoundly deepened her commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity for a bright future. "I aim to be a strong advocate for parents who feel overlooked and ensure our schools genuinely prioritize the needs and rights of families." She feels the most critical issues facing our schools today stem from significant financial mismanagement by the school board resulting in severe consequences like school closures and a shortage of buses, directly impacting students' educational experience. Additionally, there is a concerning trend to minimize parental involvement, effectively keeping parents away from the decision-making table. Flebotte was born and raised in Tampa, a proud graduate of Hillsborough County public schools and later continuing her education at HCC and UF, specializing in

Architectural Design. "My diverse 23-year career spans across construction, design, and the education sectors, enriching my understanding of business and community building." Visit <https://votejenf.com/>.



Lynn Gray (Incumbent) has been an educator for nearly 40 years and has served on the Hillsborough County School Board since 2016. She is currently seeking re-election for a third term. Her hands-on experience in the classroom has been invaluable in shaping her policies. As a member of the HCSB, she initiated various ongoing committees to strengthen parental and community involvement for their children's education and safety. Visit www.votelynngray.com.

Public Defender:



Rocky Brancato has worked closely with Public Defender Julianne Holt over the years and will use his 20-years of experience as a leader in the office and relationships with other justice partners to ensure a seamless transition for justice. "I am running because I believe that justice should not depend on a person's ability to hire an attorney. Running this cutting-edge office, which is the largest criminal defense firm in the Tampa Bay area, takes a much different skillset than running a small law practice." He currently serves directly under Public Defender Holt as Chief Operations Officer. "I am uniquely qualified for the position," he added. Prior to moving to Hillsborough County in 2003, he served at the Public Defender's Office in Pensacola, and taught at the Police academy there. He has volunteered his service to the Pace Center for Girls, DUI Counterattack, Juvenile Justice Advisory Board, County Commission on Human Trafficking and Safe & Sound Hillsborough, Youth and Gun Violence Committee. Brancato grew up in a military family. Nearly seven years ago, they adopted a baby girl. "I want her to grow up in a community that cares about fairness and justice." Endorsed by PD Julianne Holt and Sheriff Chad Chronister, as a moderate Democrat, he promises to focus on the politics of running a great law office. Visit www.voterockyforpd.com/.



Lisa McLean is ready to address the root causes of crime, the challenge of reentry and the need for bail reform. She brings a fresh perspective to the goal of fiscal responsibility and ensures taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely and efficiently. McLean will bring her brand of practical idealism to create an atmosphere of inclusivity, appreciation, and trust. In 2006, McLean launched her own successful defense firm giving her a unique perspective on the criminal justice system enabling her to work across the aisle in the pursuit of equal justice for all. Visit <https://lisaforpublicdefender.com/>

County Judge Group 11:



Chrissie Edwards loves law, and her true passion is connecting with people and the experience of the courtroom. "I believe the courtroom is the arena where the greatest work is being done to help others. I have a unique insight and awareness of the immense responsibility and privilege it is to have someone put their full trust in you. I value trust as the most important quality of a judge because they make decisions that will profoundly impact someone else's life," said Edwards. She currently owns her own law firm, handling cases in criminal law, family law, and personal injury. In addition to private practice, she is the only attorney on the ballot court appointed by Florida. She handles Marchman Act cases exclusively, one of very few lawyers in this county that practice in this area. Marchman Act Court was established as a problem-solving court that allows families to petition the courts for mandatory substance abuse assessment and treatment, whether drugs or alcohol.

Through this appointment, she works closely with the Behavioral Resources Unit of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. She educates community providers on best practices to help identify those at risk, safeguard those in need of services, while preventing violent encounters and mitigate harm within our community, as a keynote speaker for the Thirteenth Circuit. "All the individuals that have trusted me to be their voice are in my line of sight as strive to be a Hillsborough County Judge." Edwards attended Bloomingdale High School and graduated from law school at Stetson University. She feels blessed to have a close family, who have assisted her on the campaign trail. She enjoys her nieces and nephews along with her own four-legged babies, Leo and Lionel. Visit <https://voteedwardsforjudge.com/>.



Lynette 'Starr' Brookins' second home has been the courthouse since she first started her legal career more than 13 years ago. Brookins has devoted her life and legal career to service. Prior to becoming an attorney, she served as an Anti-Terrorism Dispatch Officer. Brookins is a single mother to "Rae", who spent most of her childhood in foster care prior to Brookins adopting her at the age of 17. She enjoys running, Pilates, classes on her Peloton Bike+, traveling, and time with her family. Visit www.votebrookinsforjudge.com/meet_linette.

County Judge Group 21:



Dee Jones is a prosecutor and attorney in private practice who has built a career defending justice and leading with integrity. As an Attorney, Jones has had a successful career as a litigator and most recently as corporate counsel. She currently serves as Vice President of the George Edgecomb Bar Association and is a founding Executive Board member of the National Black Prosecutors Association (Tampa Chapter) and was elected Vice President of the organization in 2021. She is the mother to two daughters, who are currently law students. Jones graduated from UF Levin College of Law in 1995. Visit <https://deejonesforjudge.com/>.



Matt Smith has been serving as the County Judge for Group 21 since 2021. He served as a prosecutor for 21 years, 15 of those years at the State Attorney's Office in Hillsborough County. "I think it is important for the people of Hillsborough County to have a judge who has committed his life to service and who will apply the law equally to all of Hillsborough County." He has presided over the Dependency Drug Treatment Court, Title IV Child Support Court and Non-criminal Infractions Court. Smith has ruled on over 24,000 cases. Prior to becoming a Judge in 2021 Smith was a trial prosecutor for 21 years (5 years in Leon County, 15 years in Hillsborough County and one year at the Attorney General's Office). He grew up as an Army brat living in VA, CT, and Germany. He graduated high school and attended the Air Force Academy, serving four years on active duty before attending law school at FSU. He currently serves on the Military Veterans Affairs Committee for the Hillsborough County Bar and is on the Bench Bar Committee for the Hillsborough County Bar. He's a Shriner, member of American Legion Post 138 and the Florida Cattlemen's Association, and in the Krewe of the Knights of San Yago. He is married to Roxanna Solis Smith (local attorney) and has two children, Penelope and Max, and a bulldog named French Fry. Visit judgemattsmith.com.

BLOOMINGDALE VOTES!



**Giving Back to Seeds Hope,
Musically**
By Elise Cruz Aragon

A huge thank you to our community members and sponsors who were able to help make a difference for Seeds of Hope. We truly appreciate your time and the support this community gives in lifting one another up.





Back to School Supplies

By Elise Cruz Aragon

Donating supplies to schools is a fantastic way to support education and contribute to the community. Whether you're contributing to an elementary school, middle school, or high school, every bit helps ensure that students and teachers have the tools they need for a successful school year. Here's a look at what schools typically need and some specific ideas for donations across different grade levels.

All schools and students need the basics to make it through the school year – stationery, classroom essentials, hygiene products. Pens and pencils, paper, and notebooks and binders are simple things that often get forgotten about – and every teacher needs them to help their students keep track of notes. Tissues, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes are crucial to keeping kids healthy and in school. For teachers, basics such as dry erase markers, coloring utensils, and glue and scissors ensure all projects can be completed by all students.

In elementary schools like Alafia and Cimino, there may be additional items you can purchase or donate. Clothes that younger learners have outgrown can be given to the nurse's office for quick changes as needs – accidents do happen. Classroom teachers gladly welcome art supplies, like crayons, colored pencils, and construction paper for creative projects. Educational games are great for after-school programs like HOST that may need to keep learners for longer periods of time while waiting for their grownups to come home from work.

In middle school, anything that can be donated to help with the Burns STARS program is appreciated. Students love to earn stickers, cute erasers, and decorated school materials –

and, of course, candy – as they redeem their STAR bucks. You can also help by sponsoring classrooms for their respective classroom materials. Some teachers need kits or like to use programs not covered by the district – your contribution can help those teachers when selecting additional programs for their learners.

For high school students, some of the most needed supplies come in the form of practical things. Every year, Bloomingdale organizes a dress drive to sponsor Gowns for Girls. Formal attire, such as dresses and suits for homecoming and prom, make a difference for students – especially for students who may not have the means to purchase their own. Sports equipment for teams, especially for items that may not be in their budget for the year, help propel our student athletes forward. And, for their next step, college and career planning resources work to ensure the transition from K-12 student to adult learner.

You can contribute to a positive learning environment and help students thrive. Whether through organizing drives, making monetary contributions, or providing specific items, your support makes a meaningful difference in the lives of students and educators. Let's come together as a community to ensure every student has what they need to succeed in school and beyond.



YOU CAN ADVERTISE IN THE GAZETTE!

Delivered monthly to over 5,200 homes reaching 23,000 residents. Distribution points include the Bloomingdale Library, Campo YMCA and our local schools.

Contact: JESSICA PETROSKI
jpetroski@tampabay.com
(813) 731-8021

Tampa Bay Times
tampabay.com

OVER 1,500 ★★★★★ REVIEWS



(813) 677-7663
ShingleMasters.com

Roof Replacement Specialists
Lifetime Workmanship Warranty*

[f](https://www.facebook.com/shinglemastersroofing) [i](https://www.instagram.com/shinglemastersroofing) /shinglemastersroofing

CCC1328724 CGC1513621



FEEDBACK 1

99%
LIKELY TO RECOMMEND

96%
COMMUNICATION

99%
QUALITY OF WORKMANSHIP

98%
VALUE RECEIVED

Scores based on all feedback for this contractor.

SCAN HERE FOR A FREE QUOTE



* Lifetime Workmanship Warranty requires the homeowner select the Platinum Protection Limited Warranty. See www.owenscorning.com/en-us/roofing/warranty for details.
© Copyright Shingle Masters Roofing & Construction Services, Inc.. All Rights Reserved.

0000329113-01



The Congressional Award: A Prestigious Opportunity for High School Students

By Elise Cruz Aragon

As summer winds down and school starts back up, it's time for our high school-aged neighborhood students to begin thinking about how to set themselves apart in their college application process. One easy way to do that is to apply for the Congressional Award. The Congressional Award is a prestigious recognition for high school students who demonstrate excellence in personal development, community service, and leadership. Established by Congress in 1979, this award offers a unique chance for students to distinguish themselves in their college applications and beyond.

What Is the Congressional Award?

The Congressional Award is a non-partisan program that acknowledges young people for their dedication to personal growth and community involvement. Unlike traditional awards, it focuses on individual effort rather than academic achievement alone. Students can earn the award by meeting specific goals in four key areas: Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and Expedition/Exploration.

Why Apply?

Receiving the Congressional Award can significantly enhance a student's college application. It highlights not just academic prowess but also commitment to personal growth and community service. Colleges and universities look favorably on students who demonstrate a well-rounded set of skills and interests, and the Congressional Award provides a solid proof of these qualities.

The award is also a valuable experience. It encourages students to set and achieve personal goals, engage in community service, and develop leadership skills. These experiences can be profoundly transformative and beneficial as students prepare for future educational and career opportunities.

How to Apply

Applying for the Congressional Award involves a straightforward process. Students must be between the ages of 13 and 23. The program is open to all high school students, including those in home schooling programs. Interested students should register online at the Congressional Award's official website. Registration is free and provides access to the necessary forms and guidelines.

Students must set and achieve goals in the four award areas. For each area, they need to document their activities and progress. This can include volunteering at local charities, pursuing personal hobbies, participating in sports, or going on educational trips. Accurate record-keeping is crucial. Students must keep a log of their activities and submit it along with their application. They also need to provide a letter of recommendation from a mentor or supervisor who can verify their achievements.

Once the application is complete and submitted, it will be reviewed by local Congressional Award staff. Students who meet the requirements will receive a bronze, silver, or gold medal, depending on the level of their achievements. Gold medals are awarded for the highest level of commitment and accomplishment.

Earning the Congressional Award offers several benefits. Colleges and universities recognize the Congressional Award as a mark of dedication and excellence. It sets students apart from their peers and demonstrates their ability to balance multiple responsibilities.

The award process helps students develop essential skills such as goal setting, time management, and leadership. These skills are valuable in both academic and professional settings. The emphasis on voluntary public service helps students make a positive impact in their communities. This not only benefits others but also enriches the student's own life experiences.

Award recipients often have the chance to meet with members of Congress and other distinguished individuals, providing valuable networking opportunities.

The Congressional Award is more than just a medal; it's a testament to a student's hard work, perseverance, and commitment to personal and community development. For high school students looking to stand out in college admissions and gain invaluable life skills, applying for the Congressional Award is an opportunity worth considering.

Parents and students interested in this opportunity should visit the Congressional Award's official website for more information and to start the application process. With dedication and effort, this prestigious award can be a significant milestone in a student's educational journey.





DRIP Infrared Sauna Nominated for Best of Florida!

By Elise Cruz Aragon

I recently had the pleasure of visiting DRIP Infrared Sauna, and I'm thrilled to share that it's been nominated for the Best of Florida in the Day Spa category! During my visit, I was genuinely impressed by the overall experience, from the pristine cleanliness to the exceptional service.

The space at DRIP Infrared Sauna is beautifully maintained, creating a serene and welcoming environment. The moment I walked in, I could tell that attention to detail was a top priority. The staff made me feel right at home with their friendly and professional approach.

The infrared sauna treatment itself was incredibly cathartic and enjoyable. I appreciated the thoughtful touches, like the comfortable change of clothes provided and the soothing essential oils added to the sauna. These details really enhanced the experience, making it both relaxing and rejuvenating.

If you're looking for a top-notch day spa experience, DRIP Infrared Sauna is definitely worth checking out. Their nomination for Best of Florida is well-deserved, and I couldn't recommend them more highly!



THANK YOU FOR VOTING US BEST OF THE BEST 5 YEARS IN A ROW!



WE WON ALL THREE CATEGORIES



When you want the best come to
the Best of the Best!

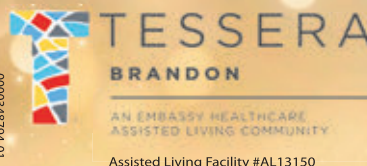
Memory Care

*"Living the present...
cherishing the past."*

Assisted Living

*"Tessera Brandon...
Living your lifestyle."*

Ask
about our
Alzheimer's
and Dementia
support
groups.



Call Jill Andrew,
Director of Marketing, to learn more!
1320 Oakfield Dr., Brandon 33511 • (813) 607-6880
tesserabrandon.com

**NO
PAYMENTS
FOR
1 YEAR!**
*0% INTEREST
FOR 60 MONTHS



**GET OVER
\$5,000 OFF**

A NEW HEAT PUMP OR AC
with rebates and tax credits combined

BOGO
BUY A HEAT PUMP
OR A/C UNIT
GET A FREE DUCT
CLEANING!

Join our
VIP TUNE UP CLUB!
Get **10% off**
parts & labor
plus much more!

**FREE SECOND OPINIONS &
FREE ESTIMATES! CALL NOW!**

813-964-7155

Family Owned & Operated since 1983 - Top 10 Trane Dealer in Florida
Home Advisors / Google Guaranteed Contractor / CMC 1249497



*Subject to credit approval & credit limit.



Bloomington Bands Together with Newsome for Music

By Jane Owen

Bands from the two schools are competing in the first annual Backyard Brawl competition to benefit their programs.

This year, for the first time ever, Bloomington High School's Rajun' Bull Band will play on the field at the same time as the Newsome High School's Wolfpack Marching Band—as a combined unit. The performance will take place during the halftime show of the Bloomington-Newsome football game at Charley Harris Stadium on August 23.

The combined performance at halftime will take place after one band is presented a trophy for winning the bands' first annual Backyard Brawl competition.

The Backyard Brawl competition is a fundraising campaign that runs from August 1 to August 23. The band that receives the most donations wins and claims bragging rights for the year. The real winners, of course, are both band programs.

Bloomington and Newsome band directors Jordan Frazee and John Davis, respectively, hope that the competition will fund the season and lead to more opportunities to join forces and create a tighter band community across the rivalry schools.

"I believe that this friendly competition can bring the communities together to support a cause as great as music in our schools. What is a better way to bring communities together than music?" Frazee said.

"Despite it being a rivalry – the real winners here are both bands. Not only because we both will hopefully meet or exceed our fundraising goals, but also because we are doing this in friendly competition and will use this event to bring both of our bands together," Davis said.

Combined, the bands will have 265 students on the field (150 Bloomington students and 115 Newsome students). They will join in formation and play a marching band stand tune called "Land of a Thousand Dances." The students learn the song at the Gebhardt Leadership Clinic sponsored by the Hillsborough County Secondary Music Council every June. The traditional halftime drills (shows) will be presented after the football game.

The Bloomington Band would love the community's support and participation in the Backyard Brawl competition. Donations go through a company called Pledge, which gives the band 100% of the donations. Pledge takes all forms of electronic payment on the site supporters get directed to after texting to 707070

To support the Bloomington Band, text: BSHSBRAWL to 707070. For more information, contact Bloomington's Band Director Jordan Frazee (Jordan.Frazee@hcps.net).





Adopt a Teacher

By Elise Cruz Aragon,

Looking to sponsor individual teachers, but want to remain anonymous? Use the QR code below to go the Adopt a Hillsborough Teacher Facebook page. Teachers from all over the county, but especially our four local schools, use this page to post their wish lists for the upcoming year. If you have the means, see what you can help our local teachers with. No gift goes unappreciated!



Keeping Our Kids Safe: The Risks of Sharing First-Day Photos on Social Media

By Elise Cruz Aragon,

As the back-to-school season gets underway, many of us are excitedly posting first-day-of-school pictures on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media sites.. While it's a great way to celebrate our children's milestones, it's important to be mindful of the information we're sharing.

When posting those adorable photos, it's easy to include details like the name of the school—be it Bloomingdale High School, Burns Middle School, Alafia or Cimino Elementary School—along with the grade level and teacher's name. But this kind of specific information can put your child's privacy at risk.

Sharing too many details can attract unwanted attention from individuals with malicious intent. For example, knowing your child's school and teacher can help a scammer pose as someone from the school to trick you into giving away personal information.

Here are some simple tips to keep our kids safe online:

- **Keep Details General:** Instead of listing the exact school or grade, try sharing more general updates. This helps protect your child's personal information.
- **Use Privacy Settings:** Adjust your Facebook privacy settings so only trusted friends and family can see your posts.
- **Think Before You Post:** Consider if the information you're sharing might be too specific. If it feels personal, it's best to keep it private.
- **Talk to Your Kids:** Explain to your children why it's important to be careful with personal information online.

By following these tips, we can enjoy celebrating our children's achievements while keeping their privacy and safety intact. Let's work together to make sure our kids stay safe in the digital world!



Bloomingdale Homes

ACTIVE NOW



122 BROOKOVER LN



4606 RIDGECLIFF DRIVE



2114 GOLF MANOR BLVD

We are your #1 Real Estate Team in Tampa Bay
and #1 Team in YOUR Neighborhood!
Call The Brenda Wade Team if you're ready
to buy or sell!



813-655-5333
1709 Bloomingdale Ave. Valrico, FL
Brenda@BrendaWade.com | www.BrendaWade.com



0000348757-01