

Groundbreaking brings public safety complex one step closer

BY **ROBIN F. DEMATTIA**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Some people ask, “Where’s the fire?” But Michael J. Choate commonly hears, “Where’s the fire station?”

As the district manager and fire chief for the Immokalee Fire Control District, he’s happy to have an exciting answer.

Groundbreaking took place on March 5 for the new Immokalee Fire Control District Ave Maria Public Safety Complex in the Ave Maria Park of Commerce.

It will increase visibility of the station, currently located in the northwest corner of town, and improve emergency services.



CHOATE

“This building will provide a public safety complex where citizens of Ave Maria can go in one place to meet with the fire chief, deputy sheriff and EMS,” Chief Choate says, adding it will also “improve emergency response during any type of natural disaster.” The current station is not hurricane rated, so firefighters must move records, computers, supplies and gear while sheltering somewhere else.

The new category 5 hurricane-rated structure will function as an emergency operations center for the entire Immokalee Fire Control District and allow for real-time coordination with Collier County’s Emergency Operations Center, which the station currently doesn’t have.

The building will also be the first time the sheriff’s office, which patrols Ave Maria 24 hours a day, has office space where officers can conduct interviews or take a break.

The new space will improve living conditions for fire service staff, with a minimum of five people working 24 hours a day. There will be energy-efficient elements as well as several decontamination zones to protect firefighters from carcinogens that they bring back from fires.

The \$10 million complex is being funded by impact fees collected from Ave Maria and Immokalee that support the fire district.

“All of the growth we’ve had is paying for this,” the chief says. “We are constantly having to learn new addresses and walk through new commercial buildings. It’s all great.”

The building is being designed for expansion over the next 50 years with space for more staffing and another fire truck. The first new facility in the Immokalee Fire Control District since 1953, it was designed by GMA Architects and will be built by EnviroStruct, each of which has been involved in many other stations.

The anticipated opening is early 2021. 🌻

“They’re doing a tremendous job of giving us the resources to stay actively engaged ... I can look at the resources and know exactly what time Publix will be open and if they have toilet paper or if they restocked water.”

— **Deb Fornwall**, Avalon Park resident



AVE MARIA SUN IMAGE

Walking and biking around Ave Maria offers scenery and fresh air that keep our spirits up, even with many events closed down.

Staying active



ERIC RADDATZ / AVE MARIA SUN

Ave Maria residents are alerted about which merchants are open and which restaurants are offering what for their daily take-out specials as well as when the all-vital Publix truck is arriving in town and what resupplies it will bring.

Sustainable community rallies residents and thrives through it all

BY **LAURA TICHY-SMITH**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Something that has set Ave Maria apart as special is the range of activities that residents enjoy. But now, the flow of time that residents traditionally mark by attending seasonal festivals and social events has been altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping activities going for residents amid shifting government regulations regarding the crisis has taken creative reimagining and nimble action on the part of the Ave Maria Master Association.

Some events have been modified and some moved online to social media, while others have had to be postponed. Fortunately, with nearly 20 different Facebook groups devoted to Ave Maria plus email

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Shopping

Unique boutique worth the trip to Ave Maria.

A8 ►



Bottoms up

Cheers to Oil Well Craft Beer at Ave Maria.

A22-23 ►



Then and now

Getting to know Tom Monaghan.

A18-19 ►



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Ave Maria University prepares grads for next step in their lives

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

While Ave Maria University's 16th commencement will look different than anticipated, it is still a cause for celebration.

"As a professor and administrator, commencement is one of those times of great joy that is something I savor," says Roger Nutt, S.T.L., S.T.D., vice president for academic affairs.

The Class of 2020 is comprised of approximately 230 students with at least one student graduating in one of 27 different majors. The most popular majors include psychology, nursing, theology, economics, history, accounting, politics, biochemistry, business administration, exercise physiology, health science and communications.

About one third of the graduates will go directly into their careers. Another third will enter graduate school, and the remaining third will take a gap year, go on a mission trip or enter religious life or seminary.

The university helps students prepare for all of these avenues.

Mr. Nutt says the senior year curriculum includes either a senior seminar, thesis requirement, capstone course, leadership project or credit-bearing internship in the student's major.

The university also organizes job and career fairs attended by companies and graduate schools. Students with education and nursing majors are especially



COURTESY PHOTO

Roger Nutt is the vice president for academic affairs at Ave Maria University.

in demand.

In addition, graduates can take advantage of scholarships or guaranteed seats arranged by the university with other educational institutions such as the Ave Maria School of Law, the School of Pharmacy at Palm Beach Atlantic University and St. Mary's University in London, which has more than 20 master's programs.

The members of this year's graduating class join the approximately 2,500-3,000 Ave Maria University alumni and become ambassadors for the school. 🌟



Wisdom from Tom Monaghan

"Set the right priorities and stick to them" is Tom Monaghan's advice to Ave Maria University's graduating class. He shares his own priorities:

- 1. Spiritual** – Be a good Catholic.
- 2. Social** – Be a good person; practice the Golden Rule, especially with your family.
- 3. Mental** – Use your brain, expand your intellect, etc. (continue to read and learn).
- 4. Physical** – Take care of your health (exercise, healthy diet, control your weight, etc.).
- 5. Financial** – Work hard, save your earnings, think long-term. Be a good steward, use to serve others.

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CC Homes creates a sense of community at Maple Ridge

BY RUSTY PRAY

Ave Maria Correspondent

If there is one thing that makes CC Homes at Maple Ridge in Ave Maria stand out, it's the sheer breadth of models offered at prices within a working family's reach.

"We offer a wide variety of floor plans with high-end finishes," says Chelsea Kimmey, director of marketing for CC Homes. "We have so many families from different backgrounds living the Florida dream in their homes at Maple Ridge."

All CC Homes at Maple Ridge include access to wonderful amenities in Ave Maria, voted Community of the Year for the past five consecutive years by the Collier Building Industry Association. Those amenities include a private water park, trails, paths and the daily conveniences of the Town Center with Publix supermarket.

CC Homes at Maple Ridge provides more than a place to live. It provides amenities that create a true sense of community.

"We have so many families with such a great sense of community living there," Ms. Kimmey says.

CC Homes at Maple Ridge offers five home collections, including 11 designer-decorated models for sale. The home collections range in price from \$219,000 to \$317,000.

For instance, the Grove model offers a total of 1,725 square feet in a one-story floor plan. It features two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a master bedroom with a walk-in closet and a two-car garage. It is priced at \$219,990.

The Birch features 2,317 total square feet, three bedrooms, 2½ bathrooms, a great room, his and her walk-in closets, a laundry room and a two-car garage. It goes for about \$250,990.

The Lincoln is a one-story 2,567-square-foot plan with three bedrooms, 2½ baths, a great room, a kitchen, a master bedroom with walk-

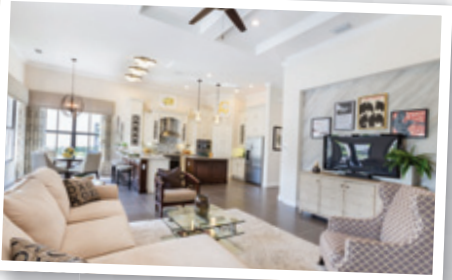


CC HOMES / COURTESY PHOTOS

Above: The Duvall is 5,103 total square feet of space over two stories. It offers five bedrooms, 4½ baths, a living room, family room, breakfast nook, a sitting room and a three-car garage.

Far Left: The Briones model, from the same collection as the Duvall, features four bedrooms and three baths.

Left: The living room and kitchen of a home by CC Homes at Maple Ridge.



in closet, a master bathroom with a double vanity, a laundry room and a two-car garage. The asking price is \$266,990.

The Danby boasts a two-story, 4,228-square-foot plan featuring four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a living room, dining room, family room, a breakfast nook, a loft and a two- or three-car garage. It goes for about \$345,990.

The Duvall is 5,103 total square feet of space over two stories. It offers five bedrooms, 4½ baths, a living room, family room, breakfast nook, his and hers baths, a sitting room and a three-car garage. A casita/guest suite and other

options are available. The price is \$417,990
Last April, CC Homes unveiled the Club at Maple Ridge, a new amenity complex exclusive to homeowners in the Maple Ridge neighborhoods. The 10,000-square-foot design includes a circular drive, elongated paver walkway, lush foliage and grand lobby entrance. Inside, rooms of various size serve as community space for special events, casual meetings and social celebrations. The club also has a fitness center, a billiard and card room, an exhibition kitchen, a massage room and a children's room,

not to mention the gorgeous pool. A lifestyle calendar keeps track of who's doing what, when and where.

Each of the rooms each has "many purposes," Ms. Kimmey says. "You can have small to large gatherings where you can meet your neighbors. The resort-style pool is magnificent, with plenty of seating around it, a barbecue area and a cabana. The atmosphere is peaceful and quiet." 🌻



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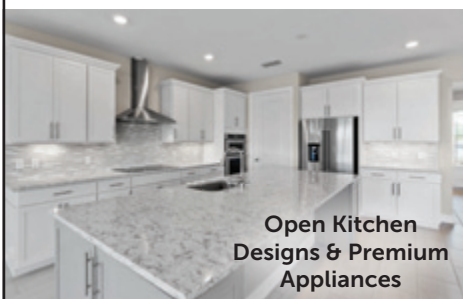
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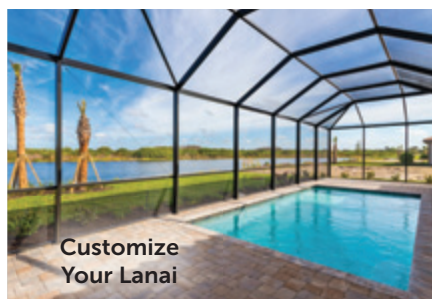
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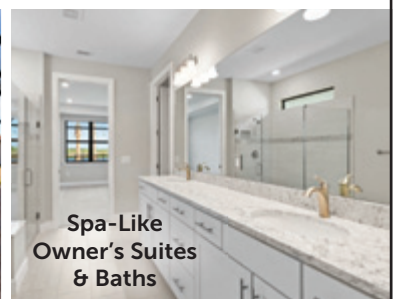
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A roseate spoonbill in breeding plumage stands among a gathering of whistling ducks.

CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY / COURTESY PHOTO

Spring is in full swing at Corkscrew

SPECIAL TO AVE MARIA SUN

Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is closed to visitors, but in nature, things are business as usual. While staff members are following CDC guidelines and practicing social distancing, only essential field activities, maintenance and security checks are under-way at the sanctuary.

Enjoy Corkscrew virtually through these images, and visit Corkscrew.Audubon.org for more information about the 13,000-acre sanctuary in Ave Maria’s back yard. While at the website, you can also subscribe to the Corkscrew e-newsletter to keep up with flora and fauna comings and goings until it’s safe again to visit in person. 📧



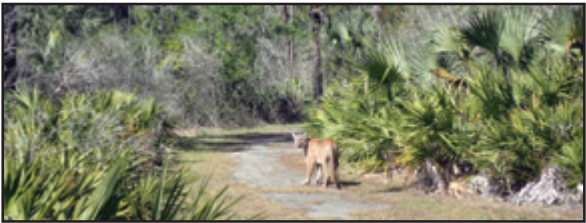
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Simpson’s zephyr lilies are usually among the first blooms that pop up after a prescribed fire on sanctuary lands.



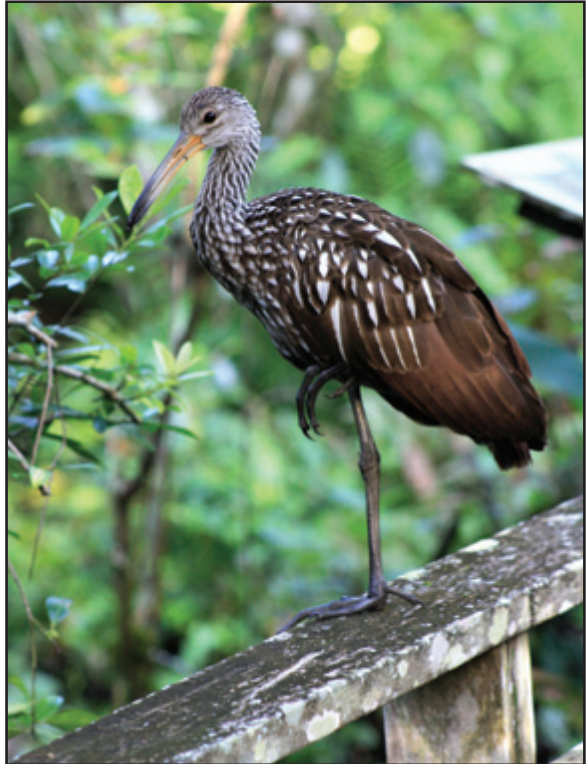
R.J. WILEY / COURTESY PHOTO

A cypress tree towers above the 2¼-mile boardwalk.



CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY / COURTESY PHOTO

Sanctuary staff spotted this Florida panther on a back-country road.



CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY / COURTESY PHOTO

Limpkins can sometimes be seen from (or on) the boardwalk.



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“It’s treating customers the way we would want to be treated, and I feel that’s why we’ve been in business for 40 years.”

— Jeanne Rush, owner, *The Secret Ingredient*

The Secret Ingredient a unique boutique to Ave Maria

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Ask Jeanne Rush, owner of The Secret Ingredient, why she opened her boutique in Ave Maria, and she’ll tell you a story about divine providence.

She said that, in 2004, she picked up a copy of the Wall Street Journal that had a story about the Ave Maria Money Market Mutual Fund co-founded by Tom Monaghan. Ms. Rush liked that the investment fund aligned with her Christian values. She asked her financial adviser to invest in it for her, but he couldn’t locate the fund, so she set the newspaper aside on her desk.

“It’s kind of funny that on Aug. 4, 2004, which was a Sunday, I was cleaning up my desk and thought, ‘Okay, I’ll put this into my computer, and if something comes up, great, but if not, I’m throwing it into file 13,’” she says.

“And on that day and that day only, a rendition of this town popped up. Not anything about the money market mutual fund but an actual rendering of the town popped up.

“It looked similar to where I’m sitting right now at the store, where I can see the church and the piazza. I thought, ‘Oh, this looks like a place I would love!’”

Ms. Rush needed warmer climes for herself and her father, so she emailed to inquire if the town was looking for a family-owned store or if only chain retailers were sought.

“They wanted family-owned businesses, so I started talking to them and decided this would be a perfect place because I could walk to work, church and the grocery, and I could hopefully take classes at the university,” she says.

“I saw it as a perfect retirement plan. It wasn’t a business decision — it was a leap of faith.”

The store in Ave Maria is an extension of Ms. Rush’s earlier boutiques in Richmond, Va., and Indianapolis, Ind., which are still in operation. She also had two stores in Dayton, Ohio, which she has since closed. She opened her first boutique in Richmond in 1979, and she opened the Ave Maria boutique 12 years ago. She spends January to April at the Florida location.

While it makes sense that the store would have a loyal following of residents from Ave Maria, Ms. Rush says The Secret Ingredient is a destination store to which customers come



PHOTOS BY JEANNE RUSH / COURTESY OF THE SECRET INGREDIENT

The Secret Ingredient has fashions for the contemporary and updated woman. In addition to clothing, the boutique has all of the accessories needed to complete an outfit and/or make different outfits from the same basic pieces.





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from as far away as Miami and Sarasota. So, what makes the boutique so wonderful when places such as Miami have no lack of shopping options?

"We believe in total customer service, doing what's best for customers and making customers happy," she says. "It's treating customers the way we would want to be treated, and I feel that's why we've been in business for 40 years."

And it's not just about working with women shoppers but also with husbands or family members who come in. The boutique keeps customers' purchase histories in the computer so it's easy to look up items purchased in the past and to include sizes, style

and color preferences. Special orders are graciously accepted, and the boutique also gift wraps and ships.

The Secret Ingredient not only stocks women's clothing but also the shoes and accessories to complete an outfit without having to run to multiple stores. The shop also stocks hostess gifts and religious items.

"I think the contemporary and updated woman is our customer," Ms. Rush says. "We do major accessories because I feel you can change an outfit easily with accessories. We really want women to leave here knowing they've got everything they need pulled together so they can just put it on or put it into their suitcases." 🌸



PHOTOS BY JEANNE RUSH / COURTESY OF THE SECRET INGREDIENT



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Couple finds twice the charm in Del Webb homes

BY RUSTY PRAY

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Nancy and Jim Frierson had no intention of buying a home at Del Webb Naples, the 55-plus active adult community in Ave Maria.

“It wasn’t in the plan at the time,” Nancy says.

The plan was to continue to RV to Florida from their home in Kansas during the winter months, visiting family and extending a practice they’d begun a couple years earlier.

But then, “Once we saw Del Webb and Ave Maria, we said, ‘Wow, this is it. We want to live here,’” Nancy says.

Jim, a retired data architect, and Nancy, who was in human resources, wound up buying a Taft model and diving into the myriad of activities that go along with living at Del Webb Naples, including golf, pickleball, bicycling, walking, crafting and yoga.

That was five years ago. Now, because of anticipated medical issues with a family member, they are building a new home with one more bedroom than the two-bedroom Taft.

They have broken ground on the Mystique, a lovely one-story design that has 1,889 square feet and includes an open kitchen with a center island that overlooks a bright gathering room. They upgraded countertops and chose an extended lanai and an extended two-car garage.

The home, as it happens, overlooks the fairway on the 13th hole on the golf course. Since both Jim and Nancy are golfers — Nancy swears Jim has the lower handicap — the location and the extra four feet of garage space will come in handy.

The home is expected to be complete sometime in late summer or early fall.

One feature of the Mystique that helped



Jim and Nancy Frierson are buying a home for the second time at Del Webb Naples, the 55-plus active adult community in Ave Maria.

sell Nancy on the model is the cornerless sliding glass doors opening onto the lanai. “So, when you open your lanai in the winter, you have a huge outdoor space,” she says.

The couple also particularly liked the powerful water filtration system and numerous finish options offered for their second Del Webb home. “We have about three times as many finish options as when we first purchased here,” Nancy says.

They do not have a pool.

“Del Webb has such a nice pool at the amenities center, we didn’t feel need for one at the house,” Nancy says.

In the meantime, Nancy and Jim are happy in their first Del Webb home.

“We really love it,” she says. “We have a preserve behind us. We have two to three football fields of open space behind us. We love that.”

From the first shovel hitting the ground, the builder has kept them apprised of the

progress on their new home.

“The walls are most of the way up,” Nancy says, providing a late-March status report. “Once the interior walls go up, we’ll have a pre-dry-wall walk-through. They really keep you well-informed. I’m very satisfied.”

One of the things that attracted the couple to Del Webb Naples from the beginning was the community’s crowded calendar of activities revolving around 18 holes of championship golf, outdoor sports courts, resort and lap pools and a grand clubhouse with a full-time lifestyle director, plus a state-of-the-art fitness center.

“With so many ways to stay active,” the website says, “it’s easy to see why neighbors become longtime friends.”

Which is exactly what has happened with the Friersons. By taking part in many of the activities offered — including golf and pickleball — they have created a village of friends and active, like-minded acquaintances.


“We have a large group of friends,” Nancy says. And Del Webb Naples caters to their lifestyle.

“When we first came here and saw the calendar of activities,” Nancy says, “We said, ‘This is going to be a fun place to live.’” 🌞

“We really love it. We have a preserve behind us. We have two to three football fields of open space behind us.

We love that.”

—Nancy Frierson



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Ave Maria Communities

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| A11



Avalon Park About the Community

From \$240s-\$600s

It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within the highly sought-after Collier County School District, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, plenty of living space, and walkability to downtown Ave Maria. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique architectural exteriors,

and 18 consumer-inspired 1- and 2-story single family homes from the mid \$200s that combine Pulte's signature quality construction and consumer-first designs. With 2-6 bedrooms and 2-6.5 bathrooms in 1,500 to 4,800 square feet of living space, you are sure to find a new Pulte home to fit your family's needs now and in the future.



Creekview

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easy personalization options and versatile living spaces make everyday moments easier and more enjoyable. With a focus on quality construction and a simplified buying experience, Pulte will help you get into your new home easily, without the headaches. That's More Life Built In®, and that's exactly what you'll find at Avalon Park.

Avalon Park at Ave Maria
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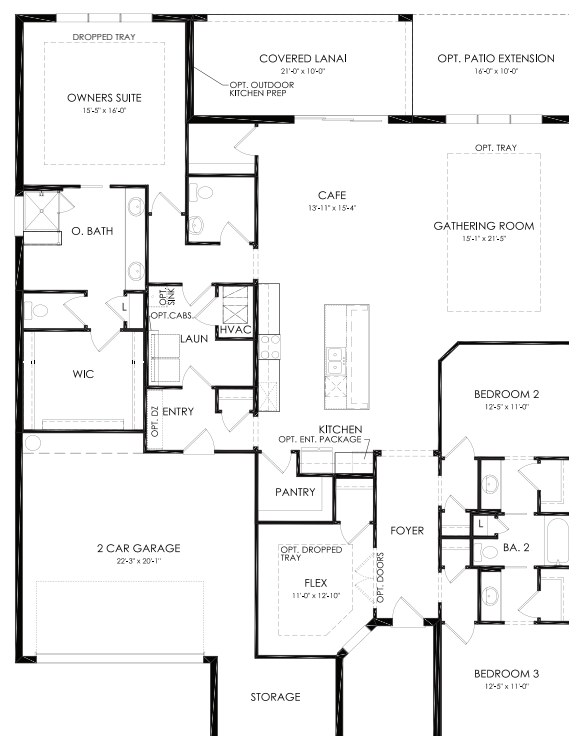


From \$190s-\$600s

Director who plans clubs, classes and events all year long. With so many ways to stay active and have fun, it's easy to see why Del Webb Naples neighbors become long-time friends. Offering 21 home designs to choose from including carriage homes, villas and single family, starting from the \$190s to \$600s, you are sure to find a home where you can create an inspired, personalized design to fit your style, and budget. End your search for your ideal Florida oasis...it's all waiting for you at Del Webb Naples.



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.



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- 2.5-4 Baths
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Del Webb Naples
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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 65 years of combined experience in South Florida real estate, Mr. Armando Codina and Mr. Jim Carr 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.



Starting from \$240,990 to \$417,990

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.



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Maple Ridge
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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 Encinitas is a new

construction, two-story home with 4 bedrooms, 3-and-one-half baths, great room, eat-in kitchen, upstairs laundry room, loft, storage closet, downstairs master suite with walk-in closet and attached garage. 5th bedroom or a wet bar in the loft are available options. Premium features included standard, such as designer brand faucets & fixtures and tile flooring. Gourmet kitchens have stainless steel appliances, European-style wood cabinetry and granite countertops. A spa-like master bathroom features double sinks with marble vanity tops, a spacious shower. Best of all, this master suite is conveniently located on the ground floor.



Starting from \$219,990 to \$269,990

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.



Encinitas

- 2,251 a/c Sq. Ft.
- 4 bedrooms
- 3.5 bathrooms
- Ground floor master suite
- 5th bedroom option available

Maple Ridge
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THE NATIONAL GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB AT AVE MARIA, FLORIDA

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, plus Executive and Estate single family homes, starting from the upper \$100s.

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!

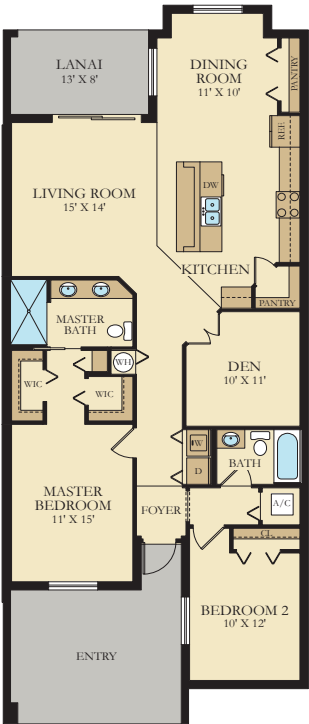


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Residents of the town appreciate knowing when the next delivery truck will pull into Publix.

ERIC RADDATZ / AVE MARIA SUN

ACTIVE

From page 1

announcements, the town was prepared to make the jump online for cyber-socializing to continue connection in the era of social distancing.

One activity that the master association was still able to present in a modified form was International Walking Day. In lieu of holding the gathering that was originally planned, residents were asked to participate by wearing their walking day T-shirts and taking photos of themselves out walking to post to the master association’s Facebook page.

“Residents voted on them, and the homeowner whose photo received the most votes won a free crowler of beer from Oil Well Craft Beer for National Beer Day,” says Carol DiFlorio, lifestyle director of the Ave Maria Master Association.

Some activities have been started as a response to current events in order to keep people engaged. One activity that the master association started during the call for social distancing was a drive-by photo shoot in Ave Maria’s neighborhoods. Residents came outside on a designated day for their photos to be taken from the street, and some held signs or set up displays for the photo shoot. The portraits were taken to post to Facebook as a photo album for each community. Two neighborhoods were photographed before the activity was put on hold because of the stay-at-home order.

Another event, a drive-by car show that would have functioned like a parade to bring the show to the neighborhoods, had to be postponed once the stay-at-home order went out. The show has been rescheduled to fall, with new plans to expand it by ending the parade at a place where there will be food trucks and residents will be able to view the parked cars up close.

An additional activity added in direct response to the stay-at-home order was the Zoom virtual Quarantini Party, with residents sharing the social aspect of a cocktail party via live video while having drinks in the safety of their own homes. Originally designed as a



Nicole Green demonstrates how to enjoy happy hour in the era of social distancing. She set up and manned her “quarantini” table for the drive-by photo shoot. Images were posted on Facebook in albums for each neighborhood.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AVE MARIA MASTER ASSOCIATION



Bessie and Ralph Brown made a “No COVID-19” sign and proudly held it up in their driveway for other Ave Maria residents doing the drive-by photo shoot.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AVE MARIA MASTER ASSOCIATION

safely separated.

Since residents can no longer travel out to do activities ranging from attending educational lectures to taking yoga classes, the master association is bringing these activities into Ave Maria residents’ homes via the internet. Since the master association is part of FirstService Residential, which has partnerships with providers of wellness classes and lifelong learning seminars, the association is opening up complimentary access to these resources that residents can engage in within their own homes.

Ms. DiFlorio says the master association has also used email to send out links to virtual museum tours and to create curated experiences, such as sending out links to a collection of selected Disney ride videos found on YouTube to create a virtual Disney park day.

“There are these YouTube videos that you could pick up, but we did a link to certain ones as our picks to hook up to the big TV, put on some popcorn and get the family together so you can go on a virtual Disney ride,” she says. “It’s something homeowners could have researched for themselves, but we picked some and put it out there to create an activity with it so they could tell their friends and create a bond by doing a Disney night.”

The master association has also leveraged electronic communication to keep residents informed about the changes taking place with the town’s merchants. The association alerts residents about which merchants are open, daily specials at the restaurants that have now



Buzzing around in golf carts is something Ave Maria residents can do while social distancing.

ERIC RADDATZ / AVE MARIA SUN

video conferencing service to facilitate business meetings via live online video, social events have recently Zoomed into cyberspace as a way for people to visit while remaining

gone fully take-out as well as when the all-vital Publix truck is arriving in town and what resupplies it has brought.

“We use the association’s Facebook page to keep the community abreast of it,” Ms. DiFlorio says. “We encourage the restaurants to post their menus because people like to ride around in their golf carts in the fresh air to pick up their carry-out and then their beverages from the brewery.”

Avalon Park resident Deb Fornwall appreciates it all.

“They’re doing a tremendous job of giving us the resources to stay actively engaged,” Ms. Fornwall says. “I can look at the resources and know exactly what time Publix will be open and if they have toilet paper or if they restocked water.”

While the town’s many amenities had to be closed for the stay-at-home order, the trail system is still open to residents. Obviously, social distancing must be observed, but Ave Maria’s trails are so wide and the network so extensive that spreading out proves easy, and walks can be shared via photos on Ave Maria’s social media pages.

“It’s awesome because we have so much space that our homeowners can benefit from using it without having an issue,” Ms. DiFlorio says. “We know our residents are out walking and biking, so we put this little fun thing to look for while you’re out there.”

The new walking event added directly in response to the current situation is the challenge to find Spirit the Purple Pal, which is a toy that looks like a cartoon hedgehog. Spirit gets moved around Ave Maria for residents to spot during their daily walks, not unlike a scavenger hunt, and then post their photos of his location that day to Facebook.

“We’re entertained just by seeing what the residents are doing,” Ms. Fornwall says. “I enjoy watching entire families that are being engaged in Spirit the Purple Pal. We can enjoy it just by watching what everyone else is enjoying.” 🌸



PHOTO COURTESY OF AVE MARIA MASTER ASSOCIATION
Deb Fornwall pretends to push Larry Fornwall into the water to create a photo opportunity for the neighbors doing the drive-by photo shoot.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AVE MARIA MASTER ASSOCIATION
The Ave Maria Master Association has set up a daily scavenger hunt activity featuring a toy called Spirit the Purple Pal.



Social distancing is doable in several spots around the town center.

ERIC RADDATZ / AVE MARIA SUN



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COURTESY PHOTOS

Above: Tom Monaghan with local Marines at the AMU interim campus in Naples. Below: Mr. Monaghan as a young Marine in 1956, left, and now.

Getting to know Tom Monaghan

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Tom Monaghan's name is well known around the town of Ave Maria, which he visualized and helped build. Here, he shares inspirational messages about his life, career and faith.

When did you first realize you had such drive and personal motivation?

I was 12 years old when I got out of the orphanage and I immediately tried to find ways to make money by working whatever job I could find.

When I was 20, I joined the Marine Corps in order to pay my way through college. While in the Corps, I continually thought and talked about how I was going to be successful. I read a lot of books from the library and I was saving almost all the money I made for college and my future.

My friends took note of all my effort and focus. They would often comment that I would be successful one day.

When I was 28 years old, I joined the Jaycees and immediately took on leadership roles in the organization.

What traits do you think made you successful in your career?

It takes hard work to be successful; that is a given. However, I think it is important to enjoy the work you do. I always loved the challenge of running Domino's. I also think my creativity or my ability to dream big and think outside the box served me well.

What do you think makes a good leader?

I believe the most important trait of a good leader is humility. After that, a good leader is someone who can motivate others. An effective leader is someone people trust and who is able to get others to share a common vision and get excited about accomplishing the goals of the team.



What do you think makes a good entrepreneur? And, how do entrepreneurs change the world?

By nature, I think entrepreneurs are action oriented. They are also willing to start small, but have a big idea that they can see through until it happens. A good entrepreneur also needs to be willing to take calculated risks. In business and life, there are very few sure things, so one has to be willing to try new things.

Additionally, they need to be patient and resilient because no matter what you do, you will experience setbacks and things will not always turn out how you think.

What do you find most rewarding about living a philanthropic life?

It is rewarding to feel like I am being a good steward of the many blessings God has given me over the years. My gifts and resources are His, and philanthropy allows me to use these



resources where I believe they will most bless the Church. It is also rewarding in a way, as it is a chance for me to make up for my sins and failings.

You have made such an impact in so many ways. Aside from a happy and healthy family, is it possible for you to pick the top three achievements you are most proud of and describe why?

I am extraordinarily grateful for my faith, which has and will always be the greatest gift I could have ever received. I am also blessed by my family, which I am so grateful for.

I do not know if I could call them achievements, but several things that I have been blessed to see come to fruition and bless the Church include:

■ Ave Maria University, because while it has already been an incredible influence on so many over the last two decades, the potential impact not only to become a beacon of Catholic higher education, but also for its gradu-

ates to be a haven within the Church.

■ Ave Maria School of Law ... similar to the university, it is difficult to measure the impact its alumni have had on our society and the Church. These men and women who are not only incredibly well-trained attorneys but also formed in the moral and intellectual traditions of the Church are assuming key positions of leadership in every sector of our country.

■ Legatus (which is Latin for "ambassador"), which is an organization of Catholic business leaders in more than 100 chapters around the country (and world). Through monthly meetings and other opportunities available to them, our members are being strengthened and supported in their faith and then by virtue of their positions and resources are doing amazing things for the Church.

■ Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, the Dominican Order that was established and came to Ann Arbor in 1997 with only four sisters. I was able to support and partner with them for many years and see their vocations soar to more than 140 sisters whose average age is 33, and where they are now sending sisters to schools all over the country.

What would you tell people are the reasons for and rewards of giving back?

First of all, I believe that ultimately it is not my money. It is God's money and I am called to be a good steward of it. Also, in a very practical sense ... I cannot take it with me!

So, knowing that the most important thing I can do with the financial and other resources that God has given me is to save souls, that is my aim with my giving. This is primarily by helping the Church in the best ways that I know how.

How do you spend your free time?

I enjoy spending time with my wife and reading.

What is your favorite book?
I am a voracious reader on a multitude of topics, so it is difficult to single out any one book. However, I really enjoy two sets of Bible commentaries, “The Navarre Bible Commentary” and “The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture.”

Do you have a favorite athlete, sports team or sport?

I have always loved to both play and watch sports and I continue to be a big sports fan to this day.
Football: Ave Maria Gyrenes, University of Michigan Wolverines and Detroit Lions. My favorite player was Barry Sanders.
Basketball: Ave Maria Gyrenes, University of Michigan Wolverines and the Detroit Pistons.
Baseball: Ave Maria Gyrenes and Detroit Tigers. My favorite players were Alan Trammell and Al Kaline.

Where do you live? Are you an Ave Maria resident, Naples resident, seasonal resident?

I am a resident of Ann Arbor, Mich. I became a Florida resident for about 10 years when I was overseeing things at Ave Maria University. Currently, I travel to Florida every month year-round for meetings and events, and spend more time there in the winter when my wife comes with me.

We are currently in very trying times and likely will be when this edition of the Ave Maria Sun is published. What words of wisdom and support would you like to share?

By the time this is published, we will have just celebrated Easter, which is the celebration of Christ’s resurrection. So, no matter how bad things get, we know that we have the ultimate victory.
In terms of Ave Maria University, I have great confidence in President Christopher Ice and the direction he is taking the university. He is a very humble and prayerful man who relies on Our Lady, and he has a great vision for the university. 🌻



Addressing a crowd at the university in 2008.



COURTESY PHOTOS
Flipping pizza during early days of Domino’s.



Doing a TV interview during construction of the AMU campus.

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MEET A TOWNMAKER

“In these current, unprecedented times of COVID-19, I want to reassure our residents that our minds are clear, calm and focused. This is a time for compassion and reliability, and AMUC will be there quietly doing our part to ensure continuity of service. Be well and thank you.”

— Jason Vogel, Ave Maria Utility Company

Jason Vogel: The wizard of water behind AMUC

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When you turn on your faucet, take a shower or flush the toilet, you can thank Jason Vogel and his team at Ave Maria Utility Company. The senior project manager, who joined the company when it started in 2006, is proud of the level of service and value AMUC provides to its customers.

“We are providing a reliable and critical service for our residents,” he says.

Mr. Vogel oversees every aspect of water, wastewater, irrigation and utility-specific development services — such as engineering plan review, approval and infrastructure testing and acceptance — for the town.

It is the dream job he envisioned while growing up in Clearwater and earning a bachelor of science degree in environmental science from the University of Florida.

“I’m a rare and proud native Floridian and an environmentalist to the core, so the calling for making a difference for both people and the planet was an easy and logical fit,” he says.

He describes a “very nomadic, yet strategically purposeful existence” before coming to AMUC. His first job after graduation was an operator position at CH2M Hill (now Jacobs Engineering) at a biosolids facility in Charlotte, N.C. Then he took a series of promotional transfers throughout Florida and Georgia before “accepting the call to settle in at a unique opportunity in Ave Maria.” This position offered a new challenge he craved.

“Ave Maria presented an incredibly rare opportunity to be a part of the creation of a town from scratch and an alliance with a pragmatic and progressive client in Barron Collier Companies,” he says.

CH2M partnered with Barron Collier Companies to design, build and operate the town’s utility infrastructure and “gave me the honor to helm as I saw fit with regard to building my team, implementing my own



COURTESY PHOTO

Jason Vogel oversees every aspect of water at Ave Maria Utility Company.

procedures and systems, drawing from my experiences,” he adds. “It was my tabla rasa moment and I have never looked back.”

He says his “dream team” staff operates as a quasi-family and remains fully intact.

“They are second to none, inspire me beyond words and give me daily purpose. We all show up daily pleased to be there and bearing smiles. Work isn’t ‘work.’ And that’s how it should be.”

When he isn’t working, Mr. Vogel lives in North Naples with his “lovely college soul mate,” Linda, and their two “amazingly talented kiddos,” Devin and Nico. He’s a proud “soccer dad,” a hyper-gardener (“My zinnias, orchids and sunflowers are popping!”) and the family line cook. His secret talent is whistling.

He loves to read and says his “current intellectual indulgence” is “White Fragility” by Robin DeAngelo.

Finally, he has been a “hardcore Gator and Buccaneers sufferer since birth” and encourages Tom Brady to “bring it on!” 🌻

SHOT AROUND AVE MARIA



PHOTO BY ERIC RADDATZ / AVE MARIA SUN

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Starting with sunrise, life for new residents of Avalon Park is “perfect”

BY **RUSTY PRAY**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Lou and Judianne Benigno love to watch the sunrise from the lanai of their new Pulte home.

From their vantage point in Avalon Park at Ave Maria, they can watch the sun peak from behind the vista of a lake.

“You look out and just see the water,” Judianne says. “The view is spectacular.”

Lou, who retired in 2016 after 30 years delivering mail in Boca Raton, and Judianne, a retired office manager, settled into their three-bedroom, 2½-bath home in February. They moved east from Broward County, where Lou had settled after coming to Florida from Brooklyn in 1979.

But what brought them to the Naples area wasn’t the view. It was the quality of the Pulte house, Lou says. And they did their homework before deciding on the Pompeii model, which they customized by including several options.

A Pulte Group sales consultant pointed the couple first to Marco Island, where they could see a completed Pompeii model.

“That’s all it took — one look at that model,” Lou says. “When we saw it in person, we knew this was it.” Two major factors guided their decision to make the Pulte home the last one they would ever buy. One was the cornerless sliding glass doors opening onto the lanai. The other was the half-bathroom.

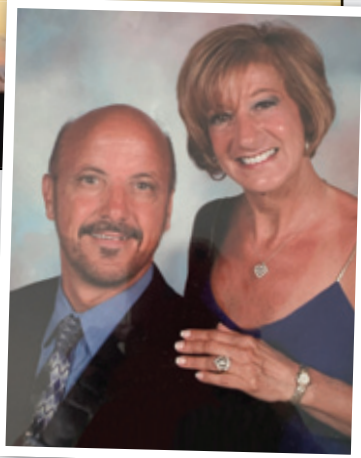
“The sliding glass doors open from both sides,” Lou explains. “When they open, the whole corner of the house disappears.”

The extra half-bathroom was important because the Benignoes do a lot of entertaining with friends and family — they have two grown children and five grandchildren. Accommodating company also was the motive behind



COURTESY PHOTO

Lou and Judianne Benigno settled into their new Pulte home in Avalon Park in February this year.



opting for a formal dining room instead of a flex room in the floor plan, which offers about 2,104 square feet of living space.

“It fit all our needs,” Lou says.

From the beginning, he and Judianne were proactive home buyers.

“We were here every week from the ground-breaking,” he says. “We had our kids take pictures of us digging with shovels.”

As the project moved along, the “builder told me to write down anything I might want to bring to their attention,” Lou says. “I did that. And when I presented them to the contractor, he had already taken care of everything.”

The formal dining room isn’t the only option the couple chose for their new home. They said yes to a pool. They upgraded to impact windows. They upgraded kitchen appliances

and extended the kitchen cabinetry. They chose wider molding and an upgraded laundry room. They even upgraded the TV wall mounts.

“Everything I had wanted in my previous house I got with this one,” Lou says. “I figured we were buying a house for the last time, and we were going to do as much as we could with the new house.

“And that’s what we did.”

“Everything has been positive,” Lou says about the time they’ve been in their new house. “I can find nothing negative . . . We’re very impressed with the quality and attentiveness of them coming and taking care of what needs to be done.”

Judianne’s favorite room is the kitchen.

“I love the openness of it, the concept of it,” she says. “I do a lot of cooking and entertain-

ing. The openness makes me feel close to my company.” She also loves the serenity and old-fashioned graciousness of life as residents of Avalon Park at Ave Maria. “The house, the neighborhood, it’s very peaceful here,” she says. “And everyone is so friendly. Everybody says hello.” And then there’s the perk of starting their day watching the sunrise from their lanai. “I love it,” Lou says. Judianne nods. “It’s perfect.” 🌻



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“The number one benefit of being in a smaller town is our customers.
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— Matt Williams, Oil Well Craft Beer owner



Oil Well Craft Beer offers tasting flights from 20 taps featuring a selection of local, unique and difficult to find beers.

PHOTO BY BRYANT MORIN PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY OF OIL WELL CRAFT BEER

Cheers to Oil Well Craft Beer at Ave Maria

Brewery named #1 Beer Bar in Florida

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Exciting things are brewing at Oil Well Craft Beer. Originally a taproom featuring craft beers from a variety of breweries, the owners have added an onsite brewery. This represents an evolution beyond Matt and Danee Williams’ original plan.

“A taproom is something Matt always talked about,” Danee says. “He’s a real dreamer and always had this vision ...”

Matt loves traveling to traveling to breweries, trying different beers, talking about beer “and everything that goes along with beer culture,” he says. His original vision, he adds, was for a taproom that had that feel of a brewery “because that was something we could afford to pull off.”

But in the three years they have run the taproom, he has become friends with people who run the breweries in Southwest Florida. This inspired him to do even more with beer.

“When the space next door became available, we thought this is the time to do it,” he says. “The only thing that made sense was to add a brewery.”

There was just one hitch with the idea. Matt had only dabbled in homebrewing; he had brewed exclusively with pre-made brewing kits and extracts. However, he had all those friends he’d made.

“I didn’t seek to be a brewer,” he says. Chris Buccheri is the primary brewer for



PHOTO BY LIGHT THE SKY PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY OF OIL WELL CRAFT BEER

Oil Well Craft Beer has 20 taps that deliver local, unique and difficult to find beers.

Oil Well.
Serving as brewing consultant is Bill Vaughan, the head brewer for Bone Hook

Brewing Co. in Naples. Dave Altomare, a friend who is an engineer, troubleshoots equipment issues.

“Of the four of us working the brewery, I probably do the least,” Matt says. “I do the grunt work and move the hoses.”

The new space holds a three-barrel brewing system, making Oil Well a nano brewery. Matt says the crew brewed their first batches in March, a pale ale and an amber ale. In coming weeks they plan to round out the basic inventory by brewing a porter, a Kolsch and an IPA.

“Once we’ve confirmed the new brewing system is dialed in and we’re doing great core beers, we are going to get more creative,” Matt says. “We’ll make beer that we love ...”

“... And that the people love, of course,” Danee interjects.

“Right, right,” Matt says, quickly agreeing with her. “We’ll also do a lager at some point, and Kolsch sells well. Those are the beers the masses like, so we’ll always keep a style like that on tap. I call them ‘gateway’ craft beers for people who have only had Miller Lite.”

Beyond serving brews, Oil Well Craft Beer serves as a hub for social events in Ave Maria. Danee books food trucks and arranges special events.

“I come up with different theme parties,” she says. “And the food trucks are great because it brings a different variety of food out to Ave Maria.”

The Williams have found the townspeople responding to all they offer, and doing so with more than just their purchases.

“The number one benefit of being in a smaller town is our customers,” Matt says.

PHOTO BY BRYANT MORIN PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY OF OIL WELL CRAFT BEER



Danee Williams, co-owner of Oil Well Craft Beer, makes popcorn in the taproom.

“We call them our friends and family.”

Matt says two years ago a customer showed him a social media link to the Great American Beer Bars contest by CraftBeer.com. In the contest, more than 6,000 readers of the website fill out a survey to vote for the best beer bar in every state. Oil Well won Best Beer Bar in Florida for both 2019 and 2020.

“We did nothing more than any other bar,” Matt says.

“Just, ‘Hey, vote for us,’” Danee adds.

“Our customers took it and ran with it, sharing amongst friends like wildfire, and we won,” Matt says. “Then when it rolled around the next year, they took pride in trying to make us win again, and it worked. A lot of people call us the modern-day Cheers.”

“If you come in not knowing anyone, you walk out with a whole bunch of new friends,” Danee adds. “There’s been some great friendships and relationships started at Oil Well.” 🍷



Matt Williams, co-owner of Oil Well Craft Beer, shows off the brewery’s crowlers.

PHOTO BY OIL WELL CRAFT BEER



Beer being born – the crew at Oil Well Craft Beer brew their first batch of beer.

PHOTO BY OIL WELL CRAFT BEER



Oil Well Craft Beer serves as a social hub in Ave Maria.

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