



The Inlet model has four bedrooms.

Maple Ridge sales outpace developer's projections

BY **ROBIN F. DEMATTIA**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Sales at Maple Ridge continue to pace ahead of the developer's timeline. Thanks to record sales, phase seven lots are now available.

"More homesites have become available at Maple Ridge and have proven to ignite strong sales in the past few months," says Chelsea Kimmey, director of marketing for CC Homes. "Many people are interested in acquiring some of the prime new areas with lake views and larger lots."

Maple Ridge sold 23 homes in October.

"People buy at Maple Ridge because of the price and the location within Ave Maria," Ms. Kimmey says. "Ave Maria is a relaxing, slower-paced lifestyle community that is idyllic for families."

The most popular models at Maple Ridge are the Huntington (one story, three bedrooms), Harbour (two stories, four to six bedrooms), Grove (one story, two bedrooms) and Greenview (one story, three to four bedrooms).

"People like our open concept floor plans, spacious rooms and outdoor living spaces," Ms. Kimmey says.

Each Maple Ridge home features a brick paver driveway and walkway, attached garage, rear patio or covered terrace, and either a Mediterranean-inspired coastal or a contemporary facade.

SEE MAPLE RIDGE, A24 ►

"People buy at Maple Ridge because of the price and the location within Ave Maria. Ave Maria is a relaxing, slower-paced lifestyle community that is idyllic for families."

— **Chelsea Kimmey**, director of marketing, CC Homes

HERE COMES SEASON!

Get ready for lots of things to see and do



PHOTO BY ANIALEE HULL



COURTESY PHOTOS



BY **SANDRA YEYATI**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

IT'S A NEW YEAR, SEASON IS HERE, AND there is much to celebrate in Ave Maria.

Hundreds of families have been purchasing new homes, and as Northerners return, the streets are bustling with activity. Old and new friends can be seen around town enjoying sunsets in 70-degree weather, breaking bread together, and chatting over cocktails and cappuccinos.

"What people love about Ave Maria is the feeling they get when they're here," says Michelle Mambuca, social media and marketing coordinator for Barron Collier Companies. "There's a sense of community. It really does feel like a big kind of small town."

As the pandemic wanes, Ave Maria businesses are

SEE SEASON, A26 ►

TOP: The Saturday morning Ave Maria Farmers Market draws residents and visitors alike to stroll around Town Center.

LEFT ABOVE: Trolley tours take visitors around to the neighborhoods of Ave Maria.

LEFT: Arts and crafts festivals return Jan. 29-30 and Feb. 26-27.

Safety first

Take our tour of the town's new public safety complex. **A12 ►**



Community of the Year

Ave Maria takes top honor for the seventh year. **A2 ►**



Good sports

Athletics, academics score big at Ave Maria schools. **A19 ►**



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Ave Maria named Community of the Year – again

For the seventh consecutive year, Ave Maria and its developer, Barron Collier Companies, were named 2021 Community of the Year by the Collier Building Industry Association in its annual Sand Dollar Awards.

An independent panel of judges ranked Collier County communities on various criteria including overall amenity package, recreational opportunities (including clubhouse, golf and tennis facilities and pool areas), and outdoor use amenities (such as paths, gazebos, sculptures, etc.) that add to the quality of the community. Ave Maria won the Sand Dollar for the under \$500,000 category.

“Receiving this Sand Dollar Award seven years in a row is a testament to the exceptional amenities, recreational activities, and active lifestyle offered in Ave Maria,” Cee Cee Marinelli, director of development for Ave Maria, says.

Ave Maria homeowners enjoy a variety of recreation amenities, such as baseball and soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, a playground and dog park, bocce ball courts, softball fields, picnic pavilions, and an amphitheater. The Ave Maria Water Park is unrivaled by any other Southwest Florida community, and more than 100 miles of walking and biking paths wind throughout the master-planned community with pause points at lakes and benches. The Ave Maria Master Association offers a busy social calendar that includes outdoor music, arts and crafts festivals, farmers markets, happy hours, family socials, and holiday-themed events.

Ave Maria has also been recognized by RCLCO Real Estate Advisors as one of the



COURTESY PHOTO

More than 600 new-home sales were reported in Ave Maria in 2021.

Top 25 Selling Master-Planned Communities in the United States and the highest-ranking community in Southwest Florida.

The town continues to see an acceleration in the pace of new home sales, with more than 600 new home sales reported in 2021. Since the opening of the community in 2007, more than 3,500 new homes have been sold in the town. Sales are reported from the town's four residential builders: CC Homes, Lennar, Pulte Homes, and Del Webb Naples, an active adult community that has been named a Top 20 Places to Retire.

Planned for approximately 11,000 residences and 1.8 million square feet of retail, office, and business park uses at buildout of its 4,000 acres, Ave Maria offers various housing types from condominiums and attached villas to

single-family homes with two to six bedrooms and lake, preserve, and golf course views. There are more than 60 available floor plans, with prices ranging from the \$200,000s to the \$700,000s. More than 20 model homes are open daily.

Also, there is a Town Center with Publix Supermarket, commercial center with Mobil gas station, and private schools from preschool through university.

“Buyers across all generations are drawn to the conveniences of the town, the array of new home product offerings, and the incredible lifestyle Ave Maria provides,” says Ms. Marinelli.

For more information, stop by the Ave Maria Welcome Center, call 239-352-3903 or go to www.avemaria.com. 🌻

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Make the Ave Maria Welcome Center your first stop

BY SANDRA YEYATI
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When visiting Ave Maria, there are many good reasons to pop into the Welcome Center. Located in the Town Center across from Tropical Smoothie, this is the place to grab a map, hop on a guided sightseeing trolley tour, learn about the town's history, get the 411 on local events and, perhaps most importantly, talk to the friendly and knowledgeable people who work there.



MARQUEZ

"We are the face of Ave Maria," says Donna Marquez, who oversees a staff of seven community representatives at the Welcome Center. "We try to gauge what people are coming in for. Our job is to listen and help, whether you're looking for a great place to have dinner, ideas for fun things to do in town and around Southwest Florida, or some guidance on how to go about shopping for a new home."

While Ave Maria is divided into eight distinct neighborhoods, new construction is happening in only a handful. Each neighborhood and home builder provides a unique set of features and amenities, and the Welcome Center offers a comfortable, inviting setting to easily compare and contrast all the interesting choices.

"I like to ask people what they're looking for in a new home and lifestyle so I can guide them to the sales centers where they would probably have the best fit," Ms. Marquez explains. "If a couple is looking for a neighborhood with children, I'll suggest Maple Ridge, Silverwood, or Avalon Park, where there are lots of young families. Retirees might be interested in Del Webb, a 55-and-up age-restricted community. Golfers will want to visit The National by Len-

nar, because those homes come with a bundled golf membership.

"Price range is also a big factor, and we can help guide them with that, too. The prices here are incredible."

Every Tuesday in season, the Welcome Center coordinates one-hour trolley tours guided by Joe Marinelli, who has a wealth of knowledge about the history and development of Ave Maria. When people come aboard, they receive a trolley bag filled with items such as a comprehensive map and a book of coupons for local businesses, as well as brochures from each of the builders detailing home choices and related amenities.

Tourists who aren't looking to buy will also find the Welcome Center useful. They might be touring the Ave Maria University campus, vacationing with friends who live in the area, or checking out a town they've always heard about but never visited.

"Some people come in because they've just realized how great the community is, and they want more information," Ms. Marquez says. "Maybe they want to know a bit about the history. We tell them that Thomas Monaghan, the founder of Domino's Pizza, wanted to build a Catholic university, and Barron Collier Companies — a part of the founding family of Collier County that has a lot of land here — partnered with Mr. Monaghan to bring his vision to reality. In 2007, they built the church and university with this beautiful community around it."

Lending a fresh perspective to the Welcome Center is community representative Melanie Wain, who moved to Ave Maria just six months ago.

SEE WELCOME, A6 ►

CHRIS TILLEY / AVE MARIA SUN

The Welcome Center is at 5076 Annunciation Circle, Suite 104.



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WELCOME

From page 4

“When we first came to Ave Maria it took me a while to get my bearings,” Ms. Wain says. “I wish I had come to the Welcome Center earlier.” She still gets questions she can’t answer, and when that happens, she adds, “I have to go find the answer, and that helps me learn more about my new hometown.”

More and more people are discovering Ave Maria, making it one of the fastest-growing communities in Southwest Florida. “It’s so nice to see all these people coming in and curious about the community,” Ms. Marquez says. “Some have come back after visiting once 10 years ago, and they can hardly believe how we’ve grown. Others have never been here, and when they finally come out, they’re surprised to see that we’re a thriving, up-and-coming, self-sustaining town. I like to see the excitement in all of our visitors’ faces.”

Community representative and Del Webb resident Maria Forbes notes, “I love to talk to people and hear their stories. I always ask them, ‘Where did you come from? How did you find out about Ave Maria, and what brought you here?’”

“A lot of people are leaving the cities behind in favor of this kind of old-style neighborhood as a place to raise a family. They like the small town feel where everyone congregates down at The Bean for coffee, you have great neighbors, and it’s safe enough for kids to go out and play on their own.”

Many people move to Ave Maria from



FORBES



Donna Marquez uses a table map to help prospective residents orient themselves to the town.

the east coast of Florida. “They’re telling their friends and family about the community, and that’s bringing more of them over just by word of mouth,” Ms. Marquez says.

“The number one thing people are looking for is a sense of community, and they’re finding that here in Ave Maria — people who care, neighbors who wave at you and look out for you. This community is very friendly, and we here at the Welcome Center want to reflect the community as best we can.”

— The Ave Marie Welcome Center at 5076 Annunciation Circle, Suite 104, is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 239-352-3903 or visit www.AveMaria.com.

“A lot of people are leaving the cities behind in favor of this kind of old-style neighborhood as a place to raise a family. They like the small town feel...and it’s safe enough for kids to go out and play on their own.”

— Maria Forbes, Ave Maria community representative



There are several comfortable places to sit and chat in the center.



Information about life in Ave Maria abounds.



Calendar of Events

SPECIAL EVENTS		ONGOING EVENTS
JANUARY 15	Winter Festival	TROLLEY TOURS Tuesdays January thru April from 11am – 2pm
JANUARY 29 & 30	Arts & Crafts Festival	
JANUARY 7, FEBRUARY 4 & MARCH 4	Family Fun First Fridays	
FEBRUARY 19	Blues, Brews & BBQ	LIVE MUSIC Tuesdays & Saturdays from 11am – 2pm in the Town Center
FEBRUARY 26 & 27	Arts & Crafts Festival	
MARCH 19	Margarita & Taco Festival	FARMERS MARKET Every Saturday from 9am – 2pm

All events are subject to change. Visit AveMaria.com for more information.

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Meet the Townmaker: Austin Howell, land development manager for Barron Collier Companies

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Austin Howell is one of those rare individuals who grew up in Southwest Florida. He was not only born and raised in Naples, he can trace his roots here back three generations.

One of his great-grandfathers originally lived in Goodland but relocated to Naples and started one of the first AC/refrigeration companies on Fifth Avenue. His maternal grandfather attended Naples High School, served on the Attica in the Navy, and then helped with the construction of Marco Island.

Mr. Howell did get away for a few years while attending the University of Central Florida and working briefly in Orlando.

"It felt good to get out of Naples at the time," he recalls. "When I graduated from high school, there wasn't a lot for kids to do around here."

But, he admits, he soon appreciated everything Collier County has to offer. "I quickly realized that Naples was actually a really great place to be and made my way back here."

The first place he called when job hunting was Barron Collier Companies.

"Growing up in Naples, you know who the Collier family is and the great reputation of Barron Collier Companies," he says. A co-captain of his high school lacrosse team was Casey Marinelli, whose father Paul was CEO at the time.

Mr. Howell started as an intern but within one month was given a full-time job. He has been with the company for eight years, serving now as the land development manager.

As the licensed real estate broker with the company, he helps facilitate closings on commercial properties, identify new parcels to

develop, and oversees the development process.

"I have a variety of projects at any point in time, so every day is different," he says. He works on the company's residential properties, multi-family projects, mixed-use sites and commercial developments. "It's unique how diversified the company is," he says.

He's currently working on planning for a new logistics and distribution facility in Manatee County, assisting with the site plan and getting contracting bids.

He's also excited about a new project south of Oil Well Road across from Orangetree that will have a variety of businesses and services, including retail and a medical component. "It will be nice for the surrounding communities," he says, adding construction should start in the third quarter of 2022.

One of the challenges Mr. Howell enjoys about his job is trying to find available land. Whether commercial or residential, he says, "It's extremely competitive. But we're finding unique ways to get projects done and looking at places that traditionally haven't been considered. We're forward-thinking and identifying where trends are going. Commercial follows where the rooftops are going."

He notes that Barron Collier Companies is led by a fourth-generation CEO, and that history influences decisions.

"Not everything is the bottom line," he says. "They look to establish partnerships and do the right thing. People think of Barron Collier as a large organization, but the company still has a family feel to it."



Austin Howell's local roots go back three generations.

COURTESY PHOTO

"It's great to hear from the residents about their wants and needs...we look at what we can do to help Ave Maria continually grow. Their opinion matters a lot."

— Austin Howell

Leadership Collier class of 2018. He is currently part of Leadership Florida.

He is also president of the newly formed Habitat Next Gen, which has a goal of increasing affordable housing. "It's going to be a really good thing," he assures. "We're taking a workforce housing approach from the young professionals' point of view."

He and his wife, Angela, have an 8-month-old daughter, Kinsley. Mr. Howell's mother, who still lives in Naples, is a doting grandmother. The family likes to get away to Islamorada or Marathon once or twice a year. Mr. Howell also spends time fishing in the Gulf of Mexico and hunting. He recently joined the board of the local Ducks Unlimited chapter.

With any remaining free time, he likes to cheer on the Miami Dolphins and Tampa Bay Lightning. 🌟



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Here’s to a new year filled with health and wellness

BY STEPHANIE DAVIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When a new year gets underway, health and wellness are top of mind for many. We reached out to the health professionals who practice in Ave Maria for their tips to help ensure a year of feeling and looking our best. Here’s what they had to say.

Daniel Dix, general manager of the Braden Clinic, which provides pediatric and adult preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic services for a wide array of acute and chronic problems, recommends seeing your primary care provider at least once a year for an overall wellness check.

If one of your goals for 2022 is to adopt a healthier lifestyle, Mr.

Dix advises to make a plan, write it down, and partner with a friend or family member for accountability.

Also, he says, “Measure everything you can measure: weight, blood pressure, sleep, etc.” Technology today makes it easier than ever before to monitor your progress, he adds. “The Oura ring and various smart watches and other smart devices are great tools.”

Now hear this

Sylvia Horgan, the owner of Ave Maria Hearing, recommends a hearing check once a year — unless something changes. Anyone



older than 90 should have a hearing check every six months, she says.

If you find yourself always turning the volume up a bit on the TV, or asking people to repeat themselves more often, or worse, avoiding invitations and groups because you can’t understand what people are saying, see an audiologist post haste.

If you’ve promised yourself and others to address a hearing problem in the new year,

don’t wait any longer. Just do it. Ms. Horgan says the efficacy of a hearing aid depends in part on how long the person has gone without being able to hear well.

The eyes have it

Dr. Luisa Del Toro of Ave Maria Optical Family Eye Care says the new year is always a good time for a new look, whether it involves donning a new pair of

stylish frames (pick some out right on-site) or ditching glasses altogether by having Lasik surgery (Dr. Del Toro and her staff can assess your eligibility). No matter what, she adds, you should have an annual eye exam. And if you’re older than 40, that exam should include screenings for glaucoma and cataracts.

Keep on smiling

When you’re feeling good about the new year, your smile says more than 1,000 words. Christina Pinero, officer manager and one of several dental assistants at Ave Maria Dentistry, says you can keep that smile wide and bright by seeing your dentist for a full set of dental X-rays at least once a year and for cleanings every three to six months (as recommended based on the health of your gums).

If you dread a trip to the dentist but are determined to overcome your fear in the new year, Ave Maria Dentistry should be your first call. The practice offers IV sedation for those who suffer anxiety in the dental chair. “Once they have it, they always want it done this way,” Ms. Pinero says.

And if whiter teeth are what you want in 2022, consider an in-office session of Philips Zoom whitening treatment. Ms. Pinero says it can make your pearly whites up to eight shades brighter in just 45 minutes. Now that’s something to smile about. 🌟



DIX



HORGAN



DEL TORO



PINERO

AROUND AVE MARIA

Music in the Park



On a sunny day in mid-November, the annual Music in the Park drew Ave Maria residents on foot and by golf cart to South Park to enjoy music by Electric Lipstick and Pam & Amos, along with food trucks, Oil Well Craft Beer, axe-throwing, shopping and more fun. It was also a day to celebrate Ave Maria’s official designation as a Blue Zones Project community that promotes a healthy, active lifestyle.

- 1. John Slaby
- 2. Mike and Stanish Barbara Stanish
- 3. Beatrice Stanford and Victor Aquista



The Ave Maria Social Committee: Making friends through volunteering

BY **SANDRA YEYATI**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The next time you're enjoying a neighborhood function in town, whether it's the Winter Festival or the annual Easter event, think of the volunteer residents who help make these activities a reality: your neighbors, getting together and doing the rewarding work needed to improve quality of life in Ave Maria.

Appointed by the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA) board of directors, the Social Committee is a group of nine volunteers that helps to create, execute and manage these fun activities and celebrations.

"We serve as the voice of the community," says Debbie Fornwall, committee chair and volunteer coordinator. "Committee members have to enjoy talking to their neighbors and friends," she adds, "because we get all of our information as to what the community wants or how they liked an event by speaking to the residents."

The Social Committee oversees four subcommittees, all of which are open to anyone who wants to get involved. Currently, 28 volunteers serve in the Health and Education, Adult and Family Fun, Youth and Teen, and Marketing and Research subcommittees. These are the people who gather ideas from the community, brainstorm together to devise a strategic plan, and collaborate with AMMA staff and area developers to bring entertainment and enrichment to the people who call Ave Maria home. The Adult and Family Fun group is the most active, holding meetings every other Friday.

You might have seen or even talked to one of these volunteers during an event as they walked around with clipboards surveying attendees.

"We ask questions like, 'Would you suggest this event to a friend or family member? Can you score the event on a scale of 1 to 10. What did you like most about this event? What type of improvements would you like to see?'"

"And then we analyze the responses to see how each event rates against other events or against the same event the year before," Ms. Fornwall says. "That's how we determine what to do in the future to make sure people are happy."

Prompted by residents' suggestions, the Social Committee played an integral role in building a disc golf course in North Park. As establishments are opening up post-pandemic, volunteers are busy planning off-site group excursions. Among the ideas being tossed around are brewery and winery tours and a visit to the Kowiachobee Animal Preserve in Naples.

"We like our residents to stay active, and we want them to have fun, so if there's anything we can do to help them have that fun, then we're going to do it," Ms. Fornwall says.

For larger events, volunteers are sometimes needed to set things up a few days in advance, but most of the hands-on work is done the day-of. They show up early to help with setup; stick around to direct parking, man the entrances and run the games; and stay afterward to tear it all down. If there are enough volunteers, Ms. Fornwall spreads the work around so that everyone has plenty of free time to enjoy the event, as well.

"Things run more smoothly if you've got a



COURTESY PHOTO
SEATED: Donald Gunthner; Debbie Fornwall, Social Committee chair and volunteer coordinator; and Rhonda Hatten. STANDING: Dolly Gunthner; Tom DiFlorio, vice chair; Lacey Lambotte, youth/teen lead; Cindy Schang, health/education lead; and Leah Armstrong.

lot of hands," she says. "One person can't do it alone."

"We're always looking for volunteers who are open to sharing their ideas and skills. For example, if you're an artist and love working with children, we'd be thrilled to bring you in to offer a craft project for the little ones." During the Fall Festival, she adds, a group of volunteers planned a chili cook-off and executed it from beginning to end.

Newly-appointed Social Committee member and avid volunteer Dolly Gunthner stresses

the need for new volunteers.

"Ave Maria is growing so much, and we need the volunteer effort to grow, too," says Ms. Gunthner, who along with her husband, Don, can be counted on to do whatever is necessary. "If I can physically do it, I do it. Retired life is nice, but after working full-time for 40 years, we don't like to sit home too much."

"We look forward to going out with people and helping. It gives me a sense of purpose and makes me feel like a better person."

All Ave Maria residents are invited to participate in one of the subcommittees.

"It's fun. It's rewarding, and it's a great way to meet people and make a change in your community," Ms. Fornwall says. "Whether it's for an hour, a day or a commitment of a year — it's up to you how much you want to do."

She adds her favorite part of being involved in the committee is the camaraderie — "that closeness and trust that you earn from the others

you are working alongside of. You start out not knowing somebody and before you know it, after you work a few events together, you've got this close feeling with them."

As for her role as Social Committee chair and volunteer coordinator, Ms. Fornwall finds her reward when survey respondents write: "Amazing event, loved this, loved that."

To learn more about the Social Committee and how to get involved, send an email to AveSocialCommittee@gmail.com. 🌻

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Safety complex opens for fire, EMS and law enforcement

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The first occupants of the new Immokalee Fire Control District Ave Maria Public Safety Complex moved in on Nov. 15. The fire department left its trailer behind and gratefully transferred staff and equipment to the state-of-the-art building.

The site still needed some flooring and touch-up paint, so EMS and the Collier County Sheriff's Office joined them a few weeks later.

Michael J. Choate, fire chief and Immokalee Fire Control District manager, says they look forward to holding an open house and public tours in mid to late January. "We want to wait until we have hung things properly and there aren't any boxes left to unpack," he says.

Chief Choate thanks everyone in the community for their support of the buy-a-brick program that to date has raised more than \$12,000 to help purchase kitchen equipment such as a toaster oven and air fryer and support events like a holiday party for first responders.

The 8-by-8-inch and 4-by-8-inch bricks will be placed around the new complex's three flag poles and along a walkway leading to the main entrance. They are still for sale at www.immfire.com.

Groundbreaking took place on March 5, 2020, for the complex that houses Fire Station 32, EMS, and space for the Collier County Sheriff's Office. It will also serve as an emergency operations center as needed.

The main 22,000-square-foot building has three bays that can hold six vehicles, including the ladder truck, medic unit, brushfire unit and water tender. One wing has offices and a board room. The other wing is living quarters for four firefighters and two medics who will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The support services captain will work out of the 5,400-square-foot logistics building in the back of the complex. This building will house the reserve engine (for use when the main engine is out for maintenance), hurricane and brushfire materials, and supplies such as hoses, boots, helmets, gloves, and air packs.

Energy-efficient elements such as light sensors and low-flow water were used in the construction, as well as smart technology to control features through an iPad.

Funding for the \$10 million complex at 5362 Useppa Drive in Ave Maria came from impact fees, not taxes.

As more people discover the benefits of living in Ave Maria and move to the town, the public safety complex will help ensure prompt response to calls and provide other community services for all residents to enjoy. 🌞



CHRIS TILLEY / AVE MARIA SUN

The \$10 million complex is at 5362 Useppa Drive.



ABOVE: Fire Chief Michael J. Choate
LEFT: Immokalee Fire Control District Fire fighters in their new state-of-the-art kitchen.



A media room, above, and fully equipped gym, right, give staff opportunities for ways to spend their down time while on duty.



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AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES



AVALON PARK

About the Community

From the \$400,000s-\$600,000s

It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within walking or biking distance to downtown Ave Maria, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, and plenty of living space. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique architectural exteriors, and 11 consumer-inspired one- and

two-story single family homes that combine Pulte Homes' signature quality construction and personalized design opportunities. With home designs ranging up to 7 bedrooms and 6.5 bathrooms, in up to over 5,000 square feet of living space, you are sure to find your dream new home to fit your family's needs now and in the future.



As one of the nation's largest and most respected homebuilders with over 70 years of homebuilding experience, Pulte Homes takes pride in putting that experience to work for you. With insightful, consumer-inspired home designs, Pulte homes offer the best in livability. And, easy personalization options and versatile

living spaces make everyday moments easier and more enjoyable. With a clear focus on quality construction and a simplified buying experience, Pulte Homes will help you get into your dream new home easily. That's More Life Built In®, and that's exactly what you'll find at Avalon Park.



Mystique

- Starting from the low \$400,000s
- 1,889+ Sq. Ft.
- 2-5 Bedrooms
- 2-3 Bathrooms
- 2-Car Garage

Avalon Park at Ave Maria
4972 Seton Street, Ave Maria, FL 34142
239-842-1657



Del Webb[®]
NAPLES

About the Community

From the \$300,000s-\$500,000s

Del Webb Naples brings premier resort-style amenities and a lifestyle nothing short of extraordinary to Ave Maria. Here, daily possibilities for new adventures await. Where every day is different – and entirely up to you. From a dip in the pool to a friendly game of pickleball, in Del Webb Naples, you'll find countless opportunities to grow, thrive, and to enjoy those new passions you've been waiting to explore. Del Webb Naples provides amenities, programs and support needed for health and wellness, conveniently

located right where you live. No matter how full or fulfilling you want your days to be, you'll find a way to energize your mind, body and spirit the way you've always wanted to. Enjoy golf, bocce ball, bicycling, dance instruction, art, plus endless ways to socialize, and, opportunities to give back to the beautiful community that surrounds you are plentiful and rewarding. No matter one's stage in life, in Del Webb Naples, you'll cease to be amazed at how rich your days can be. We believe you'll like it here.

Del Webb[®]

No one understands the importance of community like Del Webb. Del Webb communities are an extension of the homeowners who live there – a collection of passions and activities you love to enjoy with others. When you choose to build in a Del Webb 55+ active adult community, you get the benefit of more than six decades

of homebuilding experience. With homes designed for how you live, including the features that matter most to you, all backed by a warranty you can rely on, you'll feel secure now and in the future. And, a streamlined process makes it easy for you to build the home you've always wanted, in the vibrant community you've been looking for.



Reverence

- Starting from the \$500,000s
- 2,669 Sq. Ft.
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5-3 Bathrooms
- 2-Car Garage

Del Webb Naples
6028 Victory Drive, Ave Maria, FL 34142
239-842-9643



About the Community

Maple Ridge at Ave Maria is a thoughtfully designed community with a myriad of home designs, all of which combine beautiful curb appeal with impressive interior layouts built for modern lifestyles. CC Homes is the builder behind this community and they are among the many reasons Ave Maria has become such a rapidly growing neighborhood attracting new residents from the Gulf Coast, Southeast Florida and beyond. With more than 75 years of combined experience in South Florida real estate, Mr. Armando Codina and Mr. Jim Carr along with Mr. Andres Miyares have set a new standard for quality new construction homes in desirable communities, with a wide range of pricing from entry-level to prestigious exclusivity.

CC Homes communities throughout the State of Florida have been recognized for their incredible market appeal, outstanding quality, and resident satisfaction time and time again, having built thousands of homes and residences. Homes built by CC Homes are designed to improve people's lives. Modern features, smart floor plans and upscale amenities combine for the ultimate South Florida lifestyle. Homeowners at Maple Ridge are pampered with high-end designer features included in the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen and kids' room.

New Contemporary Homes Available Now at Maple Ridge, Tour New Models Today!



Starting from the mid \$300,000s

CC Homes is ranked as one of the top five new home builders in South Florida and Southwest Florida, offering affordable single-family luxury in Ave Maria's Maple Ridge neighborhoods. Homeowners are pampered with high-end designer features included in

the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen and kids' room.



Harbour

- 3,522 a/c square feet
- 4 to 6 bedrooms
- 3.5 to 5.5 bathrooms
- Ground floor owner's suite
- 2 or 3-car garage

Maple Ridge
5009 Alonza Avenue, Ave Maria, FL 34142
833-729-1783 | www.MapleRidgeFL.com



About the Community

As part of the highly sought after new home community, Maple Ridge at Ave Maria- Silverwood offers exciting residential choices to buyers. Silverwood provides homeowners the perfect home at a great value. All of these single-family homes are beautifully designed with Mediterranean-inspired architecture and an inviting array of designer features included as well as some custom options available. Both Silverwood and Maple Ridge have a superb location within Ave Maria, so residents benefit from a great school district and sense of community.

Floor Plan Spotlight: The Huntington is a new construction, one-story home with 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, great room, eat-in kitchen, storage, master suite with walk-in closet and attached garage. Premium features included standard, such as designer brand faucets & fixtures and tile flooring. Gourmet kitchens have stainless steel appliances, European-style wood cabinetry and quartz countertops. A spa-like master bathroom features double sinks with quartz vanity tops, a spacious shower.



Starting from the upper \$200,000s

CC Homes is ranked as one of the top five new home builders in South Florida and Southwest Florida, offering affordable single-family luxury in Ave Maria's Maple Ridge neighborhoods. Homeowners are pampered with high-end designer features included in

the base price. Maple Ridge neighborhoods include a brand-new clubhouse for residents with resort-style pool and cabanas, fitness center, billiard room, exercise park, concierge, coffee bar, exhibition kitchen and kids' room.



Huntington

- Model home is now open for viewing.
- 1,630 a/c Sq. Ft.
 - 3 bedrooms
 - 2 bathrooms
 - His and her walk-in closets at master bedroom
 - 1-car garage

Maple Ridge
5009 Alonza Avenue, Ave Maria, FL 34142
833-729-1783 | www.MapleRidgeFL.com



About the Community

Lennar is excited to bring its popular Everything's Included® homes and resort lifestyle amenities to the charm, convenience, and values of Ave Maria. The National Golf & Country Club will offer a fresh coastal aesthetic throughout the home designs and on-site amenities including an 18-hole Gordon Lewis-designed golf course, complimented by world-class amenities for the entire family to enjoy. A variety of floorplans will be offered in Terrace and Veranda Condominiums, Coach Homes, plus Executive and Estate single family homes, starting from the \$200s.

The National Golf & Country Club will feature its own Clubhouse with a pro shop, formal and casual dining, a resort-style pool and spa, state-of-the-art fitness center with yoga/aerobics room, spa treatment rooms and beauty salon. Active residents can take advantage of Har-Tru tennis courts, pickle and bocce ball, putting green, chipping area, and a driving range. This all-encompassing amenity campus is designed to bring our community together, with spaces to congregate with friends new and old.

Whether you are a seasonal resident or looking to lay down roots, The National Golf & Country Club has the ideal home for you!

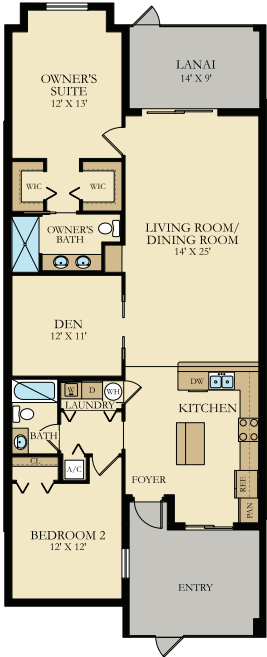


Overall starting price: from the \$200s

Lennar is one of America's leading builders of quality homes since 1954, and is one of the biggest homebuilders in Southwest Florida.

Experience unprecedented value through Lennar's Everything's Included®, simply including quality features and finishes that homeowners want and need, at no extra charge.

Simplify your home buying experience by including everything you need in a new home and community. And once you find your perfect home, our family of companies are there to assist you every step of the way with your mortgage, title and insurance needs for an enjoyable and hassle-free closing.



Bromelia II

- 1,355 Sq. Ft
- 2 Bedrooms + Den
- 2 Bathrooms
- Starting at \$267,999

The National Golf & Country Club
6090 Artisan Ct. Ave Maria, FL 34142
888-214-1476 | www.TheNational-AveMaria.com

As Ave Maria grows, so does its retail and restaurant scene

BY STEPHANIE DAVIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

New single-family homes, condominiums and villas aren't the only things opening up in Ave Maria. Several shops and restaurants opened their doors in 2021 to serve the town's growing number of residents and visitors. Here's the scoop on what's new, plus some news about what's in store for 2022.

■ **Meltz Ice Cream Shop** – When Phil and Patricia Stocton moved to Ave Maria along with their kids, Amanda and Nick, they decided the neighborhood needed a specialty ice cream shop — and that's how Meltz was born.

"We had always had the dream of opening a specialty dessert spot," says Mr. Stocton. "And Ave Maria is the perfect place for it. It's also the perfect place to raise our family and live our dream."

Meltz specializes in rolled ice cream, which is frozen in a pan so ice-cream lovers can add their favorite candies, sprinkles, fresh fruit, and more.

"We're dedicated to fresh products — everything that goes into our recipes is fresh from the strawberries to the avocados," Mr. Stocton says. "And yes, we do have avocado ice cream," he adds. "People love it!"

Amanda Stocton creates new and unique milkshakes every week — with toppings like s'mores, cookie crumbs, and even donuts.

"She puts some crazy stuff into her milkshakes," Mr. Stocton laughs. "But, they're always a hit."

— 5076 Annunciation Circle, Suite 101
www.meltzicecream.com

■ **Blue Boutique (Goodwill)** – Not your typical Goodwill, Blue is a high-end version of the popular thrift store — and best yet, purchases benefit Goodwill's mission of helping people with disabilities and transforming communities.

"We save a lot of our designer brands for Blue," says Goodwill's Debra Donatto. "Think Ann Taylor, Talbots, and more," she adds. "And many items still have the tags on them."

Blue also carries purses, shoes, jewelry and other fashion accessories.



Marlie Hernandez and Daniella Marquez at Meltz Ice Cream Shop



ANNALEE HULL / AVE MARIA SUN

Hoja De Menta



So Balling Sportswear



Maxwell Grace



Blue Boutique



Oil Well Craft Beer

The only other Blue boutique in Southwest Florida is in downtown Fort Myers. "We've had such a great response to Blue there, we knew it would be perfect for Ave Maria," Ms. Donatto says.

— 5076 Annunciation Way, Suite 103
(next to the Ave Maria Welcome Center)
www.goodwillSWFL.org

■ **Hoja De Menta** – Riena Del Mar Torres, the founder and owner of Hoja De Menta, is very busy these days operating her boutique that opened last April and quickly became a favorite among Ave Maria fashionistas. The young stylist and entrepreneur came to the area from Puerto Rico in 2015, bringing experience with fashion houses like Louis Vuitton, BCBG, and Dolce & Gabbana with her.

Hoja de Menta means "mint leaf," which is known for its healing properties and flavor — and Ms. Torres' shop has lots of flavor and color, focusing on clothing and accessories with a fun, boho/chic/French flavor by several unique designers. Ms. Torres also owns and operates Ave Maria Bike Rental, whose gray and mint green bicycles she keeps lined up in front of the boutique. She and her husband love living and working in Ave Maria. "My commute is less than ten minutes!" she says.

— 5052 Pope John Paul II Blvd., Suite 112
www.hojadementa.shop

■ **So Balling Sportswear** – Whether their preference is for tennis, golf, cycling, pickle ball or running/jogging, people in Ave Maria enjoy

an active lifestyle. And that's why So Balling Sportswear has been so busy since opening in the Town Center last summer.

Christina Zibell and her fiancé, Adrien Harris, love living in Ave Maria and decided to open their store to cater to people on the move. Because it specializes in sportswear, So Balling isn't just a shop, it's become a hub for sports enthusiasts all over town. Pop in anytime and find out about youth tryouts for local soccer and flag football teams or the next 5K or pickle ball tournament.

— 5064 Annunciation Circle, Suite 108
www.soballing.com

■ **Maxwell Grace** – Named after her son and God's grace, this gift and home décor shop is Bridget Corcoran's pride and joy — and a popular spot for Ave Maria residents and visitors alike who are looking for just the right thing for themselves or someone special they want to impress.

"We have a candle for every neighborhood in Ave Maria," Ms. Corcoran says. "They make great housewarming gifts." Throw pillows, tumblers, and post cards celebrating Ave Maria also have proven popular. The shop also carries fashions and accessories by Lilly Pulitzer, soaps and lotions from Naples Soap Company, water bottles and cups by Swell, and much more.

From pretty hand towels to religious items and sparkly jewelry, Maxwell Grace graces Ave Maria with a little bit of everything.

— 5064 Annunciation Circle, Suite 10
www.shopmaxwellgrace.com

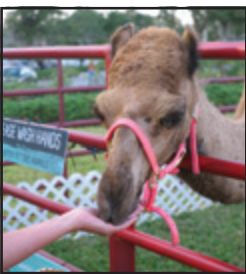
■ **Oil Well Craft Beer** – Good things are always brewing at Oil Well Craft Beer, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. The friendly establishment expanded two years ago, and since then its submarine sandwiches have proved as popular as its frosty beers. Customers come for fun as well as refreshment when the brewery hosts bingo, karaoke, and ladies' nights and numerous themed parties with food trucks and live entertainment throughout the year.

As owner Matt Williams says, "There's always a reason to raise a glass with us."

— 5534 Ave Maria Blvd., #500
www.oilwellcraftbeer.com

AROUND AVE MARIA

Hometown Christmas



ANNALEE HULL / AVE MARIA SUN

Academics and athletics are on a winning streak in Ave Maria

By **ROBIN F. DEMATTIA**
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Educational institutions in Ave Maria are excelling in academics and athletics while attracting record numbers of students and fans. This all contributes to the quality of life and sense of community as Ave Maria continues to grow.

Donahue Academy

A private pre-K through grade 12 school founded in 2007, Donahue Academy is celebrating several noteworthy achievements. Seniors Catherine Graham and Winston Fairchild recently were recognized as semi-finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and senior Joe Burke was recognized as commended. All three students scored in about the top 1.25% of all test takers on the national PSAT exam. They now compete for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2,500 scholarships and other awards. And, they join four other Donahue Academy alum who previously earned this distinction.

On the sports side, the school's eight-man football team became the Sunshine State Athletic Conference Class AAA Champion after a 28-18 game over Canterbury School from St. Petersburg.

"This is quite the accomplishment for any team and is especially surprising given that more than half the team is underclassmen and only one player is a senior," says Thomas Car-



Donahue Academy National Merit scholars Catherine Graham, Joseph Burke and Winston Fairchild.



Ave Maria squared off against Keiser University for the Sun Division Championship. Keiser emerged as 34-27 victors.

roll, director of marketing and development for the academy. "The team did a lot of growing and learning to be able to win this title."

This was Donahue Academy's third consecutive appearance in the playoffs and second State Championship. They previously won in 2019.

The football championship happened the same day as the school's boys' cross-country team was competing at the state competition in Tallahassee. Although Donahue Academy was the smallest school there, the team finished 18th overall and sophomore Leo Borjon finished 20th individually. This is only the third year of the high school team, and it was their first appearance at the state level.

The last date to apply for 2022-2023 admission to Donahue Academy is Jan. 15. Learn more at www.donahueacademy.org.

Ave Maria University

Ave Maria University started the current school year with a record 500 freshmen, which is 150 more than usual.

Kevin Murphy, vice president of marketing and communications, says the school had a



The Ave Maria volleyball team defeated Coastal Georgia to win the university's first-ever volleyball championship.

record number of applications (40% higher), acceptances, retentions and transfers (up from 64 last year to 120 this year).

Mr. Murphy attributes the increases to the expansion to 21 varsity sports, strong recruiting by the athletic department and the solid mission of the university, which attracts students. He also notes that the university increased its advertising 10-fold thanks to donations from board members Mary Demetree and Patrick Raine.

"We have students from 48 states," he says, noting that many students come from west of

the Mississippi River.

In addition, during the past five years AMU has seen a 50% increase in students who were homeschooled.

"As the country shifts to more homeschooling, that's a positive sign for us," Mr. Murphy says. "People are looking for a place where they can feel comfortable in college."

He says families like the fact that 92% of AMU faculty have a Ph.D. and that the professor-to-student ratio is 1 to 14.

The school offers 31 majors and 30 minors, and one of its highlights is its nursing program, which recently received full accreditation. The program boasts 100% job placement.

Joe Patterson, the school's athletic director and head football coach, says the school's reputation helped him recruit students from 40 states this school year.

"I think it's one of the unique characteristics of the university that we can be a small school that's very committed to its mission but also offer a competitive athletic experience," Mr. Patterson says.

He is proud to tell potential students about the great success of several teams.

For example, the women's varsity volleyball team won the Sun Conference Championship for first time. "It's been building toward this," says Mr. Patterson, who notes that the team was the runner-up last year. "They were undefeated 9-0 at home and did very well in the conference tournament."

The football team also made it to the conference title game, though they lost 34-27 to nationally-ranked Kaiser University. "We were just one play short," Mr. Patterson says.

He credits the fans, including Ave Maria residents, for providing energy to the university's teams.

"Our last three home games for football had over-capacity crowds," he says. "The support is tremendous and one of the reasons our teams do so well at home."

Seating is limited for indoor games right now, but he says men's baseball and women's softball and lacrosse will start in February (games are listed in All Around Ave Maria, on page A22).

AROUND AVE MARIA

Tournament to benefit Ave Maria Veterans Association



A tournament to benefit the Ave Maria Veterans Association helped celebrate the grand reopening of Panther Run Golf Course at Del Webb in early December. The 18-hole, par 72 course has all new grass from tees to greens, and all the bunkers have new sand. Improvements were also made to the practice facility and drainage system. Del Webb is a 55+ active adult community. Panther Run welcomes golfers who are Del Webb residents and non-residents alike. Call 239-304-2835 to book a tee time.



MILA BRIDGER / AVE MARIA SUN



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SWAMP JAM**
JANUARY 8



THE SPINNERS
JANUARY 11



INDIA Y MELINA LEÓN
JANUARY 22



**MARSHALL
TUCKER BAND**
JANUARY 27



THE DRIFTERS
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS JAY SIEGEL'S TOKENS
FEBRUARY 3



LEANN RIMES
FEBRUARY 4



FREE

**ROCKABILLAQUE
FLORIDA**
FEBRUARY 19 & 20



THE JACKSONS
FEBRUARY 23



**THE TEXAS
TENORS**
FEBRUARY 25



DICK FOX'S GOLDEN BOYS
FRANKIE AVALON,
BOBBY RYDELL, FABIAN
MARCH 4



FREE

**SOUTHLAND BLUEGRASS
& WILDERNESS
FESTIVAL**
MARCH 12 & 13



THE GUESS WHO
MARCH 19



WAYNE NEWTON
MARCH 21



KENNY G
APRIL 3



**ARTFLO MUSIC &
ARTS FESTIVAL**
APRIL 9



**CELEBRATION IN THE SKY
FREE FIREWORKS SHOW**
JANUARY 15

**MINUTES AWAY
FROM MORE**



ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Dates and details are subject to change. Visit www.AveMaria.com before venturing out, and also follow Town Center businesses on social media for updates and special promotions.

■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

RECURRING EVENTS

Farmers Market in the Town Center

Saturdays are Town Center Farmers Market days from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., through April 30. Vendors offer produce, plants, arts and crafts, clothes, honey, soaps, fresh baked goods, and more. Admission is free. For more information or to become a vendor, call Dennis Strausbaugh with SW Florida Markets, LLC, at 239-293-6266.

Live Music in the Town Center

Every Tuesday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Jan. 11 through April 30, musicians entertain passersby at various Town Center locations. Admission is free.

Sightseeing Trolley Tours

Every Tuesday, Ave Maria Development conducts free, 1-hour guided trolley tours of the town from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., starting Jan. 11 and through April 26. Meet at the Welcome Center in the Town Center.

Ave Maria Parish Tour

Every Tuesday, the Ave Maria Catholic Church offers free, 30-minute guided tours of the parish, featuring architectural and historical details about the building, from 1-3 p.m., starting Jan. 11 and through April 26. For more information, call 239-261-5555.

Family Fun First Fridays

These free events from 4-6 p.m. on the first Friday of every month combine musical entertainment with family-friendly games and activities. The Jan. 7 and St. Patrick's-themed March 4 gatherings are in the Town Center; the Feb. 4 Valentine's celebration is at the Park of Commerce.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off

The Donahue Academy's 12th annual charity steak competition comes to the Town Center from 2-7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29. Festivities include live music and entertainment while participating grill teams prepare approximately 2,000 steak dinners and serve them from 5-6 p.m. Admission is free. Dinners are \$25 in advance at www.SunshineStateSteakCookoff.com or \$30 the day of the event.

Arts and Crafts Festivals

Sculptors, painters, jewelry makers, photographers, ceramicists and other artisans exhibit and sell their creations in the Town Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the weekends of Jan. 29-30 and Feb. 26-27. Live music adds to the ambience from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free.

Blues, Brews and Barbecue Festival

For blues aficionados, this Town Center event from 12:30-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19, is not to be missed with performances by Little Eddie and the Fat Fingers, Steve Arvey, and Deb and the Dynamics. Arts and crafts vendors, kids activities, and several food trucks will be on site, along with a mechanical bull and car shows by the Cool Cruisers and the Bonita Corvette Club. Admission is free, rain or shine.

Margarita and Tacos Festival

Family-friendly fun abounds at this popular event from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 19. Enjoy live music by Westside Tropico and Orquesta Classica, lucha libre Mexican wrestlers, fun activities and animal encounters for the kids, vendor booths, and food trucks — including lots of tacos and margaritas. Admission is free, rain or shine.

MERCHANT EVENTS

The Secret Ingredient

Every Monday in January, February and March is **55+ and Fabulous Day**, when shoppers aged 55 and older save 10% off one item.

Every Thursday is **Thirsty Thursday**, when shoppers enjoy a complimentary glass of wine.

Danee Williams' one-year anniversary celebration as the owner of the shop features free sangria, a raffle, and prizes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8.

On **National Hat Day**, Saturday, Jan. 15, all hats are 20% off.

On **National Wear Red Day**, Friday, Feb. 4, shoppers wearing red save 20% off one item.

On **National Margarita Day**, Tuesday, Feb. 22, shoppers enjoy a free margarita.

On **National Dress Day**, Sunday, March 6, all dresses are 20% off.

On **National Purple Day**, Saturday, March 26, shoppers wearing purple save 20% off one item.

Oil Well Craft Beer

Enjoy **free bingo** plus Argentinian fare by the Martin Fiero food truck from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8.

Celebrate the 1970s with music by DJ DiFLO from 8-11 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 15. Best costume wins a prize. Must be 21 or older.

Beer Can Appreciation Day on Monday, Jan. 24, features \$1 off beer growlers.

Enjoy free bingo from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 5 and March 5.

For **National Pizza Day**, a pizza food truck will be on site from 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 9.

A **Chili Cook-Off Competition** to commemorate National Chili Day starts at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24. Contestants are invited to bring their best crockpot of chili for a chance to win first and second place prizes.

Celebrate **Mardi Gras** from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, with mini king cakes and plenty of beads.

Join the **St. Patrick's Day Celebration** with live music, food truck fare and lots of shenanigans on Thursday, March 17.

For more information, call the brewery at 239-354-4454 or visit www.OilWellCraftBeer.com.

The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria

Enjoy **live jazz** from 6-9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14 and Feb. 11.

Come celebrate **National Margarita Day** Tuesday, Feb. 22.

Join a **St Patrick's Day Extravaganza** with live Irish music from 5-10 p.m. Thursday, March. 17.

The Bean of Ave Maria

Come celebrate **National Irish Coffee Day** Tuesday, Jan. 25.

Lozano's Mexican Restaurant

Enjoy dinner and drinks with live music from 6-8 p.m. every Thursday and from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Saturday, Jan. 8
Women's basketball vs. Florida Memorial, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 8
Men's basketball vs. Florida Memorial, 4 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 15
Men's basketball vs. Warner, 4 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 15
Women's basketball vs. Warner, 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 19
Men's basketball vs. Southeastern, 8 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 20
Women's basketball vs. Southeastern, 8:30 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 21
Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 22
Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, 11 a.m.

Saturday, Jan. 22
Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 25
Baseball vs. Florida National, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 25
Softball vs. Eckerd (Fla.), 12 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 25
Softball vs. Eckerd (Fla.), 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 25
Baseball vs. Florida National, 2 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 27
Women's basketball vs. Coastal Georgia, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 27
Men's basketball vs. Coastal Georgia, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 28
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, 11 a.m.

Friday, Jan. 28
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 29
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, 11 a.m.

Saturday, Jan. 29
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 29
Women's basketball vs. Thomas, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 29
Men's basketball vs. Thomas, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 1
Men's basketball vs. Florida College, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 3
Men's basketball vs. Florida National, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 4
Baseball vs. Middle Georgia State, 11 a.m.

Friday, Feb. 4
Baseball vs. Middle Georgia State, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 5
Baseball vs. Middle Georgia State, 12 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 8
Baseball vs. Southeastern, 1 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 11
Softball vs. Campbellsville (Ky.), 12 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 11
Softball vs. Campbellsville (Ky.), 2 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 12
Women's basketball vs. St. Thomas, 2 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 12
Men's basketball vs. St. Thomas, 4 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 14
Baseball vs. Montreat (N.C.), 11 a.m.

Monday, Feb. 14
Baseball vs. Montreat (N.C.), 2 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 19
Lacrosse vs. Dominican (Ohio), TBA

Saturday, Feb. 19
Men's basketball vs. Keiser, 4 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 19
Women's basketball vs. Keiser, 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 25
Baseball vs. Keiser, TBA

Saturday, Feb. 26
Baseball vs. Keiser, TBA

Saturday, Feb. 26
Baseball vs. Keiser, TBA

Monday, March 7
Lacrosse vs. Georgetown (Ky.), TBA

Monday, March 7
Baseball vs. Lawrence Tech (Mich.), 11 a.m.

Monday, March 7
Baseball vs. Lawrence Tech (Mich.), 2 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9
Softball vs. Columbia International (S.C.), 12 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9
Softball vs. Columbia International (S.C.), 2 p.m.

Thursday, March. 10
Lacrosse vs. Lawrence Tech (Mich.), TBA

Friday, March 11
Baseball vs. Madonna (Mich.), 11 a.m.

Friday, March 11
Baseball vs. Madonna (Mich.), 2 p.m.

Saturday, March 12
Lacrosse vs. Otterbein (Ohio), TBA

Saturday, March 12
Baseball vs. Madonna (Mich.), 1 p.m.

Saturday, March 12
Baseball vs. Madonna (Mich.), 10 a.m.

Saturday, March 12
Softball vs. Keiser, 1 p.m.

Saturday, March 12
Softball vs. Keiser, 3 p.m.

Sunday, March 13
Softball vs. Keiser, 12 p.m.

Monday, March 14
Lacrosse vs. Cumberlands (Ky.), TBA

Monday, March 14
Baseball vs. Bryant & Stratton (N.Y.), 1 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16
Softball vs. Florida National, 12 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16
Softball vs. Florida National, 2 p.m.

Thursday, March 17
Lacrosse vs. Anderson (Ga.), 7 p.m.

Friday, March 25
Baseball vs. Florida Memorial, TBA

Friday, March 25
Softball vs. Thomas 12 p.m.

Friday, March 25
Softball vs. Thomas, 2 p.m.

Saturday, March 26
Baseball vs. Florida Memorial, TBA

Saturday, March 26
Baseball vs. Florida Memorial, TBA

Saturday, March 26
Softball vs. Thomas, 12 p.m.

Tuesday, March 29
Baseball vs. Webber, 12 p.m.

Tuesday, March 29
Baseball vs. Webber, 3 p.m.

Schedule is subject to change, check www.AveMariaGyrenes.com for updates.

■ AVE MARIA RESIDENTS ONLY

Annual Pig Roast at the Ave Maria Water Park

Ave Maria residents and their guests are invited to an evening of delicious food and live entertainment under the stars at the water park pool deck from 6-8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 5. For cost and ticket sales information, visit www.AveMariaMasterAssociation.com.

Community Garage Sale Day

Offering Ave Maria residents an opportunity to sell gently used items to their neighbors and curious shoppers, this fun community event from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 26, in North Park, includes music, family-friendly activities, and food trucks. For residents to register and reserve their spot, visit www.AveMariaMasterAssociation.com.

Health and Education Expo

Residents are invited to kick off the day with a 5K run, followed by a health-related trade show, live DJ music, kids' activities, and food truck fare from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 12, in North Park. To become a vendor or for more information, contact Cindy at Themumsist@hotmail.com. 🌻

Lennar opens condominium models at The National Golf & Country Club

BY **SANDRA YEYATI**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

To assist prospective home buyers, Lennar has opened six new model condominiums at The National Golf & Country Club, the only gated community with resort-style amenities in Ave Maria. Featuring six distinctive floor plans in two separate building styles starting in the low \$200,000s, all of these condos offer lake and golf course views as well as a bundled golf membership.

“A big selling point for these homes is that for the lowest price point in the community, you get access to all the incredible amenities,” says Christina Traver, Lennar director of marketing. “You do not have to pay extra to be a member of the country club or to play golf in our 18-hole, Gordon Lewis-designed course. It’s attached to the purchase of the home.”

Area Sales Manager Scott Schilling says the other big selling point is Lennar’s Everything Included package: “From the 20-inch floor tile on the diagonal to the quartz countertops and Shaker-style cabinets, everything is upgraded,” he says. “With other builders, those would be considered design upgrades. We include them all as standard features.”

Each condo also comes with hurricane-impact sliding glass doors and windows, energy-saving hot water heaters, stainless steel appliances and open-concept living areas. Keeping the ambience bright and uniform, interior walls and ceilings are painted a crisp white and the floor tiles are grey. Building exteriors have a coastal theme in blues and grays with slate shutters and white railings.

The Terraces is a four-story collection of 30 two-bedroom/two-bath condominiums with 1,120 to 1,301 square feet under air, plus a screened lanai and covered parking space. They range in price from \$220,000 to \$250,000. Mr. Schilling says the third- and fourth-floor condos



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Arbor is a condominium in The Terraces, coming soon to The National at Ave Maria. This is a photo from Lennar’s model in Heritage Landing Golf & Country Club in Punta Gorda.



LEFT: The Birkdale is another condominium in The Terraces. This model is at Heritage Landing in Punta Gorda. All countertops in The National at Ave Maria condominiums will be white quartz.

RIGHT: A rendering of The Verandas building.

tend to sell first because of their elevated views, as does the Carolina floor plan, which is an end unit with more windows and the largest square footage. The Arbor features a split floor plan for privacy between the two bedrooms, while

the Birkdale has an owner’s suite and a spare bedroom beside it — a popular configuration for people with younger kids.

The Verandas is a two-story collection of 16 condominiums. Each of its three floor plans,

ranging from 1,355 to 1,569 square feet under air, include two bedrooms, two baths, a den, screened lanai and garage. Prices range from \$275,000 to \$299,000. The Arabella II, an end unit, is the largest plan in the collection. The Bromelia II offers a split design with the den separating the owner’s suite from the second bedroom, and the Diangelo II has the two bedrooms situated next to each other.

While The National’s championship golf course has been open since January 2021, a wide selection of other amenities will be added later this year, including a resort-style pool and chickee bar, Har-Tru clay tennis courts, pickle ball and bocce ball courts, a world-class fitness center, men’s and women’s saunas, a nail and beauty salon and two restaurants in the clubhouse. Although the golf course is currently open to anyone, eventually it will be restricted during season to residents only, as will the other activities and facilities.

In a real estate market that is already brisk, Mr. Schilling expects all of these homes to sell quickly. “We have a very limited inventory, and they’ll be going fast — first come, first served,” he says.

Ms. Traver notes that in addition to these condominiums, The National offers an array of single-family homes and coach homes to serve the needs of any family: “With 17 floor plans to choose from in total, you really can find a perfect home for anyone. Whether you’re seasonal, retired, a young family, upsizing, downsizing, whatever it may be, you’ll be able to find a perfect home for you at the perfect price with a lifestyle that’s really beyond comparison for what you pay for.”

To visit these new models and learn more about The National, call 888-214-1476, visit www.TheNationalVIP.com or stop by Lennar’s Welcome Home Center at 6098 Artisan Court in Ave Maria. 🌟

New Pulte model homes coming soon

BY **SANDRA YEYATI**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

This February, Pulte Homes will open three new models in Avalon Park, offering homebuyers in-person tours of their top-selling Roseland, Whitestone, and Mystique homes. These one- and two-story, single-family homes are part of Pulte’s phase two collection of 11 floor plans and 251 new homesites within walking distance of the Town Center — most of them with water views.

“Our homes are designed with solutions for today’s challenges,” says Shirley Jerezano, general sales manager for Pulte’s Southwest Florida market. “Every square foot, detail, and built-in feature was created so you can get more out of life with a Pulte home.”

A compelling asset of every Pulte home is personalization, as all 11 floor plans can be personalized to serve the specific needs of any homebuyer. “Families are looking for flex rooms and open space, while empty-nesters and retirees prefer a single story with a big open kitchen for entertaining,” Ms. Jerezano says.

In addition to equipping all homes with high-speed internet and low-voltage WiFi to prevent any signaling dead spots around the house, dens can be insulated for sound-proofing to accommodate work-from-home needs and/or to maximize home entertainment experiences. Serving the emerging trend of multigenerational living, a dedicated bedroom/bathroom en suite is available for an aging-in-place parent or adult child.

The new, decorated Mystique model home, representing Avalon Park’s single-story best-seller, boasts a large, open kitchen with an island and a casual “cedar-and-thyme” vibe, using washed oak woods mixed with stone, black metal accents, and pops of soft green throughout. The Mystique’s versatile floor plan can be configured for two to five bedrooms, plus two to three bathrooms, and a two-car garage.



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Whitestone has a modern vibe with clean lines and polished chrome accents.



The Whitestone, above and right, has a bonus room above the garage and a spacious lanai/pool area.

The Roseland model’s “modern slate” interior design theme exudes sophistication with gray-washed woods, accents of brushed gold, and pops of slate blues. The two-story foyer offers a memorable first impression with cus-

tom trim work on the walls. The Roseland can be configured to have up to six bedrooms and six bathrooms, with the owner’s suite upstairs, and the option for a large multigenerational living suite downstairs..



The Mystique has a friendly, open kitchen.

The Whitestone’s “white ice” model interior design theme showcases a modern vibe with clean lines, polished chrome accents, and layers of white and neutral woods. It is a two-story design with a large flex room at the front of the home and a multi-use upstairs loft.

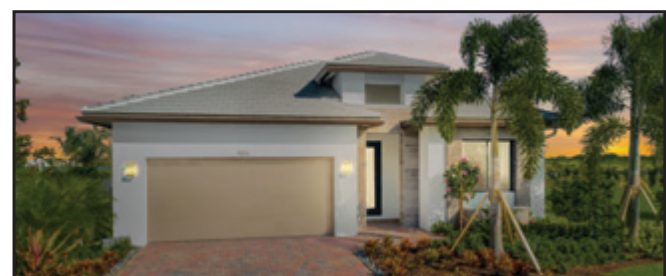
At prices ranging from the \$400,000s to the \$700,000s, these Pulte homes provide incomparable value. “You can get a four- or five-bedroom home with the latest finishes in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 range, which is unachievable in many other parts of Florida or the country,” Ms. Jerezano says, adding, “It’s more important than ever to select a builder that will stand behind its warranty.”

High-end luxury features such as higher ceilings, tile floors in all of the main living areas and brand-name appliances are standard with these homes. A committed proponent of environmentally friendly building features, PulteGroup was named the 2020 Builder of the Year for the Most Single-Family Homes Certified by the Florida Green Building Coalition, the state’s leading certifier of green residential and commercial construction.

For more information, including an opening date for the newest models, call 239-842-1657, go to www.pulte.com/AvalonPark or visit the sales center at 4972 Seton St. in Ave Maria. 🌟

From page 1

— The Maple Ridge Sales Center is at 5009 Alonza Ave. For more information, call 855-284-8913 or visit www.MapleRidgeFL.com.



LEFT: One of the bedrooms in the Inlet is a separate casita complete with kitchenette.

COURTESY PHOTOS



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AROUND AVE MARIA

Thirsty Thursday at The Secret Ingredient



Every Thursday is Thirsty Thursday at The Secret Ingredient, the friendly boutique in Ave Maria Town Center where shoppers find clothing, accessories and gifts of all kinds — and on Thursdays, they enjoy a complimentary glass of wine as they browse, try, and buy.

- 1. Danielle Soltis
- 2. Boutique owner Danee' Williams
- 3. Carolyn Dix
- 4. Dan Ratagen
- 5. Jackie Ratagen



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COURTESY PHOTO

Live music is always part of the fun at the Margarita and Taco Festival, set this year for March 19.

SEASON

From page 1

thriving. “We just opened professional suites above Tropical Smoothie and added several new boutiques in the Town Center, so there are no more empty retail spaces,” Ms. Mambuca reports. “We want to encourage residents to support their local businesses — buy a new purse or shoes at The Secret Ingredient, have a cup of coffee at The Bean or an ice cream dessert at Meltz.”

Behind the scenes, event organizers and volunteers are abuzz as season gets into full swing. They have been planning for this all year long.

“We try to make the events better and better, year after year,” says Donna Marquez, events coordinator and manager of the Ave Maria Welcome Center. “We have an amazing

group of people who come together to make things happen, including our events and marketing teams at Ave Maria Development, the lifestyle staff at the Ave Maria Master Association, many wonderful volunteers, and all of the interesting vendors and entertainers.”

Grab your dancing shoes and party outfits, because Ave Maria is about to turn into a Hallmark town. Here are just some of this season’s highlights. All of the events listed are open to the public.

Farmers Market every Saturday

Fast becoming a hometown favorite from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday, the Ave Maria Farmers Market brings quality vendors to the Town Center for fresh Florida produce; artisanal comestibles like jams, jellies, oils, hot sauce, and European-style baked goods; homemade soaps and other beauty products; plants and flowers; jewelry; arts and crafts; and new and vintage clothing.

“This is our fifth year at Ave Maria. We only had six vendors our first year, but we keep adding more vendors to accommodate increasing attendance and satisfy residents’ needs,” says Dennis Strausbaugh of SW Florida Markets. While about 40% of the vendors live in Ave Maria, the other 60% drive into town from Naples, Estero, Cape Coral, Marco Island, and the east coast of Florida.

“We require nice setups from our vendors,” Mr. Strausbaugh says. “Their tents are lined up on the grass behind the church so people can walk down the large sidewalk without ever having to step out on the street. It’s a very safe and convenient way for people to shop the market and socialize with their friends.” Live music and fun activities for kids add a festive, family vibe. Admission is free for this season-only event that runs through April 30.

Live music in Town Center

To attract people downtown from Jan. 11 through April 30, Ave Maria Development sponsors a diverse lineup of talented musical acts from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday and



COURTESY PHOTO

Hour-long trolley tours of the town’s neighborhoods and interesting spots set out from the Welcome Center starting at 11 a.m. every Tuesday through April 26.

Saturday at various Town Center locations. Among this season’s scheduled performers are jazz guitarists Mason Williams, professional saxophonists Gerald Augustin and Jim Blackburn, the folk band Patchouli, songstress Wendy Renee, the Caribbean steel drum band Steely Pan, singer and acoustic guitarist Christ Stultz, and the Irish band West of Galway.

Free trolley tours

Every Tuesday through April 26, tourists and first-time visitors to Ave Maria are treated to one-hour guided trolley tours from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The excursions, led by Joe Marinelli, begin at the Welcome Center and travel to all of the neighborhoods and interesting spots around town.

Free church tours

Also on every Tuesday through April 26, Ave Maria Catholic Church offers free, 30-minute guided tours of its famous parish from 1-3

p.m., helping visitors learn about and explore the architectural and historical details of this intriguing building.

Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off

There’s nothing quite like the aroma of thousands of steaks on the grill when the 12th annual Sunshine State Steak Cook-off comes to the Town Center from 2-7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29. Watch as scores of grill teams vie for top honors, listen to live music and, most importantly, sink your teeth into a perfectly cooked steak dinner served from 5-6 p.m. This is a fundraising event to benefit the Donahue Academy, a Catholic grade school in Ave Maria. While admission to the grounds is free, dinners are \$25. Purchase tickets in advance at www.SunshineStateSteakCookoff.com or pay \$30 at the event.



PHOTO BY ANNA FULKERSON

Shoppers load up on fresh produce at the Saturday morning Ave Maria Farmers Market.

Festivals in the Town Center

Open to the public, an array of themed festivals are sure to draw thousands of people into the Town Center, as top-notch entertainers take the stage, family-friendly activities delight the little ones, and delicious food truck fare gratifies everyone's palates.

Ave Maria's not-to-be-missed event of the year, the Blues, Brews and Barbecue Festival from 12:30-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19, offers performances by three blues bands at the top of their game: Little Eddie and the Fat Fingers, Steve Arvey, and Deb and the Dynamics. A mechanical bull, two car shows, and an arts and crafts show add to the fun.

Serving lots of laughs and danceable live music, the Margarita and Taco Festival celebrates all things south of the border from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 19. There will be high-energy Latin-music by West Side Tropico and Orquesta Classica, lucha libre Mexican wrestlers, animal encounters for the kids, and plenty of tacos and margaritas.

Arts and crafts festivals

In partnership with Ave Maria Development, TNT Events brings exemplary artists and crafters to the Town Center for two culturally enriching weekends, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 29-30 and Feb. 26-27. Come see and shop the works of sculptors, painters, jewelry makers, photographers, and ceramicists. During both weekends, the farmers market extends into Sunday and live music will fill the air from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Family Fun First Fridays

These free gatherings from 4-6 p.m. on the first Friday of each month combine musical entertainment with family-friendly games and activities. The Jan. 7 and St. Patrick's-themed March 4 gatherings are in the Town Center, while the Valentine-themed Feb. 4 celebration is at the Park of Commerce.



The street closes to traffic and artists set up their booths for the arts and crafts festivals.

Oil Well Craft Beer events

The social calendar is overflowing with fun activities at everybody's favorite brewery in the Park of Commerce. Don't miss the 1970s costume party from 8-11 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 15, featuring music by DJ DiFLO; a chili cook-off starting at 7 p.m. on National Chili Day, Feb. 24; a Mardi Gras celebration from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, with mini king

cakes, and plenty of beads; or St. Patrick's Day shenanigans with live music and food truck fare on March 17.

— Dates and details are subject to change. Visit www.AveMaria.com before venturing out, and also follow Town Center businesses on social media for updates and special promotions.



Cheers to the next Blues, Brews and Barbecue Festival coming on Feb. 19.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Fun photo opps abound at the Margarita and Taco Festival.

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